Aoraki / Mount Cook

Trip Notes

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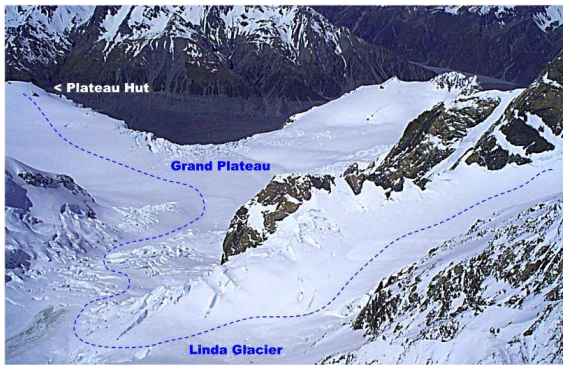
Aoraki / Mt Cook is an impressive and massive peak with five sides, six faces and seven main ridges. The mountain has a vertical rise from valley to summit of over 2500m. There is no easy route to the top and gaining the summit is a significant achievement.

Guide ratio

We guide Mt Cook on a 1:1 basis due to the technical nature of the terrain.

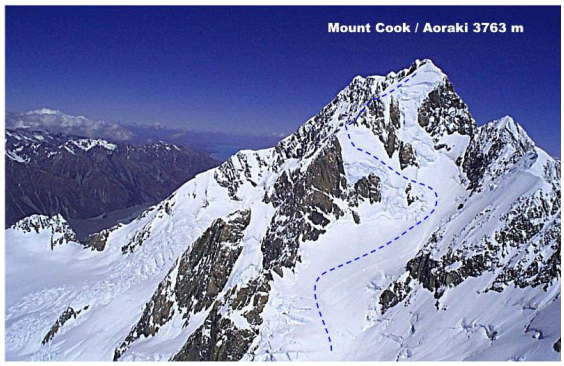
Our Mt Cook guided ascent operates over a six day period which enables us to fly in to Plateau Hut at the base of the mountain, from where the climb is staged. We aim to make the ascent during the most favourable period for weather and conditions, and on occasion will make a high bivvy, which puts us in close proximity to the summit the following day.

The usual route that we climb on Mt Cook is the Linda Glacier route. We must first weave through the crevasse field on the lower part of the glacier before turning to head into the upper Linda glacier. Progress is made to the head of the glacier and onto the sustained snow/ice face of the Linda Shelf where the ground becomes increasingly steep. From the Linda Shelf we climb a moderately steep (55º) snow and ice gulley and gain the ridge near the top of Zurbriggens Ridge. After this we must tackle the Summit Rocks for several pitches up rock that is often iced up. Having negotiated the pitches of mixed climbing through the summit rocks we revert to straight snow and ice climbing again to ascend the final summit ice cap through to the highest point in New Zealand!



We allow 16-22 hours for the return trip from Plateau Hut and hence an early morning alpine start is necessary on the day of the summit climb. Fitness and route conditions are the factors that determine the exact timing. Climbers attempting Aoraki/Mt Cook should come prepared for a very physical and demanding climb. It may only have the ultimate

elevation of 3,754m/12,316ft, but it is still a challenging ascent. The Linda route is the most commonly climbed and is a classic mountaineering adventure, requiring good technical skills and stamina.

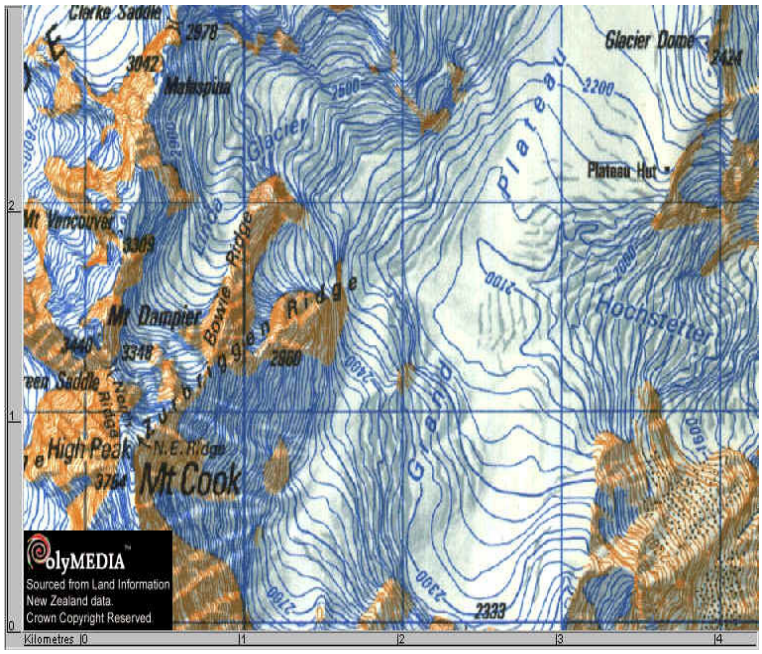


Other more technical routes are available on application to those with the necessary experience, such as the East Ridge or Zurbriggens Ridge.

Cultural background

Mt Cook / Aoraki is a Topuni area to the Ngai Tahu Maori of South Island, New Zealand. The summit of Aoraki is regarded as the head of one of their ancestors; of which the head is sacred (or topuni) to the indigenous Maori of Aotearoa / New Zealand. Adventure Consultants respects the wishes of Ngai Tahu, hence we do not stand on the summit but remain a few metres from the top of the mountain.

Itinerary



Day one Meet your guide in Mt Cook Village or in Wanaka for the drive to Mount Cook. Check gear and fly into the mountains to Plateau Hut in the early afternoon.

Day two Acclimatisation day, consolidate skills or ascend a practice peak such as Mt Dixon.

Day three Summit day, start 1am, and finish 7pm! OR climb part of the route then bivvy out overnight.

Day four Second day of climb, rest day, contingency day, or fly out on back flight to Mt Cook Airport.

Day five Weather contingency day or commence walk out.

Day six Weather contingency day, second day of walk out or alternative activity (such as rock climbing).

Please note: Due to the nature of the terrain and duration of the walk out we often utilise the option to fly out on a back flight at the completion of the climb. This is an additional cost and we can advise you of the price estimate at the time of booking.

Access to the mountain

It is possible to walk into Plateau Hut (it is a solid days walk of approximately 12 - 16 hrs), but the benefit of flying in is that it alleviates the walk- in, and the usual necessary recovery day, allowing more time to be spent on actual climbing in the high mountains. Most importantly it can allow us to take advantage of 'windows' of fine weather which are typical of the maritime climate of New Zealand. An access flight is included in the trip price.

Our guides

Adventure Consultants guides are NZMGA and / or IFMGA qualified mountain guides. They are professional mountaineers and operate to the highest industry standards.

Being a great climber alone is not enough to work with us; our standards demand that trip leaders are great guides as well. You will find your guide friendly, approachable and focused on providing a safe and enjoyable trip in line with your objectives and comfort level.

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.

Adventure Consultants 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/satellite phone communication with our operations base and Department of Conservation headquarters throughout the trip. This assists us with schedule and weather forecast updates, helicopter co-ordination and safety back up. Urgent messages can be relayed via our office to the field if required. Each party carries a locator beacon for additional security.

Climbing season

We guide Mount Cook all year as conditions allow. In November and December we can expect more snow cover 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 and daylight hours get shorter. Subject to seasonal conditions access up the Linda Glacier can be compromised at certain times. In the event access is restricted or the hazard rating is high, we will offer an alternative route or peak - possibly Mount Tasman or Mt Aspiring.

Winter conditions are less predicable and days shorter, however for experienced climbers the winter solitude will be incredibly rewarding.

Weather

New Zealand has a maritime climate, and the weather is always a consideration in the high mountains. In the event conditions were not suitable to enter the mountains at the start of the trip, we can delay for up to two days subject to your guide's schedule. We recommend you allow some flexibility with your travel arrangements to create this advantage.

When booking your trip please specify the dates you are available.

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 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.

Fitness and health

To make the most of your climbing experience we encourage you to work on your fitness prior to the trip. You will find that training with a 15kg + pack on is the best preparation for the mountains, with the aim of getting 'pack fit' and building your endurance. Your guide places special focus on fitness levels and will regulate the pace accordingly.

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.

Insurance

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

While 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 Commission (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 may not be 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 our Mount Cook trip from our base in Wanaka. Air New Zealand and Qantas/Jetstar 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 five 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 trip is running which is from 9.00am on Day 1 until 5.00pm on Day 6. All food and accommodation outside this time will be at your expense.

Accommodation during the trip

Adventure Consultants will provide your accommodation while the trip is running which is from 9.00am on Day 1 until 5.00pm on Day 6. When in the mountains you will stay in mountain huts with shared bunkrooms and basic facilities. There are no single rooms available and unlike European huts you need to provide your own sleeping bag. Some mountain nights may 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 your guide after weighing up all the factors.

If our schedule requires us to overnight at Mount Cook either side of the trip we utilise the New Zealand Alpine Club facilities at Unwin Hut which has dormitory style accommodation and if in Wanaka we accommodate you in dormitory style backpackers with shared bathroom facilities. You may decide to upgrade to single accommodations in Wanaka or at Mt Cook Village at your own expense, should you require.

Price

The price for a 6 day guided ascent of Mt Cook is **NZ$ 4,990** 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, Department of Conservation fees (Concession CA-22930-GUI), NZ Goods and Services Tax (15%) and aircraft access.

* We strongly suggest you purchase trip cancellation insurance from your normal travel agent.
* All prices are subject to change without notice.

Trip 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.

Download the registration form from our website or use our online booking form at:
http://www.adventureconsultants.com/adventure/BookingFormNZ/

Payment can be made by a NZ Dollar bank draft or cheque, Visa/MasterCard/Amex or Telegraphic Transfer to our bank account:
Bank of New Zealand 020673 0043443 00
for the account; Adventure Consultants Ltd.

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

Trip cancellation policy

1. Up to 60 days prior to the departure date a NZ $250 fee applies.
2. Inside 60 days of the departure date we reserve the right to retain 50% of the full fee.
3. Inside 30 days of the departure date we reserve the right to retain 75% of the full fee.
4 Inside 10 days of the departure date forfeits 100% of the full fee.

We look forward to climbing New Zealand's highest peak with you!

Contact us:

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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.

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