

**Prospectus for the position of  
Instructor/Guide  
at the  
AMERICAN ALPINE INSTITUTE**

The American Alpine Institute is currently accepting applications for seasonal positions for Instructor and Guide positions. Referred to by Jon Krakauer as “The best all around climbing school and guide service in North America,” AAI is based out of Bellingham, WA, and offers technical instruction and guiding in the rock, alpine and ski disciplines in 6 states and in 16 countries.

The Institute usually hires three to six new full-time or full-time seasonal guides every year. Part-time Denali guides, avalanche instructors, IFMGA European guides and guest guides are hired throughout the year depending on need.

Full-time and full-time seasonal candidates without significant AMGA training will be asked to participate in an AAI Alpine Guides course in early May. This intensive training program is three-weeks long and is led by Michael Powers (AAI Assistant Director for Staff Development, IFMGA Guide, and former AMGA Technical Director). The first two weeks of the program deal exclusively with guide technique, while the last week provides an opportunity for the new guides to student teach under the direct supervision of senior guides.

Work for the summer season begins immediately after the Alpine Guides Course and lasts through the end of the summer. Depending on a guide’s flexibility and experience, there may be options for he or she to work during the winter season in the Cascades, the Sierra, Red Rock Canyon, in Southwest Colorado, or in South America. It is not uncommon for guides in their second or third year to be offered seasonal work on Denali or in the Alaska Range.

**Job Duties:**

Depending on personal skills and experience, a new AAI Instructor / Guide may lead courses of the following types in the Cascade Range: introduction to alpinism (for clients with little or no alpine background); alpine ice climbing (for clients with previous snow and ice experience); basic rock (for those with no climbing experience); and intermediate rock climbing (for clients with basic skills who want to follow and/or lead upper-fifth class rock). The curricula of the courses include discussion of design concepts and selection of personal and group equipment; free climbing technique on mid-fifth class rock on alpine courses and 5.10 rock on intermediate rock programs; climbing skills on snow and alpine ice; establishment and operation of protective systems on rock, snow, and ice; objective hazards evaluation; route selection and evaluation; Leave No Trace travel, camping, and climbing.

During the first year of work, an AAI Instructor / Guide will typically lead clients on climbs of basic and intermediate difficulty on routes that include rock, snow, and ice, and prepare for guiding clients on climbs of advanced difficulty by the second year of employment.

## Requirements:

- Ability to work well with people.
- Ability to articulate ideas and concepts as well as clearly demonstrate specific skills.
- Ability to lead steep ice comfortably and in good form; ability to lead traditional rock comfortably at a minimum level of 5.9, with 5.10 or higher strongly preferred.
- Minimum of five Grade III climbs.
- Familiarity with a full range of protective systems.
- Wilderness First Responder Certification or Equivalency.
- CPR Certification.
- Ability to evaluate subjective and objective hazards.
- Significant experience in the mountains.

## AMGA/Previous Work History Requirements:

All applicants should hold an AMGA Single Pitch Instructor Certification **or** should have taken a higher-level AMGA course in the Rock or Alpine Discipline. Those who have participated in a Rock Guide Course or an Alpine Skills Course are preferred. AMGA ski guide training is helpful, but does not supersede training in the Rock or Alpine disciplines.

The AMGA requirement may be waived for those with significant professional outdoor education experience (e.g. NOLS or Outward Bound Instructors).

Working as a student leader for a college outdoor program does not constitute significant professional experience.

The American Alpine Institute is an AMGA Accredited Guide Service. To remain an Accredited Guide Service, all guides will have to work under the AMGA Scope of Practice by January 1, 2022. The majority of the work at AAI will require an AMGA Rock Guide Course and an AMGA Alpine Guides Course. And while these courses are not currently required for applicants, AAI administrators expect all guides on staff to comply with this by 2022.

## Helpful Characteristics:

None of the following are required; any can add additional strength to an application:

- Previous teaching experience, either as a professional or volunteer, in a climbing or non-climbing context.
- Academic accomplishments, writing, or public speaking abilities and experience.
- Professional training in any discipline related to the alpine environments or foreign cultures in which the Institute guides and instructs (e.g., biology, ecology, geology, park management, wildlife conservation, environmental education, foreign languages, anthropology, history).
- Expedition experience and/or high altitude climbing experience.
- Backcountry skiing ability.
- Level I or II training in avalanche hazard evaluation. While this is not required in the first year, we do require guides to get AIARE Level II Avalanche Training by the start of their second year.
- Five or more Grade IV climbs.
- A strong background in glacier travel.
- A strong background in ice climbing.

- Search and Rescue Training, or Rope Rescue Courses.
- AMGA Training or Certifications

**Wages:**

Wages are commensurate with experience. A typical beginning wage for an individual with a limited guiding background is \$140 per day. Wages for experienced guides with training and/or certification are competitive. Gratuities often average \$25 - \$35 per day, but they can be lower or range much higher.

Underwriting for equipment, health insurance and continuing education is available for full-time and full-time seasonal guides.

**Schedules and the Nature of the Work at AAI:**

Guides normally work a combination of longer and shorter courses and guided trips. In the first year of work it is common to have a schedule pattern in the Cascades as follows: 3-day private Mt. Baker skills training and summit climb with two to five people; followed by a day off and then a twelve-day trip for basic skills including a summit climb on the last day; followed by two, or three days off, and then an assignment to a six-day Introduction to Alpinism course with six to ten clients and one other guide. Occasionally first year guides lead guided ascents for experienced climbers (in contrast to courses or a course/ascent combinations) on such peaks as Shuksan, Sahale, Eldorado, or Forbidden. Depending on the new guide's background, there is also sometimes an opportunity to co-guide a 12-day Technical Leadership program.

One of the great benefits of working for AAI is the variety of program assignments which a guide receives as the seasons go by. No other guide service offers training at such a range of skill levels and in such a variety of venues. While AAI instructor / guides teach basic skills regularly, they also have the chance to teach at intermediate and advanced levels and to guide climbs over a complete range of technical challenges.

AAI programs include teaching climbers to lead, guiding highly technical climbs, and guiding large-scale alpine and rock routes. We offer courses, guided climbs, and expeditions in six states and sixteen countries, and the opportunity to work in a variety of interesting mountain areas is one of the many attractive aspects of working at the Institute.

In addition to the many work related benefits you will experience at the Institute, it is important to note the community of climbing partners and long-term friendships. There's a lot of enthusiasm and activity at the Institute, and it's quite easy to link up with a partners for climbs and expeditions in the U.S. and across the globe.

**General Notes:**

Initial assignments are in the North Cascades; later there are opportunities for work in California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Alaska, South America, and Asia depending on experience, local knowledge, language ability, and seniority.

All new full-time year-round and full-time seasonal hires are expected to continue to pursue AMGA certification in the disciplines they intend to guide. Guides are expected to participate in at least one continuing education program every year. These include, but are not limited to an in-house AAI Guide Training, an AMGA course or another form of approved continuing education.

All field employees are required to own a GPS and a Personal Locator Beacon (Delorme

InReach). Individuals who are new to guiding will be oriented to these devices during guide training. Guest guides are required to own a communication/emergency device that will operate in the location where they intend to work.

Workman's compensation and accident insurance are provided through the Washington State Industrial Accident Fund for both domestic and international work for all guides working at the American Alpine Institute during all programs.

AAI is an Equal Opportunity Employer

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To apply for this position, please log onto:

<https://alpineinstitute.wufoo.com/forms/guide-application/>