

VALDEZ ICE CLIMBING SEMINAR

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Located on the north shore of Port Valdez, a deep-water fjord in Prince William Sound, Valdez is surrounded by the heavily glaciated Chugach Mountains. The combination of moist air coming off the ocean and rising abruptly over the mountains and the cool, but not arctic climate makes for incredible ice climbing and downhill skiing. March temperatures range from 22 F. to 36 F, a perfect temperature range for forming consistent, climbable ice. Annual precipitation is 59.3 inches and the average snowfall is an impressive 300 inches annually. Valdez lies 305 road miles east of Anchorage. The town covers 274 square miles. As of 2006, the population was about 4,500.

The early settlement of Valdez was for the purposes of fur trading, commercial fishing and mining. During the Klondike Gold Rush of 1897-98, prospectors came to Valdez searching for an entry to the interior gold fields. From 1910 to 1916, copper and gold mining flourished in the area. In the early 1970's, Valdez became the center for work on the Trans Alaska Pipeline. Today, the northernmost ice-free port in North America, Valdez is known for hosting the southern terminus of the 800-mile Trans-Alaska oil pipeline. Other attractions include tourism, recreation, and a wintertime helicopter skiing industry.

Our group will meet at the Anchorage airport, at 12:00 noon, the day prior to the starting date of the program. Daily air service from Anchorage to Valdez is available, but there is a high probability for cancelled flights to Valdez due to weather. Instead, those interested will share the cost of a rental van for a more certain arrival in Valdez that evening. The drive to Valdez takes 6 or more hours, depending on road conditions. Some participants, especially those traveling from back East, will want to arrive the night prior and overnight in Anchorage. IMG is happy to recommend a convenient and affordable Bed and Breakfast in Anchorage, and a pickup at the B&B is available.

It is a scenic and enjoyable drive from Anchorage through the Matanuska Valley bordered by the Talkeetna Mountains and the Alaska Range to the north, and the Chugach Mountains to the south. At Glennallen, the route turns south on the Richardson Highway for the last leg of the journey to Valdez. There is an opportunity for spectacular views of some of the major peaks of the Wrangell Mountains.

As we draw close to Valdez, we will pass through Keystone Canyon on the Richardson Highway. It is an area of spectacular waterfalls, magnificent geology and fascinating history. Keystone Canyon is the location of the best ice climbing in the area. Don't forget to have your camera available to capture your first photos of the scenic waterfalls. The most well known include Horsetail Falls and Bridal Veil Falls. We'll scope out possibilities for the following morning's initial climb.

The group will check into a Bed and Breakfast in Valdez, which will be our base for the following 6 nights. IMG will make group reservations, but the cost of lodging will be up to each individual, to be paid upon your arrival. We'll retire as early as possible in anticipation of busy and eventful first day, with more to follow!

Trip Date and Price: IMG does not plan to visit Valdez in 2007, but will instead be running a program to Banff, Alberta. Please contact us for details: (360)569-2609

Guides: Guide ratio is 1:2.

Participation Requirements: All participants must have previous experience following multi-pitch ice climbs of grade III and IV. Solid belaying and rappelling skills are required. Previous participation in a 5-day Ouray Ice Climbing Seminar is required except with special permission.

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Day Prior The group will meet at Anchorage International Airport in the baggage claim area by noon, the day prior to the start of the program. The guides will arrange to rent a van for the group, the shared cost of which will be divided equally between the members. Some participants, especially those who live back East, will want to spend the previous night in Anchorage. IMG recommends the Earth Bed and Breakfast, a convenient, economical, climber friendly establishment in Anchorage. Phone: (907) 279-9907; 1001 West 12th Avenue, Anchorage, AK 99501
earthbb@pobox.alaska.net ; www.AlaskaOne.com/earthbb

After departing the airport at noon, we'll make one stop to pick up those staying at the Earth B&B. The drive to Valdez is very scenic, and takes approximately 6 hours in reasonable driving conditions. Upon arrival in Valdez, we'll check into the B&B and get a good night's sleep. Advanced reservations for the group will be made by IMG, but each individual will be responsible to pay for their lodging for the week upon arrival. Brookside Inn B&B. Valdez, AK. brookinn@pobox.alaska.net (907) 835-8666.

Day 1 Breakfast will be at a reasonable time, with no need for haste the first day. We'll use the morning to check out the approaches and scope out a good first climb. The climbs are located on the other side of the Lowe River, directly across from the highway. In years of warmer weather and dryer conditions, there may be a required rope crossing (Tyrolean traverse) to cross the Lowe River and reach the climbs. The river isn't normally too wide or deep, and the crossing is not a serious undertaking.

Each evening, at the end of the day's training, members will have the option to join the group for dinner in one of the local restaurants. Casual dress is the norm.

Day 2-5 As the team starts to pick up momentum, more challenging and longer climbs will be selected. We'll have a group consensus each day about what the scope of the climbs will be. Some members may want to elect to take an easier day or two, part way through the program, in anticipation of bigger climbs to come. Group goals will be an ascent of one major multi-pitch climb such as Bridalveil Falls (600') or Keystone Greensteps (650'), both Grade V climbs. There is no longer a guidebook for the area in print, but one is posted on the web: **Ice Guide to Valdez, Blue Ice and Black Gold** <http://www.geocities.com/guide99686/index.html> (Keystone Canyon page).

As always, final decisions about the climbs to be attempted each day will be solely up to the guides, and will be based on route conditions, weather, climber ability and avalanche hazard. Safety will be the primary concern at all times.

The final day will end with one last meal and town, a team celebration, and a final night at the B&B.

Day 6 The group will breakfast early and depart for Anchorage by 9:00 a.m. We'll drive straight to the airport. It would be wise, given the nature of the roads, to book your flight home for no earlier than 6:00 p.m. End of trip.

Valdez Required Personal Equipment List

- Boots: Rigid lug-sole climbing boots, plastic or leather
Plastic double boots are probably most appropriate, given the likelihood of colder weather.
- 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 (several manufacturers). Heavyweight longjohns worn underneath Schoeller pants are comparable in warmth to fleece pants.
- Shell Pants: Breathable/waterproof with full zips to go on over boots
- Shirt: Expedition weight synthetic top
- Fleece Jacket
- Shell Jacket: Breathable/waterproof jacket with hood
- Warm Parka: Down or synthetic filled, for belaying or hanging out. We do a lot of standing around belaying and watching.
- Hat: Wool or fleece with a neck gaiter or a balaclava. Pick a hat that fits well under your helmet.
- Gloves: 1 or 2 pair. One good Gore-Tex/fleece lined climbing glove or a Gore-Tex ski glove.
Something with a good grip and padding for the knuckles. The Lowe Alpine Glove is the perfect option.
- Mittens: Fleece with an overshell and a good grip. These are backups only, or for those with extra cold hands.
- Helmet: A good fitting UIAA approved climbing helmet.
- Ice Tools: Two 45 to 50 cm. technical ice tools with wrist leashes. An extra pick and tightening tools are helpful.
- Crampons: Rigid or semi-rigid are preferred, hand filed sharp.
- Prussik Slings: Bring a couple of pretied 7mm. prussik loops if you have them.
One or two sewn 24" webbing runners may also be useful.
- 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 or comparable.
- Sun Glasses: A good wrap-around glass that can protect your eyes from flying ice chips. Double lens goggles are a good addition 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, 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 (a cordalette).
- camera and film
- smaller sized heat packs for gloves and boots are helpful on those particularly cold days.

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. RENTAL RATES FOR FIVE DAYS:

One Ice Climbing Tool \$25; Two Tools \$50; Technical Crampons \$25