



Alpine & Ice Courses – Ski Guiding & Touring – Treks & Expeditions  
 Spring Newsletter '08 | [www.icicleUK.com](http://www.icicleUK.com) | [climb@icicleUK.com](mailto:climb@icicleUK.com) | 0845 058 98 78



### Spring Conditions & Course Reports

The snow up high has been great from December onwards, and with only three more weeks of this Winter Season left, it seems like it will be good until the very end. We had our earliest ever Vallée Blanche ski descents in December, and the final ski tours in Oberland, Gran Paradiso, & the Haute Route have lots of snow. This bodes well for the glacier conditions in Summer, with good snow bridges. The conditions for waterfall ice were mixed this year, but were good until early March. During the season, several clients did some major climbs including Modica Noury, Rebuffat on Tour Ronde, the North Face of the Courtes, and several Winter ascents of the Matterhorn. At the other end of the scale, we saw record numbers on Snowshoeing Weeks and Winter Intro courses, and several groups enjoyed a night in a snowhole!



### Summer Intro 4000m 'Summits & Skills'

We remember our first trips out to the Alps and all the questions we had; "how long a rope do we take?", "is the snow-bridge safe?", and "what will the weather be like, and what kit should I take?". Of course you have all these questions, as the high mountains of the Alps are so different from the UK hills. With this in mind we designed our Summer Intro course to tackle all these concerns head on, and to teach you as much as possible from glacier travel to acclimatisation, and Alpine navigation to safe anchor systems. On top of that you ascend your first 4000m peak, and spend a night in a remote mountain hut. We believe the course strikes the perfect balance between teaching you essential skills, & enjoying climbing some great routes. This course is run on eight weeks during the Summer season, with six places on each course.



### Kit Review – what boots are needed for the Alps?

This is the million-dollar question! We have climbed 4000m peaks in via ferrata boots in hot conditions, & used Himalayan altitude boots on the same route in vile conditions. Unless you can justify many pairs of boots, a compromise must be met, and we still consider the best boot on the market to be the Sportiva Nepal range. These are classified as B3 boots, and are equally at home on the summit of Mont Blanc, or teetering up a waterfall ice climb, and they accept any type of crampon due to the steel shank in the sole of the boot that stops it flexing at all. We are asked hundreds of times each year if B2 category boots such as the Scarpa Manta are suitable. As long as it is not too cold and you have your own crampons (sorry we cannot hire them due to undue metal fatigue) they are fine. As we say, "if in doubt, please bring them out"!



### Matterhorn 4478m Course

The view from Zermatt up to the Hornli Arete of the Matterhorn is one of the most iconic in the world, and it is no surprise that the peak lures climbers from all over the world. This Winter saw several of our clients reaching the summit, as you can see from the photo of Nick on the left, and for them it was a magical and special experience as they were on each occasion the only team on the mountain. In the Summer months the climb is easier, but obviously busier, and our Matterhorn courses attempt the peak in the driest period of July and August. The course is designed to develop quite competent climbers, usually with a couple of Alpine seasons under their belts, to attempt this peak after an intense program of acclimatization and also a whole host of similar climbs in the Chamonix region to prepare you fully. See website for course details.



### Tour du Mont Blanc Trek

This is one of the world's most famous circular treks, and it is understandable why. Mont Blanc presents a different landscape on each of its aspects, from the steep wooded valley sides in the Val Ferret, to the stony deserts around the Col du Bonhomme, and the glaciers tumbling down to the valley in Chamonix. Most people undertake the Tour du Mont Blanc over 10 or more days, so how come we offer it with 6 days trekking? The answer is simple; we undertake slightly longer days, and use minibus shuttles for the valley sections. You will miss none of the classic sections, just the mundane valley trekking. It is designed to minimise your time off work. During the tour you visit three countries; France, Italy and Switzerland, and each has their own characteristics and charm. Dates are 28 Jun - 5 Jul, 2 - 9 Aug, 30 Aug - 6 Sept 2008.



### Latest Chamonix News

There have been lots of changes in the shops and bars of Chamonix recently. Mix Bar in Rue du Moulins opened at the beginning of Winter and is already popular. Close to the micro-brewery a seasonaire block has been constructed, and alongside the Midi cable car a high quality apartment building is being built. For those who remember the Planpraz bubble cable car, it is being replaced during the Summer for bigger cabins and new pylons, but access to Brevent will be impossible unless by foot! Icicle guides Benoit and Julian were back on the North Face of Grandes Jorasses this Winter, opening new lines. For those of you who have met Maximus the Icicle office Bernese Mountain dog, he has just celebrated his 1st Birthday in style and now weighs 40kg. Please note that the Chamonix office remains open through the interseason.