

# International Wilderness Guide

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Program handbook

June 2021

## 1 Introduction

This handbook is made to give you a clear vision about the International Wilderness Guide (IWG) program of Tampere College. For an applicant it will offer a cross-section about the skills and social abilities the program has to offer. New student for one's part will find the handbook as an important tool to orient in the beginning of the studies.

Tampere Vocational College (TREDU) is a College which offers education in a range of about 90 different professions. There are more than 18000 students. TREDU and IWG as part of it have numerous partners in Finland and abroad. International project work is part of our everyday work. We are not linked only with the other Vocational Colleges. A lot of the co-operation is done on both University of Applied Sciences and University levels too.

The first IWG course started in August 1997. After that about 300 students have passed the program. Every autumn we invite old students to the IWG-meeting, where old course mates get together and a new generation is welcomed to the family. The program has been a cradle of many lifetime friendships. We are happy to welcome you on tour to the world of International Wilderness Guide program.

Mikko Oinonen  
Lecturer

## 2 The IWG Philosophy

The Program aims to the Wilderness guide vocational proficiency test. These tests are independent of the means by which occupational skills have been acquired. Skills obtained via training, working life or hobbies are treated as one entity. Such skills, regardless of how they are acquired, can be utilized in vocational proficiency tests.

The National Board of Education supervises the system. The wilderness guide courses organized by other Colleges follow the same guideline. In practice, however each College has a personal approach how the goal is reached. During the first weeks of the studies, each student drafts a personal study plan with the teacher. This study plan states the optional modules, which the student has chosen on top of the obligatory modules.

The first distinctive factor of the IWG is of course the fact that the students are international. So far, we have had people from 30 different nationalities. From the very beginning of the studies the students need to learn how to adjust with people coming from another culture.

Each one of the expeditions that are executed during the program is planned by a group of students. As the groups are formed we like to see a mixture of nationalities in each planning group. This gives the planning an extra spice. The planning group's responsibility is to plan the whole adventure from departure to arrival. The teachers supervise and give guidelines but the actual work is done by the planning group. Learning by doing is an important part of the IWG philosophy.

We spend a lot of time outdoors. Besides the several day expeditions, we do day trips to the surrounding Nature conservation areas all year around.

Traditional wilderness skills are the third factor, which needs to be emphasized. The IWG people learn how to build a camp with an open shelter and open fire for warmth and cooking. Orienteering is done by a map and compass. We move around in the wilderness on foot and on cross-country skis during the winter. On waters we move by canoes and kayaks. Of course engines are used for transportation but in the forest we rely on our feet. Safety issues are high-lighted in all circumstances.

Around the year many kinds of handcrafts are done. Every student forges a knife blade and then makes a handle and sheath. Tool handles and other objects are carved out of wood. Handcrafts form a significant part of traditional wilderness skills. Gear maintenance could be also seen as part of handcrafts. Holes in tents and dents in canoes are treated by students.

Many of the skills that are practiced in the program are new experiences for the students. As the hand starts to obey the eye in wood carving it clearly promotes the self-esteem of the student. In the international environment self-knowledge expands as matters at hand are evolving in a new manner. Social abilities increase on the same breath. Learning to understand Nature leads to the same direction.

Last, but not least factor is the study environment. Our expeditions head to beautiful Nature conservation areas. This fact brings also an extra tension to the planning process. Old-growth forests have their own magical influence which people start to notice after a few days of wandering. Phrase "Energy flows, matter circulate" is revealed in practice. All the stress people might have dissolves in the perfect harmony and silence of the forest.

### 3 Aims of the program

Wilderness Guide is a weather proof judge of human nature, cook and all-round expert, who knows how to accompany customers to Nature and bring them safely back, so that all the participants feel satisfied and refreshed.

During the studies the student learns:

- ❖ The meaning of safety factors in various outdoor activities. Key words: risk assessment, safety plan, evacuation plan, safety document
- ❖ Trustworthy wilderness skills: orienteering, fire making, fishing, cooking...
- ❖ How to plan and execute long expeditions despite the season and weather
- ❖ The use of hand tools
- ❖ How to work in customer service
- ❖ Dimensions of group dynamics
- ❖ Natural processes, ecology and biology of different life forms
- ❖ To identify a large number of species: plants, mammals, fish, insect...
- ❖ How to run a business in Nature tourism

#### 3.1 There is life also after the IWG-course

Our former students are working in Nature tourism all around the world. The support of our former students has proven to be strong for the College and new students. Many of the IWG members have a business of their own. There are also international business networks inside the IWG, where former students work together.

The sectors of business vary a lot. There are sledge-dog companies, ski /hiking-, handicraft-, paddling- and adventure companies. Many of IWG people are working either as individual guides or sub-contractors for major tourism magnets in Lapland. Due to the fact that Nature tourism is highly season dependent many work as free-lancers.

### 4 Expeditions

Before longer trips we practise the basic skills in the woods around Kuru. The second week of studies is performed in forest camp conditions. A few vital issues are covered, such as orienteering, First Aid and cooking. We also dig into plans that are necessary to do before wilderness journeys, such as safety-, route-, gear and food plans.

The first trip heads to Isojärvi National Park. Main things to be practised on the first expedition are:

- orienteering in a dense forest
- camping in autumn conditions
- fire making
- guiding
- packing one's gear
- leading a group
- safety issues on hiking trip

In March we do a skiing trip somewhere in Lapland or Eastern Finland. On the agenda, there are:

- orienteering in winter conditions
- skiing and pulling a sleigh on virgin snow
- guiding
- camping in winter conditions
- cooking on open fire
- safety issues on skiing trip

The paddling expedition is done in late May. The route is a mixture of flat water and river. At that time of the year Nature is becoming green again after a long winter. Besides paddling we visit several Nature sanctuaries to learn about different kinds of ecosystems. Issues that are practised are:

- orienteering on waterways
- paddling techniques
- how to pack a canoe/kayak
- flat and white water rescues
- guiding
- safety issues on paddling trip

The last trip is done to the Archipelago of Baltic Sea. This trip lasts only five days in early June. The purpose is to study plants and birds. Our base, the Jungfruskär-island is referred to be the crown jewel of Archipelago National Park.

## 5 The time-line of the program

The form and contents of the program has changed steadily along the years. We collect feed-back from each group and mould the program accordingly. We did an experiment and extended the program to last 15 month. Now we have noticed that applicants have considerable problems to finance so long stretch of time. Because of this fact we have decided to return back to a 10 month program.

The tests of the Professional exam are mingled with the studies to ease the pressure. We try to avoid long classroom periods at the College.

## Schedule for Wilderness Guide Course 2021/2022

2021

Week	Course / Activities	N.B.
33	<p>Getting familiar with surroundings of Kuru, introduction to College (storages, routines, general info) and staff. Course planning and going through the timetable. Presentation of the professional examination. Delivering tasks for professional examination (business plan, winter trip plan). First draft of the personal study plan. Wilma, Moodle, Futural skills, Teams; study tools.</p> <p>Food plan for next week's camp. Trip planning in general. Personal flora. Selection of planning groups, delivering tasks.</p> <p>Students find their placements for the practical training starting on week 48. Meeting with the planning group of the first trip &amp; teachers.</p>	Timo Järvenpää Mikko Oinonen
	<p>Forest camp. Building up a camp. Different shelters. Wood chopping, fire making, fire starters. Safety with hand tools, knife and axe. Basic grips when carving wood. Knots and ropes.</p> <p>Fishing. Orienteering, maps, compass &amp; coordinates. Practice in the woods. Identification of plants, edible &amp; poisonous plants. How to pack your backpack.</p>	TJ, MO
	<p>Trip planning. Meadow clearing in Pyynerä. Knowledge about gear: materials, outfits, sleeping bags, cookers etc. Plant identification. W. guide gear, visiting shops in Tampere.</p>	TJ, MO
	<p>Trip planning, plant and bird trips. Orienteering test (day and night). Use and maintenance of hand tools. Personal flora check. GPS. Personal study plan.</p>	TJ, MO
	<p>Kayak and canoe basics on Lake Yläisjärvi. FA 1 (2days). Aipal feed-back</p>	TJ, MO, Sirpa Miettinen
	<p>Wilderness food. Cooking on open fire with different techniques. Meat &amp; fish. Edible and poisonous mushrooms</p>	Tuomo Hyytinen
	<p>Nature conservation in Finland. Sustainable tourism. Day orienteering test for professional examination. Visit at Vapriikki museum, Tampere. Business idea check. Expedition to a Finnish NP</p>	TJ MO
42	<p>Autumn vacation</p>	
	<p>Hygiene passport studies. Nature knowledge (berries, mushrooms, polypore, mosses, lichens, and tree species).</p>	Tuomo Hyytinen, TJ
	<p>Building products for customers. FA2 Deadline for personal flora. Identification test (berries, mushrooms, polypore, mosses, lichens, tree species)</p>	MO, TJ, Sirpa Miettinen
	<p>During the weeks 45 and 46 the group is divided in two. Handicrafts: forging a knife (steel), handle (wood, bark) and sheath (leather). Safe use of drills, planes and circular saw. IWG-meeting?</p>	TJ, MO

52	<p>Nature knowledge: species identification, ecology (population, winter) basic terms. Biology of plants and animals. Evolution, evolutionary psychology, everyman's rights, evening programs. Cultural history: old habits, Finnish mythology.</p>	TJ, MO
	<p>Group dynamics, how does a group form, roles and leadership. Conflicts / unity of the group. Weather project start-up. Verbal communication, body language. Experiential learning. Tracks and droppings. Hunting in Finland. Joining an elk hunt in Kuru. Making schooling agreements and assessment papers Obligatory practical training. Obligatory practical training Obligatory practical training Obligatory practical training Vacation</p>	TJ, MO

2022

Week	Course / Activities	N.B.
1	Distance learning, preparing business plan and trip plan	
2	Business economics, business forms, Visiting Ensimetri and companies. Starting to build the business plan for the exam. Rescue organizations in Finland. Winter fishing. Winter exam planning.	AP, TJ
3	Nature knowledge (mammals, fish, jawless fish). Skiing exercises (if there is snow!) downhill, uphill, with & without poles. Safety document / plan / instructions. Fishing in Finland. Winter exam planning. Personal study plan and check-up.	MO, TJ
4	Geology, Weather and heavenly phenomenon. Stars, halos, Northern lights. Weather elements, thunder, lightning, fog... Identification test: Fish, jawless fish.	TJ, MO
5	Finnish forestry now and before. Statistics, forestry vs. diversity and recreational use. Visiting forestry sites. Winter exam planning. Special features in winter trekking, gear, moving, nutrition, staying warm. Shelter building from natural materials.	TJ, MO
6	Obligatory practical training (Skiing training)	
7	Obligatory practical training, Proficiency tests are done during the PT	
8	Obligatory practical training	
9	Obligatory practical training	
10	Obligatory practical training	
11	Vacation	
12	Weather project conclusion. Safety elements in on the water trips. Self-rescue from cold water. Planning skiing trip. Meeting with the Canoe trip planning group	TJ, MO
13	Gear maintenance. Risk analysis practices. Winter fishing. GPS and coordinates. Planning Skiing trip. Psychological preparation for long trips. Business plan check-up. Deadline for Prof. examination business plan (If not returned person have time to do it while others are on Skiing expedition) Planning group presentation of the ski expedition. Identification test: mammals	MO, TJ

14	Environment conservation. Planning of Nature paths.	TJ
15	Ski expedition	MO, Basho Poelman
16	Cooking practices, Bird trip	TJ, Tuomo Hyytinen
17	Practical training Proficiency tests are done during the PT.	
18	Practical training, Dead-line for Prof.exam Winter trip plan. (if not returned person have time to do it while others are on Paddling trip)	
19	Practical training (If proficiency test is not done person uses, week 21, canoeing trip time for it)	
20	Paddling practices. Winter gear maintenance, Storage rooms.	TJ, MO
21	Canoeing trip.	MO
22	Insects and spiders. Handicrafts. Visiting hunting museum in Riihimäki. Survival night	TJ, MO
23	Plant and bird identification, (Baltic sea excursion)	TJ
24	Plant and bird identification, Identification tests on plants and birds. Course ends.	TJ, MO

*Changes in the contents of the schedule / course programme are possible and most probable. The reason for these are the booking of lecturers, weather conditions, etc.*

## FAQ

*What kind of studies or work experience do you need before you can apply?*

None. But we expect that you already do Nature based hobbies like canoeing, hiking, Nature photography, fishing etc. Anything which can tell that you like it out there.

*How much is the Course fee?*

Course fee is 1000 €.

Notice: Before payment think carefully if you really want and can join the course, because if you change your mind later we don't refund the course fee. Only time we would refund the course fee (minus bank fees) is that if the course is cancelled due to us.

Accommodation in the College's dormitory cost 140 €/month. Deposit of 2 months rent 280 € and the dormitory key 70 € will be collected.

You do not need to order a place from the dorm in advance as there is space for everyone.

*Is there a payment for expeditions?*

The expeditions we do are part of the study plan. You do not need to pay for the traveling, only for your food.

*How does the application process work?*

We collect applications continuously until the deadline date, the 11 of April 2021. During the last part of April we contact applicants by e-mail to agree upon the interview. Those living in Finland are invited to Tampere for a face to face interview. People from abroad we contact by Skype.

*What kind of is schedule for the year?*

The form and contents of the program has changed steadily along the years. We collect feedback from each group and mould the program accordingly. We did an experiment and extended the program to last 15 month. Now we have noticed that applicants have considerable problems to finance so long stretch of time. Because of this fact we have decided to return back to a 10 month program.

The tests of the Professional exam are mingled with the preparing studies to ease the pressure. We try to avoid long classroom periods at the College. Schedule for Wilderness Guide Course 2022–2023 coming on this page later.

*What kind of gear do I need?*

You need weather proof clothing and a basic wilderness kit: sleeping bag, mattress, camp stove, compass, head torch. For winter trips we provide the skis and a sled. During the very first weeks of the program we will visit some outdoor shops. You have then enough time to decide what kind gear you still need.

*What are the goals of IWG course?*

Wilderness Guide is a weatherproof judge of human nature, cook and all-round expert, who knows how to accompany customers to Nature and bring them safely back, so that all the participants feel satisfied and refreshed.

*You seem to have lot of interesting topics in the studies. In what depth you study these subjects?*

Yes, studies cover lot of different subjects, academic and skills. However, studies are on vocational level and that means we touch the subjects on introductory level. After introduction and basic training, students are expected to study and train subjects by themselves.

*How is the life in dormitories?*

IWG students' dormitory is an old office building which has been converted to student housing. There are four different units which has common kitchen, shower and toilet. Room sizes vary so they are not similar. Some of them are single rooms and some doubles. Most of the cases room has to be shared with another student.

*I have read blogs and writings of former students. How up to date you would consider those to be?*

Hard to say whom you have been following, but latest bigger changes happened on course 2019/20 due to budget cuts and curriculum changes. So all from that period or older has changed quite a bit. Check our latest year plan for current content.

Reading old blogs have caused sometimes false expectancy for some student. To avoid misunderstandings, check the source to find out if the content is valid to describe current studies.

*Where can I find information about moving to Finland, living and studying in Finland?*

One very informative site is [www.infofinland.fi](http://www.infofinland.fi)