



## STUDENT PROGRAM MANUAL

**Wildlands Studies LLC**  
PO Box 2098  
Aptos, CA 95001  
831.684.9999  
[wildlands@wildlandsstudies.com](mailto:wildlands@wildlandsstudies.com)  
[www.wildlandsstudies.com](http://www.wildlandsstudies.com)



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## **Overview of Wildlands Studies Programs**

### **Welcome to Wildlands Studies!**

Wildlands Studies field programs are exciting and challenging opportunities. For over four decades participants have joined outdoor 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 9-18 team members working with the lead instructor. Small teams, we believe, are best suited for sharing energies, responsibilities, and discoveries. More than likely, 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 conversation and new networks of friendships.

Wildlands Studies programs 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 will earn 5-15 upper division quarter credits (3.35-10 semester credits) from Western Washington University by participating in a Wildlands Studies program. 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 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, 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 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 program 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 programs 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, completing homework assignments 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 a highlight of our programs with huge personal rewards. On many of our programs, 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 program?***

A: Please be sure to bring your smart phone. Smart phone messaging and/or email are the best ways for you to stay in touch with family and friends during our program. Depending on the program, cell phone coverage may be sporadically available but you will need to check with your cell carrier to see if your phone is compatible with the network standards. We urge you to use your phone wisely and for essential communications only. We ask this in order to maximize both yours and your peers' experience during the program. Living without constantly being glued to a cell phone will be liberating and good practice in being present and aware of your surroundings. Please inform the people who care about you not to expect frequent updates and that multiple days of up to a week or more may pass with no reliable access to communication facilities. The Wildlands Studies office in Santa Cruz will know how to get in contact with us in the case of an emergency back home.

***Q: Should I bring my laptop and/or tablet?***

A: Laptops are not usually not needed on Wildlands Studies courses. We are often in the field and away from charging facilities and internet. Laptops can also be heavy and difficult to store safely out in the field. Tablets, on the other hand, are becoming frequently more popular on our programs, 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 the program start date will discuss laptop/tablet use and practicality.

***Credits, Fees and Transcripts***

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

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 program'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 program'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 program 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 programs 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 program. Usually, the advisor or Financial Aid office sends a Consortium Agreement directly to Wildlands Studies, which we complete and send 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. If you need a payment plan because your financial aid will not be dispersed till after the Wildlands Studies program fee due date please reach out to our office.

***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 program: the Program Fee which serves as the academic fee; the In-County Logistics Fee, which covers the majority of costs on-site, 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 program. Do I have to withdraw?***

A: In most circumstances, we are able to work with students to help them participate on the program of their choice. Contact our office to discuss a payment plan. We 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 program start. The fee due dates are listed on each of our program web pages. The full fees must be paid prior to the start of the program and all fees paid on a payment plan are non-refundable. No one is allowed to participate on a program until the fees are paid in full.

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

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

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

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

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 program. Can you tell me what grade I earned? How do I transfer credit to my university?***

A: After you complete the program, Western Washington University will issue an official transcript to the Registrar's Office of your home university. This is an automatic process. If you need a second transcript, our website provides details on how to order it – [this is a self-initiated process](#). *Grades are provided through the transcript process only; you will be able to access an unofficial transcript online after the grades are posted.*

### **Insurance and International Travel**

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

A: Wildlands Studies requires that all participants be covered by a health/medical insurance policy and obtain travel insurance. We require all participants to have a formal travel insurance policy through **World Nomads**. This policy provides emergency accident or sickness medical expense up to \$100,000; emergency evacuation and repatriation of remains up to \$500,000; and covers all our outdoor activities including backpacking, hiking, kayaking, boating, river crossing, swimming and other activities typically referred to as “Adventure Sports” in the insurance world.

You are required to purchase this policy for the entire time you are with the Wildlands Studies program. Instructions on how to purchase the plan will be provided in the Logistics Packet.

Note that you need two types of health insurance: Your personal medical insurance and the **World Nomads** travel insurance. Further, please be sure you have read and signed the Assumption of Risks that you are required to sign for participation: our standard “*Participant Agreement*” in the registration section of your online account. Bring a copy of the name and number of your health insurance policy as well as any compensation forms that are required by the insurance company.

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 program.

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

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](http://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.

Wildlands Studies also requires that you be fully vaccinated for COVID-19 plus a booster if you are eligible. “Fully vaccinated” means you have completed the whole vaccination series at least two weeks before the program departure date. We will require you to have a booster if your COVID-19 vaccination took place six months or more before the program start date.

Participants are urged to familiarize themselves with the published guidelines for recognizing, avoiding and managing the threat of COVID-19 at the [Centers for Disease Control webpage](#) (CDC).

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

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 program students receive credit for three undergraduate courses upon successful completion of this program. 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 437A, Environmental Wildlands Studies (5 quarter credits)** – Field studies course of environmental problems affecting the natural and human-impacted ecosystems of our study region, including the role of human interactions.
2. **ESCI 437B, 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 437C, 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 program and will be provided to students in electronic form in advance of the program. 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 program; 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 program. 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 send one transcript to your home university registrar upon successful completion of a Wildlands Studies program. Additional copies of your transcript are [available online](#). To get a copy online, you'll also need a student ID number, which is available by calling the University Registrar's Office at 360 650 3430. Alternatively, you can use your social security number as your student ID number.

Official Course Title(s) on the Western Washington University transcript will be the following:  
For short summer programs: ESCI 437A, Environmental Wildlands Studies (5 quarter credits)

For academic term programs: ESCI 437A, Environmental Wildlands Studies (5 quarter credits)  
ESCI 437B, Wildlands Environmental Field Survey (5 quarter credits)  
ESCI 437C, Wildlands Environment and Culture (5 quarter credits)

### *Credit Transfer*

Students are responsible for determining in advance of their program 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. Additional transcripts can be ordered online 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 programs in October, Fall programs in January, Winter programs in May and Spring programs 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 program. 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 program 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 Program. 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 program. A final grade, however, may be appealed if done so within 45 days of the program 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 program 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](mailto: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 program 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. We do not tolerate plagiarism, using the ideas or materials of others without giving due credit, cheating, or putting forth another student's work as one's own. 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 program 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 program.

### **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 program], [Location], [# credits] Western Washington University, [Program dates]
- (2) In a Field Experience or Research Experience section - e.g., "[title of Wildlands Studies research program]", [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 programs. We have a structured risk management plan that is tailored to each specific program 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 programs, and our instructors work with students throughout the program to learn how to best manage risks that may occur in the program's specific region. We expect students to acquire and use risk management skills on our programs, 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 programs. 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.

### **Program-specific Rules and Protocols**

For every Wildlands Studies program 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 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 program, from start to finish, including all program activities (both structured and non-structured), days off during the program, 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 program 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*

Wildlands Studies programs are currently "dry". Please be prepared to abstain from drinking alcohol for the entire length of the program.

### *Drug Policy*

Wildlands Studies has a “no tolerance” policy on any illicit 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. This may include CBD. Most Wildlands Studies programs 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 the Wildlands Studies office and local authorities. Beyond being dismissed from Wildlands Studies, students who partake are subject to local 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 program. 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 unstructured times off, typically a few hours a week, students may be granted time “off” from the academic expectations of the program. However, it is imperative that faculty and program staff realize that they remain responsible for the well-being of program participants during the entire program, from the day the program starts to its end. “Time off” does not mean students can depart the program or area. It simply provides down time for participants, a short break from the academic responsibilities, and a chance to do laundry, call home, visit an internet café, or catch up on studying.

No student may participate on any high-risk activity during the program, including during any “time off” and this includes but is not limited to zip-lines, recreational horseback rides, whitewater rafting, scuba diving, surfing or other activities that have a high risk factor. 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 programs and will be explained by Wildlands Studies staff during the orientation to the program.

### *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**. Friends or family may only visit off-site before or after the program dates. 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 during the program does so AT THEIR OWN RISK. Any swimming in moving water is strictly prohibited unless Wildlands Studies faculty or staff have reviewed the area for hazards and deemed these minimal; however, students are still swimming at their own risk in this situation. Students may not jump into any bodies of water without faculty consent. Wildlands Studies does not allow any jumping off rocks into the water.

### *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 programs 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 program. 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 are 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 the Participant Agreement, Student Program Manual and presented during the field site orientation. If behavior is sufficient to result in dismissal from the program, Wildlands Studies staff will coordinate transportation – at the student’s expense – to the original meeting place, typically the airport where the program started. At the original meeting place any responsibility for the student on the part of Wildlands Studies, instructors, and staff 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 programs 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 program, 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 program. It is very important that students share with family and friends that they will have extremely limited communication during the program 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](mailto:wildlands@wildlandsstudies.com)

### Leave No Trace Philosophy

All Wildlands Studies programs 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 program 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 all programs. It is important that students understand that they are financially responsible for all their own personal medical costs while on a Wildlands Studies program. This means that if a student needs to visit a doctor while on the program, 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 Logistics Packet (emailed to accepted students about 10 weeks before the program) outlines the required amount of travel insurance and describes a policy that satisfies Wildlands Studies travel insurance requirements. Please note that students need two types of health insurance if they are joining us: their own from the USA and the travel insurance outlined in the Logistics Packet. Once you receive the Logistics Packet, students are required to submit 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 upload these to the Wildlands Studies portal where you submitted your application. These forms must be uploaded to Wildlands Studies before you can participate in the program. 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 program 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 program. Be sure to explain to the physician the location(s) to which our program 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 [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov), a site maintained by the US-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

### *Healthy Traveling*

For most programs, 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](http://www.cdc.gov)) and then navigate to the pages that discuss the country or area where your program 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. 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 at least six months after their departure from the host country. When a student applies for a program, 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 program, 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 packet, which is sent to accepted students about eight to ten weeks in advance of the program start date. Equipment should be in good working order and suitable for the duration and rigor of the program. In addition, participants should pack carefully. We ask students to bring everything asked for in the logistics packet so that they are not without an essential piece of equipment, but also to pack minimally (i.e., only what is in the logistics packet), so that we can easily travel. A good rule of thumb is to keep luggage to one large backpack or duffel, plus a small daypack. Be aware that in most Wildlands Studies programs 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 program itinerary for backpacking. If the program will be backpacking, you are required to bring a backpacking backpack.

### **Student Responsibilities**

The conduct of the student during the program 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 program jeopardizes the student's own welfare or that of fellow participants and/or the quality of the program. 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 program 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 programs, 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 program if he/she is deemed unsuitable for the program for any reason. All programs, courses, fees, and dates are tentative until verified in writing from Wildlands Studies through a program 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 program or its termination, prior to a participants' departure to participate in the program or while the program is in progress. If modification is necessary or desirable, Wildlands Studies may modify the program 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 programs 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 program and cover academic fee only. The “Group Logistics” 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 program. 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) Program is cancelled; 2) Participant requests a refund in writing at least 60 days prior to Program start date. Refunds cannot be given if: 1) Participant cancels within 60 days of Program start date; 2) Participant fails to show up at the designated meeting place and time; 3) Participant decides to leave or is dismissed during the Program. We do not give refunds to Participants for any reason less than 60 days prior to Program start date.

### *In-country Fee Refund Policy*

Wildlands Studies makes most of our logistical reservations several months ahead of the Program start date. For this reason, we offer a 75% refund of the In-Country Group Logistics Fee if: 1) Program is canceled; 2) Participant requests a refund of the In-Country Group Logistics Fee in writing 42 days before Program start date. Refunds cannot be given for: 1) Participant cancels within 42 days of Program start; 2) Participant fails to show up at the designated meeting place and time (Meeting place “no shows”); 3) Participant decides to leave or is dismissed during the Program.

### *Application Fee Refund Policy*

The Application Fee becomes non-refundable upon Participant receipt of our “Acceptance” email indicating acceptance in Program of Participant’s choice. The Application Fee is refunded if: 1) Program is cancelled; 2) Participant is never formally accepted into a Program and was not sent our “Acceptance” email. Wildlands Studies reserves the right to change or cancel Program. 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 Program cancellation.

## **Scholarships and Financial Aid**

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 program. Students attending field programs are expected to bring additional money in the form of Travelers Checks, ATM cards, or credit cards to cover expenses. Wildlands Studies offers a small number of scholarships for certain programs, check out the [scholarship page](#) to learn more.

**Policies Regarding Outstanding Fees**

*Outstanding Tuition Balances*

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

*Other Outstanding Fees*

The student is responsible for payment of all expenses that he/she incurs during the course of the program, 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 program, including damage to housing or other property. If a student fails to meet these responsibilities and Wildlands Studies pays the expense incurred during the program 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.

