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Alaska Mountaineering – Mt. Sanford Expedition

After a comfy night preparing for your trip in Chistochina, jump into a ski-plane for a 20-minute flight as you and your gear are swept from the familiar rolling tundra and wildflowers of the Northern Wrangells into a world of ice and snow. Embrace the beauty, as well as the challenges, of winter camping, skirting crevasses, and unparalleled scenery as you climb or ski your way



up the Sheep Glacier towards the summit of the 6th tallest peak in the United States. While presented with the classic mountaineering challenges like arctic weather, altitude, and glacier travel, Mt. Sanford also provides plenty of suitable terrain for learning and practicing the many mountaineering skills required to be safe in the mountains.

Trip Highlights:

- Stay in comfortable lodging in Chistochina before and after your trip
- Gain over 13,000 vertical feet as you climb to the summit
- Ample opportunities to learn and practice crevasse rescue, route-finding, whiteout navigation, and many other skills!
- Perfect first Alaskan expedition for the budding high-altitude mountaineer
- A great expedition for both climbers and skiers

Mt. Sanford 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.

Some interesting facts about the mountain.....

Mt. Sanford was named in 1885, by Lieutenant Henry Allen after a superior officer in the War Department. It is a shame that this name simply doesn't do justice to the magnificence of this beautiful mountain. Mt. Sanford, at 16,237 feet (4,949 m) anchors the Wrangell Mountains on the northwest corner, and is the first huge glaciated mountain seen as one approaches this magnificent wilderness, either from the Alaska Highway from the east, or Anchorage from the west.



Formed just to the north of the St. Elias Mountains, the Wrangells are volcanoes formed by the fiery collision of tectonic plates that lead to the birth of the immense St. Elias and Ice Field Ranges to the south and east. Mt. Sanford, Mt. Blackburn, and Mt.

Wrangell, are all massive volcanoes, with Mt. Wrangell being the most recent peak to erupt, in 1916. During this eruption, 3 feet of ash was deposited on the Copper River Valley below. Mt. Sanford and the rest of the Wrangells are relatively unknown mountains. First climbed in 1938 by Bradford Washburn and Terris Moore, Mt. Sanford was the second major peak of the Wrangells to be scaled. Climbed less than 50 times, Mt. Sanford is still a wilderness climbing experience, as well as an immense, glacier covered Arctic peak.

DAY 1 - After a long day traveling to Anchorage and a comfortable night at your hotel, your trip officially begins early this morning when you're greeted at your door by one of our friendly guides! Today you will become acquainted with your striking surroundings on a picturesque drive through rural Alaska. Paralleling the Chugach Mountains as you drive along the Glenn Highway, you will soon catch

glimpses of the Wrangell Mountains as you head towards Chistochina, the staging area for your trip. If you're lucky, Mt Sanford may even poke out of the clouds allowing you to catch a glimpse of the adventure awaiting you! Once settled in your cozy cabin, you and your guide will go through all your gear to make sure you have everything you'll need, and nothing you don't!

DAY 2 - Due to the remote nature of mountaineering in Alaska, there is a skills seminar day built into all our trips. 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. This will not only allow you to help during the course of the expedition but also engrain those basic mountaineering principles so you can take them with you to all your future adventures! To allow for the best chance of success on the mountain, this also provides a time to make sure that crampons fit properly, snowshoes or skis are in good working order, and even talk through the menu!



DAY 3 - Weather permitting, this will be the day you fly into Mt Sanford. A small plane custom mounted with skis will fly you and all your gear from the comfortable, warm tundra to a land of ice and snow! After a breathtaking 20-minute flight, the plane will drop you off on the Sheep Glacier at 6000ft before heading back to the comforts of

home and leaving you to begin the trip of a lifetime! After traveling to a safe,

scenic location for camp 1, you will unload your things and build your first winter campsite!

DAY 4 - Having managed to catch a couple of hours sleep beneath the midnight sun, you will be ready to start early! A hot breakfast will give you the energy needed to get out of your sleeping bag and start the day. You'll pack up your things and begin to ascend the Sheep Glacier towards your objective, over eight miles and 8,000 vertical feet away!



DAY 5 - As you begin to find the rhythm of things, slow progress is the goal. To create the best opportunity for a summit bid, now you must get up early, put in long days, and work forwards and upwards, making sure to keep a close eye on the weather! You will be leaving the relative comfort of the gentle incline and observing the real hazards of glacier travel come to life as the terrain steepens and the glacier starts to crack.

DAYS 6 & 7 - You begin to feel like a well-oiled machine. Everything has a place in your pack, tying into the rope is second nature, and best of all, the summit is coming into view! It still seems impossibly far but you know that every challenging step gets you a little bit closer! You begin to feel the air become thinner as you climb above 12,000ft and are captivated by the increasingly spectacular views as the world falls away around you.

DAYS 8 & 9 - You will work your way to high camp at 14,000ft! Having worked extremely hard both physically and mentally to get here, a rest day not only has the benefit of replenishing calories to sore muscles and providing hydration to a tired body, it will also give you a chance to better acclimate for your summit attempt!



DAYS 10 & 11 - You will be laying in your warm sleeping bag, drinking tea, eating snacks, and resting for when the time co... "EVERYONE UP!" The weather window has arrived and it's time to go! Allowing multiple days at high camp will provide a more realistic opportunity for an acceptable weather window to attempt the summit. All your hard work pays off as you crampon up the final 2,237ft to stand

on the 6th tallest peak in the US! After high-fives, photos, and hugs all around, you bask in your accomplishment one final moment before you begin the descent down the mountain. You've only come halfway after all!

DAY 12 - You begin to feel physically strong again as you descend back down the mountain. Although mentally fatigued, the smile on your face and the wonderful feeling of accomplishment keep you focused as you march down the mountain, passing and remembering all the camps you had built on the way up. The thoughts of all the little comforts awaiting you back at home begin to fill your mind as you remind yourself you only have one more night sleeping in the snow! Perhaps you'll miss it more than you thought...

DAY 13 - You spend the morning preparing all your things for the flight back to civilization. The relaxed atmosphere is a welcomed change after the intensity of climbing such a magnificent mountain. You arrive at your landing zone, load the plane, and are swiftly flown back to Chistochina. Your pilot will ask how your trip went but he can already tell by the obvious smile



on your face! Chistochina is a welcomed sight as you enjoy a hot shower and a

well-deserved celebration!

DAY 14 - 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 Sanford from the road, now tracing your route on the window. What an unbelievable feeling to know you climbed the 6th tallest peak in the US! 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.