



Hut-to-hut 3 countries snowshoeing 2019



- Spend a full week snowshoeing in the western Alps, staying in huts each night, and snowshoe in three countries; Switzerland, France and Italy. There are five days guiding and four nights on a half board basis in mountain huts, and a night B&B at each end.
- The itinerary has been built to link three iconic snowshoeing regions; with trek nights spent in the Grand Saint Bernard monastery / Champex-Lac in Switzerland, the Refuge du Loriaz above Vallorcine in France, and the Rifugio Bonatti in the Val Ferret of Italy.
- Snowshoeing is now officially the fastest growing winter sport, and our team of guides cannot wait to show you why. If you only have a week to spare, then this visit to the Alps will blow your mind, and you can take in several snowshoe summits too.
- As well as enjoying a great week of snowshoeing, we aim to teach you the key safety skills for route planning and winter Alpine journeys, with a lot of weight put on avalanche prediction and reaction, as well as the selection of appropriate Alpine equipment.
- This course really appeals to those who want to explore different regions of the western Alps, and to stay on a half board basis in the huts after each day of snowshoeing. It enables you to really immerse yourself in the area, and to enjoy the best routes!



Course summary and itinerary

- Don't worry if you have never snowshoed before, as you will pick up the skills quickly. All you need is to be fit for hill walking, to have a sense of humour if you fall into a soft snowdrift, and to love the outdoors. We can teach you the rest, and you are guaranteed a great holiday that you won't forget for a very long time.
- One of the delights of snowshoeing is that, unlike skiing or climbing, you can go out in all levels of visibility and snowfall, and have a great day. This region of the Western Alps is blessed with hundreds of great snowshoeing areas, and so the itinerary can be flexed on any day to take account of better weather or snow conditions, to ensure that you sample the best on offer.

Testimonials

*"A great choice of bases that we stayed in that gave us access to brilliant snowshoe treks and summits. Thank you for all the organisation and the top guiding." **Matt W***

*"Please pass on my thanks to Kingsley who guided us, for looking after us so well, and his incredible local knowledge of the mountains. We will be back next year for more!" **Babs S***

*"Thank you for organising this trip for us. We enjoyed snowshoeing in three different countries so much, and the accommodation was amazingly varied in a very good way!" **John M***



Course daily itinerary & objectives

The itinerary below is to provide you with a taster of what you could achieve, and isn't fixed in stone. We get many clients who come back year after year to repeat this course, but they need never repeat a route they have done before. Your guide will have a massive local knowledge and experience.

Sunday

Travel to Chamonix to arrive for the 17:00 check-in followed by course safety and itinerary briefings, and kit checks. Briefings are over by 18:00 and the Chamonix hosts accompany the group to pre-dinner drinks. Night in Chamonix.

Monday

After meeting your guide in the morning, you are driven into Switzerland via Martigny. The objective is dependent on the snow and avalanche conditions, and popular choices include the Grand Saint Bernard monastery via Col Ouest du Barasson, or Mont de l'Arpille from La Ravoire. Before you start your snowshoe trek, you are trained on snowshoes and the use of avalanche beacons. The night spent half board in Grand Saint Bernard Monastery / Champex-Lac.

Tuesday

You are woken, and after breakfast, you head out to tackle one of the classic snowshoe summits or high passes nearby. Objectives from Saint Bernard include Mont Fourchon, or the Three Cols route. From Champex-Lac there is a great choice of trails above the Entremont valley towards the Tour de Bavon. You return to the monastery / gite for a second night, again on a half board basis, as you are for the next two nights too.

Wednesday

After waking again in Switzerland, you set off to snowshoe down to the valley floor, where you transfer back into France and the Vallorcine valley. The snowshoes are put back on, and you ascend through the forests to reach the high alpage of Loriaz, surrounded by a crown of mountain peaks. The refuge is an old farm, and offers us cosy and traditional lodgings for the night, as well as great local food. Half board and night in Refuge du Loriaz.

Thursday

In the morning you ascend to a summit such as Tete du Chevette or Le Charmoz, to watch the sun rising over the glaciers of Le Tour, Argentiere and Geant. You then plunge steeply down in deep snow, back a different trail through the woods to the village. From here you drive through the Mont Blanc road tunnel into Italy, and snowshoe up the Val Ferret. At the head of the valley you ascend to the luxurious hut. Half board and night in Rifugio Walter Bonatti.

Friday

Today is the final snowshoe trek, and you leave the hut far below to reach the Pas Entre Deux Sauts for an amazing view of Mont Blanc in the early morning. You descend back to the hut, and then onwards down to the valley floor. It's always recommended to get a steaming Italian hot chocolate in the Cafe Lavachey! You then return to Chamonix after the snowshoeing for a celebratory meal, with the final night spent in Chamonix.

Saturday

Breakfast then the accommodation check out is by 10:00. 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



1299

5 full days snowshoe guiding, 1:8 max ratio
7 days holiday in total, Sunday-Saturday

Inclusions

1) UIMLA / IFMGA guide for five days, 2) Alpine 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 (including bedding & towels) and four nights half board accommodation in mountain huts in Switzerland / France / Italy, 6) Free 36 page technical Course Instruction Booklet, 7) Road transport to and from start and end of snowshoe treks, 8) Logistics support and briefings, 9) Equipment hire of snowshoes, avalanche transceiver, probe & shovel.

Exclusions

1) Travel to and from Chamonix, 2) Personal laundry, telephone calls, lunches, evening meals at each end of the trek, & any purchases in mountain huts / hotels / restaurants, 3) Cable cars and mountain uplift, though not normally required, 4) Activities insurance, & excess baggage charges.

Group sizes: 2 - 8 people per UIMLA mountain guide. For group sizes of over 8 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

▪ 3 - 9 Feb 2019

▪ 3 - 9 Mar 2019



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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.





Icycle 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 Icycle 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. Orders over £30 are posted free to any UK address. All purchases have free postage 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.