



VINSON MASSIF

EXPEDITIONS 2018/2019

TRIP NOTES





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Expedition Notes

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During the southern summer of 2018/2019, Adventure Consultants will operate its twenty-fifth year of expeditions to Vinson Massif, Antarctica's highest summit. If you have a desire to discover the Antarctic interior and stand on the summit of Vinson Massif, then this is an exciting opportunity and very likely your best chance of achieving that goal.

Brief History

The Vinson Massif is situated in the heart of the Ellsworth Mountains, 700 nautical miles from the South Pole. The mountain was first climbed by an American expedition during the summer of 1966/67 but was not ascended a second time until 1979. Both expeditions were supported by government programmes.



The Canadian company Adventure Network International (ANI) opened up this area to private expeditions and operated regular flights to its summer camp at Patriot Hills from 1985. In 2003/2004 they withdrew their Antarctic operations and Antarctica Logistics & Expeditions (ALE) stepped in. ALE is run by some of the same people that initially started ANI back in the

1980s and they now use a new camp at Union Glacier as their base to operate from in Antarctica.

Vinson Massif is 16,067 feet (4,897 metres) high but is not a technically difficult climb although it is an extremely cold ascent with temperatures dropping to minus 40 degrees C near the summit. Under the leadership of experienced Antarctic guides, climbers of moderate experience can safely undertake the expedition.

While ALE will supply our transport to and from Antarctica, Adventure Consultants will provide all the leadership, guiding staff and team equipment necessary for the expedition.

Access to the Mountain

From Punta Arenas at the tip of Chile, we fly by Ilyushin 76 aircraft to the ALE base at Union Glacier. Here the aircraft makes a wheeled landing on a natural blue-ice runway.

The Union Glacier Camp, situated at 80 degrees South is a small collection of tents. The dining and kitchen tent has a wooden floor and is heated with a kerosene stove. We sleep here overnight in our own mountain tents but gather for meals in the warmth of the dining tent.

From Union Glacier, we transfer to a smaller ski-equipped aircraft (Twin Otter or Cessna) for a one-hour flight north to the base of the Vinson Massif in the heart of the Ellsworth Mountains.



The Route

The climb involves interesting glacier travel on the wide and gently sloping lower reaches of the Branscomb Glacier. We pull our sleds up the glacier far below the impressive ice falls that cascade from the main Vinson Massif plateau, 1,500m above.

The Base Camp is situated on the Branscomb Glacier at approximately 2,100m and we use two high camps at approximately 2,700 and 3,850 metres. The Low Camp is situated further up the glacier just beyond the second icefall, below an ice-wall, which drops directly from the main summit which is about a 7-hour walk from Base Camp punctuated by regular breaks to take in the scenery. We carry half of our equipment in a rucksack and the other half we tow behind on a small plastic sledge.

From Low Camp, we climb a 1,200m snow arête (up to 40 degrees steep) on fixed rope for approximately 800m. Fixed rope techniques will be taught during the expedition. The snow arête leads us to High Camp which takes about 6-9 hours. High Camp is nestled beside a rocky ridge adjacent to the main summit plateau.

The climb from High Camp to the summit normally takes between 7 and 10 hours, depending on the speed of the party. The descent back to the top camp takes around 2½ hours. On summit day as you climb the glacial plateau, you will first pass Branscomb Peak on the left and the final Vinson summit pyramid then lies directly ahead. From here we climb the picturesque East Ridge, weaving in and out of small rock steps until we arrive at the stunningly beautiful summit and the highest point on the Antarctic continent.

There is a Sierra Club book in a metal tin on the summit of the peak for those wishing to record their ascent. The descent from High Camp down to Base Camp can be achieved reasonably comfortably in one day. We collect the toilet bags and other waste on the way down the mountain.

Level of Experience Required

To climb Vinson Massif, you need to be physically fit, have strong mental stamina and be capable of strenuous exercise for several days' duration. Expedition members can expect to be exerting themselves for about six to ten hours per day and 12 hours on summit day and be capable of carrying a 25 kg pack.

While the route is quite long, it is not a technically difficult climb, so members with modest mountaineering backgrounds can join this expedition so long as they have some overall cold camping experience, solid cramponing skills, and have mastered basic mountaineering skills including crevasse rescue training. Having some experience climbing at moderate altitude (above 4300m) may be helpful and it is essential to arrive sufficiently 'pack' fit for long days with big loads.

Meeting Point

The expedition members will gather at Punta Arenas in Chile. Regular daily flights on LAN Chile and Ladeco Airlines connect with Santiago and other points north. As the group gear must be weighed and loaded at least one day prior to departure to Union Glacier as well as attend the expedition briefing, you are advised to schedule your arrival in Punta Arenas accordingly. Thus, we recommend **arriving the day before** the official start date of the expedition or at the very least, arriving on the morning of Day One.

Itinerary

- Trip 1: November 23 - December 8, 2018
- Trip 2: December 4 - 19, 2018
- Trip 3: December 15 - 30, 2018
- Trip 4: December 26, 2018 - January 10, 2019
- Trip 5: January 6 - 21, 2019

- Day 1 Meet in Punta Arenas, Chile
- 2 Weighing & loading of gear
- 3 Expedition Briefing
- 4 Fly to Union Glacier, Antarctica
- 5 Fly to Vinson Massif Base Camp
- 6 - 13 Climb Vinson Massif
- 14 Return to Union Glacier
- 15 Depart for Punta Arenas
- 16 Leave for home destination

Please note: Flights to and from Antarctica are subject to weather. Delays can and often do occur therefore it is important to allow some flexibility with airline travel arrangements at the end of the expedition.

Hotels

Adventure Consultants can book your hotel in Punta Arenas or you can take care of this yourself. Please advise us at the time of booking.

Visa Requirements

Expedition members must secure their own visa for multiple-entry into Chile. While Chile claims part of the Antarctic Continent as its sovereignty, it requires that we check through immigration when leaving for and returning from Antarctica; thus a multi-entry visa is required.

Team Membership

The team will have a **minimum size of 4 members and 1 guide** and a **maximum size of 10 members and 2 guides**.

You will find the Adventure Consultants Mountain Guides companionable and strong expedition leaders with considerable power and willingness to see you achieve your goals. The number of guides is determined by the team size but the normal ratio of guides to members is 1:5.

Expedition Fee

The cost of the expedition ex Punta Arenas in Chile is US\$42,000. This is an inclusive cost and covers the following:

- Flights to and from Union Glacier in Antarctica
- Flights from Union Glacier to Vinson Massif Base Camp and return
- All group climbing equipment
- All expedition organisational requirements
- Tents and food while in Antarctica
- Mountain guides
- Use of the expedition satellite telephone for outgoing calls
- Dispatch web page updated throughout the trip for friends & family to follow
- Transport of 23kg of personal equipment

The expedition fee does **not include** the following:

- Air travel to and from Punta Arenas, Chile
- Hotel accommodation and meals in Punta Arenas
- Chilean visa and airport fees
- Personal insurance – full travel, medical and rescue insurance is required as well as personal trip cancellation insurance. Medical evacuation insurance cover of US\$150,000 is required.

- Personal clothing and equipment
 - Excess baggage transportation charges of US\$75.00 per kg for any baggage exceeding the personal equipment weight limit.
 - Cost of satellite telephone calls whilst on expedition
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Deposit

A non-refundable deposit of US\$5,000 is payable to secure a place on the expedition.

Balance

The balance is payable **120 days** before the trip departure date.

Payments

All payments should be made by bank transfer to the following bank and account:

**Bank of New Zealand
Offshore Branch
1 Willis Street
Wellington
New Zealand**

for the account of **Adventure Consultants Limited**

Account # **1000-594771-0000**
Account Type: **US Dollars**
Swift Address: **BKNZNZ22**

Note: All bank transfer charges are for the **remitter's account**.

We can also accept your deposit by credit card (Visa, Mastercard, or Amex), and your balance payment by credit card plus a 3% credit card fee.

Cancellation and Refund Policy

An expedition member may cancel his/her participation on the following basis:

- Cancellations outside of 120 days of the departure date incur the loss of the deposit payment.
- Cancellations between 119-90 days of the departure date incur 50% of the balance payment.

- For cancellation made within 89 days of the departure date, there will be no refunds.
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Trip Cancellation Insurance

Team members should take out private cancellation insurance if they wish to be covered against cancellation due to medical or personal reasons. This is called Trip Cancellation insurance and can be obtained through your normal travel agent.

Equipment List

A full clothing and equipment checklist will be sent to all expedition members, once their booking is confirmed. The expedition leader will be available prior to the trip to discuss individual equipment questions.

Medical Examination

Expedition members will be provided with pre-trip medical advice and a medical questionnaire and asked to visit their family physician and receive a full medical examination. This information will be sighted only by the expedition leader and our medical adviser and treated with full confidentiality.

Documentation and Photographs

Expedition members will be requested to provide 2 passport photographs and a copy of their climbing résumé. You will also need to procure rescue insurance.

Climb Antarctica Option

Some expedition members may wish to extend their time in Antarctica and climb unclimbed peaks on the frozen continent. Whether your interest is towards a more technically challenging ascent or a wander up a gentle and unnamed summit, Antarctica has endless scope for first ascents.

Our Climb Antarctica Expedition is an ideal add-on to your Antarctic adventure, contact our office for more information.

The Advantages of Climbing with Us

Adventure Consultants is renowned for the quality of its service and strategy applied to high altitude expedition climbing. Our reputation is attributed to meticulous planning and experienced logistics coordination. We have a philosophy of investing in every expedition to offer our climbers the best possible chance of success.

We employ strong and specialised Expedition leaders and support staff, who are some of the most pre-eminent in the industry. We pride ourselves on operating with small teams, the best back-up and support available. This includes nutritious and ample quantities of food, comfortable Base Camp facilities, reliable communications systems and the necessary medical back up.

Many of our expedition members come to us because they have seen us in action on a previous trip and decide to opt for our level of service and proven experience. Others return because they know we do our very best to make expeditions safe and successful.

How to Join This Expedition

If you would like to join one of our Vinson Massif expeditions, please complete an [Expedition Application Form](#) and forward along with the deposit for the trip.

If you require more information please contact us at:

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Adventure Consultants – is affiliated to the New Zealand Mountain Guides Association (NZMGA), New Zealand Alpine Club (NZAC) and a corporate member of the American Alpine Club (AAC). Adventure Consultants perform to IFMGA standards and are world leaders in high altitude guiding.

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