



24-day Mexico Volcanoes and Rock Climbing Leadership and Guide Training Course

Course Location

The course starts in Mexico City, one of the largest cities in the world, and an epicenter of Mexican history and culture. We'll also explore the rural side of Mexico. Peaceful towns such as Hidalgo, Amecameca and Tlachichuca are representative of the rich Mexican heritage.

Ixtaccihuatl – Popocateptl National Park and its peaks tower over nearby Mexico City and are home to a wide variety of flora and fauna. The volcanoes; Popocatepetl (17,890 ft), called “smoking mountain” and Iztaccihuatl (17,160ft), called “sleeping woman” are important historical, cultural, and geographic landmarks. The airy summit ridge of Ixtaccihuatl is an exciting complement to the high snowy slopes of Orizaba. Situated on the border of Puebla and Orizaba, Pico de Orizaba (a.k.a. Citlalteptl) is the 3rd highest mountain in North America. The volcanoes are a perfect introduction to climbing at altitude.

The state of Nuevo Leon hosts the towering crag of El Potrero Chico. This limestone massif has cliffs of over 2,000 vertical feet. It is a playground of long bolted routes, adventure climbs, and top-rope crags. The warm climate, good rock quality, and variety of routes, make this a great location for the rock climbing portion of the course.

Course Goals

- Students will gain a strong technical mountaineering and rock climbing skill set and appropriate traveling techniques.
- Students will be able to demonstrate the ability to professionally deal with emergency scenarios while in the field.
- Students will be able to use and teach state-of-the art minimum-impact camping and travel techniques to move a group through various types of terrain without harming the environment.
- They will learn 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 mountain environment.
- They will be able to recognize their own leadership abilities and limitations within the context of a group. Students will learn to make decisions pertinent to leading small groups in the mountain environment.





Course Itinerary

This 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.

Day 0: Arrive in Mexico City, we will stay in a hotel in historical district of Mexico City.

Day 1: After meeting up in Mexico City, we'll dive into food and equipment preparation for the 1st segment of the course. We also use this first day to begin our acclimatization process (Mexico City is at about 7,000ft). Pre-trip meeting. We talk about expectations for the course from the students and from the instructors. We'll go over the planning and logistical considerations associated with the course.

Day 2: Acclimatization Hike, sleep in the town of Amecameca. Spanish skills.

Day 3: Establish 1st camp on Ixtaccihuatl (17,200ft)

Days 4 - 7: Attempt Ixtaccihuatl via the Ayoloco glacier. Introduce mountaineering skills.

Day 8: Transport to Tlachichuca. Spanish skills. Tlachichuca is a small town at the base of Pico de Orizaba.

Days 9 – 12: Attempt Pico de Orizaba (18,600ft). We will establish a high camp, and continue to develop mountaineering skills.

Day 13: Mid-course evaluation and Transport to town of Hidalgo, Nuevo Leon.

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 awareness in regards to fulfilling the requirements to receive certification as an outdoor leader through the WEA and IWLS certifications.

Day 14 – 23: Rock climbing at Potrero Chico.

Throughout these 10 days we will follow an intensive and thorough rock climbing program. Beginning with the basics, we will progress from top-roping, belaying, and anchor building to multi-pitch climbing, mock leading, high-angle rescue, and guiding considerations. We will stay at a nearby campground.

Day 24: Return to Mexico City.

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.

A Typical Day



A typical day starts around 7am with breakfast and hot drinks. If a summit attempt 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 alpine start and climb a large peak in the area. 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 in the mountains. The combination of technical skills training, practical leadership experience and a true wilderness expedition 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.





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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.

IWLS Mountaineering Curriculum

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

Camping Skills: Basic expedition skills such as tent set up, site selection, and leaving camp are essential to a successful trip into the mountains. We'll learn these skills through practical experience.

General Mountaineering Skills: The mountain environment is an exciting and potentially dangerous place. You'll discover how to travel on the steep mountain slopes using equipment such as an ice axe and crampons as well as how to teach these skills to your fellow students.

Anchors: Anchor building is a fun yet complex subject. We'll examine single, double, triple and complex anchors, and their different applications. Learn how to place anchors in snow, rock, and ice.

Ropes: 50 meters or 70 meters? 8.0mm or 10.5mm? Single, double or twin? These are all questions you'll be able to effectively answer. We'll also learn how to care for and maintain these important pieces of equipment.

Knots: Learn the appropriate applications for the figure 8, water knot, double fisherman, bowline, and other essential climbing knots.



Rope Teams: Rope team travel is a complicated endeavor that requires skill, technique and teamwork. We'll cover everything from prussic arrangement to team management.

Crevasse Rescue: Traveling in glaciated terrain requires that every member of the team be proficient in crevasse rescue. We'll learn how to get a teammate out of a crevasse quickly and efficiently.

Glaciology: Students will learn and experience first hand the intriguing complexities of these enormous rivers of ice and their effect on the land.

Objective Hazards: Rock fall, river crossings, and avalanches are examples of objective hazards. Learn how to identify such hazards and minimize group exposure.

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.

Technical Climbing: Rock climbing, ice climbing and steep snow climbing are all included in the IWLS curriculum.

Top Rope Setup: Top ropes allow people to push their limits and learn solid climbing technique in a fun and safe environment. We'll cover in-depth sight selection, rope management and group management.

Escaping the Belay: What happens when things go bad? We'll practice escaping the belay and getting to the aid of an injured climber.

Short Roping: Learn different applications of short roping technique and times and places to utilize it.

Altitude Considerations: The Mexico Volcanoes reach above 18,500ft. Learn how to recognize signs and symptoms of acute mountain sickness, and steps to take to avoid it. We'll also discuss the most effective treatment for all altitude illnesses; descent.

Timing: In the mountains, timing is everything: when to leave camp, when to turn around, and when to push for the summit. Time management is a critical component of safe travel and plays into many aspects of mountaineering.

IWLS Rock Climbing Curriculum is designed to create safe and strong technical climbers. Below is an example of what you'll learn:

Climbing Technique: Whether stemming an inside corner, jamming an off-width, or friction climbing on a blank slab, you'll learn the techniques to climb on a variety of different features.

Belaying: Should we use a fixed belay or a running belay? Our team will learn and practice the finer points of different belay techniques such as the fixed belay, running belay, hip belay or munter hitch.

Rappelling: Rappelling down a steep rock face is a thrilling moment and our team will learn how to do it safely. We'll also look at different methods for teaching rappelling and dealing with incapacitated climbers.

Top Rope Setup: Top ropes allow people to push their limits and learn solid climbing technique in a fun and safe environment. We'll cover sight selection, rope management and group management.

Ascending & Descending: Fixed lines are an important tool for large groups and guiding applications. We'll learn how to efficiently build, use and maintain them.

Route Selection: Where to set up the fixed belay? How to avoid objective hazards? How to select the most appropriate route from far below? You'll learn the answer to these questions and more as we climb a variety of established routes in addition to possible first ascents.





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Rock Protection: Pitons, nuts, cams, hexes... learn the nuances of quality placements. You'll have the opportunity to place protection in a variety of settings and rock quality.

Anchors: Anchor building is a fun, yet intricate subject. We'll examine single double, triple and complex anchors, and their different applications.

Objective Hazards: Loose rock and lightning storms are some of the objective hazards that exist for rock climbers. Learn to manage these hazards and climb safely when conditions don't cooperate.

High Angle Rescue: What happens when things go bad? We'll practice escaping the belay and getting to the aid of an injured climber.

Multi-pitch Climbing: Towards the end of the course, you'll put your technical skills to the test on multi-pitch climbs, refining skills such as belay site selection, rope management and routefinding.

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.

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.

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.





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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-Mexico Volcanoes and Rock Climbing leadership and guide training course, students may be eligible for the following certifications.

- WEA certificate of completion
- WEA certified outdoor leader
- IWLS certificate of completion

