



The Ice Factor

National Ice Climbing Centre



Scottish Winter Courses 2011-2012

About Us

Between December and March (and sometimes longer) Scotland's hills are transformed by snow and ice into the most challenging yet rewarding adventures you will find anywhere. Our proximity to both Arctic and Atlantic weather means that we work with a dynamic and ever-changing mountain environment. Knowing how to make the most of the wild days is as crucial as appreciating the sheer beauty of sun, blue skies and snow-clad horizons. Our mission is to help you learn how to take the rough with the smooth, and develop your skills and confidence in one of the most challenging environments on earth!

Based near to the traditional climbing heartland of Glencoe, we are ideally placed to take advantage of some of the best teaching terrain in the country, as well as being a short drive from the classic climbs of Ben Nevis and the easy access of the Aonach Mor gondola. We also make extensive use of the Mamore hills, right outside the Centre, and can go further afield on request.



Our instructors are all certified winter addicts, and within our staff pool we have a vast amount of local knowledge and experience in the winter game. We're always happy to share this with you on the hill, over a pint in the Bothan bar, or even by email if you just want a heads-up on conditions. Information is free; have some on us!



Just occasionally the winter weather does make going outside a bit too much of an adventure; here we are blessed with the fantastic advantage of an indoor ice wall, plus dry-tooling and other practice facilities, so we can always ensure that each day has useful content, whatever the weather.

Private Courses and Guiding

All of our courses are run on a private, made-to-measure basis. We understand that everybody has different levels of experience, fitness, and expectations, and that while some may be looking for a multi-day learning progression others may simply be after a one-off, memorable, guided winter day. We listen to what you have to tell us, discuss options, and settle on a programme and duration that suits you and your diary. Pricing is on simple day rate, with a small additional fee for extra persons per day.

Introductory Winter Skills and Winter Walking

Many people forget that before tackling winter climbs it is essential to have a good working knowledge of the whole winter environment; you need to learn to walk before you can run! These courses focus on essential skills such as boot and crampon use on moderate terrain, use of the ice axe for security and for self-arrest, winter navigation, journey planning and avalanche avoidance. And just as importantly the whole dark art of managing your equipment, your pace and your personal organisation so as to make the most of short daylight hours.



We feel that a course of this type is an essential first step in a winter progression. It can lead onto more technical, ropework-based skills or for some it will shape them as independent and self-reliant winter hill walkers. We can also run a guided hillwalking day up Ben Nevis or any of the other local hills.

These courses can run on a ratio of one Instructor with up to six clients, so you can book individually or as part of a group.

Introductory Mountaineering



Mountaineering can be thought of as the skills required to deal with grade I/II ridges, gullies and snow-slopes. Routes such as Dorsal Arete and Sron na Lairig in Glencoe or Ledge Route on Ben Nevis define the sort of terrain where a single axe, a light rack of equipment and a quick and flexible approach to ropework will get you moving efficiently.

Some experience of summer ropework is useful but not essential; we will build upon this to look at techniques such as direct belays, snow and ice anchors, short-pitching and protected descents, as well as examining and improving personal movement and revising basic skills where required.

The number of clients will impact on the scope of the course; we can work with up to four per Instructor but at this number the skills would be mostly taught on ungraded terrain. To move onto more serious grade I/II terrain we would prefer to work with only two or three, but this is open to discussion based on the experience and expectations of the group.



These (relatively) easy mountaineering routes are very popular for first roped climbs, and we have taken clients on the above routes who have never worn crampons before. However, we would suggest that to get the most of a longer course we would require clients to have previously attended an introductory skills course or have personal winter hillwalking experience.

Winter Climbing

This can mean anything between grade I and grade VI, but we mostly find ourselves operating between grade II-IV, on the sort of routes where a pair of axes are essential but things are never completely vertical. Routes like Twisting Gully in Glencoe or Green Gully and Tower Ridge on Ben Nevis are old favourites, but there are plenty more, and we can arrange a guide for some of those classic Nevis Vs on request. Some summer rock-climbing experience is useful for these courses, and being able to move easily on moderate snow is essential, but we work on the basis that you have plenty to learn and take it from there.

You might choose to be safely led up one or more of the classic local climbs, or perhaps look to gain an understanding of winter protection and belays, stance organisation and lead tactics, usually with the instructor alongside you while your partner belays, and usually on easier graded ground which we know you'll be comfortable on. Or maybe a mixture of the two approaches?



All climbing courses run on a ratio of one Instructor to two clients maximum. Please note that lead climbing requires a booking of two persons and will always be at the discretion of the Instructor on the day.

Combined Courses



With prior arrangement we can design a course which blends elements of all the above. For example you might feel the need to revisit basic winter skills before going on to tackle more technical climbing. Or you might fancy one day warming up on a classic easy ridge and the next on a steeper ice route; we can accommodate all of that and more. We suggest that you contact us direct to discuss how best we can meet your requirements.

Price and Payment

Winter Walking and Introductory Skills - £160 per guide per day

Winter Mountaineering and Climbing - £180 per guide per day

Prices are based on a single person. Additional people can be added up to the maximum ratio at £20 per person per day.



The Bothan Bar

After a tiring day on the hill why not rest your limbs in our on-site bar/bistro. We have a good range of local ales on tap, a full and hearty menu, log fire always burning and the chance to catch up with other climbers and the occasional off-duty Instructor. We can hold a food order for you so that it's waiting for you and also arrange a packed lunch on request.

The Ice Factor Shop

You may have noticed that winter mountaineering does require a fair amount of shiny hardware and good clothing; it's also inevitable that things will get worn out, dropped or forgotten. Our on-site gear shop remains open until 6pm for all those last-minute requirements, and also gives you the opportunity to browse the very latest offerings from brands like Grivel, Scarpa, Haglofs, Montane, etc. We can also arrange an early opening if anyone needs to pick up anything in the morning, and are happy to give advice on or reserve clothing and equipment prior to your course.

We extend a 15% discount to all course participants on all items bought before, during, or a day after a booked course.

Accommodation

There are a number of good providers in the village and we have no hesitation in recommending:

The Macdonald Hotel www.macdonaldhotel.co.uk 01855 831539
- 3 star B&B plus self-catering cabins and camping.

Blackwater Bunkhouse www.blackwaterhostel.co.uk 01855 831253
- High standard bunkhouse, some private rooms, right outside our front door.

Tigh na Cheo Guesthouse www.tigh-na-cheo.co.uk 01855 831434
- Family-run B&B, all rooms en-suite.

Making a Booking

Please email info@ice-factor.co.uk for the attention of Jamie Bankhead, giving us an idea of numbers, what you would like to cover on your course and preferred dates, and we will get back to you with availability and ideas. Alternatively give us a call on 01855 831100 and ask to speak to either Jamie or Isi Oakley if you want to discuss the detail.

During the busiest part of the winter season (February) we expect to be running several courses at any time, so there will be limited scope for late-notice availability. We would therefore urge you to make your plans early and book your course at first opportunity. We can make a reservation on a £150 deposit; full balance is payable one month before course commences.

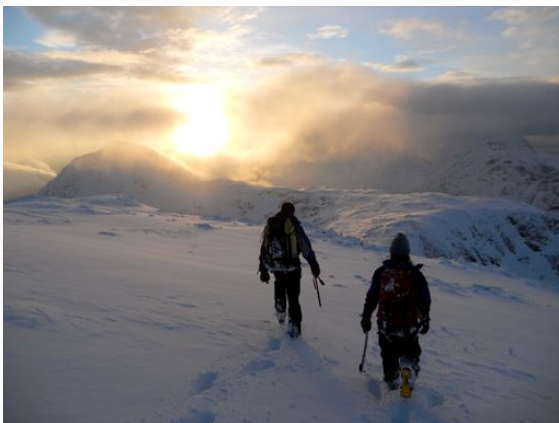
What to Bring

You need to be “hill-fit” to get the most out of your course. A winter day can be pretty tough, and multiple days will place even greater demands on you. You need the sort of fitness that you don’t get at the gym; the ability to keep pushing onwards and upwards over the course of a full day. Anything involving hills and mileage is going to help, so hiking, running and cycling are all recommended.



We issue a comprehensive Kit List with every booking, and make clear that clients who are inadequately equipped might not be allowed on the hill. Our instructional and shop staff are able to advise on equipment and purchase decisions, so please let us help you with this process.

Boots and crampons are a frequent source of difficulty – we would recommend arriving at the start of your course with boots well matched to your feet and your crampons. If you have any concerns about this or other necessary kit then please don’t hesitate to contact us.



Moving on...

We hope that your course will help you to “catch the bug” and come to love the Scottish winter as much as we do. It’s always great to bump into former clients out on the hills, using and developing skills that we helped them learn. And just occasionally we get a postcard from somewhere *really* exotic... We hope that you will keep in touch and not hesitate to ask us for further advice, or just call in for a brew and a blether. It’s a long and fun journey and we hope you’ll let us help you with it in the long run.