



### **Trip Highlights**

- Ski world-class off piste terrain among the dramatic peaks and glaciers of the Alps
- Develop your off-piste ski techniques and knowledge of mountain safety
- Discover the challenge and excitement of ski-mountaineering

### **Dates**

18th—25th January 2009

1st—8th March 2009

5th—12th April 2009

### **Introduction**

Ever dreamt of leaving the crowds of the piste behind and exploring the mountains beyond the boundary rope? This specially designed week based in the off-piste mecca of Chamonix will take you there, introducing the freedom and excitement of the backcountry. Skiing challenging terrain, untracked powder and ascending deep into the mountains using ski-mountaineering techniques will take your skiing to the next level and open up a whole new world of alpine adventure.

During the first half of the week you will benefit from first-class coaching from an ISTD qualified ski instructor, developing your ski technique to handle a wide variety of off-piste conditions. Applying these new skills, you will then enjoy the company and experience of a UIAGM mountain guide learning the essential techniques and tactics for ski-mountaineering and safe off-piste travel.

For 6 full days, you will discover the wild and dramatic mountains of the Mont Blanc region which rightly make Chamonix one of the great places to ski in the world.

### **Detailed Itinerary**

#### **Day 1 - Travel to Chamonix**

The trip begins and ends at one of our chalets in Argentiere in the Chamonix Valley. After dinner in the chalet, we will get together with our ski instructor and mountain guide to discuss the itinerary for the week ahead. (D)



### **Day 2 - Les Grand Montets, Argentiere**

Today we first arrange any equipment requirements and then head to the slopes of the Grand Montets. This spectacular ski area situated beneath several 4000m peaks is world-famous for its challenging off-piste terrain. The morning will be spent both on and off-piste, focusing on key ski techniques and familiarisation with avalanche transceivers. After lunch we will have the opportunity to explore some of the exciting off-piste routes including the Italian and Canadian bowls. (B,D)

### **Day 3 - Brévent-Flégère**

We head to the opposite side of the valley and the area known as Brévent- Flégère. The slopes here offer amazing views of the Mont Blanc massif including the Vallée Blanche and the Grand Jorasses. Continuing the development of ski technique, there are a great number of off-piste options to discover and an opportunity to get some spectacular footage on the video! (B,D)

### **Day 4 - Le Tour**

Situated at the end of the Chamonix Valley near the Swiss border, Le Tour is the venue for our final day of ski instruction. From the Col du Balme there are several off-piste routes that take us well away from the ski area and present a variety of challenges. At the end of the day, we will spend some time over a hot chocolate or vin chaud, reviewing the first part of the week with feedback and advice on personal performance. This provides a real platform and focus for the second half of the week. (B,D)

### **Day 5 - Les Grand Montets**

In the company of Robbie Fenlon, our UIAGM mountain guide, we will revisit Les Grand Montets. The top cable-car heads to the Col du Grand Montets at 3,300m. The views from here are awesome and there are several classic off-piste routes that descend through wild glaciated terrain. During the day, there will be a continual focus on the tactics and techniques for safe off-piste travel including avalanche awareness and mountain safety. (B)

### **Day 6 - Flégère, Col Cornu & Col de la Gliere**

Equipped with ski-mountaineering skis and skins, we head to Le Flégère. Taking the lifts to the highest point, we strap on our skis for the short climb to the Col Cornu. There is a beautiful silence away from the ski area and a real feeling of being in the backcountry. We enjoy a great ski down to the Lac Noir before climbing to the Col de la Gliere using the opportunity to learn about skinning technique. The descent from Col de la Gliere is both Challenging and spectacular with incredible views of the entire Mont Blanc massif. (B,D)

### **Day 7 - Le Vallée Blanche**

For many this is the highlight of the week - a descent of nearly 20km with over 2,800m of vertical. The day begins with the spectacular Aiguille du Midi cable car ride to 3,800m. On arrival we climb down the snow arête to the start of the route. Subject to the weather, we will aim to ski one of the variants rather than the popular standard route. In any event, the high mountain scenery is breathtaking with glaciers, ice-falls, seracs and granite peaks dominating the scene. By the time you reach Chamonix several hours later, you will have experienced some of the best mountain landscapes in the world. A great way to end the week! (B,D)



### **Day 8 - Departure**

Following breakfast, onward connections to the airport or train station for your return journey home. (B)

(Meals included indicated as B-Breakfast, L-Lunch, D-Dinner)

Please note that the exact nature of the itinerary is dependant upon a whole range of factors including weather and snow conditions and the ability and fitness of the group. Your Guide, Robbie Fenlon, will do everything he possibly can to follow the itinerary stated but you should be prepared for flexibility and possible changes in the itinerary.

### **Trip Pricing**

The trip price is £925 per person based upon a group size of 3 - 12 persons.

#### **The trip price includes the following services:-**

- 3 days services of an ISTD International Ski Teacher
- 3 days services of a UIAGM Mountain Guide
- 7 nights chalet accommodation on a DBB basis (except for one night's dinner when the chalet staff have a well earned night off!)
- Road transportation during the week

#### **The price does not include:-**

- International flights, airport taxes and fees (from €70)
- Return transfers from Geneva Airport (from €50)
- Personal equipment (approx €240; 3 days down hill kit, 3 days touring kit, 6 arva kit)
- Lift Pass (6 day unlimited Chamonix pass €235)
- Insurance, visas
- Meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Any other items not mentioned as included

### **Trip Grading Level 1**

The course has a ski grading of level 1. To join the trip you should have several weeks skiing under your belt and be comfortable parallel skiing red runs and easy blacks. Off piste or ski touring experience whilst helpful is not a pre-requirement. A good level of fitness will ensure that you enjoy the week to the full and gain maximum benefit. You can expect to be skiing for an average of 6-8 hours in a wide range of snow and weather conditions.

### **Why Off Piste, Chamonix with Wilderplaces?**

With a range of off-piste/ski mountaineering weeks and courses available it is difficult to know which one to choose. We believe the key to an enjoyable and safe off-piste experience is a clear understanding and grasp of the ski techniques required. This is why we have teamed up with the British Alpine Ski School ("BASS"), Chamonix to deliver this introductory week. The Directors of BASS Chamonix are Derek and Shona Tate both of whom hold the highest level world-wide ISTD qualification. All of the instructors on their team also hold this qualification. They will apply their vast experience and expertise to refine and develop each individual's ski performance throughout the week, including the valuable use of video feedback. We believe you will also find the mountain elements to be of the same high quality. You will be in the safe and highly experienced hands of Robbie Fenlon, a qualified UIAGM mountain guide who has a passion for skimountaineering and a great personality. Above all,



Robbie will do everything possible to impart his vast knowledge and make this an unforgettable experience for you.

The quality of the instruction and guiding is supported by some excellent chalet accommodation in the Chamonix Valley (see accommodation and food below). This provides the perfect retreat from a hard day's skiing in the backcountry.

### **Group size and guides**

The minimum group size is 3 and the maximum is 12. As noted above, you will spend 3 days in the company of an International Ski Teacher and 3 days with a UIAGM Mountain Guide. The maximum guide/instructor to client ratio is 1:6

### **Getting there and away**

The week begins and ends at one of our chalets in Argentiere in the Chamonix Valley, which is easily accessible from the UK and other countries. Transfers from Geneva to Chamonix take approximately 90mins and reservations can be made online at [www.mountaindropoffs.com](http://www.mountaindropoffs.com). Should you wish to travel direct to Chamonix by train or other means, please contact us for meeting arrangements.

### **Important Note**

When booking you travel arrangements, you must check with us that the minimum numbers have been reached to enable the trip to run. This can be done either by contacting the office .

### **Accommodation and Food**

Whilst in the valley, we will stay in a conveniently located chalet in the rustic village of Argentiere, Chamonix. The chalet is very comfortable, the service is fully catered and includes a cooked breakfast, afternoon tea with freshly baked cakes and dinner served with wine. Please note that to allow the chalet staff to take 1 day off each week, dinner on the Wednesday is eaten out in a restaurant (not included in the trip price) we recommend Le Rusticana on the main street beside the pharmacy.

### **Single room supplement**

We do not charge single person supplements to people booking on their own. However you will be expected to share a room with another person of the same sex. However, it may be possible to book a single room, provided one is available. Please request at the time of booking and we will let you know if one is available and the relevant supplement charge.

### **How to Book**

Full details of the booking procedure are set out in our booking form and terms and conditions. Within 7 days of receipt, we will confirm your booking by e-mail. At this time we will send you joining instructions and further booking details including Essential Information.

The Essential Information includes:-

- Passport & visa information
- Medical & health considerations
- Detailed equipment lists
- Useful country and travel information

In your booking confirmation, we will also send an invoice for payment of the balance.



### **Insurance**

It is a condition of booking that you are insured against medical and personal accident risks. This must be for the activities undertaken and include repatriation costs, air ambulance and helicopter rescue services and cancellation and curtailment. We also recommend that you take out insurance which includes baggage cover. You can purchase insurance to cover all your needs from the British Mountaineering Council at [www.thebmc.co.uk](http://www.thebmc.co.uk)

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

#### **Backcountry Skiing with Wilderplaces**

We are passionate skiers and view backcountry skiing as perhaps the ultimate way to explore the high mountains. Our backcountry ski courses and ski tours are born out of personal knowledge and experience and we have spent many years building partnerships with the best guides and instructors here in the Alps.

Our passion for and knowledge of off-piste skiing and ski touring is combined with our skills and experience as adventure travel professionals. This means that you can be sure of a professional service from start to finish. If you need help with deciding upon the right trip or what type of equipment to bring, then be sure to give us a call. We would be delighted to assist based upon our personal knowledge and experience.

#### **Climate**

Winter in the Alps can bring a wide range of temperatures and weather conditions. During the day it is possible to experience sub-zero conditions through to ambient temperatures in the high 20's. Your personal clothing and equipment should reflect the wide variety of possible conditions.

#### **Medical Information & Safety**

We will provide you with detailed information when you book your holiday. On all our trips each guide is qualified in First-Aid and they will carry a comprehensive first aid kit with them at all times and have experience of treating medical situations in an outdoors environment. In addition, we do encourage clients to bring their own first aid kit. It is your own responsibility to ensure that you are physically fit enough to join an adventurous trip such as this. We recommend that you have a complete medical and dental checkup prior to departure.

#### **Currency and spending money**

To cover personal expenditure on this trip we estimate that the equivalent of £250 will be sufficient. Further information regarding currency and money matters in France is contained in the Essential Information, sent to you at the time of booking.

#### **Extending your Trip**

Should you have more time before or after your chosen itinerary, we would be pleased to organise trip extensions customised to your requirements. A wide range of options are available and you could choose from personalised off-piste ski instruction to private mountain guiding and an ascent of a remote alpine peak.