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## **Alaska Mountaineering – Mt. Drum Expedition**

Mt. Drum, an extinct volcano, rises 12,010 feet (3,660 m) from the tundra landing strip. Though Drum is the smallest of the Wrangell Mountains, its aesthetic shape and full climbing experience make it a unique peak. The route, an Alaskan Grade 2+, follows the airy and steep south-west ridge; offering stunning views and secure climbing. Steep snow and scree is encountered along with several false summits before the altimeter reads 12,010 feet. From the summit, with Mt. Blackburn, Mt. Sanford, and Mt. Wrangell as your backdrop, you raise your ice axes high with excitement.

A challenging peak, Mt. Drum offers technical climbing without the commitment or rarified air of its larger neighbors. Drum is suitable for intermediate climbers, or fit novices in search of a real challenge. Basic mountaineering skills and comfort with exposure are required for this 8-10 day climb.



### **Trip Highlights:**

- Experience the challenges and rewards of mountaineering in Alaska
- An attainable peak for intermediates and strong novices.
- Spectacular setting among the high peaks of the Wrangell Mountains.
- Hone your skills with professional Alaska mountaineering guides.

### **Mt. Drum Expedition – Detailed Itinerary**

The following is a sample itinerary for this trip. Due to individual abilities and goals, as well as the demanding environment, all of our Alaska mountaineering trips are customized as they unfold. The guide will constantly make decisions based on weather, logistics and group dynamics to maximize each day's experience. There can be quite a bit of variation, but we always strive to make every trip your best ever.

**DAY 1-** We meet you at your hotel early in the morning and begin the drive to your staging site (This could be Glennallen, Chistochina, Chitina or McCarthy depending on where our pilot wishes to fly us in from). Within minutes of leaving Anchorage, the scenery becomes impressive. On one side are the steep, snow-capped peaks of the Chugach, and on the other

side, the tidal flats of Cook Inlet. Turning east, the Glenn Highway follows the Matanuska River valley where the long days of summer produce the famous sixty pound cabbages. As you approach Chickaloon Pass, the white ice of the mighty Matanuska Glacier fills the valley below. On a clear day the magnificent Wrangell Mountains will be directly in front of you as you descend the pass. Mt. Drum stands out and looks the highest, because it is much closer. In reality it is the smallest of these large peaks at 12,010 feet (3,660 m). Mt. Sanford at 16,237 ft (4,949m) is on the left (north), and the huge dome of 14,163 ft (4,316m) Mt. Wrangell is to the right (south). Mt. Wrangell is the largest active volcano in the world. On a clear day, it is even possible to see the massive form of Mt. Blackburn in the distance. At 16,390 ft (4,995m) this spectacular peak is the tallest of the Wrangells, and only twenty five miles from McCarthy.



Depending on where your flight is departing from, our Alaska mountaineering guides will check your equipment either in Anchorage or at our headquarters in McCarthy. St. Elias Alpine Guides has a detailed equipment list with various recommendations, coming from three decades of mountaineering in Alaska.

After the equipment check you and your guide discuss logistics, delving into specific expedition menus, their nutritional values,

and how to package it all for the trip. You also discuss equipment in depth; what kind of tents, ropes, and sleeping bags are best and why. Once all the checks are complete, you and your guide rendezvous with your bush pilot and fly in to the mountain this afternoon or spend the night and prepare for a flight first thing the following morning.

### ***Early Season Climbing Schedule for Mt. Drum (April - June)***

**DAY 2** - Meeting your bush plane early in the morning, you fly onto the Klutlan Glacier at approximately 5,000 feet (1,524 m) of elevation and establish base camp. After getting settled, you and your guide begin ferrying loads up the route. From the glacial landing strip you can double carry, meaning that you and your guide take the necessary gear to the next camp in two trips. This technique makes each load a lighter load and makes it easier to navigate steep and exposed terrain. After taking one load to the next camp, you settle in at base camp and review some climbing and rope techniques. Generally, it is not necessary to rope up until higher on the ridge as this area of the glacier has no crevasses.

**DAY 3** –You continue to move your gear up the mountain, across the glacier and up onto Hurricane Ridge, the South West Ridge of Mt. Drum, to an elevation of approximately 7,000 feet (2,133 m). You may be able to deduce through the variety of hues and textures that the rocks banding the surrounding ridges are volcanic. There are even some volcanic plugs sticking up and the reddish sub-peak of the appropriately named Mt. Ruddy is behind you. Gaining the main ridge, the dramatically sharp sub-peak of Mt. Snyder appears before you. It is believed that this peak has never been climbed. As you climb, the glacier slopes are relatively easy terrain and your progress is relatively quick. Eventually, you start up much steeper terrain to gain the main ridge. There are a few flat areas on the ridge, giving you and your guide some excellent camping options - some on dirt, some on snow. The expedition is getting high enough now that you can look over the Copper River basin to the Chugach Mountains in the distance.

**DAY 4** -Today will be spent carrying a load to 9,800 feet (2,987 m). From approximately 7,500 feet (2,286 m) onward, the climbing gets considerably steeper and narrower. There can be a lot of exposed scree, sometimes the climbing is mixed, and other times it is mostly snow. No matter what the conditions, this is mountaineering in Alaska - lots of air around with incredible views. At 9,100 feet (2,773 m), you leave the last of the rocks behind and begin climbing over the first of the big snow domes. Cresting the top of the dome, Mt. Wrangell and Mt. Blackburn suddenly leap into view and loom overhead. The sweep of the south cirque of Mt. Drum is also visible, as well as the West and East Summits....your destination. You and your guide head back to your lower camp in preparation to do it all over again tomorrow.



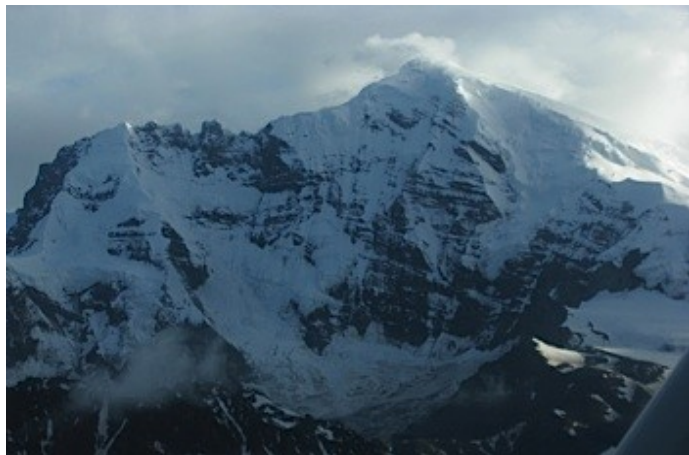
**DAY 5** – Rising early this morning, you can't help but feel the satisfaction of mountaineering in Alaska. Challenging, remote, beautiful, and shared with fellow enthusiastic climbers, this is the experience of a lifetime. Setting out from camp, you and your guide follow your route from the previous day and complete the move to high camp. This light and airy perch can become windy at times, so you build large snow walls for wind protection, creating a comfortable "home" no matter what the weather may throw at you.

**DAY 6** -Summit Day! – Awakening early, for an alpine start, you head up immediately over the first of the false summits. Moving together over steep ground, you and your guide pick your way through the uniquely Alaskan "transverse crevasses" until you are below the top knob. One pitch through the icy snow flutes puts you over the top where you are able to down climb and traverse into one of the saddles. Delicate work on crampons, but this is fun stuff! The next big block looks fairly intimidating, but you make your way around it and move onto the next piece of narrow ridge. Depending on conditions, you may make a descending bypass route or run a pitch up a very narrow piece of ridge onto easy ground. If you decide on the ridge, you and your guide will be working your crampons and ice axes hard. Don't forget to

pause now and then to enjoy amazing views of the surrounding peaks. The steam plume on Mt. Wrangell is often visible, and if the wind is right, you may get a whiff of sulfur. On your run over to the West Summit you'll also pick up the hidden treat of 13,421 foot (4,090 m) Mt. Jarvis, the hidden volcano of the Front Range.

Summit day on Mt. Drum is a very long day, usually 12 to 16 hours. Luckily, the long hours of Alaskan daylight works in your favor! Total elevation gain is well over 4,000 feet (1,219 m) due to the, sometimes descending, route to the summit. As you make your way back to camp, keep your eyes peeled for your tent, a tiny dark spot lower on the ridge. After a long, hard day of climbing, crawling into the tent and sleeping bags at the end of the day is a welcome relief; the roar of the stove letting you and your guide know that you are home and dinner is on the way.

Note: We consider the East Summit as optional (it's a long way to it over easy terrain), but for clients that want to go for it, we're happy to do all we can to make your climb everything you've hoped for.



**DAY 7-** Reserve day. Typical of most significant mountaineering in Alaska, there is always a need for an extra day to weather out a storm or deal with unforeseen circumstances. This day is not optional.

**DAY 8** – Today, still reveling in your accomplishment of the previous day (and maybe a little sore) you descend to base camp. Looking down from the high camp you can see the route stretching out before you. After breaking down camp, you and

your guide take one last look around, then shoulder your packs for the first tricky bit of down climbing. Working your way back and forth through the lower part of the ridge, it is surprising how quickly it goes, in comparison to climbing up. Three or four hours after leaving high camp you are back on the glacier. An hour later, you're back at the airstrip with much of your route visible behind you.

**DAY 9** - In the morning, after a leisurely breakfast, you and your guide break camp and organize your gear for the flight out. Now is time for that uniquely Alaskan Mountaineering Thing - waiting for the plane. You strain your ears for the first buzz of the aircraft engine and after one or two false alarms, the plane appears. It is on "final", skis kissing the snow and turning to a stop. Your pilot grins and asks how it went, but he knows...your smiles betray you. You load up, and the acceleration of take off lets you know that the climb is finished. You and your guide look out the windows, admiring your handiwork. Before you know it, you are back in Chitina, packing up the vehicle and hitting the road – in search of the perfect hamburger...

## ***Late Season Climbing Schedule Variation for Mt. Drum (July - August)***

**DAY 1** - Same as Early Season Climbing Schedule above.

**DAY 2** - You fly in a tiny single-seat bush plane and land on a patch of tundra at approximately 3,000 feet (914 m) at the foot of the mountain. You leave a small food cache, in bear proof canisters, and begin working your way up towards the peak, doing it all in one load, "alpine style", fast and light. At tonight's camp, you'll enjoy the last of the vegetation, looking at Hurricane Ridge profiled before you in the evening light.

**DAY 3** - Your goal is to move to the toe of Hurricane Ridge at approximately 6,000 feet (1,828 m). Your route takes you across outrageous ice formations, carved by glacial streams, which create deep vertical shafts called moulin. As you travel, you alternate between glacial ice and surface moraine. Depending on your progress, tonight you may opt to camp on ridge itself for better views.

**DAY 4** - Tactics vary depending on your progress and weather. You may move camp higher to 8,500 feet (2,590 m) if you have camped low the previous day, or move a load up the ridge if you have camped high. Your goal is the summit, and the game is on.

**DAY 5 thru DAY 9** - Same as Early Season Climbing Schedule above.



### **What's Included?**

As with all of our Alaska mountaineering, the Mt. Drum Expedition includes professional, experienced mountaineering guides with extensive local knowledge and medical training. We provide all food for the backcountry portions of your trip, including hot, delicious meals morning along with evening and plenty of snacks and lunch food for mid-day nourishment. St. Elias Alpine Guides also provides shared group gear, including stoves, pots, and tents, as well as technical gear (ropes, climbing protection, crampons, harnesses, helmets, etc). All you need to bring is your personal gear, (clothing, rain gear, boots, sleeping bag and pad). If you have your own climbing gear, we recommend that you bring it so you can familiar with its use as you learn and hone your systems for mountaineering in Alaska. You can find a detailed list of the gear that we recommend you bring on our [mountaineering equipment list](#).

If you would like us to arrange your transportation to/from McCarthy/Kennecott and/or lodging while in the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, we offer this as a free service to our multi-day clients. Please email or give us a call to discuss the details.