



Alpine Climbing Course

Course Notes

All material Copyright © Adventure Consultants Ltd

The Alpine Climbing Course has been created to cater for fit and motivated people who want to learn modern-day alpine climbing techniques. This course focuses on the development of 'hard skills' pertinent to alpine style mountaineering.



On the successful completion of this course, participants will be capable of utilising their skills to attempt ascents of peaks of moderate nature. What each individual takes away from the course is in part dependent on their own fitness, objectives and skill level prior to the course but all members should learn the specific skills required to undertake ascents of straightforward to moderately difficult summits.

You will gain valuable experience on the course, and we aim to teach you the building blocks for a safe and enjoyable mountaineering career.

The course objective

Our objective of this course is to pass on to you skills that have made us at Adventure Consultants successful in our own climbing careers. We focus on skill development whilst actually climbing peaks so you get to understand those skills in a real situation and not in an artificial learning environment.

Ultimately, we want you to complete this course with the foundation for a successful and safe climbing future. Those attributes that we feel are most important and useful are:

- Solid climbing standard and mountain awareness
 - Sound judgement of own ability
 - Good planning and preparation skills
 - Informed decision making
 - Technical mountaineering proficiency
-

The benefits of joining an Adventure Consultants course

With our headquarters based at Lake Wanaka we have the distinct advantage of short travel times to the venue with the best weather and conditions at the time and we have the option of the Westland, Mt Cook and Aspiring and Remarkables mountain regions in addition to crags around Wanaka and alpine rock at the Remarkables. This enables us to get you into the most appropriate location much faster and give more choice of venue.

This course has been designed by Guy Cotter who has been climbing for 35 years. Additional to his extensive record in New Zealand, his career has included 32 high altitude expeditions, including four ascents of Mt Everest and three other 8000m peaks.

As an IFMGA Guide since 1991, Guy Cotter recognises the need for people to learn about 'climbing', and not just being taught the technical skills in isolation. This is not an easy task and requires experienced and highly skilled guides with good instructional skills to achieve. The guides at Adventure Consultants are recognised as amongst the best in the industry with the ability to help you get the most from your time with us.

The skills that will be taught on the course

The following are the basis of skills taught during the course, however factors such as weather and climbing conditions may, at times, dictate that some skills are not covered in full.

- Basic to advanced snow and ice craft
 - Rope skills applicable to alpine climbing
 - Glacier travel and crevasse rescue skills
 - Weather analysis
 - Alpine rock skills
 - Introduction to mountain rescue
 - Route finding
 - Navigation
 - Avalanche awareness
-

Course outline

The following is a typical outline for the **Alpine Climbing Course** based on a prior course based in Westland National Park.

Day 1

The group congregate at the AC office in Wanaka at 9.00am where the course participants meet the guides and are introduced to the other course members. After everyone has had a chat, the guide outlines the course syllabus and in which mountains the course will take place. Next, we get together to discuss and then organise our personal and group equipment (bring all your gear with you, including those items you are not sure whether to include or not). Equipment pertinent to the course will be discussed and you can get all the advice you need concerning equipment from the guides. Anyone requiring rental equipment will be fitted at this time (but please advise in advance of your requirements to ensure you are

catered to) and final purchases can be made. Food is pre-sorted for the trip by the guides to save time. It's very important to ration food effectively, too much and your packs become overly heavy, too little and you starve! Basic rope skills and tying in are covered to ensure consistency and revision for those who already have rope skills. This enables us to get right into it when we reach the glacier in a couple of days. Trip planning is covered followed by rescue first aid and decision-making. Once all this is completed we pack up for the trip. Excess items can be left at our office for storage. We travel by road to Fox Glacier township (or Aspiring or Mt Cook) depending on where weather and conditions are best! Please remember a travel bag for use when overnighing in Fox Glacier/Mt Cook village/Wanaka village before and after the trip, see equipment list for details.

Day 2

An early breakfast is 'processed' then the group is bundled into aircraft for the flight to the remote Fox Glacier and we get to see the awesome peaks of the region we will be soon scaling. An initial familiarisation talk to clarify nomenclature and identify the peaks will help you absorb this wonderful environment before moving into the more practical elements of the trip. We utilise the hut system in the region when they are not too full and we move our gear in before we sort ourselves to get out onto the snow. The group ropes up for crevasse travel training and we go for a walk on the glacier. Our other mountaineering gear is introduced as we go along with the rudimentary techniques needed for mountaineering - use of an ice axe, learning to crampon and to self-arrest. There'll be a lunch stop, even though in mountaineering, lunch starts straight after breakfast, and goes all day...The first day out in the mountains is always exciting and eventually we will retire to the hut for a team cook-up and maybe a lesson on weather forecasting while watching the sunset.

Day 3

An early start sees the group roped up and away just on dawn towards a traverse of Grey Peak on the upper reaches of the Fox Glacier. It's good to clear the lungs with a 2 hour climb up the slopes to Pioneer Pass. Here we actually have to place snow anchors and belay on snow or ice towards the summit. At the summit we rest with Aoraki/Mt Cook right there in front of us and we get to see right up into the upper Tasman Glacier! After a quick lunch it's time to descend. We find some suitable seracs and experience ice climbing. It's a chance to hang onto those tools and find the balance point on the crampons. Tired and elated we return to the hut for the night.

Day 4

An early start again, but this time up to Mt Von Bullow, a few kilometres from the hut. The glacier approach is done by headlamp until the dawn breaks just as we near Mt Von Bullow's summit. We climb the final section with a belay and use of snow anchors to the summit. Then we move around on the Davis Snowfield to climb a snow ridge up to West Hoe, our second summit. It is a very tired group slugging back across the soft glacier and up the heart breaking hill to a welcome cup-a-tea at the hut and some time to dry out sweaty clothes and boots in the afternoon sun. The evening weather forecast is for a front the next day and we pop outside and take note of how the weather is changing.

Day 5

Slightly sore legs are rested with the onset of a storm, which keeps us around the hut for the day. A cooked breakfast is followed by a navigation lesson and numerous cups of tea and real coffee. Navigation is a crucial skill and can mean the difference between comfort and concern in the mountains. By knowing these skills one can actually avoid ever getting (completely) lost! A more involved weather lesson follows lunch, and an introductory

avalanche awareness lecture then it's time for a game of cards before dinner. The group listens to the evening weather forecast which promises improvement for the following day.

Day 6

A windy dawn greets us and it is snowing lightly, a good sign the guide tells us. We practice equalising anchors and discuss some crevasse rescue theory while the weather continues to improve. We decide to make an attempt on the Minarets, two 3000m peaks in the Franz Josef Glacier area. This will require a bivvy at Graham Saddle, some five hours from our hut. Now it's time for the course participants to consolidate the skills they have already acquired by planning and executing a trip under the watchful eyes of the guides. Food is packed, stoves and pots loaded in, and sleeping gear stowed in packs as well. With heavy packs we set off in improving weather and it is late afternoon when we arrive at our bivvy site.

Day 7

No-one likes to hear their alarm clock at 3.00am but we get away. The winds are building which makes the climbing more difficult than on a good day. Yet this is part of the game and the team moves on. Finally the summit is reached at 1pm yet due to the cold and wind, celebrations are brief. As a group we have to carefully make our way back down to pick up the bivvy gear before descending back to Centennial hut for the night.

Day 8

Just near the hut is a perfect crevasse to practice rescue skills. We each take turns to jump into the crevasse while our climbing partners hold our falls. They then carefully pull us up out of the crevasse then we swap around. All the time watched carefully by our guides for safety pointers. In the afternoon we return to our food supplies. High cloud indicates the possibility of approaching weather and all are expectant of the coming day.

Day 9

A fierce storm rages but abates late in the day and we escape to descend to Chancellor Hut on the Fox Glacier. We are all happy to be going downhill! Several times we have to utilise our navigation skills and it's a good chance for the course members to work through this under the watchful eyes of the guide. By the time we reach Chancellor Hut the weather has improved enough to allow a helicopter to land and we are soon on our way to Fox Glacier Township for showers, steak, beer and a morning's ice climbing on the lower glacier.

Day 10

A tired group gets up early and drives back to the Fox Glacier and walk 30 minutes up to some steep and overhanging ice faces. Some top ropes are erected and ice anchors practiced. The group descends back to the vans for lunch then return to Wanaka by road to sort out the equipment and debrief the course. The group members decide that after such a successful week it's worth a trip downtown for a group meal and social evening.

Our Guides

The instructors on the Alpine Climbing Course are all NZMGA/IFMGA qualified guides with many years experience, not only in pursuing their own climbing careers, but also in learning how to pass these skills on in an environment which is conducive to accelerated learning. Our focus is to pass on those skills most necessary in developing a highly competent alpine climber. Many courses focus primarily on technique but these are often taught as technical

skills in isolation yet the course member often has not been taught how to actually climb a mountain by the course completion!

Success with the highest margin of care is always a hallmark of our approach; promoting the realisation that even extreme pursuits such as high altitude mountaineering can be undertaken safely.

A founding principle at Adventure Consultants is to recognise the necessity of positive communication within the group to foster an open and friendly approach to communicating and reinforcing learning processes.

Adventure Consultants is the only major guiding company in New Zealand that employs only IFMGA or NZMGA qualified guides, the most advanced training and certification program internationally. In order to gain these qualifications guides must undergo rigorous training and assessment on climbing skills, instructional skills, avalanche training and assessment, wilderness first aid, rescue training and much more. The qualification takes many years (5-7) to attain and ensures you are getting a world class professional service.

Communications & messages

Our guides are in radio/cell/sat phone communication with our operations base and Department of Conservation headquarters throughout the trip. This assists us with schedule and weather forecast updates, helicopter coordination and safety back up. Urgent messages can be relayed via our office to the field if required. Each course carries a locator beacon for additional security.

The way the course operates

We will spend as much time in the mountains as possible actually climbing peaks whilst developing skills. Initially we will develop and reinforce skills in non-threatening environments and move on to more 'interesting' terrain during the course.

The emphasis of the course will be on alpine routes involving fairly long days where your guides will progressively introduce a wide range of skills and techniques.

Course Pre-requisites

This course has been developed to meet the need for people who want to learn how to climb mountains and avoid the frustrations of courses that are entirely technically based but lacking in experiential learning.

A high level of fitness is important to ensure you gain the most from the course. We operate the course by gradually increasing the intensity of the exercises to allow participants to increase their climbing strength and confidence over the duration of the course.

Alpine climbing often requires long days with early starts in order to gain a summit and descend before nightfall and hence stamina is a vital asset. There are times when the weather may be rough and there can be periods of discomfort. This hardship makes a summit all the more satisfying and one recognises that it takes special attributes to be a successful alpine climber.

If possible, you should take the opportunity to develop additional skills before the course commences, e.g. rope skills that can be learned through local alpine clubs or rock gyms. Of course having previous rock or alpine climbing experience will allow you to gain even more from the course.

The course venue

We operate our courses in the Mt Aspiring, Mt Cook or Westland National Parks. Being based in Wanaka gives us more flexibility than any other location in the Southern Alps to be able to travel directly to the best area for running the course. Operators based in Mt Cook are shut down by weather for extended periods.

However, due to Wanaka's central proximity to all the regions, we have the ability to anticipate these weather systems and will travel to the opposite side of the mountain range and get into the mountains often days before it clears on the windward aspects. We consider factors such as: weather and snow conditions, hut occupancy rates, and our knowledge of where to find the best climbing conditions at the time. The course will commence and finish at our Wanaka office.

Climbing season

The most suitable time for alpine climbing is from November through to April. From November onwards we can expect more snow on the routes, and as temperatures warm up into the summer months of January and February, we traditionally experience more settled weather and mixed climbing conditions (snow, ice and rock). From March through April, late summer conditions exist which result in a combination of rock and ice routes, however cooling temperatures can bring snow falls to the Alps. At this time of year the days begin to get noticeably shorter.

Weather

Weather is an integral facet of any mountain range and getting to understand and work with this major environmental factor is what will distinguish you from the others. The New Zealand weather can be fierce but also benign. A climber who learns to optimise their opportunities here will have the skills to climb in any other mountain environment on earth. On your course it is probable that some adverse weather may affect climbing plans however we will attempt to anticipate the best program to pursue for the positive outcome of the course. At times we may be forced to delay our departure into the hills in favour of other valuable activities and move into the mountains when conditions permit. It is very rare that

a trip does not get sufficient weather 'windows' that will allow entry into the mountains, but it does happen. Please be assured that your guide/s will do the best they can to get you climbing but forces much more powerful than us are responsible for the final outcome.

A day or two spent in a mountain hut can provide valuable rope skills and lesson time that you may not otherwise have had time to focus on. If there is bad weather at the start of the course, there are many options for learning skills on the nearby crags of Wanaka, or sometimes the ice crags of the west coast Glaciers. Your guide/s will ensure the time is used most efficiently.

Whilst we do our very best to provide the best program to give you the maximum learning outcomes from your course you need to arrive with the awareness that weather may disrupt your course. We have to appreciate with the weather that we are contending with nature in its most pure form and a part of the allure in climbing is that in the mountain environment there are forces much more powerful than humankind.

Ground and air transport

Return ground transport from Wanaka to the course venue is included in the cost of the course.

Aircraft access alleviates long and tiring walks into the alpine region with heavy packs. It allows you to start the course fresh, gain more valuable instructional time and take advantage of fine weather periods. For this reason we utilise helicopters or ski planes depending on availability and the region we operate in. **The helicopter or ski-plane flight into the alpine region is included in the course fee.**

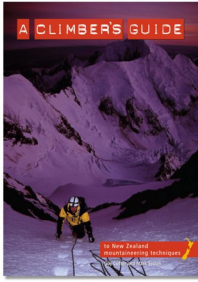
We are also the only operator to include the cost of an egress flight in the course fee. New from 2010, we now include an egress flight out from the mountains meaning your course spends the maximum amount of time above the snowline.

Equipment

Climbing in the Southern Alps requires you have the highest quality clothing and equipment due to the extremes of weather conditions. Our focus is on having the essential clothing and equipment while keeping your pack as light as possible. Your Guide will go through an equipment checklist with you at the beginning of your trip. Actual equipment taken may vary from the list we provide you subject to seasonal weather and route conditions. All group equipment including ropes and cooking equipment will be organised by your Guide.

We can offer secure storage at our office for your luggage and valuables during the trip.

Guide books and maps



Included in your course fee is a complimentary copy of '**A Climbers Guide to New Zealand Mountaineering Techniques**'. Written by Adventure Consultants guides Guy Cotter, Dean Staples and Mark Sedon, the 'ACG' was published specifically as reference material which you will find useful before, during, and long after your course has finished.

'The Mount Cook Guidebook' by Alex Palman and 'The Mount Aspiring region - a guide for mountaineers' by Allan Uren and Mark Watson offer a good insight to the variety of peaks and routes in these respective areas.

It is useful to have your own map for navigation exercises, and we can advise you of the relevant 1:50,000 topographic maps required. The above books and maps can be purchased from our office in Wanaka.

Communications and messages

Our guides are in radio/cell/sat phone communication with our operations base and Department of Conservation headquarters throughout the trip. This assists us with schedule and weather forecast updates, helicopter coordination and safety back up. Urgent messages can be relayed via our office to the field if required. Each course carries a locator beacon for additional security.

Fitness and health

To make the most of your climbing experience we strongly encourage you to work on your fitness prior to the trip. A good level of fitness takes time and commitment and can only be achieved by training hard or being constantly physically active. In training it is best to actually carry a pack for long periods on hills and uneven terrain on a regular basis. Your guide places special focus on fitness levels and will regulate the pace accordingly. Your own level of enjoyment of the course will be directly related to your level of fitness.

Our registration form requests that you advise us of any medical problems you may have and if you are on any medication. Any information you supply will be treated as confidential.

Food

We place emphasis on providing nutritious meals and a good supply of snack food throughout the trip. If you have any special dietary requirements, please advise us at the time of registration. For special diets such as vegan and gluten/dairy free we will call you to discuss your needs and how this will work in the group cooking situation. If your dietary requirements are especially strict you are advised to bring a sufficient supply of your required food types with you to ensure you are provided for.

Insurance

We strongly recommend that you take out **trip cancellation insurance** and **travel insurance** to protect yourself in case of injury or mishap or cancellation prior to/ or whilst on our trips.

Whilst our focus is on safety and our track record supports this, the mountains do have hazards and there is always the potential for mishap. If you were injured whilst on the trip the New Zealand Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) will pay rescue costs upon review of the circumstances and authorisation by the Police. This service may not apply to evacuation costs for medical conditions. You are not eligible for bulk compensation payments from ACC, and you are responsible for any medical or evacuation costs beyond the cover provided by ACC.

Travel to, and accommodation in Wanaka

We commence the trip from our base in Wanaka. Air New Zealand and Qantas provide daily services for the 50 minute flight from Christchurch International Airport to Queenstown. There is also a daily flight from Christchurch to Wanaka and direct flights from Australian cities to Queenstown on a limited seasonal basis.

A shuttle service operates 5 times daily between Queenstown and Wanaka (one hour driving time and at a cost of \$30 each way) check www.time2.co.nz for details. Bus services operate daily between Christchurch and Wanaka (approximately 6 hours travel time).

Wanaka has a range of accommodation from backpackers, youth hostels, motels, and hotels to luxury lodges.

We can help you book your accommodation / airport transfers if required.

Please note: Adventure Consultants will provide food and accommodation while the course is running which is from 9.00am on Day 1 until 5.00pm on Day 10. All food and accommodation outside this time will be at your expense.

Accommodation during the Course

Adventure Consultants will provide your accommodation while the course is running which is from 9.00am on Day 1 until 5.00pm on Day 10. When in the mountains you will stay in mountain huts with shared bunkrooms and basic facilities. There are no single rooms available. Some mountain nights will be spent in tents or bivvies where you will be more exposed to the elements but the final decision on this will be made by the guides after weighing up all the factors.

For overnights in Fox Glacier and Mt Cook villages you will be accommodated in dormitory style Alpine Club huts and in Wanaka in dormitory style backpackers with shared bathroom facilities. You may decide to upgrade to single accommodations in Wanaka at your own expense, should you require.

How to find us

Our office is situated at 58 McDougall Street in Wanaka approximately 5 minutes walk from the town centre.

The course begins at 9.00 am on Day 1 of the course at our office at 58 McDougall Street, Wanaka. Please arrive just on 9.00am as the guides will be preparing prior to that time. You will need to arrive in town the night prior to the course commencing.

Please let us know if you are delayed in your arrival and an expected arrival time.

Ten minutes drive from our office is some of New Zealand's best sport climbing in the Matukituki Valley - the gateway to the Mt Aspiring region. Three ski resorts provide plentiful winter activity and all year round fishing, boating and numerous other recreational activities abound.

The course fee

The course fee is **NZ \$3,250** per person.

The price includes; Guide Fees and hut fees, all meals and snack foods whilst on the trip, group equipment such as ropes, tents and stoves, ground transport ex Wanaka, course manual (A Climber's Guide to NZ Mountaineering Techniques, by Guy Cotter and Mark Sedon) Department of Conservation fees (CA/155/Gui), NZ Goods and Services Tax (15%) and aircraft access and egress. Technical climbing equipment and NZ Alpine Club membership are included in the Alpine Climbing Course.

- We strongly suggest you purchase trip cancellation insurance from your normal travel agent.
- All prices are subject to change without notice.
- Minimum numbers apply on all scheduled instruction courses.

Course Dates SUMMER 2011 / 2012

ACC #1 October 31 – November 9, 2011

ACC #2 November 28 - December 7, 2011

ACC #3 January 10 – 19, 2012

ACC #4 February 13 – 22, 2012

ACC #5 March 20 – 29, 2012

Course registration and payment

In order to confirm a guide and your trip, we require a completed Registration Form and a deposit of 25% of the trip fee. The balance of payment is then due 60 days prior to the start date.

You can also use our online registration at:

<http://www.adventureconsultants.com/adventure/BookingForm/>

Payment can be made by a NZ Dollar bank draft or cheque, Visa/MasterCard/Amex or Telegraphic Transfer to our bank account - details are on the registration form.

Please note: In order to reserve a place on a course we recommend that you book well in advance. This especially applies to the high season period (January through March).

Course cancellation policy

1. Cancellations outside of 60 days incur a NZ\$250.00 cancellation fee.
 2. For cancellations made within 60 days of the trip commencement date we reserve the right to retain 50% of the full fee.
 3. For cancellations made within 30 days of the trip commencement date we reserve the right to retain 75% of the full fee.
 4. For cancellations within 15 days of the departure date a cancellation fee of 100% of the full fee applies.
 5. We recommend you take out trip cancellation insurance via your travel agent.
-

We look forward to welcoming you on to your Alpine Climbing Course!

Contact us

Adventure Consultants Ltd
PO Box 739
58 McDougall St
Lake Wanaka 9343
New Zealand

Email: info@adventure.co.nz
Web: www.adventureconsultants.com
Phone: + 64 3 443 8711
Fax: + 64 3 443 8733



Adventure Consultants – is affiliated to the New Zealand Mountain Guides Association (NZMGA), New Zealand Alpine Club (NZAC) and a corporate member of the American Alpine Club (AAC). Adventure Consultants perform to IFMGA/UIAGM standards and are world leaders in high altitude guiding.



All material Copyright © Adventure Consultants Ltd 2012