

Mt. Rainier: 4½ Day Kautz Glacier Summit Climb 5½ Day Kautz Glacier Summit Climb (including Advanced MDS)

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Why Choose This Program?

The Kautz Glacier is a great intermediate climb and is a bit more demanding and technically challenging than the standard routes. It is an excellent choice for people in good condition who have done some previous climbing, are looking to hone their alpine skills, and are seeking a greater summit day challenge. The intermediate mountaineering training curriculum for this trip is comprehensive, but previous cramponing practice on glacier ice is required. The early season climbs, before the glacier snow starts to melt down to ice, are 4½ day climbs. Starting in July, when the steeper sections of the Kautz Route start to get firmer with sections of exposed glacier ice, there is an advanced training day included into the course curriculum to help the team members fine tune skills prior to venturing up onto the upper mountain.

If you are fit and looking to push yourself physically and technically on a climb other than the standard route this program is for you.

Climbers on this program have often climbed either the Emmons or the Disappointment Cleaver routes on Mt. Rainier and have felt comfortable with the skills learned on those routes. They must be confident cramponing in firm glacier conditions on steeper slopes and ready to learn more advanced techniques for dealing with steeper, icier terrain. This is a challenging climb that ascends large and imposing glaciers and snowfields, and gets you away from the regular climbs found on the more commonly climbed Camp Muir corridor. The crux of the Kautz route, just above high camp, involves ascending a chute that increases in angle from 30 to 50 degrees over several hundred feet and likely includes a section of firm snow or glacier ice. Later in the season this section can become exposed glacier ice in its entirety. Multiple pitches of belays by the guides from ice anchors are often employed to facilitate passage. The 4½-day program allows enough time for the team to learn necessary skills and complete the climb comfortably in early summer snow conditions. In July, the route above high camp starts to firm up more and we feel a group training day in advance of moving up the route is essential for preparing all members of the team for the skills involved in the climb. We offer the Kautz 5½-day program during this month. If you are looking for something more physical, technical and remote, then the Kautz Glacier route is an excellent program.

We employ a light and efficient philosophy for climbing on Mt. Rainier. We will help you pare down your personal climbing gear during a pre-climb gear check to minimize weight and make certain you bring only the essentials up the mountain.

We maximize training by adding a half day pre-climb orientation and instructional meeting at IMG's Headquarters in Ashford, just outside the park. Learning to climb thoughtfully and efficiently continues en route during each day of the ascent. This increases acclimatization, minimizes total days for the trip and allows for training to be conducted on the mountain in real conditions all the way to the summit and back.

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

Prerequisite:

This is an intermediate training climb for big glaciated mountains. A review of basic climbing skills is incorporated into this program's curriculum. However, we include the Advanced Mountain Day School into the itinerary of the July climbs to create a 5 ½ day program to help participants prepare for the steeper sections of the route. For those looking for an extended learning experience on Mt. Rainier, we offer our popular Mountain Day School and 2-day Crevasse Rescue School prior to or just after select Kautz climbs and highly recommend this additional training as well for those who are looking for a maximum of training opportunities.

All participants must have prior alpine climbing experience either on Rainier or on other glaciated peaks and be familiar with basic mountaineering skills including cramponing in firm ice and snow conditions. As with all IMG programs, a review of basic climbing skills is incorporated into this program's itinerary. Additional skills will be taught including multi pitch belayed climbing, lowering and rappelling. Past experience on multi day backpacking trips is highly recommended. This is a strenuous and more technically demanding summit climb, not for first time climbers.

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

Landcost Kautz 4½ Day: \$2,091

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Client to Guide Ratio: 2:1

Trip Length: 4½ or 5½ days

Cost includes:

- IMG's world renowned guide staff
- All training curriculum and instruction
- Round trip transportation from IMG Headquarters to the start/end of the climb (Note that this is subject to change based on Covid restrictions).
- Group equipment including single tents, stoves, fuel, climbing ropes and group hardware
- National Park entrance and climbing permits
- Hot water for meals and hot drinks (coffee, tea, cocoa)

Cost Does Not Include:

- Personal gear (see [equipment list](#) for full details)
- Lodging prior to the start of the climb or after the end of the program
- Due to Covid-19 restrictions we will not be providing meals. Hot water will be provided at mealtime. Please refer to our [food suggestions page](#) for more details.

Kautz Climb Itineraries

Below you'll see the itinerary for the 4 ½ Day & 5 ½ Day Kautz Route climbs. The standard Kautz program is 4.5 days, but we add an extra day to our mid-summer Kautz climbs when the crux of the route has a longer section of exposed, 40-50 degree glacier ice. We feel an extra day spent training on the lower glacier in advanced cramponing skills is required to get the team all climbing with the same skills. For the Kautz 5 ½ day program you are responsible for two nights of lodging in Ashford, after the ½ day on Day One and after skills training on Day Two. See [specific, available dates](#).

Kautz 4 ½ Day Climb Itinerary

Day 1 — The team meets at 2:00 p.m. the afternoon prior to the climb at IMG's Ashford Headquarters ([Directions](#)) where our training curriculum begins with the pre-climb meeting of 4 hours and 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; a review of knots, ropes, rope travel and additional critical climbing skills. You are on your own for lodging this night.

Day 2 — We meet at 8:00 a.m. all ready to go, then load up the van and are shuttled up to Paradise, the jumping-off point for our climb. Our training continues with the skills needed for safe and efficient travel with an expedition pack. We spend most of the day ascending to the first camp and establishing it at above 7,000 feet. The first day takes us through open alpine meadows and snow fields then drops us down to cross the lower Nisqually glacier. The Nisqually glacier provides an opportunity to practice roping up and the techniques of safe glacier travel.

Day 3 — We continue training and refreshing the team's glacier climbing skills prior to departing our campsite. Training continues after we pack up and move slowly up to our high camp (at +/- 10,000ft). Once camp is established, we discuss the following day's summit climb and complete our preparations for the morning.

Day 4 — We begin our climb well before daybreak to allow enough time to reach the 14,410 ft summit and descend back to camp during the safest part of the day. Our summit day route normally starts with the guides lowering each member down a vertical rock step to access the Kautz Glacier then onto the steeper and more exposed part of the route. Here the guides may employ fixed anchors or fixed ropes to protect the ascent and descent. This is a great introduction to steeper glacier climbing skills. Throughout the day, the guides will be directing their rope teams, providing safety feedback and hands on training in safe climbing skills. The upper Kautz glacier becomes more moderate in angle and leads up to the upper mountain and finally Mt. Rainier's summit crater rim. After an hour on top, we navigate the same route back down to high camp to enjoy a well deserved rest after a long and strenuous day.

Day 5 — The final day is reserved for descent to Paradise where the shuttle waits to bring us back to IMG's HQ facilities. Here we finally have an opportunity to celebrate our climb, and the guides award certificates of achievement.

“Your company is first class in all respects. I knew exactly what I needed to bring and rent. All of your staff that I met was friendly, helpful, knowledgeable, and I felt safe with them. The rental equipment was also high quality. The overall experience was fantastic. If I am able to go on another mountaineering trip, it will definitely be with IMG.”

—Jason S.

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

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Day 2 — Meet at 8:00 a.m. all ready to go with day packs. We ride the IMG shuttle up to Paradise for a day of technical training. The group hikes to the nearest suitable training area above Paradise, either the slopes below Panorama Point or the lower Nisqually Glacier. Training will include steeper angle cramponing skills: flat footed French technique, front pointing, standing in balance on crampons and movement over ice. The use of ice axes in "piolet traction" and "piolet ancre" (anchoring the pick of the axe) on moderately steep slopes will be covered including the use of more technical tools. Anchor construction on snow and glacier ice is covered as well as belaying, anchor management, rappelling and lowering. Descent back to Paradise at end of day and transport back to HQ. You are on your own for lodging this second night.

Day 3 — We meet at 8:00 a.m. all ready to go, then load up the van and are shuttled up to Paradise, the jumping-off point for our climb. Our training continues with the skills needed for safe and efficient travel with an expedition pack. We spend most of the day ascending to the first camp and establishing it at above 7,000 feet. The first day takes us through open alpine meadows and snow fields then drops us down to cross the lower Nisqually glacier. The Nisqually glacier provides an opportunity to practice roping up and the techniques of safe glacier travel.

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Day 6 — The final day is reserved for descent to Paradise where the shuttle waits to bring us back to IMG's HQ facilities. Here we finally have an opportunity to celebrate our climb, and the guides award certificates of achievement.