



Haute Route ski tour to Zermatt 2017



- The Haute Route route between the two historic mountain centres of Chamonix and Zermatt stretches for 114 miles and there is between 13,000m to 14,000m of ascent and descent taking you through some of the most famous landscapes in the Alps.
- Throughout the week you are surrounded by stunning 4000m peaks, and the ski tour provides a challenge that many people repeat several times during their lives. It will appeal to those wishing to escape the hustle and bustle of the Alpine valley towns and ski slopes.
- This course is ideal for those seeking a challenging ski tour, with the opportunity to use some mountaineering techniques, such as an ascent on crampons or an abseil. All roped techniques will be taught during the week, so don't worry if you are a ropework or climbing virgin!
- Skiing ability should be fairly good as although there is only a little steep skiing, the slopes can be icy or rutted in places, with breakable crusts. There is also often more than a little powder on the descents! You will encounter most types of snow conditions.
- As this tour is continuous, it is quite physically demanding and requires a good level of fitness. Good stamina will make the route easier and more enjoyable as it involves six days of skiing at altitude with a pack, though note the pack should be 35-40 litres maximum.



Course summary and key details

- Starting in Chamonix, France, you traverse by ski the spectacular high mountain route to Zermatt, Switzerland. By staying each night in comfortable mountain refuges, set high in the mountains, this course will appeal to those who want to spend a week in amazing mountain scenery.
- The accommodation in the mountain huts is half-board throughout which means you avoid having to carry stoves or pans and get a good three course cooked evening meals each day, and breakfasts each morning.
- Support and assistance from the Icicle Chamonix hosts is included throughout the week for logistics, equipment fitting, and briefings. They will store any luggage that you do not want to take on the route, and meet you after the tour to return it for your travel home.



Course daily itinerary & objectives

Note that the Haute Route has many variations, and that it is often essential to alter itineraries often to cater for weather, conditions, fitness, hut spaces and ski ability, though the itinerary described below is the most popular.

Sunday - Arrival day in Chamonix

Travel to Chamonix to arrive for the 17:00 check-in followed by and course safety and itinerary briefings. There is time for kit checks or rental of equipment. Chamonix hosts accompany the group to pre-dinner drinks. Night in Chamonix.

Monday - Day 1 of ski tour, Grands Montets & Argentiere hut

You meet your guide in the morning, and have a final equipment check, before setting off to the Grands Montets ski area to ski a quick shake down run to test your equipment, before taking the top lift. From here you ski down onto the Argentiere glacier, and across to the hut. The backup plan in event of strong wind closing the cable car, is to skin up to the hut Argentiere hut from Lognan.

Tuesday - Day 2 of ski tour, Col du Chardonnet & Champex-Lac

The first of many Alpine starts, to take advantage of the overnight refreeze, for the long ascend up to the Col du Chardonnet, either on skins or crampons, with the potential of a lower or abseil from the top. The route takes you on a traverse past the Trient hut to the short steep ascent over the Col des Ecardies, before the exhilarating ski down the remote Arpette valley. The night is spent in a hut / gite close to Champex-Lac.

Wednesday - Day 3 of ski tour, Le Chable & ski to Prafleuri hut

After an early breakfast, you take a short transfer by road to Le Chable, then ascend the Verbier cable cars. Here you ski past the Montfort hut and cross the Cols de la Chaux and Prafleuri, and possibly ascend the summit of the Rosablanche on the way. The night is spent in the Prafleuri Hut. If there was bad weather on the first day, an alternative is to ski to the Trient hut on the first day, then to reach the Prafleuri on the second day. Flexibility has been built into this itinerary, to make every attempt to help make it happen.

Thursday – Day 4 of ski tour, Pas de Chevre & Arolla hotel

Set off very early today, to make the East facing traverse across above the Lac de Dix from the Prafleuri Hut, before the heat of the sun increases the avalanche risk too high. At the far end of the lake you traverse around left before ascending to the newly installed ladders to cross the Pas de Chevre to descend to Arolla, Switzerland. Night in a hotel in Arolla, which is a much welcomed element of luxury mid-week to ensure you are well fed and rested. An alternative for this day is to ski to the Dix hut, then the next day to ascent to Vignettes, from where there is a very long day to ski all the way into Zermatt

Friday - Day 5 of ski tour, ascent to the Bertol hut / Vignettes from Dix

A day of ski touring ascending from the Arolla valley up to Bertol Hut on skins. Upon arriving beneath the hut, you are faced with a series of ladders and cables to ascend to reach the Bertol hut that is perched on the top of the ridge, and has spectacular views of the Zermatt peaks. Night in the Bertol Hut. The alternative for this day is to ski from the Dix hut to the Vignettes, via the Pigne d'Arolla, before the ski down to the hut. The summit is obviously weather / conditions dependent. Night in hut.

Saturday - Day 6 of ski tour, Tete Blanche & ski descent into Zermatt

An early start for the ascent of Tete Blanche from the Bertol Hut, then descend to Zermatt past the Matterhorn. This is a big day of skiing, but most of it is downhill, which will be a welcome relief, before you finally pick up the pistes to descend to Zermatt. If skiing from Vignettes, there is a long day of touring, before the final descent into Zermatt, and the weather must be stable. Catch the train to Tasch, then minibus transfer to Chamonix, which takes c.2 hours. In the evening you can go out in town to toast the weeks achievements, and enjoy your last evening in the Alps. Night in Chamonix.

Sunday – Check out and departure

Breakfast, then accommodation check out at 10:00, then 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 as a guide to the types of activity that you will attempt.



Course dates, prices, & inclusions



1099

6 full days IFMGA guiding, 1:6 max ratio
9 days holiday in total: - Sunday - Sunday.

Inclusions

1) IFMGA Mountain Guides for six days, 2) Chamonix course hosts for logistics & briefings, 3) Pre course information booklet, 4) Equipment discount voucher for UK shops, 5) Two nights B&B accommodation in Chamonix (inc. bedding & towels), 6) Five nights half board accommodation in mountain huts including three course cooked evening meals, 7) Preferential rates on ski and equipment hire, 8) Free 36 page technical Course Instruction Booklet, 9) Road transport in Chamonix valley.

Exclusions

1) Travel to and from Chamonix, 2) Cable cars for you and guide (c.60€pp), 3) Ski hire, 4) Personal laundry, telephone calls, lunches, any purchases in mountain huts / hotels / restaurants, 5) Return transport from Zermatt to Chamonix (c.50€pp based on six), and road transport outside Chamonix valley (Champex-Verbier c.15€pp based on six), 6) Sunday pre-dinner drinks & last night celebratory meal & drinks, 7) Activities insurance, excess baggage charges.

Note

We have updated our 2016 itinerary to build in some more flexibility for weather and conditions, to really make every effort to make it happen for you. We also include a night in Zermatt, as well as the ski touring ascent of the 4000m peak of the Breithorn, before you return to Chamonix.

Dates

- 12 – 19 Mar 2017
- 2 – 19 Apr 2017
- 16 – 23 Apr 2017
- 15 – 22 March 2017
- 9 – 16 Apr 2017



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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.