

# FITNESS & TRAINING ▲ MOUNTAINEERING COURSES

*Congratulations on your decision to join an AMS mountaineering course!* Most graduates find our courses to be physically and mentally challenging experiences. Living and traveling on a glacier, 24-hour daylight, a full regime of classes and practicals, and the intensity and beauty of the surroundings add up to a challenging environment. It is not just the pack weights, or the mileage, but the overall magnitude of the course that is demanding. We want all students to have a successful experience. Please read the following information for advice on preparing for your course.

AMS role models expert mountaineering and expeditionary skills which prepare students for the most challenging environments in the world. While on a course, you live in a remote mountainous environment, camp in the snow, and travel roped on a glacier, while carrying a pack and sometimes pulling a sled. The better physical condition you are in before the course, the more you will be able to come away with during your course. Proper physical conditioning is important for your safety and the safety of others. It will add to your enjoyment and your ability to be a positive contributing member of the course.

*Am I in shape now?* Everyone has different definitions of what being “in shape” is. A good idea is to go out for a hike carrying a backpack. Weigh the pack down using water containers that add up to 50 pounds, or 35% of your body weight, whichever is less. Hike 2-3 miles on a trail with hills. At your high point, empty the water containers to lighten your pack and decrease the strain on your knees on the descent. This will give you an idea of where your current fitness level is. Remember to always take adequate time to warm up, stretch, and cool down to reduce the chances of injury.

*If you haven't done so already, start your physical conditioning program now.* Begin by selecting an activity you enjoy doing, as you are more likely to continue with the program. While strength is important for lifting a pack, it is more important to build up your aerobic fitness level and stamina for the long days. Cycling, speed walking, aerobics, stair climbing, jogging, rowing machine, skiing, hiking, yoga, and martial arts are all good forms of exercise. Practically any exercise that uses large muscle groups and gets you sweating with your heart rate up will increase stamina. Begin gradually and build up to where 45 minutes to an hour of your work out is at 80% of your maximum pulse rate. Exercise to an intensity level where it is difficult to hold a conversation. Schedule a time during the day for this and plan on 4 sessions per week at 45-60 minutes each. We recommend talking to a professional exercise physiologist who can help set up a conditioning program that is good for you.

Remember, you do not need to be a professional athlete to excel on an AMS course, but you do need to be within the limits of the average active person. A keen desire to learn, strong motivation, and a positive attitude are equally important to success.

We look forward to seeing you! Feel free to contact us with any questions.