



# IWLS

International Wilderness Leadership School

## Argentina Mountaineering Information



### Course Overview

Glaciated peaks surround Aconcagua's flanks and offer students world class mountaineering objectives. During the IWLS mountaineering course, students explore glaciers, just south and west of Aconcagua and next to the border of Chile. With the high peaks of Nevado el Plomo and Cero Juncal as well as many other alpine peaks above 5,000 meters in the area, this mountaineering course offers students a fine balance of altitude, mountaineering skills, and international travel. We likely won't make summit attempts on Plomo or Juncal because of the distance and time allocated to the course, but the surrounding peaks provide ample climbing objectives and peaks to learn on.

This course is a significant mountaineering expedition into the central Andes. After logistics planning and packing in Penitentes, you'll hike up the Rio Blanco Valley and establish a base camp. The easy access to the glaciers spilling off the high peaks and a variety of mountaineering objectives provide an exciting classroom for learning to climb and guide at altitude. As the group acclimates, you'll refine mountaineering skills and practice crevasse rescue before climbing a few of the surrounding peaks.

This course strikes a great balance of expedition planning, mountaineering skills, altitude considerations, and leadership development.

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## Course Location

The central Andes rise up dramatically from the plains of Argentina. The high desert of the eastern side, complete with towering granite spires, raging rivers and huge glaciated mountains, is a wilderness with limitless exploration and adventure potential.

The beautiful city of Mendoza, Argentina, just east of the Andes, is the starting and ending location for IWLS Argentina course. From here, you'll journey to our expedition center in Penitentes, about 20 miles from Aconcagua and surrounded by a vast mountain wilderness landscape.

## Course Goals

- Students will gain a strong technical mountaineering skill sets along with appropriate traveling techniques.
- Students will be able to demonstrate the ability to professionally deal with emergency scenarios while in the field in an international setting.
- Students will be able to use and teach state-of-the art minimum-impact camping and travel techniques.
- They will be able to exercise good quality judgment and decision-making skills within a leadership position to avoid potential accident and survival situations and develop a comprehensive understanding of safety considerations in Argentina.
- 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 of Argentina.
- Students will be able evaluate their personal acclimatization process, be knowledgeable about appropriate acclimatization regimens, and have an understanding of medicines and methods associated with high altitude.
- Students will have a comprehensive understanding of risk management issues associated with guiding in a high altitude mountain environment.



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## Course Itinerary

*This is a flexible trip itinerary that shows the general progression of the trip. Certain sections of the itinerary may be re-organized to provide the best experience in relation to the current season and conditions.*

### **Day 0:** Arrive Mendoza

**Day 1-2:** We travel from Mendoza to Penitentes to help acclimate for high altitude travel. We'll spend the first day preparing, planning, having a pre-trip meeting, and packing food and equipment for our expedition into the Andes. We talk about expectations for the course from the students and from the instructors.

**Day 3 - 5:** We'll hike into the Rio Blanco Valley and set up a base camp, from where we'll stage for a series of mountaineering objectives.

**Day 6-9:** During the first 5 days on the glaciers and snowfields of the high Andes, we'll cover a variety of mountaineering skills including self-arrest, cramponing techniques, crevasse rescue, rope team travel, and more. There are a series of exciting objectives that support a progression of technical skills.

**Day 9-12:** Students will have leadership opportunities and additional technical development as we ascend the moderate surrounding peaks. Instructors will assess participants' level of involvement in accordance with the IWLS curriculum. We will review Leader of the Day and students will take on more of a leadership role throughout the course.

**Day 13-19:** Cerro Juncal 20,046' (6,110 m) and Nevado el Plomo 19,915' (6,070 m) will begin to set the back drop to our backcountry classroom. These massive peaks, and their neighbors, contribute to making the area an ideal landscape for high altitude mountaineering. While Cerro Juncal and Plomo are a bit too far to ascend during the 20 day course, there are innumerable peaks ranging from 15,000 to 18,000 feet that offer challenging and varied climbing and summit objectives. Most of these peaks are unnamed.

**Day 20:** Return to Penitentes and on to Mendoza in the evening. 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 in addition to a self-assessment.



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## 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 summit an 18,000 foot peak in the Andes. Regardless of the day's activities, it will be full of learning and adventure. Dinner could be anything from thanksgiving to pasta, to local Argentine fare. 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. The exact curriculum may vary depending on mountain weather and snow conditions.



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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 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.

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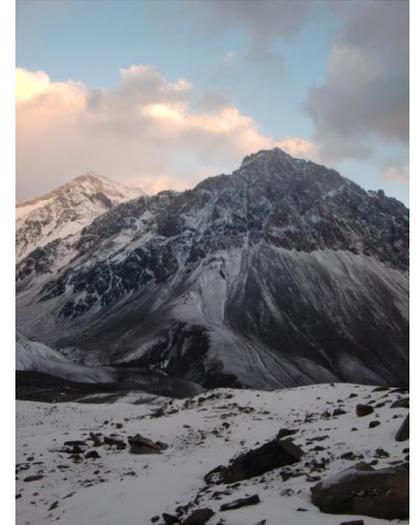




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- **Rappelling:** Rappelling down a steep rock face is a thrilling moment and our team will learn how to do it safely. We'll also look at different methods for teaching rappelling and dealing with incapacitated climbers.
- **Rope Teams:** Rope team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

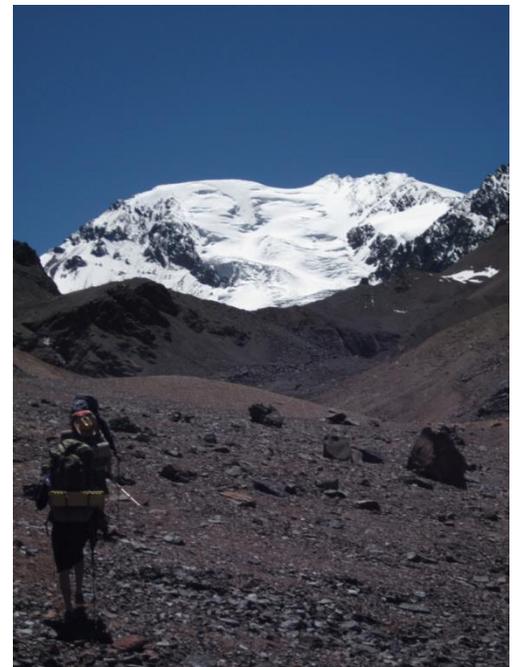


## Journal Writing

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.



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## Certifications

Upon completion of the 20-day Argentina mountaineering leadership course, students will be eligible for the following certifications:



**20 Day Guide Training Certificate of Completion**  
*International Wilderness Leadership School*



**Level 1 Avalanche Certification\***  
*International Wilderness Leadership School*

\*Dependent on weather and season – generally only available on the November/December courses and depends on the snowpack.

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