



Canada West Mountain School - www.themountainschool.com

Complete Mountaineering pre-planning – Sky Pilot 2023

Please take the time to read over all the information completely. We welcome and encourage any questions so that we can ensure you are best prepared for your course. Thank you!

Mountaineering Course Survey:

Complete this short online survey to allow us to prepare logistics, gear, and other details:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScTidYFMrVCjy5Eq9jVKKE0KWI8mFFIpTP1Pc2nxJJY4Z0v8A/viewform?usp=sf_link

Course Location:

The first 2 days are held in Squamish, BC, followed by 5 days in the Sky Pilot region. The 2 days in Squamish do not include evening sessions, so participants can return home for the evenings, or stay at a local campground or accommodation in Squamish. Here is a link to the Tourism Squamish site with accommodation providers - <https://www.exploresquamish.com/lodging>. The Alpine portion includes 4 nights of wilderness camping. Canada West Mountain School early season Mountaineering courses (May/June) are held in the Sky Pilot region. The hike into camp takes about 3-4 hours, and is approx. 7 kilometers, with 700 meters of elevation gain. Your campsite will be at treeline, between 1,400 and 1,600 meters, depending on weather and snow conditions. Expect to be camping on snow at this time of year.

Meeting location & time:

On the morning of Day-1, you will **meet at 0900 at the Squamish Adventure Centre**, located on Highway 99 as you are entering Squamish proper. Here is a link to Google Maps - <https://goo.gl/maps/1eeEB9WmZzr>.

Waiver and Medical disclosure:

All participants must complete a Waiver and Medical Disclosure form before attending Canada West Mountain School programs. Please complete this in advance – www.waiverfile.com/b/CanadaWestMountainSchool2

Access:

The primary access for the Alpine portion of the course is via the Sea to Sky Gondola to the top station at 850 meters elevation. An alternate option is via a forestry access road that can be driven with a high clearance 2-wheel drive to a parking lot approx. 20 minutes' walk from the top of the Gondola. This route is ideal if the Gondola is not operating; or, if an early morning start, or late afternoon/evening exit is expected.

Transportation:

Every participant is responsible for transportation to/from the course meeting locations and trailheads. If access is via the forestry road, it has some steep sections, but higher-clearance 2-wheel drive cars and crossover vehicles can get up the road fine. It is not suitable for a small, or low clearance vehicle.

Overnight parking is not available at the base of the Gondola but is located approx. 1 km away. Do not leave anything of value in your vehicles for either parking lot.

Gear

A gear list is located on our website here - <https://themountainschool.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/GEAR-Mountaineering-2021.pdf>. For personal backpacking gear, you will require the same equipment that you would expect to take on an overnight backpacking trip. Plan for the worst conditions, including temperatures below freezing at night and rain and/or wet snow each day. Ensure your clothing and gear is suitable for these conditions as a worst-case option; however, it may also be hot, dry, and sunny as well (hopefully!)

The following technical gear can be supplied and is included in the course fee (*please request in advance*):

- **Ice ax; Harness; Helmet; Carabiners & Belay device; 7 mm climbing cord & 120 cm sewn sling.**



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Footwear

During the alpine portion, you will be working each day on (and in) the 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, yet any general mountaineering crampon will work, if 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.

During the Squamish training days, simple trail shoes are appropriate, though we encourage people to use their mountain boots as much as possible to get accustomed to climbing with them. Technical rock-climbing shoes are supplied for some lessons, but if you have your own climbing shoes, please bring them.

Maps:

For paper maps, the National Topographic System (NTS) 1:50,000 scale map is "Squamish 92-G-11". There is also a local map available through most outdoor retailers, and online at <https://www.seatoskybackcountry.com/>

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, Avenza and Fatmaps are 3 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 prior to heading out, and the local maps for Sky Pilot area are downloaded for off-line viewing.

Weather

The course will be conducted in most weather conditions. If the alpine weather forecast is too poor for running the course safely 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, and for another weather site, [SpotWX](http://www.spotwx.com). Please monitor the weather in advance of the course.

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/Instructor is.

Camping:

Campsites are located at or above treeline. Plan on camping on snow for courses up until the end of July. Expect and plan for any weather including winds and heavy rain. All tents should be rigged with guy-lines that allow the tent to be properly secured and left unattended all day in possible high winds.

There are ample water sources at the campsite and on the approach. While the water is all seasonal runoff from snowmelt, we still suggest using purification drops such as Pristine; tablets; or a water filter.

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, and other animals are also a concern to be aware of when storing food. CWMS supplies animal resistant bags for each person as well, to put your own food bag into.



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Food & Cooking:

Food planning for the alpine section 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 basecamp.
- 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.
- Remove as much packaging in advance and consider food that does not leave excessive waste that can be an animal attractant.

Pre-Course Skills preparation:

This course Introduces technical skills involving rope management. While all these skills are taught and practiced during the course, we ask everyone to prepare by viewing these links to the basic knots and hitches that will be used extensively on the course. Please ensure that you arrive to the course well practiced and familiar with these basics (you can use any type of cord, rope, or string to practice with):

- Basic Overhand knot - <https://www.animatedknots.com/overhand-knot>
- Basic Figure 8 - <https://www.animatedknots.com/figure-8-knot>
- Figure-8 "follow through" knot - <https://www.animatedknots.com/figure-8-follow-through-loop-knot>
- Girth hitch - <https://www.animatedknots.com/girth-hitch-knot>
- Prussik hitch - <https://www.animatedknots.com/prusik-knot>
- Double Fisherman's - <https://www.animatedknots.com/double-fishermans-bend-knot>

Also, you will receive a link to join the Canada West Mountain School Virtual Classroom for our Mountain Navigation Online Course. This link will be sent by separate email, you will need to follow the instructions to login to the Virtual Classroom and get access to the course.

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. We have a daily check-in protocol by Sat device as well.

We encourage people to leave a Trip Plan with a responsible person before any of their wilderness trips. The online planning tool at AdventureSmart is a helpful tool - <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.

Action Items

- 1) Please confirm by E-mail that you have received this Pre-Planning document.
- 2) Complete the Google Forms Survey as soon as possible.
- 3) Complete the Waiver and Medical disclosure form online (link is in Planning PDF)
- 4) If you are under the age of 19, please contact our office by email or phone prior to the course.
- 5) **Please ask any other questions that you may have!**

Enjoy your course,

The Canada West Mountain School team