

PLANNING AN ADVENTURE IN THE ST. ELIAS MOUNTAINS

The St. Elias Mountains are considered one of the most inaccessible mountain ranges. This is the largest non-polar ice cap in the world and includes Canada's highest mountain, Mt. Logan (5959m). There are vast icefields, huge glaciers, numerous unclimbed peaks, a wealth of classic climbing routes, and volumes of adventure tales.

Since 1998, Icefield Discovery has been providing a comfortable camp in the heart of the St. Elias. Up until this time, the area was explored by mountaineering and scientific expeditions exclusively. Our concept is to facilitate access to these mountains for a wider range of people. We are working with some impressive forces of nature in this environment, and anyone setting out on a St. Elias adventure must understand that this is an extreme part of the planet.

The weather is the major factor determining our access in and out of the St. Elias Range. Frequently we are prevented from flying for several days. In July of 2005, we had some guests stay for an extra 10 days at Icefield Discovery due to a very bad storm. It is recommended that all people flying into the St. Elias purchase travel cancellation and rescue insurance to help mitigate the extra costs incurred by any delays. A visitor to the St. Elias also has to be mentally prepared to deal with waiting out a storm. This is often the most challenging concept.

Icefield Discovery provides a safe haven in an extreme wilderness. Your fully catered stay is in the company of experienced staff knowledgeable in natural and human history, and whose skills include fine cooking, wilderness first aid, and mountain rescue. The camp is well supplied to provide for all basic needs of the guests. Please refer to the recommended personal equipment list for what you are expected to bring.

There are health considerations for all people when venturing into remote parts of the world. Rescue aircraft are not readily available in Northern Canada and in this area weather may delay all aircraft for many days. Even in the best of circumstances, the closest hospital would be a three hour flight. If you are on any medication, bring sufficient supplies. If you smoke cigarettes, bring a 10 day supply.

The camp is at 2500m and it may be as cold as -15 c at night. You will feel the effects of altitude when you trek across the snow, and the cold when you get out of your sleeping bag in the morning. You will also breath the clean air, feel the solitude, sweat in the solar-oven heat of the day, be blasted by blowing snow, blinded by brilliant sunshine, and disoriented in total whiteouts. This is a very impressive environment.

To enjoy the icefield in the vicinity of our camp, we primarily make day trips on snowshoes to local Nunataks, ascents of The Poodle (3000m), and explore open crevasses. Each year we offer a crevasse rescue course that will provide participants with the necessary skills to lead their own glacier adventure.

We look forward to years more of expeditions to the ice and snow of the St. Elias.