



Swiss snowshoe '18 Grand Saint Bernard



- Spend two amazing days snowshoeing in this area steeped in history. Famed for the Saint Bernard dogs, Napoleon crossing the Alps, and of course the Grand Saint Bernard Hospice which was founded in 1049, where you stay for the night in the monastery.
- This is a two day course that can either be done in its own right, or before a course to enhance acclimatisation. It is perfect for those booked on the one week winter climbing or skiing courses.
- The course is scheduled to operate over a weekend, but extra dates can be scheduled on any days for groups of two or more people who are booking together. The monastery is busiest over a weekend, so it may be preferable to consider offset dates, if that could fit with your travel plans.
- A key feature of this course, is spending a night in the infamous Grand Saint Bernard hospice. The monastery is still run by the monks, and it was Pope Pius XI who confirmed Saint Bernard as the patron saint of Alpine mountaineers. The region is also famed for Roman and far later Napoleons crossings of the Alps.
- You are led by a very experienced and qualified IFMGA / UIMLA Guide, who will instruct you in the use of snowshoes, and is there to guide you and look after your safety in terms of the weather and avalanche awareness.



Course summary and key details

- You certainly don't need to be religious to enjoy this trip, and there's no need to attend any of the services at the monastery if you don't wish too, though everyone is welcome to.
- We find that this trip appeals to those who are interested in the rich history of the region, who want to stay in an amazing location. The trip to the Grand Saint Bernard monastery is one you will never forget.
- A key feature of this trip is that you don't require any previous snowshoeing experience, and to keep costs right down for you, our prices include the loan of snowshoes, and avalanche beacon, shovel and probe.
- You are shown how to use the snowshoes and safety equipment, and are guided by an expert in the region, so are in a very knowledgeable and safe pair of hands, who knows the area very well.
- The closest airport is Geneva, so for those flying in on the day, you can even arrange to meet the guide in Martigny, which is a straight forward train ride from Geneva airport. You can get dropped off here on the return too, so avoiding the airport transfer costs for going to Chamonix. Either option is fine for us, so just let us know which option you prefer once you've booked.

Trip report & article

An article written about this adventure, written by one of our snowshoe guides, which gives a real insight into the diverse history of the region, and the ascent of Mont Fourchon. You'll also learn a lot about the background to the monastery, and how it came to be built - [Link to article](#). It has also been published by the Snowshoe Magazine.





Course daily itinerary & objectives

The itinerary is to provide you with a taster of what you could achieve, and isn't fixed in stone. Your guide will have a massive local knowledge and experience.

Saturday

Arrive for the 08:30 check-in and course / itinerary briefings, kit checks or fitting. Then you set off from Chamonix for the eighty minute transfer to the upper Dranse river valley and the Grand Saint Bernard tunnel, above which the snowshoe trek starts. For those who have never used snowshoes, don't worry as after only about 10 minutes instruction you will be confident. On the way up the route steepens as you pass through slightly steeper ground and the ominous sounding, but beautiful looking, Combe des Morts, before the hospice suddenly comes into view ahead of you. The guide will check you in, show you where the facilities, and most importantly your bed is. There is also a museum in the attic of the hospice, which details the amazing history of the area and the monastery itself. Before the evening meal some groups head outside to take some more photos, and perhaps to learn how to use the avalanche safety transceivers. Then it's time for dinner, simple but hearty food prepared by the monks. During the evening there is the opportunity for anyone who is interested to attend the evening service in the crypt with the monks, which is an amazing and moving experience whatever your faith. Even if you don't understand a word of the language, the simple sincerity of the service will move you.

Sunday

In the early morning you emerge for breakfast, and in the first light of the crisp Alpine morning, you put on your snowshoes, and crunch your way over the well frozen snow. There is a wide choice of routes behind the monastery including Mont Fourchon 2902m, which is accessed via a winding route that crosses the border into Italy, before emerging onto the summit ridge that is the border of Switzerland and Italy. As you ascend to the ridge, on a clear day you are rewarded with the most amazing views of the sunrise on the south face of Mont Blanc and Gran Paradiso. After savouring the views from the summit, you loop down and around back to the Grand Saint Bernard monastery. The round trip to Mont Fourchon typically takes about four hours, and some people in the group sometimes elect to stay in the monastery to savour the atmosphere, while the others head to Mont Fourchon. Most groups stop for a celebratory beer and a bite to eat when they return to the hospice at around midday, then you start the descent back to the Super Saint Bernard where you started the trek yesterday. Then it's time for the return drive reaching Chamonix by late afternoon, you are free to depart for home.

ITINERARY NOTES: Where possible we follow itineraries. Mountain adventures are weather and conditions dependant, so occasionally we are forced to alter the plans. If this is the case, suitable alternatives are offered. Please use this outline itinerary as a guide to the types of route / activity that you will attempt.



Course dates, prices, & inclusions



299

2 full days snowshoe guiding, 1:6 max ratio
2 days holiday in total, Saturday - Sunday

Inclusions

1) 2 days snowshoe guiding by IFMGA / UIMLA guide, 2) Chamonix hosts for logistics and briefings, 3) Pre course information booklet, 4) Equipment discount voucher for UK shops, 5) Free 36 page technical Course Instruction Booklet, 6) Logistics support and in-resort hosts, 7) Transport from Chamonix to Grand Saint Bernard and back, 8) One night half board stay in a mountain hut for you and guide.

Exclusions

1) Travel to and from Chamonix, 2) Equipment hire, 3) Activities insurance, & excess baggage charges.

Group sizes: 2 - 6 people per UIMLA mountain guide. For group sizes of over 6 people, there are multiple guides, and the teams travel independently.

Notes: The loan of all technical equipment for each client is included in the course price as required: snowshoes, avalanche transceiver, avalanche probe and shovel.

Dates

- 27 - 28 Jan 2018
- 10 - 11 Mar 2018
- 24 - 25 Feb 2018
- 7 - 8 Apr 2018



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Windermere mountain store (UK)

A key part of choosing a company is being able to come and talk about your plans with an experienced course advisor face to face. In an increasingly virtual world, we know our clients value speaking to real people, getting open and honest advice. The vast majority of our clients are British, and our office and outdoor store is based in Windermere in the English Lake District.

Get in contact to arrange a meeting, and come in for a coffee to discuss your course in person with a trip advisor. We are keen to ensure that you are as prepared as possible, and that you select a course that is suitable for you. It makes it easier and more enjoyable for you and us, if you are on the right trip. As well as talking through your course, most clients have queries about the kit they will require, so as to avoid expensive mistakes, and we can show you some examples of kit to consider. Others have training queries, about how to best prepare for your trip, and we will be able to steer you in the right direction. No question is too silly, and we'll have heard them all before, so don't worry!

By now you'll have got the idea that an integral part of booking is the ability to get good, knowledgeable, advice, and a highly personal service. Some people do just book online, but we are there every step of the way to walk you from the initial enquiry, right through to your course. Unlike some companies that only exist virtually in cyberspace, we are staffed by real people, in a real office, who offer real honest advice. Because we are tangible, we are accountable, and we take great pride in that and the high standards of service that we offer you.



Why travel with Icicle in the Alps

- **Our Mission...** To have the best safety and peak summiting records of any mountain and ski guiding company in the whole world.
- **Our Aim...** To exceed the expectations of each client, to realise their ambitions, and to provide the best quality experiences possible.
- **Our Environment...** We aim to minimise our environmental impact, and to preserve, improve & promote the responsible use of the mountains.
- **Our Ethos...** We know every single client has individual needs, strengths, aims, weaknesses, ambitions, and goals. We care about each one.
- **Your Money...** We have taken every step to protect you on the mountain, and in your pocket. Funds paid to us are held in trust until you return home.



How to book a course with Icicle

On the front page of the Icicle website there is a course 'Live Availability' button which links to a page that is updated with each booking to show the number of spaces available on each advertised date of each course. The number shown in brackets on this page is the number of places still available on the date.

To book a trip you complete the secure online booking form on the website, which is protected by SSL encryption, so you can input card details and pay safely over the internet. You can list up to four people on one booking form, but if members of a group live at different addresses, or wish to pay the balance separately, it is worth completing a form separately so that you each receive the confirmation email, and the information and payment reminder emails. When you submit the form you will receive automatic confirmation with a receipt, course specific kit list, and a course information booklet with useful information.



Icicle background and key features

- Established in 2000, Icicle is a UK company, and although our trips are for English speakers, our client base is worldwide. Icicle has firmly established itself as one of the leading mountain guiding operators in the UK.
- We are proud to still be a small specialist company who have a very personal approach. It allows us to really support each of our clients. The attention to detail, local Alpine support team, and work ethic sets us apart.
- All of our Alpine courses are all led by professional guides (IFMGA / UIMLA), as our priority is your safety and quality guiding. We focus on instructional courses, and our local knowledge is second to none. Our contacts and staff always aim to 'make it happen' for you.
- We keep all our overheads low, such as our office being paid for by it also being a retail shop. We also don't spend lots of (your) money shouting about how good we are, and haven't got the flashiest website or glossiest brochure. We offer you great value without sacrificing standards.
- What differentiates us is that we have a highly personalised, flexible and friendly, approach to our courses. This flexibility is essential to maximise your achievements. We aim to offer you great and innovative trips that we would dream of going on ourselves.



Your complete financial protection

We have a moral as well as a legal obligation to protect your money, data and online security when you book onto an Icicle course. We want you to be totally confident that we are a bona fide company whose financial conduct has been assessed, and who follow a strict code of practice to protect your money. Your booking is protected by our bonding with the Travel Trust Association U3307. This bonding fully complies with the 1992 Package Travel Regulations, and guidelines proposed by the Department of Trade and Industry to protect clients on package holidays. All monies that you pay to Icicle are held in trust until after your course has ended. This protects you in the highly unlikely event of our insolvency, and all monies paid by you are insured. We are also registered with the ICO for Data Protection. Our online payments system is with RBS, who have verified the security of our system with their independent tests.



Course mountain activity insurance

It is a condition of booking onto any of our trips, that all clients have sufficient activities insurance. This is to protect you in case of any requirement for medical or hospital treatment, mountain search and rescue, and in case you have to cancel your course due to injury or personal circumstances. Your documentary proof of cover is checked at the start of the week before you start any of the guiding. It must be written in English, and specify that it covers you for all of the activities you plan to undertake (see your detailed itinerary on the website). If you are a UK resident, we recommend arranging insurance through Snowcard or the BMC. If you are not a UK resident we recommend arranging insurance through the Austrian Alpine Club (although this does not cover you for cancellation or curtailment so you should get extra cover for this).



Arranging travel to Alpine courses

All of the Alpine trips are offered on a 'Land Only' basis meaning that you need to arrange separate travel to the start of the trip. Although Icicle does hold an ATOL licence and so can arrange flights on behalf of clients, most people find that it is easier to arrange flights through discount airlines. For a range of flight options (including budget) we recommend: www.skyscanner.net. There is also a Eurostar service from London to Geneva (see: www.eurostar.com). For courses that meet in Chamonix, airport transfers can be booked from Geneva airport to Chamonix to match your flights for c. 30 euros per person each way.





Iccle guides & their qualifications

We are a small company, and our team is everything to us. The guides have responsibility for all decisions taken on the mountain and to ensure your safety. Whilst we are fortunate to have an excellent mountain team, we also have a superb office team who arrange the logistics that make the trips run smoothly.

The IFMGA Mountain Guide qualification is the highest qualification that is recognised for leading groups, and the only people who lead any of our skiing or climbing courses in the Alps. IFMGA stands for the International Federation of Mountain Guide Associations. All of our IFMGA Guides hold the International Mountain Guide carnet, and have been selected for their leadership style, personality, and sense of humour, not to mention the fact that they aren't too bad at climbing and skiing either!

All of the Alpine trekking and snow-shoeing courses are run by UIMLA mid mountain guides. These two qualifications are your guarantee of the highest standards and professionalism, and the holders of these qualifications wear their badges with pride. Rest assured that you are being led in the mountains by the best. Our itineraries are planned with guide to client ratios within the safety guidelines outlined by the IFMGA and UIMLA. Each course itinerary states these daily guiding ratios.

We strongly believe that a badge or qualification does not make a good leader, which is why we carefully hand pick our guiding team. However you have our guarantee that all our courses are led by verified highly qualified professionals, as this is a legal requirement in the Alps. Note that for trips outside the Alps, the IFMGA or UIMLA qualification is not a legal requirement, and local guides are used. This is normal practice on peaks including Kilimanjaro, Elbrus, the Atlas and the Himalayas. In the UK no qualifications are legally required, but we follow best practice and all leaders on our UK trips are suitably qualified.

Accommodation: valley/mountain

When on an Iccle course the details of where you will stay will be included in your detailed itinerary. For Chamonix based Alpine courses you are usually based in the valley in one of three types of accommodation; a self-catering studio flat, a chalet or a hotel. Accommodation is on a bed & continental breakfast basis, and all bedding (linen and towels) and any tourist taxes are included. There is a choice of B&B (always included) or half board (upgrade) in the valley, and the accommodation is usually two or three people sharing. In some trekking courses a packed lunch is also included and this will be a sandwich with two cereal / snack bars per person (see itinerary for inclusions).

In mountain huts you always stay on a half board basis, where there is a hut guardian who cooks the evening meal so you do not need crockery, pans or cutlery, with the exception of some hut winter rooms (see itinerary for details). Blankets are provided in mountain huts so you should take a sleeping bag liner for hygiene (silk or cotton), but you do not normally need a sleeping bag / mat.



Course client equipment discount



Once you have booked, you will be sent a catalogue of all the preferential rate equipment and clothing that you can buy in our Windermere shop. We offer 15% OFF equipment and clothing. There is also a selection of books and maps. Orders over £30 are posted free to any UK address. Our shop also stocks a wide range of rental kit for use in the UK or on any of our Alpine courses.

View full details at; <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/icicleshop.htm>. If you have any queries, please e-mail info@icicle.co.uk or telephone 01539 44 22 17.