



Canada West Mountain School - www.themountainschool.com

Mountain Skills Essentials pre-planning – Sky Pilot

This document will help you finalize your preparations for the course. 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 so that we can ensure you are best prepared for your course. Thanks!

COURSE LOCATION

You will spend the full 4 days of the course in the Sky Pilot alpine region above Squamish, BC.

Access will be via the Sea to Sky Gondola, included in the price of the course if you do not have a season pass. The Gondola will take everyone to the top station at approx. 850 meters in elevation, avoiding the extra time and energy required to hike up. From the top station the hike into camp will take between 3-4 hours and is about 6 kilometers with approx. 700 meters of elevation gain. Your campsite will be above treeline at approx. 1,550 meters, where you will be based for 3 nights and 4 days. Each of the 4 days will be spent learning and practicing skills in the surrounding alpine areas.

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, we will notify you of alternate locations and logistics. Here is a link to the Squamish Environment Canada forecast - http://weather.gc.ca/city/pages/bc-50_metric_e.html.

LOGISTICS

On the morning of Day-1, you **will meet at 0800** at the Sea to Sky Gondola, located on Highway 99 as you are travelling from Vancouver, south of Squamish proper. Here is a link to Google Maps - <https://g.page/SeaToSkyGondola?share>.

You will spend approx. 1 hour getting to know your team, reviewing gear, and finalizing logistics before heading up the Gondola between 0930 and 1000.

INSTRUCTOR TEAM

Your course will be led by one of our regular Mountaineering Course Instructors, all who are members of the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides (ACMG). You will be notified in advance of the course who the specific Guide is for your program as well as their contact details.

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.

GEAR

A gear list should be attached to this pre-course package for your reference - if you have not received one, please contact our office. For personal and backpacking gear, this will be the same equipment that you would expect to take on an overnight backpacking trip. Please plan for weather which includes temperatures of close to 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 as a worst-case option; but, consider that it may also be hot, dry, and sunny as well.

FOOTWEAR

You will be working each day in and on snow, 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 for this course. There are many styles of attachment systems, yet any general mountaineering crampon will work as long as they have front points designed for snow (not technical ice); and, they are compatible with your boots. If you rent crampons, please double check that they fit your boots while you are in the rental shop.



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MAPS

The location of the trip will be in the Sky Pilot region, behind the upper Sea to Sky Gondola access. 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).

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.

FOOD AND COOKING

Food planning should be the same as 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 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 call-outs!

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