

Patagonia Cultural Expedition

Course Description

Immerse yourself in the culture and landscape of Patagonia. On this course, you'll travel by foot through a remote and stunning environment, learning about it from the people who live there as you develop leadership and cultural competency. If you want to learn the unique interpersonal and technical skills to put together an international expedition, then this is the course for you.

Features

- Duration: 31 days
- Route length: 80-150 miles
- Group size: 12 students / 2 instructors
- Minimum age: 18
- Average pack weight: 45-50 pounds
- Skills: backcountry travel and living, Spanish language, cultural competence
- Opportunities to interact with local Patagonian residents, hike on and off-trail, and attempt non-technical peak ascents
- Opportunity for students to travel in small groups independent of instructors (based on instructor discretion)
- Notable wildlife: fox, puma, condor and guanaco

Overview

On this course, you will travel by foot through some of the wildest country on Earth, mastering outdoor living skills and developing cultural competency.

At the beginning of your course, you will focus on mastering basic camping and travel skills, such as moving with a backpack, staying warm, cooking, route finding and Leave No Trace practices. Later on, your instruction will include map reading, first aid, leadership, plant and animal identification, ecosystems, geology, weather, and environmental issues. As you travel, you may follow paths cut through the forest by sheep and cattle ranchers or hike with no path at all.

This course emphasizes cultural interaction in addition to wilderness travel skills. Any time we pass by a *campo* (ranch) or house, you will take the time to interact with the *poblador* family and ask if they need help with a project, share a cup of *yerba mate*, and listen and learn from their experiences of living in this wild and remote place.

On this course, you'll be exploring a raw, remote and beautiful wilderness that few have ever seen. You'll learn about different ways of life—both the Patagonian culture and the NOLS expedition culture—and, in the process, learn a lot about yourself and your own culture. After experiencing expedition-style travel in Patagonia, you'll be prepared to live and travel in a wide variety of conditions, both environmental and cultural.

Independent Student Group Travel

At the beginning of the course your instructors will travel with you to teach travel skills including navigation, leadership, risk assessment, and decision-making. As you develop competence, instructors will gradually give you more responsibilities. Once you gain proficiency and demonstrate competence to your instructors, you may travel in student-led groups without instructors for up to a day at a time—we call this independent student group travel.

Student Expedition

After successful practice with independent student group travel and if your instructors think your group is ready, your course may culminate in a multi-day student-led expedition. Usually, for the Student Expeditions you will travel in a group of four to six students independently of instructors for two to six days (depending on location). This independent expedition caps off your NOLS experience and gives you a chance both to put into practice the skills you've learned and to appreciate the relationships you've formed with your expedition mates over the duration of your course.

Independent student group travel is carefully planned with your instructors and emergency plans are created for each group. Your instructors may be up to 24 hours away, but each group carries an electronic emergency communication device to alert the NOLS emergency response system in the event of an accident. Ultimately, on this course you will develop the competence to travel independently in the wilderness and with your family and friends.

Weather and Other Challenges

Weather

The weather in Patagonia is mixed. You might find yourself traveling in the hot sun or strong winds, snow and rain, sometimes for days at a time. Your instructors will help you learn how to live comfortably in the challenging conditions you will encounter as you experience an exceptional place that few other people see.

Remoteness

During your course you may often be several days away from the nearest medical facility. All NOLS instructors maintain wilderness medicine certifications and are equipped with well-stocked first aid kits to provide care in the event of an emergency. Weather, terrain, and distance can impede communication and transportation efforts. In the event of an injury or illness, there is no guarantee that you can be evacuated immediately from the backcountry.

Group Dynamics

For some, living with a small group of people for an extended period of time can be more demanding than the course's physical challenges. You'll learn to work with different personality types and about the leadership skills it takes both to be a leader and a follower within your group, managing those dynamics.

Learning Goals at NOLS

NOLS courses teach wilderness and leadership skills on expeditions and in classrooms. You will apply these skills to challenges in a supportive learning culture with high expectations. Your course will provide you with the opportunity for a positive, transformative experience intended to inspire you and empower you to act.

We craft NOLS courses so graduates will be able to assume leadership roles; live and travel in the outdoors; act with confidence and competence; respect and collaborate with others on expeditions, on teams and in communities; care for themselves and others; understand their strengths, habits, and areas for growth; function under difficult circumstances; make informed and thoughtful decisions; communicate effectively; connect with natural places; and appreciate living simply.

We believe positive, ethical leaders change the world. Join NOLS and become one of these leaders.