



Icicle Mountaineering Ltd | Church Street
Windermere | Lake District | LA23 1AQ
Tel +44 (0)1539 44 22 17 | info@icicle.co.uk
Website: www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk
Online: shop.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk



2024 dossier | **Intro Ski Tour & Backcountry £999**

Website link | <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/introskitour.html>

Key features

- Ideal for those transitioning from piste to touring and backcountry skiing
- 5 days guiding (Saturday - Wednesday), led by a hand picked IFMGA Mountain & Ski guide
- Includes Chamonix accommodation, and 2 nights half board in mountain huts on a 3 day ski tour
- Ideal preparation for some of the famous ski tours such as the Haute Route
- Led by top qualified guides (IFMGA), group size 3 – 6 clients maximum per guide
- Icicle can help arrange the hire of all technical equipment
- Skills focused course to develop skiing, mountain safety, & avalanche awareness



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UK registered company 413 6635. VAT 770 137 933

'inspirational mountain adventure holidays'

24 years
established in 2000





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Course overview

- If you have spent most of your time on skis on piste or on popular off piste runs, and want to escape the crowds, this course will give you the skills to access the mountains with ski touring and safety skills.
- This course is also ideal as an introduction or preparation for famous ski tours such as the Haute Route (Chamonix to Zermatt) later in the season.
- The itinerary is flexible to take account of the previous skills, experience, and aspirations of the group, but typically includes a 50:50 split of ski touring uphill and off piste backcountry skiing.
- Previous touring experience is not required, as this course aims to teach key skills starting with the basics. Sometimes people have done a day or two of touring before, but not received any formal tuition, so use this course as a springboard to future tours.
- Any mountaineering skills or knowledge of ropes are an advantage, but not essential as all necessary techniques are taught.
- During the week you are based in Chamonix Mont Blanc, but you often have the opportunity to ski tour in Italy or Switzerland too. This choice of course location provides amazing access to infamous ski tours and backcountry ski descents including the 23km long Vallee Blanche.
- A key feature of the course is the evening instruction sessions (optional) to help teach some of the theory such as route planning for avalanche conditions, mountain weather prediction, and crevasse rescue. This means that you can learn some of the theory without wasting great skiing time.
- The course has been designed to assume that you have done no ski touring before, so on the first day you are introduced to all the kit; skis, touring bindings, skins and ski crampons, and shown how to use it, and how to store or carry it.
- These courses are led by IFMGA mountain and ski guides, rather than an on-piste ski instructor, as guides are the only people qualified to lead groups skiing on glaciated terrain, such as the Vallee Blanche. Don't worry, you'll get plenty of instruction, as many of our guide team are also qualified as ski instructors, so that you get the best out of both worlds.
- Key skills taught during this course include:
 - Using skins and touring skins
 - avalanche transceiver use
 - glacier travel techniques
 - recognising avalanche traps
 - choice of kit for glacier skiing
 - kick turns for ascent on skis
 - use of cousteaux / harscheisen
 - using crampons and ice axes
 - crevasse rescue for skiers
 - route planning & navigation

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Sample itinerary

The itineraries should give an idea of what you can achieve during the week. Each week this course runs slightly differently to cater for your preferences, the conditions, and where the best weather and snow is to be found. This flexibility allows you to have the course tailored to your needs. The last three days are spent ski touring to a hut for a three day mini tour, with two nights half board in mountain huts included, with the days between spent touring to reach an Alpine summit or high pass beyond, before returning to Chamonix on the third day.

Friday

Travel to Chamonix, and check in to the course accommodation. If you require ski touring kit hire, ensure that you arrive in town before 18:00, to allow time for boot and ski fitting. We use an excellent ski touring specialist shop, which offers preferential rates for our clients. Key personal safety kit (alpine harness and transceiver), can be supplied by the guide in the morning, if reserved upon booking. If you have your own safety kit, you should take it, as it is always better for familiarity. Night in Chamonix.

Saturday

At 08:30 you meet your Guide at the course accommodation, and have an introductory safety briefing, and they check your kit and supply any extra safety items required (e.g. transceiver, shovel, probe, harness). You are then driven the short distance to start your ski tour. The destination varies, as a suitable location is dependent on weather and snow conditions. Some ski tours can start from the valley floor such as to Refuge de Loriaz, whereas others require an uplift such as the Col du Tour Noir from Grands Montets. During the day you are taught ski touring techniques, and where time allows, the use of the avalanche safety / crevasse rescue kit. Today the focus is much more on the ski touring techniques, to allow you time to adapt to the kit, practice kick turns, fitting and removing skins and ski crampons. There is usually the chance to take in a col or a summit during the day, before you ski back down to the valley at the end of the afternoon. Guiding ratio 1:6 (max). Night in Chamonix.

Sunday

The guide will pick you up again from the accommodation, and you will tackle another day ski tour above Chamonix. Examples include the Crochues-Berard from Index to Le Buet, Traverse of Vallee Blanche to Helbronner and ski descent of the Black Bowl variant of the Vallee Blanche, Col du Tour Noir on the Argentiere Glacier, or Aiguillette des Houches from Brevent and the ski down to La Flatiere. The choice is on

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putting the skills learnt yesterday into practice, and giving you a challenging but realistic objective for the day. There is also the opportunity for some further skills training, such as an avalanche beacon search or some crevasse rescue practice. By late afternoon you descend to Chamonix. Guiding ratio 1:6 (max). Night in Chamonix.

Monday - Wednesday

Start a three day ski tour, with the next two nights spent half board in mountain huts. When packing for the nights, there's very little extra to carry, only a sleeping bag liner, head torch, and toiletries (toothbrush, paste, wet wipes). The evening meals are at least 3 courses and cooked, and you get continental breakfast in the mornings. Bedding (duvet, pillow and sheet) is provided. Using the huts enables you to escape into the mountains, which is the essence of ski touring. There are plenty of choices of where to go, from the Argentiere and Albert Premier huts at the head of the Chamonix valley, to options in the northern Aosta valley such as Bezzi / Benevolo / Bonatti, or even some of the Swiss options including the Grand Saint Bernard monastery. On the first day you travel and ascend to the hut that has been selected by the guide with the group, and you'll find there's places to store and dry equipment including your boots and skins. The evening meal is typically served around 19:00, and the breakfast at whatever time the guide and itinerary options dictate in the morning. The second day is either a tour above the hut, to return to the same one, or to traverse to a different hut for the second night. The third day is a final ski tour, and descent to the valley, with the return drive to Chamonix. Typically this final day is a little shorter, finishing in the mid afternoon, to allow you time to return any rental ski touring equipment to the hire shops. Return transfers to Geneva airport should be scheduled for 17:00 or after. This allows you enough time to fly home on the Wednesday, to make it into work on the Thursday, minimising the days you need to book off. You'll have a silly grin on your face, and your work output will be pathetic, but as you click on e-mails and spreadsheets, just think that the previous day you'd completed your first mountain hut ski tour!

Guiding ratio 1:6 (max).

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.

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Course Inclusions

1) Hand picked IFMGA Mountain & Ski Guide for five days (1:6 ratio max), 2) Chamonix concierge service for logistics, advice and support, 3) Road or rail transport in Chamonix valley to and from the slopes each day, 4) Pre course information dossier, with training plans and kit lists, 5) Briefing the first evening, with latest updates and weather reports, 6) Equipment discount voucher for our Windermere shop / online, 7) Preferential rates on ski touring kit and equipment hire in Chamonix, 8) Free 36 page technical Course Instruction Booklet, 9) Pre-course online course open evening one month before trip, 10) Accommodation 3 nights (Fri, Sat, Sun) in Chamonix on room only basis, 11) Accommodation 2 nights (Mon & Tue) in mountain hut on a half board basis, 12) Transport to / from Chamonix to the area for the 3 day hut to hut ski tour.

Course Exclusions

1) Travel to and from Chamonix, 2) Cable cars (c.50€/day, click for current prices, with Unlimited Pass including lifts in Chamonix and Courmayeur) as required*, 3) Equipment hire, 4) Personal laundry, telephone calls, lunches, & any purchases in mountain huts / hotels / restaurants, 5) Transport outside the Chamonix valley e.g. Courmayeur not specified above, 6) Sunday pre-dinner drinks & Friday celebratory meal & drinks, 7) Activities insurance, excess baggage charges.

Pre-requisite skills

These are outlined on this page; <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/coursesc.html>, and this course is;

Course level: **Beginner**
Skiing: **2 weeks off piste experience, some touring preferred.**
Mountaineering: **Some knowledge and rope work preferred but not essential.**
Fitness: **Good general fitness and stamina**

Fitness & stamina

The ideal fitness levels are detailed at; <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/trainingpreparation.html>, and there are links to general training advice and planners that you can adapt to suit and follow.

This trip is graded: **Level 3** - At this level your fitness should be somewhere between running a fast paced 10km run, and half marathon fitness. Typically you'll enjoy more hill training, and so would be able to run for about an hour and a half of cross country, and enjoy big hill days out too.

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How to book

- All bookings are made securely online, and deposit of £250 is payable (with secure payments handled via our travel bonding by SinGS / Felloh). Ensure that when completing the form, you fill in all the required fields, in order for the 'SUBMIT' button to appear.
- All payments are protected by our Tour Operator travel bonding with ATOL and TTA, and your monies are held in trust until after you have travelled home. You are fully financially protected, in accordance with UK and EU laws.
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/booking.html>

Before your trip

- As soon as you book online, you are sent confirmation of this, and attachments including joining instructions, course specific kit lists. If you haven't received this e-mail within half an hour of booking online, please check your junk / spam folder.
- At the office, we manually check all bookings, and you'll also receive a personalised e-mail from us formally confirming your course space, and sending you a deposit payment link. Once you have this office confirmation and paid the deposit, it's fine to go ahead and book your travel arrangements, and to arrange your activities insurance.
- Activities insurance is a requirement for all trip participants. Organise it as soon as you are booked, and ensure that it covers you for cancellation or curtailment, in case you injure yourself or get ill before your trip. This ensures you'd be fully reimbursed for the trip, and all travel costs.
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/insurance.html>

Travel to the Alps

- The closest international airport to Chamonix, is Geneva (airport code GVA). There are many direct flights from the UK every day, and it's well served by the budget airlines e.g. EasyJet.
- Geneva is a small but busy airport, and it's only a very short walk from baggage reclaim into the arrivals area, where all the airport transfer companies meet. In the Course Information Booklet is a code for preferential rates from our reliable transfer partner Mountain Dropoffs.
- Chamonix is also very easy to travel to by rail, from the UK to Paris via Eurostar, then from Paris Gare du Lyon (or Austerlitz) to Saint Gervais by high speed TGV, then the local train up the valley to the Chamonix Aiguille du Midi (or Chamonix central) stop.

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- Driving can work out cheaper, if you're with others, and there's free parking close to the accommodation, on a first come first served basis. Generally a couple of laps, and a space will be freed up for you. See the Course Information Booklet map for the locations of this free parking.
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/travel.html>

Meeting point

- Once you've booked, you'll receive the Course Information Booklet, which details the meeting point for Chamonix course clients.
- If you want an address for your airport transfer, provide the Aiguille du Midi cable car, on Rue Lyret, 74400 Chamonix. The accommodation is situated in a pedestrianized area, so you cannot be dropped off at the door, and the cable car station, or Chamonix Sud bus station are the closest access points. If arriving on EasyBus, Ouibus, or Flixbus, these all arrive at the bus station.

Course accommodation

- Most course clients stay in Chamonix in en-suite rooms, in a purpose built ski village in Chamonix Sud. These have a small kitchenette, for those wishing to self-cater.
- Check in time is from 16:00 (4pm) on the Sunday, and the meeting point to be shown into your accommodation is detailed in your Course Information Booklet, that is sent upon booking.
- The flats are normally twin rooms for two people sharing. If you are travelling as a couple (or named friends), you will share. If travelling on your own, you will be matched with another course client of the same sex.
- This accommodation is small and basic, to provide you low cost accommodation in Chamonix, but it is functional and really well located. If you wish to upgrade to higher quality accommodation, there is a £100 discount available for sourcing your own accommodation, which is applied to your invoice.
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/chamflat.html>

Course briefing

- The course briefing for this trip is at 17:00 on the Sunday evening. The Course Information Booklet will confirm the exact location for this briefing. When you attend the briefing, take your passport and activities insurance details, for these to be noted.
- The briefing takes about 45 minutes, and it aims to answer all your queries about the course.

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- Attendance at the course briefing is obligatory, and you are asked to sign a copy of the Terms & Conditions. These are the same as those you accepted online when you booked, but it's for us to have a signed paper copy on record.

Equipment checks

- Take any equipment to the briefing that you would like one of our guiding team to advise you about. For some people that may be very little, whilst others want to double-check a few bits of kit. It's always a good idea to take your boots and crampons, so we can check the fit for you.
- If you've your own safety equipment, it's worth having one of the team check this over for you.
- Note that if you require any hire equipment, or any kit that is loaned on a course, you need to attend the course briefing, as it's straight after this that is when it is allocated.
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/hire.html>

Late arrivals

- If they are pre-booked days ahead, we can accommodate late arrivals. We will organise for you to be able to check into your course accommodation at any time that you arrive. We do however ask you to assess how necessary a late arrival is, and for you to consider the disruption to your flatmate.
- You will require a separate Course Briefing, which involves an early start for our team, to fit this in before your guiding. It's not an ideal start to schedule a late arrival, followed by an early start, and sets you on the back foot. Please select suitable flight times to fit the advertised course timings.

Cable cars

- For the days you are climbing in Chamonix, the most cost effective cable car pass is called the Mont Blanc multi-pass. For this course you require a 5 day pass, from Monday to Friday (plus extra days if you arrive earlier). A 5 day pass costs 99.20€ (*2021 prices).
- Website link: <https://www.montblancnaturalresort.com/en/montblanc-multipass>

Breakfasts

- When you are in town and accommodation is included on a self-catering basis. There are a great range of cafes, bakeries, and coffee shops in town, where you can get breakfast, and there are a few offering cooked breakfasts too. Alternatively you can self-cater in your accommodation.

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- As the room is self-catering, it's yours for the week, so no need to check out when you are away in mountain huts. Should you use up any items from your breakfast or room supplies, there's a supermarket located just across the pedestrian square from the course accommodation.
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/chamflat.html>

Lunches & drinks

- Everyone has their own idea of what they would like for lunch whilst in the mountains, varying from a stack of Mars bars to a large ham sandwich. For this reason we let you choose your own lunches, which may be easily purchased locally from shops and supermarkets.
- You will be advised in the briefings as to how many days lunches you should plan ahead and purchase. There is never time to cook hot lunches while on a course, but you could take a thermos.
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/chamflat.html>

Evening meals

- In town clients normally take advantage of the excellent variety of local restaurants, and also the town's bars to celebrate week's achievements. We are also happy to book places in restaurants for you, should you wish an evening on your own.
- Some clients want an early night or to budget, so opt to cook for themselves in the self-catering flats. In guardianned huts, the cooked evening meal is normally three courses.
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/chamonix.html>

Mountain huts

- Mountain Huts are run by a 'Guardian' who cooks, cleans and is on hand for your assistance. On most courses, the itineraries detail a specific number of nights in mountain huts.
 - Clients share rooms, which often are on tiered bunks. Each person is allocated a mattress with its own pillow and blankets, but you should take a sleeping bag liner for comfort.
 - There are normally storage / drying rooms. Meals are on a half board basis, with a basic continental breakfast and a three course cooked evening meal. Any extras you order, such as bottled water, beer or wine, packed lunch, or chocolate, must be paid for by you.
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/chamflat.html>

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Weather & conditions

- It's natural for you to be avidly checking the weather on the weeks and days preceding your course, and we try and keep our social media channels updated daily, so you can see what's going on, and how the conditions are evolving. The website links below give you trustworthy weather forecasts.
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/webcams.html> and http://chamonix-meteo.com/chamonix-mont-blanc/weather/forecast/morning/5_days_weather_forecast.php

Maps & guidebooks

- You don't need to take any maps and guidebooks for your trip, as you are being guided, but it's always a good idea from a safety perspective to have a map with you. Here are the key links;
- Chamonix map; <https://shop.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/79/BooksMaps/Maps/Alpinemaps/IGNChamonix36300Tmap.html>
- Pays du Mont Blanc map; <https://shop.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/81/BooksMaps/Maps/Alpinemaps/PaysduMontBlanc1:50000map.html>
- Instructional book; <https://shop.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/165/BooksMaps/Books/Instructional/AlpineClimbing:TechniquetoTakeYouHigher.html>

Equipment lists

- You will be sent a precise course specific kit list upon booking, but we have a huge amount of kit advice on our website; <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/boots.html>
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/icicleshop%2BKIT%2BSKM.html>

Any questions?

Even if you've read all the detail here and in your Course Information Booklet, and on the website, you may still have some queries about your trip, so don't hesitate to get in touch.

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- Facebook message <http://m.me/iciclemountaineering>
- Here's our office hours, and online chat <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/contact.html>
- When you're on a trip, you'll also be provided an in resort WhatsApp number for our team, so if you haven't already, please ensure that you download this free app to your phone.



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