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12-Day Mountaineering Course

Thank you for joining Mountain Trip and we hope that your course will be a fantastic experience. In the upcoming months before your course, we want to offer you as much help as possible to prepare you for the experience. Please feel free to call or email us with any questions.

This INFORMATION BOOKLET is an assortment of information to help you prepare for a safe and successful climb. We have included some of the information that we give out to Denali climbers, an expanded course itinerary and gear list, as well as some general information and history about Denali and Denali National Park. There are dozens of good books about Denali and a few not-so-good ones, so we have included a suggested reading list. Climbing in the high mountains is hard work, and incredibly rewarding. The more prepared you are for the trip, physically and mentally, the more you will enjoy this great experience.

General Information

Responsibilities of Team Members: Team members are ultimately responsible for their own well being. This includes making all necessary preparations to ensure good health and physical conditioning. Team members are responsible for understanding the conditions that may exist on the climb and choosing a climb that is appropriate for their abilities and interests. Team members are responsible for having knowledge of all pre-departure information and for assembling the appropriate clothing and equipment for their climb. Please contact us with any and all questions. While on the expedition, team members are responsible to maintain basic levels of hygiene and to conduct themselves respectfully with other team members and members of the local population.

In addition you are responsible for all meals and lodging off the mountain, transportation to Anchorage and the Park entrance fee. If you have a "Parks Pass" or similar National Park Pass, there is no fee.

Paperwork: To register and secure a spot on a course, climbers should complete our online application or request a pdf of an application you can print and fill out. Once we receive and approve your application and also receive the requisite deposit for the course we will notify you of your position on the team.

Airline Arrangements: We plan to fly out from the glacier twelve days after your arrival in Anchorage. The vagaries of Alaskan bush flying sometimes throw curveballs into this schedule and you should plan to be as flexible as possible. You need to be in Anchorage for your Team Meeting Date at 10:00am. We strongly recommend you arrive a day early, as this will allow you time for any unexpected travel delays or lost baggage (some years almost 10% of our climbers have experienced baggage delays).

Lodging: We recommend that you stay at the Earth Bed & Breakfast before the climb. For reservations call Lori at the Earth B&B at 907-279-9907 or email her at info@earthbb.com. The address is 1001 West 12th Avenue, Anchorage, AK 99501. This is a central location convenient to gear shops and downtown.

This will also be the location of our Team Meeting. There are many other options for lodging in Anchorage ranging from five star hotels to hostel-style accommodations. **If you will not be staying at**

the Earth B&B you still need be there at 10:00am on the day your trip is scheduled to begin. Please let us know where you will be staying in Anchorage. If you arrive the day before our Team Meeting, you need to plan on booking two nights lodging in Anchorage (see itinerary).

Expectations

We believe that successful expeditions are born of teamwork. Anyone can muddle up a hill, with someone holding his or her hand, tugging on the rope when the going gets tough. We hope to instill a sense in everyone who climbs with us that through active participation; you walk away with a more positive experience. Strive for quality in everything you do on the mountain, from lacing up your boots in the morning, to taking the extra minute to organize your kit in the tent so your smelly socks don't infringe on your tent mate's airspace. Expedition climbing is a lot of hard work and we really feel that if you aim to do your best at every step of the way, you'll look back at your expedition with a smile and that faraway, Kahiltna glimmer in your eye.

By considering this course, you have embarked upon a journey that will test your will, patience, stamina, endurance and good humor. The Alaska Range is not a comfortable place. You will, at times, find yourself too hot or too cold, too thirsty or too full, moving too quickly or too slowly. There will be plenty of time to hang out and enjoy your surroundings, but at times you will need to focus all your energies at completing the task at hand. The better prepared you are before you fly on to the glacier, the more fully you will enjoy your climb.

We will spend a lot of time on your expedition covering skills necessary for safely traveling in a glaciated environment and we'll teach you a bunch of tricks, however there are some basics that you could work on before you come up to Alaska. As with any good course, you'll need a textbook and we have provided you with a copy of one of the best ones out there right now: Glacier Mountaineering, by Andy Tyson. Andy is a good friend who has done a bit of guiding and climbing in his day and we think he did a nice job with this book. Read it over at your leisure and pay special attention to some of the pages and techniques we've outlined below.

Knots (p. 22-24):

"Figure 8 on a bight" "The Butterfly" "Double Fisherman" "Water Knot" (For webbing)

Definitely read the Chapters "Roping Up" (p. 51) and "Glacier Camping" (p. 85) paying special attention to the following sections:

- Keeping Slack out of the System
- Taking Breaks
- Leave No Trace
- Pooping

Other Basics:

- Make sure you know how to adjust your pack and harness
- If you have your own crampons, practice putting them on while sitting and standing
- Familiarize yourself with your ascenders or prussiks if you have them and maybe try to rig them up according to the book (p. 27-30)

Other Recommended Reading: Freedom of the Hills, by The Mountaineers

12-Day Mountaineering Course Itinerary

Alaska has big, serious mountains with big mountain weather, geography and acclimatization issues. The following itinerary represents a very basic outline of what could happen on a given day during the course of your Kahiltna Dome Seminar expedition. Many factors can, and probably will, contribute to cause the following schedule to change. Our guides know the mountains and may elect to stray from this itinerary for any number of reasons.

DAY 1: TEAM MEETING IN ANCHORAGE. *We will have a Team Meeting at 10 A.M.* for an expedition orientation and equipment check. This is a very important meeting, which you must attend. Be sure to arrive in Anchorage early enough to make the meeting; which may require arriving a day early. We recommend staying at the Earth B&B, which is conveniently located and Lori does a great job of looking after "her" climbers. Reservations are available at: 907-279-9907 or online at www.earthbb.com. We will spend this first night in Anchorage.

DAY 2: TRAVEL TO TALKEETNA AND FLY TO THE GLACIER. Team members will travel by van the several hours drive to Talkeetna. Everyone will need to register with the National Park Service prior to flying to the glacier. Weather permitting; we will fly into the Kahiltna Glacier at 7,200 feet that afternoon. Once on the glacier, everyone will pitch in to get our Base Camp established. Skills covered will include snow camping and other camp craft, as well as some anchor building. If we are delayed by weather and cannot fly, we can still cover a lot of skills in Talkeetna.

DAYS 3-6: SKILLS. We will spend a lot of time covering a wide variety of skills in the first few days. We will also cover glacier camping techniques and other aspects of efficient campcraft, such as cooking and water production. We will go over the knots that hopefully you've been practicing and build upon those to learn proper rope techniques for anchor building, belaying and rappelling. You'll spend time going over snow climbing skills such as self arrest, glissading and how to use those sharp crampons and ice axes. You'll learn how to travel safely on a glacier, how to read glaciers to identify potential hazards such as crevasses and how to get out of them if you misread the terrain. Finally, we'll rig our sleds for travel and get ready for heading up glacier.

DAY 7: MOVE TO CAMP 1. Departing base camp, we'll drop down the infamous Heartbreak Hill and onto the broad Kahiltna glacier. We have lots of options, but our goal could be to move camp to a site at 7,800 feet, near the junction with the NE Fork of the Kahiltna Glacier. This is a moderate carry of about 5 miles and is a good shakedown for the upcoming days. We'll pass by numerous crevasses and beneath some of the prettiest peaks in Alaska en route to camp. Conditions depending, we might camp closer to the East Fork of the Kahiltna for an attempt on West Kahiltna Peak.

DAY 8: If we focus on an ascent of Kahiltna Dome, we'll break camp and head up Ski Hill to Kahiltna Pass, where we will establish our High Camp for our attempt at Kahiltna Dome. This camp at 10,000 feet provides stunning views down the Kahiltna, especially in the evening when the peaks to the south light up pink and orange with alpenglow. This may be a tough day, as we will gain altitude as well as travel about three and a half miles along the Kahiltna. The route we followed to this point is the same as the normal approach for the West Buttress of Denali. Again, we have lots of options, and this is but one of them.

DAY 9-11: Keep your fingers crossed for good weather and if we get it, we will climb Kahiltna Dome, West Kahiltna Peak or other climbing options off the Kahiltna Glacier. We'll pick routes that will provide really fun climbing and the views that unfold as we gain elevation will be truly breathtaking.

DAY 12: Break camp and descend to Kahiltna Base Camp. If the weather permits, we'll fly out to Talkeetna and then drive back to Anchorage.

*** As with any mountain itinerary, this is subject to change for many, many, potential reasons...