



American Mountain Guides Association Alpine Guides Course

The Alpine Guides Course is the 2nd step in the Alpine Guide education and certification process and is designed for aspiring guides who have a strong alpine climbing background and for instructors who are interested in improving their skills and increasing knowledge. The Alpine Guides Course places strong emphasis on maximizing client rewards while effectively managing risks. The Course is 10-days in length and is a prerequisite to taking the Advanced Alpine Guide Course. All candidates enrolled in the Alpine Guide Course must have first successfully completed the AMGA Rock Instructor Course or Rock Guide Course.

The AMGA Alpine Guides Course is designed for those with a strong alpine climbing background who aspire to become professional alpine guides and for currently working instructors and guides who are interested in improving their skills and increasing their knowledge. It is intended for guides, not climbers, so a high degree of familiarity with alpine climbing techniques is assumed.

This course is identical to courses offered by the AMGA and is also a prerequisite course for the AMGA Rock Instructors Exam. The SMC Alpine Guides Course (AGC) is a privatized version of the American Mountain Guides Association (AMGA) Alpine Guide Course. Sanctioned by the AMGA, the curriculum and prerequisites are identical to that offered by the AMGA, but is taught by SMC and guest instructors. These instructors are some of the original core group that set the AMGA certification process in motion and devised the original curriculums and modified them over the years to the final high quality offering. The experience of this group in fact surpasses the experience of the current AMGA instructor pool and you can be assured of receiving the best instruction and meaningful feedback.

Dates and Prices: Check the latest brochure, call us or go to our web site for dates and rates. Should minimum participant numbers not be reached you will be given the option of paying our private rate, rescheduling, or cancelling. Price includes instruction and camping fees. It does not include food and park entry fees. You need to be a member of the AMGA prior to starting the course.

Course Description: This course emphasizes where climbing with a partner stops and guiding begins. It includes comprehensive instructional clinics and plenty of hands-on guiding practice. The RIC addresses the skills and techniques used to guide and instruct on routes up to and including Grade III in length. Emphasis is on enhancing client rewards while effectively and appropriately managing risk. We'll be climbing routes 1 to 7 pitches in length, where you'll be expected to place your own protection and anchors. The routes may be crack, face, or slab, and up to 5.9 in difficulty. The approaches and descents will generally be straightforward.

Topics Include:

Skills taught and developed during the Alpine Guide Course:

- Efficient travel through 3 rd and 4 th class terrain
- Short-rope and short-pitch techniques on snow and rock
- Techniques for managing multiple clients
- Track setting
- Navigation skills
- Macro and micro-route finding skills
- Evaluating anchor construction as it relates to guiding
- Choosing appropriate belay methods for rock and snow
- Efficiently organizing belay stances for multiple clients
- Descending with clients
- Escaping belays
- Managing client safety in 3rd and 4 th class terrain
- Guide's anchors in rock, snow and ice
- Time and pace management
- Small team rescues
- Improvised ascending methods
- Strategies for rappelling and lowering clients
- Safety management in guiding context
- Lesson plans

- Pedagogy
- Coaching tips and effective communication

Target audience: The AMGA Alpine Guides Course is designed for both those with a strong alpine climbing background who aspire to become professional climbing guides as well as for currently working instructors and guides who are interested in increasing their skills and knowledge. It is intended for guides, not climbers, and a high degree of familiarity with climbing techniques is assumed. This course is identical to courses offered by the AMGA and is also a prerequisite course for the AMGA Rock Instructors Exam and for the AMGA Alpine Guides Course.

Prerequisites for the Alpine Guides Course: You will fill out a complete AMGA resume for these. Forms are available here. You meet the prerequisites for the RIC if you:

- You are an Associate Member of the AMGA.
- You have successfully completed the Rock Instructor Course. Please provide documentation of course completion on program application.
- You have at least 5 years of alpine climbing experience.
- Provide personal alpine climbing showing that you have led or shared lead on at least 40 different alpine climbs in at least 2 different areas (i.e. Cascades and Alaska), 10 of which should be on alpine rock routes rated 5.8 or harder and grade III or longer after the approach, 5 of which should be on different alpine technical snow, ice or mixed climbs and 5 of which should be on different ice climbs rated WI4 or harder.
- You are confident with basic knots, including: figure-8, bowline, clove hitch, munter hitch, mule hitch, prussik, klemheist, and double fisherman's.
- You are able to place traditional protection and construct anchors
- You are able to employ Classic (French) crampon techniques on 40 degree hard, frozen, snow in ascent and descent.
- You are able to safely and comfortably lead crack and face climbs rated 5.6 in stiff mountaineering boots.
- You are able to safely and comfortably lead crack and face climbs rated 5.10a in rock shoes.
- You are comfortable using the hip belay method.
- You are competent reading a map and using a compass.
- You are familiar with Leave No Trace practices and techniques
- You are able to use more than one type of device on multi-pitch rappels.
- Provide a copy of current Wilderness First Responder certification or better.
- You are at least 18 years of age.

Participants may be asked to demonstrate skills prior to the course.

Course Instructors:

The course is instructed by senior AMGA certified rock guides. Instructors are some of the original designers of the AMGA programs and have been teaching these courses for over twelve years. Their wide range of experience and home bases in different locations in the country offer an exceptional breadth of experience in professional guiding

Robert SP Parker Originally from New Zealand SP lives in Bishop and is an owner of SMC. He is certified in rock and alpine disciplines and is a past AMGA Board of Directors member and current Technical Committee member. He was one of the original developers of the Alpine Program in the early 1990s.

Mark Houston. Mark is the original Mr. AMGA. He has done it all for decades and is one of the best in the USA. Now living in Europe Mark was one of the originators of the alpine programs, a past AAMGA president and a technical committee member.

Marc Chauvin. Mark is a UIAGM internationally certified guide and is certified in rock, alpine and ski disciplines. He lives in North Conway, New Hampshire and is a past AMGA Board of Directors member and Technical Committee member.

Course length and ratios: The course is ten days in length and will not exceed a ratio of three participants to one instructor and a maximum of nine students on a course. A minimum of five participants is required to run this course.

Course Manual: You will be provided with an AMGA handbook for the course. The complete version of the AMGA Guides Manual is available from the AMGA office.

Course completion: Upon completion of the course participants will receive an oral performance evaluation with a written evaluation to follow.

Camping and meeting places:

We will have a campsite reserved in the Bishop Creek area. Please contact us prior to the program for this information! We will have a campsite reserved in the Bishop Creek area. Please contact us prior to the program for this information! We will meet the evening before the first day at 6.00 p.m. at the world headquarters of Sierra Mountain Center, 174 W. Line Street, in Bishop. Line Street is an east/west street marked by the southern-most traffic light on Main Street/Highway 395, in town. We're west of the light, on the south side of the street next to the health food store. A large parking lot is located on the south side of the building.

Getting to the Bishop Area: If flying to the area and renting a car: your best bets for airports are: Reno, Nevada (cheap car rentals, four hours drive from Bishop), Ontario, California (five hours from Bishop), Las Vegas, Nevada (Cheapest air tickets generally and cheap car rentals, five hours drive from Bishop), and finally, Los Angeles (five hours drive from Bishop). If this course takes place in early winter snow storms are a strong possibility. If this is the case Reno Airport can get closed on occasion while it generally will take a major disaster to close the Las Vegas Airport. So factor this into your planning and when perusing flights.

Curriculum Outline:

Order of topics may be rearranged as needed

Each day's session will conclude with a group debrief.

Day 0 Evening meeting at the campsite at 6.00pm

- Instructor & participant introductions, participant goals, course objectives and overview.

Day 1

- Guiding versus climbing techniques
- Knots, harnesses, cords, webbing and ropes
- Anchors
- Belaying

Day 2

- Short roping
- Short pitching
- Guided climb

Day 3

- Discussion of previous day's climb
- Rappelling and lowering
- Complex systems
- Intermediate short roping

Day 4

- Guided climb by participants

Day 5

- Discussion of previous day's climb
- Rope techniques for snow
- Short roping on snow

Day 6

- Ice anchors and guides belays
- Glacier travel
- Crevasse rescue

Day 7

- Guided climbs by participants

Day 8

- Guided climbs by participants

Day 9

- Guided climbs by participants

Day 10

- Review session
- Individual teaching assignments
- Group debrief
- Individual debrief

Important! Please read our Cancellation and Deposit Policy

Your reservation is secured with a 50% deposit and the balance is due thirty days prior to the start of the program. A 25% deposit will secure your dates if you are booking more than three months days prior to the program start. We accept checks, Visa, or Mastercard.

If a participant cancels or withdraws from a program;

- **Greater than or equal to 21 days prior to the program starting date; SMC will retain a 15% administrative fee from monies collected and refund the balance. Rescheduling is possible, but subject to availability. We will only reschedule for the same calendar year. Any and all costs incurred in rescheduling, such as USFS trail fees, will be paid for by the participant.**

- **Within 21 days of the program start date and/or once the program has begun; program fees are non-refundable and non-transferable to another trip.**

- If conditions, weather or circumstances preclude running a scheduled program we reserve the right to make the decision as to whether the program will be rescheduled or an alternative provided. In the rare circumstance where we need to cancel a program due to weather you can reschedule without a penalty, but no refund. Credits arising from such situations will be honored for 18 months.

- We are not responsible for cancellation fees or costs arising from your changed or cancelled flights, lodging, or other arrangements.

- **We strongly recommend obtaining trip cancellation insurance from your travel agent.**

- We do not provide rescue insurance. Membership in the American Alpine Club includes rescue insurance and is recommended. See www.americanalpineclub.org

Equipment list for Alpine Guides Course

Climbing equipment

- Ice Axe
- Cramons
- Ice screws
- Pickets and or deadmen
- Carabiners
- Locking carabiners
- Pulleys or pulley/carabiners
- Prussik system
- Cordellettes
- Belay/rappel device
- Harness.
- Helmet.
- Comfortable rock shoes sized large enough so that you can wear them all day.
- 1 single dynamic rope.
- 1 old beater rope.
- Rack. This should include a full range of camming devices, wired nuts, carabiners, quickdraw and slings. It should be appropriate for guiding multi pitch routes of up to three pitches in length and up to 5.10 in difficulty.
- Slings, rappel rings and old gear to leave behind during rappel descents.
- Don't run out and buy the Eastern Sierra guidebooks but if you have one, bring one.

Other essentials

- Footwear. For most Sierra climbs a medium-weight pair of leather mountaineering boots will be sufficient. In general you should wear the lightest boot you can get away with. The Sportiva Glacier or Makalu is a good example of an appropriate mountain boot.
- Camp Shoes. A lightweight pair of tennies or Tevas to wear in camp. This will reduce vegetation damage at our campsites.
- Pack. A 4000 cubic inch will hold everything for the back-country.
- Sleeping Bag. Most summer trips are warm and a bag rated to about 25° will be plenty warm enough except in the spring and late fall.
- Sleeping pad. A 3/4 or full length closed cell foam or Thermarest. If you bring a Thermarest also bring a repair kit to fix pesky leaks.

Clothing

- 2 pair synthetic liner socks.
- 1 pair heavier synthetic or wool blend socks.
- Gaiters-usually required only on spring trips.
- Long underwear top and bottom. Capilene or some other synthetic is most desirable.
- Warm pants. Tights or Expedition weight Capilene.
- Warm shirt. Synchronia or 200 weight works well.
- Another fuzzy sweater top or pile jacket of some sort.
- GoreTex Jacket and Pants - A lightweight set is sufficient and heavy bulky rainwear is unnecessary. Side zips on the pants should be long enough to slide on over boots. Jackets must have a hood. Do not skimp on your rain gear.
- Shorts for on the trail.
- Tee shirt for on the trail
- Polypropylene or similar gloves and shells.
- Warm hat.
- Sunhat.

Etc.

- Sun glasses. Good quality with side shields.

- Water Bottles. Two quart (1 liter) wide mouth bottles and or a hydration system holding up to 50oz. (2 liters).
- Headlamp. With a spare set of batteries.
- Iodine for water purification.
- Eating and drinking equipment.
- Pocket knife. Swiss army style.
- Personal toiletries. Remember toilet paper and a small zip-lock bag to carry out the used in. Solid human waste must be packed out on trips to the climber's side of Mt. Whitney. The Forest Service supplies kits to make this easy.
- Sunscreen and lip screen.
- Guides Medical Kit.
- Plastic Trash Sac. Handy for keeping gear in outside the tent should it rain.
- Ski poles. These are not essential, but can be handy on the trail. It is your choice, but they do save wear on the knees.
- Notebook and writing equipment.

Food

Your choice but maybe partner up with other guides for this.

Shared Equipment with other Guides

- Shelter.
- Stove.
- Cookwear.
- Water purification. A sad but true fact of life is that much Sierra water is contaminated. Iodine may be used individually or the group can carry a pump style purifier.

Notes

In Bishop there are no entry fees. Camping will be about 20-25 minutes from town and Bishop has the usual assortment of restaurants; especially if you like Mexican...

Required reading

Mountaineering: The Freedom of the Hills; 6th Edition; \$24.95; Chapters 6-8, Ch. 10-12, Ch. 14 (pgs. 353-360 only), Ch. 20 (pgs. 467-473 only), Ch. 21, and Ch. 23-24

Suggested reading

Knots for Climbers; Craig Luebben; \$4.95

Rope Tech; Bill March; \$12.95

Weathering the Wilderness; Sierra Club Guide William Reifsnnyder; \$8.95

Climbing Anchors; John Long; \$11.95

The following may carry the above titles

Chessler Books

26030 Highway 74

P.O. Box 399

Kittredge, Colorado 80457

800-654-8502

The Mountaineers

1001 SW Klickitat Way

Seattle, WA 98134

800-553-4453