



Icicle Mountaineering Ltd | 11a Church Street
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Tel +44 (0)1539 44 22 17 | info@icicle.co.uk

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



2020 trip dossier | **Barre des Ecrins £1499**

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

Key features

- **Climb the highest summit of the Ecrins national park, the Barre des Ecrins 4102m.**
- **5 days guiding (Monday - Friday), 2 night B&B accommodation in Chamonix.**
- **Ideal for those seeking a quieter alternative to the Western Alps, Chamonix Mont Blanc region.**
- **Led by top qualified guides (IFMGA), ratio 1:2 throughout to keep the itinerary flexible.**
- **All technical equipment (e.g. B3 boots, crampons, ice axe etc.) can be hired from Icicle**
- **2020 dates; 2 - 8 Aug, 23 - 29 Aug.**



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Course overview

- Climb the highest summit of the national park, the Barre des Ecrins 4102m. It's the highest mountain in the Ecrins National Park, and it is a quiet gem of a region, far quieter than the Western Alps regions such as Monte Rosa and Chamonix. 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 flexibility, the guiding ratio is 1:2 throughout, 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 Dufourspitze, or who seek a quieter alternative to it. It is graded as PD+ / AD-, so is a step up on the Alpine grading system. It is a tough physical effort and the summit ridge is very exposed and merits the grade.
- Another attraction to the Ecrins region is that there are so many summits and routes to choose from, that the itinerary can be adapted to suit your aspirations and the conditions. Aside of the Barre des Ecrins, other objectives include; Pic Coolidge, Roche Faurio, Râteau de la Meije Pic Es, and Aiguille Dibona.
- This trip was designed and is often guided by Mat, who lives in the region, and is a familiar face on many of our Alpine courses. He's popular IFMGA mountain guide, who is instantly likeable, and has a great work ethic of getting things done, so you achieve the most.

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 team accompany the group to pre-dinner drinks. Many clients opt to travel out a day early for an acclimatisation weekend course which includes an extra night in Chamonix, to ascend a 3000m peak on Sunday. Night in Chamonix
- **Monday** - Meet your guide in the morning, and drive to the Ecrins national park. Set off for a training route, with a hut approach, which is designed to help you acclimatise and develop technical skills. The programme for the week is intentionally very flexible, to allow you to ascend the Barre des Ecrins on the best weather day(s), but a good objective for the first two days is either the Râteau de la

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Meije Pic Est from the Chatelleret hut, or the Dibona Needle from the Soreiller hut. The day is used to ascend to the hut, and for a training climb above it. Guiding ratio 1:2 (max). Night in hut.

- **Tuesday** - The two objectives are both to the NW of the Barre des Ecrins, and are accessed via the Oisans valleys. The Râteau de la Meije Pic Est 3809m is a satellite peak of La Meije, and is grade of F+ via the SW Face, so it is an ideal training and warm up route. The climb is made via Col du Replat from the Chatelleret Hut, from where you can see the three peaks of the Râteau above. The highest is the Pic Est, which is reached by climbing the mixed couloir to the Brèche du Râteau, from which you can follow the easier angled ridge to the summit. The alternative climb to consider is the Dibona Needle 3100m, via the North ridge, which is grades PD. It's a rock route, accessed from the Soreiller Hut, a valley to the East of the Chatelleret Hut, and was a favourite route of the famous French guide Gaston Rebuffat. After climbing either of these routes, you return to the Ailefroide valley, and stay the night in a hut / gîte. Guiding ratio 1:2 (max).
- **Wednesday** - Today you start your ascent of the Barre des Ecrins, heading up to the Ecrins hut for the next two nights. On the way up, you can divert to the Col de Temple, and from there ascend the Pic Coolidge 3775m via the South ridge. This route is graded PD, and is excellent final training before the Barre des Ecrins. The summit provides stunning views across to your route the next day, and there's plenty of time for photos. Once the climb is over, you trek to the Ecrins hut, which is your base for the main ascent. You usually arrive in the early to mid afternoon, so there's time to rest and dry out any kit for the next day. Guiding ratio 1:2 (max). Night spent in mountain hut.
- **Thursday** - A very early Alpine start to head upwards on your main summit objective of the Barre des Ecrins. As you set out from the hut, you skirt around the Glacier Blanc, to ascend towards the Col des Ecrins 3300m. Here onwards the route becomes progressively steeper, as initially you climb snow slopes up the NE face, being wary of the glacial crevasses and seracs, to reach the first summit of the Dôme de Neige des Ecrins 4015m. This is a great summit in its own right, as the next section is usually climbed in two pitches to cross the rimate / bergschrund and to ascend to the summit ridge, where you turn towards the main summit of the Barre des Ecrins 4102m. For the descent, you can either retrace your ascent route, or if the conditions are looking very good, you can descend to La Berarde. Guiding ratio 1:2 (max). Night spent in mountain hut (Refuge des Ecrins or Refuge de la Berarde).
- **Friday** - From the Ecrins hut you ascend the Roche Faurio. You climb the relatively easy angled slopes of the SW face, which top out on the ricky ridge to the summit. The ascent takes

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approximately four hours from the hut, and after descending, you trek down to the valley. 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. If you start from the Berarde hut, you would spend the day descending to Ailefroide, possibly with a few hours rock climbing in the afternoon. You then make the return drive to Chamonix. Celebrations in Chamonix in the evening. Guiding ratio 1:2 (max). In the evening there are optional drinks and then a celebratory meal. Final night is spent in Chamonix.

Saturday – Breakfast then the accommodation check out is by 10:00. Most guests arrange their transport links to the airport for flights leaving in the early afternoon. 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.

Course Inclusions

1) IFMGA Mountain Guide for five days, 2) Chamonix course hosts for logistics & briefings, 3) Two nights B&B accommodation (one at each end of trip, inc. beddings & towels), in Chamonix, 4) Up to four nights half board in mountain hut / gite (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 with guide Chamonix to/ from the Ecrins national park.

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) Sunday pre-dinner drinks & Friday celebratory meal & drinks, 5) Activities insurance, & excess baggage charges.

Climbing skill

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.

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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 WorldPay). 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, and a separate WorldPay receipt. If you haven't received these two e-mails within half an hour of booking online, 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. Once you have this office confirmation, 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. If an early Course Briefing is required, this is billed at £20 for time involved.

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 3 day pass, from Monday to Wednesday (plus extra days if you arrive earlier). The 3 day pass costs 89.50€ (*2020 prices).
- Website link: <https://www.montblancnaturalresort.com/en/montblanc-multipass>

Breakfasts

- When you are in town and accommodation is included on a B&B basis, a starter pack of continental breakfast supplies is provided; fruit juice, milk, cornflakes, muesli, marg, jam, biscuit toasts. Tea and coffee is also provided. In a mountain hut, you get a similar type of light breakfast.

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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 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/IGNChamonix36300Imap.html>
- Gran Paradiso map; <https://shop.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/149/BooksMaps/Maps/Alpinemaps/09-Valsavarenche.GranParadisomap.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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