

Alaska Climbing Seminar Mt. Marcus Baker, Chugach Range

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Program description:

Our eight-day climbing seminar provides the perfect introduction to Alaskan expedition style climbing. The program culminates in a summit attempt of Mt. Marcus Baker (13,176 feet), the highest peak in the Chugach Mountains.

Dates: June 10-16, 2007

Cost: \$2,100 Does not include bush pilot fee.
Group meets in Anchorage
Climber/guide ratio 3/1

Location: Chugach Mountains, Alaska

Lead Guide: John Race

Trip details:

Mt. Marcus Baker is the highest peak in the Chugach Mountains. The Chugach are a coastal range running to the east of Anchorage along the Gulf of Alaska. From the summit of Marcus Baker the view is one of mountains and glaciers sweeping down to the sea. Despite their proximity to Anchorage and the vast amount of climbing to be done, these mountains feel incredibly remote. It is not uncommon to spend a month in the range without seeing another person.

The seminar is an ideal training ground for those who have done some basic climbing in the lower 48 and are ready to explore Alaska expedition style climbing. We will spend eight days learning important expedition skills and climbing Mt. Marcus Baker. Skills covered will include glacier travel, cramponing, use of an ice axe, ascending and descending fixed ropes, crevasse rescue with sleds and full packs, and general expeditionary camp skills. This program is an excellent first step toward longer expeditions and climbs requiring advanced skills such as Mt. McKinley, other high Alaskan peaks, Mt. Logan and all high altitude, cold weather expeditions.

The group meets in Anchorage on day one. Our bush pilot will arrange for an early pickup the following morning and transport us the two-hour drive to an airstrip on the Glen Highway. From here we will fly onto the Knik glacier landing at 8,400 feet. We will establish a base camp here at our landing site, right at the base of the climbing route. This area will be used as our initial training ground. We will establish one or more camps above this before our summit bid. The route involves primarily non-technical glacier travel with steeper terrain on the summit dome. From our high camp we are able to see the high peaks of the Wrangle/St. Elias Mountains and Mt. Hayes.

Alaska Climbing Seminar Itinerary

Day 1 Individual members of the group arrive in Anchorage by early afternoon, and meet for the first time at a local B&B, name and location to be announced. The guides will conduct individual gear and equipment checks, then the team will walk to a local restaurant for a last meal in town and a chance to get to know more about the other team members. The team will overnight at the B&B.

Day 2 Early wakeup for a pickup by our bush pilot, and transportation to an airstrip along the Glen Highway, a two hour journey. Our bush pilot will fly us in from this point to 8,400 on the Knik Glacier. The team will establish a base camp here and the afternoon will be used to start instruction and review of basic mountaineering skills: ice axe arrest, cramponing and rope travel.

Day 3 A full day of training in glacier travel, construction of snow anchors and crevasse rescue practice with full packs and sleds.

Day 4 The majority of the day will be used to move up to a high camp at 10,000 feet.

Day 5 This will likely be the summit day, weather permitting. It will be a long day, climbing to the summit and back over steeper terrain on the upper summit dome. In case of bad weather, Day 6 may be used for a second summit attempt.

Day 6 The team will break camp and move back down to base camp. The afternoon can be utilized to start working on ice climbing skills and advanced techniques in nearby crevassed areas.

Day 7 Continued training in ice climbing skills including cramponing, anchors, belaying and rappelling.

Day 8 Break camp for an early pickup by our bush pilot and return to Anchorage. The program ends in Anchorage, but the group normally chooses to share a farewell dinner and team celebration at a restaurant in Anchorage. Members may choose to fly out later that evening (after 9:00 p.m.) or spend a last evening in Anchorage at the B&B.

"After 10 years of mountaineering trips with close to a dozen different outfitters and guide services (as well as a number of self-organized trips), I've learned what goes into making a climb challenging, enjoyable, fulfilling, and safe. George Dunn and his programs are top rate in my opinion: he has immense experience and knowledge; his programs are well organized and executed; he provides destinations and climbs that can fit a variety of skill levels, backgrounds, and interests; he brings an even-handed, level-headed positive attitude to the different circumstances encountered during an expedition; and his associate guides are excellent. In the future whenever I feel the itch to get away and go climbing, I'll check on what George has got scheduled before I make any other commitments..."—Marc C.

For more comments from IMG climbers, please see our website at: www.mountainguides.com/comments.shtml

Alaskan Climbing Seminar Required Personal Equipment List

- Boots: Plastic double boots only. Vasque Ice 9000 double boots, Koflach Arctis Expedition with aveolite liners, Scarpa Inverno with high-altitude liners or comparable.
- Socks: Three complete changes of heavy wool/synthetic socks with liners.
- Underwear: One lightweight or medium weight synthetic top and one medium weight longjohn bottom.
- Shirt: Expedition weight synthetic (100 weight Polartec), or equivalent.
- Fleece: Thick jacket and pants. Full-length zips are recommended for pants.
- Storm shell: Waterproof/breathable jacket and pants. Jacket should have a close-fitting, attached hood. Pants must have full-length zippers.
- Down parka: Warm parka with attached hood. Size large enough to wear over all other layers.
- Hat: Wool or fleece hat with separate face mask or neck gaiter or balaclava.
- Sun hat: Baseball hat, large bandana is useful too.
- Gloves: Two pair, one fleece and one Gore-Tex ski or climbing glove.
- Mitts: Fleece mitts with a Gore-Tex overshell.
- Glacier glasses: Dark with good side shields.
- Ski goggles: Double lens to reduce fogging.
- Water bottles: Two wide mouth plastic bottles with insulating covers (like the Outdoor Research Water Bottle Parka).
- Suncream/Lipbalm: SPF 15 or higher.
- Sleeping bag: Rated to 0 F. **or lower**. Best and lightest is a Gore-Tex covered down bag. Next best is a synthetic bag. A regular down bag with bivouac sack does not work well. A good compression stuff sack is highly recommended if you have a bulky sleeping bag.
- Pads: 1 closed cell foam pad and 1 Thermarest pad.
- Pack: Large (6,000 cu.in.) expedition size internal frame.
- Bowl, cup & spoon: Large (12 oz. or more) insulated plastic cup, large flexible plastic bowl and Lexan plastic spoon.
- Pocket knife and butane lighter
- Seat harness: Adjustable leg loops are best
- Carabiners: Two pear shaped locking , and two regular.
- Ascenders: Bring at least one, rigged to clip into your seat harness. I prefer Petzl ascenders. Bring two 7mm prussik loops 24" in diameter tied with a double fisherman's knot.
- Crampons: 12 point hinged flat frame crampons. Grivel G-12's with the New-matic binding work well.
- Ice axe: 70 cm. with leash.
- Ski poles: Collapsible poles are highly recommended.
- Snowshoes***: Lightweight with traction bindings. Atlas, Tubbs and Sherpa are recommended brands.
- First Aid kit: Each individual should carry a small personal first aid kit to avoid depletion of the group kit. You should have the following: aspirin (or Tylenol); ibuprofen; antacid (Pepto Bismol, Rolaids); anti-diarrhea medication (Imodium); Band-Aids; athletic tape; moleskin, Second Skin or Compede. Consult with your doctor and bring any recommended prescriptions necessary for your health. Earplugs are useful for sleeping.
- Lunch food: Bulk lunch items will be provided (Pilot bread, block cheese, pb&j, sardines, etc.). Bring your own energy bars, gorp, candy, special cheeses, sausage, jerky, drink mix, etc. About 4 lbs. total for one week is normal. This will be used as climbing snacks during the day and at night in the tent.
- Sled rigging: Bring 20' of 1" webbing and 4-6 long bungee cords.
- Lockable duffel: To store street clothes, toiletries, and items to be left with bush pilot or at B&B.
- Toiletries: Toothbrush and small tube of paste. One small roll of t.p. in a ziplock bag. Optional items: Collapsible shovel (aluminum is preferred over plastic), camera and film, small journal and pen, paperback. A headlamp is not necessary in Alaska in June.

*** Available for rent