

Dear Climbing Participant,

We are excited that you have chosen to climb Mount St. Helens with us! This email contains important information about what type of conditions you might expect for the day of your climb, along with other helpful information.

There is one attachment to this email. This is a liability waiver and medical release form for the climb. Please fill out this form and bring it with you to the climb. Hard copies will also be provided at the trail head if this is not possible. If you have any medical issues that warrant concern, please call us before the climb. All participants must fill out both a liability waiver and medical release form to climb with the Mount St. Helens Institute.

**Meeting Time:** 6:00am- please be prompt.

**Meeting Place:** Climber's Bivouac/ Ptarmigan Trailhead. Climbing Guides will be wearing Mount St. Helens Institute uniforms.

**Directions to Climbers Bivouac:**

Climber's Bivouac is located at the end of Forest Road 81-830 (just east of the junction of Forest Roads 81 and 83) on the south side of the volcano.

- 1) From Interstate 5—take Exit 21 (Woodland Exit)
- 2) Travel east on Highway 503 and then USFS Road 90, approximately 35.7 miles to junction of USFS Roads 83 and 90.
- 3) Turn north (left) onto USFS Road 83 and proceed another 3.2 miles to the junction of USFS Roads 83 and 81.
- 4) Turn on to USFS Road 81.
- 5) Proceed 1.8 miles to intersection of USFS Roads 81 and 830.
- 6) Turn on to USFS Road 830 to Ptarmigan Trail and Climber's Bivouac.

For a map of the area, visit: [http://www.fs.fed.us/gpnf/04maps/images/final-2008-VR\\_msh\\_nvm\\_10x13\\_web.jpg](http://www.fs.fed.us/gpnf/04maps/images/final-2008-VR_msh_nvm_10x13_web.jpg)

**Permits:** We will issue your climbing permits (included in the price of the climb) on the morning of the climb at the trailhead.

**Description of the Day:** We will be climbing out of the Climber's Bivouac/ Ptarmigan Trailhead. This route takes us over 4600ft of elevation gain, covering approximately 9.5 miles round trip, averaging about 1000ft gain per mile. The first two miles are on a trail through forest with an elevation gain of approximately 1,000 feet. The majority of the elevation gain (3600 feet) is in the last 3 miles where the trail is more rugged and where you will be scrambling over rock and hiking in scree (loose rock and gravel). Additionally, due to the late snow pack, there will be some snow travel.

The average round trip, including an hour or more spent on the rim, takes 8-10 hours. Our goal is to have everyone get to the rim safely. Last year we had a very safe climbing season and almost every climber (>95%) made it to the rim. Because this is a strenuous hike and everyone wants to get to the rim and peer into the crater we ask that everyone work

together as a team to achieve this common goal. It isn't a competition. It is a lot more fun to see everyone arrive at the rim, enjoy the incredible views and return safely back to the trailhead at the end of the day.

### **List of Suggested Equipment:**

***Clothing-*** Please do not wear cotton clothing. Cotton gets wet from sweat and/or precipitation and stays wet, which could be potentially dangerous (hypothermia) if the temperature drops and/or there is any wind. There are many synthetic fast drying clothing options available today that can be acquired at most any outfitting store.

- Sturdy water-proof boots (Sturdy waterproof hiking boots with good ankle support are imperative; we will not allow participants to climb in sneakers or running shoes.)
- Synthetic or wool socks and liners (to prevent blisters)
- Gaiters (To keep out snow and scree)
- Base layer (such as a wool, polyester or capilene shirt)
- Mid to heavy weight layer (such as a fleece jacket)
- Water resistant / proof rain/wind shell and rain pants
- Synthetic Pants (Many participants prefer zip-off style pants- you may be hot going up, but it could be cold as we get towards the top and the weather can change quickly in the mountains)
- Gloves (Garden gloves/ work gloves are recommended because they ease the pain on your hands of scrambling over the rocks)
- Warm hat (much body heat loss occurs through the head)
- Sun hat

### ***Gear to Carry***

- 3 to 4 liters of water (Be sure to bring enough food and water to last the whole day. You will be encouraged to eat at every major stop along the climb and drink continuously)
- High energy foods such as trail mix, PB&J, Clif bars, beef jerky, cheese
- Trekking poles (Especially helpful on the way down as they lessen the impact on the knees particularly when your legs are fatigued- adjustable poles are ideal however solid ski poles are sufficient)
- Sunscreen and lip balm (Rocks and particularly the snow acts like a solar reflector and you will need to apply to all areas of exposed skin, including lips)
- Sunglasses (An absolute must towards the top)
- Personal First Aid Kit including personal medications
- Headlamp/ Flashlight
- Small pocketknife
- Camera (To capture all the spectacular views!)
- Binoculars
- Handkerchief
- Day pack to carry all your goodies

***\*Remember the alpine environment is very dynamic and it is prudent to be prepared for any and all changing conditions\****

**Camping Option:**

Overnight camping for Guided Climbs is available at Climbers Bivouac (pit toilets and no water). The Guided Climbs fee covers camping at Climber's Bivouac for both the night before and the night after your climb. You must print out your guided climb confirmation email and display it on your dashboard overnight as proof of your purchase.

**Weather Forecast:** To keep updated on weather conditions for the day of your climb visit: <http://forecast.weather.gov/MapClick.php?zoneid=WAZ019>.

Conditions on the mountain can change rapidly and we recommend that you prepare for the worst. This means adequate layering to counter the cold and wind, which can blow hard at the top. Additionally actual conditions on top do not always match with what is predicted.

**Ensuring a Successful Climb:**

The Mount St. Helens Institute has compiled a list of tips from our Climbing Guides and Mountain Stewards (who have climbed the mountain countless times). Here are some of their tips for ensuring you have a safe and successful climb

- Training hikes with large elevation gains are an essential part of your training.
  - For a list of training climbs in the Seattle area, click here: <http://fiveseventeen.sailwhatcom.com/2006/07/mt-st-helens-training-hikes.html>
  - Hikes in the Portland/ Vancouver area include: Angels Rest, Saddle Mountain, Larch Mountain, Dog Mountain, Mount Defiance, Hamilton Mountain (mostly trails in the Columbia River Gorge)
- Drink at least 3-4 liters of water the day before the climb to hydrate
- Eat a substantial breakfast (a Power bar is not enough. One of our guides eats eggs, bacon and toast before every climb. However be careful not to substantially change your diet the day of the climb. If you don't already eat the types of food that you will consume on the trail you should start incorporating it into your training hikes.
- A good-night rest is important

For general information about climbing Mount St. Helens, visit: <http://www.fs.fed.us/gpnf/recreation/mount-st-helens/>. If you have any questions you can respond to this email, or call the MSHI office at 360-449-7883.

Thank you again, and we look forward to climbing with you!

Sincerely,

Your MSHI Climbing Guides