

Alpine Guides

Aoraki/Mount Cook, New Zealand

Technical Mountaineering Course

Summer 2010/11



Photo by Trevor Streat

Kick-start your Alpine Adventures on our Renowned TMC

Aoraki/Mt Cook & Westland National Parks, New Zealand

Spans 10 days: Low guide to participant ratio

18 scheduled course options November thru March

Leading New Zealand Guiding Since 1966

The TMC and you

This course is designed as a complete introduction to climbing, living, and surviving in the mountains. The TMC will provide a kick-start to your climbing exploits.

All instruction takes place in the serious mountain environment of Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park, although the course is flexible enough to move elsewhere for a few days should the weather become inhospitable. **The skills you acquire on the TMC will take you readily into any other mountain range in the world.**

Testimony to the TMC's is its longevity. We have run this course with few changes for more than 25 years. Literally generations of Australasia's best climbers started their careers on a TMC.

The primary strength of the course is that it strikes a balance between instruction of techniques, and practical application - in realistic situations. The emphasis is on education, travel on, and awareness of all types of mountain terrain, not just purely technical climbing. We believe this is the most important element of your "mountain education".

You can expect to summit 2 or 3 peaks, (progressively more technical summits) building on your knowledge, as you apply this to practical situations.

Aircraft access is used to optimise the climbing time available. This also allows us to gain exceptionally good instructional venues, and to reduce heavy load carrying. Each day's activities will usually run for 8-10 hours, although longer and more strenuous days may be involved depending on the climbs undertaken.

2010/11 Dates & Pricing

Goods and Services Tax (GST) in New Zealand rises to 15% on 01 October. Trips booked and paid in full by 30 September will beat the pre-GST rise price

Price to 30 September 2010: NZ\$3250 per person

Price from 01 October 2010: NZ\$3325 per person

The fee includes the following:

- Guiding fees
- Alpine Guides Technical Manual (92 pages)
- All meals (including snacks and energy bars)
- Aircraft access
- Local transport
- A range technical equipment (see the Equipment Checklist on [page 8](#))
- Hut fees and local accommodation for any nights necessary during the course

We buy fresh produce for every course, 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.

Course	Dates
TMC 1	Nov 03-12
TMC 2	Nov 10-19
TMC 3	Nov 17-26
TMC 4	Nov/Dec 24-03
TMC 5	Dec 01-10
TMC 6	Dec 08-17
TMC 7	Dec/Jan 30-08
TMC 8	Jan 05-14
TMC 9	Jan 12-21
TMC 10	Jan 19-28
TMC 11	Jan/Feb 26-04
TMC 12	Feb 02-11
TMC 13	Feb 09-18
TMC 14	Feb 16-25
TMC 15	Feb/Mar 23-04
TMC 16	Mar 02-11
TMC 17	Mar 09-18
TMC 18	Mar 16-25

Maximum Bookings

All TMCs are limited to a maximum of 8 participants. The maximum guide to participant ratio is 1:4.

Minimum bookings

We minimise any disturbance to your plans by **guaranteeing to run the course you are booked on**, with the following modifications:

- A. One person only: we shorten the course to 7 days
- B. Two people only: we shorten the course to 8 days

Reporting Details

All TMC's begin at **13:30** at Alpine Guides shop in Mt Cook Village on the start date, and finish at **12:00** **midday** on the last day. These times fit with scheduled bus services

See the "Pre-trip Information Notes" for more details on transport options.

Private Courses

Technical Mountaineering Courses can be arranged at any time over the summer months (November - April) 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 & Guiding" information pack which is available on our website, or contact us directly.

Experience Requirements

Big ambitions

The TMC is a great follow-up to our Mountain Experience Course (MEC). Participants on the TMC typically have longer-term ambitions for future independent mountaineering.

If your interest in the course is more for a "one-off" experience, we recommend you consider the MEC.

Technical skills required

Prior alpine (snow and ice) mountaineering experience is not required. However, the TMC involves learning some complex rope systems. Without prior rope-handling experience the course will present too steep a learning curve.

We expect all participants to have basic rock climbing skills. You should be able to second AU grade 14 rock, or have rope skills from caving, abseiling, or rescue work, know some knots, and be familiar with tying into and using a harness.

Fitness

Apart from being enthusiastic and keen to learn new skills, a high level of aerobic fitness is required. Previous bush-walking/trekking experience is needed, as you will carry a light backpack each day, and a heavier pack for long days if walking out of the mountains at the course conclusion.

See the "Pre-trip Information" notes for more about fitness for mountaineering.

The "TMC Tune-Up"

If your rope skills are rusty (or next to non-existent) you should do the TMC Tune-up.

The TMC Tune-up is an 1½ day clinic, designed to get participants ready for the level of rope-work expected on the TMC.

A TMC Tune-up runs prior to every TMC. Check the website and download the detailed notes for more info on this excellent addition to the course.

What You Will Learn

Topics covered on your course will include:

- Equipment, what to bring and how to use it
- Trip planning and preparation
- Knots and hitches for mountaineering
- Snow and Ice Climbing
- Abseiling, Belay techniques and systems
- Snow, ice and rock anchors
- Step and stance cutting
- Alpine Rock
- Glacier travel and Crevasse Rescue
- Route finding
- Emergency shelters and procedures
- Rope management
- Mountain weather and forecasting
- Avalanche hazard evaluation
- First aid for mountaineering
- Mountain navigation
- 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.

The Aoraki/Mount Cook 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.

TMC Course Venues

The TMC will normally be based out of one of the mountain huts at the head of the Tasman Glacier. This is a fantastic venue (easily accessible by air) that offers a number of peaks, snow and ice ascents, plus mixed and alpine rock routes.

With Tasman Saddle's location slightly east of the Main Divide, it is often possible to be out climbing when the parties at West Coast venues (just kilometres away) are hut-bound due to bad weather from the west.

In order to make optimum use of the time available, the course will fly in, avoiding a 2 day walk in. Weather and conditions depending, other venues can include Centennial Hut at the head of the Franz Josef Glacier, or (less frequently) Plateau Hut, on the Grand Plateau.

Course Organisation

When dealing with such a dynamic environment it is not realistic to plan fixed day to day schedules. Instead we work around prevailing weather and snow conditions to provide the most comprehensive coverage of all the course topics.

After meeting your teammates, the first afternoon involves an outline of the course and an equipment check. If there is time some initial instruction (roping-up for glacier travel, for example) can be covered.

We will fly in to the mountains at the first possible opportunity, usually the morning of day 2. Flying optimises time available, avoiding what can be a 2 day walk in! Expect to be in the mountains for up to 7 or 8 nights of the course.

The first few days typically involve more theory and instruction. As you progress you can expect to do more practical climbing, putting to good use the skills you are developing.

Instructional days will begin at around 07:00. When climbing on good weather days you may have “alpine starts” - as early as 04:00 if tackling a longer ascent. Most days activities will have you out and about for 8 to 10 hours.

During any poor weather you will be busy with rope skills, theory, and practical, using instruction venues located close to the hut.

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

What You Will Carry

Extra possessions not needed in the mountains will be securely stored at Alpine Guides base, or your Mt Cook Village accommodation.

When packing for your course try to keep personal and non-essential items to a minimum. This reduces weight and saves room for important items, like food! Reduced weight is particularly important if your group walks out at the end of the course.

When the course travels into the mountains you will have to pack in all your clothing, equipment, and a share of the group gear and food. For most days in the mountains you will not carry the full load of gear. Equipment not needed will be left in the hut.

Your backpack's weight will vary from about 5-7 kg on most days, and perhaps 12-15 kg when travelling between huts or walking out.

Please go through the [equipment check-list \(page 8\)](#), and talk to us before the course begins if you have any questions about gear requirements.

You don't need a daypack while in the mountains. However, if you choose to bring one it will be useful for village-based activities.

Egress from the mountains

Two options are available at the end of the course: 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 walk out in the event that weather conditions will not allow for aircraft pick-up. The walk out is an arduous trip and will be a test of your fitness and stamina.

After walking the length of the glacial ice (4-5 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.

Equipment Checklist

Refer to the equipment check-list on page 8 for the specific gear list for the TMC 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.

Use discretion when selecting clothing. Plan for colder conditions through November, and after mid-March. Expect warmer conditions from December through mid-March.

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 TMC. Because the courses are hut-based, there is normally no need for a bivouac bag. An emergency shelter should always be carried.

There is usually an option to overnight in a snow shelter, or sleep under the stars. If you wish to do this then a bivvy bag is highly recommended.

Optional items

Items listed as "optional" are not compulsory. Bring these 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 bus travel to Mount 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

Technical Mountaineering Course (TMC)

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.

1. Equipment provided free of charge	Bring ✓	Borrow ✓
Ice Axe		
Ice Hammer		
Crampons - 12 point, semi automatic		
Helmet		
Harness		
Belay Device		
Ice Screw x 2		
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 5		
Avalanche Transceiver (provided if required)		
Snow Shovel (provided if required)		

Use our gear free of charge, or bring your own

Calculate your approx. rental cost below. For the TMC we charge 8 days rental.

2. Equipment and Clothing for rent	Bring ✓	Rent ✓	Cost/day	x # days	Total
Mountaineering Boots			15		
Sleeping Bag - 3 season bag			15		
Backpack, 55-65 litres			7		
Bivouac Bag (optional)			7		
Sleeping Pad (optional - required for bivouacs)			1		
Hiking Poles / each (optional)			5		
Storm Jacket			10		
Overtrousers (full length leg zip if possible)			10		
Gaiters			5		
Total estimated rental cost					

3. Required Personal Equipment (not available to rent)

- Headlamp
- Sunglasses - good quality wrap-around
- Water Bottles 2 x 1 litre widemouth (Nalgene)
- Waterproof pack liner
- Plastic survival bag (or bivouac bag)
- First Aid Kit - basic kit, incl blister tape
- Toiletries, including toothbrush sun screen and lip cream
- Leatherman or Swiss tool

4. Required Personal Clothing (not available to rent)

- Underwear (2 sets)
- Socks (3 pairs)
- Thermal underwear: 2 x tops, 1 x pants
- Mid-weight fleece jersey
- Warm jacket: down or fleece
- Warm hat / balaclava
- Climbing trousers: soft-shell are ideal. Light weight trekking pants (worn over thermals) are okay - they must be quick drying
- Waterproof warm gloves x 1 pair - leather gloves are good for rope work
- Light-weight (polypro) gloves x 1 pair
- Sun Protection: baseball cap or legionnaire hat scarf / neck gaiter (buff) and "glacier shirt"
- Hut footwear - running shoes or sandals / holey soles (must be lightweight)

5. Optional Gear - not required - but recommended

- Day pack approx 20 litre, useful for non-mountain activities
- Telescopic hiking pole - bring one
- Compass - bring if you own one
- Rock shoes - bring if you own a pair
- Drinking mug. Supplied in huts - but you can bring your own
- Sleeping pad - lightweight (if you want to sleep out)
- Bivouac bag - if you want to sleep out. Survival bag will suffice.
- Soft-shell jacket
- Shorts - worn over long johns is okay in summer
- Ski Goggles (for white-out conditions)