

ESC Ski Symposium 2025

Programme Detail

The two-day programme will feature a balance of inspirational talks and practical workshops. Saturday's theme is 'Safety and Skills' and Sunday's is 'Adventure and Planning'.

Mornings will focus on lectures attended by all delegates, while afternoons will offer a choice of two 1-hour workshops or whole afternoon training sessions. Delegates should rank their training/workshop preferences on the booking form, and we will try to accommodate choice according to capacity and on a first come, first served basis.

Saturday 15th November – 'Safety and Skills'



Saturday Morning Lectures

- **Avalanche Awareness** - [SAIS](#) - Interpreting avalanche forecasts, with a detailed review of general avalanche problems as a framework for good decision making in avalanche terrain with Graham Moss
- **Mountain Weather** - [MWIS](#) - An overview of the safety implications of mountain weather with emphasis on winter weather patterns and their impact on ski touring with Mehmet Karatay
- **Human Factors, Heuristics and Team dynamics** - 90% of people involved in avalanches, trigger the avalanche themselves. Many of whom have also taken part in some form of avalanche education. These facts would suggest that the problem lies within 'us' and how we interact with the environment and people

around us. Sign up for an insight into the multiple factors which could influence all of us to make poor decisions in the mountains with Heather Morning.

- **Strategies for Safe Ski Touring** - An overview of safety strategies for unguided ski touring groups with Brendan Hughes.

Saturday Afternoon Workshops and Training Sessions

Full afternoon training workshops

These sessions are scheduled for the whole afternoon and delegates attending one of these will not have time to attend another workshop that afternoon.

- **Ropework: Introduction for Ski Mountaineering (Hannah Burrows-Smith)** - an outdoor, hands-on skills session covering introduction to ropework for ski mountaineering and glacier travel.
- **Winter navigation on Skis (Heather Morning)** - Navigation on skis can be challenging or even downright dangerous. Poor visibility, complete snow cover and corniced edges provide the perfect 'storm' for accidents to happen. Much easier of course, to navigate in ascent as you are much more aware of your pace/time. Descent on ski is a completely different story. This workshop will identify a set of 'go to' essential tools to aid good decision making in challenging navigation conditions.

One-hour workshops

These sessions are scheduled for an hour although there might be some overrun. The intention is that delegates attending two workshops per afternoon with a break between them.

- **Avalanche Forecasting (Graham Moss, SAIS)** – Practical exercises in extrapolating what happens to avalanche risk with evolution in weather.
- **Mountain Weather (Mehmet Karatay, MWIS)** - Dig deeper into mountain weather through synoptic charts.
- **“Prehab”: Injury Prevention (Lesley McKenna)** - Injury prevention for ski tourers through strength and conditioning approaches.
- **Ski Maintenance (Ellis Brigham) Kiefer Wyllie, Ellis Brigham ski tech** – A practical session covering DIY maintenance and repair of ski touring equipment by an experienced, Ellis Brigham ski tech.
- **First Aid: Hypothermia (Declan Phelan)** – A review of the current science and working through a scenario-based approach for the prevention and management of hypothermia on a ski tour.
- **First Aid: Avalanche Victim (Declan Phelan)** – A review of the key science and strategy to deliver effective companion first aid/resuscitation of the avalanche victim.

- **Off Piste Performance (Alison Thacker)** – Alison will deliver a 1-hour workshop on skiing off-piste to give you focus for the season ahead. This is an opportunity to discuss the finer points of ski performance in the warm and dry and out of the wind. The workshop will use a combination of video analysis, off-snow drills and a Q & A session to coach different aspects of downhill performance, that can be put into practice as soon as the snow arrives. Feel free to bring along your own video for analysis, or any questions or points you might like clarified from her book "Off-Piste Performance".
- **Expedition Food (Chris Watkins)** - Preparing your own Dehydrated food.

Sunday 16th November - 'Adventure and Planning'



Sunday Morning Lectures

- **Making the Most of Your Scottish Ski Touring** – History, variety and challenges of Scottish Ski touring and how to make the most of opportunities with Alan Sloan.
- **'Fast and Light'** – Finlay Wild speaks about various ski journeys, where the emphasis becomes more about travelling an extended mountain route rather than prioritising prime descents. Usually completed on lightweight 'skimo' kit, and by their nature involving variable and sometimes marginal conditions, these ski journeys are about using the ski as a tool for winter mountain travel. Finlay will talk about lightweight approaches to some big Scottish ski rounds (Fannichs Round, Cairngorm 18 Munros Round, Tranter's Round) and skiing the Grand Alpine Arc.
- **Bike to Ski Mont Blanc** - In 2024 a team of six ESC members attempted to ski mountaineer Mont Blanc by biking from their doorsteps, in a tour designed to question the notion of adventure in the age of climate change with Howard Pollitt and Mostyn Brown.

- **Getting in to More Adventurous Trips** - Planning, logistics and practicalities. Susie Amann is an experienced ski tourer and IML who has led many expeditions and adventurous trips. As ESC Training Officer she initiated a programme to develop skills and experience to lead adventurous trips, culminating in the ESC Training Expedition to Georgia in 2023.

Sunday Afternoon Workshops and Training Sessions

Full afternoon training workshops

These sessions are scheduled for the whole afternoon and delegates attending one of these will not have time to attend another workshop that afternoon.

- **Ropework: Intermediate for Ski Mountaineering (Hannah Burrows-Smith)** - an outdoor hands-on skills session looking at more advanced ropework for ski mountaineering and glacier travel.
- **Winter navigation on Skis (Heather Morning)** - Navigation on skis can be challenging or even downright dangerous. Poor visibility, complete snow cover and corniced edges provide the perfect 'storm' for accidents to happen. Much easier of course to navigate in ascent as you are much more aware of your pace/time. Descent on ski is a completely different story. This workshop will identify a set of 'go to' essential tools to aid good decision making in challenging navigation conditions.

One-hour workshops

These sessions are scheduled for an hour although there might be some overrun. The intention is that delegates attending two workshops per afternoon with a break between them.

- **Adventurous Trip Planning (Susie Amann)** - A deeper dive into the planning, gear selection and practicalities of adventurous trips and expeditions.
- **Fast and Light Q+A (Finlay Wild)** - Skimo racing (kit, planning and training) or longer ski journeys (logistics, planning, or even aesthetics).
- **Avalanche Transceiver: Companion Workshop (Ken Marsden)** - If you are new to ski touring, or tour as a group member the Transceiver Companion workshop will focus on the skills required to complete a single buried victim search.
- **Avalanche Transceiver: Leader Workshop (Ken Marsden)** - For more experienced tourers and tour leaders, the Transceiver for Leaders workshop will address some issues around group management, interference and multiple burials.
- **Ski Edge & Base Servicing (Torquill Chapman)** - A practical session covering tools and tips for DIY maintenance and repair of your skis.
- **Expedition Food (Chris Watkins)** - Preparing your own Dehydrated food.

- **First Aid: Hypothermia (Declan Phelan)** – A review of the current science and working through a scenario-based approach for the prevention and management of hypothermia on a ski tour.
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- **Expedition Food** – preparing your own Dehydrated food – **Chris Watkins**.

The symposium will host the **launch of the new edition of "Ski Mountaineering in Scotland" (Scottish Mountaineering Press)**, with copies on sale over the weekend.

Looking to extend your stay in the Highlands

Hannah Burrows-Smith will also offer a 2 day '**Mountaineering Skills for Ski Tourers**' course alongside the symposium weekend, on Monday 17th and Tuesday 18th November. This will offer winter skills training (4 people only) and may be attractive to members travelling to the symposium from down south. Expressions of interest to Hannah at hannahbs74@hotmail.com with booking later via Eventbrite form at launch of Scottish meets/training.

Bios

- o **Susie Amann** is an experienced ski tourer and IML who has led many expeditions and adventurous trips. As ESC Training Officer she initiated a programme to develop skills and experience to lead adventurous trips, culminating in the ESC Training Expedition to Georgia in 2023.
- o **Mostyn Brown** is a ski tourer passionate about looking for new ways to travel through the mountains with minimal impact.
- o **Hannah Burrows-Smith** is a British IFMGA guide, splitting her time between her Scottish base in the Cairngorms and the Alps. She is a keen ski tourer and regularly leads tours and training weeks for the ESC.
- o **Torquil Chapman** is an experienced ski tourer who has acted as unpaid ski tech for his ski racing son for many years.
- o **Mehmet Karatay** is a MWIS forecaster and a qualified Mountaineering Instructor, based in Newtonmore
- o **Ken Marsden** is an experienced tour leader, Scottish Mountain Rescue avalanche rescue trainer and member of Glencoe MRT. With over 40 years'

experience in electrical and electronic engineering, Ken brings an extra level of understanding to how avalanche transceivers work.

- o **Lesley McKenna** is a former British professional snowboarder and three-time Olympian, based in Aviemore. Lesley is a Snowsports mountain leader and a high performance Snowsports coach.
- o **Heather Morning** is an MIC and a ski leader who has enjoyed a long career in the outdoor world, culminating in the prestigious role as Chief Instructor at the Scottish National Outdoor Centre, Glenmore Lodge.
- o **Graham Moss** is an instructor and is senior forecaster with the [Scottish Avalanche Information Service SAIS](#) for the Lochaber region. He is an expert in snow dynamics with in-depth knowledge of the complexity and challenges that the Scottish snowpack presents.
- o **Declan Phelan** is a keen ski tourer with a longstanding interest in mountain and expedition medicine. Now retired as a GP, he is deputy medical officer with Torridon MRT.
- o **Howard Pollitt** is a well-travelled and experienced ski mountaineer who likes an adventure!
- o **Alan Sloan** is a committed ski tourer with over 40 years' experience in the Scottish mountains, including skiing around half of the Munros.
- o **Allison Thacker** holds the BASI ISTD (International Ski Teacher Diploma) and runs the ski training and guiding business Off-Piste Performance. She lives in the Scottish Highlands and when not skiing works as a forecaster with Scottish Avalanche Information Service. She splits her time between Scotland, Chamonix and Arctic Norway.
- o **Chris Watkins** is an experienced climber mountaineer and ski tourer who has expeditioned far and wide.
- o **Finlay Wild** is perhaps best known as a renowned hill runner but is also a skimo racer and a ski mountaineer who enjoys big rounds.