



IWLS

International Wilderness Leadership School

20 -Day Alaska Sea Kayaking Leadership & Guide Training Course Information



Course Location

IWLS is based in Haines, Alaska, a small town located near the top of the Inside Passage. Haines borders Glacier Bay National Park. The park and the adjacent 27 million acres, including Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, comprise the largest protected wilderness area in the world. It is an extremely jagged and glaciated mountain landscape that includes the world's largest non-polar ice caps, pristine fjords, and wilderness rivers.

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. At 59 degrees latitude, summer days in Southeast Alaska have over 20 hours of daylight. The long days make for great early mornings, late night wildlife viewings, and account for the remarkable vegetative growth that is the basis for Alaska's thriving ecosystem. Haines and Gustavus are situated at the northern end of the Tongass National Forest, the largest temperate rainforest in the world.

Students will explore the incredible land and seascapes that make up Glacier Bay National Park and the surrounding areas including Icy Strait, Chichagof Island, and White Sulfur Hot Springs. Icy Strait is one of the best places in the world to view humpback whales due to converging currents at Point Adolphus. Chichagof Island has numerous islets and coves for incredible kayaking. White Sulfur Hot Springs, a unique natural wonder situated on the outer coast of Chichagof, is an unforgettable experience for IWLS students kayaking in the area.

Glacier Bay is a gem among the national park system and a perfect classroom for learning sea kayaking skills, developing as a leader and discovering the rich natural history of Alaska. Tidewater glaciers descend from surrounding snowcapped peaks and plunge into the ocean. Tidal currents, stemming from one of the largest tidal exchanges in the world (at times over 20 feet), bring richness and biodiversity to these majestic fjords. Bare rocks and cliff faces, recently uncovered by receding glaciers, speak volumes of geologic history.

Haines offers access to the Lynn Canal, one of the longest, deepest fjords 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.

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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.
- 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

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: Pre-trip meeting at 6:00 PM (unless otherwise directed) at the IWLS office in Haines. After a brief meet and greet with your instructors and fellow students, we will discuss the course and students' goals and expectations. We'll spend the evening before preparing, planning, and packing food and equipment for our expedition.

Days 1-3: 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. We will also look to complete our first ACA course. As a group we'll learn and practice paddle strokes, maneuvers, and rescues.

Days 4-10: We will focus on 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 11: Mid-course evaluations. Instructors will assess participants' level of involvement in accordance with the assessment rubrics of the ACA and IWLS curriculum.

Day 12-19: We will focus on leadership, judgment and decision-making development. 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 20: Return to Haines or Gustavus. In the last few days of the course we will have final evaluations. Students will be evaluated, by their instructors, 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 big travel day 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 make a big crossing. 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 essential for leading safe, fun adventures in the wilderness. 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 upon 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

- **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 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.



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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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 24-day course:*

- Coastal Kayaking Basic Strokes and Rescues
- Coastal Kayaking Open Water Skills
- Self and Assisted Deep Water Rescues
- Eskimo Rolling

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

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.

Certifications

Upon completion of the 20-day sea kayaking leadership and guide-training course, students may be eligible for the following certifications.



20 Day Guide Training Certificate of Completion

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ACA Certificates of Completion

American Canoe Association

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