



## **An Introduction to the American Alpine Institute**

The American Alpine Institute is an international mountain climbing school and guide service. It offers courses in rock, snow, and ice climbing for those just beginning to climb as well as for those with experience who want to advance their skills. AAI also offers guided climbs and expeditions on which its clients apply all their climbing techniques and good judgment in an effort to climb one or more major summits.

### **Domestic & International Programs**

Part of the appeal of the Institute to our clients is our ability to teach and guide them at all technical levels and, additionally, to guide them at any technical level throughout the world. AAI climbers also find great reward in the philosophy of and commitment by AAI guides to always help each climber expand their climbing skill and judgment regardless of the context. Even on guided climbs, we don't simply get people to the summit – we help them become better climbers in the process.

The single largest areas of operation for the Institute are in Washington, Nevada, California, and Alaska. In Washington's Cascades, most courses and guided climbs begin in early May -- when the weather improves and the mountains come into good shape -- and continue until early October. In Nevada's Red Rock Canyon, we offer programs from late September through early May. In California's Sierra, we offer programs year round, while in Alaska our focus is on the best weather months of May, June, and the first half of July. We also operate in many other areas: in the summer we have programs in Canada, France, Switzerland, Russia, Tanzania, Peru, and Bolivia, while in the fall, winter, and spring we have programs in Colorado, Canada, Ecuador, New Zealand, Chile, Argentina, Tanzania, Antarctica, and a variety of locations in Asia.

Great geographical diversity of programs is part of the appeal that the Institute has to its clients. We climb the 7 Summits, and – large and small – we also trek, teach, and climb on the most beautiful mountains in the world, from Alaska to New Zealand and from Chile to China.

A combination of this technical and geographical diversity with a dedication to making every program that we operate packed with learning and rewarding experiences, has earned high regard for the Institute throughout the world. *Outside* magazine termed AAI the "best all around guide service and climbing school in North America," *Travel and Leisure* rated it "America's top climbing school," and Matt Mooney

of the New York Times calls AAI “the Harvard of climbing schools.” Extremely happy clients, many repeat customers, and a staff of dedicated guides have built that reputation.

### **Facilities**

All of the Institute’s operations are managed out of our office (a converted house in the Fairhaven Historical District) in Bellingham, Washington. Working here are a director, an operations manager, three program coordinators, a graphic artist, a bookkeeper, an equipment manager, and an assistant equipment manager. In the summer months we also have an administrative assistant and three equipment specialists.

The Equipment Department fills a second AAI building (also a converted house), with retail space on one floor and rental gear and guide service gear on another. The Equipment Department outfits the guide service with technical gear, rents equipment to clients and the general public, and sells gear to clients, guides, and the general public.

### **Leadership in the Outdoor Industry**

As well as working hard for its clients, AAI also works hard for the outdoor industry and has been a major creator and shaper of programs and policy within it. Several guides serve as teachers and examiners in the American Mountain Guides Association’s Certification Program; two AAI guides have served as national chairmen of the program; and AAI’s president also served as a board member and president of AMGA for a decade.

AAI is a member of the Outdoor Industry Association (OIA), the trade association of America’s human-powered outdoor sports industry, and AAI’s director served on its board and as its president for many years. AAI has participated in OIA’s manufacturer’s standards committees, and three AAI staffers have served as members who vote on ASTM standards for climbing equipment manufactured in the U.S. One Institute staff member served as a delegate to the National Summit on Outdoor Recreation and on the National Steering Committee of the Leave No Trace (LNT) program that established LNT as a non-profit organization. One AAI staff member also served as Chairman of the National Summit Committee on Search and Rescue.

### **Work Atmosphere**

AAI is a great place to work. It provides an opportunity to work with a group of great people who care about their work, each other, and the environment in which we live. It is a skilled and very enthusiastic group that is extremely active in a variety of outdoor sports (especially climbing and skiing, but also mountain biking, running, sea kayaking, and fishing). Many long-term friendships and climbing partnerships originate here.

We are also privileged to work with a well-educated, highly motivated, and very

enjoyable clientele. It's a lot of fun helping AAI climbers prepare for great adventures around the world. The work at AAI involves a great deal of personal contact with AAI clients, many in person and many more on the telephone. Variety is also characteristic: from designing marketing and promotional materials and strategies, to program development and scheduling, to routine data entry and brochure mailings, all aspects of administering to and corresponding with our clients are conducted on a friendly, enthusiastic, and professional basis from our centralized office and equipment shop.

### **Intro to Bellingham**

Many find Bellingham to be a wonderful place to live. With an extensive system of parks and trails, good outdoor fun is right out the door for runners as well as road and mountain bikers (the American Hiking Society named Bellingham "Trail Town USA," along with only 29 other communities). Kayakers can put in just 12 blocks from our office, where the end of the road meets the inland waters of the Pacific Ocean in northern Puget Sound. Travel east and you can be climbing on a massive glacier on Mt. Baker in two hours. Drive north two hours to Squamish, British Columbia, and enjoy some of the best rock climbing in western North America.

Outside magazine ranked Bellingham #1 in the US for living in a place with great opportunity for outdoor sports. Bellingham is ranked 8<sup>th</sup> in the US by the Environmental Protection Agency for municipal governments committed to buying green energy. And the city is ranked number two in the U.S. for three other things: highest per capita use of the public library (we're all trying to expand our minds); highest per capita number of arts organizations (we're all trying to find ourselves); and the highest per capita number of espresso shops (we're all trying to stay awake in the process). In all seriousness, if you move here you will become part of a part of a bright, energized, sports-minded, and environmentally conscious community that also happens to be very warm and friendly.