

# NEW ZEALAND ALPINE EXPEDITION COURSE

2018 / 2019 COURSE NOTES



## Alpine Expedition Course Course Notes

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**The 12 day Alpine Expedition Course was designed by Adventure Consultants to provide you with up-to-date mountaineering skills with a focus on developing the necessary skills in preparation for expedition climbing.**

The course is directed toward fit and motivated people who have some background in the outdoors. Previous alpine or rock climbing experience, bushwalking or tramping to a demanding level or other related activities, which develop self-reliance and a mentally robust attitude, are the pre-requisites for this course.

You will share the experience with other people hungry for knowledge and skills on a course run by some of the world's leading alpinists.

At the end of the course, participants would have the skills to tackle more demanding ascents within New Zealand and take their first steps towards Himalayan objectives, either guided or on their own. Experience is imperative before tackling major ascents and this course is designed to help you navigate your way towards safe and successful climbing practices.



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### The Course Objective

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

- A solid climbing standard and mountain awareness
  - Sound judgement of your own ability
  - Good planning and preparation skills
  - Informed decision making
  - Technical mountaineering proficiency
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## The Advantages of Joining an Adventure Consultants Mountaineering 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, Aoraki Mount Cook and Aspiring mountain regions in addition to crags around Wanaka and alpine rock at the Remarkables. This enables us to get you onto 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 40 years. Additional to his extensive record in New Zealand, his career has included over 40 high altitude expeditions and polar journeys, including 4 ascents of Mount Everest and 5 other 8,000m 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.

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## Alpine Expedition Course Points of Difference

The main points of difference on the Adventure Consultants Alpine Expedition Course are:

- More time to gain experience while practising skills
- Focus on remote mountainous areas
- Highly experienced expedition guides instructing

Participants are expected to have a good level of fitness and some basic rope skills before joining the course.

**Note:** Participants joining this course must arrive with a good level of fitness and some basic rope skills. An appropriate level of fitness is that you can carry a 20kg pack in hill country for several hours at a time without undue fatigue. If you are not sure, please send us an honest outdoor resume or call us and we can advise you on which is the best course for you.

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## Skills Covered

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

- Basic to advanced snow and ice craft
- Rope skills applicable to alpine climbing and expedition climbing including fixed ropes
- Glacier travel and rescue skills
- Weather analysis
- Alpine rock skills
- Mountain first aid, health, high altitude medicine and acclimatisation practices
- Route finding

- Navigation
  - Avalanche awareness and rescue techniques
  - Expedition camping skills, tenting, snow caving, bivvies
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## Typical Course Outline

The following is a typical outline for the Alpine Expedition Course based on a course held previously at the Remarkables and Aoraki Mount Cook regions with AC guides, Dean Staples and Alex Geary.

### Day 1 Monday

The group meets at 9.00 am at the AC office in Wanaka at 20 Brownston Street. Course participants are introduced and the guides outline the course syllabus, and what the group will be up to each day of the course. The group is given a brief rundown on what the forecast is saying about the upcoming weather.

Dean gives a concise equipment talk so everyone knows what to bring and the crew then organise personal and group equipment. (Note: bring all your gear with you, including those items you are not sure whether to include or not). Rental equipment will be fitted at this time and final purchases can be made. Food is sorted for the trip, which becomes a valuable 'hands-on' exercise for everybody. Once organised, the group load themselves and the gear into the van for the 2.5 hour trip to the Remarkables Range, a rocky range with a couple of steep rock summits.

It's an hour long hike to the AC camp spot right beside the beautiful Lake Alta underneath the flanks of Single Cone, one of the craggy peaks of the Remarkables. Dean and Alex deliver a lesson in rope work and belaying skills, for most of the group it's revision but for some, it's reasonably new.

Then it's time to sort dinner. There are some rules about camp safety to absorb as the guides induct everybody into safe and hygienic practices. Nobody wants to be responsible for burning the camp down, do they! Lesson on how to refuel and light the stoves, then the group is broken into teams for dealing with dinner preparations.

### Day 2 Tuesday

After breakfast, it's time to use yesterday's skills on the bluffs above the camp for some multi-pitch climbing on low angled, but very good rock. There are very good cracks that are used to protect the climbing and the guides climb alongside to ensure the gear is being used correctly, and advice on how to streamline systems and climbing calls. After several pitches, the group has reached the top and is working on rappel anchors that are used to descend. The next lesson is on fixed rope training where the participants get to see how they are placed as well as ascending/descending practice. A hungry crew head back to the camp for lunch.

Then it's time for walking on snow and self-arrest techniques. This gets everyone going as they slide down the slopes and learn how best to stop with the ice axe. The skills are handy in the Remarkables early season for walking around on some of the snow slopes leading to the rocky peaks. The guides then instruct the group on prusiking and self-rescue skills that are a lead-up to crevasse rescue skills that will be taught later in the course.



### **Day 3 Wednesday**

Today the course is split into two groups, Dean taking one group up Single Cone by the East Ridge, while Alex takes the rest via the South Ridge. It's a day to put multi-pitch climbing into practice with awesome views out towards the Southern Alps. The teams meet at the summit for lunch then descend back to camp to pack up and head down to the vehicles to drive to Aoraki Mount Cook for the next phase of the trip. All good so far! The group arrives at the New Zealand Alpine Club Hut, Unwin Hut; where everyone moves into a bunkroom and chips into help cook dinner.

### **Day 4 Thursday**

The weather has deteriorated overnight and there are no flights going today. The day is spent on theory lessons that focus on weather, navigation and route finding lectures (and outside practice), a high altitude illness lesson, escaping from the system techniques, and crevasse extraction training. In all its frustrating waiting for the weather, but the time is put to good use. The forecast is improving, so it's a more positive outlook for the next day.

### **Day 5 Friday**

By 9.30am the group is at Mount Cook airport and loaded into a helicopter for the spectacular flight past the country's highest peaks into the the upper reaches of the Tasman Glacier. The group unloads the gear in the middle of the glacier and soon the skies are silent and the grandeur of the surrounding peaks sinks in. The guides deliver an initial familiarisation talk to clarify nomenclature, identify the peaks and features surrounding the valley, and point out safe and unsafe areas of travel.



The gear all now must be carried, not far to Tasman Saddle Hut. The Hut is a small bunkroom with a bench for cooking and an outside loo that requires boots to be put on before heading out. There are more rules about hut safety, especially as everyone needs to be especially careful with white spirits stoves.

After lunch, it's time to head outside and get gear sorted to start the high alpine component of the course in earnest. The guides take the group through a progression on roping up for glacier travel, cramponing and ice anchors. At the end of the day everyone has either developed an entirely new set of skills and for those who have done some snow and ice climbing before, this is good revision to know they are on track with their existing skill set. It's a big mistake to assume the other climbers are as current as they believe they are, and this in itself is a good lesson as techniques vary between areas and evolve over time. The evening is spent getting dinner ready and preparing for a full day of climbing tomorrow.

### **Day 6 Saturday**

The group leaves the hut early to the base of Mt Aylmer's South Face. Snow anchors and basic snow pitch climbing are introduced during the lesson and the team ascends a number of short pitches up the face, swapping leads with each other so everyone gets some time on the sharp end! From there top of Mt Aylmer there are superb views into the Murchison Glacier and

towards the remote high peak Mt Darchiac. The day is not over yet as the guides lead down the intricate ridge to the Col then it's time to make an afternoon ascent of Hochstetter Dome that is reached mid-afternoon, and there is time to hang on the summit for a while to take photos and enjoy the view. The descent is via the west shoulder. Its back to Tasman Saddle hut for an early dinner and preparations for more alpine climbing tomorrow with a planned night out under the stars.



### **Day 7 Sunday**

With a good forecast its up early for breakfast and heavier packs are put on as overnight bivi gear is carried to the steep approach slopes of Mt Green. This is safely ascended and the group arrives at the Green & Walter col where overnight bivi gear is stored. With light packs again it's more steep snow and ice pitching that takes the remainder of the day tackling Mt Green. A careful descent brings everyone back to the bivi gear. Our outdoor camp is set up and alfresco dining ensues.

### **Day 8 Monday**

The group gets to appreciate how difficult it is to get organised after a night out in a bivvy, as it takes some time to have everyone up and ready to move onto a morning ascent of Mt Walter. On return the bivi gear is retrieved and it is a tired group that makes its way back across the glacier to the relative comforts of Tasman Saddle hut. Dean and Alex involve the team in an in-depth debrief where the team's actions and techniques are analysed and suggestions for improvement are made.

### **Day 9 Tuesday**

The morning, the weather is not great, plenty of cloud and wind so the team does a session on rescue scenarios and expedition medical first aid. The winds ease around midday and that leaves time to head out to do a thorough session on crevasse extraction including self-rescue by prussiking out of the crevasse.

### **Day 10 Wednesday**

It's mostly clear again so the decision is made to head across to the rocky peaks of Mt Able & Kane. This is some of the better rock in upper Tasman and it feels strange climbing rock in big



boots when you have only worn rock shoes on routes like this before. Jumars are also introduced and some Himalayan expedition style fixed line is set up for everyone to practice the techniques for ascending and descend steep fixed lines.

### **Day 11 Thursday**

A tired group walks down the Tasman Glacier travelling over ice, moraine and onto the end of the white ice, 4 hours down from Tasman Saddle Hut. There's a series of short but steep ice walls that the

group get to practice some steeper climbing on as there's a bit of delay before a helicopter can pick up the team. It's impossible not to be happy with the helicopter ride out to Mount Cook village, thus avoiding the long slog the rest of the way down the Tasman moraine. That

shower at Unwin Hut surely feels good after so long! In the afternoon the vehicle is packed up for the return to Wanaka where the team all decides that instead of cooking tonight they will go out for a feed. The night is spent bunking it at a backpacker lodge close to the town centre so it's not far home for those wanting to celebrate more than others!



### **Day 12 Friday**

Today it's back to the AC office. There's time for an informative lecture on climbing at high altitude and a video taken by the AC guides on climbing Everest with spectacular footage of the summit ridge through the Hillary Step to the top. Then there's a discussion on decision making in the mountain environment and it is really beneficial to glean from the guides how they go about making decisions in such extreme environments. We finish up sorting out the equipment then the guides debrief the course. Team members get to share the highs and lows that each person experienced on the course with the rest of the group who have come to know each other well over the previous 12 days. After all the goodbyes have been done, the group heads into town for some socialising. Of course, plans are already being made for future climbing trips with like-minded people who have a similar experience level and aspirations.

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### **Our Guides**

This course is run by our guides who have been Expedition Leaders or guides on our Himalayan expeditions. The course has limited entry and is a must for anyone who wants to learn as much as they can about Expedition climbing from some of the world's leading Himalayan Alpinists.

Once minimum numbers have been met, the instructor to student ratio will be 1:4. Adventure Consultants have a commitment to ensure the highest standard of instruction and guiding practices. We will offer you the best possible learning experience, and a safe and enjoyable time. An open and helpful approach is encouraged within the group to help communicate and reinforce the learning process.

Our guides are all NZMGA and/or IFMGA internationally qualified. They have been trained and assessed through the New Zealand Mountain Guides Association, and operate to the high standards and guidelines set out by the Association.

## How the Course Operates

We spend as much time in the mountains as possible actually climbing peaks whilst developing skills. Initially, you will develop and reinforce your skills in a contained environment and move on to more challenging routes and terrain during the course.

Due to the variability of conditions and weather, the guides will make changes to the program to ensure you get the best outcomes and training opportunities from what the gods throw at you. Because of this you should expect some changes to the itinerary and be flexible with your perceived outcomes. Whatever happens, your guides will use their considerable experience to ensure you get the best from the course that can be offered.

Experiential learning is a major factor in learning how to be a competent mountaineer. The emphasis of the course is on safe application of skill development. We will introduce skills through actually climbing peaks and 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 to learn, in versatility and objective selection, based on the present and forecasted weather conditions.

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## Course Venue

We operate our courses in the Remarkables, Mount Aspiring, Aoraki Mount 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 Mount Cook are often 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 at 20 Brownston St, Wanaka. **The course starts at 9.00am on Day 1.**

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## 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.

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## 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 utmost to provide the best program that will deliver 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.

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## 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.**

**A bonus for this course is the inclusion of an egress flight in the course fee (conditions apply).** We include an egress flight out from the mountains, so your course spends the maximum

amount of time above the snowline learning skills rather than walking.

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## 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 climbing equipment and clothing, and can arrange for the equipment to be available upon your arrival.

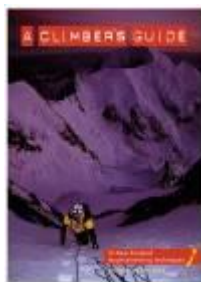
Your Guide will go through an equipment checklist with you prior to the trip. These will vary subject to seasonal weather and route conditions. All group equipment including ropes and stoves will be organised by your Guide.

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



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## 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 - 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. The training area venue for your Alpine Expedition Course will generally only be decided just prior to the course commencement date to ensure the most favourable area is utilised. The above books and maps can be purchased from our office in Wanaka.

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### **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. In training, it is best to actually carry a pack for long periods on hills and uneven terrain on a regular basis. Your own level of enjoyment 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.

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### **Communication 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.

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### **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. In some cases, people with specific requirements that are not compatible with a group situation will be asked to supply some or all of their own food.

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### **Insurance**

We strongly recommend that you take out trip cancellation insurance and travel insurance to protect yourself in the case of injury or mishap or cancellation prior to/whilst on our trips, and we can provide you with advice about this according to your nationality.

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.

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### **Travel and Accommodation**

We commence the course from our base in Wanaka, Air New Zealand and Qantas/Jetstar provide daily services for flights from Christchurch, Auckland and Wellington to Queenstown. There are also direct international flights from most major Australian cities to Queenstown.

A shuttle service operates several times daily between Queenstown and Wanaka (approximately one hour driving time and with costs from \$35 each way), check <http://www.alpineconnexions.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 are happy to assist with your accommodation and bus transfer arrangements.

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### **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 12. 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/Franz Josef and Aoraki Mount 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.

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### **How to Find Us**

Our office is situated in the Wanaka town centre at 20 Brownston Street.

**Day 1 of the course begins at 9.00 am at our office at 20 Brownston 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.

You will find some of New Zealand's best sport climbing in the Matukituki Valley - the gateway to the Mt Aspiring region (just a ten-minute drive from our office). Three ski resorts provide



plentiful winter activity and all year round fishing, boating and numerous other recreational activities abound.

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### **Course Fee**

The course fee is **NZ \$4,450 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, Dean Staples and Mark Sedon) Department of Conservation fees (37125-GUI), NZ Goods and Services Tax (15%), and aircraft access and egress.

Technical climbing equipment is included in our MIC and ACC, summer scheduled courses and we can offer a package rental price for AEC participants who are renting a lot of equipment. We tend to find AEC participants have much of their own equipment and want to use their own gear but we certainly have good rental gear available to supplement your own equipment.

- All prices are subject to change without notice.
  - Minimum numbers apply to all scheduled instruction courses.
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### **Course Dates Summer 2018 / 2019**

AEC 1: November 5 - 16, 2018

AEC 2: January 14 - 25, 2019

AEC 3: February 18 - March 1, 2019

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### **Course Registration and Payment**

In order to confirm a place on the course, we require a completed registration form (use the booking form on our website or contact us and we'll send one out) and a deposit of NZ\$1,000 per person.

The balance of payment is then due 60 days prior to the start date.

Our online registration form is at:

<https://www.adventureconsultants.com/climbing-schools/climbing-school-new-zealand/alpine-expedition-course/book-now>

All payments should be made by bank transfer to the following bank and account:

Bank: **Bank of New Zealand**  
For the account of: **Adventure Consultants Limited**  
Account number: **02 0673 0043443 00**  
Account Type: **NZ Dollars**

We can also accept your deposit and balance payment by credit card (Visa, Mastercard, Amex) plus a 3% credit card fee.

**Please note:** In order to reserve a place on a course we recommend that you book well in advance. These courses are popular and fill up fast.

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### Course Cancellation Policy

- Cancellations outside of 60 days incur a NZ\$250 cancellation fee.
- For cancellations made within 60 days of the trip commencement date, we reserve the right to retain 50% of the full fee.
- For cancellations made within 30 days of the trip commencement date, we reserve the right to retain 75% of the full fee.
- For cancellations within 15 days of the departure date a cancellation fee of 100% of the full fee applies.

We highly recommend you take out trip cancellation insurance via your travel agent – trip cancellation insurance is usually packaged together with your travel insurance and covers you for loss of deposits should you not be able to make the trip for personal reasons.

If we are unable to meet minimum numbers on the course (3 people), then we will offer you a shorter program for private guiding, with an access flight only.

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**We look forward to welcoming you onto your Alpine Expedition 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 perform to IFMGA/UIAGM standards and are world leaders in high altitude guiding.*

