



AST 2 - STUDENT INFO PACKAGE

Thank you for joining our AST-2 course. This information package provides you with detailed information regarding the AST 2 program. All students are expected to have read and understood all the information provided. Please familiarize yourself with this document so you can be prepared for this course. If you have any additional questions, please reach to us at info@kootenaybackcountryguides.com or call 1- 833 - KBGUIDE (524-8433)

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Included Services

- Pre-trip planning and information
- Course theory delivered through an online learning platform.
- Course books and material
- Pre-course information package
- Equipment lists and preparation material
- Instruction from guides certified by the [Association of Canadian Mountain Guides](#), the [Canadian Avalanche Association](#) and the [Canadian Ski Guide Association](#).

Services Not Included

- Travel to and from the field areas (Kootenay Pass or Whitewater Ski Resort).
- **Food, snacks, and drinks. Be sure to pack a lunch, snacks, water bottle, and a hot beverage to keep warm!**
- Equipment needed for ski touring. You can rent equipment from Kootenay Backcountry Guides and [ROAM Shop](#) in Nelson, B.C.
- It is customary in the ski guiding industry to provide a gratuity to guides and instructors for exceptional service; this is not included in the price.
- 5% GST

Cancellation Policy & Emergency Medical Insurance

- **What if you need to cancel?** Please see our policies [here](#).
- **What if Kootenay Backcountry Guides cancels the course?** Please see our policies [here](#).

Cancellation & Emergency Medical Insurance

Kootenay Backcountry Guides is pleased to recommend Trip Cancellation/Interruption Insurance from Lifestyle Financial. At an approximate cost of 5% of the total cost of your trip, it is a bargain for your added peace of mind. Note that insurance should be purchased when you make your initial booking payment for your adventure.

We recommend that visitors to Canada and Travelling Canadians out of their home province purchase Emergency Medical Insurance to protect against unexpected hospital and physician's expenses if you have a medical emergency. This covers sudden and unexpected illness and injury, including air and ground ambulance/evacuation to the nearest medical facility. For a quote from our preferred provider, Lifestyle Financial [click here](#).

Liability & Waivers

All students and guests of Kootenay Backcountry Guides are required to sign our [waiver](#). This waiver is the same waiver that you agree to at all ski resorts and backcountry operations. You will receive one via email. Please read over and familiarize yourself with it; you will need to sign the waiver in the presence of a representative of Kootenay Backcountry Guides. You are required to sign this document before going on any backcountry trip. We will present it to you at the start of your trip or course. Anyone who refuses to sign the waiver is not eligible for a refund.

If you are under the age of 19 you will need to have your parent or legal guardian sign for you. This must be witnessed by a Kootenay Backcountry Guides representative.

COVID-19 Plan

Please see our COVID-19 plan [here](#).

This plan is updated regularly and will follow along with recommendations from B.C.'s provincial health officer.

ONLINE LEARNING

Last season we removed our full-day classroom learning, and have replaced it with additional training in the field! The feedback was overwhelmingly positive and we are happy to announce we are going to keep the online learning moving forward. This means less sitting, and more hands-on experience and learning in the backcountry. The changes to the traditional model are as follows.

- We have moved away from our in-person classroom sessions to online pre-learning resources.
- 14-days out from your course, you will get access to your online classroom. There will be a series of videos to watch, discussions to participate in, and quizzes to challenge yourself - all on your own time.
- You will be required to have read and studied the material before Day-1 of your course date.

We recognize that not everyone is suited to learning this way. This is why we have added an additional field day to our courses. This will give you more time in the field, more time to practice skills, help you understand concepts, and any questions you might have can easily be answered by one of our expert guides.

How Online Learning Works

We have done our best to make online learning an enjoyable and productive learning experience. There will be a series of lectures that you must read, watch, and participate in. It is vital to your field day experiences that you complete each lecture to the best of your ability. Please ensure you take the time to read all the notes, watch all the videos, participate in discussions and correctly answer all the quizzes.

Take your time! The only time limit you have is that **you must complete all the lectures before your first field day**. Your progress will automatically be saved, so you can log in and out and go at your own pace.

Meeting Times & Locations

This weekend we will be spending **all four days in the field**. Please arrive prepared for 8 hours in the mountains and show up with the required equipment that is provided in this document. Bring plenty of food and water. Bring a warm set of boots and an extra jacket, maybe even some dry clothes for the end of the day. **CHECK THE FORECAST** (Weather & Avalanche Canada)!

Here is an outline of your days.

- **DAY ONE:** 7:30 am Meet your guide in the **Nelson Visitor Centre Parking Lot** and go over the plans for the day.
 - Please note our guides will be meeting you outdoors please ensure you have a mask. Bundle up - come dressed in warm clothing and warm footwear. We will be standing outside for 15-20 for the morning debrief.
 - We will be going over the plans for the day and head into the backcountry. Please ensure arrive ready to go - your car is fully gassed up, or you are buying beers at the end of the day!
 - We plan on being back in town between 4:00 pm and 4:30 pm.
- **DAY TWO:** We will make a plan for the next day at the end of day one.
- Please ensure you have your own vehicle to drive in. Due to COVID-19, we are encouraging everyone to take their own vehicle unless they are from within the same bubble.

Skills and Fitness requirements

This trip is rated [Blue Square for Ski and Splitboard Skills and Blue Diamond for fitness](#). The field days are long and demanding; we will be working hard to get the most out of you. We do our best to give you all the skills to become a more competent backcountry user. However, we can not affect your fitness or ski skills over four days; it is up to you to show up ready. So please show up in shape and prepared for long days in the mountains. We do not refund participants who can not complete the course due to a lack of skills or fitness.

Equipment List

Having the proper gear will allow you to maximize your learning in this course. Please follow this list to make sure that you have all of the appropriate equipment.

If your equipment is not up to standard and does not function, you are not eligible for a refund. Please make sure your equipment is working before heading out on a course or a trip. It is possible to rent equipment from us at Kootenay Backcountry Guides or [Roam](#) shop in Nelson.

YOUR PREFERRED METHODS OF TRAVEL

SKI TOURING

1. **Alpine Touring Bindings:** These are downhill skis with a touring binding.
2. **Tech Bindings:** This binding has pins that connect with holes in the toe of your boots. You need to have Tech Toe boots for these bindings to work. See [this image](#) for an idea of what we are describing. If you want a lightweight tech binding, the [Dynafit Radical](#) is a great example. The [Marker](#) Kingpin is a decent choice that combines a regular releasable heel with a tech-style toe piece. There are many options available for different tech bindings and boot combinations. One challenge with tech bindings is that they do not adhere to the DIN system and can be hard to operate. The [Solomon Shift](#) binding has tried to deal with the DIN issue by making a regular binding that turns into a tech binding for the climb. Many new models are being released that do the same.
3. **Frame Bindings:** Frame bindings have a regular toe and heel piece, but the heel can unlock. See [this image](#) for details. Frame bindings are heavy; they walk awkwardly, thus reducing your efficiency in the mountains; they are also NOT stronger than tech bindings and often break.
4. **Telemark skis:** These are becoming less and less popular as the world of alpine ski touring grew as equipment has changed with innovation. This system can be challenging. Releasable bindings are highly recommended as this is a significant safety advantage.

SPLITBOARDING

Splitboarding is the most effective and lightweight way to snowboard in the backcountry. As technology has improved over the last five years, split-boarding has been the go-to for all snowboarders in the backcountry. First, you need to purchase splitboard bindings. The [Spark Binding](#) set up, or the [Burton Hitchhiker](#) is the most popular. Check out [Tribute Board Shop](#) in Nelson for your splitboarding needs. More and more people using hard boot and Tech Bindings for splitboarding. Check out the [Phantom](#) setup for more info.

Boots: Those who choose Alpine Touring will want to have Alpine Touring Boots with Vibram Soles. Please make sure that if you have a tech binding, you buy boots with a tech toe. See the (Alpine Touring skis/bindings section for details). Alpine Touring Boots are designed for walking and skiing. They have a walk mode that allows your ankle to flex and a rockered sole for easy walking. Downhill alpine boots are not recommended, even ones with a walk mode; they are significantly heavier and less comfortable than an Alpine Touring boot.

Splitboarding Boots: Pretty much all snowboarding boots work with Splitboard bindings. Make sure you get boots designed for long walks. If you want a hard boot setup go to the [Phantom](#) page to find out what boots they recommend.

AVALANCHE SAFETY GEAR

Show up with all the necessary avalanche safety equipment. Please ensure you that all of the above equipment is modern and in good working order. It is not a good idea to try out brand new boots on this trip as you might end up with blisters from uncomfortable boots that make it challenging to complete the tours. Test and assemble your gear before coming on the journey to ensure it is all working correctly and you know how to use it.

1. **Transceivers:** You need a modern triple antenna digital transceiver; we do not allow analog or dual antenna transceivers on our trips or courses. All new modern triple antenna transceivers are suitable. Select one that you think fits your needs. You should be very suspicious of purchasing transceivers on Facebook Marketplace or from other used gear sources. You do not know if used transceivers are damaged or how old they are.
 - a. See [this video](#) for an overview of what to look for in transceivers.
 - b. If you are looking for an excellent site to check out all the different transceivers and what features are available, visit: <https://beaconreviews.com/>

PIEPS DSP SPORT OR PRO

Please note that these transceivers have issues with their lock buttons if you have a Pieps DSP Sport or Pro. Please take them to your local gear shop to get them checked out.

What model is your beacon?

Your beacon should have the model name printed somewhere on the body.

Below are examples of the most common PIEPS and Black Diamond Equipment beacon models on the market today:



2. **Shovel:** Shops offer a wide range of excellent shovels. Do not buy plastic or super lightweight shovels. Check out [this video](#) for what to look for in a shovel.
3. **Probe:** Make sure you are buying a high-quality probe that is easy to put together. See [this video](#) for what to look for in a probe. Although all new models have a quick snap to lock the probe in place, we do not recommend screw-in tops for avalanche probes. BCA makes excellent probes at a reasonable price. We recommend that your probe is 300cm or longer. We do not allow probes shorter than 270cm on our courses.
4. **Skins:** Choose a skin that is appropriate for your skis or splitboard. Make sure to follow the instructions carefully when setting them up. G3 Alpinist Skins are a great easy skin to set up; they are available for Skis and Splitboards.
5. **Backpack:** Having a properly fitting backpack is crucial to having a comfortable day in the backcountry. We recommend a pack between 30 and 45L. The best packs have compartments for your avalanche safety gear. Please make sure your pack has attachments to carry your skis or snowboard if we boot-pack to a summit. Having a helmet holder is also essential.

Airbag Packs: Avalanche airbags are not mandatory on our courses or trips. European studies show they significantly reduce your chances of being buried in an avalanche. There are many different makes and models to choose from and range from \$700 to \$1800.

OUTERWEAR

- High-quality waterproof breathable shell and pants.
- Warm toque.
- Ski boots or snowboard boots.
- Helmet, which should be lightweight for carrying
- Two pairs of water-resistant gloves or mitts

- High-quality ski or snowboard socks, one for each day.
- Long underwear top and bottom, we recommend changing out every two days.
- A warm Puffy Thinsulate or down jacket
- Goggles and sunglasses.
- Sunscreen
- A thermos of tea or coffee for the day
- 1-litre water bottle
- Ski Crampons (optional in mid-winter)
- A lightweight headlamp in your pack for emergency use.

AST EQUIPMENT

- **A map of the local area.** The best map to get is 082K005 and can be found at Roam Shop, Valhalla Pure, or Otter Books. You can also download the map from the government of BC [here](#).
- **Avalanche Canada Avaluator Card**
- Ensure you have download the Avalanche Canada App. [Android here.](#) [Apple here.](#)
- **A compass.** Many smartphones have compass apps built into them, or you can get them for Android or IOS. However, it is essential to have a non-electronic compass as batteries often die out.
- **Inclinometer.** You can bring a handheld one or download the app onto your smartphone at [Google Play](#) or [iTunes store](#).
- **Navigation App.** We recommend **Gaia GPS**. Gaia is not necessary but will significantly enhance your backcountry experience. [Google Play](#) or [Apple Store](#). Or you can use Avenza PDF maps, [Google Play](#) or [Apple Store](#).
- **Snow saw** for snow profiles or making emergency shelters or getting firewood. Check out the [G3 Bone Saw](#) or this [BCA snow saw](#).
- **Ruler** - you will want a small [collapsible ruler](#) for measuring snow depths. 1m or 2m are both good. If you have a probe that has measurements on it you can also use that but a ruler is much handier.
- A snow-specific [thermometer](#).
- A [snow crystal screen](#).
- A [magnifying loupe](#) for looking at snow crystals.
- A 5m 2mm rope. This is for cutting snow in profiles.
- A pencil for writing in the field.
- We will provide the Decision Making in Avalanche Terrain field books, but it is also great to have a Rite in the Rain book.

Weather Sites

Please check out the following weather sites and add them to your bookmarks on your cell phone. We will be discussing this throughout the online pre-learning and in the field. These apps and websites become very important when planning for the next day.

- [Windy: Wind Map & Weather](#)

- Download the App: [Google Play](#) or [Apple Store](#)
- [Avalanche Canada](#)
 - Download the App: [Google Play](#) or [Apple Store](#)
- BC Highway Cams - [website](#)
- Government of Canada Weather Radar - [website](#)
- Earth Orthographic - [website](#)
- Weather Radar: [Website A](#) and [website B](#)

RENTING & PURCHASING EQUIPMENT

Rent Avalanche Safety Gear From KBG

- Shovel (\$7.50/day)
- Probe (\$7.50/day)
- Transceiver (\$27.50/day)

The ROAM Shop Nelson

[ROAM Shop](#) in Nelson rents transceivers, shovels, and probes. They also rent tech binding-equipped touring skis, boots, poles, and a wide selection of splitboards.

We have teamed up with [ROAM Shop](#) to offer all registered program participants renting equipment to take one day's cost of equipment rented from them off the purchase price of new gear. This means you can test out the gear you are thinking of buying. Also, you get a 10% discount on rentals and a 5% discount on all purchases of new equipment at [ROAM Shop](#).

Please make sure you let them know you are a registered participant in a KBG program at the time of purchase!

Check their rental fleet [HERE](#). Be sure to call ahead and reserve gear as quantities are limited. In addition, you can fill out the [Winter Rental Waiver Form](#) and return them as soon as possible.