

KWG Packrafting
Level 1: Essentials of Packrafting

KWG's *Level 1: Essentials of Packrafting* course is designed to teach novice paddlers to competently enjoy entry-level packrafting trips, and participate in more advanced trips as part of a more experienced team.

***No Packrafting Experience Necessary**

Course Duration: 2 days (8 – 10 hour days)

Course Location /Venues:

- KWG Campus in Kennicott, AK
- Kennicott Glacier Lake, Training Ground Rapids CL II
- Sections of the Kennicott River & McCarthy Creek CL III-

Class Ratio: 1 Instructor to every 4 students, or 2:8 with an additional instructor or qualified assistant

Level 1 Course Overview:

The majority of this two-day course will be spent outside as we practice skills on the water. The course will involve swimming in very cold water in dry suits and off trail hiking. Each day will begin with a classroom session where we'll introduce new concepts or review concepts from previous sessions. Each day will conclude with combining skills covered that day on a down river run.

The main venue for this course, the Kennicott Lake Training Grounds, has very cold glacial water, pool drop rapids and lots of current; making it an ideal place for learning basic packraft skills. Most of Alaska's rivers are wild, cold and continuous in nature. This type of boating demands a specific set of skills and river-running strategies. The McCarthy Creek and Kennicott River are excellent resources to introduce you to this type of boating.

This course serves as an introduction to a broad range of topics including: Environmental Concerns and Equipment, River Reading, Principles of River Safety and Rescue, Self Rescue, Basic Paddle Strokes, Basic Boating Maneuvers, and Day Trip Planning. We will also briefly touch on higher levels skills such as Group Rescue, River Running and Wilderness Considerations for Packrafting.

In addition to learning hard skills, we focus on the importance of good decision-making, personal judgment and group responsibility in all river situations.

Prerequisites: In order to participate in **Level 1: Essentials of Packrafting** each participant must:

- Be in physical condition to participate in all individual skills and activities listed in the course outline.
- Be able to actively swim in cold water while in a dry suit and PFD.
- Be accountable for keeping themselves properly outfitted, fed and hydrated during full days in the field.

*If you do not meet these prerequisites please contact KWG for Custom Course options.

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Course Content

The course content, and sequence of instruction may be adjusted to best fit the group's needs and water levels at class locations, for this reason the following itinerary is subject to change.

Day 1 Classroom Session

Course Introduction, Expectations, & Logistics:

- Welcome, introductions, review waiver and complete paperwork
- Student & instructor course expectations and limitations
- Course itinerary & site logistics
- PFD policy (always wear on water)
- Leave No Trace ethics

Equipment:

- Gear shake down
- PFD's (Life Jackets): types, fit
- Drysuits
- Packrafts: types, materials, parts, sizing
- Paddles: types, length, materials, parts, how to fit paddle to you
- Personal equipment: appropriate clothing and water, food, shoes, sun protection, sun glasses with straps, bug protection, whistle, knife, fire kit
- Packing your packrafting day-pack

Rescue:

- Exercising judgment, safety as a state of mind
- Rescue Priorities: First people, then boats, then other gear
- Responsibilities of the swimmer, rescuer and the group

Day 1 Field Session

Basic River Reading:

- Current
- Main flow & Eddies
- Eddies lines & current lines
- Waves, Holes, Hazards

Self Rescue:

- Wet exit and re-entry
- Whitewater swimming techniques

Paddle Strokes:

- Forward
- Back (slowing down)
- Sweep
- Brace
- Rudder

Boating Maneuvers:

- Directional paddling
- Maintaining position in current
- Ferries
- Catching and Exiting Eddies

Day 2 Classroom Session

Review Session

- Review techniques introduced and practiced during Day 1
- Watch and review video from Day 1 Field Sessions

The Alaskan Packrafting Environment:

- Cold Water
- Adverse Weather Conditions
- Situational Awareness
- Remote Settings

Personal Preparation for Packrafting:

- Personal ability training
- River swimming ability, comfort and confidence in water
- Packrafting fitness and conditioning

Packraft Repair

- Patch Kits
- Tyvek Tape

Day 2 Field Session

Rescue and Safety:

- Self Rescue
 - Swimming in current
 - Mid-river re-entry
- Assisting Rescue
 - From your boat
 - Bulldozing
 - Towing
 - From shore
 - Extension
 - Throw ropes

Paddle Strokes & Boating Maneuvers:

- Review continue to practice the paddle strokes & boating maneuvers introduced during Day 1

Conclusion & Wrap Up:

- Group debrief / Individual feedback
- Course limitations
- Importance of First Aid & CPR
- Well-rounded wilderness skills and judgment
- Importance of additional instruction, practice and experience
- Importance of appropriate level of safety & rescue training
- Course evaluation

Wrangell- St. Elias National Park
Alaska



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