

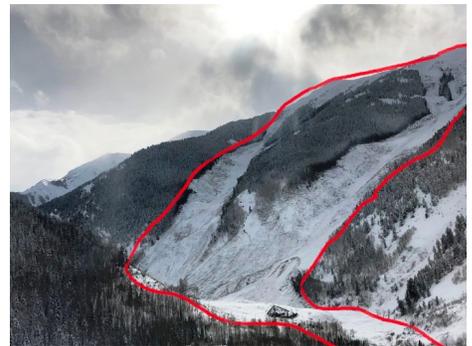
12 Skiers Receive their Avalanche Rescue and Education Certifications in Crested Butte

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CRESTED BUTTE, CO- Irwin Guides in Crested Butte hosted an AIARE 1 course the weekend of March 8-10, in which 12 skiers from all over the country learned about avalanche safety, science, and rescue in the backcountry.

The course started Friday morning at 8 am sharp in the Irwin classroom as various skiers gathered into the room, both excited and nervous about what the curriculum entailed. The two guides, Ross Matlock, and Chris Martin, welcomed to the group and briefed them on the course.

“We aren’t here to test you, or scare you,” Matlock told the class. “We want you to be able to confidently ski in the backcountry, and know how to save your peers from avalanches.”



Historic slide occurs in Aspen on Highlands Ridge

Each day on the course, the participants would start in the classroom for presentations about snowpack, snow science, rescue, and other various topics before heading out into the field to interact with the snow and collect observations. The crew used many sources for studying snow, especially the Crested Butte Avalanche Center’s daily reports.

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Today



Crested Butte saw avalanche danger go up to Extreme, a rare occasion.

“The snowpack in Colorado is making history right now,” Chris Martin said, discussing the dangerous conditions Colorado has faced this winter. “We are seeing slides after slides, and unfortunately, deaths too; This is why it is so important we educate these students on the conditions.”

The Colorado snowpack has been quite reactive this winter, with avalanche chances being from Considerable to High to even Extreme. With all the new storm cycles, the current snowpack is weak at the base, with heavy layers on top. This makes avalanche terrain more prone to sliding.

AIARE, which stands for the American Institute for Avalanche Rescue and Education, is an institution started to educate people about avalanches and safely traveling in the backcountry. According to AIARE's website, their mission is to "Save lives through avalanche education."

On the third and final day of the course, the students lead a trip up Mount Emmons to the top of the Red Lady Glades. Along the way, they tested the snowpack and studied the recent snowfall. Avalanche danger was considerable that day, so the groups stayed clear of any suspicious features or steep terrain

After hours of ascending the mountain, the group finally summited the peak and had a celebratory lunch, taking lots of photos and observing the spectacular views.

"It was really hard," participant Sarah said. "However, I'm really glad I came out and did this, it has been a priceless experience."



The group ascends Mt Emmons.

The students skied down methodically, using maps and watching out for any slides. It took an hour to ski down, but the powder was worth it in their eyes. Some students were from the East coast and had never skied anything like the glades.



Chris Martin demonstrates on how to test the snowpack.

"This has been life changing," North Carolinian Brian said. "I have never skied snow like this, or been in the backcountry before."

The course ended with a wrap up session at the Irwin Classroom, and some celebratory pizza at the Brick Oven in Crested Butte. Mattlock and Martin thanked the group of participants for being so eager to learn, and passionate about saving lives.

Irwin is constantly hosting AIARE courses, ranging from all different skill levels. If you or someone you know are interested, be sure to visit their website today, <http://irwinguides.com/>.