

American Alpine Institute^{Ltd.}

– Program Itinerary –

Alpinism 1 - Intro

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Meeting Location: The offices of the American Alpine Institute in Bellingham, WA.

Meeting Time: Unless an alternate meeting time has been arranged, you should plan on meeting your guide(s) and the equipment shop staff at AAI's office a few minutes before 7am on the first morning of your program. For climbers staying at the Best Western, we will pick you up at 6:40am.

Day 1 - After a brief meeting and introductions here at our office your instructor(s) will take the first part of the morning to check over your equipment, finalize any rentals and purchases you may need for your program, and get packed up for the day.

From the institute's office we drive about 45 miles south to a rock climbing area called Mt. Erie. By mid-morning we head for the climbing, driving south just an hour to Mt. Erie, a coastal crag overlooking northern Puget Sound and the beautiful San Juan Islands in three directions, and looking out to glacier covered Mt. Baker in the other. The rock at Mt. Erie is excellent, and the moderate routes provide a perfect training area for covering all the basics of free climbing, rappelling, anchor placement, and belaying. We practice hand and foot placements and knot tying, and each team member spends substantial time belaying and climbing a variety of short routes. By the end of the day, you should feel confident on mid-fifth class rock, have a clear sense of how ropes and protective systems work, and be able to climb moderate rock with ease. We will stay at a campground this evening.

*Note: On some courses the guide can opt to hold the day of rock climbing at the end of the program and hike directly into Mt. Baker on the first day. This is done if the weather looks to be changing and our chances for a summit attempt will be better earlier in the course.

Day 2 - The next day we make the short drive to Mt. Baker. We drive a Forest Service road to 3200 feet, and then make a moderate hike of about five miles through climax fir forest and sub-alpine terrain to the Easton Glacier. Depending on the time of year, the trail can provide views of a remarkable array of wildflowers in the sub-alpine zones. We set up our base camp between 5600' and 6000' on a lateral moraine of the Easton, which gives us easy access to the glacier and views across it to Mt. Baker's summit and impressive nearby peaks.

After establishing camp, the remainder of this day can be spent discussing the concepts of glacier travel, glaciation, mountain weather, geology, and talking about the schedule for the following days.

Day 3 - Snow school! The third day of this program will be a long day of skills on the snow. You can expect to practice the different positions for self arrest, learn ice axe and crampons techniques for climbing snow and ice of varying degrees of steepness, and discussing the basics of rope team travel.

Day 4 – This is another long day of skills practice on the glacier. We will spend the day reviewing crevasse rescue. This will include setting up and practicing the hauling systems, building snow anchors, and prusiking up a rope.

Days 5 and 6 - Summit day can fall on either day 5 or 6 of this program. It is usually on the 6th and final day of the course but occasionally the group can opt for an earlier attempt if the weather looks to be changing. Summit day will involve an alpine start (typically 1-3am), after which we head for the summit of Mt. Baker, which is at 10,778'. Our goal is to reach the summit by day-break so we can utilize snow conditions during the night and early morning and be heading down by the time the sun warms the slopes. After our summit bid we descend to camp, pack up and head back to the institute. We shoot for getting climbers back to town by about 5pm. This can vary a bit based on how the last day of the trip goes.