

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

The American Alpine Institute accepts applications for spring/summer-seasonal and year-round staff members between November 1 and January 31. 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 8 states and in 16 countries.

The Institute usually hires four to eight 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 Guide Training Course in early May. This intensive training program is up to three-weeks long. The first part of the program deals 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 Guide Training Course and lasts through the end of the summer. Depending on a guide’s flexibility and experience, there may be options for 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:

- AMGA Single Pitch Instructor Course and Exam.
- Ideal candidates will have completed at least one program in the Alpine discipline. However, AAI may be able to assist strong candidates with this if they have not completed a program.

Any additional AMGA training will also be considered in the hiring process.

The American Alpine Institute is an AMGA Accredited Guide Service. To remain an Accredited Guide Service, all guides have to work under the [AMGA Scope of Practice](#). The majority of the work at AAI requires an AMGA Rock Guide Course and an AMGA Alpine Guide Course.

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 or splitboarding ability.
- Avalanche Training
- 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
- Attendance at Outdoor Conferences or Trainings

Wages:

Wages are commensurate with experience. A typical beginning wage for an individual with a limited guiding background and no training is \$160 per day. AMGA coursework, Leave No Trace course work and other credentials bump up one's day wage by \$5 to \$10 a day per program completed.

In addition to a base wage, AAI provides an overnight stipend for each night that a guide operates in a field with course participants. These overnight bumps range from \$50 to \$80 per night

depending on the program.

Entry level base wages are constructed from the following. Each skill, course or certification that a new guide has is added to the base wage of \$168.	
Base Wage	\$168
Single Pitch Instructor Certification, Rock Guide Course, Alpine Skills Course, Alpine Guides Course	\$5 per course
Other AMGA Courses	\$10 per course
Other courses, skills and experiences increase the base day wage. These include, but are not limited to: 1) Previous work as an instructor or guide. 2) Rope Rescue Technician 3) PSIA Level I-III 4) Avalanche Pro I-II 5) Leave No Trace Level II (Master Educator) 6) Emergency Medical Technician 7) Graduate Degree 8) Experience or high level of skill in rock or ice climbing, high altitude climbing or big wall experience.	Varies
Overnight Bump (When spending the night with program participants.)	\$50-\$80 depending on program

Wages for experienced guides with training and/or certification are competitive. Significant experience will be taken into account within the wage matrix as well.

Gratuities often average \$30 - \$50 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. Financial assistance is available for AMGA courses and continuing education.

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.

Most first year guides will spend the bulk of their first summer operating on Mt. Baker, regardless of their level of training and certification. In their second and third years, their assignments will become more and more varied and will include a both guiding and teaching a much wider array of skills.

AAI programs include teaching climbers to lead, guiding technical climbs, and guiding large-scale alpine and rock routes. We offer courses, guided climbs, and expeditions in eight states and in 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.

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 (and other state programs) for all guides working at the American Alpine Institute during all programs.

AAI is an Equal Opportunity Employer

For further information contact:

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