

Equipment required for instructional courses

The following lists are not intended to be rigid, but a guide to the type of gear that will be needed to get the best out of the instructional sessions organised in conjunction with the meet. These lists will also be of use to people attending the meet, but not participating in a course. Participants will need to bring their gear with them - there will be no general pool of gear brought out to the Alps. **While local gear hire may be a possibility we would suggest that you come equipped.**

Alpine Mountaineering Courses

Footwear

- Stiff or rigid boots - three quarter or full shank; either leather or plastic. They must be capable of taking the type of crampons that you bring.
- Gaiters are essential to keep snow or scree out - with straps passing under the boots.
- Plenty of comfortable socks. Always leave wiggle room for your toes!
- Crampons can be either articulated or rigid, preferably twelve points, either strap-on or snap-on as long as they are compatible with the boots.
- Beyond the Alpine Mountaineering courses, if you are interested in rock climbing then bring rock boots - not too tight as you could be wearing them for a long hot day.
- Sandals or track shoes for campsite use.

Clothing

Layers of light, thermal and flexible clothing. Days are hot but early morning starts are cold. Long sleeves are essential for climbing without sunburn. Typical clothing would be a thermal vest, a light fleece or sweatshirt and a full weight fleece on the top, with a pair of light trousers. Zip-offs are useful as shorts are great for walk-ins. Waterproof jacket and trousers are essential, preferably in breathable material and lightweight. Trousers should have full side zips to allow them to be put on over crampons. Gloves are crucial - two pairs of lightweight finger gloves plus a pair of warm and waterproof overmitts. Sun hat critical, but also a warmer fleece or wool hat for early mornings.

Accessories

Maps and compass. The little things that make life enjoyable - good sun glasses of 'wraparound' or 'blinkered' variety (at least Category 3 or 4), high factor sun block and lip salves, personal first aid kit, compass, whistle, wash kit. You will need a (minimum) 1 litre water container. A Platypus (flexible bag with tube attached) is very useful as taking liquids frequently can help reduce the effects of altitude.

Climbing Gear

- Lightweight UIAA approved helmet.
- Climbing harness - either waist/sit type or full body, must be easily put on over crampons - i.e. not fixed step-through leg loops.
- Two long tape slings (1.2m)
- Screwgate karabiners and two spare karabiners.
- Belay / abseil device such as ATC, DMM Bug, Bettabrake, Tuber etc.
- Two 6mm diam. Prussik loops - 40cm long.
- General purpose ice-axe – 50 - 65cm long with curved pick and wrist loop. If you have other ice gear - ice hammer/ice screws etc then bring them but they are not essential.
- Rack of climbing gear if you have one, but again not necessary.
- A rope is not required for the course but might be needed for your own activities afterwards.

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Camping Gear

- Tent, sleeping mat, stove, pots, cutlery, water container, plates, cups etc.
- Three season, reasonably light and compact sleeping bag. It is possible that that we will bivouac in the mountains to make an Alpine ascent.
- If you have a Gore-Tex or breathable Bivouac bag bring it along, but it's not essential. A plastic bivvy bag, while less comfortable, will suffice. As there is the possibility of bivouacking your overnight gear must kept as light as possible.
- The best type of stove is lightweight Epigas / Coleman / rimus type with screw-in container. We suggest that you buy gas before arrival at the campsite.
- Rucksack must be capable of carrying all this, but not so large so that it is awkward on day trips - around 50-60 litres is fine. Waterproof rucksack liner useful.

Alpine Adventure Walking

Your equipment needs are very similar to the Alpine Mountaineering Courses. However, you will only be required to bring along a helmet, a harness, axe and crampons. All other technical equipment will be supplied as required.

Other Gear Notes

Sheet bags

These are often required in huts but in practice nobody ever checks. Sheet bags are sometimes available for hire in the hut for a small charge. Some people prefer to bring their own, for lightweight enthusiasts a silk sleeping bag liner is ideal. Blankets or duvets and pillows are supplied by the hut.

General walking kit / clothes (allow for hot days & cool evenings and mornings)

Shorts and cotton T-shirts for the day and a lightweight pair of cotton trousers and a light fleece for the cooler days. For cooler days / evenings, these can supplemented by fleece trousers or 'Powerstretch' and a slightly heavier or additional fleece. Bring some clothes pegs with you if you wish to wash your day clothes / socks at the huts rather than bring spares.

Reasonable size rucksack (around 40 / 50 litres)

The bigger the rucksack you have, the more you will fill it and the heavier it will be! 50 litres should be the max. required for the Alpine Walking Course. The guide's rucksack weighs around 13kg for these trips and that includes a lot of items you don't need to worry about. Aim for your sack to weigh around a maximum of 10kg for comfort.

Sunglasses, sunhat, water bottle etc.

All absolutely necessary. For people who like to drink lots and regularly the best thing is a Platypus (flexible plastic bag / bottle with a long tube connected to the top which enables you to suck away to your heart's content!) Platypuses can be bought in sizes of up to 4 litres. If possible have at least a 2 litre container of some sort as 1 litre goes very quickly. Those with wide zip-seal openings are easiest when filling from cooking pots or streams etc.

Personal toiletries including sun cream etc

Bring a relatively high factor to start off with, as high altitude sun is very powerful. A normal towel (even a hand towel) is very heavy and takes ages to dry. Best is a small quick-dry towel you can buy in outdoor shops - they absorb a huge amount of moisture but pack away to nothing and dry really quickly.

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However they are quite expensive and you can get the virtual equivalent in your local supermarket - look for multi-purpose absorbent towels. Whilst your guide will have a First Aid kit with them it is not a general dispensary! Bring some small Band-Aids, Compeed etc if you feel your feet may suffer.

Insurance policy & EHIC form

Bring with you just in case.

Passport

A good idea is to photocopy this just in case you lose it - keep the photocopy at the bottom of your rucksack where it won't get lost.

Money

Don't forget that Switzerland is outside the Euro zone. Make sure to have Swiss Francs (CHF) with you to pay for food, drink and accommodation at huts. Even in the villages and towns many places won't take euros.

Additional suggestions

- Telescopic walking poles / ski sticks are very useful - particularly for those with suspect knees and when descending with a weight on your back! Strongly suggest you don't bother with just one pole – buy two or none as using one only tends to lead to a more lop-sided walk!
- Camera - as small and lightweight as possible – if you haven't gone digital, don't forget extra film - not available in the hills generally speaking. For those taking slides, bring your film out with you, as it is notoriously difficult to purchase from anything other than specialist stores.
- Light pair of binoculars to share around.
- Small torch - at night if you want to find something without turning on the light and waking everyone.
- Personal supply of snacks / high-energy bars! - everyone has their own preference - bring stuff from Ireland as items such as chocolate etc are expensive when bought in refuges.
- Book / pack of cards / Travel Scrabble - all of which encourage an even better sun tan when relaxing after the day's trek!
- Mountain huts have certain "in house" rules - one of them is that boots cannot be worn inside the building and to facilitate this, they give you a pair of "slippers" - varies from actual slippers to flip-flops to sandals etc. For hygiene reasons, comfort or otherwise you may like to bring your own sandals or flip-flops with you - even though it will mean a small amount of extra weight - the choice is yours.

Disclaimer

This fact sheet is for general guidance only. They have been compiled by individuals drawing on their own experience and on information from various sources and while every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the contents this accuracy cannot be guaranteed.

Alpine mountaineering is an activity in which the risk of serious injury or death is ever present. Each individual must take responsibility for his / her own decisions and actions and be prepared to use his / her own judgment should things go wrong.

Visit www.mountaineering.ie for further information

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