

AVALANCHE SKILLS TRAINING 1 • MOUNT CAIN



Thank you for choosing Island Alpine Guides for your Avalanche Skills Training. This package contains some background information to help you prepare, including meeting times and places, and a complete equipment list.

If you have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to contact us by email at info@islandalpineguides.com or by telephone on 250 400 2870.

We hope you find the course enjoyable and informative.

Jan Neuspiel
Director/Guide - Island Alpine Guides



AVALANCHE SKILLS TRAINING 1 • MOUNT CAIN

MEETING TIME & PLACE

At Mount Cain, we typically either use space in one of the participants' cabins if available, or we rent space from the Mount Cain Society for our classroom sessions. If you have space at Mount Cain that might be suitable and are interested in renting it to us to hold our classroom sessions, please get in touch. We will send out a group email in the week leading up to your course start date to confirm the location of your course.

The meeting time is 8:30am on day one of the course.

Please note that you will need to organise your own accommodation. Check out [Mount Cain's accommodation rental](#) page.

COURSE OVERVIEW

With support from the National Search and Rescue Secretariat's New Initiatives Fund, as well as the collaboration of the Canadian Ski Patrol System, the Alpine Club of Canada, and others, the Canadian Avalanche Centre (CAC) has designed the curriculum for Avalanche Skills Training Level 1 (AST) and Avalanche Skills Training Level 2 (formerly known as Introductory and Advanced RAC training), and produced high-quality instructional materials, videos, and reference books to promote effective learning progressions that emphasize the most important knowledge and skills. The CAC encourages and facilitates avalanche accident prevention in Canada by providing these training materials to numerous independent instructors who are Canadian Avalanche Association members in good standing. These individuals conduct AST programs as a small business or public service venture within their communities.

The AST Level 1 is an introductory avalanche course and is geared towards the recreationalist with little-to-no experience in avalanche terrain or with using technical equipment such as avalanche beacons. Individuals who are venturing into avalanche terrain outside of ski area boundaries or into the backcountry for the first time are perfect candidates for this course.

The curriculum developed by the CAC dictates a minimum of 4 hours of classroom time and 7 hours in the field. At Island Alpine Guides, our courses follow the curriculum set forth by the CAC, and exceed all the minimum times required; a usual AST 1 course will run for approximately 6 hours in the classroom and 12 hours in the field.



AVALANCHE SKILLS TRAINING 1 • MOUNT CAIN

The following topics are covered on the AST1:

Classroom sessions

- Nature and formation of avalanches
- Avalanche terrain
- Mountain snowpack
- Winter backcountry travel
- Assessing avalanche danger
- Safety measures and self-rescue/avalanche transceivers

Field sessions

- Terrain recognition
- Route finding
- Safe travel
- Stability evaluation
- Hazard recognition
- Small party self-rescue

PREPARATION

Please come prepared for both the classroom and field sessions. The equipment list provided further down in this document will help you to be comfortable in the field regardless of the weather: rain, snow, or shine.

The choice to use skis or a splitboard is up to you; choose what mode of transport you are most comfortable with. If you are using a splitboard, please ensure you're familiar with how they work and their limitations. Mostly, proficiency with the changeovers needs to be practised.

Unlike our Mount Washington courses, our Mount Cain courses are not suitable for participants on snowshoes as you need to be able to ride the T-bar, which you can't do on snowshoes. There also tends to be more of a focus on downhill at Mount Cain as the terrain there is well-suited to it. The Mount Washington courses are better suited to people travelling on snowshoes.

If you don't yet own your own touring gear, [Ski Tak Hut](#) offers 25% off backcountry ski rentals (skins, boots, and skis) for all Island Alpine Guides customers while on one of our trips or courses. It's a great way to try it out before you commit. They don't offer splitboard rentals at this time. The voucher with further instructions can be found at the end of this document. If you are using any of the equipment for the first time, it's a good idea to practise changeovers (downhill to touring mode) before the trip.



AVALANCHE SKILLS TRAINING 1 • MOUNT CAIN

Ensure you bring along a warm jacket of down or synthetic material to keep you warm outside. There is a fair amount of standing around during the demo sessions. Extra gloves are a must as you are often digging around in the snow and your gloves will become soaking wet rapidly. A thermos of hot tea is a nice comfort.

For the classroom sessions, you will be provided with an Avaluator trip planner and Slope Assessment Tool. Bring along a notebook and pen. “Rite in the rain” or similar waterproof books are very useful for taking notes in the field.

Pre-course study

To help you prepare and get the most out of your course, we recommend some pre-course study. Avalanche Canada’s [online avalanche tutorial](#) is a great resource.

TYPICAL SCHEDULE

The first morning typically begins with a classroom session to develop some basic concepts including avalanche formation, avalanche terrain and avalanche rescue theory. From there we typically head off into the snow to put some of this theory into practice for the remainder of the daytime portion of day one.

Once we have changed out of our ski clothes and had a quick dinner, we settle in for an evening classroom session to prepare us for the following day’s field session.

The second day of the course is usually spent entirely in the field. Much of the day is spent looking at real avalanche terrain, learning how to identify it and to move through it with an emphasis on route selection and group management. We wrap up day two with a demonstration of snow analysis to introduce the concept of layering within the snowpack. The last day of the course usually wraps up by around 5pm.

Please note that the above is a general overview of how the course is often run. The instructor may well change the order of classroom and field sessions, usually to fit with anticipated weather in an attempt to utilise the best conditions for the benefit of student learning.

The weekend is busy and there is not much free time. Please keep your schedule free on the evening of the first day as there is much theory to cover that is vital to completing the course.

A certificate is issued by email following completion of your course if all sessions have been attended. This certificate is valid as the pre-requisite for AST 2 or the CAA Level 1 operations course.



AVALANCHE SKILLS TRAINING 1 • MOUNT CAIN

EQUIPMENT LIST

Items marked with “+” can be provided by us if required. Please email us at least 1 week in advance to let us know if you require any of these items. Items marked with “*” are optional.

Clothing

- Synthetic, wool or silk thermal underwear top and bottom
- Wool, fleece or pile sweater or jacket
- Insulating pants of wool, fleece or pile
- Wind and waterproof jacket and pants
- Down or synthetic jacket for extra insulation on top
- Toque
- Mitts or glove, 2 pairs

Gear

- Touring skis / snowshoes / splitboard
- Poles
- Boots
- Skins
- Avalanche transceiver+
- Shovel+
- Avalanche probe+
- Compass*
- Altimetre*
- Toilet paper
- Personal small first aid kit (blister kit)
- SPF lip balm
- Sunscreen
- Water bottle
- Lunches
- Thermos *
- Sunglasses
- Ski goggles
- Backpack to carry everything on this list

Please be sure that all clothing and equipment is in good repair and functioning properly with boots fitted properly to bindings. Be sure that skins are fitted properly to skis or boards and that they stick properly.



AVALANCHE SKILLS TRAINING 1 • MOUNT CAIN

If you are bringing your own avalanche transceiver, be sure that it has fresh batteries in it. Malfunctioning equipment uses up precious learning time for all participants. Please come properly prepared.

RISKS, DANGERS, HAZARDS AND WAIVER

All Island Alpine Guides courses and trips take place in an outdoor, wilderness environment. This means that as a participant you will be encountering various risks, dangers and hazards some of which include avalanches, cornices, crevasses, cliffs, trees, creeks, rockfall, difficult travel conditions, weather, illness, equipment failure, wild animals, becoming lost as well as the possibility of mistakes being made by IAG guides and instructors. To participate in these activities you will be required to read and agree to our [waiver](#) as part of the registration process. You will also be required to sign the waiver at the start of the course or trip. In doing so you will waive or give up certain legal rights including the right to sue or to claim compensation following an accident.

If you are a minor (under 19 years of age), we require your waiver to be signed by your parent or legal guardian. In this case, please download the appropriate waiver from the link above, print it, have your parent/guardian sign it, scan or photograph the completed copy and send it to info@islandalpineguides.com. Minor students arriving without a waiver signed by their parent or legal guardian will not be allowed to participate in the course or trip.



AVALANCHE SKILLS TRAINING 1 • MOUNT CAIN

25% OFF VOUCHER FOR BACKCOUNTRY RENTALS AT SKI TAK HUT

This voucher is only valid for backcountry rentals being used *for an IAG course or trip.*

To get 25% off, you ***must*** bring the following with you to Ski Tak Hut when picking up your rentals:

- 1) A printed copy of this voucher
- 2) A printed copy of the Island Alpine Guides booking confirmation, which you received by email when you registered. This booking confirmation must show that you are renting the gear precisely for the dates that you are on an IAG course or trip.

If you do not have the above two things with you when picking up the gear, you will *not* receive the 25% discount. No exceptions can be made.