

# NZAC INSTRUCTION PROGRAMME

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## GLACIER SKIING COURSE

September/October 2025



Photo: Justin Johnson



NEW ZEALAND  
ALPINE CLUB

27<sup>th</sup> September – 1<sup>st</sup> October / 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> October

**LOCATION:** AORAKI / MOUNT COOK NATIONAL PARK

**ACCOMODATION:** UNWIN LODGE + ALPINE HUTS

**COURSE FEES:** \$2,650 (INC GUIDING + HELICOPTER + ACCOMODATION)

### Who is this course for?

The NZAC Glacier Skiing Course (GSC) is a five-day course designed for strong intermediate (or better) skiers with experience skiing in steep slackcountry/backcountry terrain and with excellent aerobic fitness wanting to learn the core skills to safely ski on glaciated terrain. Basic-level familiarity with the use of an ice axe and crampons is required, and can usually be learned from a local NZAC section snowcraft course.



Photo: Alexandra Poetschke

This is not a 'learn to ski' course so **ensure you meet the minimum requirements.**

Telemarkers and split boarders are also welcome but must be of a high skill/experience level. Boarders must also have ski crampons as part of their touring setup just like the skiers. When you submit your registration, provide as much detail of your experience as possible, and we will run it past the instructor before confirming your spot.

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER ONLINE](#)

**At a minimum, those wishing to register for the Glacier Ski Course must be capable of:**

- Confidently skiing all the 'black diamond' runs on your local ski field in all conditions.
- Confidently skiing very steep slack country and backcountry terrain.
- Making turns in heavy wet snow on steep ground.
- Confidently performing kick-turn on steep ground to get out of trouble if needed.
- Slide-slip confidently to get down a slope too steep or rocky to turn on.
- Being fit enough to ski hard for five days in a row.
- Fitting and adjusting crampons
- Putting on a harness
- Tying the rope into a harness with a figure-8 knot and be familiar with other knots Bowline, prussik, clove hitch, Italian hitch (munter hitch), tape knot, alpine butterfly.
- Basic use of an ice axe and crampons, including self-arresting and step cutting
- Carrying a heavy pack for several days at a time.

**Course Syllabus:**

- Equipment- what to carry and why. How to look after your gear.
- Trip planning and preparation
- Skins- getting them on and off quick smart without holding too many people up.
- Skinning- good technique – how to lay a good track others will enjoy.
- Mountain travel -choosing a safe route – terrain analysis.
- Glacier ski travel and crevasse extraction
- Snow- different snow conditions. What to expect in Mt. Cook National Park
- Navigation- map and compass, altimeter, basic GPS. Navigating in a white out.
- Weather – general and specific to NZ glaciated areas
- Avalanches- about them and how to avoid the damn things.
- Transceivers – how to use them.
- Searching for an avalanche victim/s – shovel and probe.

## Instruction

The course will be run in a minimum 1:4 Guide to participant ratio, headed by a fully qualified and experienced IFMGA Guide. All participants must agree to follow the Guide's instructions and directions. 4 participants maximum per group.

## Course Location

Based at the NZAC Unwin Lodge in the Aoraki Mt. Cook National Park. **Accommodation for the night before the course starts at Unwin Lodge is included in the course fee.** Weather permitting the course will be run on either the Tasman Glacier, Murchison Glacier or the Grand Plateau. Weather or terrain conditions will dictate your instructor's choice of location. The course fees include flights to the hut, and out at the end of the course.

Backup location if conditions are not suitable will be to be based out of NZAC Unwin Lodge and instruction will take place at Ohau Ski Field or Round Hill Ski Field (NOTE: a one ride lift pass for the day will need to be purchased in addition to the course costs).

## Flexible Course Dates

The plan is to run the course over 5 days. **However, given 36 hours' notice, you will need to be available for a delayed start and so a delayed finish, if the weather forecast is better. Therefore, the you will need to be available for a 6 day window and instruction will occur on the best 5 day block out of the 6 days.** There is a lot to cover and this gives us the best chance of optimal conditions for instruction and skiing.

27<sup>th</sup> Sept – 1<sup>st</sup> October (28<sup>th</sup> Sept to 2<sup>nd</sup> October if delayed start is required - decision confirmed via email to the group on the 25<sup>th</sup> September)

4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> October (5<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> October if delayed start is required – decision confirmed via email to the group on the 2<sup>nd</sup> October)

## Course Fees

The course fees include instruction, accommodation and helicopter access to the mountains. The course fees are \$2,650. Payment on acceptance secures you a 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 trip for medical or fitness reasons. Exceptional circumstances may be considered and are at the discretion of the NZAC.

## **Insurance**

We recommend you take out travel insurance and/or personal insurance as part of your preparation for participating on NZAC Instruction courses.

## **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.

## **Food**

Participants will provide their own food; you will be given the option to organise yourselves to cook in groups once participants are confirmed. Flying in gives you the option to pack fresh, pre-cooked and easy to prepare meals. It is not recommended to solely rely on dehydrated food for sustenance. Please note food preferences on your registration form to assist with shared meal planning.

### **Accommodation:**

You will be spending the duration of the course at alpine huts, so it can be quite cold there at night. A down or primaloft jacket or a beefy fleece is a good idea as well as some hut shoes/slippers.

The huts have pots and pans, knives and forks, cups and plates – but some don't have cooking equipment so bring a cooker and gas.

### **Start Time:**

Start time will be at 8am on the first day of course. The guides will do an equipment check and briefing so please make sure that all gear is readily accessible and you are fed and ready to go. The helicopter is booked for around 10:30am, depending on availability. The course will finish at Unwin mid-afternoon on the last day. **Payment for the night before the course starts at Unwin Lodge is included in the course fee, but not the final night if course participants intend to stay on. If you intend to stay at Unwin on the night after the course finishes, please notify the hut warden.**

### **Gear list:**

Overleaf you will find a full list of the equipment you will need. **Gear needs to be modern, not outdated, and not borrowed. You must be very familiar with your gear; gear that is borrowed or hired you are most likely not familiar with, unless you have used it multiple times prior. Ski crampons are mandatory as well as modern bindings with brakes and well fitted skins.**

Item	Specification	#
Skis	With touring or telemark bindings, and proper brakes. 95mm waist + is recommended	1 pair
Ski Boots	Touring specific boots are preferable. Comfortable downhill boots work but are not ideal	1 pair
Poles	Ideally adjustable however fixed length are fine. A spare pair should be taken if possible	1 pair
Ski skins	Must have adequate glue and are cut to fit the ski. Ski edges must be exposed when fitted (2/3mm).	1 pair
Harness	Mountaineering harness with adjustable leg loops. Must fit over ski clothing	1
Rope	40 – 60 metres. (1 per pair is sufficient). Dry treated. Single/double rated dynamic or static (ski touring) rope.	1
Ice Ace and Leash	50-70cm. Leash is the length of shaft.	1
Boot Crampons	Crampons fit securely onto boots. Antiballing plates compulsory. <b>These are mandatory as well as ski crampons</b>	1 pair
Ski crampons	Well fitting to ski bindings and skis. <b>These are mandatory as well as boot crampons</b>	1 pair
Sling	120cm	2
Prussik Loops	5-6mm in diameter. 1 X Short Prusic (bellybutton to eyes) 1 X Long Prussik (foot to chest)	1 x Short 1 x Long
Locking Carabiners	Not magnet lock	4
Snapgate Carabiners		5
Ice screw	16 – 19cm length	1
Avo kit	Modern transceiver with fresh batteries, probe & shovel	1
Head torch	Plus spare batteries	1

Sunglasses	AS/NZS cat 3-4 preferred	1 pair
Ski Goggles		1 pair
Sun protection	Sunscreen & lip balm	1
Alpine Pack	50-70L	1
Day pack	35-50L for daily skiing. (optional, heli space dependent)	1
Sleeping Bag	650 Fill minimum	1
Helmet	Ski or rock climbing helmet (Black diamond vapour or vector or Petzl Sirocco recommended)	1
Cooker	Plus fuel for 5 days for 2 people (1 per pair is ok)	1
Water bottle	1.5L minimum	1
Personal toiletries	Including toilet paper	1
Personal 1 <sup>st</sup> Aid Kit	Guide will carry a group 1 <sup>st</sup> Aid Kit. Bring only personal items.	1

Item	Specification	#
<b>Insulated Jacket</b>	Down/synthetic	1
<b>Alpine Shell jacket</b>	GoreTex or equivalent	1
<b>Alpine Overtrousers</b>	GoreTex or equivalent	1 pair
<b>Hat or Balaclava</b>	Warm	1
<b>Sunhat</b>		1
<b>Thermal tops</b>	Polypro or merino	2
<b>Thermal leggings</b>	Polypro or merino	2
<b>Gloves insulated waterproof</b>	wrist retainers & removable inners best	1 pair



<b>Gloves lightweight</b>	Leather gardening gloves work	1 pair
<b>Socks</b>	Skiing or high cut tramping	2 pairs
<b>Jacket or Jersey</b>	Warm midnight wool or fleece.	1 pair
<b>Face Covering</b>	Buff / face mask. Suitable for use on the Helicopter in case of Covid regulations	1
<b>Hut shoes/slippers</b>	Dependent on heli space	1

**Optional extra items:**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Specification</b>	<b>#</b>
<b>Compass</b>		1
<b>Altimeter</b>		1
<b>GPS</b>		1
<b>Personal Locator Beacon</b>		1