



Trip Highlights

- Take your backcountry skiing to the next level in the awesome Chamonix Valley
- Develop your off-piste ski technique and tactics to an expert standard
- Ski some of the most exciting glacial terrain in Europe with a UIAGM guide

Dates

5th – 12th April 2009



Introduction

New for 2009, our advanced backcountry ski week is aimed at clients who have already enjoyed the intro course or are otherwise skiing to a high standard. Using the same successful model as our intro weeks, you will benefit from 3 days of first-class coaching from an ISTD qualified ski instructor, further developing your ski technique to handle everything the mountain can throw at you! On the remaining 3 days you will be in the company of a UIAGM mountain guide who will develop your mountain skills further, while pushing your limits on challenging and spectacular terrain. The classic off-piste routes of the Envers du Plan, Pas du Chevre and the Glacier du Toule to name a few, will be within your grasp as you experience some of the most exciting skiing in the Mont Blanc massif.

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 refreshing avalanche transceiver skills. After lunch we will have the opportunity to explore some of the exciting steeper terrain of the Lavancher Bowl. (B,D)

Day 3 - Brévent-Flégère

We head to the opposite side of the valley to Brévent-Flégère. The slopes here offer amazing views of the Mont Blanc massif including the Vallée Blanche and the Grand Jorasses. Off the top lift of Flegere there are a number of steep routes down ranging from open bowls to challenging couloirs. There will be plenty of opportunity to get some spectacular footage on the video! (B,D)



Day 4 - Les Contamines

A change of scene as we head out of the valley to the superb resort of Les Contamines. Situated in the snowy shadow on Mont Blanc the conditions are usually good here. Mid-week the resort is also blissfully quiet and after a fresh snowfall you can expect to get fresh tracks all day. There are some great itineraries to explore off the backside of the mountain with big verticals and plenty of steep terrain to challenge yourself on. (B,D)

Day 5 - Les Grand Montets & Pas de Chevre

In the company of Robbie Fenlon, your 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. If conditions allow, the pick of the bunch is the Pas de Chevre which descends slopes beneath the spectacular west face of the Dru to the Mer de Glace. An absolute classic of the valley and a day to remember (B).

Day 6 - Le Envers du Plan, Vallée Blanche

You may have skied the Vallee Blanche before by its standard route but there are many other more challenging ways down from the Aiguille du Midi. One of the best is Le Grands Envers which will take you through some of the most spectacular mountain scenery imaginable. Ice-falls, seracs and granite peaks dominate the scene as you ski the steep 2000m of vertical to the Mer de Glace. (B,D)

Day 7 - The Glacier du Toule and the Italian Vallee Blanche

Equipped with ski-mountaineering skis and skins, we head back up the Aiguille du Midi. From the foot of the access ridge there is a gentle ski down beneath the massive face of Mont Blanc du Tacul to the point where we put our skins on. From here it is approximately 90 minutes on skins to the Col du Toule. From the col a metal stairway/ladder leads down to the glacier on the Italian side and a superb descent to the mid-station of the Funivie Monte Bianco. After a pasta lunch it is up the cable to Punta Helbronner where it is possible to descend the Italian Vallee Blanche - a great descent without the crowds of the French side. If conditions are good, it is possible to clock up over 4000m of vertical skiing. An amazing 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 days arva kit)
- Insurance, visas
- Meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Any other items not mentioned as included

Trip Grading Level 2 - Challenging

The course has a ski grading level 2. To join the trip you should have either completed our Introduction course or be skiing at a high standard. This means that you have previous off-piste experience and are generally comfortable in all snow types on slopes up to 30 degrees. In all cases 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. Should you wish to travel direct to Chamonix by train or other means, please contact us for meeting arrangements.

Important Note

When booking your 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.

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

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.