



Alpine Institute

Alpinism 2 Itinerary

Program Details

The Alpinism 2 course is intended to build upon a climber's foundational mountaineering skills. We introduce students to concepts covering traditional rock climbing and navigation over more advanced glaciated terrain. The first portion of the course typically takes place at scenic Washington Pass and the second half on one of a number of glaciated peaks in the North Cascades for your final objective.

Difficulty Grade

Moderate to Intermediate

Inclusions and Exclusions

Inclusions: Permits and access fees, transportation during the course, guide, group technical equipment, and biffy bags.

Exclusions: Food, personal equipment, lodging the day before and after your course, personal health, baggage and trip insurance, and transportation before and after your course.

Itinerary

Day 1 – Rendezvous at The AAI Equipment Shop and Introduction to Multi-Pitch Rock Climbing

Plan to meet your fellow climbers and instructor(s) at the AAI Equipment Shop promptly at 7:00am. Your guide(s) will take the time to go over equipment, finalize rentals and purchases, review the itinerary, and ensure everyone is adequately prepared.

As soon as the rendezvous is complete we will load up the vans and make the drive to Mazama, Washington (roughly 3 hours) and climb at a local crag called Fun Rock. This day will be spent reviewing basic climbing concepts and covering more intermediate climbing concepts such as top rope systems, traditional climbing gear removal, rappelling, knot passing, and more. The evening will be spent reviewing the objective and itinerary for the following day. That night will be spent at a front country car campsite between Mazama and Washington Pass.

Day 2 – Alpine Rock Route (7807 ft/2379m)

This will be the first day of practical application of rock climbing skills. Today we will drive 20 minutes back to Washington Pass and climb the South Arete of South Early Winter Spire. There are several other options in the area, and instructors may choose alternative objectives based on weather and student skills. Students will cover multi-pitch climbing, rappelling, route-finding, and risk management as well as additional concepts as they come up and time allows. In the evening students and instructors will talk about their route options for the following day.

We will camp at the same campground as the night before.

Day 3 – Alpine Rock Route (7720ft/2353m)

We will venture back to Washington Pass for a second day of practical application, but this time we will climb the Becky Route on Liberty Bell. Much of the same skills as the day before will be covered but in greater detail to reinforce concepts. Again, there are several other options for routes based on student skill and weather. In the evening, students will review skills from the preceding days. This might include a review of single-line crevasse rescue and the knot pass.

We will camp at the same campground as the night before. Over dinner, we'll begin planning the final, "student-led" ascent, using guidebooks, maps, and advice provided by your instructor.

Day 4 – Alpine Rock Route (elevation and distance vary depending on objective)

Today we wake, pack, and drive to one of several areas for the glacier segment of this course. Though we typically climb Mt. Shuksan for this portion, we will occasionally climb Eldorado Peak, Sahale Peak, Silver Star Mountain, or another major non-volcanic summit. Day 4 may also, on occasion, be spent doing another day of alpine rock, at the guides' discretion.

After driving to the trailhead for the final ascent, we may hike in and set up our base camp, in which case the approach could be anywhere from 3 to 5 miles, or we may camp at a forest service campground. If there is time, we will start our review of glacier travel procedures. Your instructor will discuss topics such as glaciation, navigation, or geology over dinner.

Day 5 – Student-Led Ascent (elevation and distance vary depending on objective)

Today we will hike to a glacier training area and do a full skills review and training. We will review cramponing and ice axe technique, and then, time allowing, may move on to the more advanced skills of snow and/or ice screw anchor building and running protection, and team crevasse rescue. We will also discuss the next day's route to the summit and will go to bed early in anticipation of an early rise the next morning.

This day may also be summit day based on guide discretion, in which case we will summit and hike out and leave the final day for additional skills instruction.

Day 6 - Summit Day (elevation and distance vary depending on objective)

We will normally summit either Shuksan via the Sulphide Glacier, Eldorado Peak via the Eldorado Glacier/East Ridge, or Sahale via the Quien Sabe Glacier. We will plan on summiting early, then returning to camp, packing up, hiking back to the van at the trailhead, and then driving back to AAI's headquarters in Bellingham. We aim to get climbers back to town between 3-7 pm.

*If students summited on day 5 of the course, then this day will be additional skills training or another day of cragging before heading back to the AAI headquarters.