

Mt. Rainier: Liberty Ridge Climb

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Liberty Ridge on Mt. Rainier is a very serious, technically difficult and physically demanding ascent that is reserved for very strong climbers with prior climbing experience. The route is a prominent ridge that divides the Willis and Liberty Walls on the North Face of Mt. Rainier. It is steep, exposed, and committing. The program begins at our facilities in Ashford but we shuttle the team around to the northern side of the mountain and the White River entrance for the start of the climb. The approach to this route is long and fairly involved, and circumnavigates part of Mt. Rainier on its north-eastern flank. We climb the route using two or more camps as we progress to successively higher altitudes. Technical difficulties start at the base of the ridge, 8,600ft and end at Liberty Cap, 14,112ft. The climb ends with a long trudge across a saddle to the true summit, Columbia Crest, 14,411ft. We carry our gear up and over the top with us and descend the technically easier Emmons Glacier route and back out via the White River entrance. Four days are the minimum time required to complete the climb, but we offer a 5 ½ day program that allows for an extra weather day.

Why Choose This Program?

This is an excellent program for anyone looking for a very physically demanding and technically challenging climb on a classic hard line. Liberty Ridge is listed as one of the “Fifty Classic Climbs in North America” because of its continuously challenging nature and its striking beauty. The setting is an exposed and committing ascent of a ridge dividing two of the most impressive walls on the mountain. If you have climbed routes on Mt. Rainier or other peaks and not felt technically challenged, then this is an excellent choice for you. It is a great opportunity to utilize your steep snow and ice climbing ability on moderately steep and very exposed terrain. If you are considering other steep, high-altitude routes either with guides or on your own, this program is a great step towards that goal. You will be climbing with some of the most knowledgeable, capable, and experienced guides available and benefiting from their extensive experience on steep, technical terrain.

We employ a light and efficient philosophy for climbing on this program. As every ounce counts on the climb, we will help you accumulate the necessary gear and will check it over again prior to the start of the program.

Climbing with a 4:2 client-to-guide ratio provides a superior level of support and safety.

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

Landcost: \$2,048

Client to Guide Ratio: 4:2 (maximum 4 climbers and 2 guides per climb)

Trip Length: 5 ½ days

Prerequisite:

Previous technical training and climbing experience is required to participate in this program. Participants must have prior training in ice climbing following multi-pitch climbs of Alpine Ice Grade III or higher. In addition they must have participated in previous multi-day ascents of technical routes of 3,000 or more feet in length and 30-60 degrees in angle for most of the route. Suggested training includes IMG's Ouray Ice Climbing Seminar in Ouray Colorado followed by a couple of long alpine snow/ice routes in the lower 48 or longer technical routes in places such as Alaska, South America or the Alps.

Itinerary

Liberty Ridge on Mt. Rainier is the classic hard ascent route on one of the most well known and recognizable mountains in the world.

Day 1 - The team meets at 2:00 p.m. the afternoon prior to the climb at IMG's Ashford headquarters ([Directions](#)). This pre-climb meeting of 4-5 hours is instrumental in getting the team outfitted, informed, packed and educated prior to departure the following morning. Topics to be covered include an introduction of the entire team, an introduction to Mt. Rainier National Park, its mission and ecology; a safety briefing; issue and fitting of gear; personal gear checks and issue of group gear; proper use of safety equipment including helmets, harnesses and avalanche beacons; review of essential knots, safety techniques and additional critical climbing skills. It is important that each member limit their personal clothing and gear to a total of 30 pounds for this climb. A specific and detailed equipment list will be provided in advance to participants.

You are on your own for lodging this night, but IMG offers a convenient and economical option with our onsite [tent camping](#).

Day 2 - Our climb begins with an early morning meeting in Ashford. We load up the IMG van and are shuttled around the mountain to the White River trail head on the eastern side of the Park, the start of our climb. From here we hike through lush forest before emerging into the alpine environment of the Inter Glacier. We ascend steepening snow to St. Elmo's Pass followed by a traverse of the Winthrop Glacier to Lower Curtis Ridge at 7,000 feet. This is a long day, 6-8 hours of steady hiking with full packs.

Day 3 - The next morning we pack up camp and cross the impressive Carbon Glacier, requiring some savvy route finding to reach the base of Liberty Ridge. Crossing the bergshroud to gain the ridge proper can be challenging. We climb directly up the ridge, either on the crest or more commonly traversing along its west flank. We put in camp on our second night at Thumb Rock (10,800ft). This wildly exposed camp is perched on the crest of the ridge half-way up the route.

Day 4 - From here we get an early start on our third climbing day and ascend sustained steep snow and ice slopes to the top of the route, Liberty Cap. Depending on conditions the guides will employ running belays and will lead the steeper sections to belay the climbers up after. This is a big day, with continuous steep climbing throughout. The bergshroud just below Liberty Cap is often the crux of the climb with possible steep to vertical climbing to surmount the bergshroud and possible water ice just below the false summit. We finish up with a long slog from Liberty Cap to Columbia Crest and camp somewhere between the top and Camp Schurman on the Emmons Glacier route, depending upon the weather and conditions.

Day 5 – This day is scheduled to accommodate any weather delays the team may encounter. Weather must be good and winds reasonable for us to leave camp at Thumb Rock and head for the summit. An extra day on the route allows us to wait out marginal weather for a better summit day. After investing so much time and effort in a climb of this magnitude, it only makes sense to factor in an additional day for the climb.

Day 6 - The fifth climbing day we finish our descent to the White River trailhead where our shuttle returns us to Ashford to celebrate our climb.

“The professionalism demonstrated by IMG's guides as well as the high standards that they hold their clients up to maximized our chances of reaching the summit...”

—Greg Y.

For more comments from IMG climbers, please see our website at: www.mountainguides.com/comments.shtml
