



American  
Alpine Institute

*The Spirit of Alpinism*

www.AlpineInstitute.com  
Info@AlpineInstitute.com  
Administrative Office: 360-671-1505  
Equipment Shop: 360-671-1570

**Introduction to Alpine Rock Climbing (Part 1)  
&  
Intermediate Alpine Rock Climbing (Part 2)  
—Rocky Mountain National Park Itinerary—**

**Introduction to Alpine Rock Climbing**

The objective of the Introduction to Alpine Rock Climbing course is two-fold. First, an individual who completes this course should be able to set-up and manage a top rope on a single pitch crag. Second, the individual should be able to operate as a competent team member (able to follow a leader) on a multi-pitch alpine rock climb.

The alpine conditions during this program will determine the exact daily routine. Some of the material may be presented on different days in order to take advantage of good alpine weather.

**Day 0:**

Arrive in Boulder, Colorado. This beautiful mountain town is located only 30 miles from Denver International Airport.

**Day 1:**

On the first morning we will meet at 7am at Alfalfa's Market (1651 Broadway, Boulder, CO 80302), in the back left section of the store there is a coffee shop area where we will meet. There, we will review our equipment for the course and make sure that everyone has the appropriate gear. We can also complete any rentals that need to take place in order to outfit the participants. Once we have completed the equipment review, we will travel to a rock climbing area nearby and begin our course.

- Skills to be covered: Selection, care and use of climbing gear; review basic knots and hitches; practice basic belay technique and belay commands; practice climbing movement skills with a focus on alpine climbing; and complete an introduction to rappelling for single and multi-pitch terrain.
- Guide-to-Student ratio: 5:1
- Climbing areas: Elephant Buttresses, Boulder Canyon or West Ridge, Eldorado Canyon.
- Travel time: 10-20 Minutes
- Lodging: Hotel or Hostel in Boulder, CO. Front-country car camping available in Nederland, CO.

**Day 2:**

The second day will expand on the knowledge gained during the first day's lessons. Students should be able to build their own top-rope anchor off of bolts and manage a single-pitch crag by the end of the day.

- Skills to be covered: Introduction to active and passive climbing protection; introduction to basic anchor set-ups for top-roping; practice lead belay techniques; practice with anchors, and single-pitch management; and complete an introduction to following a leader in a multi-pitch setting.
- Guide-to-Student Ratio: 5:1
- Climbing areas: West Ridge, Eldorado Canyon or Elephant Buttresses, Boulder Canyon
- Travel time: 10-20 minutes
- Lodging: Front-country car camp or Hotel in Estes Park, CO.

### **Day 3: Travel to RMNP backcountry basecamp**

This day has been set aside to hike into our backcountry basecamp. We may cover additional systems and other climbing skills, as time permits.

- Travel Time: 1 hour driving
- Lodging: Front-country car camp or backcountry camp.

### **Day 4-6:**

Days 4 through 6 are reserved for attempting technical objectives and participating in snow school. Objectives will be selected based on their relevance to members of the team. Each objective will require team members to practice all of the skills they learned in the preceding days in a high multi-pitch setting. In general, Days 4 and 6 will likely be focused around technical objectives, with Day 5 utilizing snow school as a form of a rest day.

▪ Snow School Skills to be Covered: Selection, care and use of snow climbing equipment; walking on snow using in-balance and out-of-balance movement; practical application of self-arrest techniques from all positions; use of crampons on moderate to high angle snow and ice; learn and practice the nine principal positions of the ice axe; learn and practice three types of glissade; practice with snow anchors (pickets, flukes, deadmen, bollards); and practice with snow belay systems (static and dynamic, stomper belays, butt-axe belay).

▪ Snow School Note: The snow day is conditions-dependant. If there is limited snow, the team will choose one of the following alternative options:

1. An additional climbing objective may be selected.
2. Climbing self-rescue skills practice may be selected.

▪ Ascents Note: It should be noted that objectives may be in the backcountry and may require one or more nights out in the field. If this happens and there is additional time in the afternoons after making approaches, additional lessons may be provided. These may include lessons on the following:

- Leave No Trace Techniques
- Mountain Weather
- Self-Rescue Techniques
- Regional Geology and Ecology
- High Altitude Illness and Treatments

▪ Climbing areas: Rocky Mountain National Park: Glacier Gorge, Tyndall Gorge, or Longs Peak/Mt. Meeker Cirque. Potential Routes: North Ridge of Spearhead, South Face of Petit Grepon, Kiener's Route on Longs Peak.

- Travel time: 1 hour drive to the climbing area (if not traveled prior to Day 4)
- Guide-to-Student ratio: 2:1

- ***Lodging:*** Front-country car camp (Days 4 and 6) or Backcountry camp (possible on Day 5). After Day 6, those going home will be dropped off. Those staying for the Intermediate Alpine Rock Climbing course will camp in the front-country.

**Day 7:**

Depart or continue with Intermediate Alpine Rock Climbing.

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## Intermediate Alpine Rock Climbing

The objective of the Intermediate Alpine Rock Climbing course is for students to develop the skills to lead basic alpine rock climbs by applying modern equipment and strategies.

It should be noted that not every student is ready to be “on-the-sharp” end after completing the Introductory Alpine Rock Climbing program or something similar. Every course includes some students that are ready for this serious responsibility, and some students who are only ready to rehearse traditional rock leadership in an alpine setting. Regardless of whether a student is ready mentally or physically to lead, every student will walk away with the technical skills required of a multi-pitch leader.

The alpine conditions during this program will determine the exact daily routine. Some of the material may be presented on different days in order to take advantage of good alpine weather.

### Day 0/ Day 6:

Arrive in Boulder, CO -or- Finish the Introduction to Alpine Rock Climbing course.

### Day 1/ Day 7: First Day of Alpine Rock Climbing - Part 2 (Intermediate)

On the first morning of Part 2 we will meet at 7am at Alfalfa's Market (1651 Broadway, Boulder, CO 80302) in the back left section of the store there is a coffee shop area where we will meet. There, we will review our equipment for the course and make sure that everyone has the appropriate gear. We can also complete any rentals that need to take place in order to outfit the participants. Once we have completed the equipment review, we will travel to a rock climbing area nearby and begin our course.

- *Alpine Rock Part 1 Students: If students are combining both the Introductory and Intermediate programs, they may be able to skip this section while new students are checked.*
- *Skills to be Covered: Selection, use and care of traditional climbing gear; discuss traditional racking techniques; develop an understanding of practical applications of both passive and active protection in a leadership setting; complete an introduction to traditional anchors for leaders; develop an understanding of the practical applications of different lead belays; develop an understanding of the applications of the autoblock device; and complete an introduction to simple rescue techniques.*
- *Climbing area: Boulder Canyon or Eldorado Canyon*
- *Travel time: 10-20 minutes*
- *Guide-to-Student Ratio: 4:1*
- *Lodging: Front-country car camp or Hotel in Boulder, CO*

### Day 2/ Day 8:

This skills day will begin in the front country to practice anchor skills and multi-pitch leading. Once the instructional portion of the day is complete, the students will practice multi-pitch climbing by employing “mini-pitches” on a fourth or low-fifth class single-pitch crag.

- *Skills to be Covered: Introduction to multi-directional anchors; develop an understanding of the practical application of anchor and rope management; complete an introduction to single- and multi-pitch leading procedures; and practice multi-pitch climbing with “mini-pitches”*
- *Climbing area: Boulder Canyon or Eldorado Canyon*
- *Travel time: 10-20 minutes*
- *Guide-to-Student Ratio: 4:1*

- Lodging: Front-country car camp or Hotel in Boulder, CO

### **Day 3/ Day 9:**

The third day of Part 2 will be a skills day focused on cleaning anchors, rappelling, and lead climbing techniques and strategies.

- Skills to be Covered: Cleaning anchors and rappelling, techniques for rappelling multi-pitch lines; discussion of lead climbing strategies – both physical and mental; guided example of a short multi-pitch line; and mock single- and multi-pitch leading practice.
- Climbing area: Flatirons, Eldorado Canyon, or Boulder Canyon
- Travel time: 10-20 minutes
- Guide-to-Student Ratio: 4:1
- Lodging: Front-country car camp or Hotel in Boulder, CO

### **Day 4/ Day 10:**

This day begins with a discussion of falling factors and will conclude with either student-lead single-pitch climbs or an approach to a multi-pitch line.

- Skills to be Covered: Discussion of falling, fall factors, and how they apply to the leader; continued mock leading practice; optional falling practice on gear and/or bolted anchors; optional student-lead climbs in a single-pitch setting; and optional approach to backcountry multi-pitch line.
- Climbing area: Eldorado Canyon, Boulder Canyon, or Flatirons. Some programs will head to Rocky Mountain National Park.
- Travel time: 10-20 minutes
- Guide-to-Student Ratio: 2:1
- Lodging: Front-country car camp or Backcountry camp (Dependent on objectives)

### **Days 5-6/ Days 11-12:**

The final two days of the program are reserved for student-lead alpine rock climbs. These climbs will be selected based on student strengths and desires. The program's instructors will mentor students as they make these final leads on a high alpine objective.

- Skills to be Covered: These final two days will be practical application of all the skills learned throughout the rest of the program.
- Climbing area: Rocky Mountain National Park: Glacier Gorge, Longs Peak/Mt. Meeker Cirque, Tyndall Gorge
- Travel time: 1 hour drive
- Guide-to-Student Ratio: 2:1
- Lodging: Front-country car camp or Backcountry camp (Dependent on objectives)