



NEW ZEALAND
ALPINE CLUB



2026 CNI Intermediate Snowcraft (ISC) Course

Course summary

Dates	6 th August - 9 th August 2026
Timeline	Meet Location - Park and Ride, National Park. Meet Date - Thursday 6 th August Meet Time - 1800 Depart Date - Sunday 9 th August Depart Time - 1600
Fee	\$855.00 per person
Notes	<p>The course is run on Mt Ruapehu over three days and is hosted by the Central North Island (CNI) NZAC Section. The course is run by volunteer instructors trained by the New Zealand Alpine Club, however they do not necessarily hold a formal qualification. The course operates with a maximum ratio of 4 students to 1 instructor. Logistically postponement of the course is not an option, so the structure of the course may vary depending on weather conditions, but the content covered will be identical. Cancellation will only happen under extreme weather conditions, with a full refund of costs.</p> <p>The course fee includes the cost of hire equipment for the extended weekend (ice axes, crampons, helmet, avalanche safety gear, harness, snow anchors and ropes), accommodation for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights.</p> <p>There will also be a virtual meeting before the instruction weekend to discuss gear requirements, and technical rope skills to practice.</p> <p>This course meets the required standards for the NZAC Alpine Climbing Pathway, which has been developed to give a clear understanding of how a climber can progress their climbing skills. Link: NZAC Pathway</p>

Who is this course for?

The NZAC Intermediate Snowcraft course is designed for NZAC Novice Mountaineers (or those with an equivalent skill set) who are looking to gain additional skills to travel safely in alpine terrain where straightforward steep snow and ice is encountered, and where abseiling on descent could be required.

This is an alpine course suitable for NZAC Novice Mountaineers who have completed an NZAC Basic Snowcraft course (or equivalent) and consolidated their skills through trips on grade 1+ alpine terrain. Please ensure you meet the minimum requirements.

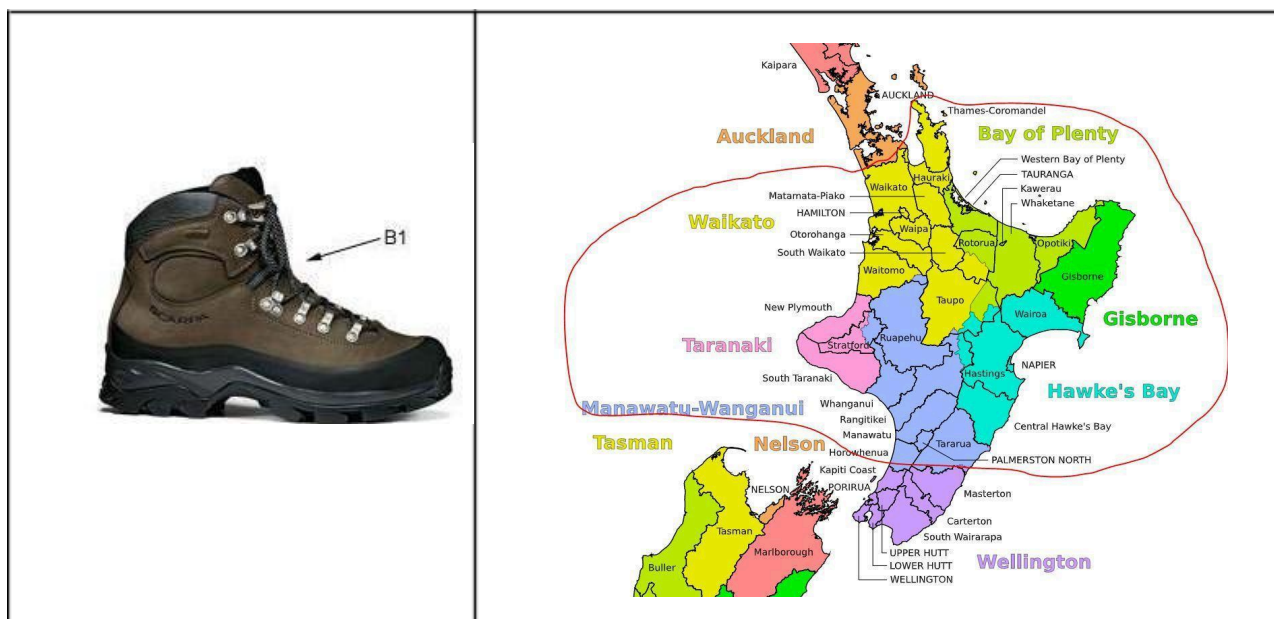
At a minimum, those wishing to register for the Intermediate Snowcraft Course must:

- Have some experience in backcountry tramping
- Have undertaken personal trips on Mt Cook Grade 1+ terrain.
- Be competent in the course outcomes detailed in the [NZAC Basic Snowcraft Course Outline](#)
- Have the fitness to enjoy multiple full days in the mountain environment.

Course Prerequisites:

To attend the Intermediate Snowcraft Course, you must have the following;

- Be a current **New Zealand Alpine Club (NZAC) member**. If you are not currently a member of the NZAC you may still apply for the course, and on acceptance into the course, membership must be obtained two weeks prior to course start date. More information about how to join the club can be found on the [NZAC website](#). Your membership with the NZAC will expose you to a world of climbing and mountaineering opportunities and includes a lot of great benefits.
- Completed an NZAC **Basic Snowcraft Course** or equivalent.
- **Reside in the CNI region**, this includes Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Gisborne, Taranaki, Manawatu-Wanganui and Hawkes Bay. Special dispensation can be obtained by agreement with the course coordinator, but CNI residents will take preference.
- Attendees must **be aged 18 or over** on the start date of the course to be eligible to attend.
- With respect to your fitness, you do not need to be an elite athlete, but you will enjoy the course more if you have a reasonable level of fitness. Ideally you will be comfortable hiking with a 10-15kg pack and will be comfortable in your boots for the duration of the course. Feel free to speak to us for any advice.
- Stiff soled tramping boots, **B1 classification as a minimum**.



Course Syllabus:

Preparing for the alpine environment

- Clothing / equipment
- Trip planning resources (avalanche forecast / weather forecasts / guidebooks)
- Weather
- Navigation
- Physical Training

Being and moving in the alpine environment

- Use of two ice axes, for daggering and piolet traction on moderately steep snow
- The use of crampons on steeper terrain
- Building basic snow or rock bollard anchors
- Pitched climbing on simple terrain
- Single-pitch abseiling with the use of prussic
- Identification of the safest and most efficient route for travel on moderate alpine terrain

Changing Circumstances

- Building basic snow anchors: horizontal/vertical mid clip snowstake, vertical top-clip snowstake, ice axe belay, snow bollard, abseiling off rock bollards
- Use of basic climbing calls
- Techniques for comfortable and unplanned camping in snow, and emergency shelters (snow shelters/ bothy bag)

Course Outcomes:

Preparing for the alpine environment

- An ability to plan simple trips into the alpine environment
- An ability to locate and interpret a range of weather forecasts, avalanche forecasts, and other relevant information
- An ability to identify simple features on a map and a basic ability to relocate using the map and terrain features
- An awareness of basic physical training principles applicable to the mountain environment

Being and moving in the alpine environment

- An ability to use both an ice axe and mountaineering boots as an effective tool for traveling in the alpine environment
- An ability to use two ice axes and crampons to effectively ascend and descend moderately steep snow where pitching is not normally required including front-pointing and French Technique
- Can demonstrate multiple cramponing techniques appropriate to the snow type and gradient
- Can build a basic snow or rock bollard anchor
- The ability to demonstrate appropriate abseil technique
- Can demonstrate safe, efficient travel techniques in the alpine environment with particular attention to avoiding avalanche terrain

Changing Circumstances

- An awareness of techniques to prevent slips and trips
- Has an awareness of a variety of possible anchor types and can select an appropriate anchor for the situation
- Understands the importance of and demonstrates clear communication when ropes are used
- An awareness of snow shelters and how to comfortably camp in the snow, including unplanned bivouacs

Someone who has these skills is considered a NZAC Intermediate Mountaineer and is likely to have the skills and ability to travel on Mt Cook Grade 2+ Terrain (that has no glacial related complications)

Course outcomes may vary depending on participant ability and course conditions. This is a guideline, individuals must assess their own ability after a course.

Instruction

The course will be run in a minimum 1:4 instructor to participant ratio. All participants must agree to follow the instructors directions. The course has a maximum capacity of 12 participants. The course is run by volunteer instructors trained by the New Zealand Alpine Club, however they do not necessarily hold a formal qualification.

Pre-Course Theory Night

Due to the wide geographical spread of the central north island section, we will conduct an interactive online session several weeks leading up to the course date. This will be held during a weekday in the evening.

Content of the discussions will be informal and open for discussion, it will however include discussions on technical gear and basic knots required for the course, which each participant should be proficient with before arriving at the mountain.

Course Location, Dates and Times

- Location: Mt Ruapehu, Whakapapa ski field
- Meeting Place: Park and Ride, National Park [Link](#) (number 32 on map)
- Meeting Time: 1800
- Dates: Thursday 6th August – Sunday 9th August
- Accommodation: NZAC [Link](#)

Course Schedule

Please note, this timeline summarises the general format for the trip. The final course itinerary may vary due to any special requirements or due to changing weather conditions on the day. A finalised course itinerary will be communicated to you prior to the start of the course.

Thursday: We will meet at the Park and Ride, National Park [Link](#) (number 32 on map) at 18:00. After assigning everyone with their course gear/checking over equipment and assessing road conditions, we will carpool up to the ski field car parks before walking as a group to the [NZAC Ruapehu Hut](#) where we will be based for the weekend. The walk to the hut will take approximately 1 to 2 hours, head torches will be required.

Friday & Saturday: There will be 2 full days of instruction, starting with a recap of basic techniques, then learning the necessary skills of moving safely up and around the mountains in steep terrain. In the evening, we will discuss topics such as knots and rope work.

Sunday: The instruction will continue, with an emphasis on applying and practicing the skills you have learned. We usually leave the mountain around 1500 and will have a debrief in National Park Village to answer any remaining questions and plan some trips to build on your new skills.

Gear List

The *minimum* gear you are required to bring on the weekend is summarised below. Please contact us before the course if you have any questions about the gear you require. This is a basic guide of what you will need to start winter climbing, we will discuss mountaineering equipment during the pre-course evenings.

Item	Details
Ice axes, crampons, helmet, avalanche safety gear, harness, belay device, prussic cord, snow anchors, ice anchors and ropes.	These items will be provided to you on the Friday evening as part of the course, but you may opt to use your own if they are suitable.
Pack	50-70L. With liner or dry bags
Stiff-soled tramping boots (waterproofed)	You must be comfortable walking in these in the snow for a whole day. Must have a minimum B1 classification.
Warm socks	3 pairs.
Thermals (polyprops or merino)	2 sets.
Polar fleece top	
Waterproof shell jacket/parka	
Waterproof over trousers	
Gaiters	Calf-length.
Hat and Balaclava	Wool or fleece.
Head torch	With spare batteries
Gloves	2 pairs - wool or polypropylene. One pair can be ski gloves.
Sunglasses	2 pairs - preferably ski goggles as the second set
Sunscreen and Lip Balm	
Sunhat and Buff	Baseball cap with scarf or legionnaires hat.
Hut clothes and shoes	
Water bottle	1L to 1.5L
Personal first-aid kit	Including personal medication etc.
Map and Compass	1:50,000 scale map NZTopo50-BJ34
Multitool or pocketknife	
Watch	
Toiletries	
Pencil, Pen and Paper	
Sleeping Bag and Pillowcase	
Camera	Optional.
Thermos	Optional.

Some of the gear listed above will be worn on the day the rest will be carried in your pack in case the weather changes. Keep in mind that weather conditions on Mount Ruapehu can be very cold.

Food

You will need to provide your own food during the course, including all breakfast, lunch and dinners. Ensure lunch meals are able to be eaten out on the mountain. The kitchen facilities at the lodge are excellent. More details about the accommodation can be found at the following [LINK](#)

All cooking and eating utensils are provided for in the hut.

Carpooling

If you are willing to drive, or are in need of a ride, we will try to assist in organising carpooling amongst the participants. Please fill out the relevant section of the registration form to indicate your interest. You will also need to allow some funds for carpooling if you choose to share a ride.

Accommodation

We will be staying in the [NZAC Ruapehu Hut](#). There is a full kitchen with cooktops, ovens and a microwave for us to use. There is also a drying room. More information about the lodge facilities can be found at [NZAC Ruapehu Hut](#).

Medical Conditions

In order for us to be fully informed, please make us aware of any medical conditions or medication requirements that you have by including this information on the relevant section of the registration form. All details will remain confidential to the instructors. If you have any questions or concerns in this regard, please don't hesitate to contact us before the course.

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 Instructors will have Emergency Management Procedures in place and field communication devices 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.

How do I register for the course?

To register for the course, please complete the registration form at the following link.

[Course Registration Form](#)

Once you have registered by completing the form, we will be in contact with you to advise of the next steps. You will be allocated a preliminary spot on the course based on how early you register and provided you meet the Course Prerequisites to attend the course.

If your application is successful, you will be contacted with payment details. Once full payment is received your registration will be confirmed.

No refunds will be available should you cancel within 28 days of the course start. Any refunds are not guaranteed and are at the discretion of the NZAC CNI committee 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 CNI committee.

Contact Details and Further Information

The only daft questions are the ones you don't ask! It is sometimes too late to resolve an issue once we are up on the mountain. If you have any questions regarding gear requirements or anything else, please let us know. You can contact snowcraft.cni@gmail.com regarding bookings/payment/course program and gear.

Please feel free to come along to the CNI Section Meetings in the time leading up to the course. These meetings will give you the chance to meet the course instructors, get to know your fellow participants, discuss any gear requirements, or ask any questions you may have. Please let us know if you are interested and we can send you the details of when and where these meetings will be held.

Course Coordination and Instruction

Email at: snowcraft.cni@gmail.com