ALASKA PACKRAFT SCHOOL PRESENTS:

EXPEDITION TRAINING COURSE

WRANGELL ST ELIAS NATIONAL PARK: “LAKINA TRAVERSE”

DATES: August 14-18th, 2025

LOCATION: Wrangell St Elias National Park, Lakina River

TUITION PER STUDENT: $2000

WHO THIS IS FOR: Packraft enthusiasts looking to take their paddling & “off trail” overland route skills to the next level in a safe, supportive & FUN learning environment. This is ideal for physically strong hikers & paddlers seeking to connect with like minded adventure lovers. Expedition training courses are great opportunities to make new friends/trip partners while gaining the knowledge necessary to comfortably take on, create & execute remote backcountry packraft missions integrating both land & river travel.

LEAD INSTRUCTOR: Jule Harle

GROUP MAX: 6 students, 2 instructors/guides

EXPEDITION SNAPSHOT:

The learning objectives of expedition courses are to develop skills necessary to be your own wilderness packraft guide. You will be involved with the “big picture” planning & preparation process from start to finish- APS instructors share what goes through their heads & how they plan for personal & professional expeditions. We'll get you in the “mind of a guide,” gaining more tools, insight & training from instructors who have almost 20 years of experience getting others ready for & executing Alaskan backcountry packraft trips.

Having previously established foundational packrafting skills, you will meet other team members to get on the water in McCarthy for a one day on-water safety refresh & skill refinement. This prep day is an essential ingredient for the success of the trip. Not only will instructors enhance your personal boat control & paddling skills - we'll practice & review important river safety & self/group rescue scenarios before flying into a remote wilderness setting with limited resources. After a flatwater lake session, Kennicott River or McCarthy Creek will be used to practice skills.

We'll also review & assess student's personal gear & our group gear before the following day's flight into the Alaska Range. All participants will be self-supported: carrying food, camping equipment and shared group items. This allows you to become familiar with & develop confidence in your personal gear while refining "systems" you'll use on future packraft trips.

RIVER CHARACTER & DIFFICULTY:

An iconic packrafting route, the Lakina Traverse combines a short bush flight & land travel through epic terrain before rewarding you with continuous "read & run" class III whitewater. A 15 minute backcountry flight with Wrangell Mountain air lands us at the Fosse airstrip, where our expedition begins.

We'll hike into & travel up the rugged Hidden Creek Valley. The daily mileage might not seem like a lot, but the terrain will keep us on our toes as we traverse through remarkable mountain country. This route isn't for the faint of heart, as it presents a variety of Alaskan terrain challenges: glacial crossings, moraine walking, steep side hilling, creek crossings & continuous route finding. Our efforts are rewarded when we make camp in an area of alpine so incredible it's known as "Land of Oz" by locals. By day 3, we descend towards the Lakina River where we transition into packraft mode for 20 miles of wilderness boating at its finest.

The upper stretches of the Lakina River start slowly, allowing ample time to ease into paddling before longer rapid sets downstream. The Lakina has a continuous feel, with read and run "glacial gravy"- lots of wave trains & boulder gardens in the canyon of forested banks as we leave the glacial scenery & epic views of the Wrangell Mountains. The trip ends at the Lakina River Bridge for a convenient pick-up for a 14 mile drive back to McCarthy. 3 days of backpacking & 1 day of wilderness boating.

TRIP PREPARATION:

An integral part of learning how to plan for personal expeditions involves creating a route plan or trip itinerary. We will discuss & plan our exact route and daily mileage together during the pre-trip virtual meetings

- **2 hr virtual group meeting** (July, date time/TBA)
- **30-60 minute private** gear/trip preparation consult (in person or virtual)

EXPEDITION ITINERARY

- **DAY 0: Car camp @ Kennicott River footbridge**
- **DAY 1: Meet @ 9am in McCarthy, AK**
    - Trip Prep & River Skills/Safety Refresher
    - Venue: AM Kennicott Lake. PM Kennicott River or McCarthy Creek
    - Car camp in McCarthy @ footbridge
- **DAY 2:** Fly into backcountry & begin hiking route into Hidden Valley
- **DAY 3:** Continue hiking route into "Land of Oz"
- **DAY 4:** Finish hiking route, descend into Lakina River valley
- **DAY 5:** Packraft Lakina River
    - Vehicle shuttle back to McCarthy.
    - Car camp @ footbridge

TOTAL HIKING DISTANCE: 20 miles, approx 5000 ft elevation gain/loss

TOTAL RIVER DISTANCE: 18 miles

LAKINA TRAVERSE COURSE PREREQUISITES

1. **A desire to learn and adventure with a team of capable packraft enthusiasts.**
2. **Physically capable** to comfortably participate in BOTH sports: paddling & off trail backpacking. Must be able to carry a 40-60 lb backpack w/ all personal paddling & expedition gear through challenging terrain for 3 consecutive days. Must be capable of paddling for 4-6 hrs on class II/III.
3. **Individuals who do not want a "guided" trip, but want to be an active participant** in the planning process and success of the group.
4. **Team members should be emotionally & physically fit;** have ability & willingness to adjust to changes inevitable in wilderness environments & what "The Alaska Factor" may throw at us.
5. Proficient swimmer.
6. Minimum 18 yrs old.
7. **Having taken a packrafting clinic or course prior & experience on class III moving water.** ACA packraft paddling clinic (2-day), or equivalent training or significant previous kayaking or packrafting experience may also qualify. Qualification/acceptance remains at the discretion of APS.
8. **Having taken Swiftwater Rescue Training within 3 years** (certification course, training OR instruction with APS).
9. **Familiarity with your own personal packraft, river gear & camping equipment;** you should be willing to acquire the gear needed for this expedition and to plan and

prepare with other team members. Review the gear list for more info on what's essential for this trip. Some rental items are available, please contact the school.

PAYMENT POLICY & PROCEDURE

A $500 non-refundable deposit via credit card is required to secure your space. The remaining balance, $1500, will need to be received through Nuvision Federal Credit Union bank transfer, cashiers or personal check. $750 is due 30 days after deposit & remaining $750 is due by July 1st, 2025. However, the remaining balance is due immediately if you are registering after July 1st.

Paying the remaining $1500 by credit card is an option, but with an additional 3% fee; $25 for each $750 payment, adding an additional $50 total.

CANCELLATION POLICY: It is strongly advised that you consider purchasing travel insurance which, in most cases, will recover costs or fees due to cancellation – please inquire with your insurance provider.

CANCELLATION FEES: Note the cancellation policies for expedition trips are different from course cancellations listed in the Terms & Agreements online.

- All monies will be returned (less the non-refundable $500 deposit) if you cancel by July 1st.
- If you cancel after July 1st, no refund will be issued of any funds collected – *Travel insurance is highly recommended*. We understand the financial commitment, however due to backcountry flight costs that APS pays in advance to reserve your space & logistics/planning involved with participant to instructor ratios for a safe expedition execution, we actually lose money in the event you cancel. However, exceptions can be made on a case by case basis in the event we are able to fill your spot with another qualified participant.
- APS will not issue future credit for amounts paid if participants cannot attend. If you need to cancel prior to launch date, it's possible your $$ may be transferred to another individual that meets all prerequisites.