



# IWLS

International Wilderness Leadership School



## 24 -Day Backpacking and White Water Skills Leadership and Guide Training Course

### Course Information

#### Course Location

AMG is based in Haines, Alaska, a small community located ninety miles north of Juneau, (the state capital) at the top of the Inside Passage. Haines borders Glacier Bay National Park. The Park and the adjacent 27 million acres, including Wrangell-St Elias National Park, comprise the largest protected wilderness area on the planet. It is an extremely jagged, glaciated, mountain landscape that includes the world's largest non-polar ice caps, pristine fjords, and wilderness rivers. The elevation of the peaks in this region ranges up to 20,000 feet. This terrain is amongst the best in North America for learning climbing skills, and the sea kayaking, rafting, trekking, and skiing here are world class.

Our expedition center in Haines is an outstanding gateway for accessing the unrivaled wilderness areas of the Yukon. A few hours drive leads us to mighty rivers, broad alpine lakes and valleys, and rugged peaks that make up the wilderness of the interior.

#### Course Goals

- Students will gain technical competence and skills regarding backcountry canoeing and backpacking.
  - Students will be able to demonstrate the ability to professionally deal with emergency scenarios while in the field and the considerations therein.
  - Students will be able to use and teach state-of-the art minimum-impact camping and travel techniques to move a group through a glaciated terrain with minimum impact.
  - They will be able to exercise good quality judgment and decision-making skills within a leadership position to help avoid potential accident and survival situations and develop a comprehensive understanding of safety considerations in the wilderness environment.
- They will be able to recognize their own leadership abilities and limitations within the context of a group. Students will be able to demonstrate the ability to make decisions and lead small groups in the wilderness environment.

#### Course Itinerary

Plan to meet at our warehouse in Haines the evening before the course. We will do introductions, check equipment, and get a feel for peoples expectations and goals for the course. Below is a flexible trip itinerary that shows the general progression of the trip. Our exact schedule will depend highly on the weather, strength of the group, and time of year.





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**Days 1 –3:** We'll make our way from Haines to the Blanchard and upper Canyon of the Tatshenshini. We'll set up a base camp and begin the course with Swift Water Rescue training and certification. This is a Rescue III international training course and will prepare everyone for rafting skills later in the course.

**Day 4 – 5:** We'll finish of the technical training and prepare for the backpacking portion of the course. Students will learn about expedition planning, food/nutrition planning and equipment packing. We'll set out to the start of the backpack in Day 5.

**Day 6 - 14:** The backpack starts at the Watson River. We'll hike along the Stikine Highlands. Abundant wildlife are a highlight of this portion. We'll have the possibility of seeing eagles, bear, moose, sheep, and goats as we make our way to Primrose Lake. Routefinding across this wild country will test our navigation skills. We will practice Leave no Trace ethics and Bear Safety.

**Day 15:** Upon arriving to Primrose Lake, we'll shift gears to the rafting portion of the course.  
Mid-course evaluations

Lead instructors will assess participants' level of involvement and assessment rubrics associated with the WEA 18 point curriculum. These, in conjunction with peer evaluations, allow participants to receive positive feedback and develop an awareness in regards to fulfilling the requirements to receive certification as an outdoor leader.

**Days 16 - 18:** Primrose Lake to Rose Lake

This portion of the river has continuous class 3-4 rapids. It is the ideal location to work on raft guiding skills. Rose mountain dominates the views above the truly wild and pristine Rose lake. Student will have the opportunity to practice their raft guiding skills.

**Days 19 – 23:** Primrose Canyon to Kusawa Lake

The descent of the Primrose Canyon is a culmination of the course. Involving exciting class 4 rapids, a portage around the falls, and application of rope work techniques, students will have to opportunity to practice scouting rapids, rigging systems, and leading the group in this spectacular environment.

**Day 24:** Return to Haines.

In the morning we'll have time for final peer and instructor evaluations. Students will be evaluated on their understanding and completion of the AMG and WEA curriculums. We will drive from Kusawa Lake back to Haines.





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## Course Curriculum

The International Wilderness Leadership Schools' educational model nurtures leadership development and creates an awareness of the guiding mentality that is essential for leading safe, fun adventures on the water. The combination of technical skills training, experiential education and practical leadership experience make the IWLS curriculum world class.

We believe that experiences drive our learning and therefore we use formal and informal classes taught by both instructors and students. Instructors are eager to help facilitate the learning process but ultimately, how much you learn will be dependent on the amount of effort you put into the course.

A detailed curriculum will be provided at the beginning of the course. Below is a partial list of curriculum points that will be covered throughout your course.

**IWLS General Curriculum** outlines essential components for effective outdoor leadership. Below are a few points that will be covered in this course.

**Decision Making and Problem Solving:** Over the course of 12 or 24 days, we'll discover ways to assess problems, explore solutions and evaluate options in order to make effective and safe decisions in the field.

**Leadership:** Opportunities to lead the group will be abundant, and you'll have the time to learn and practice multiple styles of leadership in varied situations.

**Expedition Behavior and Group Dynamics:** Because this course is a true wilderness expedition, interactions between group members need to be supportive and contribute to the efficacy of the group. The daily dynamics of the group, combined with instruction, will teach participants not only how to be a member of a team, but how to influence and lead an expedition.

**Environmental Ethics:** As adventurers in some of the most pristine environments on the planet, it is our duty to respect the natural world. All of our courses practice and teach Leave No Trace® principles.

**Basic Camping Skills:** Mastering these essential skills will prove valuable whether you are pitching a tent in gale force winds or melting snow for drinking water.

**Equipment/Clothing Selection and Use:** You'll learn to choose the right gear for the correct application, whether enjoying a sunny afternoon on a snow slope or trekking through a tropical rainforest.

**Weather:** Will the storm arrive in the next 12 hours or the next 48? Understanding weather patterns and trends will help you plan successful trips in a wilderness setting.

**Health and Sanitation:** You'll learn water treatment techniques and waste management skills for healthy backcountry living.

**Travel Techniques:** Course instruction will help you discover ways to safely maximize your efficiency, whether hiking down a well-beaten path or traversing an exposed ridge.

**Navigation:** Learn how to take a bearing, read a topographical map, triangulate your position, or navigate in a whiteout.

**Safety and Risk Management:** Safety is always the #1 consideration. As the course progresses, you'll develop an awareness to appropriately assess risk and make safe decisions.





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**Wilderness Emergency Procedures and Treatment:** Learn how to effectively manage safe, efficient and timely backcountry rescues.

**Natural and Cultural History:** Having a strong understanding of cultural history, flora, and fauna is an integral part of leading people in an outdoor environment. You'll learn some of the botany, ecology, and geology that apply to these remarkable areas.

**Communication Skills:** Speaking in public, managing a personal conflict, or leading a group in the wilderness, all of these situations require effective communication. You'll gain confidence in your communication abilities as you develop your personal leadership style over the length of this course.

**Trip Planning:** **The first day of the 24-day course is devoted to planning, packing, and organizing the logistics, food, and equipment for the expedition.**

**Teaching:** You'll have the opportunity to develop lesson plans, teach in front of the group, and learn the importance of progressions for teaching technical skills and leadership

**IWLS Backpacking Curriculum** prepares students for exploration into remote, backcountry settings.

**Pre-trip Activities:** Learn how to plan and prepare for an extended wilderness expedition. We'll cover everything from technical camping equipment to group and personal expectations.

**Backpacks:** Proper packing and fitting of backpacks improves efficiency and helps avoid injury.

**Bear Safety:** How high should you hang your food? Is it a curious bear or a defensive bear? Learn to keep bears and humans safe by being bear aware.

**Tents:** Staying dry in the wilderness is an essential survival skill. You'll learn how to repair a damaged tent, how to set up camp in high winds, and techniques to secure your dry space for the night.

**Stoves and Campfires:** The ability to repair a broken stove, make an emergency fire after being submerged in an icy river, and melt snow efficiently for water are key components for leading a group in the wilderness.

**Cooking:** Sometimes in the backcountry, the meal makes the day. Whether cooking oatmeal or Thanksgiving dinner, you'll develop your skills at making tasty treats.

**Lightning Hazards:** Learn how to read weather patterns and avoid exposure, and how to manage a group in an emergency situation.

**River and Stream Crossings:** In river crossings, attention to detail and safety are #1. You'll learn and practice safe techniques for wading across a small stream or doing a Tyrolean traverse across a raging river.

**Travel on Scree and Talus:** The term 'talus' originated from a Greek name for a giant who throws rocks. Learn how to safely travel on this potentially dangerous terrain.

**Geology:** From plate tectonics to granitic batholiths, you'll learn the history of the land you are exploring and how these forces create and influence the environment around you.

**Objective Hazards:** River crossings, bear encounters and "widow makers" are examples of objective hazards. We'll learn how to effectively deal with or avoid these hazards.

**Subjective Hazards:** Among other things, dehydration, fatigue and personal pride can be detrimental to group safety. Learn how to implement measures to mitigate these potential hazards.





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**Timing:** This is a key component of group management. You'll develop this awareness and how it affects all aspects of a day on an expedition.

**IWLS Whitewater Curriculum** is designed for aspiring professional raft guides. Below is just part of this comprehensive program.

**Rafting Equipment:** From identifying a boat's carrying capacity and rigging a raft with appropriate lines to packing a throw bag and repairing a punctured thwart, you'll learn the ins and outs of whitewater rafting equipment.

**River Rescue:** What do you do when you find yourself swimming in a Class IV rock garden? How do you extract a pinned raft from strong current? You'll learn and practice the techniques to carry out a safe and efficient rescue on the river.

**Hydrology:** Rivers are a powerful force of nature. An understanding of river hydrology helps us to identify and assess features on the river for safe navigation. You'll learn the fundamentals of pourovers, eddies, holes, standing waves and more.

**Maneuvering a Raft:** Whether in a paddle raft or an oar rig, the ability to steer a raft and avoid obstacles is vital for having a safe and fun rafting experience. You'll have the opportunity to practice both types of rafting and develop a strong skill set for maneuvering down a Class III/IV river.

**Oar and Paddle Strokes:** Maneuvering the raft requires effective strokes. You'll learn and teach these skills as you practice your safety talks and captain a boat down the river.

**Paddle Captaining and Commands:** The captain of the paddle raft communicates to paddlers how to maneuver the raft. Learning how to paddle captain requires managing a group of paddlers to provide a safe, fun, and rewarding experience on the river.

**River Signals:** Generally, the roaring noise of a rapid makes it difficult to be heard. Learn and practice the signs and signals for effective visual communication.

**Group Management:** Learn how to distribute resources for effective risk management, designate a lead boat for scouting and keeping the group together, and establish a sweep boat with critical rescue equipment

## The Wilderness Education Association

The WEA has been training and certifying outdoor leaders around the world for nearly 25 years, and teaching students to safely and effectively lead groups in the outdoors without harming the environment.

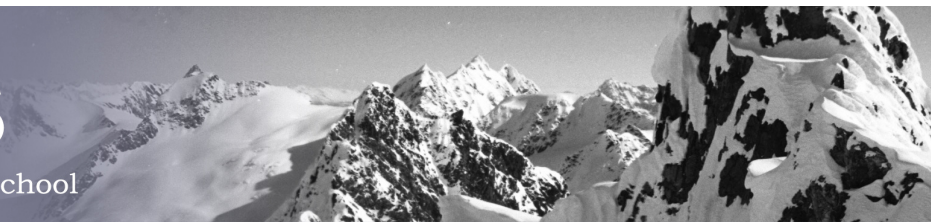
Legendary mountaineer Paul K. Petzoldt, Chuck Gregory, Robert Christie, and Dr. Frank Lupton, founded the WEA in 1977. The organization's mission includes "...promoting the professionalism of outdoor leadership and to thereby improve the safety of outdoor trips and to enhance the conservation of the wild outdoors..."





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## Journal Writing

Keeping a wilderness journal can help students to record, reflect, and gain from experiences throughout the expedition. The following are examples of topics that may be assigned throughout the course: First-Aid SOAP notes, incident management forms, leadership analyses, trip reports, lesson plans and decision making analyses.

## Evaluation and Grading

Students who take this course for credit will receive a letter grade. Grading is a measurement of one's knowledge of material, participation, written and oral communication, and one's judgment and awareness. Students will be evaluated on their skills, level of participation, their knowledge and awareness of their own abilities as outdoor leaders, their level of judgment as applied to decisions, and written projects assigned during the trip. Students that don't take the course for credit will receive an evaluation in place of a grade.

Additionally, the grading will be a reflection of student's peer and instructor evaluations as per the WEA and IWLS assessment rubrics.

## Certifications

Upon completion of the 24-Day Backpacking and White Water Skills Leadership and Guide Training Course, student will be eligible for the following certifications.

- WEA certificate of completion
- WEA certified outdoor leader
- Certified Leave No Trace™ Trainer
- IWLS certificate of completion
- Swift Water Rescue Certification
- Raft guide Certification

