



DENALI

6,190M / 20,308FT

2026 EXPEDITION TRIP NOTES





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Dates: Trip 1: May 6–26
Trip 2: May 11–31
Trip 3: May 16 to June 5
Trip 4: May 21 to June 10
Trip 5: May 26 to June 15
Trip 6: May 31 to June 20
Trip 7: June 5–25

Duration: 21 days

Departure: Anchorage, Alaska, USA

Price: US\$12,450 per person



▲ Climbing the lower flanks of Denali's West Buttress Route. Photo: Mark Sedon

Denali, "The High One", is the highest mountain in North America. Located in Alaska at latitude 63 degrees north, 630km/390mi from the Arctic Circle, the summit is at 6,190m/20,310ft. Denali is one of the much sought after "Seven Summits".

Adventure Consultants offer guided expeditions to Denali ascending the West Buttress route. Our Standard Denali expeditions are run in conjunction with the American Alpine Institute—a National Park Service approved Denali concessionaire.

An ascent of Denali is ideal for those wishing to experience high altitude expedition mountaineering. Climbers must have intermediate technical snow and ice climbing experience, glacier travel, winter camping skills, and be in great shape, capable of carrying 20kg/50lb+ packs.

HISTORY

The Athabascans, Alaska's indigenous people, named the mountain Denali—"The High One". The true summit of Denali was first reached in 1913 from the north via Karstens Ridge, by Harry Karstens, Hudson Stuck, Walter Harper and Robert Tatum. No other routes were pioneered and very few reached the summit again

until 1951 when Bradford Washburn and his team pushed through the West Buttress route. Washburn's extensive cartography and photography were key in determining this route. This landmark ascent used a ski plane to establish a Base Camp on the Kahiltna Glacier at 3,000m/10,000ft paving the way for their ascent and the most successful route today.

THE CLIMB

Our team will fly from Talkeetna to our Base Camp on the Southeast Fork of the Kahiltna Glacier at 2,200m/7,300ft, at the foot of Denali. We start the climb of the West Buttress from this camp, in traditional expedition style. Over the following few weeks, we establish five or six camps on the mountain. Some double carries will be necessary between most camps below High Camp. This will allow the team more time to acclimatise and manage loads up the mountain. Our team will then be in great position for the final summit push when the most favourable weather conditions are present.



▲ A rope team hauling sleds up Motorcycle Hill on Denali's West Buttress. Photo: AAI

The summit is never a guarantee, as Denali can experience extreme weather conditions with very cold temperatures and high winds. Storms can last a week or more, but the days can also be quite hot and clear with the long Alaskan daylight hours in the summer.

PREREQUISITE SKILLS

To climb Denali, you need to be physically fit, have a strong mental stamina and be capable of strenuous exercise for several days' duration. Expedition members need to be capable of carrying a 20kg/50lb+ pack as well as an additional 15–18kg/35–40lbs on a sled. Prospective climbers must have intermediate technical snow and ice climbing experience, glacier travel and winter camping skills. Generally, we expect climbers to have completed a climbing course and a minimum of 1–2 climbs in the seasons prior to Denali to ensure their climbing skills and fitness are current.

Previous experience climbing at altitude is an advantage. Climbing at altitude affects people differently but most climbers notice a lower performance rate than normal. Our climbing days are up to 8 hours in length, with recovery periods of only 8–12 hours before another day of demanding exertion. A high level of stamina is required to maintain this demanding pace for 21 days. An ascent of Denali requires a climber to have a good baseline fitness level and be willing to build on this by undertaking a training regime for at least 6 months prior to departure. Climbers need to be mentally and physically prepared to go the extra mile when necessary and the ability to cope with weather changes, team emergencies and summit bids.

Climbers should understand and be ready for the mental demands of a Denali expedition. This includes having patience and empathy with fellow climbers and guides, understanding expedition life, being prepared for weather delays that require spending long hours in a tent, pushing to the limits and having a good understanding of personal care (from frostbite prevention to maintaining adequate nutrition and hydration intake) for the duration of the expedition.

TEAM SIZE

The maximum climber to guide ratio is 1:3. The team will have a maximum size of 9 members and 3 guides.

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ITINERARY

Weather and climbing conditions will dictate our progress during the climb. The itinerary is a guideline of our schedule, however, guides may choose to move from this itinerary as conditions allow.



▲ Denali Camp 2. Photo: AA/

Day 0	Meet in Anchorage
Day 1	Travel to Talkeetna—orientation briefing, equipment check and fly to Base Camp
Day 2	Carry loads to Camp 1 (2,300m/7,800ft)
Day 3	Carry loads up to cache/Camp 2 near Kahiltna Pass (Approximately 3,000m/9,800ft)
Day 4	Move to Camp 2 at 3,400m/11,200ft below Motorcycle Hill
Day 5	Retrieve our cache (back-carry) at 3,000m/9,800ft and return to Camp 2
Day 6	Carry loads to cache around Windy Corner to 4,150m/13,600ft and return to Camp 2
Day 7	Move to Camp 3
Day 8	Back-carry the cache at 4,150m/13,600ft
Day 9	Rest Day
Day 10	Carry to 4,900m/16,000ft and cache above the top of the fixed lines
Day 11	Optional rest day
Day 12	Move to High Camp at 5,250m/17,200ft
Day 13	Optional rest day

Day 14–19 Summit Days

Day 19–20 Descent to Base Camp

Day 21 Return to Talkeetna

DETAILED ITINERARY

Weather and climbing conditions will dictate our progress during the climb. The following itinerary is a guideline.

Day 0

Be ready for a 8am gear check and orientation at the Anchorage hotel. After the gear check, we will run any last-minute errands and the guides will shop for fresh food items. There will be an optional dinner at a local eatery in the evening.

Day 1

Depart for Talkeetna via a ground shuttle. The ride is about 2.5 hours with a brief stop along the way. Once in Talkeetna, we will check in at the ranger station for an orientation and a slide show from one of the park rangers. We then have lunch in town and pack for the glacier flight. We should be able to fly onto the glacier and establish our Base Camp in the afternoon.

Once on the glacier, we will settle into Base Camp (2,200m/7,200ft) on the Southeast Fork of the Kahiltna Glacier and discuss camp building, camp etiquette, cook tent procedures and the roles of each team member on the expedition.

Day 2

After breakfast we will rig our sleds, dig our Base Camp cache and head to Camp 1 at 2,300m/7,800ft below Ski Hill.

Quick Stats: 8.85km/5.5mi, 300m/1,000ft of elevation gain (we lose elevation down Heart Break Hill below Base Camp).

Day 3

Carry loads to cache at 3,000m/9,800ft feet near Kahiltna Pass below Camp 2 and return to Camp 1.

Quick Stats: 11.3km/7mi round-trip, roughly 700m/2,000ft of elevation gain.

Day 4

Move to Camp 2 at 3,400m/11,200ft below Motorcycle Hill.

Quick Stats: 6.4km/4mi, 1,100m/3,400ft of elevation gain.

Day 5

Retrieve our cache (back-carry) at 3,000m/9,800ft and return to Camp 2.

Quick Stats: 1-mile round-trip, 400m/1,400ft elevation loss and gain.

Day 6

Carry loads to cache around Windy Corner to 4,150m/13,600ft and return to Camp 2.

Quick Stats: 7.2km/4.5mi round-trip, 750m/2,400ft of elevation gain and loss.

Day 7

Move to Camp 3 at 4,350m/14,200ft. The views of Mt Hunter, Mt Foraker and the sunset over the Alaska Range are incredible from this camp.

Quick Stats: 4.4km/2.75mi, 950m/3,000ft of elevation gain.

Day 8

Back carry the cache at 4,150m/13,600ft.



▲ Access to Denali is by ski plane. Photo: AAI



▲ Denali Base Camp on the Kahiltna Glacier. Photo: AAI



▲ Crevasse rescue techniques are a prerequisite. Photo: Mark Sedon

Quick Stats: 1.6km/1mi round-trip and 200m/600ft of elevation loss and gain.

Day 9

Rest day. We practice using fixed lines and passing running protection as a rope team in preparation for ascents of the fixed lines in the days to come.

Day 10

Carry to 4,900m/16,000ft and cache above the top of the fixed lines. The fixed lines protect about 250m/800ft of vertical 50 to 55-degree snow and ice on a feature called "The Headwall." Above the Headwall, we gain the crest of the West Buttress that eventually leads to High Camp at 5,250m/17,200ft.

Quick Stats: 4km/2.5mi round trip, 700m/2,300ft of elevation gain and loss.

Day 11

Optional rest day.

Day 12

Move to High Camp at 5,250m/17,200ft. This is a long hard day. We will no longer have the use of sleds so all expedition gear must be carried in climber's packs for the ascent to High Camp. We will have the option of retrieving our cache on the way to camp or returning to pick it up in the following days should the need arise.

Quick Stats: 2.8km/1.75mi, 900m/3,000ft of elevation gain.

Day 13

Optional rest day. Most climbers need and want a rest day after the move to High Camp.

Days 14–19

Summit days. The trip from High Camp to the summit (6,190m/20,308ft) will take between 14–18 hours round-trip and is the hardest day of the expedition for most climbers. It is not uncommon for teams to have to wait several days at High Camp for a chance at the summit. Some teams never get a chance at the summit. High winds and very cold temperatures are the norm and your time spent here will likely be miserable.

Quick Stats: 8km/5mi round-trip, 940m/3,108ft of elevation gain and loss.

Days 19–20

Descending days. It will take 2 full days to descend from High Camp back to the landing strip.

We need to be back at the landing strip by no later than 6 am on the morning of Day 21 of the trip.



▲ Advancing camp on Denali with full sleds. Photo: AAI



▲ Climbers descending fixed lines during a snowstorm. Photo: Roy Wells



▲ Happy climbers on the top of North America. Photo: AAI



▲ Descending the Autobahn to High Camp, with Mount Hunter peeking through the clouds beyond. Photo: Steve Moffat

Quick Stats: The descent from High Camp back to Base Camp will cover 22.5km/14mi and 3,000m/9,800ft of elevation loss. The last half-mile (800m) back to Base Camp is uphill (Heart Break Hill) and we will have to gain about 180m/600ft before reaching Base Camp.

Day 21

If the weather is good, we will fly off the glacier and sort gear in Talkeetna. It is not entirely uncommon to be delayed for a day or more while waiting for the weather to clear up enough for glacier planes to land. Upon return to town, most climbers opt to spend the night in Talkeetna and enjoy one of the fine dining and drinking establishments with fellow climbers in town. Lodging will be arranged when we get back to town and your guides can help you make needed reservations for shuttle rides once we are settled in and unpacked.

SUMMIT DAY

A summit day on Denali is a serious undertaking. Numerous factors need to come together to allow a team to undertake a summit bid. In addition to weather and snow conditions on the mountain, everyone on the team needs to have demonstrated their ability to reasonably attempt the summit. Summit day is the most arduous of the expedition, and your guide will make the ultimate decision regarding timing and who is capable of the summit bid.

While such decisions can be difficult at the time, it is important to remember that safety of all the team is the overriding factor in the decision-making process.

THE ADVANTAGES OF CLIMBING WITH ADVENTURE CONSULTANTS

Adventure Consultants is renowned for the quality of its service and strategy applied to high altitude expedition climbing. Our reputation is attributed to meticulous planning and experienced logistics coordination. We have a philosophy of investing in every expedition to offer our climbers the best possible chance of success.

We employ strong and specialised expedition leaders and support staff, who are some of the most pre-eminent in the industry. We pride ourselves on operating with small teams, the best back-up and support available. This includes nutritious and ample quantities of food, comfortable Base Camp facilities, reliable communications systems and the necessary medical back up.

Many of our expedition members come to us because they have seen us in action on a previous trip and decide to opt for our level of service and proven experience. Others return because they know we do our very best to make expeditions safe and successful.

FOOD

During the expedition, you will enjoy high quality and nourishing food. Breakfast and dinner is provided on the mountain, you need to bring lunches a selection of your favourite high energy snacks. Please indicate any specific dietary requirements you may have on your application form.

MEDICAL EXAMINATION

Expedition members will be provided with a medical questionnaire and asked to visit their family physician and receive a full medical examination. This information will be sighted only by our medical adviser and treated with full confidentiality. Advice on immunisations will be provided at this time.

VISAS

Generally, entry Visas are not required for travellers staying less than 90 days, however you may need to complete an ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorization), please check with your travel agent. Climbing permits are a separate matter dealt with by the expedition agent.

EQUIPMENT LIST

Expedition members will be sent a list detailing all necessary individual clothing and personal equipment to be provided.

EXPEDITION FEE

The cost of the expedition is US\$12,450 per person ex Anchorage, Alaska, USA.

This is an inclusive cost and covers the following:

- Mountain guides at maximum 1:3 ratio
- All expedition organisational requirements
- Ski plane flights to and from the Kahiltna Glacier
- National Park Service Mountaineering "Special Use Fee" and National Park entrance fee
- Group equipment: stoves, tents, ropes etc. and all supplies necessary to make a safe and strong bid for the summit
- Mechanical ascenders for fixed lines
- Custom expedition sleds
- Breakfast and dinner while in the mountains (lunch and snacks not included)
- A dispatch page following the climb on the American Alpine Institute website
- Group shuttle to/from Talkeetna

The expedition fee **does not** include the following:

- Round-trip airfare to Anchorage, Alaska
- Meals and lodging in Anchorage and Talkeetna
- Personal clothing and equipment
- Trip cancellation/medical evacuation insurance
- Excess baggage
- Any rescue costs
- Any costs associated with early departure
- Extra expenses incurred from weather delays in Talkeetna
- Gratuities

NOTE: This expedition is organised for Adventure Consultants by the American Alpine Institute, an



▲ A party hauling sleds with Denali looming above. Photo: AA/



▲ Climbers on the final approach to the summit of Denali. The actual summit is visible on the far right, at the end of the ridge crest. Photo: AAT

authorized concessionaire of Denali National Park and Preserve. All prices are subject to change without notice.

PAYMENT DETAILS

All payments should be made by bank transfer to the following bank and account:

Bank of New Zealand
Offshore Branch
42 Willis Street
Spark Central
Wellington
New Zealand

For the account of Adventure Consultants Limited

Account Number: 1000-594771-0000

Account Type: US Dollars

Swift Address: BKNZNZ22

NOTE: All bank transfer charges are for the remitter's account.

We can also accept your deposit and balance payment by credit card (Visa, Mastercard or Amex) plus a 3% card fee.

DEPOSIT

A non-refundable deposit of US\$2,000 is payable to secure a place on the expedition.

BALANCE

The balance of US\$10,250 is due 120 days from the departure date.

CANCELLATION & REFUND POLICY

An expedition member may cancel their participation on the following basis:

- a) Cancellations outside of 120 days of the departure date will result in the loss of the trip deposit.
- b) Cancellations between 120 and 90 days of the departure date incur 50% of balance payment.
- c) For cancellation made within 90 days of the departure date there will be no refunds.

We strongly recommend you take out trip cancellation insurance via your travel agent if you wish to be covered against cancellation due to medical or personal reasons.

HOW TO JOIN THIS EXPEDITION

If you would like to join one of Adventure Consultants Standard Denali expeditions please book online at <https://adventureconsultants.com/expeditions/seven-summits/denali-standard-departure#DepartureBookingBlock>.

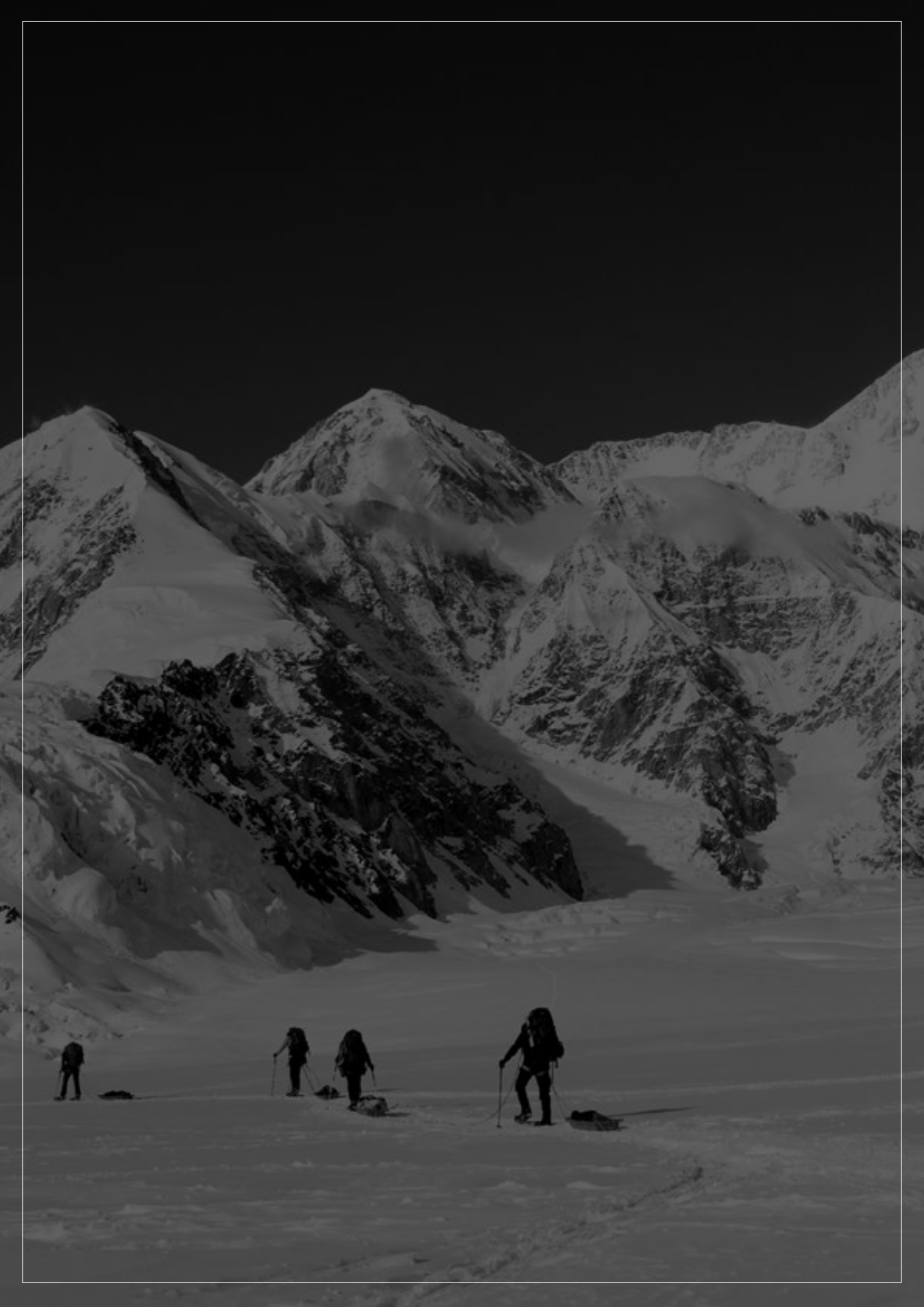
CONTACT US

Adventure Consultants Ltd
5/12 Frederick Street
PO Box 739
Lake Wanaka 9343
New Zealand

Phone: + 64 3 443 8711

Email: info@adventure.co.nz

Website: <https://adventureconsultants.com/>





▲ Denali from the Kahiltna Glacier. Photo: Guy Cotter



Adventure Consultants is affiliated to the New Zealand Mountain Guides Association (NZMGA), New Zealand Alpine Club (NZAC) and a corporate member of the American Alpine Club (AAC). Adventure Consultants is a supporter of the dZi Foundation in Nepal for their 'Revitalise a Village' programmes.

Adventure Consultants perform to IFMGA/UIAGM standards and are world leaders in high altitude guiding.



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