



Snow Skills Course

The use of an ice axe and crampons is fundamental to not only the mountaineer, but also to anyone who wants to be able to move with comfort and safety in the mountains under any conditions. For the backcountry hiker this course gives the skills needed to safely cross passes and to deal with the mountain snowfields often found in the summer, especially after a heavy winter. Those mountaineers with ambitions of climbing the world's higher peaks will also gain confidence as we work through skills such as self-arrest, cramponing, and belaying on snow.

Meeting place and time: We'll meet in Lee Vining at Nicely's Restaurant at 7.00am, for breakfast, the morning of the course. Lee Vining is about an hour north of Bishop and forty five minutes north of Mammoth Lakes on highway 395. It's a small town and the highway goes right through it. Driving time is about six and a half hours from Los Angeles. Nicely's is on the west side of the highway, in the center of town.

Itinerary: After breakfast and finalizing logistics and equipment needs we'll caravan or carpool up Highway 120 towards Tioga Pass. Here any number of late season snow patches will be our classroom for the day, hopefully within five or ten minutes of the vehicles.

Since the snow is usually firm first thing in the morning we'll start with crampon skills including an overview of the various types of crampons and how to fit them to boots. A detailed progression including proper use of the ice axe for balance, step kicking, step cutting, and various techniques for ascending and descending snow slopes will take us through the morning.

The afternoon will be spent learning and practicing the important skill of self arrest: stopping a fall on snow with the ice axe. We'll round out the day by learning and practicing snow anchors and belays.

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 guiding, permits, all necessary group climbing gear and ice axe, crampons, helmet and harness if you do not have them.

Ratios: 1:7 maximum.

Notes and other information: SMC will provide helmets and group climbing gear. You need crampons, ice axe and a harness with carabiners and a belay device. Food and lodging are not included in the course. We do not rent mountaineering boots but Wilson's Eastside Sports in Bishop does. If you need boots call them at 760-873-7520. Please refer to the equipment list for more information.

For background reading we recommend the classic bible "Freedom of the Hills" written and published by The Mountaineers.

For lodging we recommend Murphy's Motel, 760-647-6316. Call for lodging reservations early as motels book quickly during the spring season.

There are half a dozen campgrounds in the area too, the closest ones are four miles west on Highway 120, on the way to Tioga Pass.

Prerequisites: No prior climbing experience but prior backpacking and wilderness travel essential. You should be fit and prepared to spend the day climbing up short slopes at altitude, and sliding back down them, and climbing up them, and sliding down them.

Equipment List for Snow Skills

The following list is a general guide and will assist you in packing for the program. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have specific questions regarding equipment or if you need assistance prior to making a purchase. The following list will vary according to the time of year, and your individual requirements. We provide all of the technical equipment.

Climbing equipment

- Ice Axe. A standard 70cm. general purpose axe will be adequate. We will be happy to provide an axe if you need one.
- Crampons. These should be matched to the boot. We suggest for very flexible boots the Charlet Moser G10 or Black Diamond Contact Clip; for stiffer boots the Black Diamond Sabretooth, the Moser G12 or Rambo. We will be happy to provide crampons if you need them.
- Harness. An adjustable leg loop type such as the Black Diamond Bod or Wild Things Expresso will accommodate layering changes. We will be happy to provide a harness if you need one.
- Helmet. New models such as the Petzl "Helios" or the Black Diamond Half Dome are comfortable and light weight. We provide these for the program.
- Carabiners. Two locking carabiners (Screwgates are more secure than twist lock style and easier to manipulate) and two regular carabiners are required. We include these with the harness.
- Belay/rappel device. An ATC style is preferred. We include these with the harness.

Other essentials

- Footwear. A medium-weight pair of leather mountaineering boots or heavyweight hiking boots will be sufficient. The Sportiva Makalu or Glacier is a good example of an appropriate mountain boot. Plastic boots are fine but will tend to be somewhat hot and uncomfortable on the approach.
- Day Pack. About 2000 cubic inches, just enough to get your gear from the car to the slopes with lunch and essentials in it.

Clothing

- 1 pair synthetic liner socks
- 2 pair heavier synthetic or wool blend socks
- Gaiters
- Long underwear top. Capilene or some other synthetic is most desirable
- Long underwear bottom.
- Warm pants. Tights or Expedition weight Capilene
- Warm shirt. Synchilla or 200 weight works well.
- Another fuzzy sweater top or pile jacket of some sort
- GoreTex Jacket and Pants. A lightweight set is sufficient and heavy bulky rainwear is unnecessary. Side zips on the pants should be long enough to slide on over boots. The jacket must have a hood. Do not skimp on your rain gear.
- Polypropylene or similar gloves.
- Heavyweight shelled gloves.
- Warm hat. Synthetics are less itchy than wool.
- Sunhat

Etc.

- Sun glasses. Good quality with side shields.
- Water Bottles. Two quart (1 liter) wide mouth bottles and or a hydration system holding up to 50oz. (2 liters).
- Camera/film/spare battery.
- Sunscreen and lip screen. SPF 30+. A 1oz. bottle will be enough. Make sure the lip stuff actually contains a sunscreen.