

**Vesper Peak Scramble Summit**  
**August 13-14, 2025**  
**Elevation: 6,138 ft. Gain: 4,115 ft. 7 miles RT**  
**Classification: Unrated (U) Scramble**  
**Leader: Cathy Lazarus**  
**Assistant Leader: Leslie Drapiza**



Photo credit to Linda Bedard of Liz with Vesper Peak behind.

### **Overview**

Vesper Peak is a very popular scramble located in a lake basin in the Monte Cristo range along the Mountain Loop Highway. The standard route is straightforward on mostly low angle rock (intrusive quartz diorite). The mountain also has technical climbing routes on its steep north face ranging from 5.6 to 5.10. It was ascended in 1918 by the Mountaineers club but it was likely preceded by prospectors and a geological survey party. The summit views include Glacier Peak, Sloan Peak, Mt. Pugh, Mt. Rainier, Mt. Stuart and the top of Mt. Adams.

### **Route Description**

**Day 1:** We will start at the sunrise Mine Trailhead at 2,320 feet. We will cross over several creeks (at beginning, then .4 miles and at .5 miles is South Fork Stillaguamish River). We will emerge into the scenic Wirtz Basin between rocky Mt. Sperry and Morning Star Peak (1.25 miles). In the rocky basin we will follow cairns until the trail reappears and switchbacks steeply up the right side of the basin to Headlee Pass (4,600 feet at 2.8 miles in). Be careful just below Headlee as the steep, narrow rock

chute is notorious for falling rocks. From Headlee drop 100 feet in elevation, cross a boulder field and we will have our first glimpse of Vesper. We will cross a stream that flows from Lake Elan and start looking at camping options. Lake Elan has a few flat places (3.4 miles). There are five well established campsites and the higher we go, the further from Vesper Creek, our water source.

**Day 2:** From camp, start switchbacking up a rooty and dirt-covered path in a thicket of short spruce trees. We will emerge from the trees and take granite slabs and boulders to the summit. Enjoy the stunning views. We will retrace our route back to camp, pack up and head out.

### **Driving Directions**

The trailhead is about 5 hours 30 minutes from Salem (305 miles) and 100 minutes from downtown Seattle. On I-5N take exit 194 toward Highway 2 toward Snohomish/Wenatchee. Drive nearly 2 miles and take the left exit for WA-204 E towards Lake Stevens for 2.5 miles. Turn left onto WA-9 N and drive for 1.7 miles, then turn right onto WA-92 E. In 1.5 miles arrive at a traffic circle and take the second exit to stay on WA-92 E. After 6 miles at a second traffic circle take the second exit onto Quarry Road. Stay on Quarry Road through two more traffic circles. Arrive at an intersection and turn left onto Mountain Loop Highway (Hwy 530). Stay on the Mountain Loop Highway for 27.5 miles. Make a right onto Forest Road 4065. Drive 2.5 miles to the end. From the Mountain Loop Highway it takes 10-15 minutes to reach the Sunrise Mine Trailhead. There are rough patches and potholes so a high clearance vehicle is recommended. Parking is roadside and limited. Northwest Forest Pass is required.

### **Itinerary:**

#### **Wednesday**

**9:00 am:** Meet at Sunrise Mine Trailhead 707 at 2320 feet.

**9:30 am:** We will begin our hike in second growth forest making many stream crossings.

**10:00:** At .5 mile in, cross the Stillguamish River at 2400 feet.

**11:00:** At 1.25 miles arrive at Wirtz Basin between Sperry Peak and Morningstar Peak at 3100 feet. Listen for Pikas.

**11:45 am:** Begin switchbacks up the valley to the head of the basin (1.7 miles 3800 feet).

**2:00 pm** Hairpin right turn, switchback up narrow couloir and arrive at Headlee pass. Watch footing and for rockfall. (4600 feet)2.3 miles

**3:00 pm** Descend slightly and head up another rock field, then back in the forest to Vesper Creek and Lake Elan. Choose a campsite (2.7 miles 5000 feet).

#### **Thursday**

**7:00 am:** Leave for summit through heather and shrubs. Switchback up a rooty dirt path. Pick a path through granite slabs and boulders. (.5 miles)

**8:45am:** Arrive at summit (6138 feet). Enjoy views of Baker, Glacier and Rainier.

**9:30 am:** Depart summit.

**10:30:** Break down camp.

**11:30 am:** Begin hike out.

**4:30 pm:** Arrive back at trailhead.

### **Packing List:**

- Ten essentials (map, compass, whistle, personal first-aid, food, water, sunblock/chapstick, sunglasses, matches/candle/fire starter, headlamp & spare batteries, socks/gloves/hat, emergency blanket/bivy, pocket knife)
- Food (one breakfast, two lunches, one dinner plus snacks)
- Water (2-3L for the hike in, water sources are available)
- Mosquito repellent (optional)
- Trekking poles
- Light-weight hiking boots
- Gaiters (optional but will keep scree/dust out)
- Synthetic/wool socks
- Synthetic shirt
- Hiking pants
- Hat (warm & sun)
- Lightweight gloves or mittens
- Jacket (warm)
- Windproof/waterproof layers

**We may want a helmet under Headlee Pass as rocks from hikers above are common. It would be the only place we need a helmet.**

### **Camp:**

- Tent and stakes
- Sleeping pad
- Sleeping bag
- Stove and fuel/lighter
- Cooking pots/utensils
- Water filter
- Water storage
- Breakfast and dinner + more food
- Toiletries

### **Special Considerations:**

- The trailhead parking fills early! It's not really a parking lot, just a wider section of road. Parking along the road is narrow. Longer vehicles may have trouble turning around. There is a deep washout/rut right before parking area. Pit toilet at trailhead.
- Northwest Forest Pass is required.
- No cell service except at summit
- Water available toward beginning at creek crossings and then not again until camp.
- Trail to camp is very exposed to the sun

•If the weather is questionable, we'll make a decision on whether to go or not by August 11.

If you have any questions, please contact Cathy (458-223-0422) or [cathylazarus4@gmail.com](mailto:cathylazarus4@gmail.com).

### **Weather links**

NOAA at 5,700 feet

<https://forecast.weather.gov/MapClick.php?lon=-121.516&lat=48.011>

Mountain Forecast:

<https://www.mountain-forecast.com/peaks/Vesper-Peak/forecasts/1894>

Sunrise: 6:03am Sunset: 8:24pm civil twilight: 5:28am 8:58pm

### **Map link**

[GaiaGPS-2025-06-21T23\\_19\\_20.pdf](#)

### **Team and Emergency Contacts**

1. Cathy Lazarus
2. Leslie Drapiza
3. Meghan Boeckman
4. Kevin Ball
5. Billy Bob Davis