

Ouray Ice Climbing Seminars

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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 seminars 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 on expeditions that require the ability to crampon with confidence. Upcoming IMG expeditions for which this seminar is useful training include Denali, the Wrangell/St. Elias Range, Mt. Logan, 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 seminar day will start with breakfast at the hotel. Access to the Ice Park is a stroll across the street to the start of the box canyon. There are at least 12 distinct areas in the Ice Park with all levels of climbing and upwards of 200 named routes. The 5-day seminars have the option of visiting "natural" ice outside the Park on Forest Service land. In the evening we will head straight to the 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: Jeff Ward, Jake Norton, Chris Booher, Ben Marshal, Matt Farmer, Zoe Hart and Justin Merle. George Dunn still makes an appearance for a week or two each year, it is too fun to miss!

The focus of the seminars 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!

George Dunn and International Mountain Guides lead climbs outside of the Ouray Ice Park on land located on the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests under special use permit from the Forest Service, USDA.

International Mountain Guides is an equal opportunity service provider

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), Telluride, (47 miles, 1 hour), Grand Junction (96 miles, 2 hours) and Denver (300 miles, 6-7 hours). There is a shuttle service from Montrose and Telluride (Telluride Express, 1-800-800-6228). The shuttle fee is \$25 a person one way, with a minimum of 3 persons. We send out a team roster 30 days in advance and encourage teaming up to share the shuttle or a rental car. We will have a vehicle available in Ouray to shuttle climbers to and from the ice climbing areas.

Lodging

Participants are encouraged to stay at the Ouray Victorian Inn in town, right next to the Ice Park.

Call early to confirm reservations, ESPECIALLY around the Ice Festival (January 9-13, 2008)
1-800-84-OURAY

Please note:

Lodging is **not** included in the cost of the program. Team members are encouraged to share rooms.

“The Ice climbing seminar is out of control. You stay in a hotel all week and the ice park is just a couple minutes away. Jake Norton, and Jeff Ward, two of George's assistant guides are great. They are very good teachers. It's amazing how fast everyone picked up the ice climbing skills. Our skills and confidence improved every day. At the end of each day we'd hit the outdoor hot tub, drink a few beers, and talk about our adventures of the day. Our group pushed each other to do better every day, and we did...”

—Bruce 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.

Recent Expansion

Capacity of the Ice Park has recently been increased by 50% with the addition of "South Park" and other areas to the south of the "Schoolroom".

Dates and Cost

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 22-23, 2011

Feb 5-6, 2011

Ratio: 4 students per guide

Landcost: \$320

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.

Dec 31-Jan 2, 2011

Jan 28-30, 2011

Feb 19-21, 2011

Ratio: 3 students per guide

Landcost: \$600

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 15-17, 2011

Feb 11-13, 2011

Ratio: 3 students per guide

Landcost: \$600

Ouray, CO 5-Day Ice Climbing Seminar

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.

Jan 31-Feb 4, 2011

Feb 21-25, 2011

Ratio: 2 students per guide

Landcost: \$1,125

Private Guided Programs

Create your own program with our expert guides to suit your schedule. For first time climbers looking for an introduction to the sport and advanced climbers seeking longer/more technical guided routes.

1:1 guiding \$300/half day or \$400/day

2:1 guiding \$225/day per person

3:1 guiding \$200/day per person

4:1 guiding \$160/day per person

Register early to confirm your preferred dates

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 10-14, 2011 (Come a few days early for the Ice Festival, Jan 6-9!)

Landcost: Cost: \$1,125

“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.

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

Ouray Ice Climbing Programs 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 and self/partner rescue techniques.

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.

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.

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 other ice climbing areas 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.

"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 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: Knee length
- Longjohns: Synthetic tops and bottoms
- Pants: Fleece (side zips recommended). Best of all are the new climbing pants made from Schoeller brand fabric - a stretchy, dense weave, durable synthetic fabric (several manufacturers).
- Shell Pants: Breathable/waterproof with full zips to go on over boots
- Shirt: Expedition weight synthetic long john top
- Fleece Jacket
- 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 expedition weight. A down sweater is fine. We do a lot of standing around belaying and watching, so an insulated layer is essential.
- Hat: Wool or fleece with a neck gaiter or a balaclava. Pick a hat that fits well under your helmet.
- Gloves: Bring 2 pair, at least one good Gore-Tex fleece or synthetic lined climbing glove or a Gore-Tex ski glove. Something with a good grip and padding for the knuckles. You'll probably need to trade off your gloves each day, leaving the other back at the hotel to dry completely.
- Mittens: Wool or fleece with an overshell 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 with wrist leashes.
Recommended manufacturers include Charlet Moser (Quark, Aztar), Grivel (Light Wing, Taa-Koon), Black Diamond (Rage, Cobra or Viper) and Trango.

Search the internet; you can often come up with good deals on last year's models and other bargains. 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. Don't overlook the wristleash. Some tools come with a wristleash, most do not.

Leashless tools are the new rage, 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. Try out as many types of tools as you can and see what works best for you before you buy.

- Crampons: Rigid or semi-rigid are preferred, hand filed sharp. Recommended brands include Charlet Moser (M-10, Dart, Dartwin), Grivel (Rambo, G14), Black Diamond (Bionic or Sabertooth), Trango (Harpoon).
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 the way to go for technical ice and mixed climbing, Dual points still work best for general alpine climbing.
- Prussik Slings: Bring two pretied 7mm. prussik loops.
Construct each prussik out of 4.5 feet of 7mm Perlon accessory cord tied with a double fisherman's knot. One or two sewn 24" webbing runners may also be useful.

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Ouray Required Personal Equipment List (continued)

- Seat Harness: Adjustable leg loops and gear loops are both helpful.
- Carabiners: Two locking pear shaped biners and two non-locking, minimum.
- Belay Device: Black Diamond ATC XP or any of the comparable devices.
- Sun Glasses: Double lens goggles are a good backup or for inclement weather.
- Suncream
- Lipbalm
- Water Bottle: One quart, wide mouth plastic bottle with insulating cover.
A thermos is an excellent option.
- Pack: Good sized daypack to carry spare clothes, food and 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.

Optional:

- Ice screws
- Sewn webbing runners
- 15 - 20 feet of 7mm. cord for linking anchors or constructing prussiks
- Camera and film
- Swimsuit for the hot tub
- Disposable glove warmers, for those with cold sensitive fingers

If you do not own ice tools or rigid crampons and do not wish to purchase them, rental tools and rigid crampons are available for an additional fee. Make your request early, as supplies are limited.

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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