

Client account of a Back Country Ski Week with Wilderplaces and BASS Chamonix

S.T. January 2008 Back Country Chamonix

A ski holiday starts with some warm-ups, getting the legs into ski mode on some nice blues... so

Day One: We went to the top of Grands Montets and spent at least 500 metres on the black before heading off-piste for a day on the steeps, bumps, a couloir, etc, etc accumulating over 26,000 feet of vertical;

Day Two was the Vallee Blanche. A normal ski holiday would see one descent as a fitting achievement, so Robbie and Derek had us down it twice throwing in some interesting variations just to make sure we didn't get bored.

Day Three in a normal ski holiday might have been a gentle one after the efforts of the first two days but Derek had us on Le Tour, walking to the summit, some great couloirs and off-piste through the trees. The afternoon couloir was aborted due to avalanche danger, which would have been the cue in an ordinary ski holiday for taking it easy but with BASS Chamonix it was an opportunity for more off-piste including high speed GS on the cut up off-piste and 21,000 feet of vertical;

Day Four was cloudy in Cham so a drive to Super St Bernard in search of conditions for the couloirs. Cloud prevented that so a wonderful ski tour to the monastery for lunch. In an ordinary ski holiday that would have been a good day and at 4 o'clock you meander homewards. With Robbie at 4pm you head off into Italy by a 10k itinerary, oh, and by the way, the last bus back from Italy is at 5!

Day Five sees cloud in the valley but it's an inversion and the boys take us to the summit of Les Grands Montets for a morning of big bumps fields. On an ordinary ski holiday we would then take it a bit easier in the afternoon. With Wilderplaces it's back to the top and over the fence to access via a ladder les pisteurs. Even Robbie was palpably relaxed once we were all down safely as he pointed out that one slip on what we had just done would probably have been the last thing we would ever have done...like, if you have to be told that you shouldn't be there in the first place! 23,800 feet of vertical;

Last Day on a normal holiday we should be doing little beyond recovering from the above. Robbie takes us to Les Contamines for some navigation work and a descent through the trees to an ancient Roman bridge. In the afternoon on a normal ski holiday it would be an easy finish so of course we went all the way to the top to descend via the off-piste, icy bumps and ski cross course at high speed all the way to the bottom;

Total descent for the week: over 123,000 feet!

Unanimous verdict on the week: Amazing, brilliant, fantastic!!!

Ideas for next year: Italy in the morning, Hellbronner in the afternoon, Vallee Blanche into Chamonix by moonlight. Could be called "Mohawks in the Moonlight" but not sure if G Plake could stand the pace!

Big thanks to all my companions and especially to Derek and Robbie for laying on such an extra special week (I even think my skiing might have improved)