



Mountaineering Instruction Course

Course Notes

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The Mountaineering Instruction Course has been designed to deliver modern-day climbing skills that will ensure you a solid foundation as a mountaineer. The course is run over a 7 day timeframe and is pitched at a level appropriate to those who want to experience all the skills and techniques necessary to climb in the high elevation glaciated regions of New Zealand's Southern Alps. At the completion of the course participants can utilise their skills to plan their own trips into the mountains climbing routes of easy to moderate difficulty.

On the MIC you will learn how to move efficiently and safely in crevassed terrain and climb glaciated peaks around the main divide. Your skill development will take you from preparing and planning your climb through to navigating your way in high mountain terrain and on to the appropriate rope techniques for ascents on snow, ice and rock. You will learn some basic self-rescue techniques for glaciated regions such as crevasse extraction and you will become familiar with what equipment to take into the mountains for any given objective. You will be taught how to read the weather and how to stay safe in the mountains.



Your personable and highly motivated guides are very keen to see you progress and will introduce appropriate techniques towards your development while you are actually climbing mountains!

The course is perfect for those who lead an active lifestyle and want to take full advantage of world class, professional instruction. Participants on this course should have a reasonable level of fitness.

At the end of the course, participants should have the skills and confidence to travel in glaciated terrain. You will have the technical ability and know-how to attempt major mountains by their easier routes in New Zealand and trekking peaks in the Himalayas. The program will also set you up with sufficient prowess to be guided on some technically difficult ascents.

Experience is imperative before tackling major ascents and this course is designed to help you navigate your way towards safe and successful climbing practices.

The course objective

Our objective is to pass on the skills, which have made us successful in our own climbing careers. The most important attributes being:

- Current techniques for mountaineering
 - A climbing standard appropriate to the objective
 - Attuned mountain awareness
 - Sound judgement of your own abilities
 - Solid planning and preparation skills
 - The basis of good decision making
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The skills that will be taught on the course

We endeavour to cover the following skills during the course; however factors such as weather, your fitness and climbing conditions may dictate that some skills are not covered in full.

- Fundamental snow and ice craft skills
 - Rope skills applicable to alpine climbing
 - Glacier travel and self rescue skills
 - Weather analysis
 - Route finding and navigation
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Our Guides

The instructors on the Mountaineering Instruction 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 knowledge that will assist your development towards becoming a competent climber. Many courses focus primarily on techniques that are taught as skills in isolation yet we recognise that you need to learn those skills in context while you are actually climbing the mountain so you know where and when to utilise each technique learned.

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 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 around five years to attain and ensures you are getting a world-class professional service.

Typical course outline

The following is a typical outline for the Mountaineering Instruction Course (MIC) based on a previous course in the Westland region at the head of the Franz Joseph and Fox Glaciers where the highest concentration of New Zealand's tallest mountains are located. The guide, Steve, instructed four participants on an adventurous week. Following are diary excerpts written after the trip;

Day 1 Monday

We met at the Adventure Consultants office at 9.00am and were introduced to the other course participants and our guide - Steve, who briefed us on the course itinerary and other details. We discussed, and then organised our personal and group equipment. Steve sorted out gear that we needed to rent and there was time to make a couple of last minute purchases in town. I made a mental note of what Steve told us 'It's very important to ration food effectively, too much and your packs become overly heavy, too little and you starve!' Steve showed us the preferred method for tying-in and basic rope skills that we would use when we reached the glacier so we spent some time on that then we sat down to have Steve explain the weather forecast. He told us we would not be flying into the mountains today as planned because a cold front was passing over and the helicopters could not fly today. He said it looked like the following morning would be fine. As an alternative we headed out to the local rock climbing area to learn belaying and abseiling skills and learn some rock climbing skills. I'd rock climbed on climbing walls before but not on real rock so it was fun making the transition to the 'real thing!' What I did notice was the shoes with the sticky soles made standing on small holds much easier and enabled me to use friction rather than edging all the time. The other course members were new to rock climbing and progressed really quickly as Steve demonstrated how to move properly on rock and what technique to use for the different type of moves we had to make. At the end of the session we returned to Wanaka for dinner and a talk about what would happen the next day. It seemed the weather was going to be best up the west coast thus we packed all our kit so we'd be able to get away early in the morning.



Day 2 Tuesday

We met at 8, loaded all our gear into the van and drove for 3 hours to Fox Glacier. The plan is to fly by helicopter to Centennial hut at 2400m on the Franz Joseph glacier. Cool, this was going to be my first ride in a helicopter!

We had some lunch and changed into our mountain gear, after all this time getting ready for this trip it was good to test it out in the real environment. At the helipad we are introduced to the pilot and given a helicopter safety briefing before taking off. We buzzed over Fox village then had an amazing flight over the rainforest and on up to the glaciers that we flew over (for what seemed like a long way!) to get to the hut. Huge peaks were all around us and I couldn't believe how small the hut looked as we approached. This is outrageous terrain! Glaciers flowed everywhere all broken up in places and heavily crevassed, yet in other places it was all smooth. I wondered how we were going to be able to make our way around and work out where to go!

When we had landed Steve got us to get out of the helicopter and crouch on the snow while he unpacked the gear. Soon the helicopter pilot waved and left us to an increasing silence. Wow! I was looking down across the glacier directly at the Tasman Sea that seemed really close and Steve said it is only 20km away.



We sat around for a while taking it all in and Steve told us the names of all the peaks and what all the features were around us. I now know the difference between a crevasse and a bergschrund - I hope that comes up in a game of Trivial Pursuits some time!

We carried our gear to the hut and moved inside. It's small and basic but big enough to shelter from the weather and fits about 14 people at a squeeze. There was another group of 4 people

there so there wasn't an issue with space but Steve said sometimes it gets very busy so we were quite lucky. We dressed in our gear and took our equipment with us outside to begin our lessons. I could see there was no way we could just get out there and go climbing without learning how to be safe on the glaciers.

We learnt how to walk properly on snow then how to use crampons and ice axes. Then we put on the ropes, set up for glacier travel and went for a walk for a couple of hours to learn how to travel safely without falling into a crevasse. The sun was setting so we went back to the hut and helped Steve prepare dinner which ended up being a really nice meal. And I'd thought I might end up eating dehydrated food all week!

Day 3 Wednesday

Steve got up at 6.30 and started the stoves and soon we had a brew on. Apparently we have to learn how to do it ourselves so we can prepare and cook tonight. A quick breakfast followed and when the caffeine levels were achieved we roped up and got our crampons on. (Wow, the snow had got so hard overnight!)

We crunched our way downhill initially and stopped to do some self arrest on a smooth face of snow. Self arrest is the art of stopping yourself if you slip by throwing the pick of the ice axe into the snow and coming to a halt. We did that for an hour until we were experts! Then we tromped across the glacier towards a peak on the edge of the Davis snowfield called Mt Von Bulow. Not much of a climb up really but an opportunity for us to learn how to use snow stakes and belay on snow, a technique we can use for steeper climbs now we've learnt

how to do it on low angled terrain. The tramp back across the glacier was extremely hot in the afternoon sun and we returned to the hut tired yet happy with the day. And yes, we did learn how to use the stoves and make dinner! We spent an hour and a half that night learning navigation techniques and made a navigation plan for an ascent of Aurora next day.

Day 4 Thursday

We packed up early full of anticipation for the day ahead. After all, we've already learnt a lot of the skills we need to safely do the climb (I just hope we don't go into any crevasses as we've not learned how to get someone out yet!) The trip across the glacier to the base of the mountain didn't take long and soon we were pitching up the slope putting in snow anchors and belaying each other. Arriving at the top was fun and we did some rappels off snow anchors on the way down (even though we could have climbed down as it wasn't so steep) then Steve came down after and brought our snow stakes back to us.

We had lunch on the glacier then Steve taught us assisted hoist crevasse rescue, something I realised I'd need a lot more time to perfect before I could consider myself proficient. It was good for me to realise that prevention is better than cure and, on the whole (as explained by Steve), good technique and route finding prevents the need for us to perform crevasse rescue by not going in them in the first place!



The weather is changing slowly but surely, high clouds are dancing across the sky and lower level grey clouds are billowing onto the glacier towards us. I realise we've been pretty fortunate but our forecast last night said things were getting worse ('crapping out' was Steve's official interpretation!).

The climb back up to the hut is getting tiring. I was pleased to get there just as the sleet started coming at us and luckily I didn't get too wet. Dinner was consumed with a 'gusto' that only comes about when one is truly famished. We listened to the forecast then Steve taught us some weather theory so I began to get a better appreciation for how to read a weather map and how to 'read' the weather. This would help a lot when I was planning my own mountain trips in future.

Day 5 Friday

I must say I wasn't upset when we awoke to the sound of rain lashing the hut, my body needed a rest so I rolled over and slept a bit longer, luckily so did everyone else! Finally Steve got up and got a brew on and we had a late breakfast. With no chance of going out in this weather we did some more ropework and learnt how to prussic up and down ropes. We followed up by putting more time into getting our assisted hoist crevasse extraction technique sorted. I enjoyed an equipment lecture from Steve that was very comprehensive and we had lots of cups of tea and snacks during the day.

Day 6 Saturday

More bad weather today as the storm hadn't moved off. The forecast said it would turn to the south today and get colder and fine up. We had a lecture on trip planning and preparation and Steve talked about his exploits Himalayan climbing and what it was like to climb Everest, a climb he'd done as a guide with AC back in 2006. I don't see that on my

horizon and feel like I have a long way to go but a couple of the guys seemed interested in doing that in future. Toasted sandwiches were the highlight of the day and after lunch we started packing up to hike out towards the Fox glacier for the night where we'd planned to bivvy out. It's amazing how heavy the packs feel when all the sleeping bags, food and climbing gear is loaded into them so we were a little slow across the glacier that afternoon. We walked for two and a half hours across the Davis snowfield and dropped onto the Fox glacier below Mt Von Bulow that we'd climbed a couple of days before. From there we trudged down the glacier to Chancellor Dome. The plan was for us to bivvy out which I found out meant to just lay a mat out on the snow and lie down on it to sleep! We cooked a simple pasta meal on the stoves and watched the snow sparkle as it froze. A cold wind blew in the early hours and I had to pull the hood of my bivvy bag over me to stop the snow blowing in. Yuk!



Day 7 Sunday

It wasn't easy getting up but there was no point in sticking around so we hurriedly packed up and descended in a couple of hours to Chancellor hut. Steve arranged for a helicopter pick-up and soon we were winging our way down to the Fox Glacier village.

We managed a shower followed by lunch then hit the road back to Wanaka again where we sorted out the gear we'd used. Steve took us through a de-brief where we could chat about our experiences of the week and get ideas about what progression would be appropriate for our next steps.

A few of us decided to go downtown for a meal and social evening, and to share plans for future adventures!

Course dates

SUMMER 2011 / 2012

MIC #1 October 24 - 30, 2011

MIC #2 November 21 - 27, 2011

MIC #3 December 14 – 18, 2011

MIC #4 January 16 – 22, 2012

MIC #5 February 20 – 26, 2012

MIC #6 March 12 – 18, 2012

MIC #7 April 2 - 8, 2012 (Easter)

The way the course operates

Experiential learning is a major factor in learning how to be a competent mountaineer and therefore we spend as much time as possible in the mountains actually climbing peaks whilst

developing skills. Prior to going into the mountains we conduct an equipment check then work on rope techniques, knots and belaying. We will utilise helicopters or ski planes to fly into the high mountains to enable us to get to the high glaciers and huts. The timing of when we enter the mountains depends on the weather conditions at the time and we make every effort to get into the mountains as soon as we can to maximise your time in the high peaks.

When we are in the mountains we usually establish ourselves in a hut or camp then get on with the rest of the program. Initially you will learn how to travel safely in the mountains and on glaciated terrain. Often this will be on the way to a non-technical climbing route that you can then climb while your guide introduces you to skills applicable to the terrain you are on. Throughout the course, the guides will try to vary the terrain to give you variety and allow you to learn the techniques specific to snow, ice and rock and the aim is to increase the intensity of the program at your pace.

Alpine climbing can involve long days with early starts in order to gain a summit, and descend before nightfall. There are times when the weather may be rough and there can be periods of discomfort. We manage this through consultation with the group members and our objectives are dictated by the strength and motivation of the group as a whole.

You may have the opportunity to develop additional skills before the course commences. Rope skills can be learned through local alpine clubs, and previous rock or alpine climbing experience will allow you to gain even more from the course.

Weather plays a major factor in any mountain experience and New Zealand's Southern Alps get their share. We intend to run the course to schedule, however weather influences may require us to adjust the program accordingly. Weather in itself is an important lesson for the group in versatility, and selection of the appropriate objective, based on the present and forecasted weather conditions.

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 area that is best for running the course. Operators based in Mt Cook are often shut down by weather for extended periods yet due to Wanaka's central proximity to all the regions, we have the ability to anticipate these weather systems and will travel to the fine-weather side of the mountain range. We can often get into the mountains several days before it clears on the windward aspects. Prior to committing to a region 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 at our Wanaka office at **9.00am on Day 1** and finish around 5pm on day 7.

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 7. 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.

Climbing season

The most suitable time for alpine climbing is from October through to April. In October-December we can expect more snow on the routes yet as temperatures warm up into the summer months of January and February we traditionally experience more settled weather and mixed climbing conditions (snow, and rock). From March through April, late summer conditions exist which result in rock routes being in better condition.

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 endeavour to walk out as part of the learning experience - travelling through the alpine into sub alpine terrain. We may have the option to fly out at the end of the course. This is reliant on the guide and group's combined decision, is subject to weather conditions at the time, and is at an additional cost.

Equipment

Climbing in the Southern Alps requires good personal gear due to the potential weather conditions. Our focus is on having the essential clothing and equipment, whilst keeping pack weights as light as possible for your comfort and ease of travel.

The course equipment list is a guideline to your equipment requirements. We carry a good range of modern rental equipment. If you will be renting equipment from us please advise your requirements in advance to ensure correct sizing and availability. If you intend on buying any equipment items, we are happy to advise on recommended brands and models, and of key importance - their suitability to the type of activity.

We offer our clients **discounted prices** on a selection of 'AC recommended' climbing equipment and clothing, and we can arrange for the equipment to be available for you when you arrive.

Your Guide will go through an equipment checklist with you on the morning of day 1 of the course. The checklist will vary subject to seasonal weather and route conditions. All group equipment including ropes and stoves 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 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 - by Allan Uren and Mark Watson offer good insight into 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 when you arrive for your course. Maps can be purchased directly from our office. The venue for your Mountaineering Course will generally only be decided just prior to the course commencement date to ensure the most favourable area is utilised depending on current weather and conditions. The above books and maps can be purchased from our office in Wanaka.



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, the rocky

summits of the Remarkables climbing area, or even 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 that we are contending with nature in its most pure form and a part of the allure in climbing is that when we are in the mountain environment we are dealing with forces much more powerful than ourselves.

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 travelling into remote regions carries a locator beacon for additional security.

Fitness and health

To make the most of your climbing experience we encourage you to work on your fitness prior to the course. A good level of fitness takes time and commitment and can only be achieved by either training hard or being constantly physically active. When training, it is recommended you carry a pack for long periods on hills and uneven terrain. Over time you should increase the weight the pack until you are comfortable with 15-20kg up and down hills and preferably off-trail. Gym training, cycling, swimming and running also add to your base fitness and are a great addition to a pack training program. Your own level of enjoyment will be directly related to your level of fitness so it is up to you to ensure you make the best of your time on the course.

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.

Insurance

We strongly recommend that you take out trip cancellation and travel insurance to protect yourself in case of injury or mishap prior to/and 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, however you may not be eligible for bulk compensation payments. You are responsible for any medical or evacuation costs beyond the cover provided by ACC.

Travel to, and accommodation in Wanaka

We commence our Mountaineering Instruction Course 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 twice daily flight from Christchurch to Wanaka and an increasing number of direct flights from Australian cities direct to Queenstown.

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 4-6 hours travel time), also between Dunedin and Wanaka (approximately 3-4 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 7**. All food and accommodation outside this time will be at your expense.

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 at our office at 58 McDougall Street, Wanaka. You will need to arrive in town the night prior to the course commencing. Please give us a call to confirm your arrival in town.

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, mountain biking and numerous other recreational activities abound.

The course fee

The course fee is **NZ \$2550.00** 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 (Concessions OT-29503-GUI & CA-22930-GUI), NZ Goods and Services Tax (15%) and aircraft access, Technical climbing equipment.

- 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 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 being NZ\$637.50. The balance payment of NZ\$1,912.50 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 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. We recommend you take out trip cancellation insurance via your travel agent.
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We look forward to welcoming you onto your **Mountaineering Instruction Course!**

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 is a supporter of the dZi Foundation in Nepal for their 'Revitalise a Village' programs.. Adventure Consultants perform to IFMGA/UIAGM standards and are world leaders in high altitude guiding.

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