



STUDENT PROGRAM MANUAL

Wildlands Studies

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Overview of Wildlands Studies Projects

Welcome to Wildlands Studies!

Wildlands Studies field projects are exciting and challenging opportunities. For the past four decades participants have joined backcountry study teams as working field associates, helping field study specialists search for answers to important environmental problems.

Your team will be small in size. In most cases there will be no more than 9-16 team members working with the project leader. Small teams, we believe, are best suited for sharing energies, responsibilities, and discoveries. Likely as not, your fellow team members will come from diverse U.S. and Canadian locations, and bring with them a variety of college and career interests, a mix that usually provides ample substance for backcountry conversation and new networks of friendships.

Wildlands Studies projects occur entirely in the field, and while there is time for solitude and relaxation, they are not simply vacations. Fieldwork sometimes means long days and uphill trails in not always ideal weather. At times, research can be frustrating, repetitious, or just plain hard work; but it is also a rare and fascinating opportunity to explore our wildlands firsthand, while striving toward shared goals with experienced instructors and new friends. You do not need previous fieldwork experience—all necessary skills will be taught on-site by our team staff.

Students desiring academic credit from Western Washington University will earn 5-15 quarter credits (3.35-10 semester credits) of upper division credit by participating in a Wildlands Studies project. Credits earned may be eligible for transfer credit to both semester and quarter system campuses. While students usually encounter no difficulties in transferring credit to their home campus, applicants should check with their advisors prior to enrolling. Our staff will be happy to explain the program in further detail to the applicant's advisor if necessary.

The purpose of this Student Program Manual is to share with you important information and policies related to participating on a Wildlands Studies program. In this Manual, you will read about our academic expectations, Environmental Science course information, academic policies, our risk management philosophy, program-wide policies and rules, behavioral expectations, disciplinary procedures, travel information and recommendations, and financial and contractual obligations as a participant.

We love our wildlands. Wherever we go, we strive seriously to minimize our impact on the land. We believe that to know its beauty and feel its inner music is a human need, a need important to our hearts as well as our heritage. As concerned citizens, we invite you to join one of our teams, and help in the effort to solve critical problems facing our wildlands and wildlife populations.

Leslie Arutunian
Director, Wildlands Studies



Frequently Asked Questions

Academic Program Structure

Q: *What is the program structure and how much free time will I have?*

A: Wildlands Studies programs are highly structured and very intensive with academic activities scheduled almost every day of the program. This project involves seven days per week of instruction and field research. Faculty and staff work directly with students 6-10+ hours a day and are available for tutorials and coursework discussion before and after scheduled activities. Typically, scheduled activities each day begin at 9am, with breaks for meals. Most evenings have scheduled activities, including guest lectures, structured study time, and workshops. When in the backcountry or at a field site, our activities may start as early as 4 am or end as late as 10 pm (e.g., for wildlife observation). It is necessary to be flexible and able to accommodate a variety of class times. Generally, there are very few, if any days off during the program. There are typically a few hours of free time each day, but those are generally filled with coursework and chores (e.g., laundry, contacting home, etc.).

Q: *How much time is spent outside versus in lecture?*

A: Wildlands Studies projects are not taught in the classroom setting that you are used to at your home university. There are academic responsibilities such as required readings, homework assignments, exams, final projects and oral presentations. However, these activities and faculty lectures take place in the field: standing in the ecosystem that is the focus of the lecture, talking to the stakeholders you have read about, homework assignments completed in your tent with a headlamp, or reading a peer-reviewed article about glacier movement while you sit overlooking a glacier. There is nothing comparable to the learning you will gain through this first-hand experience in the field. This combination of academic and experiential learning is, we believe, unparalleled.

Q: *Do we go on overnight field studies?*

A: Whenever possible we have overnight backpacking trips to the backcountry. We know from our alumni that backpacking is the highlight of our projects with huge personal rewards. On many of our projects, where terrain and wildlife permit, we will have one, two, and even three multi-day backpacking trips. On others, where we are limited due to wildlife or dense vegetation, we conduct a series of daylong field studies in backcountry locations.

Communication and Technology

Q: *How often can my family and friends expect to hear from me when I am on the project?*

A: Our projects are specifically designed to be far removed from urban areas and cell towers. Please be sure the people who care about you understand that two or three weeks may pass with no access to means of communication. We ask students to contact their families upon arrival on their project, and then try to provide access to phone or internet periodically throughout the course. Communication to family and friends back home is often infrequent (about once every two weeks) because we are in the backcountry much of the time, frequently in locations where there is no cell phone coverage or manner to charge cell phones. It is common that communication with family and friends may occur only once or twice during the entire project.



Q: Should I bring my cell phone, laptop and/or tablet?

A: Cell phones and laptops are generally not needed on Wildlands Studies courses. We are often in the field and away from cellular service, charging facilities, and broadband or internet. Cell phones, camera batteries, and laptops will be difficult, if not impossible to recharge and challenging to store safely if you go on a multi-day backpack. In many countries, cell phones are cheap to buy with a pay-as-you-go plan, and students opt to purchase phones abroad. This depends on the country and location. However, we rarely would recommend that you bring a laptop because it will be hard to charge and difficult to safely store. Tablets, on the other hand, are becoming frequently more popular on our projects, as they are easier to transport and store, and can help you with note-taking, photo management and communication. Our logistics letter, emailed out about ten weeks in advance of a project, will discuss cell phone, tablet and laptop use and practicality.

Credits, Fees and Transcripts

Q: Will I get credit in my major at my home campus for participation on this project?

A: Typically, Wildlands Studies course credit transfers as upper division elective credit toward your overall degree requirements. If you want your credits to apply to your major, you will need to speak with your major advisor to make sure that they will accept the project's credits for your major. We have many documents and course materials that you can take with you to your advisor, and often these are available on our website on the project's specific page. Many students have had success at transferring their Wildlands Studies course credits directly into their major, particularly if they are pursuing an Environmental Studies degree.

Q: Are the Wildlands Studies fees considered qualified expenses for a 529 College Savings Plan?

A: Many students have been able to use their 529 account to cover their Wildlands Studies academic fee. However, we are a private entity and an educational partner of Western Washington University. Neither Wildlands Studies nor Western Washington University can provide you with a 1098T form. However, we can provide you with a letter at the end of the year listing project specifics, academic credit and associated costs, and many participants and parents have found this works fine for their tax filings.

Q: My home university is not in an official partnership with Wildlands Studies, can I still get credit?

A: Most students join our projects and successfully transfer upper-division credit back to their university. These students do not go through Study Abroad, they work directly with their major department or the Registrar's office to transfer the credits back to their university. Sometimes students are fortunate to work with their major advisor to gain course equivalency that allows them to use the credits toward their major. For this you would need to speak directly with your academic advisor.

Q: What paperwork do I need to submit to Wildlands Studies so that I can use my financial aid?

A: The process to obtain a Consortium Agreement to use FAFSA financial aid starts at your university. You'll need to see your Financial Aid Advisor (or your academic advisor) to discuss your desire to use financial aid to pay for the Wildlands Studies project. Usually the advisor or Financial Aid office sends a Consortium Agreement directly to Wildlands Studies, which we complete and fax back to them. The financial aid funds are disbursed directly to you, the student. Once you receive the funds, you then pay your Wildlands Studies fees.



Q: Does the Program fee or the In-country group fee cover airfare costs?

A: No. Airfare is a separate expense paid by the student. There are three main fees associated with a Wildlands Studies project: the Program Fee which serves as the academic fee; the In-County Logistics Fee, which covers the majority of costs on-site, with the exception of food; and the flight cost, paid directly by the student.

Q: My financial aid will not be disbursed until after the fees are due for my project. Do I have to withdraw?

A: In most circumstances, we are able to work with students to help them participate on the project of their choice. Contact our office to discuss a payment plan. We usually require a non-refundable deposit at the time when the fees are normally due with an agreed upon payment plan that leads up to the project start. The fee due dates are listed on each of our project web pages. The full fees must be paid prior to the start of the project. No one is allowed to participate on a project until the fees are paid in full.

Q: If I apply for a project and it's full, will my application fee be refunded?

A: The application fee is refundable until you are accepted into a specific project. Once accepted, your fee cannot be refunded. If you are waitlisted for a project, and no space becomes available, your application will be refunded. However, once you receive our email accepting you into a project, the application fee becomes non-refundable.

Q: The project I want to join is full. Can I be put on a waitlist?

A: Yes, you can, but we would encourage you to enroll in your second choice project to guarantee that you have a space on a project. This is how it works: once we have determined that you qualify for a project, we would accept you into your second choice project, and your name would be placed on the wait list for your first choice. If a space becomes available on your first choice project, we will call you to see if you're still interested in joining that project. If you are, we move you to that project, and you are dropped from your second choice. If you decide that you'd prefer to stay with your second choice project, you can do that.

Q: Do I need to be registered at my university during the term that I'm on a Wildlands Studies project?

A: Each campus has its own way of allowing students to take a quarter or semester away to study off campus. You should speak with an advisor to discuss taking courses outside your university. Most universities have a process and paperwork that you complete for 'planned leave' that allows you to stay a continuing student.

Q: I just finished a project. Can you tell me what grade I earned? How do I transfer credit to my university?

A: Grades are only available through the official transcript. Western Washington University will automatically send a transcript to your home campus Registrar's Office or you directly, and on the application form you will note where you want it sent. Additional transcripts can be ordered directly from Western Washington University.



Insurance and International Travel

Q: *What is the minimum type of insurance required to participate in a project?*

A: For Domestic and International projects, participants must show proof of medical insurance coverage. For international programs, participants must also provide travel insurance of the following types and minimum limits: Medical policy (Accident and Sickness) in an amount not less than One Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$100,000) for major medical expense benefit; an Accidental Death and Dismemberment policy in an amount not less than Twenty Five Thousand Dollars (\$25,000); an Emergency Medical Transportation/Evacuation and Medically Necessary Repatriation policy in an amount not less than Five Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$500,000); a Repatriation of Remains policy in an amount not less than Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$50,000); an Emergency Non-Medical Evacuation Due to Catastrophe policy in an amount not less than Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$50,000); and a Security of Political Evacuation policy in an amount not less than Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$50,000). International insurance must also cover “Adventure Sports” and include all activities described in the logistical information and/or syllabus of the Participant’s program, as well as a minimum coverage of \$1500 Trip Interruption and \$3000 Trip Cancellation. Said policies are to commence on the first day of the scheduled trip outside the United States and terminate upon return to the United States.

Wildlands Studies has no obligation to provide medical or other health services to a participant, nor liability for failure to do so. As a participant, you accept full financial responsibility for any and all medical and other health services that may be required as a result of participation in the Wildlands Studies project. Wildlands Studies works closely with STA Travel (Student Travel Agency) and refers participants to STA to purchase travel insurance for our projects. However, there are other agencies that provide travel insurance, including Travelguard (www.travelguard.com) and Gateway International (www.gatewayplans.com) as well as others.

Q: *Can you tell me what inoculations I’ll need for my international project?*

A: You’ll want to speak with a travel nurse or doctor (or visit a travel clinic) to make sure that they know where you are going and which shots you will need. You can also check online for qualified advice on health concerns related to travel in the country where you’ll be studying. The U.S.-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov, is a good resource. It is important that you plan ahead for your travel abroad and schedule your appointment for inoculations early as many vaccinations are completed as a series.

Q: *Is there a language requirement for the international projects?*

A: All program instruction is in English. Although your study will be enhanced if you know the language of the country, it is not a requirement.



Academic Information

Wildlands Studies Course Description

Wildlands Studies project students receive credit for three undergraduate courses upon successful completion of this project. These three courses have distinct objectives and descriptions, and we integrate teaching and learning through both formal learning situations (i.e., lectures and seminars) and field surveys. Academic credit is provided by Western Washington University. Students will receive transcript credit for the following three individual courses:

1. **ESCI 497T, Environmental Wildlands Studies (5 quarter credits)** – Field study of the natural and human landscape, and the problems affecting undisturbed and human-impacted ecosystems in our study region. We will explore the ecological and anthropogenic mechanisms driving tropical plant and animal community assembly, function, and change.
2. **ESCI 497U, Environmental Field Survey (5 quarter credits)** – In this field-based course we introduce practical, theoretical, and analytical skills and apply them to the hands-on biological study of the diverse flora and fauna of our study region. We will explore the process of field research from the formulation of questions and the generation of hypotheses to the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data.
3. **ESCI 497V, Wildlands Environment and Culture (5 quarter credits)** – Field course studying the relationships among cultural groups and the environment. Using region- and culture-specific case studies, students assess historical and current cultural and environmental uses of wildlands and/or wildlife communities. Course examines outcomes of environmental policies and wildlands/wildlife management, including both sociological and natural consequences.

Students will develop skills in field observation and documenting and sharing observations. Students will employ varied techniques to present and record their natural history observations including, but not limited to, Grinnell-style Trip Logs and species accounts, natural history sketching, narrative writing, and mapping. Students will be able to conduct basic field research and be able to synthesize, organize, and present their data in a way that is appropriate to the audience and subject matter. Students will discuss their results in light of current management or conservation issues. Students should be able to demonstrate their understanding of the ecological, and/or social science processes and concepts that underlie their research.

Readings: A Course Reader is established for this project and will be provided to students in electronic form in advance of the project. Students are responsible for printing the entire reader before the course and bringing it with them on the program. Readings include selections from academic primary literature, technical reports, book chapters, and environmental impact assessments and planning documents. Field guides and textbooks supplement our field activities and are an integral part of our project; we will carry a shared reference library of these on all activities and backcountry trips.



Academic Expectations

All program participants will be expected to participate and contribute equally in all of our activities. Letter grades are based upon the breadth of our endeavors. Personal success will follow from active daily participation in the living and learning community, an open inquiring mind, hard work, and thoughtful attention to formal assignments. Participants will be evaluated according to the following criteria: 1) Assigned field exercises, and formal presentations at group seminars; 2) Written examinations; 3) Written term paper; 4) Daily entries in field journal; 5) Required readings during the program; 6) Participation; and 7) Maintenance of standards for group safety and conduct.

Academic Credit

Academic credit is granted upon successful completion of a Wildlands Studies project. Academic credit is conferred by Western Washington University, which is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. Western Washington University credit is recognized at other universities throughout the United States, Canada and abroad. All participants should check with their campus registrar or academic advisor to confirm transferability.

If you desire academic credit, please note the following:

(1) Wildlands Studies issues letter grades A-F for courses. Incompletes will only be granted in cases of exceptional circumstances, and it is your responsibility to complete papers and assignments on time. Incompletes automatically become a grade of 'F' or 'NC' after 3 months if a grade change issued by the instructor is not received.

(2) Western Washington University will automatically send a transcript to your home campus Registrar's Office or you directly, and on the application form you will note where you want it sent. Additional transcripts can be ordered directly from Western Washington University. **Grades are only available through the official transcript.**

Official Course Title(s) on the Western Washington University transcript will be the following:
For short summer projects: ESCI 497T, Environmental Wildlands Studies (5 quarter credits)

For academic term projects: ESCI 497T, Environmental Wildlands Studies (5 quarter credits)
ESC I 497U, Wildlands Environmental Field Survey (5 quarter credits)
ESC I 497V, Wildlands Environment and Culture (5 quarter credits)

Credit Transfer

Students are responsible for determining in advance of their project the transferability of units to their home institutions. Western Washington University's unit of credit is based on the quarter unit, however, units earned may be eligible for transfer credit to both semester and quarter system colleges (5 quarter credits equals 3.35 semester credits). Students should check with their home institution to ensure credit transferability. Western Washington University is only responsible for providing academic credit, and not ensuring credit transferability. Our staff will be happy to explain the program in further detail to an applicant's advisor, if necessary.



Obtaining an Official Transcript

Western Washington University will automatically send a transcript to your home campus Registrar's Office or you directly, and on the application form you will note where you want it sent. Additional transcripts can be ordered directly from Western Washington University. **Grades are only available through the official transcript.**

Please note that course transcripts are available for distribution as follows: Summer projects in October, Fall projects in January, Winter projects in May and Spring projects in July.

Policies on Grading, Incompletes, and Early Withdrawal from Courses

Grading

Wildlands Studies issues letter grades A-F for courses. Letter grades will be reported to Western Washington University and to Wildlands Studies affiliate schools for each student.

Incompletes

Incompletes will only be granted in cases of exceptional circumstances, and it is your responsibility to complete papers and assignments on time. Incompletes automatically become a grade of 'F' or 'NC' after 3 months if a grade change issued by the instructor is not received.

Early Withdrawal

Students who leave a Wildlands Studies program without completing outstanding coursework will not obtain academic credit for the project. Wildlands Studies does not grant incomplete or partial credit. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of our courses and the focus on in-field study, students are required to be present on-site and participate fully through the duration of the project in order to receive academic credit. It is the responsibility of the student to make and finance necessary travel arrangements for early departure from a Wildlands Studies Project. Any academic credit and/or financial implications of early departure for the home institution are also the responsibility of the student. The Wildlands Studies refund policy is outlined in a later section of this document.

Grade Appeals

On a rare occasion, a student may wish to appeal their final course grade(s). Grade appeals with individual academic assignments must be handled directly between the student and lead instructor while on the project. A final grade, however, may be appealed if done so within 45 days of the project end date. The grade appeal process must be initiated by the student, whose role is as follows: The student must first approach their lead instructor and see if they can work out a mutual agreement on the disputed grade. If not, the student will need to approach the main Wildlands Studies office *in writing* to appeal their grade within 45 days of the project end date. The written narrative should include the student's justification for appeal and their requests for specific changes. This narrative should be emailed to our main office (wildlands@wildlandsstudies.com). The student must follow the email with a phone call to our office to discuss the appeal with the Wildlands Studies director (831.684.9999).

If the director decides a grade appeal may be warranted, the Wildlands Studies office will notify Western Washington University of the appeal. Wildlands Studies will first discuss grades and grading with instructor, and obtain *in writing* the instructor's input on their assessment/determination of course grades. If instructor and student cannot work out a compromise on the grade with Wildlands Studies as the mediator, Wildlands Studies will establish a grade appeal committee that includes the Director of Wildlands Studies and two Wildlands Studies Lead Instructors/Faculty. Both the project instructor and student will provide as much student work electronically as possible to the committee, who will review all the materials via a conference call. Deliberation is based on the



written appeal of the student, the response of the faculty member (if available), and evidence of student work where relevant. The committee's decision will be final and no further course of action will be pursued regarding the grade(s) under appeal. Any change in grade(s) will be submitted via the Wildlands Studies Director to Western Washington University with a justification for the change.

Academic and Research Honesty Policy

Academic integrity is as relevant in this field course as it is at a student's home institution. Plagiarism, using the ideas or materials of others without giving due credit, cheating, or putting forth another student's work as one's own will not be tolerated. Any plagiarism, cheating, or aiding another to cheat (either actively or passively) will result in a zero for the assignment. Cases of academic dishonesty may be reported to a student's home institution.

Confidentiality of Student Records

Wildlands Studies respects the confidentiality of health, personal history, and academic records of the students. We share pertinent information from the student's application with our project lead instructor to provide them with the necessary personal information for each student participant. Wildlands Studies provides Western Washington University with the student's social security numbers as a means of creating a Student ID for access to transcript and grade information. Beyond this, Wildlands Studies maintains confidential records and only uses information when appropriate. Additionally, team roster information should be treated with confidentiality by participants and should be shared only among participants and faculty of the project.

Requesting References from Wildlands Studies Faculty

Students sometimes wish to request references from their Wildlands Studies faculty. While we do not discourage asking for a reference, Wildlands Studies faculty are not obligated to provide a reference for former students. Their decision may be based on their own availability as well as the student's performance in Wildlands Studies courses. As Wildlands Studies faculty are extremely busy and may often be in the field for teaching or research, students should plan ahead and allow for long turnaround times. Students are responsible for maintaining contact information for their former faculty and for contacting the faculty member directly.

Representing Wildlands Studies Experience on your Resume

We encourage students to highlight and share the field experience that they gain in a Wildlands Studies course on their resume or curriculum vitae. We suggest two ways to include a Wildlands Studies experience:

- (1) In the education section - e.g., Study abroad: Wildlands Studies, [name of WS project], [Location], [# credits] Western Washington University, [Program dates]
- (2) In a Field Experience or Research Experience section - e.g., "[title of Wildlands Studies research project]", [list of skills developed], [location], [program dates]



Risk Management

Risk Management Philosophy

Risk management is the most important factor in the planning and preparation of Wildlands Studies projects. We have a structured risk management plan that is tailored to each specific project itinerary enabling us to adapt to the dynamic changes of the natural and political world to both prevent and respond to risk quickly. Although we work hard to prevent incidents, wilderness travel does come with inherent risks. Injuries and accidents can happen. Participants should be aware of the potential for dangerous situations to arise. Our instructors are experienced backcountry field guides as well as academicians, and are certified in First Aid and CPR. As a part of our risk management strategy, we require standards of behavior intended to maximize the safety of our students, our staff, our organization, and the local communities in which we visit.

Learning to identify and avoid potential risks is one of the most valuable skills that participants can learn in the field. Wildlands Studies provides an orientation and overview upon arrival of our projects, and our instructors work with students throughout the program to learn how to best manage risks that may occur in the project's specific region. We expect students to acquire and use risk management skills on our projects, and as adults, accept responsibility for following our risk management protocols. We require all our students to sign a Participant Agreement and show proof of medical insurance before participating in our projects. Wildlands Studies provides exciting and unique backcountry field study experiences and we strive to achieve our program and educational goals while preventing injury and illness.

Project-specific Rules and Protocols

For every Wildlands Studies project there are rules and protocols that are specific to that field location. Students will be briefed on these rules and protocols by Wildlands Studies faculty as part of the orientation.

Wildlands Studies-wide Program Policies

None of the course instructors take pleasure in laying down rules and policing members of our team. However, incidents have occurred on past programs that compel us to establish clear policies for those who are enrolled as students on our program. We sincerely hope that our students will respect and abide by these policies, because students who fail to do so may be expelled from the program. These Wildlands Studies-wide policies are in effect during the entire project, from start to finish, including all program activities (both structured and non-structured), days off during the project, and including transport to and from field sites. Violation of any of these policies will result in disciplinary action (see specific information on disciplinary procedures later in this document), and Wildlands Studies faculty reserve the right to ask students to depart from a project if they engage in behavior or activities that compromises the Wildlands Studies program or are believed to put the student or others at risk.

Alcohol Policy

The alcohol policy for the Wildlands Studies Projects is as follows:

- (1) When group members are engaged in class activities, traveling, or interacting with other people in the role of students, there is to be no consumption of alcohol. If there is any question about whether it is okay to drink in a given situation, the course instructor has the final say. Specific situations where alcohol is expressly forbidden include:



- (a) Group travel on motor vehicles, including (but not limited to) buses, trains, cars, trucks and boats
- (b) Group travel on foot, by bicycle, or other self-propelled conveyance
- (c) Classroom sessions, meetings with guest experts, course-related interactions with local people
- (d) Any activity that involves being in or on the water. Students who have consumed alcohol may not enter the water until the following day.
- (2) Moderate consumption of alcohol is not prohibited when the group is at leisure (i.e., during “time-off” see policy below). However, if course instructors believe that a student’s alcohol consumption is endangering himself, or herself, or threatening other members of the group or the reputation of Wildlands Studies, then instructors will be obligated to seek advice on how to deal with this problem by speaking directly with the Wildlands Studies Director.
- (3) Students must understand that irresponsible, discourteous, or obnoxious behavior, whether alcohol-induced or not, is embarrassing and threatening to the program and course instructors and will not be tolerated. If the instructor feels that a student’s use of alcohol is inhibiting the project in any way, they have the right to dismiss the student from the project.
- (4) Students must also understand that course instructors stand to lose a great deal if an intoxicated student gets hurt or causes others to get hurt. That is why we are compelled to take a hard line on the issue of alcohol consumption.
- (5) Problems derived from alcohol and student conduct will be handled by course instructors in the most expedient and professional manner that serves to protect the best interests of our program. No repeated warnings, no scolding, no drama. If it is not working out, the student will be dismissed and we will get on without them.

Drug Policy

Wildlands Studies has a “no tolerance” policy on any drug use and students may be immediately dismissed from the program if we find that a student has been taking any kind of prohibited drug. Most Wildlands Studies Projects involve travel in countries that do not tolerate illegal substances. Wildlands Studies faculty reserves the right to investigate, search for and confiscate evidence or contraband, and report incidents to local authorities. Beyond being dismissed from Wildlands Studies, students who partake in drug use are subject to local authorities and laws, which may result in fines, arrest, and deportation.

Local Laws Policy

Wildlands Studies supports and complies with all local laws in the countries we visit. We will brief students on local laws and expectations soon after arriving at the field study site. We expect students to comply with local laws. Any violations will result in Wildlands Studies disciplinary procedures and possibly penalties from local law enforcement including fines, arrest, or deportation.

Cultural Respect and Understanding

We expect that students understand and respect local customs in the location of their project. Considerations include, but are not limited to, communication with local residents, knowledge of laws, knowledge of religious customs and holidays, and appropriate attire. Students will be briefed on cultural norms that differ from Western expectations, and will be expected to demonstrate competence and respect for these as a guest in another country.



Time Off Policy

Wildlands Studies programs are academically intense and most, if not all, days during the program will have scheduled activities. During the few times off, typically a few hours a week or 1-2 days over the course of the project, students are responsible for their own actions. Please note that all Wildlands Studies policies still apply during time-off periods.

Sign Out Policy

Students must communicate their location to Wildlands Studies faculty at all times so that they can be located in case of an emergency. Typically students travel together as a group with a faculty member. However, there may be times when the faculty have asked students to conduct independent research at a nearby location that they must travel to by foot. The specific protocols for signing in and out will differ among projects and will be explained by Wildlands Studies staff during the orientation to the project.

Visitor Policy

Wildlands Studies programs are intensely scheduled, with most, if not all days having program activities. This does not leave much time-off, and therefore, aside from visiting scholars and guest lecturers, visitors are not allowed during the program. If friends or family would like to visit off-site before or after the project dates, that is ideal. Students and their visitors should plan accordingly for their own off-site travel, as no accommodations are available at our field sites.

Swimming Policy

Any student who swims during a Wildlands Studies program, at or near Wildlands Studies field sites, or on time-off days during the project does so AT THEIR OWN RISK. Any swimming in moving water is strictly prohibited unless Wildlands Studies faculty or staff are present and deem the situation safe enough to swim. Students may not jump into any bodies of water without faculty consent. Wildlands Studies does not allow any jumping off rocks into the water. Entering water within 24 hours after consuming alcohol is prohibited and will result in disciplinary action (see alcohol policy above).

Motor Vehicle and Boat Policy

Students may not ride in, drive, or paddle motor vehicles or boats without prior Wildlands Studies faculty approval. Seat belts must be worn in all motor vehicles where available. Any use of motor vehicles or boats by Wildlands Studies projects will adhere to all local laws including maximum occupancy, approved seating, personal flotation devices, radio protocols, rescue procedures and first aid and emergency equipment requirements.

Harassment and Nondiscrimination Policy

Wildlands Studies courses can be intense as students, faculty, and staff live in close quarters for the duration of the project. This often encourages a strong sense of community. To maintain this strong sense of community and to promote a safe learning environment for all, Wildlands Studies prohibits all forms of harassment and discrimination because of gender, race, religion, age, sexual preference, national origin, disability, or personal history. Disparaging remarks do not belong in any Wildlands Studies learning or living space, no matter the intent. Each faculty member, staff, and student is responsible for ensuring that the living and learning spaces are free from harassment.



Disciplinary Procedures

Any violation of Wildlands Studies policies will result in disciplinary action. Depending on the severity of the violation Wildlands Studies faculty and staff will implement one or more of the following disciplinary actions:

- Discussion and education about the inappropriateness of the behavior
- Verbal warning
- Written warning
- Dismissal

Wildlands Studies faculty strive to provide a safe learning environment for all students. All students are expected to understand and to support the standards of behavior outlined in this document and presented during the field site orientation. If behavior is sufficient to result in dismissal from the program, Wildlands Studies staff will coordinate transportation to the original meeting place, typically the airport where the project started, at the student's expense. At the original meeting place any responsibility for the student on the part of Wildlands Studies will cease. Financial obligations to Wildlands Studies as outlined in other sections of this document will still be in effect. Students who are dismissed from the program will not receive any credit for the course or any fee refunds.

Emergency Contacts and Communication

Our projects are specifically designed to be far removed from urban areas and cell towers. Please be sure the people who care about you understand that two or three weeks may pass with no access to means of communication. We ask students to contact their families upon arrival on their project, and then try to provide access to phone or internet periodically throughout the course. Communication to family and friends back home is often infrequent (about once every two weeks) because we are in the backcountry much of the time, frequently in locations where there is no cell phone coverage or manner to charge cell phones. It is common that communication with family and friends may occur only once or twice during the entire project. Furthermore, even when access to a phone is available, it can often be a public pay phone in an area with no cell phone or internet coverage, and thus, not all students on a particular project will be able to talk for long and in some cases may not even get through to their families during the allotted communication time. It is very important that students share with family and friends that they will have extremely limited communication during the project so that family and friends do not worry about students unnecessarily. Our office in Santa Cruz, CA will know how to get in contact with instructors in the case of an emergency back home.

Wildlands Studies emergency contact

Leslie Arutunian
Wildlands Studies
Santa Cruz office
831.684.9999
wildlands@wildlandsstudies.com



Leave No Trace Philosophy

All Wildlands Studies projects seek to minimize our group impacts in the environments through which we travel. We follow the principles of Leave No Trace outdoor ethics to guide our backcountry decisions and demeanor.

- (1) Plan Ahead and Prepare – This planning is focused on mitigating environmental impacts of activities, including knowing the environment and area so that times of high use by the public can be avoided; travel occurs in weather conditions and time of year when the area is more durable and resilient; being well-equipped to handle emergency situations with minimal environmental impact; and packing food amounts such that large amounts of leftovers need not be dealt with.
- (2) Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces – In high use areas, this means remaining on existing trails and in established campsites. In low use and pristine areas use should be dispersed to avoid creating trails or obvious campsites. In all cases, Wildlands Studies groups clean up use sites before leaving; removing trash and refreshing obviously used areas (e.g., fluffing up matted grass, moved logs replaced, etc.).
- (3) Dispose of Waste Properly – This includes “pack it in, pack it out” in terms of garbage and leftovers, but also refers to proper management of human waste including latrines, portable toilets, cat holes or carrying solid waste out, depending on the area of travel. Waste water from dishes or baths must be disposed of 200 feet from freshwater.
- (4) Leave What You Find – Historical and natural artifacts should be left undisturbed. On many public lands, disturbing or removing these artifacts is prohibited.
- (5) Minimize Campfire Impacts – In much of the pristine backcountry where Wildlands Studies groups travel, campfires are not appropriate, and camp stoves are used in most cases for cooking. When fires are appropriate (or essential), minimum impact methods are used (using existing fire rings or durable surfaces, collecting wood in a nondestructive manner, and cleaning up fire remains to the original condition).
- (6) Respect Wildlife – We observe wildlife, but from a distance, avoiding any interference with migrations, sensitive times of year or sensitive habitats.
- (7) Be Considerate of Others – Wildlands Studies project teams are a large group and we strive to reduce our impacts on others using the same areas we are, especially in the backcountry. This includes minimizing both the sight and sounds of our groups (i.e., placement of campsites, noise levels on the trail).

Wildlands Studies faculty will brief students about the specific methods to minimize environmental impacts in the area in which they are traveling. We expect students to participate and respect our philosophy.



Travel Information

Personal Health

Medical and Travel Insurance

Wildlands Studies requires that all participants be covered by a health/medical insurance policy, as well as obtain travel insurance for international projects. It is important that students understand that they are financially responsible for all their own personal medical costs while on a Wildlands Studies project. This means that if a student needs to visit a doctor while on the project, or receive emergency care, the student bears the cost and any related costs (such as transport). Thus, it is important to have both medical insurance and travel insurance. The Participant Agreement (included in the logistics packet mailed out upon acceptance) outlines the required amount of travel insurance and describes an inexpensive policy that satisfies Wildlands Studies travel insurance requirements. STA Travel, our preferred travel agent, sells the required travel insurance and many past participants have found this to be good option for the required insurance. Please note that students need two types of health insurance if they are joining us on an international project: their own from the USA and the travel insurance outlined in the Participant Agreement. Once accepted, students are sent a series of forms. Please complete the Emergency Medical information form and the Participant Agreement, include a copy of your medical insurance card and your travel insurance policy, and return these to the Wildlands Studies office. These forms must be returned to the Wildlands Studies office before you can participate in the project. We also ask that students bring a copy of the name and number of their health insurance policy as well as any compensation forms, which are required by the insurance company on the project with them.

Inoculations

Students should consult a travel nurse or doctor (or visit a travel clinic) at least six weeks prior to participation on a project. Be sure to explain to the physician the location(s) to which our project travels, so they can appropriately determine which inoculations you will need. Students will want to keep inoculation records on-hand in case this information is needed to enter into the country or in case of emergency. Information about travel, inoculations, and disease risk is also available at <http://www.cdc.gov>, a site maintained by the US-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Healthy Traveling

For most projects, but especially international ones, there is no ready access to Western-style medical care, though Wildlands Studies Instructors do carry comprehensive, backcountry-oriented medical kits. Students should bring their own basic first-aid supplies and any prescription medicines their doctor thinks they might need. Prescription medicines should be accompanied by complete pharmacological information, available on request when you fill the prescription – this information could be indispensable in the event of an emergency. If a student has an acute allergy, then please make sure you have an emergency kit with an epinephrine syringe, available by prescription.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention is an authoritative source of information on travel medicine. Visit their website (www.cdc.gov) and then navigate to the pages that discuss the country or area where your project is located. They have special sections about a number of important diseases, such as malaria. The World Health Organization (WHO) also maintains a comprehensive base of information about disease risk. *The Pocket Doctor* by Stephen Bezruchka M.D. (The Mountaineers, Seattle) is a good, concise source of information about traveler's health concerns. A more comprehensive reference is *Medicine for Mountaineering*, published by The Mountaineers, Seattle. We encourage everyone to educate themselves about medical concerns related to traveling in the area where they are headed.



Passport

For international travel, students need a current passport that does not expire until six months after their departure from the host country. When a student applies for a project, Wildlands Studies will ask for a student's passport information, including name on the passport, passport number, date of issue, date of expiration and citizenship. Many countries require this information for reservations. Before departing on a project, we recommend that students make two photocopies of your passport (inside cover and front page, where the photo is) in case it should get lost or stolen during travels. Students should bring these with them and keep them separate from the passport. Wildlands Studies faculty can hold on to one as a precaution should a student lose their passport. It is also a good idea to scan passport information and email it to yourself. This way one can access the information while abroad.

Packing and Equipment

Wildlands Studies students are expected to bring their own equipment as indicated in the logistics letter, which is sent after acceptance into a project and about ten to twelve weeks in advance of the project start date. Equipment should be in good working order and suitable for the duration and rigor of the project. In addition, participants should pack carefully. We ask students to bring everything asked for in the logistics letter so that they are not without an essential piece of equipment, but also to pack minimally (i.e., only what is in the logistics letter), so that we can easily travel. A good rule of thumb is to keep luggage to one large backpack or duffle, plus a small daypack. Be aware that in most Wildlands Studies projects there will not be room to store more luggage than one large bag in travel vehicles or at the field site, and each student may have to carry all of their own luggage at times between sites. Students should also check their project itinerary for backpacking. If the project will be backpacking, only bring a backpack, not a duffle bag.





Student Responsibilities

The conduct of the student during the project is of utmost importance. Students are expected to conform to standards of conduct consistent with the maintenance of the reputation of Wildlands Studies, including regular attendance in all classes and field study activities, and to conform to all applicable rules, regulations, and policies. Students are expected to conduct themselves appropriately at all times and not engage in any conduct which in the judgment of the Instructor/Leader and/or other officials of the project jeopardizes the student's own welfare or that of fellow participants and/or the quality of the project. Prohibited conduct includes but is not limited to, the following: the use of physical or verbal violence, use of any illegal or inappropriate substance, violating the laws of the Host Country, openly abusing the customs and morals of the community, and unauthorized absences from classes. Failure of a student to conform to said standards of conduct may result in the termination of the student's participation in the Program. In the event the Instructor/Leader of the project in his or her sole discretion determines that the conduct or academic performance of a student is detrimental to the best interests of the Program, the Instructor may terminate the participation of the student in the Program. In the event of a termination, Wildlands Studies shall not be required to refund to the student any payment or portion thereof made to Wildlands Studies.

Wildlands Studies Contractual and Financial Obligations

Statement of Wildlands Studies Responsibility

In organizing and administrating these projects, Wildlands Studies LLC, its agents, faculty, employees, contractors, and staff give notice that they act solely on behalf of and for the benefit of the participants, on the express agreement that Wildlands Studies LLC shall not be liable, financially or otherwise, for non-performance or unsatisfactory service; for the injury to persons including death; for loss of, or damage to property; for accident or delay; and/or for expenses arising from strikes, weather, quarantine, sickness, government regulation, civil unrest or war, or from any act or omission of its agents or employee and/or airline, railroad, bus company, automobile rental agency, hotel or hostel, or other supplies of service.

Wildlands Studies, LLC, is a limited liability company located in Santa Cruz, California. All matters relating to or arising out of or involving in any way a student's relationship with Wildlands Studies LLC shall be governed by California law and any legal dispute shall be determined by a California venue.

Wildlands Studies reserves the right to refuse any applicant admission to any project if he/she is deemed unsuitable for the project for any reason. All projects, courses, fees, and dates are tentative until verified in writing from Wildlands Studies through a project acceptance email. Wildlands Studies does not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, color, religion, or nationality in its admissions process, educational programs, scholarship programs or any other Wildlands Studies administered program.

Program Modifications and Cancellations

Actions, occurrences, or events may make necessary or desirable the modification to a project or its termination, prior to a participants' departure to participate in the project or while the project is in progress. If modification is necessary or desirable, Wildlands Studies may modify the project with respect to any costs, dates, times, methods, schedules, sites, elements or details of the Program, though any such modification will contain a reasonably comparable substitution if possible.



Fees & Refund Policies

Fees

Wildlands Studies projects have an academic program fee, an in-country fee, and costs associated with flights and personal expenses. Program fees are based on the length and location of each project and cover academic fee only. The on-site or “in-country” fee covers expenses such as the transportation during the program; applicable meals/camping fees; Park/Nature/Reserve entrance fees; permits; use of study facilities; rental of group equipment. Flight costs, travel gear and personal expenditures are paid directly by participants. Program fees are due upon acceptance into a project. Please note program fee deadlines in acceptance materials. After fee deadlines, enrollments are accepted on a space-available basis.

Program Fee Refund Policy

The Program Fee is refunded if: 1) A project is canceled; 2) A project is fully enrolled and when a student withdraws before the project start date a replacement is available from a waiting list to take the student’s place; 3) A student is on a waiting list and no spaces become available; 4) A student requests a refund in writing prior to the program fee deadline. After the fee deadline, refunds of 50% of program fees are given to students canceling if they do so in writing prior to 60 days of the project’s start date. Refunds cannot be given for: 1) Cancellations within 60 days of the project start, 2) meeting place “no shows”, or 3) student leaving or dismissed during a project.

In-country Fee Refund Policy

In-Country Fees are 75% refundable if a team member cancels from a project no later than 42 days before the program begins. If a participant withdraws from a project within 42 days of the program’s start date and cannot be replaced from a waiting list, the In-country Fee is non-refundable. This policy is necessary because much of the project team's expenditures must be paid and/or committed to before the program takes place.

Application Fee Refund Policy

Application Fees become non-refundable upon acceptance in the project of a student’s choice. If a student does not request a refund of his or her Application Fee in writing within 6 months of submitting the fee, the fee becomes non-refundable. Wildlands Studies reserves the right to change or cancel a project. Wildlands Studies is not responsible for non-refundable airline or other tickets, or payments or any similar penalties that may be incurred as a result of any course cancellation or changes.

Scholarships and Financial Aid

Wildlands Studies and Western Washington University do not offer scholarships or financial aid for Wildland Studies projects. Many students are able to form "Consortium Agreements" between their home campus and Wildlands Studies for the use of FAFSA financial aid from their home campus. This is at the discretion of each university. Students should check with their University’s Financial Aid office about a "Consortium Agreement" if interested in using financial aid to pay for a project. Students attending field programs are expected to bring additional money in the form of Travelers Checks, ATM cards, or credit cards to cover expenses.



Policies Regarding Outstanding Fees

Outstanding Tuition Balances

Students shall pay to Wildlands Studies the Program Fees described in the Full Project Description and/or Logistics Information by the specified deadlines. Failure to do so may result in Wildlands Studies refusal to allow the student to participate in the project. All fees must be paid in full before a student can participate on a project.

Other Outstanding Fees

The student is responsible for payment of all expenses that he/she incurs during the course of the project, including, but not limited to, equipment rentals, equipment orders, phone bills, medical expenses. Students are also responsible for any damages they may cause during the course of the project, including damage to housing or other property. If a student fails to meet these responsibilities and Wildlands Studies pays the expense incurred during the project or caused by the student, then Wildlands Studies will charge those expenses to the student plus an administrative fee. These expenses must be paid in full before the student departs the program. Grades may be held until all outstanding fees are paid in full.

