



Welcome to the Summer 2007 newsletter! There has been lots happening in the Alps this season, as well as updates on the current conditions and the latest course availability. We also report on the trips to Aconcagua and review the Winter Alpine Snowshelters & Survival Weekend courses.



Summer 2007: The UK saw one of the wettest summers on record, and this had an influence on the Alps, in that the tail end of the string of low pressure systems passed over the mountains bringing unseasonal snow falls. This resulted in high avalanche risks, that some people (none of the Icicle groups) fell foul of. The snows did make some courses harder than usual, but equally it improved the snow conditions on glaciers, so many routes really benefited. Now we are experiencing normal August weather patterns in the Alps, so this bodes really well for the end of season trips. So far this summer some of our more experienced clients have climbed some major routes including the Frenedo Spur, Grand Capucin, Mitilleggi on the Eiger, and the Arete des Diables on Tacul. Well done on these!!!



Aconcagua 6959m: Following the success of our expeditions last year, the start of 2008 looks a busy season on Aconcagua for Icicle teams. We always approach via the Polish glacier route, and make a decision at high camp of whether to take the glacier direct route or the Falso Los Polacos across to the Canaletta, and from there to the summit. The full itinerary for our trips to the second highest of the 7 Summits is detailed on our website

Expedition Kit Bags: We have just received our new expedition kit bags that were designed on the same lines as the ever classic North Face base camp duffel. Our bags have some improved design features, and are given FREE to all new expedition clients booking from the date of this newsletter.



Chamonix: This summer has seen quite a few changes in Chamonix with the closure of the La Stade hotel to become apartments, the opening of the new Sanglard shop near ENSA, and the new paving in the pedestrian zone in the centre of town. A new avalanche plan of the valley has just been produced. It can be viewed, and queries answered at the town hall.

Latest News

The huge popularity of our snow safety avalanche awareness courses last winter was so good that we are planning to offer them every day in the winter season. Any groups (of 4 or more) are offered a discount but the days only cost £49 normally anyway!



The new six person chair lift to Index has been great for those climbing up in the Aiguilles Rouges this summer as it is faster and a higher capacity than the old system.

We have recently put up a whole series of course film clips on our website, so you get an impression of exactly what type of activities are entailed. The clips are hosted on YouTube, but you can see them directly on our site by clicking on the Videos button on the bottom right of the front page of the website. Already the clip of the view from the summit of Mont Blanc has seen well over 1000 views. It is a very popular page!



Acclimatisation Weekends: This summer has seen a great uptake on the £99 acclimatisation weekends. They are essential preparation for those undertaking a course tackling a major Alpine summit, such as Mont Blanc or the Matterhorn, the following week. The reason for this is that, unlike other operators, we are flexible with our summit day to take advantage of the best weather. On some weeks this means that the weather window is near the start of the week, not at the end as would be ideal for acclimatisation. Our goal is summit success, not meekly following a prescribed itinerary, whatever the weather may be!



Kit Review: The ice climbing world cup has been a driving force in the development of technical ice tools and crampons, not to mention techniques. This time we review the incredible Grivel Monster leashless ice axes. They are specifically designed for hard mixed climbing, rather than pure waterfall ice and are ultra thin for torquing in narrow cracks.

Mountain Fit: Those clients who visited Chamonix in 2006 will have met Beth, who was a resort host for the season. Recently she has just finished her personal trainers exams, and is currently based in the south east of the UK. If anyone is looking for a personal trainer who has specific Alpine knowledge and experience, then get in contact via www.fitforyou.org.uk. Lack of aerobic fitness is the most common reason for people unfortunately failing on summit attempts.



Kilimanjaro: The photo above shows the sunrise over the summit crater rim of Mount Kilimanjaro. It has to rank as one of the magical moments in your life, and you will never forget it. Behind you the shadow of Kilimanjaro is projected across the plains, and the summit cone of Mount Meru breaks through a sea of clouds. No previous climbing experience is required for the Machame route but you should be a fit and keen trekker, as the summit day is always a big effort. See our website for full details of our expeditions to Kili. In 2006 we had a 100% summit record on Kilimanjaro, so fingers crossed for '07!

Alpine Snowshelters and Survival: This is the course for all those Ray Mears fans out there who want to learn how to assess avalanche risks, and to locate and build safe shelters in the harsh Alpine winters. These courses only cost £149, and are run over weekends throughout the winter season. Key features of the courses are a night spent in a snowhole, and a nighttime emergency relocation.



Pic of the month

Each month we pick one of the photos entered into our annual photo prize draw and tell you about it.



The photo was taken by Shaun Fowler on a Off Piste Ski Clinic level 2. It shows one of the other course members skiing in deep powder down from the Plan d'Aiguille, with the Aiguille Verte & Drus in the background. This course is run several times each winter, and is for those perfecting their off piste skills. This winter season sees the launch of our Canadian Rockies ski courses & heli-skiing. See website for details.

The Competition

We have three copies of an interactive CD Rom that lets you explore the Mont Blanc massif in 3D via a virtual flight. In order to win a copy, we invite you to send in a copy of your best course photos for possible use on the website or our brochure. You can send them on CD to our UK office, or by e-mail / Skype. The close date for entries is the end of August. The first three entries will win the CD's.



Safety Review: Contrary to advice that we have seen published in one of the UK climbing magazines recently, we never recommend you backing up an abseil with a prussic clipped to a leg loop. This is very dangerous, as if the abseiler became unconscious, their leg would be pulled upwards, and the prussic is then released by the belay device with the net effect of the climber dropping uncontrolled. If you aren't sure how to abseil safely, consider a Alpine Intro course.



Environment: Further to announcing our new tough environmental policy, we are happy to say that our words are backed up by actions; the Icicle UK office is 100% paperless, and we are encouraging you to be the same by using our new e-confirmation system. In addition we only use airport transfer companies that are carbon neutral, and have implemented tougher environmental standards for our expeditions to minimise the carbon footprint. Full details of all our efforts can be seen on the website.



For those wanting to book an accommodation only holiday, Icicle operates two chalets and six flats in the Chamonix valley. To view the chalets visit www.chaleticicle.co.uk or for the flats, just click on the 'Holiday' button on the side bar of the website. The chalets are catered in Winter and self catering in Summer season. All of the apartments are run on a self catering basis year round, and are available in both summer & winter. If you are looking to book over Xmas / New Year / half term / Easter, book soon to guarantee space!



Alpine Intro 4000m 'Summits & Skills' course: The Introduction course is designed to teach a total novice the key climbing and mountaineering Alpine skills over a week of training and ascents. The week focuses on the skills that you will require on rock, ice and snow; including Alpine ropework, glacier travel, navigation, avalanche awareness, crampon and ice axe techniques. Even if you have had no previous contact with ropes, or any experience of ice or rock climbing, by the end of the week you will have climbed vertical pitches of ice, led a rock route (on bolted protection) and climbed an Alpine 4000m mountaineering route such as Gran Paradiso in north Italy.

Alpine boots advice: Despite a very detailed boots advice on the website in the equipment section, we still get many e-mails from people saying "I know you advice B3 boots, but I have B2 boots, so they should be OK in the Alps, aren't they?" No, no, no. They are too flexible, lack insulation, and risk shedding C3 type crampons which could be highly dangerous. If you do not have any B3 boots, and do not want to go out and buy some then do not worry as our Chamonix office has a very large stock of B3 hire boots, that are rented to Icicle clients for just £20 for the week. We stock top Salomon, Kayland, Technica, and Sportiva brands.



Late Availability

We have final spaces on our Summer courses as is detailed below.

19-25 August 2007

Intro course – 1 space

26 Aug – 1 Sept 2007

Intermediate – 2 spaces

Ice & Classics – 1 space

2-8 September 2007

Intro course – 1 space

9-15 September 2007

Intro course – 4 spaces

Mont Blanc – 2 spaces