



SWS Mountain Guides
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Mt Shasta 3 Day Climb and Ski Descent

via Avalanche Gulch or West Face



General Description: Mt. Shasta is listed as one of the "50 Classic Backcountry Ski Descents in North America". With its slopes towering above the surrounding terrain, Mt. Shasta is considered one of the finest ski descents in California and a must do for all backcountry skiers/boarders. Mt. Shasta offers the advanced alpine skier/boarder a descent of over 7,000 vertical feet from the summit on a variety of routes. Join us on a 3-day adventure that offers the experience of an amazing climb followed by a thrilling ski descent on one of two different routes (Avalanche Gulch or West Face). The Avalanche Gulch route is the standard route for a majority of Mt. Shasta summit attempts. Avalanche Gulch is beautiful and offers stunning views of the coastal mountain ranges. It is steeper than the West Face route and offers the more advanced skier a descent that is not found anywhere else in the country. The West Face sees fewer climbers and skiers than most other routes on the peak. However, with its wide-open bowls, iconic views, and a descent into Cascade Gulch it makes for one of the best descents on the mountain. While the West Face requires participants to be in exceptionally good shape, the more remote nature of this route is well worth the effort! The route will be determined by your guides based on weather, climbing and ski conditions, and group ability. Each day is designed to build on the prior refining skills, knowledge, and culminates with an attempt at a Shasta summit and ski/board descent.

Itinerary

Day 1: We meet at 8:00 am in our Mt. Shasta office to conduct a complete pack check and divide up the group gear before heading to the Bunny Flat trail head (6,860 feet) on Mt. Shasta's south side. From the trail head we will skin to our base camp located at approximately 9500 feet depending on conditions. Climbing to high camp will typically take 4-5 hours. If conditions are challenging or other factors outside of our control present themselves, we may have to establish camp the first night at Horse Camp at 8,000 feet. Our first day is focused on learning skills such as route finding, efficient track setting, and camp selection based on weather and snow conditions. All are fundamental skills for the ski or snowboard mountaineer. After establishing camp and settling in we will have dinner and get a good night's rest under a tremendous night sky.

Day 2: Today we get out for a ski/board assessment run (2000-3000 feet) as well as doing a complete snow school. In our snow school you'll learn skills such as proper climbing techniques, self-belay, and self-arrest. The tour allows us not only to enjoy some skiing/boarding but also is a great opportunity for acclimatization, skill development, snow and gear assessment, and fun. Along the way we will cover some additional skills in avalanche awareness, ski/board mountaineering skills, and basic rope travel techniques. After a ski descent back to our camp location we will have an early evening in preparation for our summit attempt the next day.



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Day 3: We put all the skills together today. We set out on an Alpine Start (1-2 am) on our attempt to summit Mt Shasta. For safety reasons and for the best ski conditions we generally want to start enjoying our downhill turns around 10-11am. Depending upon snow conditions, timing, weather, and skills we will either descend the West Face or Avalanche Gulch. Both are sought after ski descents and offer 7,000+ feet of vertical. Once back at camp we will share high-fives, hydrate, and arrive back to the trail head around 5-6 pm.

PLEASE NOTE: This is a best-case scenario. This itinerary is subject to change at the guide's discretion and depends on mountain conditions/weather, group fitness/experience/expectations, and other factors we cannot anticipate.

Location: Mt. Shasta Wilderness Area, Mt Shasta, CA.

Experience Level Requirements: Advanced Alpine Skiers or Splitboarders who have experience in variable snow conditions. No previous ski/board mountaineering experience is needed but uphill travel (skinning) experience is very important. We recommend taking our 1 Day Backcountry Ski Clinic to boost your skills prior to this climb.

Physical Conditioning Requirements: Participants should be in excellent physical condition. Backpacks generally weigh a 35 to 50 pounds on our approach. Please call us if you have any questions or concerns about this. If you have a history of or have concerns about altitude illness, please call and talk to us. We have several techniques that may help you to avoid, or at the very least, minimize adverse reactions to altitude. Please refer to our Physical Conditioning PDF on the resource page for more info.

Food: Breakfasts, dinners, and hot beverages are provided while on the mountain. We will have a variety of options available, however we cannot guarantee specific choices of flavors or meals. If you have a favorite breakfast or dinner that only requires hot water to be added, we encourage you to bring it. Make sure to bring your own favorite, high-calorie, high-carbohydrate lunches, and snacks. Examples: bagels, cheese, dried fruit, trail mix, Clif bars, chocolate, etc. Note: you will need approximately 200-300 calories per hour (7-9 hours on summit day alone).

Getting Here and Away: The Sacramento Airport (SMF) and Medford International Airport (MFR) are great jumping off points.

Where to Stay: Mt. Shasta is a great mountain town with several options on where to stay. Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or want recommendations.

Group Size: 4-6 Total Guests (Guide to Guest Ratio: 1:3/4).

What is Included: Professional instruction/guide, breakfast(s), dinner(s), ice axes, helmets, harness, group climbing equipment including ropes and safety equipment, group camping equipment including tents and stoves, permits, and permit fees including Mt. Shasta summit fees.

What is NOT Included: Skis or Snowboards, Poles, Ski Mountaineering Boots, and Crampons are NOT included but are available for rent either from SWS Mountain Guides (crampons) or locally (skis, poles, boots). For more details about equipment, please see our equipment list for this course or give us a call for rental options.

Ski Mountaineering Rentals are available at the Fifth Season 530-926-3606 or give the SWS Mountain Guides office a call at 888.797.6867 for additional rentals options in the San Francisco Bay Area.