

## Kitlist: Winter Mountaineering/Climbing

DUBH MOR

The phrase “no such thing as bad weather, only the wrong clothing/equipment”, is an apt one for venturing into Scotland’s mountains in winter: it really does make all the difference! Take a good look at our suggested kit lists and your own equipment, and don’t hesitate to get in touch with any questions before your course.

Consider how many days you are on the hill for - bring enough kit for the duration! Even for a single day course, spare gloves and a spare base/mid layer may be advisable. Likewise a change of clothes for the drive home in case we get really wet.

In the interests of your own personal safety and well-being, Dubh Mor reserves the right to refuse to take participants on the hill if their personal clothing/equipment is considered unsuitable and potentially dangerous. Should you have any queries regarding the suitability of your kit, please contact us prior to booking – we are happy to help and always eager to talk about kit! 😊

Technical equipment such as axes, C2 crampons, helmets and harnesses are included as part of the course fee. Many participants will have their own technical equipment and winter PPE, which you are welcome to bring if you wish to use them and your instructor considers them suitable. We do not hire clothing or boots but can strongly recommend @ScottishMountainHire in Fort William for boots. Please collect prior to arriving for your course. Early enquiries and booking are recommended.

### CLOTHING:

- Good waterproof jacket and waterproof trousers/salopettes (not insulated ski-wear – too hot!) Gore-tex, eVent, etc are good, suitable fabrics. It's worth making sure that your jacket has a big hood that will fit over a helmet. It's also worth having waterproof trousers with long zips that can be put on without taking boots off on the hill.
- Comfortable non-restrictive trousers (synthetic material such as softshell is best)
- Wicking synthetic baselayers (long and short-sleeved). I often take a spare on the hill each day, as I find changing my base layer after a particularly sweaty ascent can be a godsend for the rest of the day
- Thermal top and bottoms if you feel the cold
- Some form of packable insulation (e.g. fleece/softshell/synthetic jacket)
- Belay jacket/emergency insulation: a godsend on belays and good to have in your pack just in case. Natural down is warmer, lighter and packs smaller, but is useless when wet. Modern synthetic fibres such as Primaloft are slightly heavier, larger to pack and not quite as warm, but perform far better in wet (British!) environments. If buying a belay jacket, we recommend sizing up to fit over all your layers, and choosing synthetic over down
- Warm hat (at least x1)
- Buff (VERY useful item as extra hat/hand warmer/goggle-wiper/neck gaiter or faceguard)
- Spare hat or Buff
- Gloves (I take a variety of thin and thick gloves – usually at least x3 pairs on the hill each day)
- Mittens (if it is especially cold, there is no better way to keep your hands warm)
- Gaiters (a great help, especially on the boggier walks or in snow!)

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### **EQUIPMENT:**

- Decent backpack: 30-40 litres is a good size, with some form of waterproof liner(s). N.B: on a mountaineering/climbing course you may be asked to help carry a rope or some climbing equipment – don't stuff your bag to the gunnels! 😊
- Multiple drybags are FAR better than a raincover, both in waterproofing and keeping your contents organised. A raincover is likely to simply blow away in the strong winds.
- Headtorch: essential (check batteries beforehand. Reverse 1 inside to prevent accidental usage and draining the batteries) Have it to hand as we may well be walking in and out in the dark
- Walking poles (broad-based snowbaskets can help in deep powder. "Flick-locks" are better than "twist-locks", which are prone to freezing and difficult to collapse) Short "Z-poles" that pack down inside your rucksack are less intrusive when climbing than long models which must be strapped to the outside
- Ski Goggles (if it is especially windy, with a lot of snow around, these can really help your vision)
- Food – ensure it can be eaten with gloves on if necessary. I favour a sweet/savoury balance of around 50:50
- Water (a good quality water bottle is a worthwhile investment and ease of use trumps hydration bladders, which can easily freeze or burst)
- Flask of soup/hot drinks

### **FURTHER READING:**

<https://www.ellis-brigham.com/winter-hill-walking-kit-list>

<https://www.ellis-brigham.com/mountaineering-clothing-buying-guide>

### **THE “BIG THREE” ESSENTIALS: BOOTS, CRAMPONS AND ICE AXES:**

There is a veritable plethora of outdoor kit available on the market and making a decision can be tough. Overly-technical climbing kit will be more of a hinderance than a help on mountaineering terrain, whereas basic walking kit will have too many limitations to be of use when climbing. For this course, aim for a middle ground. Please feel free to get in touch with any questions beforehand – we love to talk gear! 😊

- Good winter walking **boots** with ankle support and a decent tread, well-fitted and previously used. These will need to be “beefier” than summer boots and have a stiff sole (B2 or B3 rated) that will accept compatible crampons. B3s are often warmer and better for steeper climbing, especially on ice. B2s are more comfortable for the walking element but may not be as warm. Boots are the only technical kit we do not provide, but our friends @ScottishMountain hire will be able to help you in Fort William if you do not have your own

### **FURTHER READING:**

<https://www.ellis-brigham.com/mountaineering-boot-buying-guide>

<https://outdoorsmagic.com/article/best-mountaineering-boots/#7oMXpyEDUFrRRXZZ.97>

<https://www.gearweare.com/review/best-mountaineering-boots/>

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- Mountaineering/climbing **crampons** with front points and a good, solid heel-lock (fitted to your boots BEFORE going onto the hill). Essentially there are 3 tiers of crampon (see below). Go for something in the general mountaineering genre for this course. Technical climbing crampons will also be suitable, but perform better on the climbing and less well on the walk-ins due to their stiffness. Basic crampons designed for hiking and snow travel are **not** suitable for this course.



Crampon Rating	C1	C2	C3
Compatible with:	B1/B2/B3 boots	B2/B3 boots	B3 boots only
Front points:	No	Horizontal, fixed	Vertical, often replaceable/interchangeable dual/mono
# points:	10	12	12/14
Feel:	Flexible	Stiff	Solid
Fittings:	Flexible heel and toe cradle	Plastic heel lock, flexible toe cradle	Plastic heel lock, metal bail
Suitable for:	Winter Skills / Winter Hillwalking		
	Winter Mountaineering		
	Winter Climbing		

**FURTHER READING:** <https://www.ellis-brigham.com/crampons/crampons-buying-guide>

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- **Ice axe(s)**. Most mountaineering is done with a single axe (straight-shafted), with an adze, not a hammer, so you can cut steps, etc. However, more complex modern climbing often utilizes dual hybrid or technical axes, which tend to be shorter and have a curve in the shaft to facilitate an easier swing with greater clearance for your hands. Most commonly sold as a pair, one should have an adze and one a hammer, and be the same size and shape! However, the most technical tools are not as good for basic walking/ mountaineering. The aggressive shaft bend and offset handle makes cutting steps and plunging the spike difficult. Therefore, my recommendation for this course is to either bring a hybrid pair (i.e: nothing too aggressive!) or a separate walking axe, and a technical climbing pair of adze/hammer. Please see the table below for further information

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	Walking Axe	Hybrid / Alpine Axes	Technical Climbing Axes
<b>Suitable for:</b>	Winter Hillwalking / Skills		
		Winter Mountaineering	Winter Climbing
	-For walking only, not climbing	-For walking/mountaineering/climbing	-For climbing/mountaineering
	-Straight-shafted, usually between 50-70cm long	-Straight-shafted, often with a slight bend near the head for clearance, circa 50-60cm long	-Highly aggressive, dramatically bent shaft for clearance and offset, often recessed 'pistol grips'
	-Large spike/ferule and straight shaft for plunging into deep snow	-Medium spike/ferule and straight lower shaft for plunging in deep snow, often with integral grip	-Small spike/ferule. Effectiveness often compromised by shape of grips and bent shaft
	-Gently curved pick angle	-Medium pick angle	-Aggressive pick angle
	-Head/adze unit often one piece integral	-Head with modular adze/hammer often replaceable individually	-Modular head/adze/axe unit commonly interchangeable
	-Large adze for digging snow/cutting steps/etc	-Medium adze for clearing/digging snow/cutting steps	-Small adze for clearing snow, mainly for gear placements
	-Leash classically attached to shaft/head via wrist loop	-Leashes classically attached to head/spike	-Leashes traditionally attached each axe head to each wrist. Now, more commonly from both axe spikes to harness
	-Good for mountaineering snow belays	-Best for mountaineering snow belays	-Poor for mountaineering snow belays
<b>Examples:</b>			
<i>*Please note how the technical end of Hybrid Axes overlaps somewhat with the Climbing Axes</i>			
		<i>Basic</i> → <i>Technical</i>	
Grivel Brenva BD Raven DMM Cirque	DMM Fly BD Venom Petzl Sumtec	Petzl Quark BD Viper DMM Apex	DMM Switch / Apex BD Fusion Petzl Nomics

## FURTHER READING:

<https://www.ellis-brigham.com/ice-axes-buying-guide#alpine-ice-axes>

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### **TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT (all included by us, but bring your own if you have and wish to use):**

- Harness (if this is your summer rock climbing harness ensure it fits over your winter clothing. Adjustable leg loops will help!)
- Belay device on screwgate karabiner
- Helmet
- Walking ice axe (optional – see notes in axe section above)
- Dual technical ice axes (1 adze, 1 hammer) – nothing too extreme!
- Leashes for attaching ice axes to wrist/harness

### **CLIMBING EQUIPMENT:**

- For safety reasons, all ropes and technical climbing rack used will be Dubh Mor equipment. If you wish to bring any of your own items along to review and discuss pros/cons, please do so. We will have a wide selection of ropes, climbing rack and specialist tools and equipment to use and discuss.