ST. ELIAS
ALPINE GUIDES

INTRO TO MOUNTAINEERING
EQUIPMENT LIST

MULTI-DAY TRIPS

The following is a complete list of personal equipment required for our Intro to Mountaineering Course. We do make some recommendations for particular brands or items, but if you are unsure of any items you own or intend to purchase, please contact us.

We highly recommend that you bring as much of your own gear as possible so you are able to practice with or break in your own gear for future use. If you want to invest in a piece of gear but aren't sure what's right for you, consider renting from us for this trip to learn more and practice with it before purchasing.

If you need to purchase items on this list, please make those purchases well in advance. While Anchorage has quality gear shops, consider them only as a backup for emergencies or last-minute items (unless you are from Alaska), as they may not have the item you need in stock. **There are no gear stores in McCarthy**.

Rentals: We have a limited supply of rental equipment available. Please make arrangements with us in advance.

REQUIRED TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT

Included with your trip are a set of crampons, a shared set of ice screws, ice tools, and ropes.

- **ICE AXE WITH LEASH**: 60-70cm mountaineering axe with a steelhead (ex: Black Diamond Raven). A simple leash can be made from 9/16" flat webbing.
- **2 TECHNICAL ICE TOOLS**: 50cm, hammer or adze. (Black Diamond Viper, Petzl Nomic) - we'll provide a group set
- **CRAMPONS**: 12-point steel mountaineering crampon. Avoid waterfall ice crampons with fully rigid frames and vertical front points, as well as older crampons with leather straps. Make sure that your crampons are compatible with your boots (ex: Grivel G12, Black Diamond Serac) - we'll provide crampons if you don't have your own.
- **HARNESS**: Alpine harness with adjustable leg loops (ex: Black Diamond Couloir). For safety, your harness needs to be less than 10 years old and in good condition.
- **(3) LARGE LOCKING CARABINERS**: Pear-shaped carabiners are recommended (Petzl Attache).
- **(4) SMALL LOCKING CARABINERS**: Pear-shaped carabiners are recommended (Black Diamond Positron Screwgate).
- **(5) NON-LOCKING CARABINERS**: Wire gate carabiners are recommended (Black Diamond Oz).
- **BELAY DEVICE**: Black Diamond ATC, Guide ATC, or similar is recommended.
- **(2) CORDELETTES**: 6mm or 7mm nylon static cord, each 5-6m (15'-20') in length.
- **EXTRA RIGGING**: Bring 30' of 5 to 6mm cord or 9/16" tubular webbing.
- **CLIMBING HELMET**: Needs to be climbing specific (ex: Petzl Elios).
- **POLES**: Ski poles or trekking poles with powder baskets (ex: Black Diamond Traverse).

OTHER TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT

Ask your guide if you need the following equipment for your trip:

- **SNOWSHOES**: A solid snowshoe with a heel-riser is preferred (ex: MSR Denali Evo Ascent).
- **TRANSCEIVER**: Modern, single frequency [457 khz] transceiver, preferably less than five years old. A digital 3-antennae model is required (ex: BCA Tracker 3, Mammut Pulse Barryvox, Peips DSP).
- **SHOVEL**: Lightweight avalanche shovel with a metal blade. Extendable handle is recommended. (ex. Black Diamond Transfer 3, VoileTelepack).
- **PROBE**: A Dedicated probe, ski pole probes are not sufficient. (ex. Black Diamond Quickdraw Tour Probe 280, Ortovox 240 HD PFA).

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REQUIRED APPAREL: FEET

- **MOUNTAINEERING BOOTS**: Arguably the most important piece of gear on this list, boots can be a deciding factor in the success of an expedition. It is important that your boots are specifically designed for mountaineering with a fully rigid sole and ample insulation. We recommend a four-season mountaineering boot, hybrid/leather or plastic (La Sportiva Nepal or Batura Evo, Kayland M11+).
  - **Fit**: Different manufacturers model their boots on different lasts (molds). In choosing boots to purchase or rent, make sure you try on boots from more than one company. First and foremost your decision should be based on fit. Err on the roomy side, and consider sizing up a half or whole size.
  - **Types**: Plastic boots have long been the standard for mountaineering – they're warm, durable, and economical. Modern hybrid/leather boots offer the same level of warmth with an increased range of motion and are lighter weight, however, they tend to be more expensive and are not quite as durable.
- **GAITERS**: Provide a clean interface between our pants, boots, and crampons (ex: OR Crocodile).
- **SOCKS**: Bring at least four pairs of socks (wool or synthetic) that work well with your boots. Keep in mind that warmth comes from good circulation, not necessarily heavy socks. Your boot liners provide most of the insulation. If you're boots are roomy, choose a heavier sock. If you don't have much extra room in your boots choose a medium sock. Liner socks are a matter of preference – they work well for some people but may cause problems for others.
- **CAMP BOOTIES OR SHOES**: A secondary set of footwear to give our feet a break from boots when hanging around camp (ex: Forty Below Camp Booties, Crocs, sneakers). Down booties will provide additional warmth for high camp.

REQUIRED APPAREL: LOWER BODY

- **BASELAYER BOTTOMS (OPTIONAL)**: Medium weight (Patagonia Capilene 2 or Merino Wool).
- **CLIMBING PANT**: Softshell pants for wearing all day, every day. Breathability is more important than weather protection, built-in gaiters are a plus (ex: Patagonia Alpine Guide Pant).
- **HARDSHELL PANT**: For adverse weather. These should have full side zips (First Ascent Rainier Storm Shell Pants).
- **PUFFY PANTS (OPTIONAL)**: Extremely cozy on a blizzard night at camp, puffy pants are a luxury item at lower elevations and a mandatory item at very high altitudes. Full-zip highly recommended (Mountain Hardwear Compressor Pant).

REQUIRED APPAREL: UPPER BODY

There are many possible layering combinations for your upper body. The goal is simply to have a system that is functional in a wide range of weather conditions, from extreme cold to intense heat, strong wind, heavy rain and snow...or beautiful sunny weather.

- **SUN SHIRT**: Short or long-sleeved, light synthetic fabric (ex: Patagonia Sun Hoody or Mountain Hardwear Canyon Shirt).
- **BASELAYER TOP**: Light to medium-weight synthetic fabric, long-sleeved (Patagonia Capilene 1 or 2 or Merino Wool).
- **LIGHTWEIGHT INSULATING LAYER**: Light fleece or synthetic layer (Patagonia R1 Hoody).
- **SOFTSHELL OR FLEECE JACKET**: Great outer layer for cold or windy conditions (Patagonia Ascensionist Jacket).
- **SHELL JACKET WITH HOOD**: Gore-tex or equivalent lightweight waterproof fabric.
- **INSULATED PARKA WITH HOOD**: We recommend synthetic insulation (Patagonia DAS Parka).

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REQUIRED APPAREL: HANDS

- **LIGHT GLOVE**: Fleece, softshell, or synthetic liner glove.
- **MEDIUM GLOVE**: This should be a wind and water-resistant winter glove (Black Diamond Legend Glove).
- **HEAVY GLOVES OR MITTS**: For very cold days, and as emergency backups to our other gloves (Black Diamond Guide Glove or OR Alti Mitten).

REQUIRED APPAREL: HEAD

- **SUNGLASSES**: Glacier glasses or dark tinted wrap-arounds, should have full UV protection. Bring an extra pair.
- **GOGGLES (OPTIONAL)**: Preferably with low light lenses (amber or rose) and UV protection.
- **WARM HAT**: Fleece, wool or synthetic.
- **SUN HAT**: Baseball cap, visor, etc.
- **BUFF (OPTIONAL)**: Versatile protection from the sun, cold, and wind.
- **FACE MASK, NECK-GATOR, OR BALACLAVA (OPTIONAL)**: For warmth and skin protection on very cold days.

REQUIRED EQUIPMENT

- **BACKPACK** - A good external or internal frame pack is required. A pack in the 70-95 liter range should fit your gear and food comfortably. YOU WILL BE CARRYING A BEAR CAN OF FOOD, half of a tent, and some amount of group gear, so make sure it fits. We recommend taking your full pack into a gear shop and packing with one of their bear cans to make sure it fits. We like packs made by Osprey, Gregory, or Deuter.

- **SLEEPING BAG** - It has been known to snow during any month in Alaska. A good three-season sleeping bag rated to 10-20°F is a must. The question is down or synthetic? Down loses its insulating ability once wet, but if you are careful to keep the bag dry, down gives the best warmth-to-weight ratio. Feel free to call us to discuss this purchase or consult your local reputable gear shop. Our favorite sleeping bags are Marmot, Feathered Friends, and Western Mountaineering.

- **SLEEPING PAD** - A full-length pad is best. Therm-a-Rests are great, but remember they can get a small puncture and leak, so we recommend bringing a repair kit. Closed-cell foam pads (a.k.a. Ensolite pads) tend to keep you warmer, but are not as comfortable to sleep on. Bringing both an Ensolite pad and an inflatable sleeping pad to layer is our recommendation to ensure maximum warmth and durability. Because you'll be sleeping on the snow, make sure that your pad, or a combo of inflatable+foam pad, equals an R-Value of 4-5. An ensolite foam pad can be nice to sit on around camp.

- **MESS KIT**: A cup, bowl, and spoon. This doesn't have to be fancy, and even Tupperware will do! DO NOT BRING SIERRA CUPS. They were designed to spill, burn hands & lips, and eventually be gold-plated for your study.

- **WATER BOTTLE(S):** We'll provide you with a 16oz souvenir Nalgene, and we recommend supplementing it with one 32oz wide-mouth bottle. An insulated cover with a lid, such as those offered by Outdoor Research, is recommended for at least one bottle to keep it from freezing.

- **TOILETRY KIT**: Toothpaste, toothbrush, moleskin (we highly recommend Spenco Second Skin), personal medications (please tell us before the trip of any medications you are taking), and a personal first aid kit (with band-aids, aspirin, etc.). Other personal items to consider are: chapstick, biodegradable soap, dental floss, wet wipes, a small container of waterless hand sanitizer, tampons or pads. Remember that we are backpacking in bear territory, so limit the number of "smellables," such as lotions or perfumes, as they must be stored in the bear cans at night.

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- **CAMERA**: Bring a good one, especially with a wide-angle lens. Don't forget extra batteries and extra memory cards for all the pictures you'll take!
- **KNIFE**: The Swiss Army knife is the old standby, although the new multi-tools are acceptable, as long as they have a knife. Keep it simple and small.
- **HEADLAMP**: Small LED headlamp recommended (ex: Petzl Tikka) - headlamps only required in August and September.
- **SUNSCREEN/BLOCK:** Even on an overcast day, the sun can be surprisingly persistent and sunscreen becomes especially important if your route includes a lot of glacial travel as the white ice is super reflective and will burn the bottom of your nose and chin!

+ OPTIONAL ITEMS

- **WATCH**: Consider an altimeter watch to track elevation and make weather predictions.
- **BUG NET**: Lightweight and teeny tiny, this little item can save the day if your camp ends up getting swarmed. A head net paired with a brimmed hat will keep the net out of your face. You're not likely to encounter many bugs on this trip, but if conditions are just right there is a chance the bugs will make an appearance.
- **EYE MASK + EAR PLUGS**: There are no black-out blinds on our tents, so if you think you might have trouble sleeping under the midnight sun or next to a noisy tent mate, consider an eye mask and ear plugs to assist.
- **THERMOS**: Consider a 16oz thermos for additional warmth throughout the day or at camp (Thermos, Hydroflask)
- **STUFF SACKS**: Optional according to preference, but very handy. Bring an assortment of sizes for separating different clothing items. We strongly recommend that you keep your clothing, sleeping bag, and anything else you don't want to get wet in waterproof stuff sacks. A large trash compactor bag (with a couple of backups) can be used to line the entire inside of your pack for a cheap alternative.
- **PEE BOTTLE OR URINATION DEVICE**: A designated (and well-marked!) bottle can save you a trip in the middle of the night. Women might consider a wide-mouth Nalgene or a female urination device such as an EllaPee or a Freshette can be helpful when wearing a harness. If considering such a device, look for something with a longer hose, and regardless of your anatomy, if planning on using a pee bottle, practice in the shower first!
- **BOOK**: Bring something to read just before dozing off or for rest days. Small, light paperbacks are best but if you're careful an e-reader will work well too!
- **JOURNAL + PENCIL**: Bring a notebook and writing utensil to take notes - Rite In The Rain makes waterproof notebooks of different formats.
- **BINOCULARS**: Nice to have for animal sightings and views of the distant peaks.
- **COMPASS**: An option for you (not for us!), but if you don't know how to use one, here's a great chance to learn! A compass such as the Silva Ranger with compensation for declination is very handy.

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GROUP EQUIPMENT

- **TENTS** - We will provide tents for you or you can bring your own. If you plan to use our tents, be aware that you will likely be paired up with another group participant. If you'd like to bring your own tent, it needs to be a 3-season tent with a vestibule - the MSR Copper Spur is a popular model. We will also be bringing a cook tent (Black Diamond Mega Mid) as an additional shelter for mealtimes or "indoor classroom" experiences.

- **BEAR CANISTER** - Each participant will be given a full bear canister at the start of the trip. It will be full of food and other group items like stoves or the cook tent. The bear canisters are full-sized and the exact dimensions depend on the brand (we use several interchangeably). A good estimate of space is two basketballs stacked on top of each other. A full bear can will weigh about 11lbs, and will become emptier as the days progress, giving you the chance to put your own stuff in there as space opens up.

- **FOOD** - We supply all the food on our backpacking trips and most of it will already be prepacked in the bear cans we give you. You will be given the chance to pick out snacks for yourself during orientation and you'll want these easily accessible during the day. Depending on the length of your trip you can expect to fill a half-full gallon zip lock bag with snacks.

- **COOKING EQUIPMENT + FUEL**- We'll bring everything we need for cooking delicious meals in the backcountry. For backpacking trips we use lightweight gear and pack just enough fuel to last the trip (plus a little extra for emergencies). All this stuff will already be in the bear cans you receive, but occasionally a fuel bottle won't fit and will be loose.

- **TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT**- We will be supplying ropes, and ice screws and can bring as many ice tools as needed for the group to share (if you have your own ice tools, we recommend that you bring them). If you need crampons we can supply those too on an individual basis.

- **TOILET SUPPLIES** - We will provide you with toilet paper to use a nearby outhouse or for an occasional glacier loo, as well as a zip lock bag for dirty paper or any other trash. You may choose to bring additional wet wipes if you want to.

- **SAT PHONE/INREACH** - Your guide will have a satellite communication device for coordinating bush flights and to use in emergencies. You do not need to bring your own emergency location device but can if you want to. We highly encourage you to disconnect as much as possible when you're out in the backcountry and often find that folks underestimate the strong tether they feel to the outside world when they know they can or are expected to send a daily text to their fan club back home.

Your guide will go over all your gear with you during orientation but if you have any questions while planning and packing, please don't hesitate to reach out!

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