



TD LOCALS LEAD BACKCOUNTRY ADVENTURE WORLDWIDE AND NOW RIGHT HERE IN TAHOE DONNER

By **GIULIANA RENDE** Photos by **BEN HOGAN**

Wide open spaces...endless untouched powder...breathtaking views. Yep, it's easy to understand the allure of ditching the resort trails and earning your turns on the terrain less traveled. But, as any mountain local will tell you, hitting the backcountry is serious business. And no two people know the risks—and the rewards—better than Tahoe Donner residents Chris and Jenny Fellows, co-founders and co-directors of the North American Ski Training Center and Climbing School (NASTC).

WHERE THE ADVENTURE BEGAN

Chris and Jenny came to Tahoe in the 1990s to teach and coach skiing at Squaw Valley. They soon found themselves spending much of their free time at Tahoe Donner, exploring the beautiful cross country trails in the winter, and mountain biking or hiking TD trails in the summer. After falling in love with the many offerings and tight-knit community, the couple decided to make Tahoe Donner their home, and built a house here in 1992.

Not long after, Chris and Jenny took a long climbing/mountaineering trip to Nepal. Although they had often talked about starting their own backcountry guiding and climbing school, it wasn't until returning from Nepal to their new Truckee home that they realized they were in the perfect spot to turn plans into action.

WE SAW STARTING THE SCHOOL HERE AS THE PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE BACK TO OUR TD AND TRUCKEE COMMUNITY BY HELPING EDUCATE AND GUIDE NEW SKIERS AND RIDERS.

"We were hoping to create a high-performance ski school where true 'students of the sport' could get advanced training, and have the opportunity to experience greater adventure at ranges around the world," Chris says. "We saw starting our school here as the perfect opportunity to give back to our Tahoe Donner and Truckee community by helping educate and guide new skiers and riders."

WHEN THE DREAM BECAME A REALITY

In 1994, Chris and Jenny brought their lofty vision to life and founded NASTC, a unique performance ski school offering adventure ski training clinics for intermediate and expert skiers. They started with six courses at two local ski areas—Donner Ski Ranch and Sugar Bowl—and in 1995, added Whistler, BC and Portillo, Chile to their resort roster.

They soon found that students flocked to their popular courses, and they spent the next several years expanding NASTC's offerings by adding resorts and programs across the globe. Now in their 24th season, NASTC offers 28 courses at 16 world-class resorts worldwide, including Squaw Valley, Silverton, Kicking Horse, Verbier, St. Anton, Iceland, Grand Targhee and more.

Chris and Jenny take pride in the fact that all of their courses are taught by instructors considered the best of the best in the industry, who are all members of the PSIA National Demonstration Team and AMGA-certified guides.

"We draw from the top guns in the world of ski instruction—the teachers of teachers, the Ph.D.'s of ski pros," Jenny says. "These men and women have made a career teaching skiing, and are dedicated to helping people truly improve and further enjoy their sport."

HOW NASTC WAS BUILT ON COMMUNITY

What makes NASTC stand out from other adventure ski schools around the globe is the personalized touch that Chris and Jenny bring to their programs. They truly care about the experience of each and every



BASIC BACKCOUNTRY TIPS

1 TAKE A COURSE No one, no matter how advanced a skier, should go into the backcountry without taking a course from an AIARE-certified avalanche school. Certified schools, like NASTC, can be found on the AIARE website at avtraining.org.

2 DON'T GO ALONE Don't take a chance by going into avalanche terrain alone, or with someone who doesn't have the credentials or judgment to play it safe. Also, it's best to go with someone who knows the terrain and is patient enough to help you get acquainted with your equipment.

one of their students, and are personally invested in creating a thriving learning environment within a family atmosphere, where students can enjoy great camaraderie and often form lifelong friendships.

In fact, it is this value of community and the passions that bond us that motivated Chris and Jenny to make NASTC's permanent home right here in Truckee. They both describe how it's the family atmosphere and genuinely friendly, community feel of this area that brought them here in 1992, and keeps them here today.

"We were looking for a place to live where the surroundings would match the mountain lifestyle we love...where we could raise a healthy family, and live near a tribe of likeminded mountain people who were also raising kids," Chris says. The couple now has three teenagers: Colter (19), Monique (16) and Heath (13).

WHAT'S NEW FROM NASTC + TAHOE DONNER

It is with this same spirit of honoring and valuing the local community that Tahoe Donner and NASTC are now offering exciting new guided backcountry skiing programs for the 2017/18 ski season right here in our own backyard. Students will have the chance to explore our local backcountry under the expert supervision of NASTC's highly-trained guides in Truckee.

Attendees will be taught the skills and know-how to keep themselves and their fellow skiers safe, learning about use of alpine touring equipment, terrain choice, skinning, pacing, setting a track, route-finding, basic mountain navigation, avalanche beacon use and much more.

The program will be featuring three unique courses:

AVY SAVVY: Intro course for all levels of alpine skiers, nordic skiers, and snowboarders covering use of avalanche beacon and touring equipment plus short, beginner level tour.

INTRO TO BACKCOUNTRY: Group or private backcountry tour near Tahoe Donner. Includes review of avalanche beacon use. Open to intermediate and expert skiers.

HAWKS TO EUER VALLEY: Group or private backcountry tour in restricted terrain starting and finishing at the Adventure Center. Advanced and expert skiers in good shape only. (Exact route is subject to conditions.)

Although courses won't start until January, excitement about this new program is already brewing in the community. Tahoe Donner and Truckee residents are thrilled to have an easy way to learn, practice and fine-tune their backcountry skills locally so they can safely take advantage of the great untapped resource right in the Sierra and beyond.

For more information or to sign up for Tahoe Donner and NASTC's Guided Backcountry Skiing and Avalanche courses, go to skiNASTC.com.



SKI TAHOE DONNER'S BACKCOUNTRY **NASTC TAHOE DONNER BACKCOUNTRY GUIDING**

New this year, get out and explore the great backcountry skiing right here in TD with professional instructors and guides. Learn avy skills and find powder with expert instructors. Level requirements vary, space limited. Book early.

AVY SAVVY

DATES: Jan. 6, Jan. 27, Feb. 23, March 3 - Half Day
SKIING AND AVY ED LEVEL: ALL (beginners welcome)

An intro/overview to the backcountry. Learn to use avalanche gear, what to do if someone is caught in avalanche and route selection, plus a beginner level tour.

INTRO TO BACKCOUNTRY

DATES: Jan. 7, Jan. 28, Feb. 24, March 4 - Half Day
SKIING LEVEL: Intermediate and up

Review use of backcountry gear, practice beacon use and burial, discuss route finding and selection, then enjoy tour up and great ski down!

HAWKS TO EUER VALLEY*

DATES: Jan. 20, Feb. 10, March 10 - Half Day
SKIING LEVEL: Advanced/Expert

Enjoy a beautiful climb up Hawks Peak, ski the north face down to Euer Valley, and then skin back up. Route subject to conditions.

**Please note this terrain is closed and not accessible without a Tahoe Donner-approved guide.*

SIGN UP + LEARN MORE AT [skiNASTC.COM](http://skiNASTC.com)

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GET THE RIGHT GEAR

Talk to your guides, course instructors and the outdoor shops in your area about the best gear for you. A good and affordable way to try backcountry skiing equipment without blowing your budget is to rent or demo gear from a local shop before taking the plunge.

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CHECK THE REPORTS

Your safety in the backcountry hinges on the weather conditions and current avalanche threat, so you **MUST** stay fully informed leading up to and right before heading out. Go to sierraavalanchecenter.org. Check out apps that will give you local weather and avalanche reports, like Open SNOW, myRadar and Avalanche Lab.

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LEAVE A TRIP PLAN

Always leave a trip plan with a friend back home. This can be as simple as who you're with, where you're going, what time you're leaving and plan to return. Once you return, make it a habit to call to let your friend know you are home safe and sound.