

Sunrockice Mount Tasman (3500m) 6 Day Program

Available 1 October - 31 March 2002

The Mount Tasman program is six days long to give the best possible chance of climbing Mount Tasman in normal summer conditions. The season is Mid November to mid February. The Guide to climber ratio is 1:1 only.

Experience Required

There are no easy or short climbing routes on Mount Tasman. You must be familiar with glaciated terrain, and fast on crampons, with the ability higher on the mountain to move quickly on exposed snow and ice ridges. Our minimum requirement is a high level of fitness, with the technical skills of a successful Sunrockice Intermediate course participant, or equivalent.

The Grand Plateau and Mt Tasman

(Photo : Tom Lowell)



Risk acceptance

Mountaineering is a hazardous activity. The Guide's first priority is always client safety. He or she is trained to decide whether Mt Tasman climbing routes can be safely attempted in the prevailing conditions, or if an alternative ascent should be considered.

Alternative Options

Weather conditions, potential ice and rock fall, the extent of crevasses, snow surface conditions, fitness and experience define the acceptable margins for a Mt Tasman climb. If Mt Tasman is not a safe option, your Guide will offer an alternative ascent for your trip, perhaps the Minarets, Haidinger, Lendenfeld, or some other high peak from the Franz or Fox glaciers.

Conditions:

1. A period of 6 days guided climbing is covered in the cost, even though Mt Tasman may take less in exceptional weather. If your ability and the conditions in the mountains allow, you may, at your Guide's discretion, undertake another climb, or return early to Fox Township or Mt Cook Village. No refund is due in this eventuality.
2. It may sometimes be possible to stay on for extra days, depending on your Guide's schedule. Extensions due to poor weather or conditions, including your fitness and ability, will cost an additional NZ \$575 per day for Guide, food, and hut fees.
3. No refunds will be given if you have to walk in to Pioneer or Plateau huts, or out from them, by any route.

Route Description

The most commonly guided route now is via Marcel Col over Lendenfeld Pk and Engineer Col to the 'Shoulder' and the North ridge. Height gain to the summit is 1160m from Pioneer Hut (2340m / 7675ft). It is a long and serious climb, rarely taking less than 12-15 hours return.

Crossing the Fox glacier from Pioneer hut to Marcel Col is usually easy and fast early on the summit day. The Fox and Marcel glaciers have little technical terrain, other than crevasse crossings. There is, however, some objective danger from ice cliffs and rock fall at the Lendenfeld Corner.

From Marcel Col (2987m) there is a great view into the Grand Plateau, and the angle of the ice steepens rightwards on Lendenfeld's East ridge. Approaching the summit of Lendenfeld (3203m) Guide and climber can usually move quickly and easily. The descent into Engineer Col (3093m) may involve a couple of pitched rope lengths.

The key to the climb is the condition of the 'North Shoulder', a buttress of ice at the junction of the North and Syme's ridges. Some seasons this is 'user-friendly' snow-ice, mostly of moderate angle. At other times there are sections that are steep, broken hard ice for a few rope lengths to the summit ridge. Above the 'Shoulder' the terrain is low-angled, but exposed to wind, and the summit is in sight.

Techniques range from moving together to sometimes pitching sections to the top, where the Silberhorn ridge route joins from Plateau, after 6-8 hours of climbing. From here you can see the Pacific Ocean to the east and the Tasman Sea to the west, given clear conditions.

After summit ceremonies, rest, and more food, the ridge can be reversed by short roping in good conditions, and the North Shoulder dealt with by quickly lowering the top pitches to Engineer Col. Up and over Lendenfeld, with care on the ridge to Marcel Col, and then it's a hike home on the technically easy glacier. From the Mt Tasman summit return to Pioneer hut usually takes 6-7 hours, arriving back in the late afternoon or early evening.

Mt Tasman summit (Photo : Guillaume Dargaud)



North Ridge (Photo : Guillaume Dargaud)



North ridge at dawn (Photo : Guillaume Dargaud)



Fly in

The walk into Pioneer hut via the Chancellor hut and Fox glacier is a hard 1½-day ascent with gear and food. We prefer to maximize high climbing with a Cessna flight at the first opportunity, depending on weather and snow conditions. At your Guide's discretion, you may then work up fitness and technique on a smaller climb, (such as Glacier Pk), before attempting Mt Tasman.

Fly out

We do try to fly out from Pioneer Hut, either to Mt Cook Village or Fox, if the weather and conditions allow Cessna 185 aircraft landings. The alternative is to upgrade to a helicopter flight, with the cost negotiable on the day. Or, walk down to Chancellor hut, then a strenuous 4-6 hours to the Fox road end.