



# W.G.A. Standards

## Wilderness guide Level 2-3

### Boreal

### Backcountry



## Signature Table

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# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

A Wilderness Guide is an integral leader, trained up to date with experience and a high level of self, group environmental awareness. A Wilderness Guide is competent to develop, organize, promote and guide activities in a safe way, in remote natural landscapes, with a high level of self-sufficiency up to several weeks according to the level of training, experience and legal competences. We are leaders of leaders and as Wilderness Leaders we always develop and practice our vision and moral purpose.

## 1.1 Scope

The Scope of this document is to define the WGA certifications and the requirements to obtain them in a way that they can be assessed uniformly across the different training centers to guarantee a good standard of education.

## 1.2 Reference Documents

RD-1 Earth Charter	<a href="https://earthcharter.org/discover/the-earth-charter/">https://earthcharter.org/discover/the-earth-charter/</a>
RD-2 Mission Statement	<a href="https://wildernessguidesassociation.com/mission-statement/">https://wildernessguidesassociation.com/mission-statement/</a>
RD-3 Code of ethics	<a href="https://wildernessguidesassociation.com/code-of-ethics/">https://wildernessguidesassociation.com/code-of-ethics/</a>
RD-4 Ecoregions	<a href="https://wildernessguidesassociation.com/w-g-a-eco-regions/">https://wildernessguidesassociation.com/w-g-a-eco-regions/</a>
RD-5 Policy for firearms	<a href="https://wildernessguidesassociation.com/policy-for-firearms/">https://wildernessguidesassociation.com/policy-for-firearms/</a>

## 1.3 Terminology

Abbreviation/Term	Meaning
Frontcountry*	The Front Country are Wilderness Areas useful for trips like hikes and/or multiple day hikes in areas where rescue services can reach them (normally) within 12 hours.
Backcountry*	Back Country has none, or hardly, cell-phone reception. There is no human settlement within a day walk. Accessibility is difficult and help in case of emergency could (and normally does) take longer than 12 hours to reach the injured person. There is also wildlife to consider in decision making (egg. Bears, Cougars). In our opinion Europe does not have real Back Country, except maybe in the far North (Arctic) and East (Russia), but that's it. A Back Country Guide can take people to remote areas, expedition style.



Ecoregions	Ecoregions cover relatively large areas of land or water, and contain characteristic, geographically distinct assemblages of natural communities and species. The biodiversity of flora, fauna and ecosystems that characterize an ecoregion tends to be distinct from that of other ecoregions. The W.G.A. uses the Walter Biome system to determine the Ecoregions. Ecoregions are not season specific unless otherwise stated.
Specialization	Skill or set of skills where the guide has a knowledge and experience deeper than the one provided by the basic WGA trainings. (see Appendix A)

The difference between Front Country and Back Country is subjective and a thin line.

What does a WGA Guide make a Front-Country Guide or a Back-Country Guide?

- Days of training
- Knowledge and Skills
- Ecoregion specific / Training
- Other experiences in the field
- Hours and experience in Guiding
- Experience level in Back Country and tough environment
- Level of Certification (WGA level or similar IML etc.).

## 1.4 Document Structure

Section 2 contains the definitions of the different levels and its requirements according to the ecoregion.

Section 3 explains the requirements to be a guide instructor or a training institute.

Appendix A explains what specializations are and presents a list of examples for the levels on Section.

Appendix B lists and maps in more detail the skills and knowledge needed to obtain the different levels defined in Section 2.

## 2 LEVELS AND COMPETENCES

In the following sub-sections the different levels, its structure and competences are explained in detail. As a general overview, there are 3 levels (see Figure 1):

- Level 1 is the entry point and provides the basic skills for every WGA guide.
- Level 2 is a more advanced training; it has different modalities that focus on one of the available ecoregions (the student has to choose a modality).
- Level 3 is the highest level of training in the W.G.A., it gives further knowledge and skills applicable to the modality chosen on level 2.

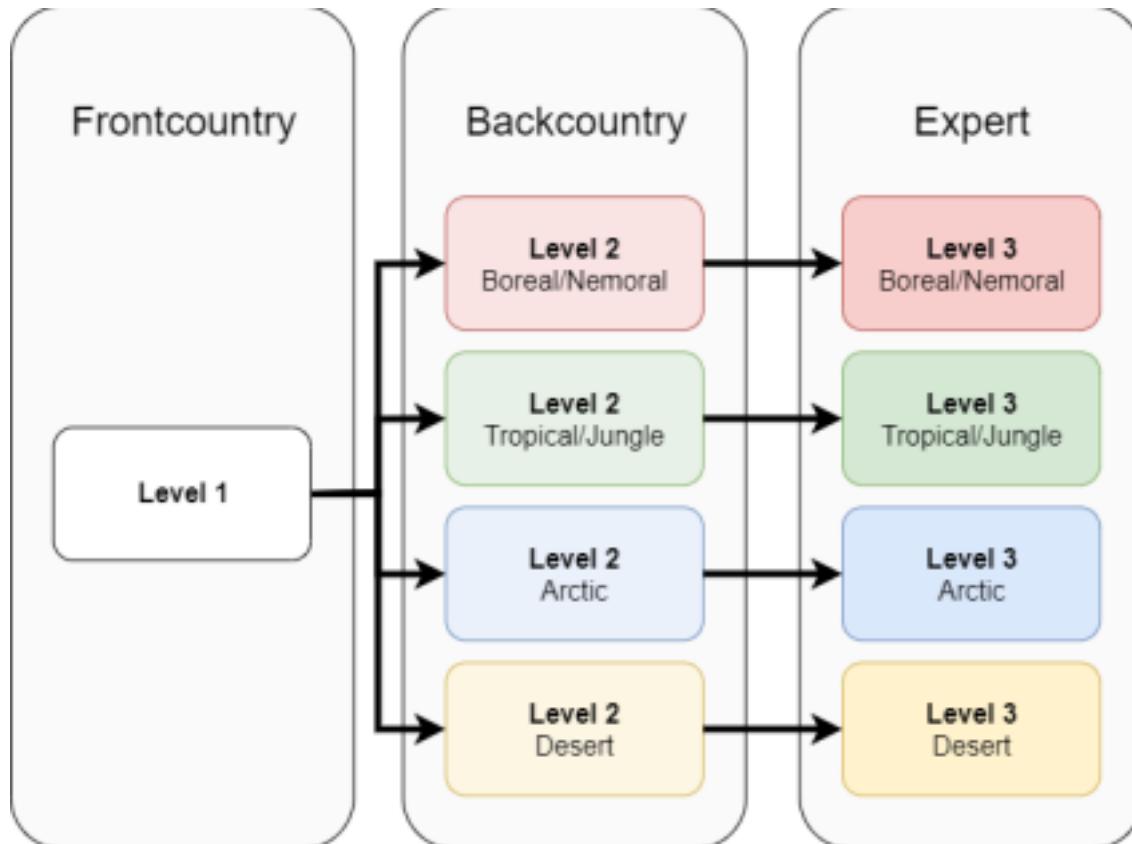


Figure 1 Level structure

Transfer of experience: the WGA applicant can proof experiences in other ecoregions, which can be applicable and will be evaluated during the assessment process.



## 2.1 Wilderness guide - Level 2 Boreal: Backcountry

### 2.1.1 Competences Level 2

- Can guide autonomously in territory with which they are familiar, where evacuation can surpass 12 hours.
- Can act as a guide off trail without direct supervision of W.G.A. Level 2 or Level 3 guides.
- Knows about his/her limitations and possibilities as a W.G.A. level 2 guide and his/her responsibilities towards nature and customers.

### 2.1.2 Qualification assessment

#### Qualifications:

- A Minimum of 28 extra field-training days (within the level 2 competences) by a W.G.A. approved organization or W.G.A. Training Institute. These training days must be on top of the level 1 requirements.
- The applying guide must have a valid WFA certificate (revalidated every 3 years) with a minimum of 40 hours training. Medical courses like WFA, WFRA, WAFA or WFR only count for maximum 2 days of field training.
- A minimum of 4 documented specializations by a W.G.A. Training institute or W.G.A. approved organization or similar. (Appendix A) These specializations will not be counted as field-training days for a W.G.A. Level 1 or 2 application.

#### Practical Period:

- A minimum of 28 days of (assistant) guiding under supervision of a W.G.A. Approved Level 2/3 guide or a W.G.A. approved organization within field overnight experience within the level 2 competences and ecoregion.
- In field overnight experience should be at least 14 days of random camping in remote- or backcountry areas within the boreal ecoregion.
- At least 14 days of (assistant) guiding should be under direct supervision.
- Experience should be logged in the W.G.A. Logbook which can be found and downloaded on the W.G.A. Website.
- A W.G.A. approved organization for internships is published on the website of the W.G.A.
- The practical period should be well documented and submitted within the application.

### 2.1.3 Skills and Knowledge

See Appendix B.

<sup>1</sup> Any documented and suitable guiding experience with references either from the employer/supervisor or from the clients, supervised and signed off by a Level 2 or 3 WGA guide or another experienced guide from a suitable organization or association. At least 14 days should be under direct supervision.



## 2.2 Wilderness guide - Level 3 Boreal: Backcountry

### 2.2.1 Competences Level 3

- Can guide autonomously in territory with which they are familiar, where evacuation can surpass 12 hours.
- Can act as an expert guide off trail under without supervision of W.G.A. Level 2 or Level 3 guides.
- Knows about his/her limitations and possibilities as a W.G.A. level 3 guide and his/her responsibilities towards nature and customers.
- A level 3 guide can train level 1 guides (see 3.1.2 qualifications).

### 2.2.2 Qualification assessment

#### Qualifications:

- A minimum of 120 days (960 hours) of (assistant) guiding from which at least 60 days (480 hours) in Remote / Backcountry areas within the Boreal Ecoregion.
- A Minimum of 20 days of training in Group Management, Didactics, Teaching and/or Coaching or a Teaching Degree.
- The applying guide must have a valid WFA certificate (revalidated every 3 years) with a minimum of 40 hours training. Medical courses like WFA, WFRA, WAFA or WFR only count for maximum 2 days of field training.
- A minimum of 6 documented specializations by a W.G.A. Training institute or W.G.A. approved organization or similar. (Appendix A) These specializations will not be counted as field-training days for a W.G.A. Level 1, 2 or 3 applications.
- The applying guide must have knowledge about Search & Rescue fundamentals (NASAR) The applying guide must have knowledge about Metabolic engines the phosphagen, the glycolytic, and the oxidative pathway.
- The applying guide must be able to organize and lead a rescue party in remote areas.
- The applying guide must have a letter of recommendation from an approved level 3 guide instructor and /or an approved organization.
- The applying guide have proof of good behavior or work in a field where that is already needed.
- The applying guide must have at least 300 days (2400 hours) of guiding experience within the Boreal – Nemoral Ecoregion, from which at least 125 days (1000 hours) in the Remote / Backcountry if he/she wants to train W.G.A. Level 1 guides to become a level 2 or 3 guide.
- Experience should be logged in the W.G.A. Logbook which can be found and downloaded on the W.G.A. Website.
- A W.G.A. approved organization for internships is published on the website of the W.G.A.
- The applying guide deliver proof of all above and certificates.



## 2.2.3 Skills and Knowledge

See Appendix B.

<sup>1</sup> Any documented and suitable guiding experience with references either from the employer/supervisor or from the clients, supervised and signed off by a Level 2 or 3 WGA guide or another experienced guide from a suitable organization or association. At least 14 days should be under direct supervision.



## APPENDIX A: SPECIALIZATIONS

The Wilderness Guide trainings provide knowledge about the different topics that are needed to perform as a guide at an adequate degree. But as there is so much knowledge it is not possible to make the student a complete expert on everything. To overcome this limitation, it is responsibility of the students to sharpen their skills and knowledge in order to become better guides. This self-learning process we call specializations, and every student can choose the areas that they see fit (Each certification level requires a certain number of specializations from the student). Specializations should be certified by a W.G.A. Training institute, W.G.A. approved organization or similar.

There are many areas where a Wilderness Guide can specialize so we are not listing them all, but some examples are:

### Specializations in the category Land:

- Hiking & Backpacking
- Equestrian travel
- Bushcraft
- Survival
- Primitive Skills
- Orienteering
- Rockclimbing
- Canyoning

### Specializations in the category Water:

- Canoeing
- Rafting
- Kayaking
- Sea kayaking

### Specializations in the category Snow & Ice:

- X-country Skiing
- Kite (as a transport form)
- Mushing
- Winter travel & Survival
- Glacier Travel



## Specializations in the category Nature & Culture:

- Meteorology
- Interpretive Guiding
- Ecology
- History
- Geology
- Native/Aboriginal knowledge & skills
- Tracking
- Nature & Wildlife

## Specializations in the category Safety & First aid:

- Wilderness First Aid\*
- Standard First Aid\*
- Wilderness First Responder
- Rope rescue\*
- Search & Rescue\*
- White water rescue technician\*

\*For these specializations is instructor level required

The student will provide valid certifications to the W.G.A. to claim a specialization. This can be done through recognized certificates or by demonstrating the skills.



## APPENDIX B SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

This Appendix shows an overview of the skills that a Wilderness Guide level 2 and 3 should have when reaching a W.G.A. level 2 or 3 application.

### B.1 Leadership

	Required on level
Receiving and sharing Feedback	L1
Instruction & delegate	L1
Understanding groupdynamics	L1
Adaptive leadership styles	L1
Communication skills	L1
Teaching, processing & transference	L1
Teamwork	L1
Decision making & effective problem solving	L1

### B.2 Nature & Wildlife (Local Flora and Fauna)

	Required on level
Basic knowledge of tracks, animal gaits and patterns	L1
Be able to use a field guide	L1
Plant medicine basics	L2
Proper Knowledge of Flora and Fauna of the area you're guiding in	L2



## B.3 Navigation

	Required on level
Correct use of Compass	L1
Correct use of protractor	L1
Correct use of GPS	L1
Correct Use of different scaled maps	L1
Knowledge of the different Grid systems	L1
Route-finding	L1
Orienteering using stars, be able to find the North Star	L2

## B.4 Survival

	Required on level
Basic knife, axe and saw craft	L1
Starting a fire with matches and lighter	L1
Starting a fire with flint & steel	L1
100% score Starting a fire with flint & steel and only wood curls as kindling	L2
Starting a fire using what you have on you	L1
Starting a fire using different types of natural kindling	L1
Signal Fire	L2
Long Fire	L2
Bow Drill	L2
Use of Firestarters like Cotton and Vaseline	L1
Feather stick	L1



Emergency shelter	L1
Different ways to use a tarp	L1
Knowledge of at least 10 knots and 4 lashings	L1
River cross system	L1
2 pulley systems	L1
Know how to use a dry package crossing water	L1
Cordage	L2
Purifying Water	L2
Crafting a Cooking System	L2

## B.5 Rescue, Safety, risk management & first aid

	Required on level
Perform effective and efficient wilderness first aid, rescue and evacuation techniques	L1
Apply effective and efficient risk reducing techniques	L1
Medical and evacuation assistance	L1
Be able to make a risk analysis and emergency plan	L2

## B.6 Environmental dangers (Hazards)

	Required on level
Related to the weather: cold temperatures, wind, water, humidity and use of equipment	L1
Related to wildlife: predators, venomous & poisonous wildlife	L1
Related to terrain: cliffs, loose rocks, irregular terrain, water, ice	L1



Avalanche awareness, at least a full day training	L2
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## B.7 Communications

	Required on level
Knows and follows the minimum requirements of local authorities	L1
Is experienced in using different communication devices on the field	L1
Knows and follows the minimum requirements of local authorities	L1

## B.8 Travel

	Required on level
perform travel techniques, for multiple day trips	L1
perform time-, volume-, and weight saving packing techniques	L1
Demonstrate effective route planning and navigation technique, including natural indicators	L1
Preparing and leading a 3-day trip in rough terrain during winter	L2
Be able to travel in rough terrain for six days during winter	L2
Be able to theoretical prepare a week hike in Back Country	L2
Canoeing technique and rescue	L2
Winter Travel & Survival	L2
Use of Pulka's	L2
Use of snow tools	L2
Use of Snowshoes	



## B.9 Camping techniques (or Backcountry camping techniques)

	Required on level
Choose and build a suitable and safe campsite	L1
Sanitation	L1
Perform personal and group hygiene management	L1
Wilderness Camping	L2
Camping in Winter Conditions (Snow)	L2
How to build a Quinzee or Snow Shelter	L2

### B.9.1 Nutrition & cooking

	Required on level
Outdoor cooking (cast iron, campfire and stoves)	L1
plan and prepare specialized trailfoods menu's	L1
know how to cook safely on open fires and stoves in and outside the shelter	L1
Counting Calories	L2
Understanding of nutrition and metabolism	L2



## B.10 Planning, logistics and organisation (or guiding & preparation)

	Required on level
knows different transportations and logistics options available	L1
understands the environmental impacts of chosen logistics and transportation and knows how to minimize them	L1

## B.11 Environment & culture

	Required on level
Perform low impact techniques	L1
Knowledge of the culture of the area of operation	L1
Consider special rules and regulations which apply on the visited area	L1

## B.12 Equipment & Clothing

	Required on level
is familiar with different approaches to clothing systems and understands the importance of and differences between systems	L1
can create and recommend a clothing system suitable for various activities on the area of operation	L1
is skilled in effective use, maintenance and repair of equipment required for his/her field of specialties before, during and after an expedition	L2
is aware of the state of the market for suitable clothing and equipment and can give clients rational and detailed advice on choosing clothing and equipment	L1
knows how to adapt equipment and personalize it	L1



Maintenance of Snow tools and Winterequipment, Snowshoes etc.	L2
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## B.13 Meteorology

	Required on level
know how to obtain information about the weather by natural and technical means	L1
knowledge about global, local and micro weather systems	L1

## B.14 Health and Hygiëne

	Required on level
Heat illnesses	L1
Dehydration	L1
Hyponatremia	L1
Sun protection	L1
Footcare	L1
Heat and water proofing medical supplies	L1
Bite and sting management	L1
Heatproofing medical supplies	L1

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