



## Canada West Mountain School - [www.themountainschool.com](http://www.themountainschool.com)

### Alpine Skills Mountaineering course planning details – 2022

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 day of the Alpine Skills Mountaineering course is spent in Squamish. The evening is 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. The access for most of the Alpine locations involves between 3-4 hours of hiking, with up to 800 meters of elevation gain. Campsites are all at, or above treeline. Each of the 5 days will be spent learning and practicing skills in the surrounding alpine area with evenings spent at the same base camp, so moving camps each day is not required.

#### 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 Guide/Instructor and the other participants, you will head out to the Smoke Bluffs climbing area. The 1st day will be spent mainly reviewing and practicing rope skills and climbing systems. You will not require your overnight gear for Day-1 during this training session. The final Logistics and Pre-trip Prep for the Alpine field portion will take place on the first day as well.

On Day-2 you will meet at the pre-arranged trailhead parking and review weather conditions and do a final review of gear before heading out on the hike to access the alpine training location and your base camp. Specific location details will be finalized shortly before the course dates, based on weather, current alpine conditions, group experience levels and other factors.

The course will finish on Day-6, with a return to the trailhead 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 and all trailheads. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, we do not recommend ridesharing at this point. Please ensure you do not have anything in your vehicle as all trailhead parking locations are in remote and unpatrolled areas.

#### WEATHER

While we will conduct the course in most weather conditions, if the alpine weather forecast is too poor for running the course, you will discuss options with your Instructor during the first day in Squamish. Here is a link to the Environment Canada forecast, just enter the nearest Access City (Squamish, Whistler, Pemberton, etc) - [https://weather.gc.ca/forecast/canada/index\\_e.html?id=bc](https://weather.gc.ca/forecast/canada/index_e.html?id=bc); and, a more detailed forecast options can be found at [www.spotwx.com](http://www.spotwx.com) as well, where you can choose any location and receive a full list of weather forecast options.

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### **GEAR**

Here is a link to our gear list: <https://themountainschool.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/GEAR-Mountaineering-2022.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.

Please also note that there will be a small amount of additional communal climbing gear (supplied) that will need to be carried into the basecamp – climbing ropes, snow anchors, etc.

### **FOOTWEAR**

The first day in Squamish you will only need regular light trail hiking shoes, though if you have new mountaineering boots, we recommend you wear them 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, 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 decided shortly before the trip dates.

Once a location is selected, we will send you specific details on the maps required, including a Map Sheet number so that you can download 1:20,000 scale maps as a PDF File from the BC Government website here - <https://a100.gov.bc.ca/ext/mtec/public/products/mapsheet>. Search for the Map Tile ID search, or type in a specific location name on the general search field. Once you locate the area, you can click on the download link to get the 1:20,000 scale map sheet and you can print this or save to a PDF File and have a commercial print shop print it for you on a large format printer.

There are also many GPS apps for mobile phones, we recommend applications such as GaiaGPS or Avenza Maps. As well, a dedicated GPS device is also a good idea if you prefer to not bring your phone. For all GPS devices, **please ensure that the mapping apps are downloaded and available for offline viewing before you head out**, as there will not be any mobile cell service in the alpine course regions.

We also encourage everyone to view the course area on Google Earth - <https://earth.google.com/web/> before heading out as well, in order to familiarize yourself with the region.

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### **FOOD AND COOKING**

The first day in Squamish you will need to have lunches, snacks, and drinks for the 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 if you are planning on staying there for the first night. 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 as well as some extra cord to hang food. Food may be hung from trees, cliff faces or buried in snow if no trees are available. While bears generally are not a problem, we will follow best practices as all course areas are still bear habitat. Rodents, pine martins, ravens, and crows are the most common problem animals 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](mailto: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) 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.
- 3) **Please ask any other questions that you may have!**

Enjoy your course,

**The Canada West Mountain School team**

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