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Website: www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk
Online: shop.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk



2023 trip dossier | **Dufourspitze 4634m £1849**

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

Key features

- **Climb Dufourspitze, the highest mountain in Switzerland and second highest in the Alps.**
- **5 days guiding (Monday - Friday), with flexible itinerary to take advantage of the best conditions.**
- **Previous crampon or climbing experience is required, as this is a progression from an Intro course.**
- **Led by top qualified guides (IFMGA), guiding ratio 1:2 for 4 days, after first day of 1:6 glacier training.**
- **All technical equipment (e.g. B3 boots, crampons, ice axe etc.) can be hired from Icicle.**
- **Options of upgrading to private 1:1 or 1:2 weeks, or ascents via the Italian Cresta Rey route.**



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Course overview

- Climb the highest summit of Monte Rosa; Dufourspitze 4634m. It's the highest mountain in Switzerland, and the second highest in all of the Alps after Mont Blanc. We offer a week long programme to attempt this peak, as your acclimatisation and flexibility for selecting a weather window are crucial.
- To keep the itinerary flexible, the guiding ratio is 1:2 for four days, after the initial glacier training day, so you can take advantage of the best days for the summit weather window. The climb itself takes three days, so there are two spare days for training and acclimatisation routes before the ascent.
- This week would appeal to those who have previously done Mont Blanc, or who seek a quieter alternative to it. Whilst the Swiss route is 'only' graded as a PD+ (Peu Difficile) on the Alpine grading system, it is a tough physical effort and the summit ridge is fairly exposed and more technical than the grade suggests. If approaching from the Italian side, the technical grade is AD (Assez Difficile).
- Dufourspitze was named after Swiss army General Henri Dufour, who was the co-founder of the Red Cross, and it was first climbed by British climbers with their guides. The summit ridge is the most challenging part of the whole climb, and ropes are fixed in places during the summer months.
- If you seek a course in this region, that focuses on climbing more summits, you should consider the trip in the south of the Monte Rosa massif, on the Swiss-Italian border. The itinerary is called the Spaghetti Tour, and you could climb up to six 4000m peaks. For this itinerary, [click here](#)

Sample itinerary

- **Sunday** - 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. Briefings are over by 19:00 and the Chamonix hosts accompany the group to pre-dinner drinks to answer any queries. Night in Chamonix.
- **Monday** - Day to practice using crampons and ice axes on the Mer de Glace / Argentiere glacier. You also climb vertical ice, create anchors, and learn glacier travel skills. One of your most important days of the course in terms of skills development as it is essential to have good footwork on Dufourspitze. Guiding ratio 1:6 (max). Evening theory session / meeting with course hosts: [click for info](#). Night in Chamonix.
- **Tuesday** - Your final training day before setting off for Dufourspitze. Set off for a training route, designed to help you acclimatise and develop technical skills. There are many options to choose from, depending on your previous climbing experience, but popular objectives include; Mont Blanc du Tacul, Aiguille du Toule, Cosmiques Arete, or Pointe Lachenal. Guiding ratio 1:2 (max). Night in Chamonix.

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Dufourspitze - Swiss (normal) route

Wed Drive over to the Zermatt region from Chamonix, and catch the Gornergrat train up to Riffelberg. Here you start the three hour ascent to the Monte Rosa hut, which is accessed via the Grenz glacier. This day is a bit of a rest day, as the main ascent the next day involves 1900m of climbing, so it's a good idea to rest the legs today! Guiding ratio 1:2 (max). Night spent in mountain hut.

Thu A very early Alpine start to head upwards towards Silbersattel. This lower section is non technical, but ascended at a steady pace, until you pass 4000m, where you veer right to reach the foot of the Dufourspitze summit ridge. The incline soon steepens over snow and ice slopes to 40 degrees, which terminates at a rock step which leads to the summit. The rock ridge is graded III, and after reaching the top, you return by the same route to the hut. Guiding ratio 1:2 (max). Night spent in mountain hut.

Fri The day is spent descending from the hut to Zermatt, and returning to Chamonix. For very fit groups, this day can allow another contingency weather window, for an ascent and complete descent of the mountain, if the summit was not possible on the previous day. In the evening there are optional drinks and a celebratory meal. Guiding ratio 1:2 (max). Night in Chamonix.

Dufourspitze - Italian route

Drive through the Mont Blanc road tunnel to Italy, and to the Alagna or Gressoney region, where you catch the cable car to Indren, then walk the glacier trail for the short approach to the Gnifetti hut. Another option is to continue to the Margherita hut, which is the highest mountain hut in the Alps. Stay for the night in one of the huts. Guiding ratio 1:2 (max). Night spent in mountain hut.

A very early Alpine start from Gnifetti to head upwards over Signalkuppe, on which the Margherita hut is situated, or start from this hut if you spent the previous night there. Descend to the exposed col below Dufourspitze, and ascend the mixed terrain upwards to the summit. This route is technically not too difficult, but is relenting and very exposed. Return from the summit via the same route, to normally stay the night in the Margherita (or Gnifetti) hut on the way down. Guiding ratio 1:2 (max). Night spent in mountain hut.

Day spent descending from the hut to Indren, and from either hut, there is the opportunity to take in some other 4000m peaks e.g. Pyramide Vincent on the descent, before returning to Chamonix. For fit groups, this day can allow another weather window, for an ascent and descent of the mountain. In the evening there are optional drinks and a meal. Guiding ratio 1:2 (max). Night in Chamonix.

- **Saturday** – Breakfast then the accommodation check out is by 10:00. Most arrange their airport transfers to leave around this time, to catch a flight from Geneva about midday. 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.

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Course Inclusions

1) IFMGA Mountain Guide for five days, 2) Chamonix course hosts for logistics & briefings, 3) Self-catered accommodation in Chamonix (inc. beddings & towels), 4) Up to two nights half board in mountain hut (inc. costs for guides), 5) Pre course information booklet, 6) Equipment discount voucher for UK shop, 7) Free 36 page technical Course Instruction Booklet, 8) Road transport in Chamonix valley including road transport to / from the Monte Rosa region, 10) Evening technical instruction on nights in Chamonix.

Course Exclusions

1) Travel to and from Chamonix, 2) Equipment hire, 3) Personal laundry, telephone calls, lunches, evening meals in valley, & any purchases in mountain huts / hotels / restaurants, 4) Cable cars and uplift for you and your guide (approx £100), 5) Sunday pre-dinner drinks & Friday celebratory meal & drinks, 6) Activities insurance, & excess baggage charges.

Notes

This course assumes 1:2 guiding on Dufourspitze. If you wish to ascend the Italian Cresta Rey option, note that the guiding ratio is 1:1 for this route, so you must upgrade to a 1:1 week.

Pre-requisite skills

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

Course level: **Intermediate**
Mountaineering: **Some experience as itinerary.**
Ice & Rock: **Grades I/II gullies and / or rock 3 / V.Diff.**
Fitness: **High level of 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 4** - As an absolute minimum you should be capable of running a half marathon in a good time (under 1hr 45mins), but realistically you should be looking at marathon fitness for all courses of this fitness and stamina level to ensure your endurance is up to standard.

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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, as well as noting your passport & insurance details.

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). The 5 day pass costs 120.70€ (*2022 online 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. For shopping for supplies, there are many supermarkets both close to the course accommodation, in the town centre, and a larger Carrefour on the edge of town.
- 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 always happy to help advise you on which restaurants to consider, on any evening of your course.
- Some clients want an early night or to budget, so opt to cook for themselves in the self-catering flats. In guarded 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>
- 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%2BMTR.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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