Rafting Utah's Gates of Lodore - Family Trip - Alumni



Vernal, Utah
July 26 - 30, 2026

Features

- Three nights and four days in the field
- Two hotel nights included in Vernal, UT
- Great for families
- Outstanding geology
- River travel in oar rigs and paddle rafts
- Group Size: up to 15 participants

Cost: $1,655
Minimum Age: 10

- *Pre and Post trip lodging included in Vernal, UT*

Trip Description

The majestic sandstone canyons of Lodore tower over an amazing stretch of the Green River in Dinosaur National Monument located in Colorado and Utah. Named after the dinosaur fossil bed discovered in 1909 by paleontologist Earl Douglass, Dinosaur was declared a National Monument in 1915. Many of the name places such as Echo Park, Disaster Falls and Hell's Half Mile resonate from the Powell expedition of 1869. This river holds a unique place in the history of river conservation and the Echo Park Dam controversy in Dinosaur National Monument. We'll paddle 45-miles in oar rigs and paddle rafts as we blast down exciting whitewater and float serenely through the flat, quiet stretches on our journey. We will emphasize Leave No Trace camping techniques for fragile river corridors as we spend four days and three nights camping along the Green River

This trip is appropriate for all levels of paddlers and a great way to introduce friends and family to the NOLS experience. On this trip you will live and travel together as a group. Participants will be expected to care for themselves and look after the group. By day you will learn and practice the ins and outs of river travel. In camp you will be expected to participate in camp set-up and help with meal preparation. There will also be ample time to explore and relax together as a group and enjoy great camaraderie!

Environment

Typically, Lodore Canyon is warm and sunny. Like many mountain environments there is always the potential for afternoon showers. We will go prepared for anything from abundant sunshine to constant rain, or dead calm to fierce head winds. As a reminder, Lodore Canyon is in a remote wilderness where evacuation to modern medical facilities can take hours or even several days. Lodore Canyon

does have several access points that can be used for evacuation purposes and, as on all NOLS backcountry expeditions, we will carry an emergency communication device.

Dinosaur National Monument is home to over 400 species of birds, mammals, amphibians, fish and reptiles. Reintroduced to the monument in the early 1950's Bighorn sheep sightings are now a common. Dinosaur is also home to four endangered fish species; the humpback chub, bonytail, Colorado pikeminnow and razorback sucker.

Trip Details

Your trip will begin at **7:30 PM on the first evening at the hotel in Vernal.** You will meet your instructors, have a trip orientation and issue gear. Please get yourself to the hotel, there are taxis available in Vernal. Please make sure you eat dinner before orientation.

The first full day will be a very busy one. You will pack your gear, make a quick stop to the NOLS river base to drop off luggage and cars and then head to the river, which is approximately three hours to the Lodore put-in. At the put-in we will load our gear on rafts, have a raft and safety orientation before launching on the river.

The next four days will be spent traveling on the river and camping along the river bank. As we travel along the river there will be opportunities for side hikes to experience some of the local history and explore the riparian zone.

On the last day we will float to our take-out at Split Mountain, where we dismantle the rafts and shuttle back to Vernal via NOLS vehicles arriving in the late afternoon. After we return to NOLS River Base we will de-issue gear. We will transport you to the hote that afternoon. We recommend that your travel arrangements from Vernal be made for the morning after the last day. We will have a celebration dinner all together that evening. Hotel is included.

Meals begin with breakfast on the first full day and go through dinner on the last evening.

A Day in the Life

Unlike many NOLS courses we will have a large group kitchen. Instructors will lead the cooking process with a few participants helping at each meal. Our days will start out with breakfast followed by a refresher of the plan for the day. You will then likely break camp, load rafts and head downstream.

Since we are traveling in a river environment through a canyon there are limited campsites. For this reason exactly how far we travel each day will be dictated by the campsite we are assigned. Assigned camps are common practice on rivers in the intermountain West.

We will stop somewhere along the river for a group lunch. There is also the potential for other stops along the river to see historical sites and do short side hikes. This will be determined by the weather, water level and group interest.

Once we arrive in camp we will unload rafts, set up camp and most likely have time to relax before dinner.

Tenting on this trip will be akin to our standard NOLS Expeditions. You will likely be sharing space with people you have not met before. We will keep our tents single-sex unless you are a couple or ask to tent with another person in particular. We try to provide a comfortable amount of living space for Alumni trips, but sharing a tent almost always feels small for anyone more accustomed to bedroom living.

Difficulty Scale

This trip is rated 3 out of 5 on our difficulty scale.



We use a difficulty scale to help participants evaluate if a trip is right for them. It considers probable weather conditions, physicality of activities, and food and accommodations. You don't need to be a honed athlete, but pre-trip work to improve your strength, flexibility and endurance, is highly encouraged to improve your enjoyment of the place. If you have specific questions regarding physical preparation and your readiness please reach out to the Alumni Trips Department.

Curriculum

Instructors hold both formal and informal classes on a wide range of subjects and skills that will enhance your ability to travel in a river environment. These begin with the basics of river travel — covering basic raft curriculum beginning with paddle strokes,paddle signals, group travel, and then moving on to hazard assessment, reading water, and basic rescue techniques. Leave No Trace camping techniques for a desert river environment will be emphasized along with cooking in a group kitchen. In addition, instructors can hold additional classes if the group desires, including natural history, NOLS' leadership topics, and relevant human history.

Expectations of Participants

The alumni trip atmosphere is more relaxed than a typical NOLS course; however, it is not a guided trip—we call it an educational, participatory vacation. Alumni trips are self-reliant adventures through remote areas where evacuation to modern medical facilities can take several days. Throughout the course, you will live outdoors, help to prepare meals, and care for yourself.

Unlike our standard expeditions, Alumni trips do allow electronics and alcohol for those that are of legal age in the country of the trip. We believe that these luxuries can add to a course experience and local flavor. Excessive alcohol consumption is not a part of the culture of Alumni trips.

Trip Itinerary

July 26	**7:30pm orientation** at the **Dinosaur Inn & Suites**, 251 E Main St, Vernal, UT. Hotel is included. Dinner is on your own this evening.

July 27	NOLS will pick you up at the hotel at **8:00 am**. Final gear check and packing dry bags. Drive approximately 3 hours to put-in and launch on the river. First night camping on the river. You can park at NOLS River Base during the trip.
July 28	Traveling and camping on the river.
July 29	Traveling and camping on the river
July 30	Travel on the river to the take-out. Arrive at take-out, load up river gear and drive approximately 30 minutes to NOLS River Base, deissue gear and then hotel drop-off. Group dinner together this evening. Hotel and dinner are included.
July 31	Travel onward. Please make **travel arrangements for this day.**

Travel Logistics

Getting to Vernal
By Plane— Vernal (code: VEL) is serviced by Contour Airlines via Denver. There are limited daily flights, so we suggest you book early.

Shuttle services are available in Vernal. Please arrange your own transportation to and from the airport.

Salt Lake City International Airport is the closest large commercial airport and is serviced by a number of different carriers. There are smaller carriers who connect SLC to Vernal, or it is a three hour drive. The Salt Lake Express shuttle operates from the airport to Vernal twice daily at 0830 and 1730. It will take you to the Quality Inn hotel and costs ~ $50/person

By Car— Vernal is located on US Hwy 40 East/West between Salt Lake City and Denver. US Hwy 191 North from Vernal connects with Interstate 80 near Rock Springs, Wyoming. The official NOLS River Base address is 3101 East 2500 South. Vehicles may be parked at the NOLS River Base while you are on the river.

If You Are Delayed On Arrival Day
If your arrival to Vernal is delayed please call the NOLS River Base at 435.781.0305 or the NOLS Alumni Office at 800.332.4280.

Lodging
Lodging the orientation night and final night is included in Vernal.

In the backcountry, you will be sharing a tent with other people. When the group gathers in person we will make sure your family is sharing a tent together if that is your preference.

Travel Insurance
Travel insurance is worth exploring in case unforeseen events cause you to change your plans or if NOLS has to cancel a trip for any reason. Check with your personal insurance carrier and credit card to understand what you already might have or check out cat70.com for a wide variety of options.

Carbon Footprint and Offset
Current estimates are that the Travel Industry accounts for ~8% of global emissions. This percentage includes everything from transportation to accommodation and shopping. NOLS recognizes that our business contributes to this problem but we do not have a comprehensive strategy at this point.

If you would like to offset part or all of the carbon emissions related to your Alumni trip, we recommend South Pole. Their calculator can help easily calculate your footprint and choose a project to contribute to. Here is a link to their calculator.

Storage of Personal Belongings
Personal belongings and vehicles may be stored at the NOLS facility for the duration of your trip. Due care will be taken to prevent theft or damage of your personal belongings. NOLS does not assume any liability for lost, stolen or damaged personal property while stored at a NOLS facility or elsewhere. NOLS will not honor any personal claim for property loss while in our care.

Tipping
While tipping is common in the outdoor guiding culture, your NOLS Instructors are not driven to excellence by tips but rather a love for taking people outdoors. You are welcome to tip the Instructors if you choose, but many instructors are honored by a donation in their name to the NOLS Annual Fund which supports scholarships for future NOLS students.

Trip Registration
The best way to register is through the trip information page on the nols.edu website. A non-refundable deposit secures your spot on the trip. If any issues arise, please call the NOLS Alumni Department at (800) 332-4280. Your enrollment is complete with receipt of your full tuition and your completed application forms; these are **due 60 days before the start of your trip.**

Your tuition includes meals starting with breakfast on the first day and through dinner on the last night, all group equipment, camping gear (tents, kitchen gear, etc.), safety equipment, instruction, permits, and transportation from the NOLS River Base to the put-in and from the take-out back to the NOLS River Base.

All participants are required to submit registration materials, including a medical form. These forms highlight the intersection of your trip's anticipated physical rigor and your current health and fitness status while also providing NOLS information about things like your dietary needs.

NOLS is not responsible for additional costs incurred by late arrivals or evacuations. Those expenses are the responsibility of trip participants and we recommend purchasing travel insurance to mitigate the impact of unforeseen circumstances.

Do not book travel greater than 60 days before the start of the trip unless you have confirmed with NOLS that the trip will run. On rare occasions, we do cancel trips due to low enrollment.

Cancellation and Transfer Policy
For your reference, here is the Alumni Trips Cancellation and Transfer Policy. When enrolling on a trip, you will need to agree to this policy.

Group Equipment

Group Gear provided by NOLS			
Cooking Gear	Rafting gear, paddles	PFD's, paddle jacket	Maps and Reference Books
Food	Maps	First Aid kits	Emergency Communication
Rescue Gear	Tents or Shelters	Repair kits	Water Treatment

Equipment List - available for rent "yes"
Not available for rent "X"

An X indicates that it is not available for rent and you will need to bring that item with you.

Upper Body Clothing		
Equipment	**Rent**	**Notes**
Base Layer (1)	X	Lightweight wool or synthetic top
Mid Layer (1)	Yes	Fleece or lightweight synthetic jacket.
Long sleeve shirt (1)	X	For sun protection
Wind Jacket (optional)	X	A lightweight, nylon wind shell. Hooded wind jackets are recommended. Does not need to be waterproof.
Rain Jacket	X	Waterproof rain jacket that fits over several insulating layers.
T-Shirt (1-2)	X	Cotton, synthetic or wool shirt, collars add sun protection.
Sports Bras (1-2)	X	Should be silk, wool or synthetic.
Wool / Fleece Hat	X	A lightweight warm hat made of wool or fleece.
Sun Hat	X	A baseball hat or wide-brimmed sun hat
Light Gloves	X	Wool or fleece.

Lower Body Clothing		
Base layer (1)	X	Lightweight wool or synthetic bottoms
Cotton pants (1)	X	Great to wear at camp
Wind Pants (optional)	Yes	Great to wear over synthetic bottoms.
Nylon Shorts (1-2)	X	Loose fitting, nylon or something similar.
Underwear (1-2 pairs)	X	Wool or synthetic,some women prefer cotton briefs.
Footwear		
River Shoes	Yes	A closed toe river shoe for foot protection. An old pair of sneakers works great. Crocs w/ back straps are not acceptable. NOLS rents neoprene booties
Camp Shoes	X	Sneakers to wear at camp and on side hikes
Socks (1-2 pairs)	X	To wear with camp shoes.
Miscellaneous Personal Gear		
Large Dry Bag	Yes	We rent 100 Liter dry bags that will fit all of your stuff
Small Dry Bag	Yes	A 10 Liter Dry bag is great for your day essentials.
Sleeping Bag	Yes	We recommend synthetic bags over down for this environment.
Sleeping Pad	Yes (foam)	A 3/4-length closed cell foam (rent) or inflatable pad (purchase only).
Small Zip Duffle Bag (optional)	X	This is a great way to organize clothing in your dry bag.
Water Bottle	X	Bottles with retention device (a short piece of webbing attached with duct tape around your water bottle works).
Hot Drink Mug	X	Please bring your favorite hot drink mug
Lip Balm (1-2)	X	SPF 15 or greater.
Sunscreen	X	SPF 30 or greater.
Sunglasses	X	Good-quality sunglasses with UV protection.
Sunglasses retainer	X	Some type of retention device so they won't fall in the river (Chums or Croakies are examples that work well.)
Headlamp	X	Durable and lightweight. Bring spare batteries.
Toiletries	X	Toothbrush, toothpaste, comb, brush, tampons, etc.
Watch	X	A watch with an alarm is a necessary item.
Ground Cloth	Yes	For sleeping out under the stars.
Optional Items		

Book	X	Bring something fun to read.
Camera	X	We would love to see your photos post-trip!
Camp Chair	X	Crazy Creek chair or something compact.
Prescription Glasses And Contact Lenses (1-2 pairs)	X	Bring at least one spare pair of glasses or lenses. Contact lens wearers should also bring a pair of glasses as backup. Prescription sunglasses are a nice item to have.
Zip lock bags	X	Helpful to organize smaller items

***We recommend that you leave any expensive jewelry at home (engagement rings, wedding bands with diamonds, etc.)