

North Cascades Alpine Climbs

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The North Cascades of Washington are a climber's playground and offer a complete variety of challenges in an incredible mountain wilderness. Some of the great climbers of North America cut their teeth here, honing the skills necessary to make them competent climbers. These legends from our climbing history spent endless amounts of time exploring this vast empire of mountainous terrain making many peaks famous through literature like the "50 Classic Climbs". If you are looking for adventure on a grand scale, but need to manage your time, then you will find it here. Custom climbs can be arranged to your schedule and interests. Maximum large group size is 8 climbers and 4 guides (2:1) – these large groups are possible on only a few of the peaks. Most climbs require a 1:1 or 2:1 ratio and smaller groups. Minimum duration for a North Cascades climb is 3 days, but most objectives require 4 days.

Our unparalleled guide ratios allow us to offer a higher level of instruction, move more quickly, increase our flexibility and our rate of success. This is what sets us apart from the rest. There is a huge variety of climbing terrain, from mellow glacier to steep snow and ice, easy rock scrambling to challenging 5th class climbing. Climbs often start below tree line in old growth forest, making for a well-rounded full mountain experience. They can be an excellent primer for alpine climbs like Denali, the Matterhorn, or Ama Dablam, but they're an incredible experience in their own right. If you're looking for training, the North Cascades offer a great venue for spending time practicing the basics, such as ice-axe arrest, crevasse rescue or rock rescue, anchor systems, belaying and multi-pitch climbing, running belays and fixed line ascension. Give us a call and we can help you to decide on just the right program for your needs. If you are not in need of beginning instruction then we will be happy to recommend a more advanced climb based on your desires and level of experience. Some of our climbers come back year after year to continue to explore the North Cascades.

Skill Level

For all climbs we will be carrying a full load of gear in to base camp. All participants must be in very good physical condition. The need to train for this climb cannot be overstressed! For several months prior to the start of the climb, training should include lots of long, slow distance runs over hilly terrain, an hour or more in duration to build a solid cardiovascular base. Add additional weekend outings carrying a heavy pack (35-50 lbs.) up steep hills or stairs. These sessions should gain 2-3,000 feet over 3 or more miles. Occasional workouts at a higher intensity and general strength training are also helpful in building higher levels of fitness.

Possible Learning Objectives

Skills clinics are possible, covering all aspects of snow and alpine climbing:

- Basic snow and ice climbing
- Glacier travel and crevasse rescue
- Alpine rock climbing techniques
- Rope handling/belay techniques
- Crevasse rescue
- Route finding
- Developing educated, self-reliant climbers with the ability to evaluate subjective/objective hazards including: travel over glacier and alpine terrain, mountain weather, wilderness navigation

Private Climb Objectives

Other than the regularly scheduled climbs on Mt. Baker and Mt. Shuksan, all other North Cascades climbs are arranged on a private basis. If you are in doubt about what to do, give us a call, and we'll help you to decide on the best option for you.

Dates: On your schedule, 3-day minimum

Landcost: Rates are based on guide ratio and are per person per day.

Peak Season (Jun-Aug):	Non-Peak Season:
1:1 \$795	1:1 \$595
2:1 \$595	2:1 \$450
3:1 \$495	3:1 \$395

Included in your fee are all group equipment including shared tents, stoves, climbing ropes and snow/ice anchors. Not included is transportation to the trailhead, personal clothing and gear, lodging the evening prior to the start of the climb or the last night of the trip.

Maximum group size: 8 climbers and 4 guides (select moderate glacier climbs only)
Normal group size is 2-6 climbers at a 2:1 climber to guide ratio. 1:1 guiding is also an option and recommended for more technical climbs.

Recommended Climbs

Eldorado, East Ridge (beginner to intermediate)

Perched at 8868 ft, Eldorado Peak combines the classic North Cascades approach with a moderate snow climb to reach its exciting, exposed summit ridge. The approach starts at 2200 feet and climbs steeply through old growth forest and rocky talus to reach the beautiful alpine meadows and the first suitable camping spots, depending on the season. From here the route traverses over scoured glacial rock slabs to the base of the Eldorado glacier. Moderate glacier climbing with incredible views of the surrounding peaks gets us to the base of the East Ridge, where we climb moderate snow and rock to the summit.

The glaciers flanking Eldorado provide a wonderful training ground for learning cramponing, snow climbing, ice axe arrest, and crevasse rescue.

This climb can be done in 3-5 days depending on your training objectives and fitness levels, or combined with ascents of the nearby Dorado needle to include more challenging rock climbing on alpine granite.

Dorado Needle (intermediate)

Dorado Needle sits near Eldorado, at the head of the remote and beautiful Marble Creek Cirque. Quality granite alpine rock climbing awaits those who chose to venture there. The Northwest Ridge leads to the summit via 3 pitches of great 5.4 climbing. The Southwest Buttress is more committing undertaking, requiring 1100 feet of fifth class climbing up to 5.7. Both are worth the long approach! Suggested climb length is 3-4 days.

Forbidden Peak, West Ridge (intermediate)

Forbidden Peak's massive granite summit dominates the view from Bostin Basin. It provides airy and exposed ridge climbing with constant views of the rugged North Cascades all around. The West Ridge of Forbidden is a highly sought after climb, included in the list of "50 Classic Climbs in North America". Though only 5.6 at its hardest point, it is a stellar alpine challenge and requires a long day of engaging ridge climbing with exciting exposure and unbeatable scenery. This climb is suitable for fit individuals with prior alpine rock climbing experience.

From camp, we approach our climb over glacially scoured rock slabs which give way to snow higher up. To gain the West Ridge, we climb steep snow early in the season or moderate rock later on. Several hours of climbing and exposed ridge traversing bring us to the summit, at which point we reverse our route by downclimbing and rappelling. Stellar climbing in its own right, this route is also excellent practice for climbs like the Matterhorn or Ama Dablam. Suggested trip length is 4 days.

For repeat offenders, Forbidden's North Ridge and East Ridge are also worthy climbs. Ask us about them!

Torment-Forbidden Traverse (advanced)

If climbing the West Ridge of Forbidden isn't enough for you, add on a mile of similar alpine ridge traversing. This climb takes you through several days of climbing over exposed alpine snow, rock and sometimes ice. It often involves bivouacking high in the high alpine, making it necessary to strip down your climbing gear and overnight kit to a minimum weight. We prefer to send you off on this route with a guide you've climbed with before--it's a big endeavor!

Sharkfin Tower (intermediate)

An outstanding climb, this route on good alpine rock with great exposure is set above the Quien Sabe glacier and amongst the larger peaks of Boston Basin. It's a great introduction to easy 5th class alpine climbing, and a good warm up for some of the bigger routes in the Boston Basin. Suggested trip length is 3 days

Sahale via the Quien Sabe Glacier (beginner)

Set on the far east side of Boston Basin, Sahale offers a moderate glacier climb leading to an exciting but easy rock scramble to its summit. Like the other peaks in the area, the views are unbeatable, with the Johannesburg Massif looming to the south, Buckner and Logan to the west, and the deep, remote valleys of Thunder Creek sitting below the crumbling Boston Peak to the north. A great introduction to glacier travel and alpine climbing, this climb can be done as a single objective or combined with others in the Basin to round out the trip. Suggested trip length is 3 days.

Triumph (advanced)

Triumph's NE Ridge offers moderate rock climbing (one 5.7 pitch) on an exposed ridge. The route is accessed by a steep and strenuous approach, half on good trail and half through scrubby cross-country travel. The climb itself is reasonably straightforward otherwise, and has awesome views to the surrounding rugged terrain. Suggested trip length is 3 days.

Mazama rock climbing (all levels)

Mazama is a quaint mountain town nestled an hour and a half east of Marblemount. With its relative proximity, the rock climbing there makes for a wonderful additional day or two to practice technical rock climbing at the local crags, Fun Rock and the Matrix. There are also stellar multi-pitch sport climbs like Prime Rib 5.9- and the Inspiration Route, 5.9+. The climbing is on the Cascadian volcanic rock "rhinestone", and makes for a fun few days. IMG also uses Mazama, since it's located in the rain shadow of the North Cascades, as an alternate destination available during rainy times.

“This experience only enhances my desire to further visit and explore wild places around the world. We are very fortunate to have the North Cascades in our own back yard!”

—James N.

For more comments from IMG climbers, please see our website at: mountainguides.com/comments.shtml

International Mountain Guides ♦ www.mountainguides.com ♦ email: office@mountainguides.com

PO Box 246 ♦ 31111 SR 706 E ♦ Ashford, WA 98304 ♦ phone: (360) 569-2609 ♦ fax: (866) 279-7455

North Cascades Alpine Climbs Itinerary

You will need to arrive in the greater Seattle area or SeaTac Airport no later than the evening prior to your scheduled climb. Lodging this night is at your expense. You will be responsible for providing your own transportation to the specified North Cascades Ranger Station approximately 2 hours driving time from Seattle.

Day 1: Meet at the designated North Cascades Ranger Station at 8:00 a.m. for group registration. After a gear check and issue of group gear, hike in to camp below the intended objective and establish camp. The evening can be spent in review of ropes, knots, rigging and preparation for the following day.

Day 2: First available day for training, instruction or an ascent of a peak as per your arrangement with IMG.

Day 3: Typical summit day in the North Cascades, after a day of training out of high camp. Return to high camp for the night.

Day 4: Casual morning breakfast, take down camp and descend to trail head.

Day 5+: Add additional training and climbing days as your schedule and interest permits. Recommended trip length is 4-5 days for maximum climbing opportunities.

“Thank you for a professional, safe and successful climb. We had the experience of a lifetime. I learned a lot and appreciated the way you strategically and tactically approached the mountain...”

—John H.

“We learned a ton of skills that we can use on future climbs. Definitely one of the coolest/hardest things that we have ever done!...”

—Tom S.

“Your guides are like expert teachers whose classroom is the mountain. They were so patient with every one of us. They answered all of our questions... The group of guides and climbers on this trip was spectacular. I think that my abs were more sore from laughing than my legs were from climbing. It was simply a blast! Thank you so very much for all that you do... all of it is just so very, very well done...”

—Polly P.

For more comments from IMG climbers, please see our website at: mountainguides.com/comments.shtml