

**Prospectus for the position of
Instructor/Guide
at the
AMERICAN ALPINE INSTITUTE**

The American Alpine Institute is currently accepting applications for seasonal positions as Instructor / Guide. Referred to by Jon Krakauer as “The best all around climbing school and guide service in North America,” AAI is based out of Bellingham, WA, and offers technical instruction in rock and alpine climbing in 6 states and 16 countries. The Institute usually hires four to eight new staff members every year, so if the position described below strongly appeals to you, you are urged to apply now. After receiving your application, we will evaluate it and, if you are among the qualified applicants, we will arrange a phone interview. We prefer doing an in-person interview, so if there is a possibility of coming to Bellingham for that purpose, we will look forward to seeing you.

For those candidates to whom we offer a position, we conduct an Alpine Guides Course in May or June. This intensive training program is three weeks long and is led by Michael Powers (AAI Assistant Director for Staff Development, IFMGA Guide, and as Technical Director, he is the former director of America’s national guide certification program). Two weeks of the course are with new guides and our training staff, while the third week of training is done in the context of a 6-day Introduction to Alpinism course which serves as a guiding practicum with AAI clients participating in either an Introduction to Alpinism course or a more advanced Alpine Ice course.

Work for the summer season starts immediately after the Alpine Guides Course and lasts through the end of the summer. Some new guides need to end their first summer’s work in late August in order to return to grad school or non-summer jobs, but in most years new staff members often have the opportunity to work well into September or early October. Though the Institute will be filling several seasonal positions again this year, they may gradually lead to year-round work. Most years, one or two new staff members are offered part-time winter positions, either in the Sierra, Red Rocks, Joshua Tree, Southwest Colorado, South America, or in a combination of those areas.

Beginning just before or following a staff member’s second summer season (and commensurate with their experience and performance), it is not uncommon for him or her to be offered non-summer guiding and instructional work as well as early season employment on Denali or in the Alaska Range.

Job Duties:

Depending on personal skills and experience, a new AAI Instructor / Guide may lead courses of the following types in the Cascade Range: introduction to alpinism (for clients with little or no alpine background); alpine ice climbing (for clients with previous snow and ice experience); basic rock (for those with no climbing experience); and intermediate rock climbing (for clients with basic skills who want to follow and/or lead upper-fifth class rock). The curricula of the courses include discussion of design concepts and selection of personal and group equipment; free climbing technique on mid-fifth class rock on alpine courses and 5.10 rock on intermediate rock programs; climbing skills on snow and alpine ice; establishment and operation of protective systems on rock, snow, and ice; objective hazards evaluation; route selection and evaluation; Leave No Trace travel, camping, and climbing.

During the first year of work, an AAI Instructor / Guide will typically lead clients on climbs of basic and intermediate difficulty on routes that include rock, snow, and ice, and prepare for guiding clients on climbs of advanced difficulty by the second year of employment.

Requirements:

- Ability to work well with people.
- Ability to articulate ideas and concepts as well as clearly demonstrate specific skills.
- Ability to lead steep ice comfortably and in good form; ability to lead rock comfortably at a minimum level of 5.9, with 5.10 or higher strongly preferred. Those coming with 5.9 leading ability are expected to improve to mid-5.10 prior to the beginning of their second year.
- Familiarity with a full range of protective systems.
- Wilderness First Responder Certification.
- Ability to evaluate subjective and objective hazards.
- Significant experience in the mountains.

Helpful Characteristics:

None of the following are required; any can add additional strength to an application:

- Previous teaching experience, either as a professional or volunteer, in a climbing or non-climbing context.
- Academic accomplishments, writing, or public speaking abilities and experience.
- Professional training in any discipline related to the alpine environments or foreign cultures in which the Institute guides and instructs (e.g., biology, ecology, geology, park management, wildlife conservation, environmental education, foreign languages, anthropology, history).
- Expedition experience and/or high altitude climbing experience.
- Backcountry skiing ability.
- Level I or II training in avalanche hazard evaluation. While this is not required in the first year, we do require guides to get AIARE Level 2 Avalanche Training by the start of their second year.
- Five or more Grade IV climbs.
- A strong background in glacier travel.
- AMGA Training or Certifications – The American Mountain Guides Association requires all new hires to be on track toward certification. We will counsel new hires in how to do this and assist them with the process.

Wages:

Commensurate with experience; a typical beginning wage is \$100 per day. Tips for many guides average \$25 - \$35 per day, but they can be lower or range much higher.

Hours: Generally eight hours per day, five or six days a week, with the understanding that while in the field, the instructor is responsible for clients at all times.

Schedules and the Nature of the Work at AAI:

Guides normally work a combination of longer and shorter courses and guided trips. In the first year of work it is common to have a schedule pattern in the Cascades as follows: 3-day private Mt. Baker skills training and summit climb with two to five people; followed by a day off and then a four day trip for basic skills including a summit climb on the last day; followed by zero, one, two, or three days off, and then an assignment to a six-day Introduction to Alpinism course with six to ten clients and one other guide. Occasionally first year guides lead guided ascents for experienced climbers (in contrast to courses or a course/ascent combinations) on such peaks as Shuksan, Sahale, Eldorado, or Forbidden. Depending on the new guide's background, there is also sometimes an opportunity to co-guide a 12-day Technical Leadership program.

One of the great benefits of working for AAI is the variety of program assignments which a guide receives as the seasons go by. No other guide service offers training at such a range of skill levels and in such a variety of venues. While AAI instructor / guides teach basic skills regularly, they also have the chance to teach at intermediate and advanced levels and to guide climbs over a complete range of technical challenges.

AAI programs include teaching climbers to lead, guiding highly technical climbs, and guiding large-scale alpine and rock routes. We offer courses, guided climbs, and expeditions in six states and sixteen countries, and the opportunity to work in a variety of interesting mountain areas is one of the many attractive aspects of working at the Institute.

In addition to the many work related benefits you will experience at the Institute, it is important to note the community of climbing partners and long-term friendships which are made while working at AAI. There's a lot of enthusiasm and activity at the Institute, and it's quite easy to link up with a partners for climbs and expeditions in the U.S. and across the globe.

General Notes:

Initial assignments are in the North Cascades; later there are opportunities for work in California, Nevada, Colorado, Alaska, Latin America, and Asia depending on experience, local knowledge, language ability, and seniority.

Workman's compensation and accident insurance are provided through the Washington State Industrial Accident Fund for both domestic and international work.

We look forward to reading your application.

AAI is an Equal Opportunity Employer

For further information contact:

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