

American Alpine Institute

Alpine Mountaineering and Technical Leadership

Part 4

Little Switzerland Expedition

Curriculum

Alpine Mountaineering Skills:

- development of mixed climbing skills – participants will transition from snow climbing to rock climbing on most routes
- continued development of movement skills on moderate ice and technical rock
- development of simul-climbing skills on lower angled ice with running belays
- study and practice of transitions between glacier travel mode and technical climbing mode
- continued study of the proper choice between and application of the primary ice axe positions: piolet canne, panne, manche, poignard, ramasse, rampe, ancre, and traction
- specialized designs and uses of alpine and technical tools in high angle climbing
- free climbing technique on alpine rock
- advanced concepts in the proper selection and placement of snow, ice and rock gear for belays and intermediate protection
- integration of specific skills with the general goals of efficient, safe, and self-dependent climbing

Expeditionary Skills:

- continued training on the use of maps, compasses, GPS, and guidebooks
- strategizing for multi-day backcountry tours in a remote setting
- practical application of expeditionary staged camp techniques

Mountaineering Skills:

- review of glacial and ice structures
- continued development of mountain sense and the ability to follow a “line of weakness “
- development of advanced technical protective systems in an alpine setting
- advanced study of movement over complex alpine terrain

Objective Hazards Evaluation & Self-Rescue Skills:

- evaluation & prediction of mountain weather patterns
- introduction to the assessment of natural hazards
- individual & team crevasse rescue techniques

Leadership Skills:

- continued study and practice of individual technical leadership skills
- development of technical leadership strategies on complex terrain
- technical & personal functions of individuals on an ascent: roles & responsibility
- problem solving: gathering appropriate data & assessment techniques
- evolving leadership roles: individual leadership vs. collective decision making
- large and small team expeditionary leadership strategy

Itinerary

The following is an example itinerary. This is subject to change due to weather, fitness, technical skill, or a variety of other circumstances. All course material will be covered; it simply may not be covered in this order.

This expedition is somewhat different than the Mount Waddington option. Instead of one objective, we will attempt to complete a handful of objectives during our stay in Little Switzerland.

Day 1:

Meet in Anchorage on the first morning of the trip. You will need to arrive at the hotel the night before in order to make this meeting. Complete a gear check and then head up to Talkeetna, our jumping off point for the expedition. On the drive up, we will stop in Wasilla, where we will do all of our food buying for the trip. Once we arrive in Talkeetna, late in the afternoon, we will begin packing for the expedition. We will stay at the Talkeetna Hostel that first night.

Day 2:

We will finish up any last minute packing and then travel to K2 Aviation, where we will weigh everything and get prepped for the flight to the Pika Glacier. The flight from Talkeetna to Base Camp is approximately 40 minutes. Upon landing we will establish camp at 5,600' and then begin to assess objectives.

Day 3-11:

Over the preceding days we will attempt a handful of objectives. These include, but are not limited to:

- The Munchkin – II, 5.2
- Dragonspine, First Buttress – III, 5.7
- North Troll, South Ridge – III, 5.7
- Hobbit King – Hobbit Arete – III, 5.7
- Hobbit Footstool, East Ridge – II, 5.8
- Middle Troll, South Face – III, 5.8, 45-degree snow
- The Throne, The Lost Marsupial – III, 5.8
- The Royal Tower, East Ridge – IV, 5.8
- South Troll, South Face – IV, 5.9
- The Royal Tower, Gargoyle Buttress – IV, 5.10a

The goal on each of these objectives will be to allow students to lead as much as possible. Each student lead will be evaluated and feedback will be provided throughout the day.

There are a couple of practice crags in the area, so if there are weather issues, additional rock rescue and ice climbing skills may be practiced and evaluated.

Day 12:

We will breakdown camp and fly back to Talkeetna. AAI will not provide transportation back to Anchorage. Your guide will help you to book a shuttle from Talkeetna.

We recommend flying home from Alaska two days after the scheduled end of your trip.