

American Alpine Institute
Alpine Mountaineering and Technical Leadership

Part 3a - Picket Range
Advanced Alpine Mountaineering and Rock Climbing, Aid Climbing, Big Wall Techniques
and Remote Cascade Expedition

Curriculum

Advanced Aid and Free Climbing Skills:

- selection & use of personal equipment for an aid climb including specific ropes, harnesses, & equipment
- design concepts, selection & use of technical equipment for mixed aid & free climbing
- advanced rigging for multi-pitch climbing
- use of big wall gear & equipment including etriers, daisy chains, mechanical ascenders, haul bags, port-a-ledges, leeper cams, hooks & an assortment of other gear
- use of fixed lines
- strategy for multi-pitch aid or mixed climbs
- strategies for multi-pitch descents
- techniques for hauling, big wall bivies, & for pendulums
- clean aid climbing techniques
- complex hauling systems
- management of hanging belays
- strategies for multi-day routes

Expeditionary Skills:

- planning and preparing for a large scale backcountry expedition
- continued training on the use of maps, compasses, GPS, and guidebooks
- strategizing for multi-day “carry over” routes in a remote setting

Ice Climbing and Mountaineering Skills:

- continued study of ice climbing technique including all ice axe positions
- review of glacial and ice structures
- development of advanced technical protective systems in an alpine setting
- advanced study of movement over complex alpine terrain

Objective Hazards Evaluation & Self-Rescue Skills:

- evaluation & prediction of mountain weather patterns
- introduction to the assessment of natural hazards
- individual & team crevasse rescue techniques

Leadership Skills:

- continued study and practice of individual technical leadership skills
- technical & personal functions of individuals on an ascent: roles & responsibility
- problem solving: gathering appropriate data & assessment techniques
- evolving leadership roles: individual leadership vs. collective decision making
- large and small team expeditionary leadership strategy

Itinerary

The following is an example itinerary. This is subject to change due to weather, fitness, technical skill, road closures, wildfires or a variety of other circumstances. All course material will be covered, it simply may not be covered in this order.

It is likely that participants will go out to dinner one to three times throughout the duration of the course.

Day 1:

Meet in Bellingham at 7:00am at the American Alpine Institute office. Drive to Index and begin aid-climbing instruction. Guides will demonstrate lead climbing on aid and gear cleaning techniques. Students will demonstrate an understanding of these principals. Car camp.

Day 2:

Continue the study of aid climbing technique. Develop an understanding of steep aid technique, hooks and leeper cams. Develop an understanding of the use of fixed lines in aid climbing. Introduce the basic principals of using a haul bag. Begin to develop a plan for the expedition portion of the trip. Car camp.

Day 3:

Students will continue to practice aid climbing, applying all of the techniques that they have learned up to this point. Additionally, they will begin to work with the concepts of combined aid and free climbing, pendulums, and port-a-ledge bivies. Continue to discuss the expedition portion of the trip. Sleep on port-a-ledge or car camp.

Day 4:

The final day of aid climbing will culminate in a small ascent of a multi-pitch line. Every principal of both aid and free climbing will come into play in order to complete the ascent. Finish strategizing the expedition portion of the trip. Sleep on port-a-ledge or car camp.

Day 5:

Stop at a grocery store to resupply for the expedition portion of the trip. Pack for the backcountry and then drive to the trailhead. Make an approach to your initial camp.

Day 6-12:

The remaining portion of the trip will be planned during the first four days. During the expeditionary timeframe, climbers will have the opportunity to climb a number of remote peaks deep in the Picket Range of the Cascades. Depending on the interest of the participants, these ascents may be more heavily oriented toward rock, ice or glacial mountaineering. All participants will have the opportunity to “take the sharp end” in both technical leadership as well as in group leadership.