

BLACK MOUNTAINEERING

DENALI EXPEDITION

West Buttress Route | Alaska Range, USA | 6,190m Summit

LOCATION
ALASKA, USA

DURATION
21 DAYS

ROUTE
WEST BUTTRESS

GRADE
VERY DIFFICULT

ALTITUDE
6,190M

DAILY ACTIVITY
8-10 HOURS

EXPEDITION INTRODUCTION



Location	**Alaska**
Duration	**21 Days**
Route	**West Buttress**
Grade	**Very Difficult**
Daily Activity	**8–10 hrs**
Altitude	**6,190m**

Denali is one of the world's great mountaineering challenges. Rising 17,000ft (5,182m) above the surrounding plains, with greater vertical relief than Everest or Kilimanjaro, it demands a 21 day expedition covering approximately 13,000ft (3,962m) of ascent from the Kahiltna Glacier to its 6,190m summit, the highest point in North America. It stands as one of the most sought after objectives among the world's Seven Summits.

Guided by Jason Black with a maximum ratio of 2:1 climbers to guide, the team travels fully self-sufficient with backpacks and sleds, building progressive camps and load carries to acclimatise safely through the Alaska Range's demanding Arctic conditions.

Climbers develop core glacier travel, rope, and crevasse skills en route, tackling landmark terrain including Motorcycle Hill, Squirrel Hill, and the West Buttress before establishing High Camp at approximately 5,240m for the final summit push. Every stage of the climb is built around steady, deliberate progress rather than speed.

The route unfolds in stages, beginning with a ski plane landing directly on the Kahiltna Glacier and progressing through a series of camps connected by carries and caches that steadily move the team's food, fuel and equipment higher on the mountain.

Above Camp 3, the character of the climb shifts as sleds are left behind and all gear is carried in backpacks up the fixed lines of the Headwall onto the West Buttress itself, leading to High Camp and, conditions permitting, a summit day of 14 to 18 hours across some of the most exposed and demanding terrain in North American mountaineering. Throughout, the team's pace is dictated by the mountain's weather and each climber's acclimatisation.







ALASKA & REQUIRED EXPERIENCE

Alaska is the last great American wilderness, a vast and largely untouched state where the Alaska Range rises abruptly from the surrounding tundra to form one of the most dramatic mountain landscapes on Earth.

The expedition begins in Anchorage before travelling north to the historic climbing town of Talkeetna, gateway to Denali National Park and the starting point for the ski plane flights that carry climbers onto the Kahiltna Glacier.

From there, the mountain reveals itself in stages, moving through a landscape of crevassed glaciers, towering granite walls and sweeping views across neighbouring giants such as Mount Foraker and Mount Hunter.

It is this combination of remoteness, scale and raw Arctic character that makes Alaska, and Denali in particular, one of mountaineering's most unforgettable destinations.



MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR EVERY CLIMBER

01 **High-Altitude Experience**
Extensive high-mountain experience, including a successfully summited 6,000m peak.

02 **Winter & Glacier Skills**
Comfortable operating in a remote glaciated mountain environment and severe cold.

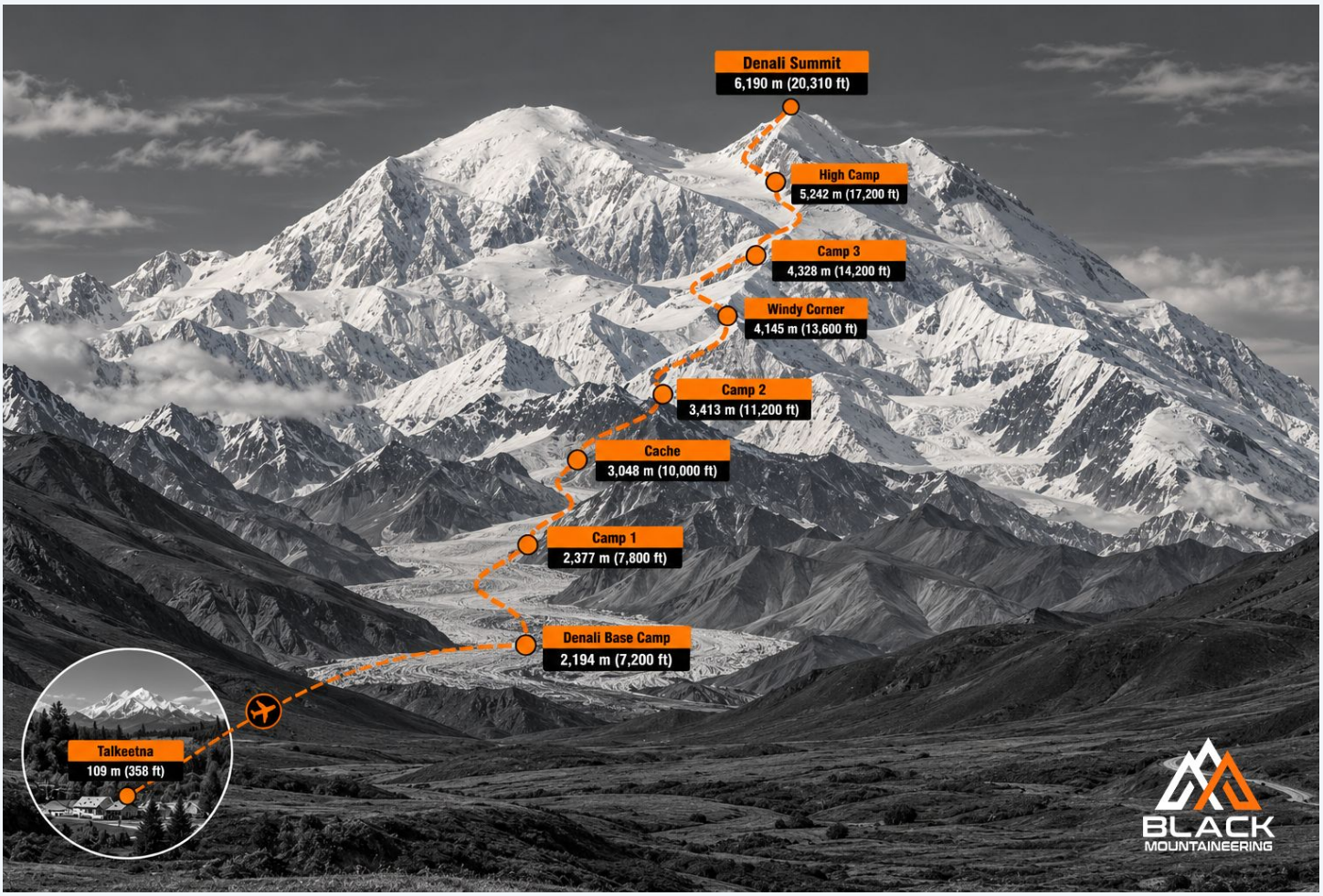
03 **Winter Skills Training**
Completion of a recognized winter mountaineering skills course prior to departure.

04 **Excellent Mountain Fitness**
High endurance and strength, with capacity for consecutive heavy load-carrying days.

05 **Technical Competence**
Confident with crampons, ice axe, harness systems, fixed lines, and self-arrest.

✔ **Pre-Climb Screening**
All prerequisites are logged and verified during application to ensure team readiness.

WEST BUTTRESS ROUTE



Peak Altitude	**6,190 meters**
Total Duration	**21 days, arrival to departure**
Expedition Grade	**Very difficult**
Daily Activity	**Approx. 8–10 hours**
Acclimatization	**Carries & caches, Camps 1–3**
Summit Day	**Exposed snow/ice, fixed lines**
Route	**West Buttress Route**
Group Size	**Minimum 4, maximum 6**

GLACIER APPROACH & MOVE TO 14 CAMP

DAY 0

Arrival in Anchorage

10am pre-trip briefing at Hyatt House, Anchorage. Team orientation, gear check, and packing procedures with guides.

Location: Anchorage

Activity: Briefing & Gear

Meeting: 10:00 AM Hyatt House - Hotel Lobby

Overnight: Hyatt House

DAY 1

Anchorage → Base Camp

Transfer to Talkeetna (2.5 hrs) via private ground transfer, NPS Ranger registration. Ski aircraft flight onto Kahiltna Glacier Base Camp (2,194m).

Base Camp: 2,194m / 7,200ft

Transfer: 2.5h Talkeetna

Flight: Glacier Ski Plane

Overnight: Kahiltna Base

DAY 2

Base Camp → Camp 1

Rig sleds, descend Heartbreak Hill (400ft). Rope up & haul sleds 5.5 miles (8.8 km) to Camp 1 at 2,377m (7,800ft).

Distance: 8.8 km / 5.5 mi

Elev Gain: 305m / 1,000ft

Descent: 122m / 400ft

Overnight: Camp 1 (2,377m)

DAY 3

Camp 1 → Cache Below Camp 2

First load carry higher. Climb towards Kahiltna Pass carrying food & fuel. Establish cache at 3,048m, descend to Camp 1.

Distance: 11.3 km / 7 mi RT

Cache Alt: 3,048m/10,000ft

Elev Gain: 670m / 2,200ft

Overnight: Camp 1 (2,377m)

DAYS 4 - 5

Move to Camp 2 & Lower Cache

Ascend Kahiltna Glacier with sleds to Camp 2 (3,413m). Day 5 back-carry: retrieve cache from 3,109m & return to Camp 2.

Camp 2 Alt: 3,413m/11,200ft

Move Dist: 6.4 km / 4 miles

Back-Carry: 1.6 km / 1 mi RT

Overnight: Camp 2 (3,413m)

DAYS 6 - 7

Windy Corner & Move to Camp 3

Day 6: Carry supplies to Windy Corner (4,145m). Team returns to Camp 2 for the night.

Day 7: Move camp to Camp 3 (14 Camp at 4,328m) below West Buttress.

Camp 3 Alt: 4,328m/14,200ft

High Point: 4,145m/13,600ft

Elev Gain: 914m / 3,000ft

Overnight: Camp 3 (14 Camp) on Day 7

HEADWALL ASCENT & MOVE TO HIGH CAMP

DAY 8

Windy Corner Cache Retrieval

Descend from Camp 3 to Windy Corner (4,145m) cache. Retrieve food & equipment, carry back to Camp 3. Rest & recover.

Distance: 1.6 km / 1 mi RT

Elev Loss/Gain: 183m / 600ft

Focus: Supplies & Rest

Overnight: Camp 3 (4,328m)

DAY 9

Rest & Technical Skills Day

Active rest & skills day at Camp 3 (4,328m). Practice ascending fixed lines, passing protection, and rope team protocols.

Location: Camp 3 (14 Camp)

Training: Fixed Line Rope

Focus: Skill Efficiency

Overnight: Camp 3 (4,328m)

DAY 10

Ascend Headwall & 16,200ft Cache

Climb 800ft of 50-55° snow/ice on Headwall fixed lines onto West Buttress crest. Cache at 4,937m, descend to Camp 3.

High Point: 4,937m/16,200ft

Headwall: 800ft 50-55° Ice

Distance: 4 km / 2.5 mi RT

Overnight: Camp 3 (4,328m)

DAY 11

Optional Rest Day at Camp 3

Optional rest & acclimatisation day at Camp 3. Focus on hydration, nutrition, gear check, & weather evaluation before upper move.

Location: Camp 3 (4,328m)

Focus: Hydration & Gear

Purpose: Full Recovery

Overnight: Camp 3 (4,328m)

DAYS 12 - 13

Move to High Camp (5,242m)

Leave sleds behind; carry all gear in heavy backpacks up Headwall fixed lines to High Camp (5,242m). Day 13: Rest & weather check.

Optional Rest day on **Day 13**

High Camp: 5,242m/17,200ft

Distance: 2.8 km / 1.75 mi

Elev Gain: 914m / 3,000ft

Load Carry: Packs Only

MILESTONE

High Camp Arrival (5,242m)

Team reaches 17,200ft High Camp on West Buttress. Crucial rest, acclimatisation, & weather window evaluation for summit push.

High Camp: 5,242m/17,200ft

Key Phase: Summit Push

Target Peak: Denali (6,190m)

Overnight: High Camp

THE SUMMIT PUSH & FLIGHT TO TALKEETNA

PHASE 1: DAYS 14 - 19

Denali Summit Attempt (6,190m)

Objective: Summit Denali (6,190m / 20,310ft) from High Camp (5,242m).

• Route: Exposed West Buttress ridge, Autobahn slope, Zebra Rocks & Summit Ridge.
• Effort: Demanding 14–18 hour round trip in severe cold & high wind.
• Strategy: Weather-dependent window. Wait at High Camp for ideal wind/temp conditions.

Start Point: High Camp (5,242m)

Summit Alt: 6,190m/20,310ft

RT Distance: 8 km / 5 miles

Elev Gain: 950m / 3,120ft

Duration: 14 – 18 hours

Overnight: High Camp (5,242m)

PHASE 2: DAYS 19 - 20

High Camp → Base Camp Descent

Two-day descent from High Camp back to Kahiltna Base Camp.

• Day 19: Descend West Buttress ridge & Headwall fixed lines to Camp 3.
• Day 20: Traverse lower glacier, collecting cached gear.
• Final Push: Re-rig sleds, climb 600ft Heartbreak Hill to Base Camp.

Start Point: High Camp (5,242m)

Finish Point: Base Camp (2,194m)

Total Dist: 22.5 km / 14 mi

Elev Loss: 2,987m/9,800ft

Final Climb: Heartbreak Hill (600ft)

Duration: 2 full days

PHASE 3: DAY 21

Flight to Talkeetna & Celebration

Expedition conclusion & flight off glacier.

• Flight: Board ski aircraft on Kahiltna Glacier for flight to Talkeetna.
• Logistics: Unpack gear in Talkeetna.
• Optional - Celebration: Well-earned celebration dinner & drinks with team.
• Optional - Overnight: Talkeetna Hotel.

Most climbers choose to stay overnight in Talkeetna and celebrate with the team; accommodation can be arranged on request.

Start Point: Base Camp (2,194m)

Finish Point: Talkeetna (109m)

Transport: Ski Aircraft Flight

Flight Status: Weather Dependent






WHAT'S INCLUDED

INCLUDED

- ✔ JBM Elite personalised training plan
- ✔ NPS park fees
- ✔ Two nights hotel in Anchorage
- ✔ Ski plane flights on & off Kahiltna Glacier
- ✔ Tents and group cooking equipment
- ✔ Custom expedition sleds
- ✔ Professional guides' leadership & instruction
- ✔ Airport transfers
- ✔ Group transport to and from Talkeetna
- ✔ All food while on the mountain
- ✔ Group climbing equipment
- ✔ Snowshoes

NOT INCLUDED

- ✖ International flights
- ✖ US visa (ESTA)
- ✖ Insurance
- ✖ Meals off the mountain
- ✖ Tips

TRAVEL INSURANCE (MANDATORY)

For Denali, climbers must carry two separate, comprehensive forms of insurance.

POLICY 1: TRAVEL & CANCELLATION
True Traveller Policy

- ✔ Trip Cancellation & Interruption: Full expedition value cover
- ✔ Baggage & Delay Coverage: Lost gear, luggage delays & travel risks
- ✔ General Medical: Travel-related medical protection off mountain

Protects Financial & Travel Investment

Get True Traveller Insurance



POLICY 2: MOUNTAIN RESCUE
Global Rescue Membership

- ✔ High-Altitude Field Rescue: Specialist search & rescue team
- ✔ 6,190m Altitude Cover: Mandatory coverage for Denali summit height
- ✔ Emergency Evacuation: Airlift & emergency repatriation home

Protects Life & High-Altitude Field Safety

Get Global Rescue Insurance



⚠ **IMPORTANT:** Both policies are complementary and mandatory before departure.
Climbers must verify altitude limits (6,190m), mountaineering exclusions, and evacuation terms.

MANDATORY EQUIPMENT & LAYERING CHECKLIST

Denali is one of the most physically demanding and equipment-intensive expeditions in the world. Climbers must be prepared for severe cold, high winds, glacier travel, hauling heavy loads and living independently on the mountain for an extended period.

All mandatory equipment must be expedition quality, fit correctly and have been tested before departure.

01 | SUN PROTECTION

- [ ] SPF 50+ sunscreen
- [ ] Sun hat
- [ ] High-SPF lip protection
- [ ] Face / nose protection
- [ ] Glacier glasses
- [ ] Goggles

02 | HEAD & FACE

- [ ] Warm beanie / toque
- [ ] Ski / expedition goggles
- [ ] Sun hat / baseball cap
- [ ] Buff / neck gaiter
- [ ] Glacier sunglasses – Category 4 Recommended
- [ ] Face mask or balaclava
- [ ] Spare glacier sunglasses
- [ ] Nose / face protection for high UV exposure

03 | HANDS

- [ ] Lightweight liner gloves
- [ ] Spare liner gloves
- [ ] Mid-weight working / climbing gloves
- [ ] Waterproof expedition gloves
- [ ] Expedition mittens

MANDATORY EQUIPMENT & LAYERING CHECKLIST

04 | UPPER BODY – LAYERING SYSTEM

BASE LAYERS

- [ ] Lightweight long-sleeve base layer
- [ ] Lightweight sun shirt
- [ ] Additional base layer

> *Synthetic or merino wool. No cotton.*

MID LAYERS

- [ ] Active insulation / fleece layer
- [ ] Lightweight insulated jacket
- [ ] Softshell jacket

OUTER LAYERS

- [ ] Waterproof / breathable hardshell jacket
- [ ] Expedition-weight down parka with hood

05 | LOWER BODY

- [ ] Synthetic / merino underwear
- [ ] Softshell climbing trousers
- [ ] Lightweight base-layer bottoms
- [ ] Waterproof hardshell trousers
- [ ] Expedition-weight base-layer bottoms
- [ ] Insulated expedition trousers / down trousers

> *Full-length side zips on insulated trousers are strongly recommended so they can be put on or removed while wearing boots and crampons.*

MANDATORY EQUIPMENT & LAYERING CHECKLIST

06 | FOOTWEAR

SOCKS

- [ ] 4–6 pairs expedition-quality mountaineering socks
- [ ] Liner socks if personally preferred

MOUNTAINEERING BOOTS

- [ ] High-altitude double or integrated expedition mountaineering boots suitable for Denali

> **Examples of the type of boot required include:** *La Sportiva G2 • La Sportiva Olympus Mons • Scarpa Phantom 6000 • Scarpa Phantom 8000 • Millet Everest Summit GTX*

> *Boots must be compatible with your crampons and thoroughly tested before the expedition.*

ADDITIONAL FOOTWEAR

- [ ] Expedition overboots if required for your boot system
- [ ] Gaiters if not integrated into boots
- [ ] Lightweight insulated camp booties

07 | PACKS & EXPEDITION BAGS

- [ ] Large internal-frame expedition backpack – approximately 90–100+ litres
- [ ] Large expedition duffel – approximately 120–140 litres
- [ ] Second duffel / travel bag for equipment left in Anchorage / Talkeetna
- [ ] Waterproof stuff sacks / dry bags
- [ ] Heavy-duty pack liners

MANDATORY EQUIPMENT & LAYERING CHECKLIST

08 | TECHNICAL MOUNTAINEERING EQUIPMENT

- [ ] Mountaineering ice axe
- [ ] Lightweight climbing harness
- [ ] UIAA / CE-approved climbing helmet
- [ ] 12-point steel crampons
- [ ] Anti-balling plates fitted to crampons
- [ ] 2 trekking poles with snow baskets
- [ ] Mountaineering snowshoes
- [ ] 2 × 60cm sewn slings
- [ ] 3 locking carabiners
- [ ] 4 non-locking carabiners
- [ ] Mechanical ascender
- [ ] 2 prusik loops / suitable accessory cord

09 | SLEEP SYSTEM

SLEEPING BAG

- [ ] Expedition down sleeping bag rated approximately -29°C or colder

SLEEPING MATS

Two sleeping mats are required:

- [ ] Full-length closed-cell foam mat
- [ ] Full-length insulated inflatable sleeping mat

ADDITIONAL

- [ ] Sleeping bag compression / dry sack
- [ ] Pillow or stuff-sack pillow – optional

MANDATORY EQUIPMENT & LAYERING CHECKLIST

10 | EATING & HYDRATION

- [ ] Large insulated mug
- [ ] 2–3 × 1-litre wide-mouth water bottles
- [ ] Bowl / insulated food container
- [ ] Insulated bottle covers / parkas
- [ ] Spoon / spork
- [ ] Personal flask / thermos – optional

11 | PERSONAL MEDICAL & REPAIR KIT

PERSONAL MEDICAL

- [ ] Personal prescription medication
- [ ] Personal pain relief
- [ ] Blister treatment
- [ ] Personal first-aid supplies
- [ ] Compeed / similar
- [ ] Any medication specifically advised by your doctor

REPAIR KIT

- [ ] Duct tape
- [ ] Cable ties
- [ ] Therm-a-Rest / sleeping mat repair kit
- [ ] Small sewing kit
- [ ] Boot repair materials
- [ ] Multi-tool / small knife

MANDATORY EQUIPMENT & LAYERING CHECKLIST

12 | PERSONAL & TOILETRIES

- [ ] Toothbrush
- [ ] Toothpaste
- [ ] Hand sanitiser
- [ ] Face / body wipes
- [ ] Toilet paper as advised
- [ ] Pee bottle – minimum 1 litre
- [ ] Foot powder / antiperspirant
- [ ] Personal hygiene products
- [ ] Small quick-dry towel

FEMALE CLIMBERS

- [ ] Female urinary device if desired
- [ ] Menstrual products / menstrual cup according to personal preference

13 | EXPEDITION ACCESSORIES

- [ ] Headtorch
- [ ] Spare headtorch or backup light
- [ ] Spare batteries
- [ ] Power bank
- [ ] Charging cables
- [ ] Ear plugs
- [ ] Camera / phone
- [ ] Journal and pen
- [ ] Garbage bags
- [ ] Personal entertainment for weather/rest days

MANDATORY EQUIPMENT & LAYERING CHECKLIST

14 | PERSONAL EXPEDITION SNACKS

- [ ] Energy bars
- [ ] Sweets
- [ ] Gels
- [ ] Electrolytes
- [ ] Nuts
- [ ] Favourite summit-day snacks
- [ ] Chocolate
- [ ] Personal drink powders

15 | TRAVEL & DOCUMENTS

- [ ] Passport
- [ ] Emergency evacuation / rescue cover
- [ ] ESTA / US entry documentation as applicable
- [ ] Flight documentation
- [ ] Travel insurance
- [ ] Emergency contact information
- [ ] High-altitude mountaineering insurance
- [ ] Copies of passport and insurance documents
- [ ] Expedition documentation supplied by Black Mountaineering

SLED HAULING & EQUIPMENT CHECKLIST

Denali is very different from many other high-altitude expeditions. Climbers are responsible for moving significant amounts of personal and expedition equipment up the mountain.

On the lower glacier, this normally involves a combination of carrying a heavily loaded expedition backpack and hauling equipment in a sled.

PERSONAL HAULING EQUIPMENT

- [ ] Large expedition backpack (approx 90–100+ L)
- [ ] Climbing harness suitable for full winter clothing
- [ ] 2 × 60cm sewn slings
- [ ] 3 locking carabiners
- [ ] 4 non-locking carabiners
- [ ] Personal prusik system
- [ ] Trekking poles with large snow baskets
- [ ] Expedition snowshoes
- [ ] Heavy-duty dry bags / stuff sacks for equipment

TEAM EXPEDITION EQUIPMENT (PROVIDED)

- [ ] Expedition sleds & Sled hauling systems
- [ ] Expedition tents (4-season mountain tents)
- [ ] Group cooking equipment & cook sets
- [ ] Stoves and fuel systems
- [ ] Group static & dynamic ropes
- [ ] Snow and glacier protection equipment
- [ ] Group repair equipment & tools
- [ ] Satellite communications equipment
- [ ] GPS & mountain navigation equipment
- [ ] Expedition snow shovels
- [ ] Group medical & emergency equipment
- [ ] Group food and mountain supplies
- [ ] Clean mountain waste management (CMC)

PERSONAL VS TEAM EQUIPMENT & STRATEGY

YOU CARRY [INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY]
Your personal clothing, boots, technical climbing equipment, sleeping system, personal food/snacks, water, personal medical supplies and other personal expedition equipment.

WE PROVIDE / COORDINATE [GROUP EXPEDITION SYSTEMS]
The main group camping, cooking, rope, communication, safety and expedition systems required to operate the team on Denali. Every climber is expected to carry an allocated share of group equipment, food, and fuel.

LOAD HAULING MINDSET [UNASSISTED EXPEDITION]
Denali requires a completely different mindset from a supported Himalayan expedition. There are no porters carrying your personal expedition equipment up the West Buttress. Self-sufficiency is essential.

NOTE: It is important that every climber understands the difference between personal equipment and team equipment.

TEAM MEMBERS SHOULD BE PREPARED FOR:

As the expedition progresses and the terrain becomes steeper, the way loads are transported changes. Equipment and supplies may also be cached as part of the team's acclimatisation and mountain strategy.

CORE EXPEDITION SKILL:
Load carrying is therefore not simply a fitness requirement. It is a core Denali expedition skill.

Heavy Backpack | Expedition Sled | High Altitude | Extreme Cold | Consecutive Days





PHYSICAL PREPARATION PRINCIPLES 1 - 7

Climbing Denali combines altitude (6,190m), extreme cold, heavy loads (23kg pack + 22kg sled) and 21 consecutive days. Preparation follows a progressive structure: Base Fitness → Load Strength → Endurance → Specific → Peak & Taper.

"The principle is simple: Train specifically for the mountain you are going to climb."
— Jason Black, Denali Specialist

01 **Start Months Early**
Begin months before departure. Progressive timeline: Base Fitness → Heavy Load Strength → Endurance → Mountain-Specific → Peak & Taper.

02 **Train Specifically for Denali**
Long mountain days, sustained uphill walking with heavy pack (up to 23kg), towing expedition sled, and movement over snow and ice.

03 **Progressive Load Building**
Combine heavy backpack with weighted sled. Increase weight, elevation gain, duration & consecutive days progressively.

04 **Sled Hauling & Core Muscles**
Target hip flexors, glutes, quads, hamstrings, calves & core. Exercises: weighted step-ups, lunges, squats, deadlifts, and stairs.

05 **Aerobic Engine & Vertical Gain**
Maintain steady Zone 2 effort (hiking, stairmaster). Benchmarks: 1,220m ascent w/ 18kg, 915m w/ 23kg, and 610m w/ 27kg.

06 **High-Intensity Interval Training**
Weekly Zone 4/5 hill sprints & stair intervals to raise anaerobic threshold for steep climbing under heavy load.

07 **Joint Mobility & Injury Prevention**
Build durability in ankles, knees, hips, and lower back through mobility routines, foam rolling, and eccentric strength work.

16-WEEK INTERMEDIATE–ADVANCED PLAN

This 16-week intermediate–advanced programme is for athletes with an established fitness base. Expedition fitness is built through consistent work, not one huge training week. The plan develops the engine, leg strength, durability and recovery habits needed for long days in the mountains.

The Aim
"Move well. Recover well. Carry load. Climb steadily. Repeat the effort on consecutive days."

01 **Weeks 1–4 | Foundation**
Aerobic base + gym strength. Long hill day builds from 2 to 3.5 hr, 400–800m gain, 5–6kg pack.

02 **Weeks 5–8 | Build**
Strength + vertical volume. Long hill day 4 to 5.5 hr, 800–1,200m gain, 6–8kg. Heavier gym work.

03 **Weeks 9–12 | Specific**
Load carriage + tired legs. 6–7 hr mountain days up to 1,500m with 8–10kg and back-to-back weekends.

04 **Weeks 13–16 | Peak & Taper**
Simulation + freshness. Peak 7–8 hr day and 2-day simulation, then volume drops so you arrive fresh.

GETTING PREPARED | DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE WHAT YOU ARE SIGNING UP TO

Expeditions demand time on your feet, repeated climbing, load carrying and the ability to keep moving when tired.

FOUR PILLARS OF PREPARATION:
- **Endurance:** Build a strong aerobic base through regular walking and steady cardio.
- **Durability:** Condition feet, ankles, legs and back for repeated days of work.
- **Confidence:** Train in poor weather, on hills and with your expedition equipment.
- **Recovery:** Rest, sleep, mobility, nutrition and hydration are part of the plan.

THE FOUNDATION: Start from your current level. Build gradually. Use hills whenever possible. Train in the footwear and backpack you expect to use. Consistency is more valuable than chasing one heroic session.

THE PAY-OFF: Better fitness means more enjoyment, more confidence, improved recovery and greater capacity to deal with the unexpected.

TRAINING TERMS & MEASURING EFFORT

01 **Rest**
No structured training. Let the body absorb the work.

02 **Long Walks**
Build time on feet, endurance, kit confidence and fuelling habits.

03 **Hill Walking**
Develop climbing strength, descending control and mountain movement.

04 **Intervals**
Repeated work and recovery to improve cardiovascular capacity.

05 **Cross-Training**
Low-impact aerobic work such as cycling or swimming.

06 **Strength Training**
Gym-based full-body strength with emphasis on legs, posterior chain and load carrying.

MEASURING YOUR EFFORT | USE THE TALK TEST

ZONE	LEVEL	FEEL	TALK TEST
RECOVERY	**6–6.5**	Very easy	Full conversation. Cool down and recover.
EASY	**6.5–7**	Comfortable	Conversational pace. Builds aerobic base.
STEADY	**7–8**	Working	Short sentences. Sustainable effort.
THRESHOLD	**8–8.5**	Hard	Only a few words at a time. Controlled discomfort.

Heart-rate figures can be useful, but terrain, fatigue, heat, altitude and individual differences all affect the number. The talk test gives you a simple real-world check of effort.

TRAIN SMART: The goal is not to finish every session exhausted. The goal is to build a body that can work for hours, recover, and do it again the next day.

10 STEPS TO PREPARE

1 Start Walking Now
Build regular time on your feet. Start with manageable distances and progress gradually.

2 Make Leg-Based Cardio a Habit
Cycling, swimming, stair work and other aerobic sessions support your walking base.

3 Take the Stairs
Use everyday opportunities to strengthen glutes, quads and calves.

4 Analyse How You Move
Good posture, efficient stride and controlled descending reduce wasted energy.

5 Train on Different Terrain
Use hills, rough ground and varied surfaces to prepare feet and ankles.

6 Train in Bad Weather
Use wind and rain to test layers, waterproofs and your ability to stay organised.

7 Practise with Walking Poles
Develop a natural rhythm and learn to use poles effectively uphill and downhill.

8 Train with Your Expedition Kit
Use your boots and progressively load your pack on longer sessions.

9 Fuel & Hydration
Practise eating and drinking little and often during training so it becomes automatic.

10 Footwear
Train in the boots you intend to use. Test socks, lacing, blister prevention and foot care.

SIMPLE RULE: TEST EVERYTHING IN TRAINING

FUEL & HYDRATION ROUTINE:
- **Before:** Eat a familiar meal and start hydrated.
- **During:** Small regular snacks and frequent fluids.
- **After:** Refuel, rehydrate and recover.

EXPEDITION HABIT: Do not leave equipment testing until the final weeks. Long training walks are where you learn how your boots, socks, pack, poles, layers, food and hydration system actually perform.

REMEMBER: The expedition is not the place to discover that your boots rub, your pack does not fit, or your food strategy does not work.

WEEKS 1–4 | FOUNDATION

AEROBIC BASE + GYM STRENGTH

HARD · STEADY · STRENGTH · EASY · RECOVERY · MOUNTAIN

	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4
MON	RECOVERY **Easy walk** 30 min 3 mi / 4.8 km	EASY **Aerobic** 45 min Conversational	STRENGTH **Strength A** 50 min Progress load	EASY **Aerobic** 45 min Easy
TUE	STRENGTH **Strength A** 45-50 min Technique first	STRENGTH **Strength B** 45-50 min Controlled load	EASY **Aerobic** 50 min Conversational	STRENGTH **Strength B** 50 min Progress load
WED	EASY **Aerobic** 40 min Bike / incline walk	REST	REST	REST
THU	REST	HARD **Uphill intervals** 6 x 2 min Easy recovery	STEADY **Hill session** 75 min 400-500 m | 5-6 kg	HARD **Uphill intervals** 5 x 3 min Controlled hard
FRI	EASY **Hill walk** 75 min 300-400 m | 5 kg	RECOVERY **Recovery walk** 30 min Very easy	RECOVERY **Recovery** 30 min Walk / easy bike	RECOVERY **Recovery** 30 min Very easy
SAT	MOUNTAIN **Long hill day** 2 hr 5-6 mi / 8-10 km 400-500 m | 5 kg	MOUNTAIN **Long hill day** 2.5 hr 6-7 mi / 10-11 km 500-600 m | 5 kg	MOUNTAIN **Long hill day** 3 hr 7-8 mi / 11-13 km 600-700 m | 5-6 kg	MOUNTAIN **Long hill day** 3.5 hr 8-9 mi / 13-14.5 km 700-800 m | 6 kg
SUN	REST	EASY **Easy walk** 45 min Flat / gentle	REST	EASY **Easy walk** 60 min No pack

STRENGTH / EXPEDITION GUIDANCE

Strength A: squat or leg press, Romanian deadlift, step-up, row, calf raise, loaded carry. Strength B: split squat, hip hinge, step-up, pulldown, calf raise, carry. 2-3 sets each; finish with good form, not failure.

WEEKS 5–8 | BUILD

STRENGTH + VERTICAL VOLUME

HARD · STEADY · STRENGTH · EASY · RECOVERY · MOUNTAIN

	WEEK 5	WEEK 6	WEEK 7	WEEK 8
MON	STRENGTH **Strength A** 50-55 min Heavier, clean form	EASY **Aerobic** 60 min Easy	STRENGTH **Strength A** 55 min Final heavy block	EASY **Aerobic** 50 min Easy
TUE	EASY **Aerobic** 50 min Conversational	STRENGTH **Strength B** 50-55 min Heavier, clean form	EASY **Aerobic** 60 min Conversational	STRENGTH **Strength B** 50 min Reduce load slightly
WED	REST	REST	REST	REST
THU	STEADY **Loaded hills** 90 min 500-600 m | 6-7 kg	HARD **Uphill intervals** 6 x 3 min Jog / hike recovery	STEADY **Loaded hills** 1 hr 45 min 600-700 m | 7-8 kg	HARD **Uphill intervals** 5 x 4 min Controlled hard
FRI	RECOVERY **Recovery** 30 min Very easy	RECOVERY **Recovery** 35 min Very easy	RECOVERY **Recovery** 30 min Very easy	RECOVERY **Recovery** 35 min Very easy
SAT	MOUNTAIN **Long hill day** 4 hr 9-10 mi / 14.5-16 km 800-900 m | 6-7 kg	MOUNTAIN **Long hill day** 4.5 hr 10-11 mi / 16-18 km 900-1000 m | 7 kg	MOUNTAIN **Long hill day** 5 hr 11-12 mi / 18-19 km 1000-1100 m | 7-8 kg	MOUNTAIN **Long hill day** 5.5 hr 12-13 mi / 19-21 km 1100-1200 m | 8 kg
SUN	REST	EASY **Easy hills** 75 min 300-400 m | light pack	EASY **Easy walk** 60 min Recovery pace	REST

STRENGTH / EXPEDITION GUIDANCE

Continue Strength A/B with progressive resistance. Keep most aerobic work conversational. Long hill days are for efficient movement, fuelling, footwear and pack practice – not racing.

WEEKS 9–12 | SPECIFIC

LOAD CARRIAGE + TIRED LEGS

HARD · STEADY · STRENGTH · EASY · RECOVERY · MOUNTAIN

	WEEK 9	WEEK 10	WEEK 11	WEEK 12
MON	STRENGTH **Muscular endurance** 45-50 min Step-ups + lunges	RECOVERY **Recovery** 35 min Very easy	STRENGTH **Muscular endurance** 45 min Moderate load	RECOVERY **Recovery** 35 min Very easy
TUE	EASY **Aerobic** 60 min Conversational	STRENGTH **Muscular endurance** 45 min Step-ups + carries	EASY **Aerobic** 60 min Conversational	STRENGTH **Muscular endurance** 40-45 min Do not chase fatigue
WED	REST	REST	REST	REST
THU	STEADY **Loaded climb** 2 hr 700-800 m | 8-9 kg	EASY **Aerobic** 60 min Easy	HARD **Uphill intervals** 6 x 4 min Strong but controlled	STEADY **Loaded climb** 90 min 500-600 m | 10 kg
FRI	RECOVERY **Recovery** 30 min Very easy	REST	RECOVERY **Recovery** 30 min Very easy	REST
SAT	MOUNTAIN **Long mountain day** 6 hr 12-14 mi / 19-22.5 km 1200-1300 m | 8-9 kg	MOUNTAIN **Back-to-back Day 1** 4 hr 8-10 mi / 13-16 km 650-750 m | 9 kg	MOUNTAIN **Long mountain day** 6-7 hr 14-16 mi / 22.5-26 km 1300-1500 m | 9-10 kg	MOUNTAIN **Back-to-back Day 1** 5 hr 10-12 mi / 16-19 km 850-950 m | 10 kg
SUN	EASY **Easy walk** 75 min Tired-leg recovery	MOUNTAIN **Back-to-back Day 2** 5 hr 10-12 mi / 16-19 km 750-850 m | 9 kg	EASY **Easy walk** 60 min Recovery pace	MOUNTAIN **Back-to-back Day 2** 6 hr 12-14 mi / 19-22.5 km 950-1050 m | 10 kg

STRENGTH / EXPEDITION GUIDANCE

Shift gym work toward muscular endurance: weighted step-ups, walking lunges, calf work and loaded carries. Back-to-back days teach you to recover and perform again on tired legs.

WEEKS 13–16 | PEAK & TAPER

SIMULATION + FRESHNESS

HARD | STEADY | STRENGTH | EASY | RECOVERY | MOUNTAIN

	WEEK 13	WEEK 14	WEEK 15	WEEK 16
MON	STRENGTH **Maintenance strength** 40 min Reduced volume	RECOVERY **Recovery** 35 min Very easy	REST	EASY **Easy walk** 40 min No fatigue
TUE	EASY **Aerobic** 50 min Easy	STRENGTH **Light strength** 35-40 min No max efforts	EASY **Aerobic** 45 min Conversational	MOBILITY **Mobility** 25-30 min Hips, calves, ankles
WED	REST	REST	STRENGTH **Light strength** 30-35 min Mobility + activation	REST
THU	STEADY **Loaded hills** 90 min 600-700 m | 10-12 kg	EASY **Aerobic** 45 min Easy	REST	EASY **Easy hills** 60-75 min 300-500 m | light pack
FRI	RECOVERY **Recovery** 30 min Very easy	REST	EASY **Easy hills** 60 min 250-350 m | 6-8 kg	REST
SAT	MOUNTAIN **Peak mountain day** 7-8 hr 16-18 mi / 26-29 km 1500-1800 m | 10-12 kg	MOUNTAIN **Simulation Day 1** 6 hr 12-14 mi / 19-22.5 km 950-1150 m | 10-12 kg	MOUNTAIN **Reduced hill day** 4-5 hr 9-11 mi / 14.5-18 km 700-900 m | 6-8 kg	EASY **Shake-out walk** 30 min Very easy
SUN	REST	MOUNTAIN **Simulation Day 2** 7 hr 14-16 mi / 22.5-26 km 1050-1350 m | 10-12 kg	REST	READY **Expedition ready** Arrive fresh

STRENGTH / EXPEDITION GUIDANCE

Weeks 13-14 are the peak specific block. Weeks 15-16 reduce volume so fitness is retained while fatigue falls. Do not add missed sessions or extra hard work during the taper.

LOGISTICS, VISAS & MOUNTAIN RULES







PASSPORT & VISA REQUIREMENTS

Passport Validity
- Must be valid 6+ months past return date.
- Minimum 2 blank pages for entry stamps.

US ESTA / Visa
- VWP citizens register online for ESTA.
- Non-VWP holders require B1/B2 Visa.

Currency & Financials
- Official currency: US Dollars ($USD).
- Bring cash for tips & mountain incidentals.

FLIGHTS & MEETING POINT

Destination Airport
- Ted Stevens Anchorage Int'l Airport (ANC).

Flight Booking Advisory
- CRITICAL: Do NOT book flights until dates & schedule are confirmed by Jason Black.

Mandatory Meeting Point
- Briefing at 10:00 AM sharp at Hyatt House Anchorage.

GUIDE AUTHORITY & RULES

Lead Guide Command
- Guide decisions on weather, pacing, route & turn-around times are FINAL.
- Team safety is the ultimate priority.

Zero Tolerance Policy
- NO illegal drugs, alcohol, or illicit substances.
- Violations result in immediate removal.

HAZARDS & EXPEDITION PROTOCOL

Objective Mountain Hazards
- Extreme cold (-40°C), gale winds, crevasses, and altitude illness (AMS/HAPE/HACE).
- Immediate reporting of distress is mandatory.

Guide Tipping Custom
- Gratuities not included in trip fee.
- Suggested tipping: $300-$500 per climber.

PRECISION. PROFESSIONALISM. PASSION.

Black Mountaineering Expedition Leadership

PRECISION
Safety & Security

Careful planning, proven logistics, acclimatisation & risk management.

PROFESSIONALISM
Expedition Leadership

Led by Jason Black — Everest, K2 & Denali summiteer (30+ yrs experience).

PASSION
Authentic Experience

Built on a lifelong passion for exploration, challenge and adventure.

DIRECT EXPEDITION INQUIRIES & OFFICIAL WEBSITE

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info@blackmountaineering.com

OFFICIAL WEBSITE
blackmountaineering.com

EXPEDITION PAGE
View Mt Denali Expedition

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