

Alpine Guides

Aoraki/Mount Cook, New Zealand

Ski Mountaineering Course

Winter 2010



Photo by Trev Streat

Ski, Travel, Climb & Survive - Winter Mountaineering

Aoraki/Mt Cook & Westland National Parks, New Zealand

7 Day Course: Low guide to participant ratio

3 scheduled course options July thru September

Leading New Zealand Guiding Since 1966

The Ski Mountaineering Course

This 7-day course will take you through the techniques required to travel and climb safely in the mountains during winter. To achieve this, the course emphasis will be on technical instruction and practical application. Weather permitting, one or two peaks will be climbed. The importance of doing a few turns will not be missed either!

The safe enjoyment of the winter mountain environment depends to a large measure upon good judgement, technique, and equipment. Your guide will help you to develop these skills through the practise of glacier travel, crevasse rescue, avalanche awareness, navigation, terrain analysis and route finding, weather forecasting, and of course ski touring.

Winter 2010 Dates & Pricing

Cost: **NZ\$2850 per person**

The course fee includes the following:

- Guiding fee
- Alpine Guides technical manual
- All meals (including snacks and energy bars)
- Aircraft access
- Hut fees
- Local transport
- A range technical equipment (see the Equipment Checklist on page 7)
- Local accommodation for any nights necessary during the course (and the final night)

Course	Dates
SMC 1	July 18-24
SMC 2	Sept 05-11
SMC 3	Sept 19-25

We buy in fresh produce for every program we run so you are guaranteed to eat well. Most dietary regimes can be catered for. Please make a note of what you like to eat on your booking form.

Ropes are provided on all courses.

Maximum Bookings

All SMCs are limited to a maximum of 8 participants. Our maximum guide to client ratio is 1:4

Minimum bookings

Our courses are based on an economic minimum of three participants. However we minimise any disturbance to your plans by guaranteeing to run the course you are booked in on, with the following modifications:

- A. One person only: We shorten the course to 5 days
- B. Two people only: We shorten the course to 6 days

Private Courses

Ski Mountaineering Courses can be arranged at any time over the winter months (July - October) for groups of 2 or more people. This option allows you to choose the dates, duration, and tailor the content to your specific requirements.

For details and pricing please refer to the "Private Instruction" information pack which is available on our website, or contact us directly.

Experience Requirements

Previous high-alpine mountaineering experience is not required. However, the SMC makes a great follow-up course to our MEC or TMC programs.

You must:

- Be at least a [strong intermediate to advanced skier](#)
- Have some basic rope skills (at least be able to tie in to a harness)
- Have a high level of aerobic fitness
- Used to carrying a backpack, or some experience skiing with a backpack

What You Will Learn

Topics covered on your course will include:

- Equipment; what to bring and how to use it
- Trip planning and preparation
- Avalanche hazard evaluation
- Uphill skinning technique
- Laying a track
- Downhill backcountry skiing
- Knots and hitches
- Mountain weather and forecasting
- Glacier travel and Crevasse Rescue
- Belay techniques and systems
- Snow anchors
- Route finding
- Terrain analysis
- First aid for mountaineering
- Mountain navigation
- Emergency shelters
- Hut management, food preparation, cooking

You will also learn about your own capabilities and your own ability to live in the mountains and to accept their ever changing conditions.

Reporting Details

All SMCs begin at 8:30 am at Alpine Guides shop in Mt Cook Village on the start date, and finish at 5 pm on the last day. Accommodation is provided for the final night, if required.

Ski Touring Equipment

By utilising specially designed touring bindings, (we use Fritschi Diamir) with regular downhill skis, you can skin uphill and get to areas that you would otherwise only dream about. The uphill efforts are always rewarded by the views and the downhill run.

See the [Equipment & Clothing checklist](#) on page 7 for details on what you need to provide and what we have available to rent.



The Area

In New Zealand the largest mountain range is the Southern Alps which extends 700 kilometres down the entire length of the South Island. At the heart of this range lies the Aoraki/Mount Cook region - an area dominated by the massif of Aoraki/Mount Cook itself. This region contains 29 peaks over 3000 metres and is characterised by extensive glaciation. Aoraki/Mount Cook rises to a height of 3754 metres. Large glaciers carve their way down into the valleys, and on the western side of the Main Divide these reach down to temperate rainforest, stopping only a few kilometres from the sea.

SMC: Course Venue

The SMC will normally be based out of mountain huts either at the head of the Tasman or Murchison Glaciers. In order to make optimum use of the time available, the course will fly into these areas avoiding a 2 day walk in. Weather depending, other venues may include Pioneer Hut at the head of the Fox Glacier, or Centennial Hut at the head of the Franz Josef Glacier.

Course Organisation

We do not believe that it is realistic to plan fixed day to day schedules when dealing with such a dynamic environment. Instead we will work around the prevailing weather and conditions to provide the most comprehensive coverage of all the course activities.

After an initial briefing and equipment check we will fly in at the first possible opportunity. [You can be in the mountains for up to 6 nights of the course.](#)

Typically the earlier part of the course will involve more theory and instruction. As we progress you can expect to do more practical climbing, touring, and testing the new skills you will have learned.

Instructional days will normally begin at around 7:00 am. The day's activities will have you out for about 8 hours, as the course will attempt to maximise fine weather and good conditions. On any poor weather days you expect to cover rope skills and theory, and use instruction venues located close to the hut.

We aim to have you back in Mount Cook village by late afternoon on the final day.

What You Will Carry

When the course travels into the mountains you will have to carry with you all your clothing, equipment, and a share of the group gear and food. Extra belongings will be stored at Alpine Guides base.

On most days in the mountains you will not carry the full load of gear. Equipment not required will be left in the hut. Only when you move between huts or travelling out to the village will it again be necessary to carry everything. This means your pack's weight will vary from 5—7 kg for a normal day, and to 15—16 kg when we travel between huts and campsites.

Try to keep your personal and non-essential items to a minimum to allow room for important items like food, and to reduce the weight of your load. Check the SMC equipment list, and talk to us before the trip begins if you have any queries.

You will not require a daypack in the mountains. If you choose to bring one it will be useful for village-based activities.

Winter Seasonality

Winter Period (July/August)

This early winter period offers a greater likelihood of powder skiing. Days are short and temperatures cold - perfect for keeping your powder dry.

Spring Period (September/October)

The spring period provides a high chance of corn snow, which is better suited to first time backcountry skiers. The days are longer and warmer. Snow cover is at its maximum. While it is not uncommon to ski powder after a storm in spring you are more likely to find corn snow which is better suited for first time off-piste skiers.

Egress from the mountains

Two options are available at the end of the course: skiing/walking or flying out. Flying out is the more common option, as it maximises time spent in the mountains, and avoids a long and demanding trip on foot.

Your guide will be the final arbiter on this matter. This decision to walk out is based not only on your fitness, but on snow conditions and weather at the time.

Flying Out:

Flying out is an extra cost that is not included in the course fee. Please budget for this.

If the weather forecast for the end of the course is good, a flight out is the best way to make the most of your time. The cost can range from \$160 to \$320 per person, depending on group numbers and aircraft load factors. Normally the cost is around \$180 to \$280 per person.

Please note there is no need to "book ahead" for a flight out. Your guide will discuss the options available to you and it will be reassessed as the course progresses

Walk Out:

You must always be prepared and fit enough to ski/walk out in the event that weather conditions will not allow for aircraft pick-up. The trip out is an arduous exercise and will be a test of your fitness and stamina.

After skiing/walking the length of the glacial ice (2-3 hours), you have another 5-7 hours of walking on very



rough glacial moraine. This trip may be split over 2 days, with an overnight stop at De La Beche Hut.

Why is the flight out not included?

Simply, it builds flexibility into the program and keeps the overall course cost down for our participants. It also gives the option for people who wish to walk out.

The cost of air transport depends on a host of logistical variables, including: party location, party size, aircraft available, weather and snow conditions, other parties flying in and out who can help share the cost, their location, and so on... Our base staff will work to provide the best possible price available on the day.

Your Equipment Checklist

Refer to the equipment check-list on page 7 for the specific gear list for the SMC and the items of clothing and personal kit you will need. **This is your gear/clothing reference list for this course. Use this list as the guide for your trip and no other.**

Please read our "Notes on Equipment and Clothing" for specific details on clothing and equipment items. Contact us if you have any questions.

Bivvy Bags

These are an optional item on the SMC. Because courses are hut-based there is usually no need for a bivouac bag (although an emergency shelter should always be carried).

However, there is the option to overnight in a snow shelter. If you wish to do this a bivvy bag is a necessity.

Optional items

Items listed as "optional" are not compulsory. Bring these only if you wish.

The rest of the details...

You'll find answers to most questions in our additional detailed notes: [Pre-trip Information Notes](#), and [Equipment and Clothing](#).

These are designed to help you plan and prepare for your Alpine Guides trip. Download from our website using the links below.

Pre-trip Information

Includes details on travel to Mt Cook, insurance, personal fitness, accommodation, and more...

http://www.alpineguides.co.nz/download/notes/pretrip_info.pdf (600 Kb)

Equipment & Clothing

What to look for when choosing clothing and equipment for mountaineering in New Zealand

<http://www.alpineguides.co.nz/download/notes/equipment.pdf> (750 Kb)

Equipment & Clothing Checklist

Ski Mountaineering Course (SMC)

Use the check list below to ensure you bring along the gear specifically for your trip. Please try to let us know what you need to rent as soon as possible **before** you arrive. Get in touch if you have any questions.

	Bring ✓	Borrow ✓
Technical equipment provided free of charge		
Ice Axe		
Ice Hammer		
Crampons		
Helmet		
Harness		
Belay Device		
Ice Screw x 1		
Snow stake		
Prusiks x 3 (1 long, 2 short), Sling x 2 (1 long, 1 short)		
Karabiners: large screw-gate x 3, snap-link straight-gate x 4		
Avalanche Transceiver		
Snow Shovel		

Use our gear free of charge, or bring your own

Calculate your approx. rental cost below. For SMC we charge 7 days rental.

Equipment and Clothing for rent	Bring ✓	Rent ✓	Cost/day	x # days	Total
Ski Touring Boots			15		
Sleeping Bag			15		
Pack			7		
Storm Jacket			10		
Overtrousers (full length leg zip if possible)			10		
Gaiters (if required)			5		
Skis with AT bindings, Skins, Poles			20		
Total estimated rental cost					

Personal Equipment Required (not available to rent)

- Headlamp
- Sunglasses
- Ski Goggles (for white-out conditions)
- Water Bottle (s)
- Waterproof pack liner
- Plastic survival bag
- First Aid Kit - basic kit, incl blister tape
- Toiletries, including toothbrush sun screen and lip cream
- Leatherman or Swiss tool

Personal Clothing required (not available to rent)

- Underwear (2 sets)
- Socks (2 pairs)
- Thermal underwear - mid weight or heavier: 2 tops, 1 x pants
- Mid weight fleece top / soft-shell jacket
- Warm jackets, fleece 200 weight and down jacket!
- Warm hat / balaclava
- Climbing trousers. Soft-shell are ideal. Bring gaiters if your trousers do not have snow-cuffs
- Waterproof warm gloves (1 pair) + Light-weight (polypro) gloves 1 pair
- Sun Protection: cap, scarf / bandanna
- Hut footwear (running shoes / sandals / holey soles)

Optional Gear

- Day pack
- Compass (bring if you own one)
- Snow study kit (crystal grid, dial stem thermometer, magnifying glass)
- Bivvy Bag
- Drinking mug (supplied in huts - but you can bring your own)

How long is a "long sling"?

Check our "Notes on Equipment & Clothing" for tips on what to look for when choosing gear and clothing for your Alpine Guides trip.

These notes include a price list for pre-ordering items you need through our store - **saving you significant \$'s**

