

Mt. Rainier: 4½ Day Emmons Glacier Summit Climb

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Why Choose This Program?

The 4 ½ Day Emmons glacier climb is an excellent program for anyone desiring a less-rushed summit experience in a more remote alpine environment, away from the greater crowds found on the south side of the mountain. The focus of this small group climb is on self-sufficiency and teamwork. This climb is physically more demanding than the Disappointment Cleaver route due to the heavier loads carried and longer distance traveled. All group equipment is carried by the team so average pack weight is in the range of 45-50 pounds rather than the 35 pound weight for the standard route. The Emmons route incorporates significant roped glacier travel and is a very “do-able” route considering its consistently moderate nature and fewer objective hazards. The Emmons is a great choice if you are looking for a more self sufficient experience and a less frequented route up the largest glacier on the mountain.

Although climbing Mt. Rainier is never an easy endeavor, a fourth day can sometimes mean the difference between reaching the top or falling short; being able to climb safely within your abilities, and enjoying the descent. Two nights at or above 8,200ft will give you an increased advantage and help you feel fitter and less oxygen deprived on summit day. This program is recommended for anyone hoping to avoid the greater crowds of the standard route, partake in and learn about glacier travel on a big mountain, and enjoy a less-rushed, more self-sufficient alpine experience.

The approach trail starts at White River Campground and climbs through several distinct plant life zones starting in the dense forests of the Western Hemlock Zone, eventually climbing up through beautiful sub alpine meadows into the alpine zone. We use two tent camps strategically located; one at 8,200ft on the lower Inter Glacier and another at 9,600ft, Camp Schurman.

We employ a light and efficient philosophy for climbing on this program. We will help you go through your personal climbing gear prior to departure to help you minimize the weight of your pack.

IMG provides breakfasts, dinners and hot drinks for the group on the mountain. We feel this adds a lot to the experience in terms of convenience, comfort and camaraderie.

Climbing with a 2:1 client-to-guide ratio provides a superior level of support and safety. Our group size is never larger than twelve (8 climbers and 4 guides).

Prerequisite:

There are no prerequisites as training in the required skills – use of crampons, ice axe and roped glacier travel are incorporated into this program as part of the curriculum en route. All participants are strongly encouraged to train specifically for this program and to have prior experience on overnight backpacking trips. For training suggestions check out our training for Rainier page at <http://www.mountainguides.com/rainier-training.shtml>

Dates: June – August (Please see the IMG website for [specific, available dates.](#))

Landcost: \$1,664

Client to Guide Ratio: 2:1

Trip Length: 4 ½ days

Itinerary

Day 1 - Meet in Ashford at HQ ([Directions](#)) at 2:00pm SHARP for the pre-climb meeting. This meeting of approximately 3 hours is instrumental in getting the team outfitted, informed, packed and educated prior to departure. Topics to be covered include an introduction of the entire team; issue and fitting of rental gear; personal gear checks and issue of group gear; proper use of safety equipment including helmets, harnesses and avalanche beacons; introduction to knots, ropes, rope travel and a review of additional critical climbing skills. We'll issue all rental gear needed, go carefully over personal gear and get our packs all set to go. Promptly at 5:00pm we'll load up the IMG van and drive for 1 ½ hours to Crystal Mountain Ski Area on the east side of the mountain. During the ride the guides will discuss other aspects of the climb including an introduction to Mt. Rainier National Park, its mission and ecology and a safety briefing. The evening ends with a group dinner and night spent at the Alpine Inn (both at additional cost).

Lodging at Crystal Mountain Ski area is not included in the cost of the program. Please make your lodging arrangements directly with the [Alpine Inn](#) (888-SKI-6400). Tell the registration desk you are climbing the Emmons Route with IMG and they will provide a discount on the standard room rate for the night. The Inn also offers our customers a special rate for a team dinner the first evening and an early departure team breakfast the morning of Day 2.

Day 2 - In the morning after breakfast, we load up the IMG van and shuttle to the White River trailhead at 4,500ft on the north-east side of Mt. Rainier. From here we hike three miles on trails through forest to Glacier Basin before continuing a few more miles over rough trail and snow to our first camp at 8,200ft on the Inter Glacier. Just below camp we stop for some training in the use of the ice axe, self arresting slips on snow and efficient climbing up and down steeper snow slopes.

Day 3 - The following day we climb a fairly short distance to high camp, adjacent to Camp Schurman, located at 9,600ft on Steamboat Prow, a wedge formation that divides the Emmons and Winthrop Glaciers. Along the way we ascend the Inter and Emmons glaciers which provide us with a perfect opportunity to practice roped glacier travel, one of the skills we will need in ascending the upper mountain the following day. Once at camp we discuss the summit climb, have dinner and get to bed early. We begin our ascent before dawn the next day and generally count on a 12-hour round trip to the 14,411ft summit and back to camp.

Day 4 - Our summit day takes us up the Emmons "Corridor" and often onto the Upper Winthrop Glacier depending on the route conditions. The conditions can vary greatly but we usually encounter crevasses and snow bridges, and some moderately steep snow climbing. We normally hit the summit crater close to the true high point, Columbia Crest. We spend an hour on the summit, weather permitting. Descent normally takes half the time the ascent required. The round trip normally takes 12 hours total. After arriving back at our high camp we get some well-deserved rest during our final night on the mountain.

Day 5 - The following morning we descend the Inter Glacier and retrace our steps back down to the White River Trailhead by noon to 1:00 pm where we meet the shuttle for the ride back around the mountain to IMG headquarters in Ashford. At HQ we'll wrap up the trip with an awarding of certificates by the guides. The average program ends around 4 pm but unpredictable variables may affect our return time.