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Alaska Mountaineering – Mt. Drum Expedition

Mt. Drum is a great introduction to the more technical side of mountaineering. This stout and often underappreciated gem rises to 12,010 feet which eliminates having to contend with altitude and heavy glaciation and allows you to focus solely on steep snow and ridge climbing. Sticking out the west end of the Wrangells, Mt. Drum is infamous for being the



first to catch the hardy Alaskan storms as they blow into the Wrangells which adds quite the element of excitement as you work your way up the appropriately named 'Hurricane Ridge'! As an added bonus, landing on the Tundra gives you the chance to climb this mountain in the truest form, from the bottom!

Trip Highlights:

- Great objective for mountaineers looking to take their skills to the next level by challenging themselves in technical terrain
 - Enjoy the unique challenges of climbing an Alaskan Mountain Ridge
 - Spectacular setting among the Wrangell Mountains
- Learning techniques for traveling in avalanche terrain

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 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 - Today you travel to McCarthy, a quaint mountain town and the headquarters of St. Elias Alpine Guides. You'll notice the bustle of Anchorage fade away behind you and give way to the surrounding sights of rural Alaska as our friendly staff drive you along the Glenn Highway. Paralleling the snow-capped Chugach Mountains, you will soon catch a glimpse of the adventure awaiting you! As you

descend from Chickaloon Pass, Mt Drum will be the first big mountain in the Wrangells to materialize out the front windshield and leave you to decipher where the clouds end and the mountain begins. Once settled in the cozy town of Gulkana, you will meet your guide who has been excitedly preparing for your trip!



DAY 2 - In order to best prepare the team for a successful expedition, it's important to ensure everyone is on the same page. For this reason, you will spend today refreshing all your mountaineering knowledge and learning the specific techniques we apply due to the remote nature of mountaineering in Alaska. This means there is nothing to worry about if you forget how to tie a clove hitch or can't quite get that prusik perfectly dressed! Our patient and



knowledgeable guides will spend the day with you covering all the basic skills/knots/ropework that will be used during your trip. You will even get to ascend a rope as if you were climbing out of a real 'crevasse'!

DAY 3 - Once all caught up on the latest technical mountaineering skills, you'll be ready to head into the mountains! Weather permitting, this will be the day you fly into the Klawasi Glacier. After a short but exciting flight in a small bush plane, you and your guide will be left alone in the mountains to officially begin the trip of a lifetime! Depending on time, you may be able to move all your gear to the glacier or perhaps spend your first (and last!) night comfortably in the tundra.



DAY 4 - Eager to get an early start after a nice night under the midnight sun, today you will begin the actual climb! A hot breakfast will give you the energy needed to get out of your sleeping bag and start the day. Once things are packed up, you'll begin the approach to the bottom of Hurricane Ridge. Your climb will take you from 4500ft up 7,500 vertical feet to the summit of Mt. Drum at 12,010ft and across almost 7 miles of ridgeline!

DAY 5 - As you fall into the rhythm of the trip, slow progress is the goal. Above 7,500ft, the ridge steepens and begins to narrow substantially. Getting up early to promote climbing during the cooler and more stable morning temperatures will give you the afternoons and evenings to enjoy recovering in the warm sunshine at camp while keeping a close eye on the weather!

DAY 6 - Here's where the magic happens! 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, the summit begin to come into view! Or is that another false summit?!?! There are a number of false summits along the ridge and even though the terrain is becoming more difficult, your smooth climbing and increasing comfort with exposure allow you to make continuous progress.

DAY 7 - As you begin to climb higher, the name of the ridge should prepare you for what to expect! Hurricane Ridge will likely not disappoint so ensuring that you build proper winter camps with strong walls to protect your tents against the hurricane-like winds will help you sleep soundly at night. Early starts under the



midnight sun will promote cooler and more stable snow conditions during your time climbing through the most technical and avalanche-prone terrain.

DAYS 8 & 9 - These will be your summit days! The long days behind you have set you up with the best chance to successfully tag the summit when the weather cooperates. When the window does appear, all your practice and preparation will have you out of your tent, tied into the rope, and ready to go faster than ever! It will be a long day to reach the summit and return but the achievement will be worth every challenging step! Once safely back at camp filled with simultaneous exhaustion and elation, you will have a chance for some well earned rest before beginning the descent.

DAYS 10 & 11 - 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. With a tired mind and sore body, you'll finish walking down the ridge and back to the glacier where your basecamp awaits at 5000ft. The only difference is you'll notice much quicker progress working with gravity instead of against it!

DAY 12 - You arrive back at your landing zone and relish in the opportunity to do nothing but relax until the plane arrives. Having been constantly working your mind and body for the past 11 days, the relief to sit and enjoy your final moments in peace will perhaps be some of the fondest memories of the entire trip! Once the plane lands and is loaded, the pilot whisks everyone quickly back to Gulkana where a well-deserved celebration (and shower) are awaiting!

DAY 13 - Feeling totally exhausted but entirely fulfilled and proud to have completed a once-in-a-lifetime mountaineering trip in Alaska, you head back to the airport and once again look up at Mt Drum from the road, now tracing your route on the window. As you 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 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.

