



Complete Mountaineering course planning details

This document will help you finalize your preparations for the Canada West Mountain School Complete Mountaineering course. Please read all the information completely.

We welcome and encourage any questions so that we can ensure you are best prepared for your course; please contact us for further information:

E-mail: info@themountainschool.com

Phone: 604-878-7007

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). Approx. 1-2 weeks in advance of the course, you will be notified who the specific instructor(s) will be for your course dates.

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. See <https://www.exploresquamish.com/lodging> for a listing of Squamish hotels and campgrounds. You can also stay in the Vancouver area or at your home as well.

The remaining 5 days are spent in a backcountry alpine area in the Sea to Sky region, based out of one camp for the full duration. The location is determined based on weather, snow conditions and transportation factors, with the final confirmation made during the first 2 days while in Squamish.

Alpine location options are in the Spearhead Range of Garibaldi Park behind Blackcomb Mountain; the Sky Pilot area above Squamish; or in an alpine location off the Duffey Lake Road area north of Whistler. Sky Pilot and Spearhead options require access via Gondola and the **Gondola costs are not included in the course fee** if either of those locations are chosen.

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 learning and practicing rope skills and climbing systems that will be used in the alpine. You will not require your overnight gear for Day-1 during these training sessions (unless you plan to camp in Squamish). The final trip preparation (logistics, travel, food, route planning, weather, etc.) for the Alpine field portion will take place during this 2-day portion and you may be asked to bring all of your overnight and technical gear to do a "gear check" on day-2.

On day 3 you will meet at the trailhead parking and do a final review of weather, gear, conditions and safety concerns before hiking into the base camp location, where you will stay for 5 days/4 nights.

The course will finish on Day 7 at approximately 4 pm at the parking lot trailhead.

Canada West Mountain School

1290 3rd St, West Vancouver, BC V7S 2Y2, Canada
1-888-892-2266 ■ info@themountainschool.com



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TRANSPORTATION & PARKING

You are responsible for transportation to/from the course meeting locations. There is bus service to Squamish and Whistler. Bus services are not available for trailheads on Duffey Lake Road. All trailheads are accessible on regular roads by any vehicle, unless otherwise arranged in advance.

Parking in Squamish will be close to the Adventure Centre and is free of charge.

Multi-day parking in Whistler (if the Spearhead location is used) is paid parking and can be arranged here - <https://www.whistler.ca/services/transportation/parking/garibaldi-park-and-singing-pass-parking> (scroll to the bottom of the page for “Garibaldi Park and Singing Pass” parking instructions)

Overnight parking for the Sea to Sky gondola is not permitted at this point. If the Sky Pilot location (and Sea to Sky Gondola) is used, you will arrange parking options during the first 2 days with your instructor.

WEATHER

While we conduct the mountaineering courses 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 2 days. 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 page at <https://www.whistlerpeak.com/> for a local alpine weather forecast; current live temperatures and winds.

GEAR

Here is a link to our gear list: <https://themountainschool.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/GEAR-Mountaineering-2025.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/water, and suitable clothing.

For the alpine portion, your personal and camping gear should be the same as you would expect to take on a multi-day backpacking trip. Please plan for the worst which includes temperatures close to freezing or 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 campsites may be as high as 2,200 meters (in the Spearhead Range) and **will** be on snow in early season (June/July); please plan for that likelihood.

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 only need regular trail hiking shoes (if you have new mountaineering boots, we recommend you wear them though, to help break them in). If you have rock climbing shoes, please bring them, though we will 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 critically 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/category/gear/>

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.

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MAPS

The best paper maps for the Spearhead are John Baldwins "Backcountry Whistler". This map is available at most outdoor stores such as MEC and Valhalla Pure. Here is a link to John Baldwins website - <https://www.johnbaldwin.ca/maps.asp>.

For the Sky Pilot option, the best is the Sea to Sky Backcountry Map, available in paper and digital - <https://www.seatoskybackcountry.com/buy>

Many Map/GPS Navigation Apps (GaiaGPS and Avenza are 2 common map apps) can also be used. If you have a map application on your phone, **make sure it is updated and the local map layers for the course area are downloaded for off-line viewing**; you will not have reliable access to cellular data while in the alpine.

FOOD, COOKING & CAMP MANAGEMENT

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

- Review food carefully and measure out your portions to avoid bringing excess
- You will carry your food in on the first day, after that everything will stay at base camp
- There will be lots of time in the evenings to prepare meals; but breakfasts should be quick and easy
- Lunches should be "easy prep". Do not plan on long lunch breaks, you will likely 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. Food may be hung from trees, cliff faces or buried in snow. Bears are not usually a concern, but we follow best practices in bear habitat
- Rodents, Pine Martins, Ravens, and Crows are also a concern when storing food
- There are usually water sources at campsites and approaches, though early-season courses may rely on melting snow for drinking water at the camp. Most water sources are clean, but we suggest using purification drops such as Pristine, or a filter
- All garbage will be packed out. Latrines will be established near camps, but please plan on carrying out your own toilet paper and personal hygiene products. Double ziplock-style bags and hand sanitizer are recommended.

SAFETY PLANNING

Our Guides will have Satellite service 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.

We suggest using the online planning tool at AdventureSmart for all your Mountain Adventures - <https://plan.adventuresmart.ca/>. For the purposes of this course, you 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. Be sure that you follow up with your check-in contact person on the last day, to avoid unnecessary alarms and SAR callouts!

Enjoy your course,

The Canada West Mountain School team

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