



# IWLS

International Wilderness Leadership School

## 24 -Day Patagonia Mountaineering

*Leadership & Guide Training Course Information*



photo: Jacob Schmidt

### Course Location

We will begin and end our course in the picturesque city of Punta Arenas, located at the bottom of the South American continent. The straits of Magellan border this historic seaport and great seafood abounds! There are many sights to see ranging from the maritime museum to local markets. We will spend a day here to prepare and plan for our upcoming mountaineering expedition. El Chalten, Argentina is a friendly village surrounded by fjords and glaciers! We will spend a day and night here on our way to the park.

Patagonia, a land of legendary allure and mystique, is home to lofty Andean peaks, massive glaciers, and virtually untouched wilderness area. This course takes place on the Southern icefield of Patagonia, one of the least explored mountain areas of the world. More than 80 glaciers spill off of this icecap, the third largest non-polar ice cap in the world. Mountains such as Fitz Roy and Cerro Torre reach heights above 10,000 feet, but the jagged glaciated peaks generally top out around 6,000 feet.

This course starts in El Chalten, from where we'll access the mountains and glaciers of the southern Patagonia ice cap. Los Glaciares National Park has one of the most rugged and beautiful mountain landscapes in the world.

### 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 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 mountain 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 mountain environment.
- 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.



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## Course Itinerary

*This is a flexible trip itinerary that shows the general progression of the trip.*

**Day 0:** Fly in to Punta Arenas

**Day 1:** Transport to El Chalten

**Day 2:** Trip preparation, planning, food and equipment packing. We will also discuss expectations for the course.

**Day 3-6:** We head into the Los Glaciares National Park where we have many route options. Our route selection will be based on the current weather and conditions of the mountains. Generally, it will take us 2 to 3 days to access the ice cap. Participants will be climbing in the stark glacially carved terrain of this region of Patagonia.

**Day 7 – 11:** We'll dive into the technical skill development of mountaineering. We'll cap the skill development with a series of peak ascents in the area.

**Day 12:** Mid course evaluations. Lead instructors will assess participants' level of involvement and assessment rubrics associated with the IWLS curriculums. 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.

**Day 13-22:** During the second half of the course, we'll continue to develop skills and explore remote areas of the Patagonian ice cap. Students will have the opportunity to step into leadership roles, examining the judgment and decision making associated with remote mountaineering.



**Day 23:** Descend from the mountains and return to El Chalten. 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 24:** Return by Bus to Punta Arenas.

**Day 25:** Flights home from Punta Arenas.

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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.
- **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.



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- **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*

- **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.



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- **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.

## 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.

## Certifications

Upon completion of the 24-day mountaineering leadership course, students will be eligible for the following certifications:



**24 Day Guide Training Certificate of Completion**  
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**Level 1 Avalanche Certification\***  
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\*Dependent on weather and season.



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