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INTRO TO ALPINE CLIMBING COURSE

SAMPLE ITINERARY

This program will provide opportunities for participants to learn alpine climbing skills for rock, snow, and ice while experiencing the outstanding climbing in the San Juan Mountains. Participants will be taught fundamental skills for alpine climbing such as movement techniques for technical rock climbing, belaying and rappelling, anchor building with artificial climbing protection, self arrest and ice axe use, french technique crampon use, techniques for steep snow and ice climbing, wilderness navigation and route planning, rope-team travel, crevasse rescue, and techniques for building safe and secure alpine camps. Emphasis will be placed on decision making and understanding of techniques for application on future climbs.

Day 1

Our first day will include an introduction to technical rock climbing at a local crag. Participants will learn techniques for belaying, rappelling, and movement on technical rock. There will also be an introduction to anchor building with artificial climbing protection. We will finish by 3:00 pm and we'll go back to the Peak Mountain Guides office to do a gear check before departing for the mountains tomorrow morning.

Day 2

We'll drive from Ouray to the Blue Lakes Trailhead on the North side of the Sneffels Range. We'll follow the trail for 3.2 miles and an ascent of 1400' to a protected campsite near treeline. During our hike we'll introduce wilderness navigation principles and map reading. Upon arrival at our camp we will discuss campsite selection and we'll build a sturdy camp for our stay. We'll then use the nearby snow slopes to begin practicing ice axe use, self arrest, and techniques for kicking steps in snow. In the evening we'll make a nice dinner and enjoy the alpine ambiance.

Day 3

We'll wake early to begin practicing crampon techniques, anchor building in snow, and belay methods for a snow environment. After a break for lunch we'll progress into rope team travel techniques and everyone will have a chance to travel on the rope while we go on a tour of the surrounding terrain. We will also introduce and practice crevasse rescue on a nearby snowbank. At the end of the afternoon we'll get out our maps and create a route plan for our upcoming ascent of 14,150' Mt. Sneffels. Another nice dinner and a relaxing evening in camp will be the finish to our day.

Day 4

We will wake early for our ascent of Mt. Sneffels in order to capitalize on the firm snow conditions of the early morning hours. Traveling by headlamp we will ascend the lower snow slopes of Mt. Sneffels into the upper alpine basin around 12,500'. From here we may choose from a variety of options for our ascent, depending on group fitness level and interests. We could ascend the Lavender Col route which includes steep snow climbing up to 40 degrees and a few hundred feet of moderate rock scrambling (class 3). Another option would be to ascend the Snake Couloir which includes steep snow and ice climbing up to 55 degrees and a full 100' pitch of mid-5th class rock climbing. Both routes offer exceptional opportunities to apply the skills learned in the previous days of the program. Each route also offers incredible big mountain views and classic alpine climbing. Once we have stood on the summit and exchanged high fives we'll descend the mountain back to our camp and return to the car. We should arrive in Ouray by 4:00.