New Zealand Backpacking Equipment List

Welcome to NOLS! It's important to choose the right equipment for any outdoor adventure. This list is designed to help you make smart decisions about the gear you take on your course. Your course will have specific gear needs, but your clothing should be functional in the varying environments that you will encounter throughout your course.

When you arrive, your instructors will look through the equipment you've brought and help you decide what to take into the field. You'll then go into our Outfitting Department to rent or purchase any remaining items. We've made every effort to ensure that this equipment list reflects what you will need on your course, but your actual needs will vary depending on season and instructor judgment. We encourage you to keep the tags on all clothing, and the receipt at home, so that you may later return any unneeded items.

Here are some thoughts to guide you as you pack:

- **First, use gear you already own.** You'll be comfortable in tried-and-true clothing. Bring more layers than you think you'll need; your instructors will help you choose your best options. Items that you don't bring on the expedition should fit in a moderate sized bag, which you may store at our base at your own risk.
- **Second, rent key items from NOLS.** When it comes to gear, every adventurer has their own preferences. In the field, you'll have the opportunity to hone your preferred system. We recommend that you rent, rather than purchase, several "big ticket" items, such as a sleeping bag and backpack. While you are not obligated to rent gear from us, there are several reasons why we suggest it. Our rental gear is high quality, chosen specifically for the heavy use it receives on courses. Rental prices are reasonable, so you can try out gear and make informed decisions for your future adventures.
- **Third, visit a local outdoor store.** Most gear shops, from REI to mom-and-pop shops, are familiar with NOLS and its courses. We encourage you to keep the tags on all equipment and clothing, and the receipt at home, so that you may later return any items you don't use.

Equipment Fees

In addition to your course tuition, you will pay an equipment deposit. This deposit will be applied directly to the charges you incur for gear rentals and purchases. At the end of

your course, you will be billed for any amount that exceeds your equipment deposit, or refunded any balance from the NOLS headquarters in Lander.

Quality Over Quantity

At NOLS, we fundamentally believe that you don't need to own a lot of expensive gear to live and travel comfortably in the backcountry. By purchasing high-quality items and learning to care for them, you're making a lifetime investment. Spend money on the few items that really matter, and don't get lured into splurging on the trendiest fabrics or latest gadgets.

Questions?

Please contact one of the following:
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How to Use this List

Items under the **Required** heading are items that you **must** either bring yourself or rent or purchase from NOLS as available. Items under the **Optional** heading are not required, and you may bring them from home, buy, or rent from NOLS as available. If you see an **X** in the price column, that means that an item is not available for rent or for purchase as indicated.

Purchase price listed is for new gear; used gear will be discounted proportionally according to amount of wear.

Note: All prices are in $USD. They are subject to change and include a 15% New Zealand Goods and Services Tax. Be aware that outdoor equipment is often more expensive to purchase in New Zealand than it is to purchase in the USA, and due to shipping delays, NOLS New Zealand may not have all items in all sizes available for purchase or rent.

Upper Body Clothing			
You'll need at least 4 insulating layers and 1 rainproof layer, which must fit comfortably over each other so they can all be worn at the same time. If you tend to get cold easily, add the fleece vest in addition to the other 4 layers.			
Equipment	**Rent**	**Buy**	**Notes**

Required Items			
Lightweight Long-sleeved Shirt	X	$118	Mainly for use on hot sunny days as sun protection. We recommend lightweight wool or polyester. (Examples: Patagonia Sun Hoody)
Base Layer (Long Underwear Top) (2) (insulating layer)	X	$38-88	Light- or mid-weight long-sleeve top, wool or synthetic. (Examples: Mountain Hardwear Extend, Patagonia Capilene, smart wool, Icebreaker wool)
Fleece Jacket (insulating layer)	$45	$97-130	Heavier than a base layer top, but lighter than an outer jacket. Aim for material that's fleece, wool, or other synthetic.(Examples: Mountain Hardwear Microchill, Patagonia R1)
Insulated Jacket (Synthetic) (insulating layer)	$50	$275	A warm jacket that fits over your other layers and under your rain jacket. A hood is recommended. (Examples: Mont-Bell Thermawrap Pro, Arc'teryx Atom)
Rain Jacket (Waterproof layer)	X	$330-500	Durable, waterproof, non-insulated jacket with hood. Coated nylon or breathable fabrics (like Gore-Tex, Pertex or H2No). It is important that you can wear your rain jacket over all your base and mid-layers.
Sports Bra (1-2)	X	X	Synthetic, wool, or silk
Optional Items			
Wind Shirt (Wind layer)	$17	$90	A lightweight, breathable, durable nylon wind shell. Pullover or zip-up style. (Example: Patagonia Houdini)
Insulated Vest	X	X	Lightweight fleece or other synthetic.
Lower Body Clothing			
You'll need 2 lower insulating layers plus 1 pair of shorts, 1 wind layer and 1 waterproof layer, which must fit comfortably over each other so they can all be worn at the same time. If you get cold easily, you may want to bring a pair of insulating pants as a third layer.			
Equipment	**Rent**	**Buy**	**Notes**
Required Items			

Long Underwear Bottoms (2 pairs) (insulating layer)	X	$44-88	Mid-weight synthetic or wool bottoms. (Examples: Mountain Hardwear Extend, Patagonia Capilene, Smart wool, Icebreaker wool)
Nylon Shorts or Pants	X	X	Nylon athletic or hiking shorts (or hiking pants). They should be loose-fitting and quick-drying. Shorts are preferable as they are more versatile in varying weather conditions.
Nylon Pants (Wind Layer)	$16	$93	Nylon or synthetic pants. These should fit comfortably over lower-body base layers. Soft-shell fabrics are acceptable, but lightweight “running pants” are not durable enough. We recommend renting NOLS wind pants.
Rain Pants (Waterproof layer)	X	$145-165	A durable, waterproof pant that can fit over other lower-body layers. A full-length zipper is convenient for changing layers without removing footwear.
Underwear (2-3 pairs)	X	X	Briefs or boxers; some students prefer to go without underwear and wear quick-drying shorts with liners. Briefs may be synthetic, wool, or silk.
Optional Items			
Fleece Pants	$16	$100	Mid- or heavy-weight bottoms that fit comfortably over the base-layer bottoms. Fleece pants or insulated (puffy) pants work, too.
Sleeping Gear			
Equipment	**Rent**	**Buy**	**Notes**
Required Items			
Sleeping Bag	$32	X	A synthetic-fill mummy bag with approximately 3 pounds of fill, rated to 0° or 10°F. We rent Mountain Hardwear Lamina 0° or 15°F synthetic sleeping bags. Due to New Zealand’s wet environment, we strongly recommend that you DO NOT bring down or feather bags.
Sleeping bag liner	$40	X	Highly recommended for use with rental sleeping bag
Compression Stuff Sack	$6	$45	Stuff sack for your sleeping bag or clothing. Can also function as a small backpack.

Sleeping Pad	X	$165-200	We rent closed-cell foam pads only; however, we recommend and sell full-length self-inflating sleeping pads. We do not rent self-inflating pads. (Example: Therm-a-rest Pro-Lite Small or Regular) If you bring an inflatable pad, make sure to bring a repair kit so you can patch it if it gets holes. Be aware that you'll be sharing a tent with other people; bring a narrow (NOT wide) sleeping pad.
Optional Items			
Sleeping Pad Stuff Sack	$6	$44	Stuff sack to pack and protect sleeping pad
Head, Neck, and Hand Layers			
Equipment	**Rent**	**Buy**	**Notes**
Required Items			
Baseball Cap or Sun Hat	X	$26-63	To protect ears and face from the sun. Consider a full brim for maximum protection, but a typical baseball cap works well. Flexible fabric is recommended over straw or other stiff materials, which are hard to pack. A nylon model will dry more quickly, but canvas works well. Avoid hats made from Gore-Tex or plastics, as they get too hot.
Fleece or Wool Hat (1-2)	X	$22	Warm hat for cold weather that should cover your ears. We recommend wool or fleece. One warm hat for use during cold, wet days. Hence, a second warm hat can be useful for use in camp or when sleeping
Fleece or Wool Gloves	X	$19-28	Lightweight, synthetic, fleece or wool.
Optional Items			
Mosquito Headnet	X	$16	A light, nylon headnet. Recommended to combat midges.
Buff	X	$33	Wool or synthetic neck warmer. Offers great insulation in combination with a warm hat. Lightweight versions can offer sun and/or wind protection in warmer climates.

Liner Gloves	X	$19.50	Lightweight, synthetic, fleece or wool glove
Rain Hat	$15	$68	Waterproof, large-brimmed, and with a chinstrap for windy days.
Packs and Bags			
Equipment	**Rent**	**Buy**	**Notes**
Required Items			
Backpack	$55	X	Our packs are large expedition models, with a volume of 80–100 liters. We recommend you rent one of these packs. If you bring your own pack, it must have a volume of 80–110 liters. Your instructors will check it to determine its suitability for your course and route.
Small Stuff Sacks (1-2)	$5	X	Small nylon or mesh sacks for organizing gear in your pack. These should be between 2- and 5-liter capacity.
Plastic Trash Bags (2-3)	X	$3	For lining stuff sacks, sleeping bags, and day bags to make them more waterproof.
Heavy duty trash bags (2-3)	X	$4.50	Heavy-duty, extra large plastic bags (60-100 micron plastic) for lining and waterproofing backpacks and other bags. These are thicker and more durable than normal trash bags. E.g. lawn-and-garden bags.
Footwear			
Equipment	**Rent**	**Buy**	**Notes**
Required Items			
Hiking Boots	X	X	Durable hiking boots; all-leather or combination of leather and synthetic. Must have good support in the heel and ankle. We recommend taking the time to break in new boots before your course to prevent blisters. **Please read the Hiking Boot Selection Guide at the end of the list.**
Socks (3-5 pairs)	X	$15-30	Mid to heavyweight. You may prefer socks of different thickness for different activities (eg. for travel during the day and wearing at night in your sleeping bag).
Camp Shoes	X	$75	Comfortable shoes to change into in camp. Must be closed-toe. Crocs (without holes) work

			extremely well, are highly recommended, and are an instructor favorite! Lightweight and quick-drying running shoes are acceptable.
Gaiters	X	$60-130	Boot attachment that protects the ankle and shins from snow and dirt. Must be durable and large enough to fit over boots. Lightweight trail-running gaiters are not recommended.
Optional Items			
Liner Socks (1-2 pairs)	X	$15	Lightweight wool or synthetic “wicking” socks. You will need at least two pairs if you are using a liner sock/wool sock combination in your hiking boots.
Miscellaneous Items			
Equipment	**Rent**	**Buy**	**Notes**
Required Items			
Bandana (2)	X	$5.50-15	Useful for various purposes.
Lighter	X	$3.50	For lighting your camp stove.
Bowl	X	$11	Durable and able to handle hot liquids. A screw-on lid is **essential**. Nalgene bowls work well.
Spoon	X	$2.50-25	Lexan spoons are light, durable and popular.
Water Bottle or Water Bladder	X	$16-22	Bring durable plastic bottles, such as a Nalgene water bottle. Wide mouths are convenient. Ensure you have the capacity to carry 2 liters (70 US Fl oz) of water (A bottle and a bladder are a great combination, although 2 bottles work fine. A water bladder is optional and listed below - see Hydration system)
Lip Balm (1-2)	X	$4.50	Stick, cream, or tube-type moisturizing balm, SPF 15 or greater.
Sport Sunscreen (3)	X	$5.50	A 3- to 6-oz. tube, SPF 30 or greater. Please note the sun exposure in New Zealand is very strong due to the depletion of the ozone layer.

Sunglasses	X	$60-220	Good-quality sunglasses with 100-percent UV protection; lenses should be dark. If you wear prescription lenses and have limited vision without them, bring prescription sunglasses or look for a quality pair of clip-on polarized shades.
Eyeglass Retainer	X	$13	Chums or Croakies for keeping track of your glasses or sunglasses.
Prescription Glasses and Contact Lenses	X	X	If you wear prescription glasses or lenses, you should bring a spare set. Even if you wear contact lenses daily, plan to carry a pair of glasses into the field.
Headlamp	X	$66-80	Durable and lightweight. Bring spare batteries.
Batteries (3-6 sets)	X	$1.80 per battery	We have AA and AAA batteries for sale.
Notebook	X	$16	A small, lightweight notebook or notepad for taking notes during classes and journaling.
Pen and Pencil (3)	X	$1.50-2.50	For journaling and taking notes during classes. Bring more than one.
Toiletries	X	$5-10	Toothbrush, toothpaste, comb, brush, skin lotion, and tampons. Travel or trial sizes are enough. NOLS New Zealand provides towels, shampoo and soap for showers when staying at our campus. You may want to bring extra toiletries for base use, such as moisturizer, a brush, q-tips, a razor or deodorant. We have some basic supplies available for purchase.
Watch	X	$45	Durable and waterproof, with an alarm feature.
Insect Repellent	X	$20	Small bottles; no aerosol spray cans or Deet-based spray.
Optional Items			
Insulated Thermos	X	$55	12- to 20-oz. insulated mug with a lid. A lighter option is 16 oz. Nalgene water bottle also functions as a great mug.
Hydration system/ Hydration Dromedary	X	$38 - 77	Portable bladder with drinking tube (ex. Platypus, MSR or CamelBak).

			(We recommend and sometimes require having a backup water bottle in case the bladder is damaged.)
Camera	X	X	GoPros and lightweight digital or 35mm cameras are acceptable; bring a protective case (waterproof is recommended). Avoid elaborate lenses and heavy SLRs. (Please note: you may not bring your smartphone or tablet to use as a digital camera.) Bring extra batteries and memory cards.
Book	X	X	A small paperback book or lightweight e-reader, such as a Kindle; bring a protective case. Tablet-style e-readers (e.g., Kindle Fire) are not permitted.
Knife or Multi-Tool	X	$35-50	A small knife is sufficient; simple folding knives are popular.
Trekking Poles (1-2)	X	$138/ pair	Used for supporting weight while hiking. Should be sturdy and adjustable. Past students **strongly recommend** using hiking poles, and have typically found two poles highly beneficial
Camp Chair	X	$60-82	Folding foam camp chair that you can pack easily in a backpack and is light.
Sit Pad	No Charge	X	A simple piece of closed cell foam that makes sitting on the ground more comfortable. Much lighter-weight than a camp chair.
Binoculars	X	$110	Small and travel-sized
Dry Box	X	$38	For protecting a camera, binoculars, etc. that you want to stay 100% dry.
Envelopes and International Stamps	X	$0.40-2.80	To mail letters home.
Coffee	X	$11/200g	Coffee is not a part of the standard NOLS ration. Buy ground coffee in NZ if that's more convenient than carrying it from the US.
In-town Clothing			
You will need some clothes to wear at our campus, during the cultural section and when traveling to and from New Zealand—i.e., 2-3 days of clean casual "in-town"			

clothes and a clean pair of shoes or sandals. These should be separate from any clothes that you take with you on any field sections.

Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
Clean underwear (2-3 sets)	X	X	While you don't necessarily need them in the field, it is nice to come back to a clean pair.
Town clothes (2-3 sets)	X	X	T-shirt, jeans, sweatshirt, skirt, etc. It may be hot and sunny at our campus or it may be windy and cold. Bring some additional clothes to wear in-town.
Shoes	X	X	The shoes you wear in the field will be grubby and stinky when your course ends. A pair of flip-flops or lightweight tennis shoes will be nice to have.
Toiletries	X	X	We provide towels, shampoo and soap for showers at the base. You may want to bring extra toiletries such as moisturizer, a brush, q-tips, a razor or deodorant.

Shared Group Equipment—NOLS will supply

Expedition members share both the use of and the responsibility for the group gear that NOLS issues. NOLS charges only for group equipment lost or damaged. Keep in mind that NOLS evaluates gear from a number of perspectives beyond those that an individual user might consider. Performance, durability and simplicity are all contributing factors towards our gear selection.

Tents and Shelters
Maps and Compass
GPS
Camp Stoves
Reference Books
Fuel and Fuel Bottles
Ice Axes
Cooking Gear
Trowels or Shovels
Water Treatment
Equipment Repair Kits
Ropes
Safety Gear

First Aid:
Our instructors carry adequate first aid kits. There is no need to bring your own.

Hiking Boot Selection Guide

Selecting the right boots is an important part of preparing for your NOLS course.
We want you to have footwear that provides adequate protection for your feet, that is durable enough to withstand weeks of rugged wear, and that provides reasonable comfort. Many boots and shoes available on the market do not meet these criteria. Boots that are very new and not broken in may cause blisters; old boots may fall apart during a long expedition. Additional factors to consider are how heavy your pack is and how strong your ankles and feet are.
When considering footwear, remember that your course will travel mostly off trail in snow, scree, boulders, mud and high grass. Your feet will definitely get wet regardless of your boots and gaiters being marketed as “waterproof.”

Features of a suitable mid-weight hiking boot:

- A sole that provides good traction and a stepped-heel for traction in steep terrain
- Durable uppers that will withstand hiking among sharp boulders and dense vegetation; leather or Gore-Tex are both fine materials
- Over-the-ankle design; short boots or trail runners are not suitable
- A comfortable fit with your preferred hiking socks. Boots that are too small are a common cause of blisters. When in doubt, go a size larger than you think you need.

Boots in this category include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Asolo: TPS Series, Powermatic Series, Moran GTX, Flame GTX, Synchro GTX
- Lowa: Ticam GTX. Tibet Pro GTX, Baffin Pro
- La Sportiva: Thunder II GTX, Garnet GTX, Omega GTX, Pamir
- Vasque: Wasatch GTX, Summit GTX, Sundowner GTX, Clarion GTX, Bitterroot GTX, Taku GTX
- Scarpa: SL Active, Kinesis series, Kailash GTX, Bhutan GTX, Terra GTX