



Alpine Institute

Alpine Ice Itinerary

Program Details

This 6-day comprehensive course is designed to introduce climbers who already have a background in mountaineering, to the fundamentals of alpine ice climbing. The course is broken up into 3 segments, the first being a seminar reviewing foundational mountaineering, snow and ice climbing concepts, the second being a practicum that covers new and more advanced technical skills, and the third being a skills application summit attempt of Mt. Baker via one of a number of technical ice routes.

Difficulty Grade

Moderate to Advanced

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 (6000ft/1829m)

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 make the roughly one hour and a half drive to the North side of Mt. Baker. The trailhead starts at 3700 feet, and the hike to our base camp location is anywhere between three and a half and five miles, landing camp between 5600 feet and 6000 feet.

Once basecamp is established we will spend the remainder of the day reviewing the concepts of glacier travel, glaciation, mountain weather, and geology and discussing the schedule for the following days.

Day 2 – Field Seminar and Basic Ice Climbing Concepts (6000ft/1829m)

We spend the second day on the Coleman Glacier covering and building upon concepts of climbing and belaying on snow and ice in its various forms and degrees of steepness. Once we have wrapped up the day we will return to basecamp to discuss the next several days.

Day 3 – Field Practicum

Again, we will hike up to the Coleman Glacier to an ideal location to cover protective systems for ice climbing, leading sequences, application of ice climbing over difficult terrain, and technical climbing in an icefall zone. Glacial structures, hazard evaluation, principles of glacier travel and crevasse rescue are also covered on this day.

Day 4 – Field Practicum

Day four will look very similar to day three, touching upon and continuing concepts from the previous day. We try to focus on allowing students ample opportunity to practice the skills that are being taught throughout the practicum phase.

Days 5 and 6 – Application Climb

The final 2 days culminate in a summit attempt of Mt. Baker via one of several intermediate ice routes where we will take the time to apply what we have learned over the past four days. We also cover summit strategies, route finding and navigation, and route logistics. Routes are chosen for each team based on the proficiency demonstrated during the seminar and practicum portions of the course and at the guide's discretion.

After the summit bid on the final day, we descend to camp, pack up, and drive back to AAI headquarters. We aim to be back at the shop between 3-7pm.