

# Winter Skills Courses in Scotland



Prices from

**216** GBP (2 days) per person

## Highlights

**Winter skills courses for beginners and the more experienced in the wild and rugged Cairngorm mountains. Lead by expert mountaineering guides in the day, you will spend the evenings back at the lodge warming your feet in front of a roaring fire!**

The Cairngorms National Park in the eastern Highlands of Scotland offers some of the Scotland's wildest and most magnificent scenery. The highest mountain range in the UK, they offer the perfect destination for hill walking and munro bagging. In the winter, they become covered in snow and ice, making them an ideal base for winter sports. Sharing the mountains with us outdoorsy types is a plethora of wildlife including golden eagles, pine marten, deer and the mountain hare, which changes its colour in winter to white, to blend in with the snow.

As well as being incredibly beautiful, these mountains are also wild and can be dangerous for the inexperienced and ill-equipped. These winter skills courses allow both beginners and those with more experience to improve their navigation techniques, even in white-out conditions. You will learn all the skills for safe movement across snow and ice, how to use an ice-axe and climb difficult inclines using skills like step-cutting. A highly qualified mountaineer with many years guiding experience and a local and intimate knowledge of the area will lead the group.

Hitting the range, you will use map and compass in the safety of the group to steer a course through stunning scenery in the varying terrain of the Cairngorm mountains. More experienced hill-walkers will come to attempt gully and ridge walks. Back at the lodge you will dry your kit and lounge by an open fire before enjoying a delicious two-course dinner.

## Is it for me?

The winter-skills walks vary in length and difficulty and are tailored to offer a range of experiences for beginners and the experienced alike. You will be in a group, but the ratio of guides to participants is usually 1:6 on the weekend courses and 1:8 on the longer courses, so you will get the individual attention that you need and won't feel swamped in a group. Whether you are a beginner or more experienced, you will need a decent level of fitness for a full day's walking. Guides will always assess your competence and make safety their paramount concern.

The accommodation at Fraoch Lodge is comfortable without being luxurious, and the roaring fire and excellent home fare make for a convivial setting. If you can find a large group you can take over the lodge (capacity of 12) and have a whale of a time there and at the local pub!

## Accommodation

Quality accommodation for the navigation courses is in Fraoch Lodge, nestled in the picturesque setting of Boat of Garton, surrounded by heather-clad hills and woodland. There are six twin bedrooms with sinks, a large lounge with an open fire and a separate dining room with log-burning stove. A purpose built kit drying room will have your equipment ready for the next day.

The food served at the lodge is really something very special. A hearty breakfast and good coffee are served in the morning to get you on your way. Packed lunches are home-cooked and made with home-baked bread! After a day out on the mountains, you are welcomed back at the lodge in time for 'cake o'clock' and then for dinner you will be served two or three course fire-side dinners, including a mix of wild and home-grown vegetables, fruits

## Why book with Tourdust?

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and herbs and the best local beef and venison.

## Itinerary

There are three different winter skills courses to choose from;

### Five Day Introduction To Winter Skills Course

Introductory course covering mountain navigation and technical winter skills:

**Day 1:** Suitable equipment: boots, ice axe, crampons - various types. Avalanche assessment incl.: snow pit analysis, weak layer recognition, triggers, precautions & emergency procedures, etc. Boot and axe use w.r.t. step-kicking & cutting techniques, self belay and Self-arrest techniques

**Day 2:** Equipment for & practicalities of winter navigation. Micro-navigation (gauging distance through timing & pacing; Contour interpretation w.r.t. the 3 primary elements of mountain terrain: features, gradient, & slope aspect.

**Day 3:** Practise of self-belay and self-arrest techniques on steeper ground; Cramponing: the principles, various techniques and their appropriate application w.r.t the gradient; Winter Navigation techniques taking a route over Cairn Lochan & C'gorm incl. bearings, pacing, timing, etc. Route planning & considerations incl. effect of mountain weather.

**Day 4:** Winter Mountain navigation across Cairn Lochan plateau to Ben Macdui; Winter application of tactical navigation techniques incl. boxing, attack points, aiming off, doglegging, etc.; ascertaining position and route by the 3 elements of mountain terrain

**Day 5:** Relevance & design of emergency snow shelters; Search techniques; the opportunity for shadowed leading.

### Winter Skills Weekend

This condensed course is suitable for hillwalkers with good mountain navigation skills looking to get out into the mountains during the winter. The course covers:

- Suitable equipment (boots, crampons and axes)
- Basic avalanche assessment:
- Snow pit analysis
- Appreciation of the conditions under which windslab forms and its recognition
- Avalanche triggers, precautions and emergency procedures
- Good foot placement and step kicking
- Step cutting on various types of snow and ice
- Use of crampons and various techniques appropriate to the terrain
- Self belay and self arrest techniques

### Three Day Advanced Winter Skills Course

Advanced winter skills course for those who are looking to progress their winter skills to incorporate easy grade winter climbs. The course requires that you have already attended a winter skills course as well as the requisite fitness for 2 fairly demanding days in the winter mountains. Some basic rock climbing experience would be helpful but not compulsory.

**Day 1:** A quick refresher in the essential winter skills needed for a safe and efficient approach to the base of the route:

- step kicking and cutting
- self-belay and the various self-arrest techniques,
- cramponing techniques

**Day 2:** Move on to looking at basic ropework, various snow and ice anchors and belays. You will learn about the efficient construction of various snow and ice anchors and their appropriate use. You will also look at rock anchors.

**Day 3:** The aim of today is to undertake a grade I route bringing together all you have learnt on the previous 2 days as well as looking at route choice, route finding and avalanche risk assessment. There also may well be a chance brush up on some of the all essential navigation skills.

## Details

### Getting there

The nearest airport is Inverness and the closest train station is Aviemore. Your hosts can arrange for you to be picked up from either.

### Comfort level

Reasonably comfortable (Inns, B&Bs, luxury camping etc.)

### Experience required

A reasonable level of fitness and interest is all that is needed