



IWLS

International Wilderness Leadership School



24 -Day Mexico Baja California Sea Kayaking Leadership & Guide Training Course Information



Course Location

The colonial town of La Paz is a thriving town that also offers insight into the cultural history of Mexico. The town of La Paz was founded in 1535 by Hernando Cortes; its 19th century cathedral and lively marketplace make this capital city an enticing place to experience Mexico.

The islands and coastline of the southern Baja peninsula between La Paz and Loreto are renowned for their beauty and remoteness. Many of the islands in this area are completely uninhabited, creating a pristine wilderness of untouched beaches. We'll explore islands such as Isla Espiritu Santo and Isla San Jose as we make our way along the rugged coast. Much of the course takes place in the Islas De Golfo De California Special Biosphere Reserve.

The ecoregion of the southern Baja peninsula is covered by cacti, xeric shrubs and a variety of other succulent plants. There are close to 500 species of vascular plants, many of which are endemic to the area. Frigate birds, pelicans and ospreys can be seen circling the skies overhead. Coyotes, lynx, mule deer, jackrabbits and badgers are among some of the wildlife species that are found on the Baja peninsula. Colorful tropical fish and abundant marine mammals live in the Sea of Cortez, part of a thriving marine ecosystem.

This rich marine area is surrounded by the Sierra de la Giganta, rising up to over 5,000 feet (1,524 meters). These mountains provide great opportunities for day hikes and exploration of the desert topography. From the summits of this range, participants get spectacular views of the surrounding islands and a new appreciation of the unique environment.



Course Goals

- Students will gain a strong technical sea kayaking skill set and appropriate traveling techniques.
- Students will be able to demonstrate the ability to professionally deal with emergency scenarios while in the field.





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- Students will be able to use and teach state-of-the art minimum-impact camping and travel techniques to move a group through 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 while sea kayaking in a coastal 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 while sea kayaking.

Course Itinerary

Our exact schedule will depend highly on the weather, strength of the group, and time of year.

Day 0: Students arrive in La Paz, Baja California Sur, Mexico.

Day 1-2: We explore the beautiful town of La Paz while we make all the necessary preparations for food, equipment, and logistics.

Day 3: We head out onto the water of the Sea of Cortez.

Days 4 – 13: We will explore the rugged coast and tropical waters by snorkel and by kayak while developing kayak and leadership skills. We may camp at only one or two islands during this time, exploring during the day, returning to camp at night. Depending on weather and group ability we may camp at one of the many islands including; Isla Espiritu Santo and Isla San Jose.

Day 14: Mid-Course Evaluation and re-supply. Lead instructors will assess participants' level of involvement and assessment rubrics associated with the IWLS and WEA curriculums. These, in conjunction with peer evaluations, allow participants to receive positive feedback and develop awareness in regards to fulfilling the requirements to receive certification as an outdoor leader.

Day 15 – 22: We'll continue to explore the rugged coast and islands of the southern Baja peninsula. Participants will have the opportunity to be in leadership roles.

Day 23: Take out at La Paz. In the last few days of the course we will have final peer and instructor evaluations. Students will be evaluated on their understanding and completion of the IWLS and WEA curriculums.

Day 24: Flights home





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A Typical Day

A typical day starts around 6am with breakfast and hot drinks. If a big crossing is planned, you may find yourself awake just before sunrise. While water is heating you will most likely be preparing for the days' adventures.

You will play an integral part of the expedition team by setting up camp, cooking meals, or carrying a portion of the group gear. You may be leader of the day, responsible for planning the day, accomplishing objectives, or facilitating a lesson plan.

The day's activities will vary depending on weather, location, and progression of the course. We may work on developing your technical skills set, learn about different leadership styles, or get an early start and paddle along the beautiful shoreline. Regardless of the day's activities, it will be full of learning and adventure.

Dinner could be anything from thanksgiving to pasta, to backcountry pizza. Students often walk away from our courses with a newfound love for cooking good and original food.

The day will finish with a debrief session where we'll discuss the days events, what you learned, and how you'll be able to use your newfound skills in the near future.



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.





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IWLS General Curriculum

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.

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.

Sea Kayaking Curriculum

Paddling Equipment: Safely traveling the remote waters of the Sea of Cortez requires that you have a thorough knowledge of your equipment and its use. We'll talk about kayak design, appropriate clothing, rescue gear, guide gear, and more!

Strokes: Forward, reverse, sweep, beam draw, and sculling draw: we'll cover them all, and you'll get ample opportunities to practice and refine your strokes.

Maneuvers: When coming in for a rescue, speed and efficiency are of utmost importance. We'll learn and practice maneuvers such as the low brace turn, bow rudder and hanging draw.

Braces: Paddling in rough conditions requires solid bracing skills. We'll learn and practice the low brace, high brace and sculling brace in a fun, controlled environment.

Rescues: What happens when you're paddling with clients and a boat capsizes? We'll learn everything from the paddle-float rescue to the assisted bow rescue to kayak rolling.

Towing: Whether you are pulling an injured kayaker away from booming surf or lending a helping hand to a seasick client, you'll learn the finer points of a towing system and the criteria for towing.

Navigation: Expeditions in the meandering waters of the Sea of Cortez require solid navigational skills, including how to use deck compasses, read charts and position off land features.

Group Management: Managing a pod of kayaks on a windy day is challenging. You'll learn techniques for managing safety with a group on the water.

Tides and Currents: We'll learn about tide charts, the "Rule of 12's", and how to identify and avoid strong currents.

Communication: VHF marine radios, satellite phones, EPIRBs, and signaling devices are among some of the communication devices that we'll review during the course. You'll learn the protocols for effective communication in a wilderness setting.

IWLS International Curriculum is designed to provide students with a fundamental understanding of planning and leading expeditions in foreign countries. Here are just a few topics that will be covered:

Cultural History: As visitors to this remarkable place, we place a premium on being respectful and learning about the local culture and history. The rich Mexican history of Baja provides great insight into the culture of the region today.



Language Skills: The ability to ask directions, purchase items, and communicate on any level is an essential element of leading an expedition to a foreign country. Throughout the course, we'll develop our Spanish language skills through dialog and lesson plans.

Trip Preparation: Logistics in a foreign country have the potential to be complex and tenuous. You'll take part in shopping at the local market, arranging transportation, and securing permits in preparation for your expedition to Baja California.

The American Canoe Association (ACA)

These trips utilize kayak instruction by certified American Canoe Association Instructors.

The American Canoe Association (ACA) has been the governing body of paddle sports instruction and active voice for paddlers in North America for over 100 years. Instructor Certification ensures quality, consistent instruction on the most current paddling techniques, rescues, and safety procedures.

The International Wilderness Leadership School is one of few programs in the state offering certified sea kayaking instruction. Quality instruction is an investment made for your own safety as well as enjoyment. Our instructors are not only certified by the ACA, they also bring a wealth of wilderness guiding, formal teaching, and risk management experience to our program.

The following ACA programs will be incorporated into the 12-day course*

- Essentials of Kayak Touring
- Coastal Kayaking Basic Strokes and Rescues
- Coastal Kayaking Open Water Skills

**Completion of ACA programs is highly dependent upon weather and time of the year.*

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..."

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





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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 sea kayaking leadership and guide-training course, students may be eligible for the following certifications:

- ACA certificates of completion
- ACA assessment levels 1-5
- IWLS certificate of completion

