



# IWLS

International Wilderness Leadership School

## 24-day Mexico Volcanoes & Rock Climbing Mountaineering Guide Training & Leadership 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 Amecameca and Tlachichuca are representative of the rich Mexican heritage.

Ixtaccihuatl – Popocatepetl 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 Ixtaccihuatl (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 3<sup>rd</sup> highest mountain in North America. The volcanoes are a perfect introduction to climbing at altitude.

### Course Goals

- Students will gain a strong technical mountaineering 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.



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## 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 the historical district of Mexico City. Pre-trip meeting at 6:00pm (unless otherwise noted) at the Hotel Catedral. After a brief meet and greet with your instructors and fellow students, we will discuss the course and students' goals and expectations.

**Day 1:** After meeting up in Mexico City, we'll dive into food and equipment preparation for the course. We also use this first day to begin our acclimatization process (Mexico City is at about 7,000ft).

**Day 2:** Acclimatization Hike, sleep in the town of Amecameca. We will focus on improving our Spanish skills.

**Day 3:** Establish 1<sup>st</sup> camp on Ixtaccihuatl. The group will focus on leadership skills and basic camping.

**Days 4 - 7:** Attempt Ixtaccihuatl via the Ayoloco glacier (17,200ft). Introduce mountaineering skills.

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

**Days 9 – 11:** Attempt Pico de Orizaba (18,600ft). We will establish a high camp, and continue to develop mountaineering skills. During this time, students will have the opportunity to focus on developing their leadership skills by participating as the leader of the day and making group decisions and managing risks in a high altitude mountain environment.

**Day 12:** Transport back to Mexico City. Food resupply in the city.

**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 IWLS curriculum. These, in conjunction with peer evaluations, allow participants to receive positive feedback and develop self-awareness.

**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 curriculum.



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## 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 day's 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.

### *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.



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- **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.

## *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.
- **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.
- **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 firsthand the intriguing complexities of these enormous rivers of ice and their effect on the land.



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- **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*

- **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.
- **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.



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## *IWLS International Curriculum*

- **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.

## 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 IWLS assessment rubric.

## Certifications

Upon completion of the 24 day-Mexico Volcanoes & Rock Climbing leadership course, students will be eligible for the following certifications.



### **24 Day Guide Training Certificate of Completion**

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