



American Mountain Guides Association Rock Instructors Course

The Rock Instructor Course is the 1st step in the Guide education and certification process and is designed for aspiring guides who have a strong rock climbing background and for instructors who are interested in improving their skills and increasing knowledge. The Rock Instructor Course places strong emphasis on maximizing client rewards while effectively managing risks. The Rock Instructor Course is 10-days in length and is a prerequisite to taking the Rock Guide Course, and the Alpine Guide Course. It is intended for guides, not climbers, so a high degree of familiarity with climbing techniques is assumed.

This course is identical to courses offered by the AMGA and is also a prerequisite course for the AMGA Rock Instructors Exam. The SMC Rock Instructor Course (RIC) is a privatized version of the American Mountain Guides Association (AMGA) Rock Instructor Course. Sanctioned by the AMGA, the curriculum and prerequisites are identical to that offered by the AMGA, but is taught by SMC and guest instructors. These instructors are some of the original core group that set the AMGA certification process in motion and devised the original curriculums and modified them over the years to the final high quality offering. The experience of this group in fact surpasses the experience of the current AMGA instructor pool and you can be assured of receiving the best instruction and meaningful feedback.

The Rock Program trains and examines guides who work in a variety of rock environments, including areas with long, complex routes and technical descents. Currently, there are two levels of rock certification.

The first is the Rock Instructor Certification. It is designed for guides or aspiring guides who work on routes that are Grade III or shorter. While these routes are multipitch, they are relatively straightforward and may not involve complex approaches and/or descents. Time factors, while important, are not as pressing on these routes. During the Rock Instructor Certification Exam candidates will be examined on climbs through Grade III.

To receive AMGA certification as a Rock Instructor you must:

- 1st successfully complete the 10-day Rock Instructor Course
- 2nd Pass the 6-day Rock Instructor Exam.

The second level is the Rock Guide Certification. It is designed for guides or aspiring guides who work on routes that are Grade IV or V. Participants will be expected to display full competence in areas such as short roping and multiple-client guiding. Candidates do not have to take the Rock Instructor Exam to apply for the Rock Guide Course and continue on the Rock Guide Certification track. To receive AMGA certification as a Rock Guide you must:

- 1st successfully complete the 10-day Rock Instructor Course.
- 2nd successfully complete and pass the 10-day Rock Guide Course and Aspirant Exam.
- 3rd Pass the 6-day Rock Guide Certification Exam.

Dates and Prices: Check the latest brochure, call us or go to our web site for dates and rates. Should minimum participant numbers not be reached you will be given the option of paying our private rate, rescheduling, or cancelling. Price includes instruction and camping fees. It does not include food and park entry fees. You need to be a member of the AMGA prior to starting the course.

Course Description: This course emphasizes where climbing with a partner stops and guiding begins. It includes comprehensive instructional clinics and plenty of hands-on guiding practice.

The RIC addresses the skills and techniques used to guide and instruct on routes up to and including Grade III in length. Emphasis is on enhancing client rewards while effectively and appropriately managing risk. We'll be climbing routes 1 to 7 pitches in length, where you'll be expected to place your own protection and anchors. The routes may be crack, face, or slab, and up to 5.9 in difficulty. The approaches and descents will generally be straightforward.

Topics Include:

- Client orientation and preparation.
- Equipment selection.
- Time and pace management.
- Anchor construction as it relates to guiding.
- Rope management with multiple clients.

- Managing multiple clients at the belays.
- Choosing appropriate belay methods and stances.
- Effective management of 3rd and 4th class terrain.
- Short rope and short pitch techniques.
- Rappelling and lowering with clients.
- Belay escapes and self rescue skills.
- Transitions.
- Performing improvised ascending methods.
- Raising (hauling) systems.
- Evaluating risk and risk management in your own guiding.

Target audience: The AMGA Rock Instructors Course is designed for both those with a strong rock climbing background who aspire to become professional rock climbing guides as well as for currently working instructors and guides who are interested in increasing their skills and knowledge. This is also a good course for beginning alpine rock guides. It is intended for guides, not climbers, and a high degree of familiarity with climbing techniques is assumed. This course is identical to courses offered by the AMGA and is also a prerequisite course for the AMGA Rock Instructors Exam and for the AMGA Alpine Guides Course.

Course Prerequisites: You meet the prerequisites for the RIC if you:

- 1) are a current Professional or Associate Member of the AMGA.
- 2) have at least five years of rock climbing experience
- 3) provide a personal climbing resume of at least 60 climbs, showing each of the following
 - a) that you have led or shared lead on at least 50 different traditional, multi-pitch routes, including at least 5 routes Grade III or longer and at least 2 routes Grade IV or longer
 - b) that you have led at least 10 traditional routes rated 5.10a or harder (if these are multi-pitch, they may be included in the 50 above)
- 4) have multi-pitch rappelling experience
- 5) can safely and comfortably lead crack and face climbs rated 5.10a at the time of the course
- 6) possess equipment suitable for Grade III routes
- 7) know the prerequisite skills (see list below)
- 8) are at least age 18

Summary of prerequisite skills: Before the course you must have the mastery of the following:

Knots: figure-8 (follow-through and on a bight), bowline (single, double, on-a-coil), clove hitch, Munter hitch, prussik, double fisherman's, klemheist

Belaying: Belay methods: mechanical (more than two types of devices) and non-mechanical (hip belay);

Rappelling: Multi-pitch rappels using a carabiner brake, figure-8 and plate device (ATC, Pyramid, Tuber, etc.)

Anchoring: Ability to comfortably utilize natural and artificial anchors to create equalized and redundant anchor systems that have minimal extension and ability to evaluate your own anchor systems

Ascending: Improvised, non-mechanical ascending

Raising Systems: Z (3:1) and C (2:1) mechanical advantage pulley systems

Belay escapes

Participants may be asked to demonstrate skills prior to the course.

Course instructors: The course is instructed by senior AMGA certified rock guides. Instructors are some of the original designers of the AMGA programs and have been teaching these courses for over twelve years. Their wide range of experience and home bases in different locations in the country offer an exceptional breadth of experience in professional guiding.

Robert SP Parker. Originally from New Zealand, SP lives in Bishop and is an owner of SMC. He is UIAGM certified.

Alan Jolley. From Boulder Colorado, Alan is an AMGA certified rock guide and is a past member of the AMGA Board of Directors.

Marc Chauvin. Mark is a UIAGM internationally certified guide and is certified in rock, alpine and ski disciplines. He lives in North Conway, New Hampshire.

Course length and ratios: The course is ten days in length and will not exceed a ratio of three participants to one instructor and a maximum of nine students on a course. A minimum of five participants is required to run this course.

Course Manual: You will be provided with an AMGA handbook for the course. The complete version of the AMGA Guides Manual is available from the AMGA office.

Course completion: Upon completion of the course participants will receive an oral performance evaluation with a written evaluation to follow.

Camping and meeting places:

Joshua Tree. We will camp at either Sheep Pass or at Indian Cove. Once we have a campsite reserved we will let you know the site number. Please contact us prior to the program for this information!

Bishop. We will have a campsite reserved in the Bishop Creek area. Please contact us prior to the program for this information! We will meet the evening before the first day at 6.00 p.m. at the world headquarters of Sierra Mountain Center, 174 W. Line Street, in Bishop. Line Street is an east/west street marked by the southern-most traffic light on Main Street/Highway 395, in town. We're west of the light, on the south side of the street next to the health food store. A large parking lot is located on the south side of the building.

Getting to Joshua Tree: find your way to Southern California. If you are flying to get to the program the Ontario airport is your best bet as it is only two hours from Joshua Tree. Rental cars are available there. Driving from the west: take interstate 10 to the Yucca Valley/hwy 62 exit. Proceed through Yucca Valley and the town of Joshua Tree. Continue west on 62 approximately 7 miles to the Indian Cove entrance to Joshua Tree National Park. This is about half way between Twentynine Palms and Joshua Tree. Head into Indian Cove and the group campground is on your right just before the entrance road "T's". An entrance fee of \$10 is charged at Joshua Tree Park and is good for seven days. A Golden Eagle Pass will work too. Yucca Valley is your best place to shop for supplies before heading into the Park. The Indian Cove entrance station has water but otherwise the nearest supplies are in Twentynine Palms, a twenty minute drive from the campground. The nearest phone is 15 minutes from the campground. For programs that base out of Sheep Pass Campground the nearest supplies are a forty minute trip and the nearest phone is half an hour away. There is no water in the Sheep Pass campground.

Getting to the Bishop Area: If flying to the area and renting a car: your best bets for airports are: Reno, Nevada (cheap car rentals, four hours drive from Bishop), Ontario, California (five hours from Bishop), Las Vegas, Nevada (Cheapest air tickets generally and cheap car rentals, five hours drive from Bishop), and finally, Los Angeles (five hours drive from Bishop). If this course takes place in early winter snow storms are a strong possibility. If this is the case Reno Airport can get closed on occasion while it generally will take a major disaster to close the Las Vegas Airport. So factor this into your planning and when perusing flights.

Curriculum Outline:

order of topics may be rearranged as needed
Each day's session will conclude with a group debrief.

Day 0

Evening meeting at the campsite at 6:00pm

-Introduction, ice breakers, instructor & participant introductions, participant goals, course objectives and overview.

Day 1

- 1) Knots
- 2) Protection
- 3) Guide belay anchors
- 4) Belaying
- 5) Guides' rack
- 6) Evening session: pre trip evaluation of clients

Day 2

- 1) Stance & rope management
- 2) Guided climb (by instructor)
- 3) Walk off descents
- 4) Anchor/belay station management
- 5) Guides pack
- 6) Evening session: learning and teaching styles

Day 3

- 1) Guided climbs by participants
- 2) Evening session

Day 4

- 1) Lowering
- 2) Lowering practicum
- 3) Rappelling

- 4) Rappelling practicum
- 5) Homework: prepare trip outlines per scenario

Day 5

- 1) Transitions

Day 6

- 1) Time Management
- 2) Guided climbs by participants (with technical descent)

Day 7

- 1) Short Pitching/Roping
- 2) Short Roping Transitions

Day 8

- 1) Guiding routes (w/complex descent)

Day 9

- 1) Knot for improvised self rescue
- 2) Belay escapes and baseline
- 3) Mechanical advantage raises
- 4) Knot pass while lowering
- 5) Rescue problem solving practicum
- 6) Exam rescue skills

Day 10

- 1) Guiding routes (w/complex descent)
- 2) Group and final individual debrief and recommendations

Equipment list for Rock Instructors Course

- Tent, tarp and car camping equipment.
- Sleeping bag and pad(s).
- Lawn chair.
- Approach shoes.
- Climbing shoes.
- 1 single dynamic rope.
- 1 old beater rope.
- Rack. This should include a full range of camming devices, wired nuts, carabiners, quickdraw and slings. It should be appropriate for guiding multi pitch routes of up to three pitches in length and up to 5.10 in difficulty.
- Slings, rappel rings and old gear to leave behind during rappel descents.
- Harness, belay device, helmet.
- Don't run out and buy the JT guide book but if you have one, bring one. Same with the Eastern Sierra guidebooks.
- Clothing for warm or cold, wet or dry. Bring everything from shorts to a down jacket and boots.
- Sunscreen and lip screen.
- Day pack.
- Food and cooking gear.
- Notebook and writing equipment.

Notes

There is a \$10 entrance fee for Joshua Tree National Park. The closest water, phone, grocery, fuel, etc. is a forty minute round trip from camp, 15 minutes in Indian Cove. Having said that it's often nice to sneak into town for a shower or dinner.

In Bishop there are no entry fees. Camping will be about 20-25 minutes from town and Bishop has the usual assortment of restaurants; especially if you like Mexican...

Required reading

Mountaineering: The Freedom of the Hills; 6th Edition; \$24.95; Chapters 6-8, Ch. 10-12, Ch. 14 (pgs. 353-360 only), Ch. 20 (pgs. 467-473 only), Ch. 21, and Ch. 23-24

Suggested reading

Knots for Climbers; Craig Luebben; \$4.95
Rope Tech; Bill March; \$12.95
Weathering the Wilderness; Sierra Club Guide William Reifsnnyder; \$8.95
Climbing Anchors; John Long; \$11.95

The following may carry the above titles

Chessler Books
26030 Highway 74
P.O. Box 399
Kittredge, Colorado 80457
800-654-8502

The Mountaineers
1001 SW Klickitat Way
Seattle, WA 98134
800-553-4453

Important! Please read our Cancellation and Deposit Policy

Your reservation is secured with a 50% deposit and the balance is due thirty days prior to the start of the program. A 25% deposit will secure your dates if you are booking more than three months days prior to the program start. We accept checks, Visa, or Mastercard.

If a participant cancels or withdraws from a program;

- **Greater than or equal to 21 days prior to the program starting date; SMC will retain a 15% administrative fee from monies collected and refund the balance. Rescheduling is possible, but subject to availability. We will only reschedule for the same calendar year. Any and all costs incurred in rescheduling, such as USFS trail fees, will be paid for by the participant.**

- **Within 21 days of the program start date and/or once the program has begun; program fees are non-refundable and non-transferable to another trip.**

- If conditions, weather or circumstances preclude running a scheduled program we reserve the right to make the decision as to whether the program will be rescheduled or an alternative provided. In the rare circumstance where we need to cancel a program due to weather you can reschedule without a penalty, but no refund. Credits arising from such situations will be honored for 18 months.

- We are not responsible for cancellation fees or costs arising from your changed or cancelled flights, lodging, or other arrangements.

- **We strongly recommend obtaining trip cancellation insurance from your travel agent.**

- We do not provide rescue insurance. Membership in the American Alpine Club includes rescue insurance and is recommended. See www.americanalpineclub.org