



Canada West Mountain School - www.themountainschool.com

Mountains Skills Essentials, 2016

This document will help you prepare for your 4-day **Mountain Skills Essentials** course with Canada West Mountain School. Please read over all the information completely, there are a few "**action items**" that we need to hear back from you on. We also welcome and encourage any questions to ensure you are best prepared for your course. Thanks!

COURSE LOCATION

You will spend the full 4 days of the course in one of a variety of alpine locations. The specific course area will be chosen 7-10 days in advance of the course. Our choice will be based on current snow and weather conditions. There are typically 3 course areas that are used for this program:

- 1) Alpine backcountry behind Blackcomb Mountain in Garibaldi Provincial Park. Access is via the lifts on Whistler/Blackcomb (an additional \$50 for lift access is required). From the top of the lifts, the hike to base camp will be about 2-3 hours. Your campsite will be above treeline. Each of the 4 days will be spent learning and practicing skills in the surrounding alpine areas, including trips out to areas such as the Spearhead Glacier, Decker Glacier and Mt Troy.
- 2) Joffre Range. This Alpine area is accessed via Cerise Creek or Joffre Lakes and provides access to a great zone of snowfields, glaciers and peaks. Camping is at treeline and involves a 3-4 hour hike into base camp. The trailhead is about 3 hours drive from Vancouver.
- 3) Sky Pilot region. Canada West began operating mountaineering courses in the Sky Pilot region during the 1980's and the recent addition of the Sea to Sky Gondola has once again allowed access to this fine area. Snowfields, rocky summits and a small glacier make for an excellent training area for this course. Access is via 4x4 road, or the Sea to Sky Gondola for an additional \$35. The hike to base camp is about 3-4 hours.

MAPS

Once the specific course area is chosen, we will let you know the best maps for that area. Below are the most common maps and resources for each area. Also, for all the locations please look at the area on Google Earth.

Whistler/Blackcomb:

There are a couple of map options for this area. John Baldwin produces an excellent Topo map of the Spearhead Range behind Whistler/Blackcomb, that includes the whole area of the course. This map can be found at most outdoor stores, including MEC. <http://www.johnbaldwin.ca/backcountry-whistler.asp>.

The Canadian National Topographic Systems (NTS) maps require 1 map sheets to cover the area - "92-J-02, Whistler" in the 1:50,000 series.

Joffre:

John Baldwin also has a Topo map of the Duffey Lake Road region that includes the Joffre Range and surrounding glaciers. This map can be found at most outdoor stores, including MEC.

<http://www.johnbaldwin.ca/duffey-lake.asp>

The Canadian National Topographic Systems (NTS) map "92-J-08, Duffey Lake" in the 1:50,000 series.

BC Parks info and map:

http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/joffre_lks/joffre_brochure.pdf?v=1463596552272

Sky Pilot:

The Canadian National Topographic Systems (NTS) map "92-G-11, Squamish" in the 1:50,000 series.

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TRANSPORTATION

Every person is responsible for transportation to/from the trailhead/meeting place, though we do encourage ride sharing. If you can offer a ride to anyone, please let us know; and, if you NEED a ride, please let us know.

EQUIPMENT

Here is a link to the CWMS Mountaineering gear list for your reference:

<http://themountainschool.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/GEAR-Mountaineering.pdf>

Please contact our office if you have any problems accessing this list or if you have any questions about Gear for your course.

In terms of personal and backpacking gear, this will be the same equipment that you would take on an overnight backpacking trip. You will be working each day in and on snow for the whole day, so it is important to have good footwear that will keep your feet warm and dry. As for weather, you should always plan for the worst, including temperatures of freezing or slightly below at night, and possible precipitation of rain and/or wet snow each day. Please ensure your clothing and gear is suitable for these conditions.

Crampons are required, there are many styles of attachment systems yet any general mountaineering crampon will work, as long as they are compatible with your boots.

In regards to communal gear, we encourage people to share tents and cooking gear/stoves. If you already have a team or partner planned, this is great. **If not, please let us know and we can help coordinate this for you and put you in contact with other students.**

FOOD AND COOKING

Your food planning for this trip should be very similar to a backpacking trip of the same length. Here are a few notes to help:

- * review your food carefully and measure out your portions to avoid bringing excess food.
- * you will only need to carry your food in on the first day, after that everything will stay at a base camp
- * you will have a lot of time in the evenings for preparing meals
- * breakfasts should be quick and easy (no gourmet pancake breakfasts, please)
- * Lunches should be planned to be easy and can be eaten during short breaks. Do not plan on a long "lunch break" - more likely you will be eating during small breaks in travel and teaching.
- * bring lots of snack food that is easy to access
- * Anticipate storing your food in safe location away from rodents, ravens, bears and other animals - bring storage bags (stuff sacs) to store your food in. Storage may be buried in snow, or hung from trees.
- * There are ample water sources at the campsites and on the approaches. Most water sources are clean, but to be on the safe side we suggest to bring purification drops such as Pristine, or a filter.

SAFETY PLANNING

Please leave an Emergency Response Plan with a responsible person. This is a standard procedure that should be done on all trips. The minimum information to be left is your name; departure date/time; expected return date/time; destination; general itinerary while on the trip; actions to take if overdue. Other info that is very helpful is the specific location of the trailhead, vehicle types and plate #, size of group and emergency equipment carried.

Plan on a return time of 7 pm on the final date of your course. If your contact person has not heard from you by 9 pm on that date, they should contact Canada West Mountain School at 1-604-815-3451. **Please be sure that you follow up with your check-in contact person when you return at the end of your course**, in order to avoid unnecessary alarms and SAR call-outs!

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ACTION ITEMS

Please be sure to follow up on all these items:

- 1) Please confirm with the Canada West Mountain School office that you have received this Pre-Planning document, the Gear List and Course outline and have read all the material included.
- 2) Follow up with the Canada West Mountain School office within 1 week prior to the course start date to ensure you receive the final details and logistics regarding course locations, meeting times and other details.
- 3) Indicate if you **require CWMS to supply** any of the following gear, or if **you will supply** this gear:
 - Ice ax
 - harness
 - helmet
 - carabiners
 - belay device
 - 7 mm accessory cord
 - 120 cm webbing sling
- 4) Let CWMS know if you need a ride, or if you can provide a ride, we will help to coordinate that for you.
- 5) Let CWMS know if you would like to share any communal gear with another participant, we will put you in touch with each other (tent, stove/cookware, food prep, etc)
- 6) **Lastly, ask any other questions that you may have!**

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