

# American Alpine Institute<sup>Ltd.</sup>

## - Expedition Itinerary -

### **Denali - West Buttress**

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**Meeting Location:** Best Western Golden Lion Inn in Anchorage, AK

**Meeting Time:** There will be a pre-trip meeting for all team members at 2pm on the day before the first day of your program (Day 0). Guides and climbers will meet in the main lobby at the hotel and commence with the gear check and packing procedures shortly thereafter.

\*As a reminder, this itinerary can and will change from trip to trip. Climbing days and rest days are often dictated by weather and conditions. This day-to-day plan is rough and should be used for general reference only.

#### **Day 0**

2pm gear check and orientation at the hotel in Anchorage. After the gear check we will run any needed errands and guides will shop for fresh food items. There will be an optional dinner at a local eatery in the evening.

#### **Day 1**

Depart for Talkeetna via a ground shuttle. The ride is about 2.5 hours with a brief stop along the way. Once in Talkeetna (set altimeters for 358 feet) we will check in at the ranger station and have an orientation and slide show from one of the Park Rangers. After the orientation we will have lunch in town and pack for the glacier flight. We should be able to fly onto the glacier and establish base camp in the afternoon. Once on the glacier we will settle into Base Camp at 7200'/2194m on the Southeast Fork of the Kahiltna Glacier, and discuss camp building, camp etiquette, cook tent procedures and the roles of each team member on the expedition.

Most AAI teams opt for a single carry strategy between Base Camp and Camp 1 as opposed to carrying and caching at Camp 1 and returning to Base Camp. There are advantages and disadvantages to both strategies and the guides will decide which is best for the team based on several factors including weather, conditions on the mountain, and assessment of the group. The itinerary below will reflect the single carry strategy. Quick Stats: The elevation in Talkeetna is 358' above sea level, the elevation of Base Camp is 7200 feet.

#### **Day 2**

After breakfast we will rig our sleds, dig our Base Camp cache, and head to Camp 1 at 7800'/2378m below Ski Hill. Quick Stats: 5.5 miles, 1000' of elevation gain (we lose 400' down Heart Break Hill below BC).

**Day 3**

Carry loads to cache at 10,000'/3048m feet near Kahiltna Pass below Camp 2 (C2) and return to C1. Quick Stats: 7 miles round-trip, 2200' of elevation gain and loss.

**Day 4**

Move to C2 at 11,200'/3413m below Motorcycle Hill. Quick Stats: 4 miles, 3400' of elevation gain.

**Day 5**

Retrieve our cache (back-carry) at 10,000' and return to Camp 2. Quick Stats: 1 mile round-trip, 1200' elevation loss and gain.

**Day 6**

Carry loads to cache around Windy Corner at 13,600'/4145m and return to Camp 2. Quick Stats: 4.5 miles round-trip, 2400' of elevation gain and loss.

**Day 7**

Move to Camp 3 (14 Camp) at 14,200'/4328m. The views of Mount Hunter, Mount Foraker, and the sunset over the Alaska Range are incredible from this camp. Quick Stats: 2.75 miles, 3000' of elevation gain.

**Day 8**

Back carry the cache at 13,600'. Quick Stats: 1 mile round-trip and 600' of elevation loss and gain.

**Day 9**

Rest day. On this rest day at camp we practice using fixed lines and passing running protection as a rope team in preparation for ascents of the fixed lines in the days to come.

**Day 10**

Carry to 16,200'/4937m and cache above the top of the fixed lines. The fixed lines protect about 800 vertical feet of 50 to 55 degree snow and ice on a feature call "The Headwall." Above the headwall we gain the crest of the West Buttress that eventually leads to High Camp at 17,200'/5242m. Quick Stats: 2.5 miles round trip, 2000' of elevation gain and loss.

**Day 11**

Optional rest day.

**Day 12**

Move to High Camp at 17,200'/5242m. This is a long hard day. We will no longer have the use of sleds and so all expedition gear must be carried in climber's packs for the ascent to High Camp. We will have the option of retrieving our cache on the way to camp or returning to pick it up in the following days should the need arise. Quick Stats: 1.75 miles, 3000' of elevation gain.

**Day 13**

Optional rest day. Most climbers need and want a rest day after the move to High Camp.

**Days 14-19**

Summit days. The trip from 17,200' to the summit (20,320'/6193m) will take between 14 and 18 hours round-trip and is the hardest day of the expedition for most climbers. It is not uncommon

for teams to have to wait several days at High Camp for a chance at the summit. Some teams never get a chance at the summit. High winds and very cold temperatures are the norm and your time spent here will likely be miserable. Quick Stats: 5 miles round-trip, 3120' of elevation gain and loss.

### **Days 19-20**

Descending days. It will take two full days to descend from High Camp back to the landing strip. We need to be back at the landing strip by no later than 6am on the morning of the 21st. day of the trip. Quick Stats: The descent from High Camp back to Base Camp will cover 14 miles and 9800 feet of elevation loss. The last half-mile back to BC is uphill (Heart Break Hill) and we will have to gain about 600' before reaching BC.

### **Day 21**

If the weather is good, we will fly off the glacier and sort gear in Talkeetna. It is not entirely uncommon to be delayed for a day or more while waiting for the weather to clear up enough for glacier planes to land. Upon return to town, most climbers opt to spend the night in Talkeetna and enjoy one of the fine dining and drinking establishments with fellow climbers in town. Lodging will be arranged when we get back to town and your guides can help you make needed reservations for shuttle rides once we are settled in and unpacked.