



IWLS

International Wilderness Leadership School

ALASKA SEMESTER

Course Information



Course Overview

The Alaska semester combines 3 different courses. The standard format consists of sea kayaking, mountaineering or ski mountaineering and whitewater and backpacking skills. However, students can choose to combine any 3 courses in Alaska or the Yukon for a semester program. The 3 courses are cumulative. They build upon each other to create a comprehensive outdoor leadership and guide training semester. Students that successfully complete a semester with IWLS are highly regarded for an employment position.

Course Location

The International Wilderness Leadership School 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. Glacier Bay NP and the adjacent 27 million protected acres, including Wrangell-St Elias National Park, comprise the largest protected wilderness area on the planet. It is a jagged and glaciated landscape that includes the world's largest non-polar ice caps, pristine fjords, and wilderness river corridors.

Our Sea Kayaking Programs are based out of Haines and Gustavus, two coastal Alaskan communities offering access to some of the best wilderness paddling in the world. Gustavus-based programs operate in Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, a designated wilderness with many areas accessible only by kayak or other non-motorized craft. Renowned for its wildlife and geology, the area teems with whales, seals and other marine mammals and has tidewater glaciers that calve into the ocean. Haines offers access to the Lynn Canal, the longest, deepest fjord in North America. The area is a gem of the famed Inside Passage. Both course areas have protected paddling, as well as quick access to open water conditions for training opportunities.

The sea kayaking in this part of the world is truly unrivaled and provides an ideal location to develop leadership skills and sea kayaking expedition skills.

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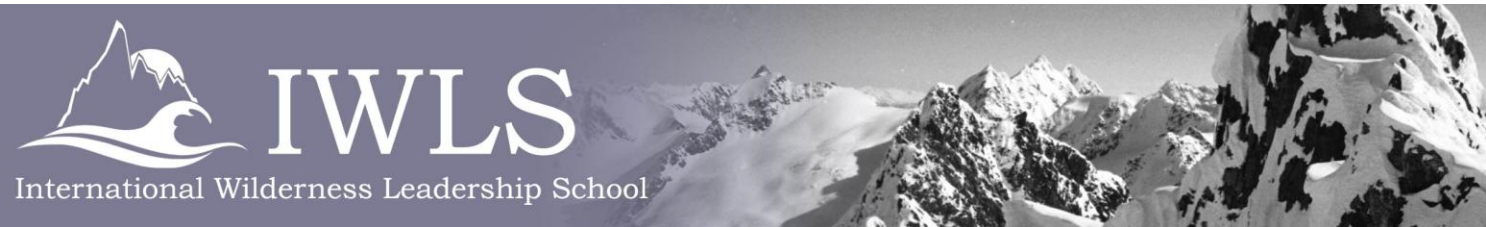
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Course Goals

- Students will gain a strong technical mountaineering, sea kayaking, white water rafting, and backpacking skill sets 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 a variety of terrains with minimum impact.
- Students 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 mountains and on the ocean.
- Students 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.
- Students will be able to recognize terrain, snowpack, and weather that contribute to the formation of avalanches and apply appropriate decision making skills regarding avalanche safety.
- Students will have a comprehensive understanding of risk management issues associated with guiding in a variety of environments.
- Students will have preferred status for employment position with IWLS upon successful completion of a semester length course.

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.

The semester begins with a sea kayaking expedition into Glacier Bay National Park and the Inside Passage. Plan to meet at our warehouse in Haines or Gustavus the evening before the course. We will do introductions, check equipment, and get a feel for people's expectations and goals for the course.

Day 1: We'll spend the first day preparing, planning, and packing food and equipment for our expedition. We talk about expectations for the course from the students and from the instructors.

Day 2: Our first day on the water will include basic paddling stroke technique, an introduction to the wet exit and a short paddle to our first wilderness camp.

Day 3: This will be our first ACA course. As a group we'll learn and practice paddle strokes, maneuvers, and rescues. We'll spend the entire day on, and in the water.

Days 4-12: Intensive technical skill instruction and development.

Days will be spent in the field addressing points of the course curriculum. Students will plan the route and destinations in advance, with flexibility incorporated into the day-to-day route and itinerary. This will provide for many opportunities and teachable moments related to judgment and decision-making. We aim to spend 6-8 hours daily on skill development and traveling our route, with time spent on shore participating in lessons, problem solving activities, and discussions and debriefs.

Day 13: Mid-course evaluations.



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Lead instructors will assess participants' level of involvement in accordance with the assessment rubrics of the ACA and IWLS curriculum. These, in conjunction with peer evaluations, allow participants to receive positive feedback and develop self-awareness.

Day 14-23: Leadership, judgment and decision-making development.

During this segment of the trip, the group will continue to tackle paddling objectives. Participants will have the opportunity to be in leadership roles, develop teaching styles, and be active participants in group decision-making and safety management.

Day 24: Return to town. 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 ACA and IWLS curriculum.

Day 25: We'll finish de-rigging the first portion of our semester, get cleaned up and have some personal time.

Days 26-27: Re-coup, do laundry, talk with loved ones etc... Enjoy the beauty and community of Haines, Alaska.

Day 28-29: Pack and prepare for our next expedition.

We will have an evening Pre-trip meeting. Trip day will be spent doing preparation, planning, food and equipment packing. We talk about expectations for the course from the students and from the instructors.

Day 30: Head into the mountains.

Day 31-40: Skill intensive mountaineering instruction.

This portion of the course focuses on the technical skills associated with mountaineering and Alaska expedition climbing.

Day 41: Mid-course evaluation

Lead instructors will assess participants' level of involvement and assessment rubrics associated with the IWLS curriculum.

Day 42-51: During this segment of the trip, the group will tackle more technical climbing objectives as a group. Participants will have the opportunity to be in leadership roles.

Day 52: Return to Haines. 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 curriculum.

Day 53: De-rig from mountaineering portion of the semester.

Day 54-55: Re-coup, do laundry, talk with loved ones etc... Enjoy the beauty and community of Haines, Alaska.



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Day 56: Pack and prepare for our next expedition.

Day 57-59: 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 60-61: 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.

Day 62-70: The backpacking portion of this course starts at the Watson River. We'll hike along the Stikine Highlands. Abundant wildlife is 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. Route finding across this wild country will test our navigation skills. We will practice Leave no Trace ethics and Bear Safety.

Day 71: Upon arriving to Primrose Lake, we'll shift gears to the rafting portion of the course and complete Mid-course evaluations.

Lead instructors will assess participants' level of involvement and assessment rubrics associated with the IWLS curriculum. These, in conjunction with peer evaluations, allow participants to receive positive feedback and develop self-awareness.

Days 72-74: 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 75-79: 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 80: 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 IWLS curriculum. We will drive from Kusawa Lake back to Haines.

A Typical Day

A typical day starts around 6am with breakfast and hot drinks. If an exposed crossing or 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 early start and paddle to the toe of calving tidewater glacier. 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.



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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 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.

IWLS General Curriculum

- **Leader of the Day:** Opportunities to lead the group will be abundant and you'll have the time to learn and practice multiple styles of leadership.
- **Situational Based Decision Making:** Over the course of 12 days, we'll discover ways to make effective and safe decisions in the field.
- **Focused and "Big Picture" Awareness:** Learn to identify objective and subjective hazards in a backcountry setting.
- **Logistics:** Develop the ability to efficiently plan and pack for an extended expedition in the backcountry.
- **Communication Skills:** Learn to communicate to a wide variety of audiences and provide constructive and appropriate feedback during daily group debriefs.
- **Teaching and Lesson Plans:** 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.
- **Expedition Behavior and Group Dynamics:** As this course is a true wilderness expedition, interactions between group members need to be supportive and contribute to the efficacy of the group. Learn the finer points of teaching these facilitation skills.
- **Camp Set-up and Maintenance:** Mastering these essential skills will prove valuable whether you are pitching a tent in gale force winds or melting snow for drinking water.
- **Nutrition and Cooking:** A healthy diet is vital for maintaining energy throughout an expedition. Learn to appropriately prepare nutritional and tasty backcountry meals.
- **Navigation:** Learn how to take a bearing, read a topographical map, triangulate your position, and navigate in a whiteout.
- **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.
- **Leave No Trace® Ethics:** As adventurers in some of the most pristine environments on the planet it is our duty to respect the natural world.
- **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 this remarkable area.



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IWLS Mountaineering Curriculum

- **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.
- **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 hip belay, running belay, boot axe belay, fixed belay, and more!
- **Ascending:** Fixed lines are an important tool for large groups and guiding applications. We'll learn how to efficiently use, build and maintain them.
- **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.
- **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 firsthand the intriguing complexities of these enormous rivers of ice and their effect on the land.
- **Technical Climbing:** Rock climbing, ice climbing and steep snow climbing are all included in the IWLS curriculum.
- **Escaping the Belay:** What happens when things go array? 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.
- **Sleds:** Key for long expeditions in the mountains. Learn how to maneuver, pack, and construct expedition sleds.
- **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.





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IWLS Sea Kayaking Curriculum

- **Paddling Equipment:** Safely traveling the remote waters of Southeast Alaska requires that you have a thorough knowledge of your equipment and proper 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 in the frigid waters of Southeast Alaska 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 Alaska require solid navigational skills, including how to use deck compasses, read charts and position off land features.
- **Group Management:** Managing a pod of kayakers on a windy day is challenging. You'll learn techniques for managing safety with a group on the water.
- **Tides and Currents:** Southeast Alaska is home to some of the largest tidal changes in North America. 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 Backpacking Curriculum

- **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.



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- **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.
- **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

- **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.





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- **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

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 a written instructor evaluation in place of a grade.





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Certifications

Upon completion of the 24-day mountaineering, 24-day sea kayaking, and 24-day backpacking & whitewater leadership courses, students will be eligible for the following certifications:



80 Day Guide Training Certificate of Completion

International Wilderness Leadership School



Level 1 Avalanche Certification*

International Wilderness Leadership School



ACA Certificates of Completion

American Canoe Association



Swiftwater Rescue Technician, Level 1

Rescue III International

*Dependent on weather and season.

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