



W.G.A. Standards Wilderness Guide Level 2-3 Desert



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

1.3 Terminology

Abbreviation/Term	Meaning
Frontcountry	Frontcountry 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	Backcountry has little or no 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 potentially dangerous wildlife to consider in decision making.
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, their 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 must 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 in level 2.

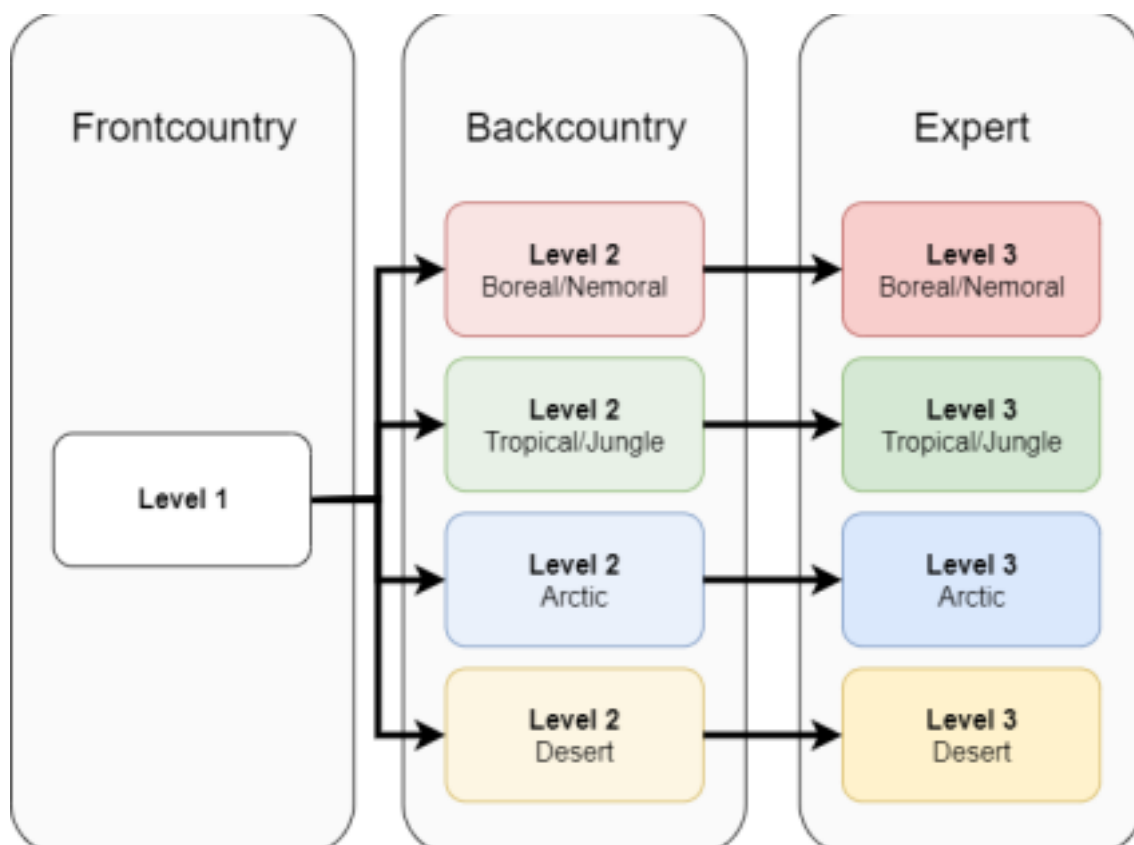


Figure 1 Level structure

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



2.1 Wilderness guide - Level 2 Desert

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:

- 28 days in-person training in the Desert ecoregion with a WGA recognized training institute (224 hours). A minimum of 14 days needs to be developed in remote/backcountry areas within the Desert ecoregion.
- 28 days of assistant guiding in the Desert ecoregion. This is an internship (practical period) under the tutelage and supervision of a Level 2/3 Desert Guide. The apprenticeship experience may include:
 - Assistant guiding on a private/commercial trip with clients, and/or
 - Assistant teaching/instruction during a WGA Level 1 training course and/or WGA Level 2 Desert training course.
- A minimum of 4 specializations

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.
- 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.

¹ 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 Desert

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

- WGA Level 3 Desert Backcountry Guide certification
 - A minimum of 100 days (800 hours) of guiding¹ and/or assistant guiding² from which at least 50 days (400 hours) are in remote/backcountry areas within the Desert ecoregion. These 100 days are in addition to the internship from Level 2 Desert training (Level 2 internship does not count towards the 100 days required for Level 3 training).
 - A minimum of 6 specializations (for example, four specializations from Level 2 + two new specializations for Level 3)
1. Guiding = the applicant is guiding their own paying clients on a trip in the Desert ecoregion. For example, the applicant has created their own guiding company and has obtained paying clients to take on a wilderness trip/expedition in the Desert ecoregion. The applicant is the person responsible for the trip and the well-being of the clients.
 2. Assistant guiding = the applicant is part of a group or team of guides that are guiding/instructing paying clients on a private/commercial trip in the Desert ecoregion. In this case, usually the applicant is not the owner of the company/organization, but a co-worker or subcontractor of the company/organization. Assistant guiding also refers to assisting in the training of wilderness guide students during the formation of their training.



Instruction for Desert students in-training

- Level 2 Desert Backcountry Guides can provide assistant training and instruction¹ for:
 - WGA Level 1 students
 - WGA Level 2 Desert students

- 1. Assistant training and instruction are under the tutelage and supervision of a Level 3 Desert Expert Guide.

- Level 3 Desert Expert Guides can train and instruct:
 - WGA Level 1 students
 - WGA Level 2 Desert students
 - WGA Level 3 Desert students in-training

2.2.3 Skills and Knowledge

See Appendix B.

¹ 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

Specializations in the category Water:

- Canoeing
- Rafting
- Kayaking
- Sea kayaking
- Canyoning

Specializations in the category Snow & Ice:

- X-country Skiing
- Ice skating
- 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
- Edible & Medicinal plants

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
Preparing and leading a 3-day trip in Desert terrain	2
Public speaking	2
Didactics	2
Leading a team of Guides and/or Instructors	3

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

	Required on level
Good Knowledge of Desert Flora & Fauna	2
Excellent Knowledge of Desert Flora & Fauna	3
Good knowledge of tracks and tracking patterns of Desert species	2
Excellent knowledge of Desert species Animal track & Sign	3
Good knowledge of Edible Desert Plants	2
Excellent Knowledge of Edible Desert Plants	3



B.3 Navigation / Oriëntering

	Required on level
Find your way in the terrain using sun and/or stars only	3
Now how to use Map, Compass and GPS with Declination	2

B.4 Survival

	Required on level
Making improvised sandals	2
Making improvised sun goggles	2
100% score on making fire with a ferro rod with natural tinder	2
Purifying water	2
Shelter building in Desert areas during summer and winter	2

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

	Required on level
Wilderness & remote First Aid 40 hours	2
Emergency Plan & Risk Analysis	2
Be able to organize and lead a rescue party in remote Desert areas	3



B.6 Environmental dangers (Hazards)

	Required on level
Related to the weather: high temperatures, wind, water, drought, and use of equipment, sand storms	2
Related to wildlife: poisonous animals and plants	2
Related to terrain: Flash floods, canyons, dunes, mountains	2

B.7 Communications

	Required on level
Is experienced in using SPOT (or similar)	2
Is experienced in using Inreach	2
Is experienced in using radio	2

B.8 Travel

	Required on level
By foot	2, 3
By water (rivers)	2, 3



B.9 Camping techniques (or Backcountry camping techniques)

	Required on level
Wilderness Camping	2, 3
Camping in hot and cold conditions	2, 3
Natural shelter material, set up, and location	2, 3
Tarp shelter set up and location	2, 3

B.9.1 Nutrition & cooking

	Required on level
Counting calories and food value	2
Cooking over open fires	2
Understanding of nutrition and metabolism	3
Hydration	2

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

	Required on level
Preparing and leading a 3-day trip in Desert terrain during winter	2
Be able to theoretically prepare and lead a week hike in Desert Backcountry	3
Rules and regulations	2



B.11 Environment & culture

	Required on level
Indigenous Desert cultural knowledge	2, 3

B.12 Equipment & Clothing






	Required on level
is familiar with different approaches to clothing systems and understands the importance of and differences between systems in desert situations	2
can create and recommend a clothing system suitable for various activities in different types of deserts	2
is skilled in effective use, maintenance and repair of equipment required for desert trips before, during and after an expedition	2

B.13 Meteorology

	Required on level
know how to obtain information about the weather by natural and technical means in desert regions	2




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