



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 on these days 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 2 days while in Squamish. For the 2020 season, the likely option will be in the alpine area behind Blackcomb Mountain, in the Spearhead range of Garibaldi Park. Access is via the Whistler-Blackcomb Gondola. From the top of the gondola, the hike to base camp will be between 3-4 hours and involve around 600 meters of elevation gain and 7 km's of hiking, including 3 km's in off-trail terrain. Your campsite will be above treeline. Each of the 5 days will be spent learning and practicing skills in the surrounding alpine area, including summit attempts on many of the glaciated peaks up to 2,600 meters in height.

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 10:00. Lift access for the Gondola is not included in the course fee and can be pre-purchased through Whistler/Blackcomb online here - <https://www.whistlerblackcomb.com/plan-your-trip/lift-access/summer-sightsee-tickets.aspx>

The course will finish on Day-7 at approximately 4 pm after we download at the end of the day back to Whistler Village.

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 locations. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, we do not recommend ridesharing at this point. Parking for overnight use in Whistler Village is available for \$5/day. Please ensure you do not have anything in your vehicle as the parking is not patrolled at nights.

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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. For the Alpine portion, you can also visit the [whistlerpeak.com](https://www.whistlerpeak.com) page at <https://www.whistlerpeak.com/> for a local alpine weather forecast; current live temperatures and winds; and, live webcam images including the Spearhead Range.

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.

During the first 2 days in Squamish you will require all technical climbing gear except crampons and ice axe. Be prepared to spend each day outside in any/all weather conditions, with a daypack, food, and suitable clothing.

For the alpine portion, 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 in the Spearhead Range will be at 2,200 meters elevation and may be on snow in early season (June/July) courses, please plan for that possibility. **Please ensure that your tent has ample guy-lines attached to all exterior tie-down points** on your tent fly, as the camping location can be windy at times.

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 them 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 Garibaldi Park, in the Spearhead Range. The best map is "Backcountry Whistler – 2nd Ed." Map available at most outdoor stores such as MEC and Valhalla Pure. Here is a link to John Baldwins website - <http://www.johnbaldwin.ca/backcountry-whistler.asp>

Many other Map Applications (GaiaGPS and Avenza are 2 common map apps) can also be used. If you have a mapping application on your phone or GPS, make sure it is updated and the local map layers and data for the Spearhead Region are downloaded for off-line viewing as you will not have reliable access to cellular data while in the alpine.

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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. Do you need to borrow any of this technical gear from the gear list, or you will supply your own?
 - Ice ax, harness, helmet, carabiners, belay device, 7 mm climbing cords, 120 cm sling.
2. Let us know your experience level with overnight backpacking and any other mountain experience such as climbing, backcountry skiing, snowshoeing, etc.
3. Will you be attending with anyone else who you already share your "social bubble" with, or are you attending on your own?
4. Everyone requires a tent, please confirm that you have a proper tent suitable for the course
5. What are you hoping to gain from this mountaineering course?
6. Please ask any other questions that you may have!

Enjoy your course,

The Canada West Mountain School team

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