

## Mt. Rainier: Liberty Ridge Climb

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Liberty Ridge on Mt. Rainier is a classic and it is our most advanced level climb and mountaineering instruction program. It is considered the premiere guided route on Mt. Rainier and is the most technically demanding of the instructional based climbs we offer on the mountain. All prospective climbers must have past experience and the training conducted throughout the climb will be focused on fine tuning pre-existing skills to minimize risk and increase efficiency on the route.

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. Our training curriculum begins at our facilities in Ashford with a half day pre-climb orientation and instructional meeting at IMG's Headquarters in Ashford, just outside the park. On day 2 we shuttle the team around to the east side of the mountain to the White River entrance for the start of the climb. We incorporate training en route during each day of the ascent to increase climbers' confidence, efficiency and learning to minimize risk.

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. Another option is to descend the Disappointment Cleaver route down to Paradise. 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 advanced mountaineering skills curriculum program for anyone with prior alpine climbing experience looking to increase their skills to a very high level of competence on a very physically demanding and technically challenging climb. 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 to continue to increase your skills on. It is a great opportunity to utilize your steep snow and ice climbing ability on moderately steep and very exposed terrain and move to a higher level of proficiency with our experienced instructors. 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 and learning from some of the most knowledgeable, capable, and experienced mountaineering instructors and guides available and benefiting from their extensive experience on steep, technical terrain.

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***"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](http://www.mountainguides.com/comments.shtml)

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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 2:1 client-to-guide ratio provides a superior level of support and instruction.

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

**Landcost:** \$2,572.

**Client to Guide Ratio:** 2:1 (Maximum 4 climbers)

**Trip Length:** 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
- Group equipment including single tents, stoves, fuel, sleds, duffel bags, climbing ropes and group hardware
- National Park entrance and climbing permits
- Hot drinks (coffee, tea, cocoa)

**Cost does not include:**

- Personal gear (see equipment list for full details)
- Lodging the evening prior to the start of the program or after the end of the program
- Due to Covid-19 restrictions we will not be providing meals on these expeditions. Hot water will be provided at meal time. Please refer to our meals page for suggestions.

**Prerequisites:**

Previous technical training and climbing experience is required to participate in this program. Participants must be fit and ready to learn more advanced skills during the course of the program. Prior training in ice climbing following multi-pitch climbs of Alpine Ice Grade III or higher is necessary. In addition team members must have participated in previous multi-day ascents of technical snow/ice routes of 3,000 or more feet in length and 30-60 degrees in angle for most of the route. Finally, a previous intermediate level ascent of Mt. Rainier is required.

**Recommended prior experience:**

- IMG [Ouray CO 5-day ice climbing seminar](#) or [New England Winter Ice Climbing](#)
- Prior intermediate ascent of Mt. Rainier via either the [Kautz](#) or [Fuhrer Finger](#) routes
- At least two technical ascents of steep snow/ice routes of over 3,000 vertical feet. Such as climbs found in the [North Cascades](#): North Ridge of Mt Baker, North Face of Mt. Shuksan, North Face of Mt Buckner are good examples, but other similarly difficult climbs elsewhere can also apply. Routes should be Grade III or IV minimum with ice climbing up to WI 2-3.

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***“I found your entire operation to be first-class, from the registration process and intervening communications through the entire climb with your outstanding guides... It is clear that IMG looks far beyond technical climbing skills and experience when hiring guides — you obviously seek a certain type of high quality individual to lead your clients... Keep up the good work.”***

—Jerry V.

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## 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](#)) 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; instruction in the 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. Due to Covid protocols, IMG does not offer our usual on site tent camping, but [lodging and camping](#) options are close by.
- Day 2** - Our climb begins with an early morning meeting in Ashford. We load up the IMG van (unless Covid protocols prohibit group transport) and are shuttled around the mountain to the White River trail head on the eastern side of the Park, the start of our climb. Our training continues with the skills needed for efficient travel with an expedition pack. 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. We'll use this crossing of the Winthrop to fine tune rope travel, review safety skills and practice route finding strategies. 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. The guides' instruction from the previous day will be key to a successful navigation of the glacier. 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. Continuous attention to rope safety is key here, and the guides will focus on educating the team in efficient management of the rope, short roping and pitched out belayed climbing as necessary. 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 coach the team as they employ running belays and lead the steeper sections to belay the climbers up after. This is a big day, with continuous steep climbing throughout and continuous coaching and direction from the guides. 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 (up to 3 hours) from Liberty Cap to Columbia Crest and then descend another route to camp either at Camp Schurman on the Emmons Glacier route or Camp Muir on the Disappointment Cleaver 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 guides will award the team certificates of achievement.