

Mt. Shuksan with International Mountain Guides

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Mt. Shuksan is one of the highest non-volcanic peaks in the Northwest at 9,127 feet. A strikingly beautiful peak, it is the most frequently photographed mountain in the United States.

Mt. Shuksan has it all for the aspiring mountaineer: Either of its two main approach hikes lead through dense forest up into the alpine zone and glaciated terrain. It's many routes give good options for both moderate glacier climbing and steeper, moderately technical rock climbing and ice climbing. All of the routes have good opportunities for training in ice axe arrest, cramponing, crevasse rescue skills and technical alpine climbing. The spectacular summit pyramid demands steeper snow climbing or moderate rock scrambling to get to the summit pinnacle. Your IMG guide will take you through the training process and to the summit of Mt. Shuksan for a classic Northwest mountain experience.



Sulphide Glacier route

The Sulphide Glacier route is the most direct route up the mountain with the fewest technical difficulties. The broad rolling expanse of the Sulphide Glacier provides a moderate roped glacier approach to the final 600 foot rock summit. This final challenge involves either steeper snow in early summer or third class, hands and feet rock scrambling to the very summit pinnacle in the later summer months. The final pyramid makes for a very spectacular and scenic summit experience. This ascent is suitable for first time climbers or veterans of past climbing adventures looking for a spectacular climb. The second day of the program will involve training with crampons, use of an ice axe, ice axe arrest and roped glacier travel. This is a good first time introduction to glacier travel or a comprehensive refresher course for those with previous experience. However, all participants must be in very good physical condition. The need to train for this climb cannot be overstressed! For several months prior to the start of the climb, training should include lots of long, slow distance runs or hikes over hilly terrain, an hour or more in duration. Add additional weekend outings carrying a heavy pack (45-55 lbs.) up steep hills or stairs. These sessions should gain 2-3,000 feet over 3 or more miles.

“I want to thank you and IMG for my trip to Mt. Shuksan last summer. Now every time I see it on a calendar or billboard, I can say 'I climbed that.' Eric and Aaron were great, and I would be glad to go on another trip with them...”

—Bruce G.

Fisher Chimneys route

The Fisher Chimneys route is a more challenging way to access to the upper glaciers of Mount Shuksan. Starting on the other side of the mountain from the Sulphide Glacier, a scenic trail takes climbers past the beautiful Lake Ann to the base of the Lower Curtis Glacier. At this point the trail changes to interesting but doable third and fourth class climbing interspersed with exposed walking on talus and heathery benches. These are the Fisher Chimneys, and they climb through the middle section of the mountain to 6700 feet on the White Salmon Glacier, near an incredibly scenic high camp, with close up views of icefalls and the massive Mount Baker in the distance. From the high camp, there are snow climbing and crevasse rescue training venues. The climb to the summit traverses the Upper Curtis Glacier, through Hell's Highway, to gain the upper Sulphide Glacier and access to the summit pyramid. This is one of Chief Guide Justin Merle's favorite routes to guide, so it must be good!

Mount Shuksan North Face Climb

The North Face of Shuksan offers another fun and challenging way to the upper glacial plateau on the mountain. The climbing begins on a remote ridge above Price Lake, and takes the climber up steep snow and ice in the early season, or snow, ice, and rock later in the season. This is a challenging climb, awesome in its own right, and great practice for climbs like Liberty Ridge on Mount Rainier, or Ama Dablam in the Himalayas.

Approach via challenging bushwacking through the White Salmon river valley (more direct, but often quite heinous), or make it a full experience by climbing the Fisher Chimneys route and descending the White Salmon Glacier to the gain the North Face.

This climb is only offered as a four day custom program. Prior technical skills including ice climbing up to WI 2/3 are required.

Options for Mt. Shuksan Climbs:

- Sulphide Glacier Route (Beginner level)
 - 3 days for those with prior ice axe arrest, cramponing and rope travel training(custom trip only)
 - 4 days required for those lacking prior training (recommended time frame for all climbers!)
- Fisher Chimneys Route (Intermediate level)
 - 4 days, for climbers with experience following 4th class rock and moderately steep snow/ice. A solid level of fitness is required.
- North Face Route (Advanced level)
 - 4 days, for climbers with steep snow/ice climbing and 4th class rock skills. North Face climbs are booked as private programs only.

Our unparalleled guide ratios allows us to offer a higher level of instruction, move more quickly, increase our flexibility and our rate of success. This is what sets us apart from the rest. Techniques that will be used and introduced may include movement over rock, ice axe arrest, use of crampons, rope travel, running belays and fixed line work making this an excellent primer for a Mt. McKinley expedition, climbing elsewhere in Alaska, the Alps, and other big alpine climbs. If you are not in need of beginning instruction then give us a call and we will recommend a program based on your previous experience.

Skill Level

For all climbs we will be carrying our full load of gear in to base camp. All participants must be in very good physical condition. The need to train for this climb cannot be overstressed! For several months prior to the start of the climb, training should include lots of long, slow distance runs over hilly terrain, an hour or more in duration. Add additional weekend outings carrying a heavy pack (50-60 lbs.) up steep hills or stairs. These sessions should gain 2-3,000 feet over 3 or more miles. It would also be helpful to get out in the snow during the winter and practice with a pack on steeper slopes.

Mt. Shuksan Dates and Prices

Mt. Shuksan, Sulphide Glacier:

June 14-17, 2021
July 19-22, 2021
August 6-9, 2021
August 16-19, 2021

Cost: \$900
Maximum group size:
8 (1 guide per 2 climbers)

Mt. Shuksan, Fisher Chimneys:

July 10-13, 2021
July 31-August 3, 2021
August 14-17, 2021

Cost: \$1,200
Maximum group size: 4 (1 guide per 2
climbers)



Mt. Shuksan 6-Day Women's Seminar:

TBD (Please contact us for custom options)
Cost: \$1,800 (guide/climber ratio: 1 to 2)

Mt. Shuksan Private Climbs:

July 15 – September 30, 2020

Cost:
\$350 per day per person (2-8 people)
\$550 per day, one person private

Mt. Shuksan Sulphide Glacier Route Itinerary

Day 1: The group meets at the Sedro Woolley Ranger Station in the North Cascades at 8:00 a.m. After check-in and a final pack check and issue of team equipment the group drives together to the trailhead. The trailhead is approximately 2,500 feet in elevation. The climb starts in dense forest and climbs up into the alpine zone to camp at approximately 6,000 feet on the edge of the Sulphide Glacier. A long day with 50 lb. packs, 5-7 hours in duration, probably the hardest day of the trip.

Day 2: Training day. After a leisurely breakfast, the team heads out to the nearby slopes for a day of training in crampon skills, ice axe arrest, roped glacier travel, snow anchors and crevasse rescue. A full and informative day.

Day 3: Summit day. Up before first light, cramponed, harnessed and roped up and then off we go up the rolling slopes of the Sulphide Glacier. The glacier is generally moderate with some navigation around crevasses required. The team will often break at the base of the summit pyramid and gear up for the final 600 foot push to the very top. This final ascent involves steeper (30-40 degree) steps kicked in snow or some sloping slabby 3rd class rock to scramble up belayed by the rope. A full day getting to the summit and back, perhaps 6 hours up and half that time in descent.

Day 4: Up after dawn and a casual pack up of camp, then hike back down to the trailhead in an easy three hours. The team can make plans for lunch at the nearest town, then back to greater Seattle by early afternoon.

Mt. Shuksan Fisher Chimneys Route Itinerary

Day 1: Meet at the Glacier Ranger Station at 8:00 a.m. for group registration. After a gear check and issue of group gear, the team will drive up to the Mt. Baker Ski Area. Hike up to Lake Ann at 4800'. This is the first option for camping. The group often elects to hike up further up to the Fisher Chimneys for a first camp.

Day 2: Move up to a high camp above the Chimneys. There are good options for training in appropriate skills this day on both rock and steeper snow/ice slopes.

Day 3: Normal summit day. Continue climbing up snow/easy rock to a steeper slope of snow/ice. Cross the upper Curtis Glacier and then ascend the Sulphide Glacier to the base of the summit pyramid. To gain the 600 foot high summit there is an option of easy rock scrambling or a 5.0 rock ridge ascent to gain the summit pyramid and the narrow summit with a vast panoramic view of Mt. Baker and the North Cascades. Descend back to high camp.

Day 4: Descend the route back to the trailhead and waiting cars.

The **North Face Route** Itinerary follows the Fisher Chimneys Route with the addition of dropping down the White Salmon Glacier from high camp to access the base of the North Face route. Ascend via steep two tool climbing up snow/ice slopes to the summit and descend to high camp.

REQUIRED Insurance:

IMG requires that all* trip participants purchase [Travel Insurance](#) that includes coverage for medical evacuation, repatriation and medical expenses for the duration of their IMG program. Trip Cancellation Insurance is strongly recommended. Trekking and mountaineering programs are true "adventure travel."

**The insurance requirement does not apply to IMG customers on programs within the continental USA, but is strongly encouraged.*

Mt. Shuksan & North Cascades Custom Programs Equipment List

Clothing

- Long underwear top and bottom (light or medium weight)
- Expedition weight long underwear top
- Fleece or soft shell jacket ***
- Stretchy, dense weave synthetic climbing pants
- Waterproof/ breathable shell with hood ***
- Waterproof/ breathable pants (full side zips preferred)
- Warm, roomy down or synthetic jacket with hood (not an 8000 meter jacket) ***
- Wool or fleece hat
- Insulated ski or climbing gloves ***
- Fleece or lightweight climbing gloves
- Heavy wool or synthetic socks with liners (one extra change)
- Baseball or sun cap
- Lightweight synthetic shirt for sunny days

Gear

- Full size internal frame pack, 55 to 65 liters (around 4,000 cu. in.) ***
- Sleeping bag with stuff sack, rated to at least 20 degrees F.
- Sleeping pad
- Leather climbing boots are recommended -- must be rigid soled and insulated; double plastic boots *** are acceptable for the Sulphide Glacier in May and June
- Full or calf length gaiters
- 10 or 12 Point crampons, fitted to your boots ***
- Sunscreen and lip balm
- Ice Axe, 60 or 70 cm. in length, with wrist leash ***
- Climbing harness with adjustable leg loops.
- Climbing helmet ***
- 3 Carabiners (One locking pear shaped)
- Adjustable trekking or ski poles with snow baskets ***
- Headlamp, LED, bring an extra set of batteries
- Dark glasses, UV rated with side protection (wrap around or side shields)
- Double lens ski goggles
- Two wide-mouth plastic water bottles, 1 liter capacity
- Pocket knife

- [] Plastic bowl, plastic insulated mug, spoon
- [] Camera. The smaller and more convenient the camera the more opportunity you will have to photograph the climb. Your cell phone does the trick nicely.
- [] Personal lunch food for each day on the mountain. Bring a variety of your favorite foods. Include easy to eat snacks for the trail.
- [] Light toiletries: toothbrush and paste, small roll of t.p., ear plugs for sleeping (wind or snoring tent mates)
- [] Personal FA kit to include moleskin, a few Band-Aids, tape, aspirin, Advil, etc. Also consider bringing a water treatment system and/or insect repellent depending on the season.
- [] 2 Large heavy duty plastic garbage bags for keeping gear dry in the pack.

Included in your fee are all group equipment including guides at 2:1 ratio, shared tents, stoves, climbing ropes, snow/ice anchors and climbing permits. Not included is transportation to the trailhead, lodging the evening prior to the start of the climb or the last night of the trip.

“My experience on Shuksan with your guides Eric Stevenson and Aaron Mainer was outstanding. Eric and Aaron were total pros with personality. Their technical skills were clear and solid. But, equally important to me was their ability to relate with us pedestrian clients, encouraging us, not coming off superior and engaging at many levels. I pay for the expertise, but I hope for a complete experience -- I got it all... I can safely say I won't climb with any outfit but IMG....”

—Jeff M.

“I wanted to drop you a quick note to let you know how much I enjoyed my trip to Shuksan with Chris. Overall it was a great experience; we climbed all different types of terrain in both rain and beautiful sunshine (on the summit -- the best time to have it!) But what made the trip truly memorable was Chris' guiding and friendship. While continuing to learn more skills in the mountains, I also appreciated his companionship and overall helpful attitude. The North Cascades are a wonderful spot and I look forward to climbing there again...”

—Rodney M.

“I was very impressed with how everything was so well organized. It seemed like every little detail was covered. IMG is way better than the others. Way better! You guys are the best in the business...”

—Jim P.

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