

Ouray Ice Climbing Programs

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Ouray, located in the San Juan Range of southwestern Colorado, is one of the few locations in the lower 48 states where quality ice climbing is virtually guaranteed in the winter months. A combination of good weather (285 sunny days per year), easy access to quality climbing, and the small, picturesque resort town setting have contributed to Ouray's nickname, "Ice Climbing Capital of North America."

These programs are an excellent choice for those considering participation in an expedition or climb that requires confident cramponing in icy conditions. Focusing on the balance and technique necessary for climbing steep water ice gives one a real advantage when the going gets tougher. Upcoming IMG expeditions for which this training is useful training include Everest, Denali, Alaska, Mt. Logan, Aconcagua, the big peaks of South America and the Himalayas.

For you skiers, ice climbing is the perfect complement to a ski vacation. Telluride is just 47 miles or an hour drive away from Ouray! Bring the family skiing, then come spend a few days training with us.

A typical climbing day will start with breakfast at your hotel. Access to the Ice Park is right at the edge of town, a pleasant hike along the top of the box canyon. There are at least 11 distinct areas in the Ice Park with all levels of climbing and more than 150 named routes. The 3 and 5-day programs have the option of visiting "natural" ice outside the Park on Forest Service land. In the evening you can visit your motel hot tub or the hot springs pool in town to soak and relax, then finish with dinner at a local restaurant.

Seminar instructors are selected from IMG's premiere staff of ice guides: Justin Merle, Andy Polloczek, Jonathon Schrock, Eric Remza, Marc and Sondra Ripperger, Ryan Dougherty, Max Lurie and other local experts. George Dunn still makes an appearance occasionally; it is too fun to miss!

The focus of the programs will be on improving individual climbing skills. With a small instructor/student ratio there will be lots of close attention for all levels of climbers. Participants are encouraged to progress at their own pace and comfort level.

No previous ice climbing experience is required. Sign up for a two-day, three-day or five-day course, and come have a great time with us!

Ouray: Just The Facts

The Town:

Ouray, Colorado, elevation 7,760', population 700, 9 blocks long, 6 blocks wide, mostly built in the 1800's, designated a National Historic District, and is in the Uncompahgre Gorge of the San Juan Mountains

The Park:

Most climbing is within walking distance of town, and the park which is just over 3/4 miles long is divided into three sections: Lower and Upper Gorges and an area between the footbridge and road bridge.

Don't Try This At Home, But...:

The secret to making good ice is to angle the nozzles so that the water has time to cool down before coming in contact with the existing ice and rock face.

Not to Brag:

Ouray sees 285 days of sunshine a year

Bring a Jacket Anyway:

Night temps can drop to -20°

In the Beginning:

Jeff Lowe and Mike Weis made the first ascent of Bridalveil Falls in 1974

Private Playground:

Eric Jacobsen, owner of Ouray Hydroelectric, purchased the land in a bankruptcy auction in 1992. Sympathetic to climbers, Eric's only caveat was that he had to have adequate liability insurance coverage provided for himself and his company.

Fit for a Climber's Budget:

Under a unique land-use arrangement, the County of Ouray insured Eric and Ouray Hydroelectric under its insurance umbrella, and Eric in turn leased to the county the use of the land for recreational purposes for \$1.00 a year until 2008. This was the critical ingredient for laying the foundation of the Ice Park.

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Transportation

Ouray can be reached by flying into one of several nearby locations. Montrose is the closest and most logical destination (34 miles, 40 minutes driving). Grand Junction (96 miles, 2 hours) and Denver (300 miles, 6-7 hours) are also options. It's easy to rent a car, or there are two shuttle service options from Montrose to Ouray: Western Slope Rides, gowsr.com and Telluride Express, tellurideexpress.com. We send out a team roster a couple of weeks in advance and encourage teaming up to share the shuttle or a rental car.

Lodging

There are many options to choose from in the town of Ouray. Recommended options include:

Hotel Ouray, 303 6th Ave

A newly restored historic hotel right on main street.

Comfort Inn, 191 5th Ave

Clean rooms, good value and nice breakfast

Victorian Inn, 50, 3rd Ave

The historic "climbers choice" with new management

Box Canyon lodge, 45, 3rd Ave

Right across from the Vic and equally nice

St Elmo Hotel, 426 Main ST

Smaller, well-appointed hotel with a great restaurant

Beaumont Hotel, 505 Main ST

A nicely restored historic building right on Main Street

Make your reservations early, ESPECIALLY around the Ice Festival. Lodging is **not** included in the cost of the program. Team members are encouraged to share rooms.

REQUIRED Insurance: IMG requires that all* trip participants purchase [Travel Insurance](#) that includes coverage for medical evacuation, repatriation and medical expenses for the duration of their IMG program. Trip Cancellation Insurance is strongly recommended. Trekking and mountaineering programs are true "adventure travel."

**The insurance requirement does not apply to IMG customers on programs within the continental USA, but is strongly encouraged.*

"This trip is a 'don't-miss.' The scenery is excellent, the town is cool and funky, the pace is relaxed, the company is fun, and the climbing is exquisite..."

—Bob G.

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

Ouray: Just The Facts (cont.)

And With PVC It Shall Be Built:

In the fall of 1994, Bill Whitt, Gary Wild, and Mike O'Donnell strung out some half inch pvc pipe and the odd assortment of garden hose and sprinkler heads and began to farm ice in the gorge. A crop of long steep flows of crystal blue ice appeared on previously blank rock; the Ouray Ice Park had arrived as the world's first park devoted exclusively to the sport of ice climbing.

By Any Other Name:

The result was a wealth of new climbing terrain in Box Canyon, which since 1996 has been known as the Ouray Ice Park.

The First Festival:

Jeff Lowe, along with O'Donnell, Wild and Whitt organized the Arctic Wolf Ouray Ice Festival in January 1996.

Like No Other Board:

The Ouray Ice Park was built entirely by volunteers with donated materials and capital. Ouray Ice Park, Inc. (OIP), formed in January of 1997, is a non-profit corporation that includes seven volunteer board members who are considerably skilled at ditch-digging and plumbing systems.

The Routes:

Ouray has almost 200 named and graded routes, all high quality, between 70-100' long, with legendary names like:

- Dizzy With The Vision
- Titanic
- Gender Bender
- Arachnid
- Easter Rising
- Tractor Pull
- Bloody Sunday
- The Skylight
- Gravity's Rainbow
- Centerfold
- Solar Circus
- Blue Velvet
- Birdbrain Boulevard
- Tourist Trap
- ACDC
- Le Pissoir
- Root Canal
- Tangled Up In Blue
- Stone Free
- The Schoolroom

Essential Climbing Stops:

Fuel up at Buen Tiempo, Ouray's Mexican restaurant. Pick up your climbing gear at Ouray Mountain Sports.

IMG Ouray Ice Climbing Programs Dates and Prices

Ouray, CO 2-Day Beginner's Program

Recommended for first time climbers. A great introduction to the basics of ice climbing in the close by and easily accessible Ouray Ice Park. If you aren't sure if you will enjoy ice climbing, try this first. You'll be back next year for a longer program!

Jan 2-3, 2021 • Jan 16-17, 2021 • Feb 20-21, 2021
Ratio: 3 students per guide • Landcost: \$500

Ouray, CO 3-Day Beginner's Ice Climbing

This is the recommended short program to get you started out right with a smaller guide ratio, more time to learn skills and practice them.

Jan 9-11, 2021 • Jan 30-Feb 1, 2021 • Feb 13-15, 2021
Ratio: 3 students per guide • Landcost: \$750

Ouray, CO 3-Day Intermediate Ice Climbing

A short program recommended for those who have taken an ice climbing program previously. Focus will be on climbing more routes on varied terrain and working on advancing skills.

Jan 13-15, 2021 • Feb 5-7, 2021
Ratio: 3 students per guide • Landcost: \$750

Ouray, CO 5-Day Ice Climbing

Open to all levels of experience, suitable for first time ice climbers AND repeat climbers. Participants are teamed up based on ability and learning styles. An in depth learning experience with lots of climbing and time to really improve skills.

Feb 22-26, 2021
Ratio: 2 students per guide • Landcost: \$1,500

5-day Veteran's Seminar

Open to past participants of Ouray programs. We do not expect participants to be experts, but rather to have had previous experience and be ready to tackle different climbs in different areas. This is the ultimate fun Ouray program, drawing repeat visitors from many years back.

Jan 25-29, 2021 (Come a few days early for the Ice Festival, Jan 21-24, 2021!)
Landcost: Cost: \$1,250

Private Guided Programs

Can't make any of our advertised programs fit your schedule? We offer custom climbs for any size group from 1 to 8. Rates are based on guide to climber ratio just like our regular programs. Fit your dates, skill level and group size to our guide ratio for the perfect program to suit your needs. We can accommodate any ability, from first time climbers, to family groups, to advanced ice climbers. Our guides will create the best possible experience for you in Ouray. **Register early to confirm your preferred dates.**

1:1 guiding \$450/day
2:1 guiding \$300/day per person
3:1 guiding \$250/day per person

Ouray, CO Everest Skills Training

For climbers looking to brush up on skills required for climbing Everest or any high, technical mountain, Ouray is the perfect training ground. Learn the best ways to efficiently ascend and descend fixed lines, cross ladders, and generally prepare for your upcoming expedition. While you're at it, have some fun ice climbing! The movement skills will greatly aid your climb through the Khumbu icefall or on the technical pitches of any big mountain. Get personal advice about your climb, your gear, and your training. One of our top Everest guides will show you the ropes, consult with you about your upcoming trip and help you to fine tune your skills and your equipment.

Custom dates only, based on guide availability. 3-5 days recommended based on your needs.
Landcost per person: 1:1 \$500 per day • 2:1 \$325 per day

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Ouray Ice Climbing Programs Dates and Prices (continued)

Private Climbs in the Ouray and Silverton Backcountry

Available to climbers who have intermediate to advanced level skills and would like to do an all-day climb on natural ice at a higher grade.

Options include the following climbs (please check with IMG regarding conditions and route availability, as options change throughout the season):

- In the Silverton/Eureka area: Stairway to Heaven; Whorehouse Hoses; Goldrush and more.
- South Mineral Creek: Direct North Face; Campground Couloir; Snowblind; Sundance
- Campbird Road: The Ribbon

Landcost per person: 1:1 \$500 per day • 2:1 \$325 per day

Ouray Ice Climbing Programs Sample Itinerary

Day 1: Group meets at 8:00 a.m. at the Ouray Victorian Inn's breakfast room. After a general introduction of the instructors and the team and a brief discussion of appropriate clothing and equipment, the group will walk to the nearby training area located in the Ouray Ice Park. Prior to the start of training, the guides will discuss standards of safety and Leave No Trace ethics to be maintained by the group throughout the program. Topics to be covered on Day 1 will likely include: French technique/flat footing skills on lower angle ice; working on balance over the feet, flat footing and then front pointing; top-roped climbing without tools. The latter part of the day will be spent top-roping Grade II to III ice to develop technique. Other skills to be introduced include belaying, rappelling, and rope management.

Day 2: Continued top-roping in the Ouray Ice Park, gradually increasing the difficulty of pitches up to Grade III with the introduction of additional techniques as appropriate. Other topics of discussion and applied practice will include anchors (screws, bollards and threaded runners), anchor systems and rappelling. Climbing will cater to the group's ability level and goals, and could include visiting backcountry ice.

For the Three-Day Seminar add the following session:

Day 3: Lead climbing skills. We will practice on single and possible multiple pitch climbs placing screws on the lead, setting up belays, and swapping leads. Students may simulate leads with a top-rope backup. Options including climbing outside the Ice Park on natural ice.

For the Five-Day Seminar add the following sessions:

Day 4: Advanced skills. A multiple pitch climb will be attempted as conditions permit to introduce students to an array of advanced skills. Smaller instructor/student ratio (1:2) will allow for fine-tuning of individual technique. We will likely visit one of the natural ice formations nearby. This is a great day, putting to use all of the skills we have learned to this point. The climbing will not be more difficult, just a "real life" climb led by the guide, natural belay stations and a beautiful view.

Day 5: Advanced skills, continued. We will have the opportunity to top-rope harder problems, grade IV and up. Techniques will be introduced for dealing with the steepest and thinnest ice as well as mixed terrain. We may also take the opportunity to visit another of the areas surrounding Ouray for more fun climbing.

For private program custom itineraries, please contact the IMG office and Justin Merle, Ouray Program Director.

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

Ouray Required Personal Equipment List

- Boots: **Rigid** lug-sole climbing boots. Your boot must have a welt that accepts a clip-on crampon. Modern insulated leather or synthetic climbing boots are much lighter and more precise for ice climbing than plastic double boots. Either is acceptable for the course.
- Socks: Two changes of heavy wool or synthetic
- Gaiters: short boot top gaiters are more flexible, but traditional knee high gaiters will work fine. Many boots these days have integrated gaiters, and climbing pants that stay in place over the boot top will work without gaiters as well.
- Long underwear: Synthetic or wool tops and bottoms
- Soft Shell Pants: Any of the mid-weight climbing pants made from stretchy, dense weave, durable synthetic fabric (like the Outdoor Research Cirque pant) are ideal.
- Shell Pants: Breathable/waterproof with full to $\frac{3}{4}$ length zips to go on over boots
- Shirt: Expedition weight synthetic top
- Soft Shell Jacket and other mid-layers (temps can range from 0 F to highs in the 40's).
- Shell Jacket: Breathable/waterproof jacket with hood. Lightweight and slim in fit is best for ice climbing.
- Warm Parka: Down or synthetic filled, but does not need to be 8000m weight. A mid-weight warm belay jacket is fine. We do a lot of standing around belaying and watching, so an insulated layer is essential to stay warm between climbs.
- Hat: Wool or fleece with a Buff, neck gaiter or a balaclava. Pick a hat that fits well under your helmet.
- Gloves: Bring minimum 2 pair, at least one good insulated glove for belaying, and one that balances warmth and dexterity for climbing. Bring gloves with a good grip (leather palms work well). You may need to trade off your gloves as they get wet, so having several options is good. A good all around glove is the Outdoor Research Extravert. Simple, dexterous, warm. The OR Stormtracker works well for dexterity on climbs, but is less warm.
- Mittens (optional): insulated mitts with a water resistant shell and a good grip. These are backups only, or for those with extra cold hands. Most ice climbers prefer to use gloves if at all possible.
- Helmet: A good fitting UIAA approved climbing helmet.
- Ice Tools: Two 45 to 50 cm. technical ice tools.
Recommended manufacturers include Petzl, Black Diamond and Grivel
. If you just buy one tool, get a hammer head, not an adze. Many ice climbers have hammer heads on both of their tools. No adze to bonk yourself in the forehead with.
Leashless tools are the standard, and for good reason. Best adapted for mixed and steeper climbing, leashless tools open up a whole new set of options for the modern ice climber.

Stumped on what to buy? It is probably best to rent tools and technical crampons your first time out. IMG has them available for you in Ouray. Try out as many types of tools as you can and see what works best for you before you buy.

“Just got back from Ouray and had a great time, even better than last year, and I didn't think that was possible! We expected it to be a fun trip, but I do believe that IMG has once again out-done itself.”

—Stacey R.

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- Crampons: vertical front point crampons, hand filed sharp. Recommended brands include Petzl, Black Diamond and Grivel. More and more climbers are choosing monopoints for serious ice climbing and mixed climbing. The single front point allows you to pivot your foot more and places well in narrow cracks. Just make sure your crampon has aggressive secondary points close to the front monopoint for softer or rotten ice conditions. Monopoint is great for technical ice and mixed climbing, dual points still work best for general alpine climbing and in softer ice.
- Climbing Harness with belay loop: Adjustable leg loops, good gear loops, and ice-clipper slots are helpful.
- Carabiners: 2 locking pear shaped 'biners, minimum. Bring a couple of non-lockers if you have them.

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Ouray Required Personal Equipment List (continued)

- Belay Device: Black Diamond ATC XP or ATC Guide or any of the comparable devices.
- Sun Glasses: Good shatter resistant, wraparound sunglasses that provide eye protection and minimize fogging.
- Suncream and Lipbalm
- Water Bottle: One quart, wide mouth plastic bottle with insulating cover.
- Thermos: It's nice to bring hot coffee or tea out for the day.
- Pack: Good sized (30-50L works well) climbing pack to carry spare clothes, food and ice tools for the day.
- First Aid Kit: Each individual should carry a small kit to meet their personal needs. Recommendations include: Aspirin or Tylenol, Ibuprofen, Band-Aids, Steri-Strips, 1 or 2 4X4 gauze pads, athletic tape, moleskin and any necessary personal prescription drugs.
- Everest Training programs only:* Bring a handled ascender, figure-8 device, large carabiner (consider the Petzl Vertigo WL), and 12' of 8mm accessory cord and we will help you dial in your ascender/safety tether rig for the big mountains.

Optional:

- Sewn webbing runners: a 48" nylon runner is super useful as a rappel extension, and highly recommended if you'll be climbing in the backcountry or wish to practice rappelling.
- Extra non-locking carabiners
- Ice screws (if you have your own, you're welcome to bring them to practice with, but guides will have enough).
- Prussik Slings: Bring two pretied 6mm. prussik loops if you plan to practice rescue training (as in on the 5-day seminar. Construct each prussik out 4.5 feet of 6mm Perlon accessory cord tied with a double fisherman's knot. Or just bring 10-15 feet of 6mm cord to create your own.
- Extra non-locking carabiners
- 20 feet of 7mm. cord for linking anchors if you want to practice anchor systems
- Camera with extra batteries
- Disposable glove warmers, for those with cold sensitive fingers
- Swimsuit for the hot tub

NOTE: If you do not own ice tools or vertical front point crampons and do not wish to purchase them, rental tools and crampons are available for an additional fee. Make your request early, as supplies are limited. Our ice tool stock currently includes Petzl Nomics and Quarks. Crampons are Black Diamond Cyborgs.

RENTAL RATES:

Item:	2 Days	3 Days	5 Days	per Add'l Day
One Ice Climbing Tool	\$10	\$15	\$25	\$5
Two Ice Climbing Tools	\$20	\$30	\$50	\$10
Technical Crampons	\$10	\$15	\$25	\$5

“Ice climbing in Ouray, Colorado with George Dunn and International Mountain Guides has become an annual event for me and a few friends. The guides are knowledgeable and fun, the access is easy and the climbing is great! All this combined with evenings relaxing and socializing with fellow clients and guides makes Ouray a wonderful respite from life in the real world...”

—Keith C.

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