

# Himalaya Backpacking - Adult 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, and your clothing should be functional in the varying environments that you will encounter throughout your course.

When you arrive at the NOLS campus in Ranikhet, 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 the 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 campus 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 on 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.
- **Lastly, please consider modest clothing options.** Wearing modest clothing demonstrates respect for the conservative cultures we travel in. With the exception of undergarments, all students should avoid any tight-fitting or revealing attire.

## 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 visit our web site at [www.nols.edu](http://www.nols.edu), email [india@nols.edu](mailto:india@nols.edu), or call on WhatsApp NOLS India outfitting staff at (+91) 94101 59900; (+91) 90351 39704; (+91) 5966 297657.

---

## 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. You may have the opportunity to purchase rental items at the end of your course at a discounted price.

Upper Body Clothing			
Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
You need at least three insulating layers, a windproof layer and a rain layer. Make sure your layers fit comfortably over each other. If you get cold easily, we suggest that you take four insulating layers, or three layers plus a vest.			
<b>Required Items</b>			
T-Shirt	X	\$15-25	We recommend Capilene® or other synthetic materials over cotton T-shirts since they dry much faster. This is not one of your insulating layers.

Long Underwear Top (1)	X	\$29-55	Lightweight or mid-weight crew or zip turtleneck top of polyester, Capilene, or Polartec Power Dry.
Mid-Layer (Expedition Weight)	X	X	Mid- or expedition-weight synthetic, fleece, or performance wool is best. Should fit over your base layers.(Examples: Mountain Hardwear Extend, Patagonia Capilene, Ibex wool, Icebreaker wool
Insulated Jacket	\$30	X	A warm, synthetic-filled jacket that fits over your base layers. (Examples: Mountain Hardwear Compressor, Patagonia Nano Puff Hoody).
Rain Jacket	X	\$100-120	A sturdy, roomy waterproof jacket with a hood. Must be large enough to fit over all your insulating layers. Breathable fabric such as Gore-Tex and H2NO® are preferable and can work as both a wind and rain layer.
Collared Shirt	X	\$25	For airline/bus travel to the mountains, travel within villages, and after the course. We recommend light colors, since it will be hot.

### Optional Items

Wind Shirt	\$25	X	A lightweight, breathable, nylon wind shell either pullover or parka style. Must be large enough to fit over all of your insulating layers.
Fleece Vest	X	X	A fleece vest of Polartec® 200 or a synthetic-filled vest.

### Lower Body Clothing

You need two to three lower-body insulating layers that fit comfortably over each other and underneath your wind or rain pants. You should have two lightweight insulating layers.

Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
-----------	------	-----	-------

### Required Items

Underwear/ Sports Bras (2 pairs)	X	\$22-30	Quick Dry and synthetic are preferred.
Base Layer (Mid-weight Synthetic)	X	\$29-50	Light or mid-weight bottoms of high performance polyester, Capilene®, Smartwool or Polartec Power Dry.
Mid-Layer (Expedition	\$25	X	Expedition weight bottoms of Polartec 200 (or greater) or stretch Capilene®.

Weight Fleece Pants)			
Hiking Pants	X	\$32-90	Synthetic trail pants can also double as wind pants. This can be a valuable layer when traveling in or around villages. We recommend pants that can be converted into shorts.
Wind Pants	\$15	X	Breathable nylon wind pants that are roomy enough to fit over all lower body garments. Zippered legs will help you slip your pants on over hiking boots. We recommend that you rent wind pants from us. NOLS has a custom design that includes zippered legs and reinforced patches at points of wear that hold up well to the rigors of a NOLS course.
Rain Pants	X	\$90-100	Coated nylon pants to fit over all your layers. Breathable fabric such as Gore-Tex® and H2NO® are preferable and can work as both a wind and rain layer.
Cotton Pants/Skirt	X	\$50	For airline/bus travel before and after your course. Light colors are cooler.
<b>Optional Items</b>			
Knee-Length Hiking Shorts	X	\$20-80	Loose fitting nylon athletic or river shorts with at least a 7-9 inch inseam (Knee length or longer). No cotton.
<b>Head, Neck, and Hand Layers</b>			
<b>Equipment</b>	<b>Rent</b>	<b>Buy</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Required Items</b>			
Liner Gloves	X	\$22	Lightweight polypropylene gloves may be layered with heavier gloves for warmth or worn alone for sun protection.
Baseball Cap or Sun Hat	X	\$10-20	Necessary for sun protection for your face and ears.
Wool or Fleece Hat	X	\$10-18	A warm hat made of wool or fleece.
<b>Optional Items</b>			
Gloves or Mitten Shells with Liners	\$8	X	Nylon shells to cover your mittens and/or gloves. Gore-Tex is acceptable. Modular glove and mitten systems will work well. We rent Outdoor Research Glacier Mittens with liners.

Footwear			
Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
<b>Required Items</b>			
Mid-Weight Hiking Boots	X	X	<b>See below for additional boot recommendations.</b>
Hiking Socks (3 pairs)	X	\$15-18	Must be 75 to 100% wool, merino wool, heavy ragg type or thick polypropylene. No wool/cotton blends.
Gaiters	X	\$50-70	We sell Outdoor Research and Mountain Hardwear at our store. Make sure they fit comfortably over your hiking boots.
Camp Shoes	X	X	We recommend bringing a close toed rubber shoe (Ex: Crocs with no holes) Avoid expensive shoes. Tennis or trail shoes are not ideal in wet conditions. Open-toed river or mountain sandals are not acceptable.
<b>Optional Items</b>			
Insoles	X	X	An aftermarket insole (available for purchase separate from footwear) can provide arch support, stabilize your foot and heel, add cushion, help with volume adjustment and assure your comfort in hiking boots. Spenco Polysorb®, Superfeet, and Montrail Stabilizing Insoles are good choices.
Liner Socks (1 pairs)	X	\$20	Lightweight wool, synthetic or Capilene® “wick dry” socks.
Packs and Bags			
Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
<b>Required Items</b>			
Internal Frame Backpack	\$50	X	Internal frame packs must have a volume of 6,000–7,000 cubic inches (98–115 liters). We rent Lowe Alpine, Deuter, Osprey, and Dana Design internal frame packs. If you decide to purchase your own, we recommend the Deuter 90+10, Dana Design Astraplane, Mystery Ranch G Series, Gregory Denali, Osprey 85+ or a pack of similar quality and capacity.

Day Pack	X	X	A day bag (2,400-3,000 cubic inches) for airline carry on and bus travel. Small backpacks (25-35 liters) or messenger bags work well. Small roller bags are not acceptable.
Small Stuff Sacks(2-3)	\$1	X	Used to organize items in your pack. Lightweight driesacks are convenient (example: eVent Sil DrySack). Non-waterproof are fine too and they weigh less (example: Outdoor Research Ultralight Stuff Sack).
Waterproof Bag Liners (2-3)	X	\$1	3mil/33 gallon durable, sturdy, plastic trash compactor bags for waterproofing. These can be found in most grocery stores.

Our advice? An expedition backpack is a major purchase. If you don't already own one, we think you should use ours, gain some experience, then make an informed decision based on your needs after the course.

### Sleeping Gear

Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
<b>Required Items</b>			
Sleeping Bag	\$30	X	We recommend synthetic-insulated bags, approximately rated to 0°F. Due to the wet conditions sometimes encountered in the Himalayas, down or feather-filled bags are not recommended.
Compression Sleeping Bag Stuff Sack	\$5	X	A compression stuff sack makes your sleeping smaller and easier to pack (example: OR Ultralight Compression Sack).
Sleeping Pad/ Inflatable air mattress	\$5	\$90-120	We rent closed-cell foam pads; however, we recommend ¾ - full length self-inflating sleeping pads. We do not rent self-inflating pads. (Example: Therm-a-rest Pro-Lite Small or Regular).
Sit Pad	\$1	X	A small foam pad to use for sitting during classes.

Our advice? A sleeping bag is another major purchase. If you don't already own one, we think you should use ours, gain some experience, then make an informed decision based on your needs after the course.

### Miscellaneous Items

Equipment	Rent	Buy	Notes
-----------	------	-----	-------

Required Items			
Insulated Mug	X	\$5.50-8	12–20 oz. insulated mugs with lids are preferred. Many staff use a 16 oz. Nalgene for their mug.
Bowl	X	\$3-5	A 1-2 pint bowl with a snap-on or threaded lid. Re-sealable Tupperware® type or Nalgene containers work great.
Spoon	X	\$1	Lexan spoons are light and durable.
Hydration System (2)	X	\$10-40	Wide-mouth quart- or liter-size totalling 64 oz. at least. A lightweight bladder system also works well. We sell Nalgene bottles and MSR Hydromedary® bladders. Two water bottles are okay.
Lip Balm (1)	X	\$1	We recommend SPF 30 or greater.
Sunscreen and Sunblock (Zinc)	X	\$8.5-10	Two tubes or bottles of 2-3 oz. should be plenty. A sun protection factor of 30 or greater is necessary. A physical sun block such as zinc oxide is strongly recommended for people who burn easily
Cotton Bandana (2)	X	\$3.5-5	Useful for a variety of purposes.
Sunglasses	X	\$40-95	Durable with 100% UV protection. If you wear prescription lenses, bring your own prescription sunglasses or look for a quality pair of clip-on shades. You should have a sturdy case. Julbo, Smith, Coyote Vision, Oakley, Bolle and Bausch and Lomb are good brands.
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.
Sunglass Retainers	X	\$5	Chums® or Croakies® for your glasses or sunglasses.
Headlamp	X	\$25-60	LED headlamp preferable. Bring spare batteries. Petzl and Black Diamond are reliable brands.
Batteries (2 sets)	X	\$1	We have AA and AAA for sale.

Lighters (1)	X	X	Used to light camp stoves. Keep in mind that airlines don't allow this item in carry-on luggage. Recommended brand: Bic
Personal Toiletries	X	X	Toothbrush, toothpaste, comb/brush, moisturizer, prescription meds, tampons. Sample sizes of 2 oz are preferable. No deodorant or excessive items. We have toothbrushes and toothpaste for sale.
Instant Hand Sanitizer (2)	X	\$3	2 oz. bottle preferable. Alcohol-based. We recommend you purchase this prior to travel to India; it's great for keeping your hands clean during travel before your course begins.
Watch	X	X	Water-resistant. An alarm and a light feature are helpful.
Notepad with Pen and/or Pencil	X	\$2-5	A small, lightweight pad is fine. Steno notebooks work well. 2 Pens/pencils should be enough.
<b>Optional Items</b>			
Coffee	X	\$10	Bring if you enjoy specialty coffee for yourself in the morning. Coffee is not included in the NOLS ration and can be hard to find locally.
Vitamins	X	X	A multi-vitamin to supplement the diet.
Insect Repellent	X	\$5-9	A small bottle or tube. No aerosol spray cans.
Adjustable Trekking Poles	X	\$75-85	Hiking poles are recommended for those seeking extra support for their knees and/or back. Sturdy 2-3 section telescoping poles ease packing. Most students prefer using hiking poles due to the steep Himalayan terrain.
Camera and Film	X	X	Compact camera with protective case. No heavy lenses/elaborate set-ups. Consider extra batteries.
Lonely Planet Hindi Guide	X	\$20	This is a good beginner phrase book for the course. Please acquire other books, DVDs or tapes in Hindi in preparation for your time in India.



### 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 that gets lost or damaged. Keep in mind that NOLS evaluates gear from a number of perspectives beyond what an individual user might consider. Performance, durability, and simplicity are all factors we consider when we select our gear.

Tents  
Compass  
Maps  
Stoves, Fuel, Fuel Bottles  
Trowels  
Reference Books  
Binoculars  
Cooking Gear/Spice Kits  
Repair kits  
Water Purification

#### **First Aid:**

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

## **Boot Selection Guide**

NOLS has been outfitting people with boots for many years and our priorities have remained the same: 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. Medium-weight backpacking boots work best. These boots are designed for extended backpacking and provide good support for off-trail hiking with heavy packs or extended trips.

#### **Here are some features to look for:**

- A sole that provides good traction, like Vibram or other lugged sole.
- Some form of nylon shank to provide foot support and protection.
- Durable uppers that will withstand hiking among sharp boulders and dense vegetation.
- A Gore-Tex liner is fine, but unnecessary. Your foot will get wet when the river comes in over the top of your boot.
- A Gore-Tex liner will slow drying time once the boot is wet.
- A comfortable fit with your preferred hiking socks. Boots that are too small are a common cause of blisters.

The following list is not exhaustive and is to be used for suggestions only. The boots listed here should help define what type is acceptable for your course. It is fine to substitute a similar boot for one listed here, provided the model you bring is a good quality leather model designed for extended backpacking expeditions with heavy packs.

**Examples of Acceptable Boots:\***

- Asolo: TPS Series, Power Lite Series, Matrix Series, Radiant Series, Energy Series, FSN Series
- Garmont: Dakota, Expedition, Montana, Synchro GTX
- La Sportiva: Thunder II GTX, Garnet GTX, Omega GTX
- Lowa: Tahoe GTX, Tibet GTX, Banff, Terek GTX
- Montrail: Blue Ridge, Torre, Traverse
- Scarpa: Himavan GTX, Mangali GTX, Bhutan GTX, Kailash GTX, Terra GTX
- Vasque: Wasatch GTX, Summit GTX, Sundowner GTX, Clarion GTX, Taku GTX, Talus UltraDry
- Oboz: Wind River, Sawtooth Mid

\*Please note that boot manufacturers often rename their product lines. Visit their websites or contact us if you have questions. If you have any questions about fitting your boots, call the NOLS Admission Office at 800-710-6657, or WhatsApp NOLS India outfitting staff at (+91) 94101 59900; (+91) 90351 39704; (+91) 5966 297657, or look us up at [www.nols.edu](http://www.nols.edu).