

NZAC INSTRUCTION PROGRAMME

HIGH ALPINE SKILLS COURSE

November 2025



Photo: Clare Shepherd– 2019 HASC



NEW ZEALAND ALPINE CLUB

11th – 16th November | 18th – 23rd November | 25th – 30th November

LOCATION: Aoraki Mt Cook National Park

ACCOMODATION: Alpine Huts + NZAC Unwin Lodge

COURSE FEES: \$3,150 (INC GUIDING + HELI ACCESS)

Who is this course for?

The NZAC's High Alpine Skills Course (HASC) is designed for enthusiastic intermediate mountaineers who are looking to learn the skills to travel safely on glaciated terrain and lead climbs on New Zealand's high alpine peaks.

Participants should be competent in all of the course outcomes from the NZAC's Intermediate Snowcraft Course (Found [here](#)) and have put these skills into practice on moderate (non-glacial) peaks.

Please see the NZAC Course Pathway prior to registering for this course. <https://alpineclub.org.nz/alpine-climbing/courses/>



Photo: Carl Ramos

Please do not apply if you are not competent in the course outcomes from the NZAC Intermediate Snowcraft Course or do not have climbing experience.

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER ONLINE](#)

GENERAL INFORMATION

Course Syllabus:

Preparing for the high alpine environment

- Clothing/equipment
- Trip planning resources (avalanche forecasts/weather forecasts/guidebooks)
- Weather
- Navigation
- Using aircraft for access
- Selecting appropriate objectives

Being and moving in the alpine environment

- Pitched climbing on rock and snow
- Glacier travel
- Snow anchors
- Rock anchors
- Route section in the high alpine environment
- Snowpack observation and avalanche hazard evaluation
- Descending technical terrain

Changing Circumstances

- Crevasse Rescue
- Use of avalanche safety equipment including transceiver search
- Techniques for emergency shelters (snow shelters/ bothy bag) in the high alpine environment
- Emergency procedures for the high alpine environment

Accommodation:

Accommodation is provided as part of the course fees. For the night prior to the course start date accommodation is provided at NZAC Unwin Lodge in Aoraki Mt Cook Village. During the course high alpine huts will be used (typically Kelman, Tasman Saddle and Plateau Huts). Should the weather prevent access to the alpine huts, Unwin Lodge will be used. Participants are asked to bring a bivvy bag or lightweight tent as this gives more flexibility.

Access:

Included in the course cost is helicopter access into and out of the alpine environment. This is subject to suitable flying and mountain conditions. In the unlikely event of participants not flying, this proportion of the course fees will be refunded.



Photo: Michael Wilson

Instruction

The course will be run on a 1:4 Guide to participant ratio. All courses are delivered by fully qualified and experienced IFMGA Guides or NZMGA Climbing Guides. All participants must agree to follow the Guide's instructions and directions. Four participants maximum per group. The course has a capacity of 8 participants.

Fitness

It is crucial that all participants have suitable fitness for the course. Feedback from participants shows that those with a higher level of fitness not only enjoy the courses more, but they also have a greater capacity to learn whilst in the mountain environment. As a rough guide for fitness, you should be able to:

- Jog at a moderate pace for 5-8 kms without stopping and/or
- Hike 300 metres uphill (1,000 ft.) in less than an hour, with a 12 kg pack.
- **The ability to carry a 7-10kg backpack up hill in both hot and cold conditions, over an 8-10-hour day is vital.**

Food:

Participants are advised to pair up and organise their own food. Contact details of the other participants will be shared prior to the course. Please note there is no supermarket in Aoraki Mt Cook Village. Flying in gives you the option to pack pre-cooked and easy to prepare meals and fresh food. **It is not recommended to solely rely on dehydrated food for sustenance however make sure you have at least one meal suitable for preparation in the less luxurious bivy conditions.** Food can be transported in boxes within reason. Keep in mind that food needs to be lightweight and capable of being cooked in a billy or pot over gas. Please remove all unnecessary food packaging before getting to Unwin Lodge.

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 will be booked for 10:30am pending weather.** The course will finish at Unwin mid-afternoon on the last day. Payment for the nights accommodation 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.

Course Fees

The course fees are \$3,150.00 Full payment is required upon booking and your place is not confirmed until this is received. All participants must be NZAC members at the time the course starts.

No refunds will be available should you cancel within 60 days of the course start. Any refunds outside of this are at the discretion of the NZAC National Office and will depend on whether a replacement can be found.

The course fee includes accommodation at Unwin Lodge the night before the course start date, accommodation during the course, all instruction and flights to and from the course location. It does not cover food. It is the participants responsibility to bring and arrange this.

It is important to note that once on the course if you decide to leave the course early for personal reasons the cost of an individual early flight out is not included in the course fees and you will be responsible for the cost of the helicopter flight out. No refunds are due for courses voluntarily reduced in length.

If weather and/or conditions require the course objectives/itinerary/length to be modified no refund is due. Some course costs may be returned if they have not been incurred for example unused helicopter flights. The NZAC tries to minimize the impact of bad weather on courses. At times the best option may be to relocate the course. If this is the case the instructor in charge will liaise with all course participants.

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. NZAC offers some insurance options for both New Zealand and Australian residents available on the NZAC website that include cover for having to pull out of a course at short notice due to Covid.

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 that may result in injury or death. 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 in certain activities. Arrangements may be made to evacuate the participant(s) at their own cost. The instructor is the final arbiter in these decisions.

Publications:

We recommend that people do some pre course reading. This gives a good theoretical understanding of the techniques taught on the course. Taking the time to read one of the books below is recommended.

A Climbers Guide to NZ Mountaineering
Alpine Guides Technical Manual

Here is the link if you would like to purchase one.

<https://shop.alpineclub.org.nz/product-category/guidebooks/instruction-manuals/>

If you are logged in, you will get the discounted, member price.

Gear list:

Overleaf you will find a full list of the equipment you will need. **Please ensure the gear is modern and fit for purpose as there will not be time to remedy any gear issues prior to flying in.** Some NZAC Sections hire mountaineering equipment. It is the individual participants responsibility to hire and return and kit.

Auckland Section Gear Hire

<http://www.aucklandclimber.org.nz/hiregear>

CW Section Gear Hire

<https://alpineclub.org.nz/sites/default/files/2024-04/Gear%20hire%20FB.jpg>

CNI Section Gear Hire

<https://alpineclub.org.nz/region/central-north-island/>

Otago Section Gear Hire

<https://alpineclub.org.nz/region/otago/>

Southland Section Gear Hire

<https://alpineclub.org.nz/region/southland/>

Wellington Section Gear Hire

<https://alpineclub.org.nz/region/wellington/>



Photo: Tom Hoyle

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.

Equipment (per pair) list:

Item	Specification	#
Rope	60m dry treated lightweight single rope	1
Rock gear: Cams	(#0.5 – 3)	3-4
Rock gear: Wires	Assorted sizes	6-8
Quickdraws	Extendable (made from a 60cm sling)	4
Tape Sling or Cordelette	17mm tape or 6mm cord x 6m	1per pair
V-thread (abalokov) hook	Bought preferred, homemade accepted	1
Cooker	Plus fuel for 5 days for 2 people	1
Pot	For cooking	1

Individual gear list:

Item	Specification	#
Harness	with adjustable leg-loops	1
Helmet	rated for mountaineering/climbing	1
Pack	alpine 55-70L (It may be possible to fly an additional smaller pack 30-40L however this is at the guides discretion. Please ensure everything fits inside the 55-70L pack)	1
Sleeping bag	Suitable for a night bivvying	1
Locking carabiners	Not magnet lock	4
Snaplink carabiners		4
Belay device	Black Diamond ATC® or similar	1
Long slings	2 x 120cm	2
Prussik loops (6mm)	long (from foot to chest)	1
	short (from belly-button to eyes)	2
Pack-leash x 60cm	prussik cord (6mm x 120cm)	1
Ice Screws	16-22cm with fold out handle	2
Progress capture pulley	e.g. Petzl Microtraxion® - recommended	1
Ice axe (+ leash optional)	50-75cm walking axe (not a technical ice climbing tool)	1
Ice hammer (+ leash optional)	50cm approx..	1
Crampons	Steel crampons, 12 points, must fit boots well & have anti-ball plates	1
Mountaineering boots	Good quality, full shanked, insulated, fit crampons well	1 pair
Snow gaiters	snug, clean profile on inside of foot/leg	1 pair
Rock shoes	These are compulsory however may not be used on all courses	1 pair
Snowstake	With a mid-clip cable/sling or 'T' section preferred	1
Headtorch	plus spare batteries	1
Water bottle	If you are bringing a bladder bring a back-up	1

Compass		1
Maps	Barron Saddle, Plateau, Tasman Saddle (can be printed from topomaps.co.nz)	1
Transceiver	3-antennae digital modern (trip dependant)	1
Shovel	With telescopic handle (trip dependant)	1
Probe	240cm+ (trip dependant)	1
Personal 1st Aid Kit	Including necessary or emergency personal medication	1
Toiletries & Poo pot	Including toilet paper	1
Bivvy bag	or lightweight tent (2-person shared ok) Optional	1
Sleeping mat	foam or inflatable - Optional	1
Walking poles	Optional	1
Personal Locator Beacon	Optional	1

Clothing List

Again, it is important that participants are sensible about how much clothing and personal items they intend to carry in order to keep the packs at a reasonable weight. But then again, you don't want to be cold. An alpine-spec shell system and a down or synthetic jacket or heavy weight fleece for bivvying is **essential**.

Item	Specification	#
Warm beanie		1
Glacier glasses	AS/NZS cat 3 minimum, 4 preferable and a pair of backup sunglasses or ski goggles	1
Neck gaiter	E.g. Buff®	1
Sun defence	Peaked sun-hat, sunscreen	1
Alpine shell jacket	GoreTex® or equivalent. Good Quality	1
Alpine over trousers	GoreTex® or equivalent, leg zips. Good Quality	1
Gloves lightweight	e.g. polypro, wool	1 pair
Gloves insulated waterproof		1 pair
Insulated Jacket	Down/synthetic (preferred) or extra heavy fleece	1
Mid-layer jacket	Fleece or softshell	1
Thermal pants	Polypro or merino	1 pair
Thermal tops	Polypro or merino	1-2
Lightweight glacier shirt/long sleeve hooded technical top	To keep the sun off	1
Socks, underwear	Optional foot warmers	2 sets
Hut shoes	Optional	1 pair
Face covering	Fabric reusable face covering that covers mouth and nose	1