



St. Elias Alpine Guides, LLC
Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, Alaska
(888) 933-5427 ♦ (907) 554-4445
www.steliasguides.com

Alaska Mountaineering – Mt. Blackburn Expedition

Standing proud as the apex of the Wrangell Mountain Range, the beauty of Mt Blackburn has an almost irresistible allure. Visible from the town of McCarthy and the architect of the mighty 27-mile long Kennicott Glacier, the 16,390ft Alaskan jewel is as appealing as it is perilous. Since first climbed by the legendary mountaineering pioneer Dora Keen in 1912, claiming one of its less than 50 total



successful summits is a notable achievement! With over 7,500 vertical feet of climbing on the 50th most topographically prominent peak in the world, you are sure to encounter everything you could dream of in a true mountain wilderness expedition. Due to Mt. Blackburn's exposure, vertical relief, (almost) guaranteed arctic storms, and portions of technical climbing, previous mountaineering experience is required – Please contact us if you started to smile while you read this!

Trip Highlights:

- A truly challenging climb with no footsteps to follow, fixed ropes, other climbers to rely on, or a guaranteed summit
- Learn strategies used to make important decisions in the mountains from our experienced and professional guides
- Test your physical and mental endurance for a once in a lifetime achievement
- Enjoy the beauty and unique scenery of the true Alaskan backcountry

Mt. Blackburn Expedition – Detailed Itinerary

The following is a sample itinerary for this trip. Due to individual abilities and goals, as well as the demanding environment of Alaska, all of our 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 - You have officially arrived in Alaska! After a nice breakfast at your hotel in Anchorage, one of our friendly guides will greet you bright and early to begin your journey to our small mountain town of McCarthy. The views will change quickly as you head east out of Anchorage, paralleling the snow-capped Chugach Mountains along the Glenn Highway. As you

descend from Chickaloon Pass towards the Copper River Valley, the rugged Wrangell Mountains will appear majestically before you. If you're lucky, Mt Blackburn may even poke out of the clouds, looming in the distant horizon! You'll feel the excitement build as you drive down the infamous McCarthy Road stealing glimpses of your objective along the way. No view, however, beats the view from McCarthy, where you'll meet your guide who has been excitedly preparing for your trip for the past couple of days!

DAY 2 - In order to best prepare you before heading out into the mountains, it's important to refresh all your mountaineering skills. You'll spend today learning and practicing all the unique skills required for a remote mountaineering trip in Alaska so it's no big deal if you're not feeling 100% confident. You will even get to ascend a rope as if



you were climbing out of a real 'crevasse'! This will also give you and your guide an opportunity to thoroughly go through your gear, ensure it works properly, and make sure you're not forgetting anything! This will also be your chance to ask any questions you may have about the trip.



DAY 3 - Today the official adventure begins! After your last 'real' meal, you will head to our local airport first thing in the morning to prepare for the 30-minute flight to the Nabesna Glacier. You'll load all your food, fuel, and gear into a bush plane modified with skis on it capable of landing you on a glacier at 8000ft where you'll begin your climb up the NW Ridge! You will undoubtedly feel a sense of true remoteness as the

sound of the engine of the plane disappears leaving you and your guide completely alone in the Alaskan backcountry. Depending on time, you may be able to move your gear closer to the base of the ridge, or perhaps set up your first winter camping spot right where you landed.

DAY 4 - This is the first full day spent making progress towards the summit! The goal is to get close enough to the actual climb to set up your basecamp. Early starts, hot breakfasts, and long days under the midnight sun will give you the best chance to make as much progress as possible. You will also get to put into practice all the rope skills you learned as you tie yourself into the rope and along with your tow-behind toboggan carrying all your things, begin to work your way to the base of the NW Ridge.

DAY 5 - As you fall into the rhythm of the trip, slow progress is the goal. Going from sea level to 8,000ft with your eye on 16,390ft will surely shock your system! By moving slowly, you allow your body to adjust to the new altitude and decreased oxygen levels in the air before climbing too high. During this time on the glacier, you will become a pro and making and breaking camp,



packing your backpack as well as your sled, and mastering the status of rope ninja!

DAY 6 - This is when the magic starts to happen! The routine has you feeling like a well-oiled machine. Everything has a place in your pack, your gear is working as it should, and best of all, you get to begin the more technical part of climbing up the ridge! You and your guide will discuss different strategies about how to proceed as the climbing gets steeper and the glacier falls away below you.



DAY 7 - After a full day of climbing the ridge, and many tough days before, a day to rest, recover, and acclimate will be welcomed. You may choose to practice more technical ridge climbing skills, lighten your bag of snacks, or use it as a good excuse to wipe the dust off the book you've been hauling around but haven't had time to read yet! After a mix of relaxing, hydrating, and training, this would be a great time to

introduce snow anchors and belaying techniques. You will use these skills for the technical climbing sections.

DAYS 8 & 9 - Feeling rested and acclimated, you will spend these days pushing to 14,000ft. Loads will still be heavy as it's important to carry lots of food and fuel and the climbing will become progressively more challenging. In the very likely case that you are pinned by a storm at 14,000ft, the more food and fuel you have, the longer you can wait up high and the better chance you have of making it to the summit when the weather finally breaks!

DAYS 10 & 11 - With the summit so close, it's hard to think about anything else. Having a couple of days at high camp to recover from the physical and mental exertion so far will serve you well because once the weather window shows an opportunity for a summit attempt, it won't take long before you hear "Everyone out of your tents...it's time!" and you better be ready!

DAYS 12 & 13 - These will be your summit days! After all your hard work pushing to high camp, you'll just be waiting for the weather to cooperate. With all your preparations and practice, once you decide to go it won't be long before you're out the door and on the rope. The summit day will be a long day so ensuring a good weather window that will hold is essential! After climbing for 10 or more hours, you'll finally be able to



marvel at your sense of accomplishment (and of course the incredible views!) from the summit of the tallest mountain in the Wrangells!!! After high-fives, photos, congratulations, and possibly tears have been shared, you will turn around to head back down. Exhausted but pleased with your accomplishment, there is sure to be a big smile plastered across your face!



DAY 14 - With a sense of great accomplishment, you will pack up your high camp and work your way carefully back down the ridge. No matter how good the trip was, you can't help but let your mind begin to wander and think about the comforts awaiting you back in civilization but the most important thing to remember is mountaineering is only 50% uphill. It may be hard to concentrate with a tired mind and sore body but safety will

be the number one priority during the descent.

DAY 15 - You'll arrive back at the pick-up with a whole new appreciation for the mountains. The same view you saw when you landed on the first day seems completely different now and fills you with a new respect for the mountains and so many wonderful memories! The relaxed atmosphere is a welcomed change after the intensity of climbing such a magnificent mountain. Soon you hear the plane coming to get you and before you know it you've landed back in McCarthy and head straight for the hot, wood-fired sauna. What a nice place to return to!



DAY 16 - Feeling totally exhausted but entirely fulfilled and proud to have completed a once-in-a-lifetime mountaineering trip in Alaska, you head to the airport and once again look over your shoulder back at Mt Blackburn. As you work to figure out how you can possibly describe your experiences to your friends and family who are eagerly awaiting your stories upon your return, we drop you off at the airport in Anchorage and wave goodbye...for now!

What's Included:

- Guiding and instruction from skilled professionals. Our guides have extensive experience, as well as medical, rescue, and avalanche training.
- Round trip transportation between Anchorage and McCarthy.
- Ski plane flights to and from the mountain range.
- Delicious breakfasts, lunches, and dinners while in the mountains.
- Group equipment: stoves, tents, ropes, fuel, etc.



What you're responsible for:

- Personal gear – check the gear list for this trip for a complete description.
- Lodging for the nights before and after your trip (see below).
- Food while not on the mountain.
- Guide gratuity – Please let us know if you have any questions about this.

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.