



Canada West Mountain School - www.themountainschool.com

Complete Mountaineering course planning details – 2020

This document will help you finalize your preparations for the course. Please read over all the information completely and note that there are a few "action items" that we need to hear back from you on. We also welcome and encourage any questions so that we can ensure you are best prepared for your course.

COURSE LOCATION

The first 2 days are spent in Squamish. The evenings are non-instructional and students are responsible for their own accommodation while in Squamish - check out <https://www.exploresquamish.com/lodging> for a listing of hotels, campgrounds and other lodging options. Participants can also choose to stay in the Vancouver area as well.

The remaining 5-days are spent in a backcountry Alpine region, with the final location determined during the first day while in Squamish. For the 2020 season, the likely option will be in the alpine area near Sky Pilot Mountain, behind the Sea to Sky Gondola above Squamish. Access is via the Gondola. From the top of the gondola, the hike to base camp will be between 3-4 hours and involve around 800 meters of elevation gain. Your campsite will be at treeline. Each of the 5 days will be spent learning and practicing skills in the surrounding alpine area, including summit attempts on Sky Pilot and other peaks.

LOGISTICS

On the morning of Day-1 you will meet at 0900 in Squamish at the Adventure Centre. Here is a link to Google Maps - <https://goo.gl/maps/LKEUd>. After a short introduction meeting with your Guides and the other participants, you will head out to the Smoke Bluffs climbing area. The 1st and 2nd days will be spent mainly learning and practicing rope skills and climbing systems. You will not require your overnight gear for Day-1 or Day-2 during these training sessions. The final Logistics and Pre-trip Prep for the Alpine field portion will take place during this 2-day portion as well.

On day 3 you will meet at the trailhead parking and review weather conditions and do a final review of gear before loading up on the Gondola at around 09:00. Overnight parking is available about 1 km from the base of the Sea to Sky Gondola

The course will finish on Day-7 at approximately 4 pm.

INSTRUCTORS

Your course will be led by one of the Canada West Mountain School Instructors/Guides who are members of the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides (ACMG). You will be notified in advance of the course who the specific instructor(s) will be for your course dates.

TRANSPORTATION

Every person is responsible for transportation to/from the course meeting location. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, we do not recommend ridesharing at this point. Parking for overnight use is located 1 km away from the Sea to Sky Gondola base, your Guide will direct everyone to the parking lot, and you will walk back to the gondola. Please ensure you do not have anything in your vehicle as the parking is adjacent to the highway and is not patrolled at nights.

WEATHER

While we will conduct the course in most weather conditions, if the alpine weather forecast is too poor for running the course in this region, you will discuss options with your Instructor during the first 2 days in Squamish. Here is a link to the Squamish Environment Canada forecast - http://weather.gc.ca/city/pages/bc-50_metric_e.html; and, more detailed forecast options can be found at www.spotwx.com as well.

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GEAR

Here is a link to our gear list: <https://themountainschool.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/GEAR-Mountaineering-2020.pdf>. This is also attached to the pre-course package.

Your personal and camping gear should be the same that you would expect to take on a multi-day backpacking trip. Please plan for the worst which includes temperatures of close to freezing or slightly below at night, and possible precipitation of rain and/or wet snow each day. Ensure your clothing and gear is suitable for these conditions. The alpine campsite may be on snow in early season (June/July) courses, please plan for that possibility.

FOOTWEAR

The first 2 days you will only need regular light trail hiking shoes, though if you have new mountaineering boots, we recommend you wear them on these days as well, to help break them in. If you have rock climbing shoes, please bring them as well, though we can supply he if needed. You will not require rock shoes for the 5-day alpine portion

During the alpine portion, 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**. Please review this post on our website for guidance on suitable boots for a mountaineering course – <https://themountainschool.com/how-to-choose-mountaineering-boots/>

Crampons are required, there are many styles of attachment systems, yet any **general mountaineering** crampon will work, if they are compatible with your boots (micro-spikes or similar are not sufficient); and, they have front points designed for snow (not technical ice). If you rent crampons, please double check that they fit your boots while you are in the rental shop

MAPS

The location of the alpine portion of the trip will be in the Sky Pilot region, behind the upper Sea to Sky Gondola. For paper maps, the standard National Topographic System (NTS) 1:50,000 scale map is "Squamish 92-G-11".

You can also download 1:20,000 scale maps as a PDF File from the BC Government website here - <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/data/geographic-data-services/topographic-data/topographic-map-viewer>. Launch the Map Viewer Tool and then enter 92G065 as the search term for the Map Tile ID search, or Sky Pilot Mountain on the general search field. Once you locate Sky Pilot you can click on the download link to get the 1:20,000 scale map sheet (Map Reference #092G.065) and you can print this; or, if you have PDF viewer on your phone you can store it there or import it into a mapping application such as Avenza Maps (free app) or GaiaGPS.

In the email notification that you receive in advance of the course, there should be a KMZ file for Sky Pilot that can be opened in Google Earth and many other Map Applications (GaiaGPS and Avenza are 2 common map apps). This KMZ file will have the approach trail and campsite marked on it. Also, if you have a mapping application on your phone or GPS, make sure it is updated and the local maps for Sky Pilot area are downloaded for off-line viewing.

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FOOD AND COOKING

The first 2 days in Squamish you will need to have lunches, snacks, and drinks for each day out in the field. Your food planning for the 5 days on the Alpine portion of this trip should be the same as planning for a backpacking trip of similar length. You can prepare your food before the course, but there will also be time provided in Squamish to purchase food. Squamish has a good variety of grocery stores (as well as 3 good quality outdoor gear stores). Here are a few notes to help:

- review your food carefully and measure out your portions to avoid bringing excess food.
- you will carry your food in on the first day, after that everything will stay at base camp (except lunches each day)
- 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 prep 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
- Bring storage bags (stuff sacs) to store your food in. Food may be hung from trees, cliff faces or buried in snow. While bears are not usually a concern, we will follow best practices as this area is still bear habitat. Rodents, Pine Martins, Ravens, and Crows are also a concern to be aware of when storing food.
- There are ample water sources at the campsite and on the approach. Most water sources are clean, but to be on the safe side we suggest using purification drops such as Pristine, or a filter.

SAFETY PLANNING

Our Guides will have a Satellite phone or Inreach device for the course, as well as all the emergency first aid kits and gear to take care of any situation. We have a daily check-in protocol by Sat device as well. Cell Phone reception is not 100% reliable in all areas.

Please leave a Trip Plan with a responsible person. We suggest using the online planning tool at AdventureSmart - <https://plan.adventuresmart.ca/>. For the purposes of this course, you will be in the Sky Pilot region and will be returning before 7 pm on the final date of your course. If anyone needs to contact you, they should contact Canada West Mountain School at 1-604-878-7007 (alternate #604-815-3451), or info@themountainschool.com and we can pass a message on during the daily update. Please be sure that you follow up with your check-in contact person when you finish your course on the last day, to avoid unnecessary alarms and SAR callouts!

ACTION ITEMS

- 1) Please confirm that you have received this Pre-Planning document, Gear List and Course outline
- 2) Confirm if you will require a pass for the Sea to Sky Gondola or if you have a pass already
- 3) Indicate if you require CWMS to supply any of the following gear:
 - a. Ice ax, harness, helmet, carabiners, belay device, 7 mm climbing cord, 120 cm sling.
- 4) **Please ask any other questions that you may have!**

Enjoy your course,

The Canada West Mountain School team

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