



**ADVENTURE  
CONSULTANTS**

MOUNTAINEERING

# ALPINE CLIMBING COURSE



**2021/22 COURSE NOTES**









# ALPINE CLIMBING COURSE NOTES

## 2021/22 COURSE DETAILS

**Dates:** ACC 1: October 18–27, 2021  
ACC 2: November 15–24, 2021  
ACC 3: December 6–15, 2021  
ACC 4: January 3–12, 2021  
ACC 5: January 31 to February 9, 2022  
ACC 6: March 7–16, 2022

**Duration:** 10 days

**Departure:** ex Wanaka, New Zealand

**Price:** NZ\$3,850 per person

▲ Climbers take in the dawn as they begin their day. Photo: Olivier Baron

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.

Upon the successful completion of this course, participants will be capable of utilising their skills to attempt peaks of a moderate nature. What each person takes away from the course will be partly 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.

## COURSE OBJECTIVE

Our objective on this course is to pass on to you the skills that have made us at Adventure Consultants successful in our own climbing careers. We focus on skill development while you climb mountains, 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 taking away 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

## SKILLS COVERED

The following are the basis of skills taught during the course:

- 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



▲ A rope team negotiates the upper Tasman Glacier. Aoraki Mount Cook, Mount Tasman and the Minarets are on the sky line. Photo: Alfheidur Saemundsson

- Route finding
- Navigation
- Avalanche awareness

Please note that factors such as weather and climbing conditions may at times dictate that some skills are not covered in full.

## COURSE PREREQUISITES

This course has been developed to meet the needs of 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 gradually increase 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 to gain a summit and descend before nightfall, 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 extremely satisfying and one recognises that it takes special attributes to be a successful alpine climber.

Having previous rock or alpine climbing experience will allow you to get the most from this course. If possible, you should take the opportunity to develop your basic skills before the course commences, e.g. rope skills that can be learned through local alpine clubs or rock gyms.

## 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 the skills most necessary for developing into a highly competent alpine climber. Many courses focus primarily on technique, but these are often taught as technical skills in isolation, meaning the course member often has not had the actual experience of climbing a mountain by the course's 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 reinforce 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. 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 5–7 years to attain and ensures you are getting a world-class professional service.





▲ ACC students learn to climb independently. Photo: Alfheidur Saemundsson



▲ Students practicing self arrest techniques. Photo: Taichiro Naka



▲ Practice crevasse rescue techniques. Photo: Alfheidur Saemundsson

## ADVANTAGES OF JOINING AN ADVENTURE CONSULTANTS COURSE

With our headquarters at Lake Wanaka, we have the distinct advantage of short travel times to seek out the venues with the best weather and conditions. We have the options of the Westland, Aoraki Mount Cook and Aspiring National Parks, plus the Remarkables mountain region with its alpine rock, in addition to the popular crags around Wanaka itself. This enables us to get you into the most appropriate location much faster and gives a wider choice of venues.

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 numerous high-altitude expeditions, including five ascents of Mount Everest and six 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 be achieved.

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.

## COURSE OUTLINE

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

### DAY 1

The group congregates 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 explains 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





▲ Course members navigating in cloudy conditions. Photo: Adrian Camm

catered to) and final purchases can be made. Food for the trip is pre-sorted by the guides. They are adept at balancing food effectively so we neither bring too little nor have to carry too much in our packs. Basic rope skills and tying in are covered to ensure consistency and to act as 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 Aoraki Mount Cook National Parks, depending on where weather and conditions are best) so remember a travel bag for use when overnighing in towns before and after the trip.

## DAY 2

An early breakfast is processed then the group is bundled into aircraft for the flight to the remote Franz Josef 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 Aurora Peak. Here we need to place snow anchors and belay on snow or ice towards the summit. At the summit, we rest with astounding views all around 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.



Winding through crevasses on the Tasman Glacier. Photo: Alfheidur Saemundsson



▲ Each course is well catered with plenty of fresh food. Photo: Alfheidur Saemundsson

## DAY 4

An early start again, but this time up to Meteor Peak, not too far from the hut. We climb up a steep snow face using snow anchors for protection as well as rock gear on the steep rock buttress that leads to the main divide and ultimately the summit. After a couple of rappels and down climbing of Meteor, it is a tired group that slugs back across the soft glacier and up the heart-breaking hill to a welcome cup of tea at the hut. At least there is time to dry out sweaty clothes and boots in the afternoon sun. The evening weather forecast is for a front the next day, so 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 avoid ever getting (completely) lost! A more involved weather lesson follows lunch, and an introductory avalanche awareness lecture then it's time for a



▲ Ice climbing on seracs. Photo: Peter Parkinson

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 attempt climbing the Minarets, two 3,000m/9,800ft peaks in the Franz Josef Glacier area. This will require a bivvy at Graham Saddle, some 5 hours from our hut. Now it's time for the course participants to consolidate the skills we 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.





▲ Having fun while practicing crevasse rescue. Photo: Alfheidur Saemundsson

Finally, the summit is reached at 1.00pm, yet due to the cold and wind, celebrations are brief. As a group, we 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 before 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 storm rages overnight but abates in the early morning as we escape to descend to Chancellor Hut on the Fox Glacier. We are all happy to be going downhill! Several times we 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 and a quiet beer.

## DAY 10

The group gets up early and drives back to Wanaka as everyone is keen to practice some rock climbing on the local crags around the Wanaka region. By mid-afternoon everyone is rather tired, it's been an action packed 10 days so it's back to the AC office to clean up and debrief the course.

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## CLASS SIZE

Each course will run with a minimum of 3 students and 1 guide and a maximum class size of 8 students and 2 guides.

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

## HOW THE COURSE OPERATES

We will spend as much time in the mountains as possible climbing peaks while 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 long days. Your guides will progressively introduce a wide range of skills and techniques.

## COURSE VENUE

We operate our courses in the Mount Aspiring, Aoraki Mount Cook or Westland National Parks.





▲ Course member practicing pitched snow and ice climbing on the South Face of Mount Aylmer. Photo: Alfheidur Saemundsson

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 Aoraki Mount Cook are often shut down by weather for extended periods, yet due to Wanaka's central proximity to all the alpine 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 10.

## COURSE ACCOMMODATION

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 Aoraki Mount Cook villages, you will be accommodated in dormitory-style Alpine Club huts. In Wanaka, accommodation will be 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. From October to December, we can expect more snow on the routes. 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 to April, late summer conditions exist, which result in rock routes being in better condition.





• Tasman Saddle Hut. You will be based in one of New Zealand's fantastic alpine huts while in the mountains. Photo: Dean Staples

## WEATHER

Weather is an integral facet of any mountain range so 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 what happens in the end.

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.

While 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 need to appreciate that we are contending with nature in its most pure form and

part of the allure in climbing is that when we are in the mountain environment, we are dealing with such raw environments.

## GROUND & 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.

## 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.

We will provide a course equipment list that will be a guideline to your equipment requirements and we carry a good range of modern rental equipment. If you will be renting equipment from





▲ Testing snow anchors on the Tasman Glacier. Photo: Jeremy Elrick



▲ Access to and from the mountains is by helicopter. Photo: Dean Staples



▲ Rock climbing in Wanaka. Photo: Alfreidur Saemundsson

us, please advise your requirements in advance to ensure correct sizing and availability. If you intend to buy 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 the 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 & 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.

'Aoraki Tai Poutini—A Guide for Mountaineers' by Rob Frost and 'The Mount Aspiring Region—A Guide for Mountaineers' by Allan Uren and Mark Watson offer good insight into 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 Alpine Climbing 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.

## COMMUNICATION & MESSAGES

Our guides are in radio/cell/sat phone communication with our operations base and the Department of Conservation headquarters throughout the trip. This





Put your alpine rock climbing skills to the test. Photo: Lydia Bradey

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 & 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/33–44lbs 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 of any medications you are taking. 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 highly recommend that 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 or have a mishap 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, 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 & ACCOMMODATION

We commence our Alpine Climbing Course from our office in Wanaka. Air New Zealand and Qantas/ Jetstar provide daily 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, at a cost of NZ\$35 per person each way), check <https://www.ritchies.co.nz/wanaka> for details.

Bus services also 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.

## COURSE FEE

The course fee is NZ \$3,850 per person. *Please note that prices are subject to change without notice.*

The price includes:

- Guide Fees
- 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 New Zealand Mountaineering Techniques' by Guy Cotter, Dean Staples and Mark Sedon)
- Department of Conservation fees (37125-GUI)
- NZ Goods and Services Tax (15%)
- Aircraft access and egress
- Technical climbing equipment

## PAYMENT DETAILS

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



▲ Students practicing crevasse self rescue. Photo: Dean Staples

**Account Number:** 02 0673 0043443 00

**Account Type:** NZ Dollars

**NOTE:** All bank transfer charges are for the remitter's account.

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

### DEPOSIT

To confirm place on one of our courses, we require a completed registration form with a deposit of NZ\$1,000 per person.

### BALANCE

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



▲ Practicing rope techniques in Kelman Hut. Photo: Dean Staples





▲ Joining an Alpine Climbing Course will open up your mountain world. Photo: Amy McLeod

## CANCELLATION & REFUND POLICY

- Cancellations outside of 60 days incur a NZ\$500 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 recommend you take out trip cancellation insurance via your travel agent if you wish to be covered against cancellation due to medical or personal reasons.

## HOW TO JOIN THIS COURSE

If you would like to join one of our 2021/22 Alpine Climbing Courses, please complete our online booking form and forward your deposit payment at <https://www.adventureconsultants.com/climbing-schools/climbing-school-new-zealand/alpine-climbing-course/book-now>.

## CONTACT US

If you require more information, please contact us at:

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**Web:** [www.adventureconsultants.com](http://www.adventureconsultants.com)









▲ Learn while you climb. Photo: Alfheidur Saemundsson



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' programmes.

Adventure Consultants perform to IFMGA/UIAGM standards and are world leaders in high altitude guiding.



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