

Women's Baja Coastal Sailing - Adult Course Description

This course is your opportunity to strengthen your confidence and leadership skills with a group of motivated women. You'll learn the technical sailing and wilderness expedition skills you need to navigate an open sailboat on the blue waters of the Sea of Cortez. As you travel, you'll camp along the remote, rugged, wilderness coastline of the earth's second-longest peninsula.

Designed with the adult professional in mind, this course is your opportunity to learn with other motivated and like-minded individuals as you explore Baja's diverse natural history, tumbled mountain landscape, remote coastline, and rich marine life. If you're looking to build your foundation as a sailor, learning from and with other women, this is the course for you.

Features

- Duration: 8 days
- Average group size: 15 students / 4 instructors
- Minimum age: 23
- Designed for those who self-identify as women
- Watercraft used: Drascombe Longboats, 22-foot open, yawl-rigged coastal sailboat with outboard auxiliary motor and four oars
- Emphasis on technical sailing, coastal wilderness expedition skills and NOLS Leadership curriculum.
- Skills: passage planning, boat handling under sail, motor and oars, anchorage assessment, beach landing/launching procedures, hazard evaluation, practical navigation, weather, tides, cooking, stove use, shelter set-up, communication, feedback, decision-making, risk assessment.
- Opportunities for day hikes to explore the coastal desert, learn about Baja's unique natural history, or snorkel in the Sea of Cortez.

Overview

The Baja California Peninsula and the Sea of Cortez are beautiful, dramatic environments. The land is rugged, dry, and mountainous, while the sea teems with marine life along a remote and wild shoreline.

The 22-foot NOLS longboats you will learn to sail are versatile, open (without a cabin) boats, and the skills you will develop can be applied to a wide variety of watercraft. You will learn to navigate sea hazards and explore the tiny coves and beaches inaccessible to larger yachts. As you sail, you'll have plenty of practice in each crew position to strengthen the leadership, sailing, and coastal expedition skills necessary for multi-day sailing expeditions. Your group will travel by sailboat during the day, gaining hands-on practice with sail basics, including terminology, wind awareness, points of sail, sailboat maneuvers, sail handling, sail trim, rowing, anchoring and wind, wave and weather theory.

At camp you will practice Leave No Trace camping techniques, cooking, sanitation, shelter set up and stove use. Other days, you may take day hikes to learn about the coastal environment or explore tide pools. Fishing and snorkeling are also great ways to enjoy down time at camp. At the end of your day, there will be time for community building and reflection on learnings from the day.

By the end of this course you will have a strong foundation of expedition and sailing skills and an opportunity to connect with the remote wilderness of Baja California Sur.

Weather and Other Challenges

Remoteness

The Sea of Cortez and the Baja California Peninsula are environments of harsh beauty. The areas you visit are remote, and you will often be several days from medical facilities. At sea, strong winds may blow up suddenly, making conditions hazardous for travel.

Wildlife

Some desert wildlife, such as snakes and scorpions, are venomous. The undersea world is surprisingly lush compared to the land, but there, too, are hazards that you will learn to identify and manage, including jellyfish or spined shellfish. Your instructors will teach you about scorpions, rattlesnakes, stingrays and other potential hazards so that you can manage the risk they may present.

Weather

Rain is possible but infrequent, though strong winds from the north ("El Norte" winds) are quite common, especially in mid-winter. These winds can make sea conditions too hazardous for travel, often for a few days at a time. Watching the weather, judging wind

and wave conditions, and learning about the strength and ability of the group and the equipment are what responsible wilderness travel is all about.

Seasonal Conditions

Conditions vary by season and the temperatures can fluctuate by 30 degrees between day and night time. In December and January, it is often windy, and daytime temperatures are usually in the 70s (°F) but can get down to the low 40s at night, with water temperatures in the low 60s. Late March and April have daytime temperatures up to the high 90s and nighttime lows in the 70s. The water warms up to the 70s and the winds are usually more variable, lighter and less frequent. November and February have milder weather between these two extremes.

Fishing

While not a focus of the course, students may have opportunities to fish. There is no license required to fish from shore using a hand line or a rod and reel.

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.