

NZAC INSTRUCTION PROGRAMME

INTRO TO BACKCOUNTRY SKIING

30th August – 2nd September / 6th – 9th
September 2025



Photo: Petrouchka Steiner – Grierson



NEW ZEALAND
ALPINE CLUB

LOCATION: Mt Cheeseman Skifield / Canterbury

ACCOMODATION: Mt Cheeseman Lodge

COURSE FEES: \$1,750 (INC GUIDING, ACCOMODATION AND CATERING)

Who is this course for?

The NZAC Intro to Backcountry Skiing Course (IBSC) is a four-day course designed for intermediate (or better) skiers with good fitness wanting to get a good grounding in ski touring so they can go experience the winter backcountry by themselves!

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.

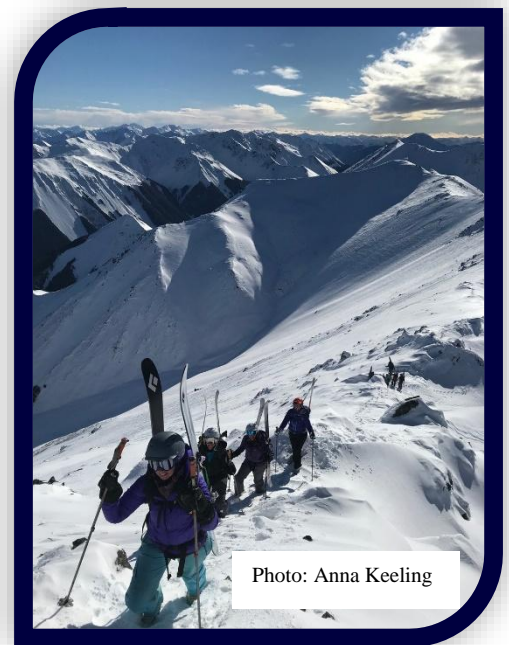


Photo: Anna Keeling

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER ONLINE](#)

At a minimum, those wishing to register for the IBSC must be capable of:

- Confidently skiing off piste in a range of snow conditions.
- Comfortably skiing steep ungroomed slopes on a ski field.
- Making turns in crusty or heavy snow on steep ground.
- Slide-slip confidently to get down a slope too steep or rocky to turn on.
- Being fit enough to ski for three days in a row. The group will be looking for 600-1000m of ascent each day.

Course Syllabus:

- Equipment- what to carry and why. How to look after your gear.
- Trip planning and preparation - including use of the NZ Avalanche Advisory, weather forecasts and checklists.
- Skins- getting them on and off quick smart without holding too many people up.
- Skinning- good technique – how to lay a good, safe track that others will enjoy.
- Mountain travel - terrain analysis and choosing a safe route.
- Reading the snow- finding the goods and tests for analysing snow stability.
- Navigation- map and compass, altimeter, basic GPS. Navigating in a white out.
- Weather – general and specific to the Canterbury high country
- Avalanches - Signs of instability and how to avoid avalanches.
- Companion rescue: Avalanche Transceivers, probing and shoveling.

Instruction

The course will be run in a minimum 1:4 Guide to participant ratio, headed by a qualified and experienced IFMGA or NZMGA Guide. All participants must agree to follow the Guide's instructions and directions. 4 participants maximum per group. The course has a maximum capacity of 8 participants.

Course Fees

The course fees include instruction, accommodation, breakfast and dinner. The course fees are \$1,750. Payment of a \$875.00 **non-refundable deposit** on acceptance secures you a place on the course. The remaining \$875.00 is due by 1st July 2025.

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.

Schedule

Accommodation is not included prior to the course start.

Course Day 1:

Meet at Mt Cheeseman Ski Field car park, **dressed ready to ski at 8.30am**. You will check in to the accommodation at the end of the day. A final gear check and brief for the course will be carried out. Following this enjoy some great skiing whilst learning the foundations of ski touring before returning for an overnight at the Lodge.

Course Day 2/3:

Putting your new skills to the test, enjoy a full day of backcountry skiing from Mt Cheeseman Skifield. Along the way you'll refine and learn new skills whilst seeking out the best snow before descending back into the Ski Field where you will spend the night at the Lodge.

Course Day 4:

From Mt Cheeseman Ski Field, you'll access the great backcountry and enjoy a final day of ski touring exploring valleys towards Broken River and Craigieburn Valley Ski Area's. After a final descent back down, you'll head back to the Lodge for a debrief and course summary. Dependent on plans for the final day it may be necessary to position vehicles at either Broken River Ski Field or Craigieburn Ski Field for transport back to Cheeseman.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Accommodation:

Accommodation is in one of the 2 Mt Cheeseman Lodges, bunk dorm accommodation. These are comfortable lodges with communal areas for socialising. Bring a sleeping bag and pillowcase. You may also want to bring some slippers for inside the lodge. Please note, guests are expected to assist with a light duty each day which may include meal preparation, dishes and helping with some of the Lodge cleaning.

Food:

Breakfast and Dinner is included in the course fees and is cooked for you. Please advise of dietary requirements in your application form. You will make your own lunch so please bring food for 3 lunches and snacks that can be carried on the hill. **Please ensure you bring lunch and snacks packed ready to go for the first day and arrive having eaten breakfast.**

Getting there

Mt Cheeseman is approximately one and a half hours drive from Christchurch. Prior to the course start date you will be put in touch with the other course participants if you wish to arrange car sharing. **All vehicles must carry snow chains. Drivers must know how to fit these.**

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	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
Avo kit	Modern transceiver (Digital unit with 3 antennas and current software) with fresh batteries, probe & shovel	1
Head torch	Plus spare batteries	1
Ski crampons	Mandatory , fit well to ski bindings and Skis	1 pair
Boot crampons	Crampons that fit to your ski boots	1 pair
Sunglasses	AS/NZS cat 3-4 preferred	1 pair
Ski Goggles		1 pair
Sun protection	Sunscreen & lip balm	1
Large Pack	60-70L for getting your stuff to Mt Cheeseman	1
Day pack	35-50L for daily skiing	1
Sleeping Bag	For use at Snowline Lodge. (it can still get very cold overnight)	1
Pillow Case	For use at Snowline Lodge	
Helmet	Ski or rock climbing helmet (Black diamond vapour or vector or Petzl Sirocco recommended)	1
Water bottle	1.5L minimum	1
Personal toiletries		1

Item	Specification	#
Insulated Jacket	Down/synthetic (useful for lunch stops)	1
Shell jacket	GoreTex or equivalent	1
Overtrousers	GoreTex or equivalent	1 pair
Hat or Balaclava	Warm	1
Sunhat		1
Thermal tops	Polypro or merino	2
Thermal leggings	Polypro or merino	2
Gloves insulated waterproof	wrist retainers & removable inners best	1 pair
Gloves lightweight	Leather gardening gloves work	1 pair
Socks	Skiing or high cut tramping	2 pairs
Jacket or Jersey	Warm midnight wool or fleece.	1 pair
Personal 1st Aid Kit	Guide will carry a group 1 st Aid Kit. Bring only personal items.	1

Optional extra items:

Item	Specification	#
Compass		1
Altimeter		1
GPS		1