
Shuksan: Sulphide Glacier

4 Day Trip

DAY 1: Sedro-Woolley to Shannon Ridge Trailhead

Day Overview

- ❑ **8:00 AM** at Sedro Woolly, Northwest Mountain Shop, for orientation and gear check
- ❑ Leave to Shuksan
- ❑ Hike/ climb from Shannon Ridge Trailhead (2,586') to camp near the Sulphide Glacier (6,200')

8am We will meet at The Northwest Mountainshop, 829 Metcalf Street, Sedro-Woolley, WA 98284, for orientation and gear check. A big part of developing the necessary skills starts with having the proper equipment and food to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience in the wilderness. The guides will discuss each piece of equipment and ensure everything is in good condition and fit properly. Finally, the guides will evaluate conditions, discuss the weather with the group, and make last-minute adjustments before departing. This is an invaluable part of the course and will often help eliminate many of the questions students have regarding both equipment and the flow of the course.

Arriving at Shannon Ridge Trailhead, we will have endured a bumpy and broken forest road but await an approach-trail spectacle. The cruising trail flows up sustained switch-backs, tossing you up the valley until arriving under a notch in Shannon Ridge. The path draws you in, but look back and see if the striking views toward Kulshan and the Salish Sea are there. Walking northward now, we flow into the alpine. Seasonal snow patches exist here and just beyond the notch, where boots may be required, but running water may be found. It is advantageous to set camp just below the toe of *The Sulphide Glacier* at 6,400'.

An integral part of mountaineering and expeditionary climbing is setting up a safe and secure camp in an extreme environment. As a group, we'll practice these skills. Guides discuss the importance of personal maintenance, hygiene, and sleeping in cold environments, Leave No Trace principles, and address student concerns. Finally, instructions on proper hydration, including efficient snow-melting protocols, nutrition, and backcountry-cooking techniques, will be addressed.

DAY 2 - SNOW SCHOOL

Day Overview

- Snow school for snow travel and self-arrest
- Lunch
- How to follow a trad route/ how to lead belay
- Rappelling
- Early bedtime

We'll learn the basics of traveling on snowy and icy surfaces. We start by working on various walking techniques for moving safely and efficiently over various snowy slopes, with and without crampons. Good footwork, balance, and rest techniques are invaluable skills that we use throughout the course. Guides then introduce the use of the ice axe, and students conclude by practicing various self-arrest positions.

After lunch, we'll dive into the technical aspects required for the summit day. Skills include rappelling, constructing an extended rappel (AKA tether), what to do at a belay station, how to "clean" trad gear (cams, nuts, etc.), moderately steep snow/ ice climbing techniques, moving in short-rope configuration, etc.

Most of the skills covered on Day 2 will be implemented on Day 3 (Summit Day). The remaining time will be spent resting at camp, preparing for the lengthy and adventurous day in the mountains.

DAY 3 - Summit Day

Day Overview

- ❑ Pre-dawn alpine start
- ❑ Navigate The Sulphide Glacier
- ❑ Ascend the South Gully or the SE-Ridge
- ❑ Descend Summit Pyramid
- ❑ Descend The Sulphide Glacier (good nav. exercise)
- ❑ Arrive at Camp

Summit day! We begin with a pre-dawn wake-up time, an essential aspect of any alpine climb. Moving with a sense of urgency at camp is imperative, and it begins the prior night by packing/ prepping your gear & bag.

Rope teams assembled and gear equipped, we begin by headlamp up the glacier avoiding the cascading Eastern slopes. The early bird gets the worm for this route - the first pick up the South Gully or SE-Ridge. We can expect slopes up to 40* over the ~1,300 gain along the *Sulphide Glacier*; breaks will be taken roughly every 1 hour.

Ascension options include the 4th-class South Gully or the low-fifth-class SE-Ridge (similar to some Flatiron Routes in Boulder, CO.) The team will execute the plan made the night prior.

Scrambling and climbing our way up, summit views are vast as the eye can see. We will take time to get group photos, sign the summit register, then begin our way down. The team will perform a series of rappels (down the *South Gully*) and maybe some belayed down-climbing on moderately angled snow until touching back onto the walkable slopes below. During the descent, climbers must remain diligent for rockfall from other climbers, a hazard not uncommon on popular routes like this one. All tangible mountain skills covered on Day 2, offering a preview of application for further climbing adventures.

It is a physically and mentally demanding day, providing excellent training for more advanced objectives students may encounter later in their climbing careers.

DAY 4 - Return to Shannon Ridge Trailhead

Day Overview

- Early wake time
- Breakfast
- Break camp
- Descend to Shannon Ridge Notch
- Arrive back at Shannon Ridge Trailhead

The final morning will be best spent waking up around dawn. Packing camp and descending toward *Shannon Ridge* may require mountaineering boots and/or an ice axe - we will discuss protocols for mid-late summer firn. Once arriving at the notch, it is a quick descent back down to the dirt trail with spectacular views toward Kulshan. After returning to the cars, the team may decide where to grab lunch for a final debrief, and cheers!

Pre-Course Home Study and Prerequisite Skills Requirements

We strongly encourage students to be proficient in tying and hitching the most commonly used and useful knots. Home study materials and videos can be found [here](#).

Students are expected to be self-sufficient backcountry campers able to keep a tidy, Leave No Trace camp.