

NZAC INSTRUCTION PROGRAMME

BACKCOUNTRY AVALANCHE COURSE

21<sup>st</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> JULY 2025



Photo: Keith Munro



NEW ZEALAND  
ALPINE CLUB

South Island Course

**LOCATION:** Arthurs Pass National Park

**ACCOMODATION:** Arthurs Pass Lodge

**COURSE FEES:** \$850 (INC GUIDING, COURSE RESOURCES, ACCOMMODATION)

### Who is this course for?

This Backcountry Avalanche course, designed by the Mountain Safety Council is for climbers and mountaineers to further develop their knowledge, skills and understanding of avalanches and how to avoid them. It is the perfect course for those regularly traveling in snow-covered alpine terrain.

This course is designed to build upon the knowledge learned through an Avalanche Awareness course or similar.

Participants should be competent in all of the course outcomes from the NZAC's Basic Snowcraft Course (<https://alpineclub.org.nz/sites/default/files/2021-01/NZAC-Basic-Snowcraft.pdf>) and have and have attended an Avalanche Awareness or similar course in the last 5 years.

**Please do not apply if you are not competent in the course outcomes from the NZAC Avalanche Awareness Course and the course outcomes from the NZAC Basic Snowcraft Course.**

**[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER ONLINE](#)**

## Course Syllabus:

### Avalanche Basics

- Avalanche characteristics
- Identification of avalanche terrain
- Types of Avalanche
- Snowpack
- What is an avalanche path
- Avalanche size
- Transceiver Checks
- Equipment for traveling in the alpine environment

### Pre-Trip Planning

- Avalanche Advisory
- Systems and checklists for trip planning
- Weather forecasts
- Snow stability checklists
- Intentions (safety code)

### Avalanche Assessment

- Weather
- Snowpack factors
- Recognising Avalanche Terrain
- Human Factors
- Decision making tools

### Movement in avalanche terrain

- Safe travel techniques and etiquette
- Route Selection
- Track Setting

### Companion Rescue

- What to pack
- Skilful transceiver use



## Accommodation:

Accommodation is provided at the NZAC Arthurs Pass Lodge. This is dorm style accommodation with hot showers. The lodge is warm and comfortable with a kitchen and living area.

**Accommodation is provided the night before the course starts.**

## **Instruction**

The course will be run in a minimum 1:6 instructor to participant ratio, headed by fully qualified and experienced Avalanche Risk Management Level 6 instructor. All participants must agree to follow the Course Tutors instructions and directions. 6 participants maximum per group. The course has a capacity of 12 participants.

## **Food:**

Food is not provided. Participants should bring their own food or arrange to cook in groups (participants will be put in contact with each other prior to the course starting). The lodge has a fridge and cookers.

There is no supermarket in Arthurs Pass, participants should arrive with the food they need for the course duration.

## **Pre-Course Learning:**

Participants are required to complete a short E-Learning course ahead of the Backcountry Avalanche Course. A link to this will be sent upon booking. Additionally, participants will be sent a copy of the Avalanche Awareness in the New Zealand Backcountry book.

Participants should read and be familiar with this book before the course starts.

## **Course Assessment:**

The course includes a formal assessment of avalanche rescue skills. On successful completion a Certificate of Attendance is issued. Participation in the assessment is optional.

## **Getting there and Course Start:**

It is the participants responsibility to travel to Arthurs Pass Lodge (School Terrace, Arthur's Pass Village 7875). Participants are encouraged to lift share where possible.

Accommodation is provided on the night prior to the course starting (Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> July). The course starts at 8.30am on the morning of Monday 21<sup>st</sup> July. During the course, participants will need to drive from Arthurs Pass to various locations in order to access different terrain and snow conditions.

Participants driving to Arthurs Pass should carry snow chains. These may also be required to access ski fields during the course.

The course will be finished by 3.30pm on the last day.

## Course Fees

The course fees include all instruction, course resources and accommodation at NZAC Arthurs Pass Lodge. **Accommodation on the night prior (Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> July) to the course is also included.** The course fees are \$850. Full Payment of a \$850 is required upon acceptance to secure your place on the course.

No refunds will be available should you cancel within 60 days of the course start. Any refunds are not guaranteed and are at the discretion of the NZAC National Office and may depend on whether a replacement can be found.

No refunds are due for courses voluntarily reduced in length. If weather and/or conditions require the course objectives/itinerary to be modified no refund is due. Some course costs may be returned if they have not been incurred.

No refunds are due for leaving the course for medical or fitness reasons. Exceptional circumstances may be considered and are at the discretion of the NZAC.

## Emergency Situations and Risk Disclosure

The Course Instructor will have Emergency Management Procedures in place and a Satellite phone to immediately contact rescue services in the case of an accident or emergency. It is encouraged to take your own personal locator beacon if you own one.

The natural environment and climbing activities can involve risks. While recognising that the course organisers and instructors are doing their best to manage these risks, and agreeing to accept their direction whenever required, you must accept personal responsibility for your own actions and safety. You must also accept to follow the instructions of the Course Leader and other instructors at all times.

All participants on the Course are expected to be as honest and transparent as possible about their experience and fitness as part of their application. If a participant's lack of fitness/ability severely affects the running of the course the participant(s) may be asked to not participate for certain activities. Arrangements may be made to evacuate the participant(s) at their own cost. The instructor is the final arbiter in these decisions.



## **Gear list:**

Overleaf you will find a full list of the equipment you will need. Some NZAC Sections hire mountaineering equipment. It is the individual participants responsibility to hire and return and kit.

**Please be careful purchasing any climbing or mountaineering equipment online. The NZAC recommends kit is purchased from a reputable outdoor retailer. This ensures your kit meets international standards and is not fraudulent. See <https://www.theuiaa.org/uiaa/is-your-equipment-really-certified/> for more information.**

Item	Specification	
<b>Mountaineering Boots</b>	<b>Stiff mountaineering boots</b> with good insulation are essential. Crampons fit well to boots	
<b>Helmet</b>	Rated for mountaineering	
<b>Ice Axe</b>	Mountaineering axe (non technical for general mountaineering)	
<b>Crampons</b>	Must fit boots well and have anti-balling plate	
<b>Avo kit</b>	Modern transceiver (3 antenna digital unit with current software) with fresh batteries, probe & shovel	
<b>Head torch</b>	Plus spare batteries	
<b>Sunglasses</b>	AS/NZS cat 3-4 preferred	
<b>Ski Goggles</b>		
<b>Sun protection</b>	Sunscreen & lip balm	
<b>Day pack</b>	35-50L for daily trips (this pack must fit all your equipment for a winter's day in the mountains)	
<b>Sleeping Bag</b>	For use in the lodge	
<b>Water Bottle/Thermos</b>		
<b>Personal toiletries</b>		
<b>Personal 1<sup>st</sup> Aid Kit</b>	Guide will carry a group 1 <sup>st</sup> Aid Kit. Bring only personal items.	
<b>Personal Medication</b>	E.G Inhalers, Epipens etc.	
<b>Container for packed lunch</b>	Plastic bag or plastic container	
<b>Notebook and Pen</b>	Ideally Waterproof	
<b>Map and Compass</b>	Printed topomap. Compass with a base plate	



Item	Specification	
Insulated Jacket	Down/synthetic (useful for outdoor theoretical sessions) Winter weight.	
Alpine Shell jacket	GoreTex or equivalent	
Alpine Shell Overtrousers	GoreTex or equivalent	
Hat	Warm	
Face Covering / Balaclava		
Windbreaker Top	Softshell	
Thermal tops	Polypro or merino	
Thermal leggings	Polypro or merino	
Outer Glove	Waterproof, insulated articulated gloves. (good quality!)	
Inner Gloves	To be worn under your outer glove	
Socks	Skiing or high cut tramping	
Hut Shoes / Slippers	For use in the lodge	
Jacket or Jersey	Warm midweight wool or fleece.	

**Optional extra items:**

Item	Specification	
Altimeter		
Inclinometer		
Snow Saw		
GPS		
Poles		
PLB		
Gaiters		



