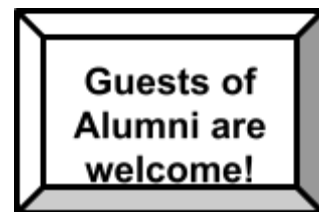


Mountaineering on Washington's Mount Baker

Seattle, WA

July 18 - 25, 2026



Features

- Six nights camping on a stunning glaciated volcano
- Glacier travel and snow mountaineering
- Focus on technical mountaineering skills training, including crevasse rescue
- Elevations up to 10,778 ft.
- Base camp style camping
- 2 hotel nights in Seattle

Cost: \$3,255

Minimum Age: 18

Historic Age Range: 18-70

Max group size: 10 Participants

2 NOLS Instructors

Trip Description

Our classroom on this NOLS Alumni trip is Mount Baker, aka Koma Kulshan, one of the five glaciated volcanoes of Washington State and one of the gems of the North Cascades. With an elevation of 10,778' and forty-four square miles of ice spread out amongst twelve glaciers, Mount Baker is one of the most extensive training grounds for snow and ice mountaineering in the Lower 48. For six days, you will travel and climb surrounded by stunning views. You'll work hard, moving over the steep terrain with heavy mountaineering gear while developing skills and strength to be safe in that environment. You will also learn the skills to live and thrive in a mountain environment and, if all goes well, attempt to reach the summit.

The trip starts and ends in Seattle, WA, a city with easy access to an international airport, numerous high-quality gear stores for those in need, and a rich mountaineering history. We'll meet at a hotel on the first evening to introduce ourselves. The next morning, we'll review our gear and take care of any last-minute needs before driving into the beautiful North Cascades and camping at a scenic campground near Mount Baker. Over the days that follow, we'll move up the mountain in several stages as we learn the skills necessary to eventually make an attempt for the summit.

Our training starts with the basics, so novice mountaineers are welcome. We'll start with foundational camping and outdoor living skills before moving into the subalpine zone and eventually establishing a 'high camp' in the middle of a glacier. Throughout the course, you will work as a team to build competency and efficiency moving on glaciers. Walking on rope teams, using ice axes and crampons, building snow anchors, performing crevasse rescue, managing steep terrain, and much more will become second nature to you as you build fluency in this arena. All of these skills will set you up for our summit attempt on Mount Baker and for future mountaineering expeditions within or beyond NOLS.

On the last day we'll hike down to the road and drive back to the hotel in Seattle. After getting cleaned up, we'll meet up for a closing dinner as a group.

Environment

Mountain weather is fickle. On any given day, temperatures may range from below freezing to t-shirt conditions. Snowfall is possible, even in July. Mountaineering in the Pacific Northwest, while tough, is a great learning ground for future mountaineering of all types. You will travel off-trail, mostly above timberline, over steep slopes of vegetation, snow, rock, and ice. You will negotiate glaciers, crevasses and icefalls and walk on loose, shifting boulders. Much of the traveling is on steep terrain requiring precise movement. Carrying a backpack over steep terrain can be hard on your knees and feet if you are not used to this type of travel. You'll be miles away from the amenities of civilization. Telephones and hospitals may be a couple of days away. Identifying and managing mountain hazards—falling rock, weather, moving water and steep terrain (risks that could result in injury or death)—are a constant theme in our instruction. Managing these risks and assuming responsibility for yourself and your colleagues will help make your expedition on this wild and beautiful mountain healthy and fun.

NOLS Staff

Our staff are employees of NOLS and trained and certified accordingly. This means they maintain certifications in wilderness medicine and are trained to NOLS' high standards in risk management. They are senior staff at NOLS who have spent years working and teaching in backcountry environments all over the world. Additionally, our staff specialize in bringing together groups of strangers and building the group culture and camaraderie that makes NOLS trips great.

A Day in the Life

After waking up in the morning you will typically head straight into breakfast prep and eating. After breakfast, instructors will review the plan for the day before everyone breaks to gather group and personal equipment. Days will be spent learning and then applying mountaineering skills in a structured and organized manner. You will build on your skill set throughout the trip by applying your freshly learned techniques to new situations being thrown at you.

During most days, lunch will be a casual affair as compared to a structured meal time. You will eat when you are hungry with snacks and trail food being the common staple. Dinner will be organized more like breakfast with the group enjoying time together in preparation and consumption of their meals.

Difficulty Scale

This trip is rated 5 out of 5 on our difficulty scale.



We use a difficulty scale to help participants evaluate if a trip is right for them. It considers probable weather conditions, physicality of activities, and food and accommodations. You don't need to be a honed athlete, but pre-trip work to improve your strength, flexibility and endurance, is highly

encouraged to improve your enjoyment of the place. If you have specific questions regarding physical preparation and your readiness please reach out to the Alumni Trips Department.

Food on the trip

There will be plenty of food provided on the trip for everyone. We are happy to ensure that folks who have reasonable dietary needs and/or preferences are well taken care of throughout the entire trip. Listing those needs on your registration paperwork is critical for our success here.

If you would like to bring your own snacks along, that is highly encouraged. We all have treats that we enjoy and bringing something special is a great way to keep motivation high and not have to rely on the group's schedule for your munchies.

Curriculum

This trip's curriculum focuses on introductory glacier mountaineering skills. The technical skills you will learn and practice include: ice axe use for self-belay and self-arrest techniques, rope handling and management incorporating useful mountaineering knots, snow and ice anchor systems, crampon use, steep terrain management, glacier navigation, and crevasse rescue with rope ascension techniques. You will also learn and practice mountain hazard evaluation and risk management. There may also be opportunities to practice some ice climbing if time and conditions allow. The culminating experience will be putting all your newly acquired skills together as you make a summit attempt on Mount Baker!

Expectations of Participants

The alumni trip atmosphere is more relaxed than a typical NOLS course; however, it is not a guided trip—we call it an educational, participatory vacation. Alumni trips are self-reliant adventures through remote areas where evacuation to modern medical facilities can take several days. Throughout the course, you will live outdoors, help to prepare meals and care for yourself. The expedition emphasizes hands-on learning and application of new skills in a variety of situations and you are expected to take part in the climbing curriculum.

Unlike our standard expeditions, Alumni trips do allow electronics and alcohol for those that are of legal age in the country of the trip. We believe that these luxuries can add to a course experience and local flavor. Excessive alcohol consumption is not a part of the culture of Alumni trips.

Equipment

NOLS will provide 'group gear' including tents, cooking equipment, and technical equipment such as ropes, climbing equipment, and shovels. Participants will be responsible for acquiring their own 'personal gear' such as clothing, sleeping bags, backpacks, boots, harnesses, ice axes, and crampons. Most of this gear is available for purchase or rental in Seattle, and, if needed, your NOLS instructors will be able to help facilitate rentals from [REI](#) or [Ascent Outdoors](#) in Seattle. A full gear list is available below.

Trip Itinerary

July 18	Most folks will travel to Seattle on this day, although of course you are welcome to arrive earlier if you would like to take some time to explore the city and region. Please arrive on time for a 7 p.m. trip orientation meeting in our hotel near Sea-Tac International Airport. Dinner is on your own this evening. Single gender, paired lodging provided by NOLS. Please let us know if you are traveling with someone you would like to room with.
July 19	After breakfast in the hotel, we will check gear, pack, and drive to a campground near Mount Baker. We'll have time to take care of last-minute gear needs in the city before hitting the road, and then we'll enjoy the evening at a beautiful campground on the shores of Baker Lake.
July 20 - 24	Mountaineering training, exploration, and possible summit of Mount Baker.
July 25	Descend to the trailhead and return to Seattle hotel in time for a celebratory group dinner. Paired lodging provided by NOLS.
July 26	Most folks travel home on this day.

Trip Logistics

Flying to Seattle:

Most folks who fly to the Pacific Northwest for this trip will fly into SeaTac airport just south of Seattle (SEA).

Driving:

If you choose to drive, you will be able to park your vehicle at the hotel where we will start and end our trip.

Lodging:

This expedition begins and ends at Country Inn and Suites near the Sea-Tac airport in Seattle, WA. Please arrive at the hotel for a 7:00 p.m. pre-trip orientation meeting in the lobby on the first evening.

NOLS will make the hotel reservations for the first and last night of the course. The pre-and post-course lodging is included in your tuition.

Country Inn and Suites
Address: 3100 S 192nd St, Seattle, WA 98188
Phone: (206) 752-1286

Travel Insurance:

Travel insurance is worth exploring in case unforeseen events cause you to change your plans or if NOLS has to cancel a trip for any reason. Check with your personal insurance carrier and credit card to understand what you already might have or check out cat70.com for a wide variety of options.

Carbon Footprint and Offset:

Current estimates are that the Travel Industry accounts for ~8% of global emissions. This percentage includes everything from transportation to accommodation and shopping. NOLS recognizes that our business contributes to this problem but we do not have a comprehensive strategy at this point.

If you would like to offset part or all of the carbon emissions related to your Alumni trip, we recommend [South Pole](#). [Their calculator](#) can help easily calculate your footprint and choose a project to contribute to. [Here is a link to their calculator.](#)

Storage of Personal Belongings:

Any extra personal gear will be stored at the hotel while you are in the field. Although due care will be taken, NOLS assumes no liability for baggage, valuables, or vehicles while stored at the hotel. It may be possible for you to obtain personal insurance to cover such risks if desired.

Tipping:

While tipping is common in the outdoor guiding culture, your NOLS Instructors are not driven to excellence by tips but rather a love for taking people outdoors. You are welcome to tip the Instructors if you choose, but many instructors are honored by [a donation in their name to the NOLS Annual Fund](#) which supports scholarships for future NOLS students.

Trip Registration

The best way to register is through the trip information page on the nols.edu website. A non-refundable deposit secures your spot on the trip. If any issues arise, please call the NOLS Alumni Department at (800) 332-4280. Your enrollment is complete with receipt of your full tuition and your completed application forms; these are **due 60 days before the start of your trip**.

Your tuition includes meals starting with breakfast on the first day through dinner on the last evening, all climbing gear, camping gear (tents, stoves, kitchens, etc.), safety equipment, instruction, permits, and transportation.

All participants are required to submit registration materials, including a medical form. These forms highlight the intersection of your trip's anticipated physical rigor and your current health and fitness status while also providing NOLS information about things like your dietary needs.

NOLS is not responsible for additional costs incurred by late arrivals or evacuations. Those expenses are the responsibility of trip participants and we recommend purchasing travel insurance to mitigate the impact of unforeseen circumstances.

Do not book travel greater than 60 days before the start of the trip unless you have confirmed with NOLS that the trip will run. On rare occasions, we do cancel trips due to low enrollment.

Cancellation and Transfer Policy

For your reference, here is the [Alumni Trips Cancellation and Transfer Policy](#). When enrolling on a trip, you will need to agree to this policy.

Equipment List

Group Gear provided by NOLS

Tents or Shelters	Water Treatment	Reference Books	Climbing gear, e.g. carabiners and prusik cords
Stoves	Maps & Compass	First Aid kits	Satellite/Cell phone
Cooking Gear/ Spice Kits	Equipment Repair Kits	Climbing ropes	Fuel and Fuel Bottles

Personal Gear

As noted above, participants are expected to acquire or rent their own personal gear. The list below indicates which items are available for rental at [REI](#) or [Ascent Outdoors](#) in Seattle. Your NOLS instructors will be able to help facilitate rentals if needed.

Upper Body Clothing		
Equipment	Available to Rent at Seattle REI?	Notes
Base Layer (1)	No	Lightweight long-sleeve top, synthetic or wool.
Mid Layer (1-2)	No	Long sleeved expedition-weight top(s), synthetic or wool.
Top layer ("puffy" jacket)	No	A heavy weight, zip fleece jacket or puffy jacket.
Wind Jacket	No	A lightweight, breathable, nylon wind shell.
Rain Jacket	No	A sturdy, waterproof jacket with a hood. Must be large enough to fit over all the insulating layers.

Tee Shirt	No	Synthetic or wool.
Sports Bras (1-2)	No	Synthetic or wool.
Wool / Fleece Hat	No	Fleece or wool.
Sun Hat	No	Baseball cap or full brimmed hat.
Mosquito head net (optional)	No	Mesh head net with drawstring.
Liner Gloves	No	Lightweight synthetic or wool gloves for sun protection and cold.
Waterproof gloves or mittens	No	Warmer gloves for colder temps and/or working in the snow.
Lower Body Clothing		
Base layer	No	Lightweight long underwear, synthetic or wool.
Fleece or puffy pants (optional)	No	Warm pants for hanging out in camp.
Hiking pants	No	Breathable hiking pants which you will likely wear every day. We suggest soft-shell or nylon material.
Rain Pants (optional)	No	Waterproof/breathable pants to fit over your hiking pants.
Shorts (optional)	No	Nylon shorts.
Underwear (2-4 pairs)	No	Synthetic or wool are recommended.
Footwear		
Mountaineering Boots	Yes	Synthetic or plastic boots for mountaineering. (We recommend synthetic.) Must accept crampons.
Crampons	Yes	Aluminum or steel.
Camp Shoes	No	Closed toe. Lightweight running shoes or Crocs are good options.
Socks (3)	No	Wool, Crew length.
Gaiters (optional)	No	Some folks enjoy using full-length gaiters to keep snow out of their boots.
Climbing Gear		

Ice Axe	Yes	A simple mountaineering axe.
Harness	Yes	A lightweight climbing or mountaineering harness.
Helmet	Yes	A standard climbing helmet.
Sleeping Gear		
Sleeping Bag	Yes	We recommend synthetic bags rated 20 to 30°F.
Backpack	Yes	Internal frame packs with 55+ liter capacity.
Compression Sack	Yes	For your sleeping bag.
Sleeping Pad	Yes	A full-length foam or inflatable sleeping pad.
Miscellaneous		
Trash Compactor Bags (2-3)	No	2-3 for waterproofing inside your pack and sleeping bag
Bowl	No	Lids are nice.
Spoon	No	Something light and durable.
Water Bottles	No	At least 2 liters carrying capacity is required.
Lip Balm (1-2)	No	SPF 15 or greater.
Sunscreen / Zinc	No	We recommend SPF 30 or greater. Zinc for faces.
Bandannas (1-2)	No	Women often use these for hygiene..
Sunglasses + retainers	No	Lenses should be dark and 100% UV resistant.
Headlamp	No	Strong enough for walking in the dark if needed.
Lighter	No	Used for lighting your camp stove.
Personal Hygiene Articles	No	We have travel-size toothpaste, toothbrushes, and feminine hygiene products for sale.
Watch	No	An alarm and a light feature are helpful.
Notepad and Pencil/Pen	No	A small, lightweight pad is fine.
Optional		

Hydration System	No	Many prefer hydration systems to water bottles.
Trekking Pole(s)	Yes	Mountaineers often enjoy having 1 trekking pole to compliment an ice axe while on snow.
Buff	No	Great way to cover up from the sun.
Insulated Mug/Thermos	No	A 12 oz. to 24 oz.
Pocket Knife	No	Small, lightweight knife is sufficient.
Book or e-reader	No	Bring something fun to read.
Camera	No	We would love to see your photos post-trip!
Camp Chair	No	Crazy Creek chair or something compact.
Coffee	No	Bring if you enjoy coffee for yourself in the morning. Coffee is not supplied in the NOLS ration.