

# Backcountry Splitboarding

## Course Description

Ride down hills on fresh powder and wake up each morning with a new adventure before you. Learn to travel on snow in the backcountry, build your own snow shelters and develop as a leader. If you're a snowboarder looking to take your skills to the backcountry, or eager to learn about sleeping outside in the winter, then this is the course for you.

### Features

- Duration: 14 days (4 days at NOLS Teton Valley, 9 days winter camping in the backcountry)
- Route length: 20 miles
- Average daily elevation gain: 300-3,500 feet
- Average group size: 12 students / 3 instructors
- Average age: 21 / minimum age: 17
- Average pack weight: 20-35 pounds / sled weight: 50-65 pounds
- Elevation range: 7,000-11,000 feet
- Skills: backcountry travel, winter camping, self care in a winter environment
- Emphasis on splitboard travel techniques, including up and downhill travel
- Terrain: forested mountain terrain on splitboards, often towing sleds
- Certifications: NOLS Level I Avalanche Training

### Overview

On this course, you'll enter the world of winter in the mountains. You'll learn about winter camping, touring in the backcountry, and what it feels like to snowboard down fresh, untracked powder.

If you already know how to snowboard, then this will be a great way to expand your skills. If you're new to snowboarding, we recommend taking a few lessons before your course to make sure you can get the most out of your experience.

Your course begins with several days at the NOLS Teton Valley base near Driggs, Idaho. During the day, you'll learn basic snow camping skills and avalanche awareness, then return to the base for home-cooked meals and a heated space to warm up in. You will spend at least one day at Grand Targhee Ski Resort in lessons with professional ski

instructors focusing both on developing downhill skills and moving around in split-mode. You may also take daylong splitboard tours into the backcountry to practice travel techniques, avalanche terrain observation, and snow camping techniques, or an avalanche rescue scenario.

You will then head into the Snake River Range or Wyoming Range. These mountains are known for dependable snow and excellent riding. They are amazing places to explore and to learn the intricacies of backcountry riding and winter travel.

At night, you'll sleep in snug snow shelters you build yourself—igloos, quinzhees or snow caves. During the day, you'll learn about avalanche assessment, avoidance and rescue, as well as snowboard touring. In addition, you'll spend plenty of time staying warm and dry, learning to melt snow for water, and cooking to stay warm and energized for your adventures. If weather and snow conditions permit, you may also climb a peak. By the end of this course, you'll have the skills to pursue your own winter trips to the backcountry responsibly.

## **Weather and Other Challenges**

### **Weather**

Given the altitude and latitude of these mountain ranges, bitter cold and blizzard conditions can occur at any time. You should expect highly variable weather that can change quickly from sunshine to snow, and sometimes even rain.

### **Cold Injuries**

Living in the winter environment is demanding and can be extremely challenging. You will be living in cold (possibly sub-zero) temperatures and constant care must be exercised to minimize the possibility of hypothermia, frostbite and non-freezing cold injury.

### **Terrain**

In these mountains, avalanches occur and can bury unwary riders. Travel requires moving with a pack and pulling a sled to help transport group gear and rations. Through careful terrain choices we can minimize the chance of anyone being caught in an avalanche. Since in the backcountry we are far from telephones and easy transportation, our instruction emphasizes recognizing and managing hazards.

## 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.*