

Mountaineering Mastery Method

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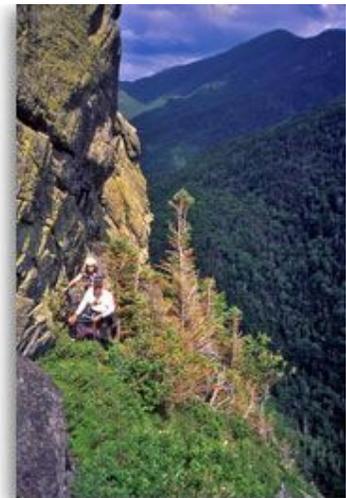
Mountaineering Equipment

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We provide all required technical gear. This includes ice axes and crampons (in winter) plus climbing ropes and related equipment when needed. We also provide packs for your use during our programs. For our overnight trips, we provide all group gear such as tents, stoves, cook sets and emergency equipment; you will need to provide your own sleeping bag, pad and backpack. Plastic double-boots are available for rental for our winter programs.

Participants must provide appropriate clothing. Please visit our [Equipment](#) page for an in-depth discussion about technical aspects of equipment and clothing, including topics on: heat and moisture management, outdoor fabrics, fit considerations for clothing and footwear, and purchasing ideas. If you are not very familiar with specialized outdoor clothing we suggest you carefully review this page.

In the lists below, we have tried to give you a range of choices to help guide you in the acquisition of equipment and clothing. There is no one "best way" to outfit yourself and cost certainly should enter into your purchase decisions. Our opinions about equipment for any given purpose are based upon our experience using the equipment extensively in the Adirondacks. When we travel away from this area the equipment we take is sometimes different. If you have questions please don't hesitate to [contact us](#).



*Comfort and safety depend on
proper clothing and equipment in
the mountains*

Equipment & Clothing Lists

[Summer Mountaineering Day Programs](#)

[Summer Mountaineering Overnight Programs](#)

[Winter Mountaineering Day Programs](#)

[Winter Mountaineering Overnight Programs](#)

Summer Mountaineering Day Programs

For our summer day programs you will need to provide your own clothing and appropriate footwear. For semi-technical trips, involving slide climbs, we will provide ropes and all other required climbing equipment. These programs are designed to help you learn what to carry, as well as how to travel, in the mountains. The list below reflects this.

Tops

Cotton t-shirts are great when it's hot; a synthetic "wicking" zip-turtleneck will work well when it's cold or damp (could be anytime). An extra long sleeve shirt can be handy to ward off bugs, the sun, or a chill. Bright colors make the best photographs.

Pants

When it's cool and dry, or buggy, you can choose cotton sweat pants for their flexibility and low price, or there are several types of pants designed especially for climbing. Our favorites are the 4-way stretch-knit pants, which allow excellent freedom of movement and are very comfortable. They will also protect your legs from scrapes while you develop good technique. Pants made from fleece are great early or late in the season when it could be cold. When it's really hot, there's nothing like a pair of baggy shorts. Stay away from any tight-fitting or constricting pants such as blue jeans.

Insulating Layer

Early or late in the season this layer is essential. During the summer months cool days are not uncommon, and a warm pullover can make climbing much more comfortable. We prefer pullovers over full-zip jackets and we have found synthetic polyester fleece material to be much better than wool, although wool is an adequate substitute if you don't mind smelling like a wet sheep when it rains. Several brands of fleece are available and they all work well. Heavy-weight fabrics tend to be too hot and bulky for anything except winter use.

Lightweight synthetic long-johns are great when it's chilly, as are a lightweight hat and fingerless gloves. Extra insulating layers are a good idea; they can always be left behind if they are not needed.

Rain Gear

In warm weather, we suggest light-weight nylon jackets and pants. These garments are sufficient for most summer showers. In cooler weather we like lightweight Waterproof/breathable rain suits. Plastic rain jackets are adequate for summer use but they are very short-lived.

Personal Accessories

This category tends to get out of control but there are some important items to remember; here are a few:

- Sunglasses and Retaining Strap – a good hard case is a smart investment.
- Camera – if you have one of the smaller point and shoot cameras get a rugged padded case that will slide onto a belt so the camera will be ready almost any time while you are climbing. Small digital cameras fit almost anywhere and we usually have one when we climb. We suggest an “elephant's trunk” type case for larger cameras. We will be happy to take pictures, using your camera, of you climbing. We can also provide duplicates of photos we take of you.
- Bug Repellent – we prefer the natural repellents such as “Green Ban”. 100% DEET will not only dissolve plastics; it is toxic enough that it can no longer be sold in New York!
- Swim Suit – if you are planning on mid-summer climbing, a cool dip in a mountain pond can be delightful.

Footwear

Lightweight hiking boots are the best choice for our summer mountaineering programs. Boots should be carefully fit to your feet and broken in for best results. We suggest you fit your boots with a single sock of medium thickness. We strongly suggest you avoid liner socks; or more than one sock of any kind.

Suggested Reading

There are no required texts for any of our courses but “Mountaineering: The Freedom Of The Hills”, published by The Mountaineers is as close to an alpinist's bible as it gets and anyone with mountain aspirations of any type should read this book! This comprehensive mountaineering text covers rock, ice and snow climbing along with glacier travel, navigation, basic first-aid and many other topics.

We maintain a small selection of [books available for sale](#), including this one.

Summer Mountaineering Overnight Programs

For our summer overnight programs you will need to provide your own personal equipment, clothing and appropriate footwear. All tents, food, cooking gear, and first-aid/repair kits will be provided by us. For semi-technical trips, involving slide climbs, we will provide ropes and all other required climbing equipment. If you have had some experience backpacking, and have your own ideas about appropriate equipment, then let your past experience guide you in determining what to carry. If you are unsure, or have had poor past experiences, then give our approach a try.

We always try to carry as little as possible and we try to take advantage of the latest technology in determining what we carry. We consider the list below to represent a functional backpacking system for the Adirondacks based upon our methods, the season, and the present level of development of outdoor equipment and clothing. There are numerous adequate substitutes for the items below and, in many cases, these substitutions can result in a substantial monetary savings in return for a small increase in weight or inconvenience. If you must make compromises, do so only after getting a good pair of boots and a good pack. These two items are very important and if they are of poor quality, or don't fit, your trip can become quite an ordeal. A good mountain shop can help you make intelligent purchasing decisions.

If you have done little or no backpacking you should certainly take the time to read at least one of the many books written on the subject. We will spend some time showing you ways to be more comfortable in the wilderness, but our major goal is to climb and that is where most of our effort will be concentrated. In addition to books, manufacturers of outdoor equipment usually produce catalogs describing the function of their products and links to many web sites can be found on our [Equipment](#) page.

APPROPRIATE CLOTHING IS IMPORTANT FOR YOUR COMFORT & SAFETY!!!

Personal Clothing

Lightweight Hiking Boots (boots should fit well and be broken in, don't skimp here!)

Running Shoes (sneakers or a lightweight, rubber-soled, comfortable shoe for camp)

Medium/Heavy Sox (3 pr., terry loop wicking types, no cotton)

Lightweight Fleece/Wool Hat (a small, warm hat for chilly evenings or rainy days)

Short-Sleeved Cotton T-shirts (2)

Turtleneck Shirt (1) (we like medium weight wicking types with zip necks)

Lightweight Fleece Pullovers (2)(cotton is not acceptable)

Lightweight Comfortable Shorts (1 pr.)

Comfortable Long Pants (1 pr., we like the stretchy type designed for climbing)

Lightweight Fleece Pants (1 pr.) (cotton is not acceptable)

Underwear (2-3 pr.)

Rain Jacket and Pants (waterproof/breathable is best, but coated, or uncoated, nylon is OK)

Please leave blue jeans and other heavy, non-functional clothing at home. They are not worth the weight!

Personal Equipment

Frame Pack (3,500-5,500 cu. in., internal or external frame, make sure it fits well)

*Day Pack or Fanny Pack (to wear during climbs)

Sleeping Bag w/ stuff sack (rated down to about 10°F is adequate), synthetic or down fill are both OK

Closed Cell Foam or Inflatable Sleeping Pad

*1 Quart Water Bottle

*Plastic Bowl (to eat from)

*Plastic Drinking Cup (for hot drinks)

*Spoon

Small Towel

Tooth Brush

Tooth Paste

Comb/Brush

Personal Accessories (medications, sun screen, moisturizer, lip balm, etc., don't go overboard)

Toilet Paper (In zip-lock bag, don't bring a whole roll!)

Small LED Flashlight (with fresh batteries)

Small LED Headlamp (with fresh batteries)

Swiss Army Knife (or any pocket knife, no big knives)

Spare Eyeglasses or Contact Lenses

Sunglasses and Retaining Strap

Small Butane Lighter

Insect Repellent (we prefer natural repellents unless bugs are fierce)

Plastic Bags (3) (30 gallon trash can liners make great pack covers, food bag liners, etc.)

Optional Items:

Wristwatch

Brimmed Hat (baseball-type cap)

Bandana

Camera (a good camera case is a sound investment)

Map, Compass, Altimeter (we'll carry these too)

Small Binoculars

Reading Materials, Notebook, Pen/Pencils, Etc.

*Items preceded by an asterisk can be borrowed from us.

Carrying too much is often more of a problem than carrying too little. You will also be carrying a share of group equipment and food, which will add significantly to the weight of your pack. If your pack weighs more than 25 pounds before you add the group gear you are probably over-packed. If you just can't seem to get rid of the weight, that's OK. We'll go through your pack with you to see what can be eliminated.

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Winter Mountaineering Day Programs

Winter clothing systems must perform yeoman service in an extreme environment. If you pay close attention to our clothing suggestions you can expect to be reasonably warm and comfortable; if not, winter climbing can be quite unpleasant. The key to versatile and effective dressing in the winter is layering and that is how the following list is arranged. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to [contact us](#).

APPROPRIATE CLOTHING IS ESSENTIAL FOR YOUR COMFORT & SAFETY!!!

Wicking Layer

The synthetics used in long underwear have made a big difference in comfort and they are the only intelligent choice if you need to purchase this layer. The many available high-tech fabrics are a vast improvement over the original polypropylene. We like medium weight zip turtlenecks on top and medium weight long johns on the bottom but other combinations work too. Cotton is useless – in fact, when wet, it will make you colder than no underwear at all! Leave it home.

Insulating Layer

We have found the synthetic polyester materials (fleece) to be much better than wool although wool is a passable substitute if you don't mind smelling like a sheep when you get wet. Fleece material comes in several weights and we mix types and weights according to conditions. Stretchy fleece is a vast improvement and well worth the extra cost. We also use extra wicking layers to fine-tune our insulating system. We've found that a light fleece pullover plus a mid-weight fleece pullover combined with mid-weight pants will cover most conditions, and this combination is a good starting point for your winter wardrobe. Many climbers add a down-filled (or synthetic) jacket to use during inactive times. An extra layer, stuffed into your pack, is also a good idea.

Outer Layer

The ideal outer layer would be totally waterproof yet pass all body moisture under even the heaviest activity. This material has yet to be created. We use a two-tiered approach for the best results.

SOFT SHELLS: We wear soft shells whenever possible. Most of the time these comfortable, and very breathable, garments are sufficient on their own as outer layers. They do a great job of protecting against wind, snow, light rain and spray on wet climbs, but they are neither water "proof" nor wind "proof". When it's really nasty we will (reluctantly) wear our hard shells over our soft shells to keep the elements at bay. Many companies manufacture soft shells and several fabrics are now used in addition to the original one made by Schoeller. These garments are available in light and heavy weights and we find both to be useful. Hoods are nice for extra warmth. Get ready for sticker shock — comfort comes at a price.

HARD SHELLS: These will protect you under the harshest conditions. We use hard shells only when we must but we carry them in our packs most of the time just in case we need to wear them over our soft shells. There are many waterproof-breathable, hard shell garments on the market and most work quite well. We like the lighter weight fabrics but heavier fabrics are tougher and we wear them when abrasion is likely to be an issue. We often wear a soft shell and carry a light Waterproof/breathable hard shell in case conditions demand it. We prefer an anorak (pullover with a built-in hood) on top and pants (not bibs) on the bottom because they work well in conjunction with a climbing harness, and they allow good freedom of movement. Jackets and bibs are satisfactory but may be less convenient. Side zips are a convenient feature on pants, but not required. Coated, or non-coated, nylon jackets and pants are passable substitutes if you need to save a significant amount of money. A ski jacket and pants will also work as a last resort. An extra insulating layer can help offset an inferior outer layer.

Head and Hands

A lightweight fleece liner cap fits nicely under a helmet. A fleece headband is great on warmer days. When it's cold we wear a fleece neck gaiter and when it's really cold we wear a fleece balaclava.

Keeping your hands warm in very cold weather is invariably a compromise; with mittens you might have warm hands but you won't be able to handle equipment well; with gloves you can feel your ice axe only if your hands have feeling. Our solution is to rely on very warm gloves most of the time and carry a spare pair in our packs "just in case".

Modular ice climbing gloves with removable liners are the best choice for cold conditions. These gloves are constructed with a gauntleted shell of waterproof fabric and a tough palm. The fingers are cut curved so that it is easier to grip an ice axe (or ski pole). They include plenty of insulation and some models are padded to protect your fingers if you accidentally whack them on the ice. These gloves have changed winter climbing so dramatically that we consider them to be almost essential. Several companies manufacture these gloves, and they are sometimes marketed specifically for ice climbing.

To be effective for really cold conditions, gloves need to be large enough so they can become a makeshift mitten to warm your fingers – without removing them. This is accomplished by sliding your fingers back into the palm area of the glove and forming a fist so your fingers can warm each other. Gloves need to be large enough so you can do this without difficulty using one hand and maybe your teeth. Insulation technology is FAR less important to warmth than the ability to ball your fingers up and warm them.

If you can't get a pair of these climbing gloves, we suggest you bring a pair of ski gloves plus a pair of mittens. We can loan you gloves if needed. All gloves and mittens should be equipped with idiot (retainer) cords, which we'll be happy to set up for you. A spare pair of glove liners and/or warm mittens can be a very welcome addition for cold or wet days.

On warmer days we wear a variety of lighter weight gloves that permit greater dexterity but are not as warm as the gloves we wear most of the time. Many of the expensive single-layer gloves marketed specifically for ice climbing fit into this category and they are wonderful when conditions permit. In the Adirondacks however, our often cold temperatures require the use of warmer gloves most of the time.

Eye Protection

Some form of eye protection is needed against flying ice chips! Sunglasses with a retaining strap (a good hard case is a sound investment) will cut glare and protect your eyes if you don't normally wear eyeglasses. Polycarbonate or plastic safety lenses are the safest. Wraparound sunglasses are a popular choice for those wishing a bit more protection. Ski goggles will work but usually have problems with fogging.

Substitutions

When you've added up the prices on all the items we suggest, you will quickly realize that clothing for winter mountaineering can involve a substantial investment. Much of this clothing can be used for other mountain activities such as backcountry skiing and rock or ice climbing, and this knowledge may help you rationalize the investment. If the costs are insurmountable substitutions are possible but, if you stray too far from the list, contact us to be sure your substitutions will work. You can't learn if you're uncomfortable so be sure to err on the side of having too much clothing rather than too little. You can always take off an extra layer if you are too warm.

Footwear

Adirondack winters are cold and wet. Appropriate footwear is absolutely essential for an enjoyable experience. Boot consideration for winter mountaineering are very similar to those for ice climbing. Please visit [Ice Climbing Footwear](#) for detailed information. Plastic double-boot rentals are available for our winter programs.

Suggested Reading

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Winter Mountaineering Equipment & Clothing Overnight Programs

When you register for these programs we will provide equipment and clothing lists specifically tailored to your program requirements. Please [contact us](#) for more information.

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~ *Mountain Adventures In the Adirondacks Since 1985* ~

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