

# KAHILTNA PEAKS EXPEDITION

*Alaska Mountaineering School promotes excellence in responsible mountaineering and wilderness travel through educating and guiding others. AMS programs follow a progression that prioritizes safety, teamwork, skill-building, respecting wilderness, and having fun. Our hands-on, you-do-it approach leads to successful outcomes. We want you to be able to repeat the skills you learned without supervision.*



## EXPEDITION DESCRIPTION

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The Kahiltna Peaks Expedition is designed for those who wish to climb some of the amazing peaks that line the Kahiltna Glacier off Denali. AMS has called this area The Playground for good reason; it has a high concentration of good quality routes for the experienced climber. For the past 30 years we have been taking climbers here who wish to advance their skills. We will access the mountains by ski plane and start by reviewing glacier travel and crevasse rescue techniques. After a warm up climb where we review snow and ice climbing techniques, we will break down camp and move towards our climbing objective. In the past we have climbed West Kahiltna Peak, East Kahiltna Peak, Mt. Crosson, Mt. Francis, Kahiltna Queen, and Kahiltna Dome.

## SPECIFICATIONS

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Difficulty: This is an advanced-level course.

Prerequisites: This expedition requires excellent mental and physical condition. You must be comfortable climbing and camping in exposed and steep locations, be able to carry a 50lb pack while pulling a 40lb sled and be comfortable camping in a remote wilderness mountain environment. This expedition requires a good understanding of the material covered in the *Illustrated Guide to Crevasse Rescue*, which will be sent to you upon enrollment. You must arrive with a prior knowledge of climbing knots, roped belaying, and rappelling techniques. Please contact us if you need clarification.

Fitness: Mountaineering in Alaska is more like a marathon than a sprint. You need stamina to carry you through multiple days of activity. Be prepared to be physically active every day for 8-12 hours of climbing, glacier travel, and building camp.

Deposit: \$3,000 due upon registration.

Expedition balance due: 120 days prior to the starting date.

Group limit: 4 climbers, 2 guides

Tuition includes: Professional mountaineering guides, roundtrip glacier flight, all food during your expedition, all group camping equipment such as tents, stoves, and shovels, all group climbing equipment such as ropes and anchors, and all emergency first aid, communication, and repair equipment.

You are responsible for: Transportation to and from Talkeetna, lodging before and after the expedition, entrance fees to Denali National Park and Preserve, travelers' cancellation insurance, personal equipment and clothing, and AMS equipment rentals.

## FEATURES

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- 1:2 guide-to-climber ratio.
- Crevasse rescue class at AMS HQ before flying to the glacier.
- All group gear is provided in order to represent the best equipment and equipment modifications.
- A curriculum-based format that prepares you for undertaking your own expedition in the future, unsupervised.

## EXPEDITION STYLE AND REMOTENESS

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The Kahiltna Peaks expedition is a self-reliant expedition that travels in a remote mountain range in Alaska. Throughout the expedition, we will expand on your knowledge of how to live in a glaciated environment and care for yourself and your team members. The expedition format emphasizes hands-on learning and the application of new skills in a variety of terrains. It also teaches self-reliance. If the weather is unflyable, evacuation to modern medical facilities can be difficult and may take several days. As is common on mountaineering expeditions, climbers should expect to have mixed-gender sleeping tents.

## ENVIRONMENT AND LOCATION

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This expedition flies into Denali National Park and Preserve, home to America's tallest and wildest mountains. The landing strip is located at 7,200' on the Kahiltna Glacier, which flows off the southwest slope of Denali. Kahiltna is the Tanaina native people's name for the river coming off the glacier. We will travel

on the Kahiltna, and then climb at various altitudes. Expect to be on the glacier for the duration of the expedition and be prepared to encounter all types of weather.

## **WILDERNESS APPRECIATION**

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AMS is based in Talkeetna in order to access the incredible wilderness of the Alaska Range. Anyone who spends days in these mountains will naturally achieve a wilderness experience. By role modeling the best conservation practices, we help develop wilderness appreciation. Thinking ahead and preparing, staying organized, bomb-proof our camps, and paying special attention to hygiene are all fundamental to protecting the wilderness. Leave No Trace techniques make us a stronger expedition and more likely to achieve our climbing goals.

## **TRAINING**

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Members of this expedition must adopt a goal of being in excellent physical condition at the start of the climb. By joining a professionally run expedition, you leave expedition logistics, food, equipment, and leadership to us. You are responsible for and have control over your physical fitness. It is imperative that everyone joining our expeditions be physically fit when the expedition begins. The better condition you are in, the more you will enjoy the climb, the safer it will be for you, and the better chance of success. Training for this course is going to be fun because you also need to brush up on your climbing skills. Many of the skills needed can be practiced in an indoor rock gym: putting on a harness, rope handling, belaying, and communication.

## **THE FIRST DAY**

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On the starting day of the expedition, you meet with your guides at 8:00 a.m. at AMS in downtown Talkeetna. There will be baked goods, coffee, tea, and fruit. After an orientation, we have an equipment check and lunch packing. Your guides will review all your equipment with you and ensure you are properly outfitted. Any items needed can be rented or purchased at this time. There is no need to reserve in advance. Please read the Equipment List for more information. You will pack your lunches in the AMS food room with food we provide. Please read the Lunch Packing sheet for more information. By mid-day, we serve a hearty lunch at AMS. After lunch, we dress in field clothing, put on harnesses and helmets, and review crevasse self-rescue by practicing fixed line ascension. After taking care of last-minute items and storing any gear we are not taking, we drive to the Talkeetna airport. Our transportation to the glacier is on ski-equipped, fixed-wing airplanes like the DeHaviland single-engine turbine Otter. The

45-minute flight into the mountains is a spectacular highlight at the beginning and end of the expedition. After arriving on the glacier, we will travel a short distance and build our first camp. Once camp is built, we'll enjoy our first dinner and go to bed warm and dry. It is a busy day, and we ask you to be on time and take care of personal business beforehand.

## **UNFLYABLE WEATHER**

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Alaska's mountain weather is unpredictable and challenging to forecast. It can prevent flying into or out of the mountains on time. If your expedition is unable to fly out on time, we will stay busy teaching classes using our indoor climbing wall and outside simulated glacier at AMS. If the weather prevents flying to the glacier, you will have the option of camping at AMS. Although rare, persistent stormy weather at the beginning of an expedition could result in a location change. During the expedition, expect to see a wide range of weather. Expeditions can also be weathered in the mountains and unable to fly out. We avoid running low on rations by flying in with a week of extra food and fuel. We recommend allowing two days on the return end of your travel plans (and/or purchasing flexible airline tickets) in case of delays. Please also refer to the *Travel and Logistics* sheet.

## **LEADERSHIP & TEAMWORK**

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Successful expeditions are appropriately equipped and have the necessary technical skills, but most importantly, they practice good leadership and learn to work together to achieve group goals. "Teamwork makes the dream work," and that starts on Day 1. At AMS, developing leadership and teamwork begins with gaining experience and developing good judgment. We teach a style of leadership that emphasizes the importance of taking care of your basic needs first, like hydration and nutrition and staying warm and organized. Learning teamwork and good communication skills are essential on any un-supported multi-day expedition.

## **FOOD**

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What to eat and how to cook it is vital to the success of any multi-day backcountry expedition. Just as important as tying your knots, having a good kitchen set up with the right food will make or break an expedition. We know that looking forward to breakfast is an excellent way to start each day. Just as looking forward to dinner helps us push to the finish line. AMS' ration plan can be adjusted to accommodate vegetarians and other dietary needs, but be aware that breakfast and dinner meals are communal. We technically all eat out of the same pot. Make sure to contact AMS if you have any medical dietary needs. See our *Expedition Food* sheet for more details.

## REFERENCES

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Alaska Mountaineering School is a small, family-run operation that cares deeply about meeting the high standards it sets. Based entirely in Talkeetna, Alaska, we are focused on the mountains in our backyard, the Alaska Range. Please research AMS and tell us what you find. Ask the other companies that pop up who they would recommend if you couldn't go with them. Most will be comfortable recommending AMS.

## EXPEDITION OBJECTIVES

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Each Kahiltna Peaks expedition is unique due to variables such as participants and environmental conditions. Considering these variables, we aim for each climber to accomplish the following objectives.

### Safety and Judgment

AMS emphasizes mountaineering skills that promote the health and safety of all expedition members.

- Manage the hazards of traveling and camping in a glaciated mountain environment
- Recognize and prevent cold injuries
- Display knowledge of personal limitations and the judgment to stay within them

### Leadership and Teamwork

Climbers are exposed to different methods of outdoor leadership, teamwork, and expedition behavior.

- Display understanding of guides' decision-making processes through discussion and questioning
- Demonstrate good expedition behavior with a positive attitude and desire to achieve group goals
- Effectively communicate ideas and concerns with individuals and within the group
- Use good judgment and attention to detail to participate fully in a safe, environmentally sound expedition

### Environmental Ethics

An important part of every AMS expedition is a wilderness experience and learning Leave No Trace skills.

- Practice minimum-impact camping and traveling skills appropriate to a glaciated environment

### Winter Camping

AMS expeditions use camping skills that protect the user and the environment:

- Select a campsite, build a fortified perimeter camp, and stay within the confines of wanded areas
- Live comfortably camping and dressing for a variety of conditions
- Be organized and take care of personal and group equipment

## Mountaineering

This is an expedition focused on climbing objectives in the Kahiltna Glacier area.

- Place snow protection and build anchors
- Use belay techniques appropriate to the situation: glacier travel, running protection, fixed lines, and alpine terrain
- Demonstrate ice climbing techniques
- Demonstrate rappelling techniques
- Recognize and avoid avalanche terrain and make stability assessments
- Establish a skill base to be a strong expedition member on any similar climbing expedition

## DAY-TO-DAY ITINERARY

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The Kahiltna Peaks expedition's sample day-to-day itinerary is designed to get the most out of the number of days available to climb.

### Guide Briefing and Packing Days

Your guides dedicate two days before the start date to prepare by briefing, checking equipment, and packing food. Stoves are fired up, tents are set up, radios are checked, and ropes are inspected. We adhere to the motto, "Prior planning prevents poor performance."

### Day 1

8:00 am: Meet at AMS for expedition orientation and overview of the day. Check equipment and issue gear. Pack lunches. Calculate weights. This is a busy day, so please be on time.

12:00 pm: Lunch provided at AMS

1:00 pm: Review fixed-line ascension, knots, use of waist and chest harness and helmet, ascending techniques, and releasing the backpack.

3:30 pm: Load van. 3-minute drive to the airport. Organize loads for fixed-wing flights.

4:00 pm: Fly onto the glacier and set up the first camp

7:00 pm: Have dinner and head to bed

### Day 2

Meet with day packs ready for a full day of travel out of our base camp. You and your guides will assess snow conditions and review snow climbing techniques, self-arrest, belaying, running protection, and anchor building.

### **Day 3**

Warm up on a shorter climb near your base camp and practice climbing techniques. Peak Options include east ridge of Mt. Frances or Radio Tower Peak.

### **Day 4**

Pack up and move camp towards climbing objective. Example: East Fork of the Kahiltna Glacier to climb the south ridge of East Kahiltna Peak.

### **Day 5**

Climb part way up the route and make high camp. East Kahiltna Peak.

### **Day 6**

Climb to the summit and return to high camp.

### **Day 7**

Descend to Kahiltna Glacier, rest and re-organize.

### **Day 8**

Climb multi-pitch route on south side of West Kahiltna Peak

### **Day 9**

Travel across the East Fork of the Kahiltna Glacier and climb a multi-pitch ice route on Denali's Southeast Buttress.

### **Day 10**

Pack up and move back to the airstrip, SE Fork of the Kahiltna Glacier. Meet our air taxi flight and return to Talkeetna; enjoy welcome-back watermelon. De-issue equipment and rental gear.