



Baffin Island

Ski Mountaineering

Until a few years ago few people had ever heard of Baffin Island. Far to the north and with most of the island above the Arctic Circle it was for along time the preserve of hardened arctic explorers, hunters and fishermen. Baffin featured large in the exploration of the pole with explorers such as Frobisher and John Davis passing through. Since that time climbers have discovered the area and some areas such as Sam Fiord have become popular with big wall climbers looking for ultimate in adventure.

At SMC we have experience in this region and have climbed there in the past climbing some of the major peaks in the area including Asgard and new routes on some of the smaller peaks. Since that time we have always wanted to return and try the skiing in the late winter and spring. Because of it's location at or above the Arctic circle the days lengthen quickly and there is 24 hour daylight from May through June. There have been very few ski expeditions to this area and information is hard to get. But you can rest assured that we will probably be doing first descents of a number of lines.

Much of the Cumberland Peninsular is part of Auyuittuq National Park. The name comes from an Inuit word meaning "the place where the sun never sets" and this park is one of Canada's northern most National Park. Much of the park is the Penny Highlands with granite peaks reach 7,000 feet but the area is dominated by the Penny Icecap where huge valley glaciers spill down into the lower elevations and fiords.

For this program we intend to explore the high valleys in the Panguirtung Pass region and ski as many peaks and gullies as we can. We will use snowmobiles to access Panguirtung Pass where we will set up a comfortable basecamp. The route to camp follows the Weasel Valley for nearly 20 miles but gaining only 600 feet. Once here the options are enormous. We will ski tour up under the vast faces of the double summited Asgard and ski some of the glaciers dropping from the icecap and to the south of our basecamp we can climb towards peaks such as Briedlabik and it's chutes and glaciers.

The arctic is an amazing place so this will certainly be an adventure to remember for a long time.

Itinerary: This is a tentative schedule at best. We have to have good snow conditions to travel in and out on the snowmobiles. We also need to be well done with our trip before the sea ice shows any signs of breaking up. When this happens there is a period of time when neither snowmobile or boat can travel on up the fiord.

Once at camp weather will certainly be our big dictating factor and we will be doing our best to work around it .But in a perfect world this is what we would aim for.

Day 0 You arrive in Panguirtung.

Day 1 We travel via snowmobile up the Weasel Valley to Summit Lake and set up basecamp here

Day 2-11 We ski and explore as much as we can.

Day 12 Return to Panguirtung.

Day 13 You return home

Meeting place and time: You need to arrive in Panguirtung the day the trip starts to finalize equipment sorting and to prepare everything for transportation up the fiord. Panguirtung is a very small Inuit community and is hard to get to. Currently one airline flies in there and that is First Air with flights from Montreal three times a week via Iqualuit. Getting there should give your travel agent something to work hard on!!!

Dates and Prices: Check the latest brochure, call us or go to our web site for dates and rates. Should minimum participant numbers not be reached you will be given the option of paying our private rate, rescheduling, or cancelling. Price includes guiding, permits, all necessary group climbing gear, tents, kitchen gear, meals in the mountains, park fees, camping site fees, snowmobile transportation. Not included are restaurant meals, hotel stays and travel to Panguirtung. Parks Canada charges a stiff entry fee to the parks, but this is included in our price.

Since this is a small trip we have the ability to vary the start and finish times if that fits with your schedule better. When you call we can fine tune the dates

Ratios: One guide and three participants

Notes and other information: For Canada entry you need nothing more than a drivers licence. There is always a possibility that you may not be able to fly to Panguirtung from Montreal because of weather. Keep this in mind. We will be in the high mountains so there will be no problems with polar bears so do not fret about this too much. They prefer the coastline where there are seals!

Prerequisites: This will be winter camping on a grand scale. So you need to have prior experience with this. We will be covering safe glacier travel techniques when we arrive, but prior glacier experience is useful Skiing ability should be advanced level in order to get the most out of this adventure.

Equipment List for Baffin Island Skiing

The following list is a general guide and will assist you in packing for this program. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have specific questions regarding equipment or if you need assistance prior to making a purchase. Please try to pack lightly and compactly. Items on the list with an * may be rented from SMC.

Ski Equipment

- Ski Boots – Randonée (Alpine Touring) or Telemark. The heaviest, stiffest boots tend to perform better on the downhill, but are less comfortable on the uphill. If buying new boots, be sure that they are comfortable for both touring and turning. A good mid-weight plastic ski boot is ideal. Consider a custom “thermo-fit” boot liner to save weight while adding comfort and warmth.
- Skis – Randonée or Telemark These days both types skis are virtually interchangeable. Most skiers of either type can get by with a modern “midfat” to “fat” ski with mid-range stiffness. Do not bring strictly “touring” skis! Your skis need to be designed specifically for downhill skiing in all conditions. Fatter skis are generally better for turning. If you are strong on the touring but weak on the turning, you might even consider a “super-fat” ski. Have them tuned and check the bindings for tightness.
- Ski Crampons - Ski crampons are an essential. All of the major brands of Randonée bindings offer compatible ski crampons. For Telemark skis, it can be a bit tricky to find this item. The best are made by a French company called Sk’Alp.
- Ski Brakes/Leashes - All skis should be equipped with some type of ski brake or leash. Ski brakes are preferred, if you have the option. If your bindings do not have ski brakes, make sure that you have leashes that are easy to put on and take off.
- Skins - Make sure they cover the width of your ski at the waist. Any more than about 4-5mm narrower than the ski at the width will cause skins to slip on steeper climbs.
- Ski Poles - A two section adjustable pole.

Climbing equipment

- Ice Axe*. A standard 70 cm. general purpose axe will suffice.
- Crampons*. These should be matched to the your boot. We suggest the Black Diamond Sabretooth, the Moser G12 or Rambo.
- Harness*. An adjustable leg loop type such as the Black Diamond Bod or Wild Things Espresso will accommodate layering changes.
- Carabiners*. Two locking carabiners (Screwgates are more secure than twist lock style and easier to manipulate) and two regular carabiners are required.
- Prussik system. Or bring 20 feet of 6mm cord to make them up.

Other essentials

- Dufflebag. For gear in on the snowmobile.
- Large Pack. A 4000 cubic inch will hold everything for our trips away from basecamp. Internal frame packs are recommended for their comfort and balance when climbing. The Gregory Makalu or Reality are about the right size.
- Day pack of about 1500 cubic inches
- Sleeping Bag. It can be cold! A bag rated to about -20F will be needed.
- Sleeping pad. A full length Ultralight thermarest paired with a Ridgerest foam pad is the best combination. Bring a Thermarest repair kit to fix any leaks.
- A pair of Mukluks or similar for around camp wear.

Clothing

- 2 pair synthetic liner socks
- 2 pair heavier synthetic or wool blend socks
- Gaiters. These should fit snugly over the top of the boots.

- Long underwear top and bottom. Capilene or some other synthetic is most desirable.
- Pile pants.
- Warm pants. Tights or Expedition weight Capilene
- Warm shirt. Expedition Capilene or light Synchilla
- Another fuzzy sweater top of some sort
- Pile jacket. The Windstopper fabric works well and is not too bulky.
- Down jacket; synthetic fill is second choice.
- Good quality rain/wind pants and rain jacket. Must be water proof and jacket must have a hood.
- Warm hat that covers the ears.
- Visor hat (for sun).
- Mid to heavyweight capilene or Windstopper gloves.
- Shell gloves or mittens.

Etc.

- Sunglasses, high quality with keeper leash. The type with side shields are recommended. If you wear corrective glasses you might want a second pair.
- Ear plugs for noisy tents.
- Personal kit; tooth brush, etc.
- Sunscreen and lip screen. SPF 30+. Make sure the lip stuff actually contains a sunscreen. A 1oz. bottle will be sufficient.
- Two 1-quart plastic water bottles with insulating jackets
- A pee bottle is far more pleasant than getting out of the tent in the middle of the night. Mark it well though to avoid confusion!!
- Personal first aid kit, foot care, and any required medications. We will have a large group medical kit; go light on your own kit. Bring plenty of blister treatment items.
- Headlamp with extra batteries and bulb.
- Camera, film and spare batteries.
- Eating utensils. Bowl, cup, fork and spoon.
- A Crazy Creek chair for in camp.
- A Swiss Army type knife

Food

- We will provide breakfast, dinner and lunch but bring some snack items like cliff bars, power bars, gorp concoctions. A days worth for most people would be 2 bars, 3 ounces of gorp, and perhaps a candy bar. Don't over do it.

Shared Equipment Provided by SMC

- Shelter. We will provide lightweight, storm worthy tents. If you have your favorite, by all means bring it, but we do want to pair people up where possible to reduce weight.
- Group cooktent
- Snow shovel. Bring yours if you have one.
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- Stove. We provide MSR Whisperlite stoves.
- Cookwear.
- Group first aid kit.

You specifically don't need

- Cell phones. They rarely work anyway.
- Big first aid kits (we have a comprehensive one)
- Deodorant or any toiletries beyond those listed above.