

Waddington Range Mountaineering

Course Description

Push yourself to grow as a leader on this demanding expedition. This is one of our most challenging expeditions, and it will give you many opportunities to grow as a leader and learn to enjoy living in the wilderness. If you're seeking a challenging experience that will transform you, then this is the course for you.

Features

- Duration: 31 days
- Route length: 70-85 miles
- Average group size: 12 students / 3 instructors
- Average age: 22 / minimum age: 17
- Average pack weight: 50-60 pounds
- Elevation range: 5,000-13,000 feet
- Terrain: will encounter snow, ice, and steep terrain
- Extensive travel above treeline and glacier travel
- Skills: basic mountaineering, travel on rock, ice, snow, and glacier
- Opportunity for peak ascents

Overview

British Columbia, Canada's Waddington Range, a little known and remote mountain range, contains steep cliffs, jagged peaks, and sprawling ice fields that will challenge you on a daily basis. This area has some of the largest glaciers in sub-arctic North America and provides an ideal setting for you to learn the fundamentals of mountaineering and leadership and push you both mentally and physically.

Your development as a mountaineer will begin with the basics. Learning to care for yourself, your fellow expedition members, your equipment, and the environment in a variety of conditions are the foundation for advanced mountaineering and the focus of our core curriculum. As you bushwhack through thick forest and undergrowth on your way to the glaciers, you'll master camping, cooking and basic travel skills. As you travel, your group will be challenged to negotiate slopes of loose scree and dense vegetation or large, crevassed glaciers, and you'll employ techniques to minimize the chance of a confrontation with bears and other wildlife.

Once you reach the glacier, you'll move into the climbing curriculum, beginning with knots, rope handling, rope team travel, self-arrest and belaying. You'll spend time practicing these skills and learning to live and travel responsibly in glaciated terrain. As your experience builds and you move into more technically demanding terrain, you'll be exposed to more advanced skills such as crevasse rescue, route finding on a glacier, avalanche hazard assessment, and the use of 4th and potentially even 5th class rope systems for protection during more exposed travel.

There will be days set aside for classes and skill practice or peak ascents when you will not move camp, but you should be aware that a number of factors often preclude successful summit attempts. Your course will take advantage of every opportunity to prepare you for future expeditions in glaciated ranges, and the primary focus of this course is the development of skills and judgment, not "peak bagging". By the end of this course, you'll be ready to pursue a lifetime of exploration in the mountains.

Independent Student Group Travel

Due to the technical nature of the travel on the Waddington Expedition, multi-day Student Expeditions, when students travel for multiple days without instructors, is not a part of this course.

Weather and Other Challenges

Weather

Mountain weather is unpredictable. On any given day, temperatures may range from below freezing to sweltering. Courses may experience snow and rain, or long stretches of sun and blue skies.

Terrain

Mountaineering in the Coastal Range of British Columbia, while it can be tough, remains a great learning ground for future mountaineering of all types. You will negotiate glaciers, crevasses and icefalls and walk on loose, shifting boulders. Much of the traveling is on steep terrain requiring precise movement. Often you'll be off-trail bushwhacking through thick forests or scrambling in boulder fields.

Early summer season courses may spend much of their time camping and traveling on snow. You will traverse steep slopes of snow, loose rock or grass, and grunt up high mountain passes, at times gaining 4,000 - 5,000 feet in a day. The heavy packs and

steep terrain can be hard on your knees and feet if you are not used to this type of travel.

Remoteness

For the duration of your course, you'll be miles from the amenities of civilization. Telephones, ambulances, and hospitals may be days away. All NOLS instructors maintain wilderness medicine certifications and are equipped with well-stocked first aid kits to provide care in the event of an emergency.

Wildlife

The area your course will travel through is home to grizzly and black bears. NOLS, in collaboration with bear biologists, has developed specific practices to minimize the risk of a bear encounter. Your instructors will teach these practices to you and you will have to follow them every day. Bear avoidance practices include carrying bear deterrent pepper spray, meticulously maintaining cleanliness at the cooking sites, not having food in tents, and proper food storage. In some situations in grizzly bear country, the minimum group size is generally four people. You will live, travel and take care of personal necessities with a group of your peers always close by. Precautions against bear encounters will decrease the opportunities for solitude and privacy on this course, one of the most challenging aspects of living in grizzly bear country.

Learning Goals at NOLS

NOLS courses teach wilderness and leadership skills on expeditions and in classrooms. You will apply these skills to challenges in a supportive learning culture with high expectations. Your course will provide you with the opportunity for a positive, transformative experience intended to inspire you and empower you to act.

We craft NOLS courses so graduates will be able to assume leadership roles; live and travel in the outdoors; act with confidence and competence; respect and collaborate with others on expeditions, on teams and in communities; care for themselves and others; understand their strengths, habits, and areas for growth; function under difficult circumstances; make informed and thoughtful decisions; communicate effectively; connect with natural places; and appreciate living simply.

We believe positive, ethical leaders change the world. Join NOLS and become one of these leaders.