



CLOUD 9 ADVENTURE



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Chamonix Snowshoe Week

- Our top-pick snowshoe trip in and around the Chamonix Valley
- Snowshoe in France, Switzerland and on the Italian border
- Spectacular views of the Mont Blanc range, from all angles
- Open to all snowshoers with hill walking experience and good base fitness
- 6 days' snowshoeing
- Excellent quality chalet accommodation with hot tub and sauna
- 1 night in the famous Hospice de Grand Saint Bernard (or other mountain refuge)
- All meals included
- Fully qualified and expert snowshoe guide (International Mountain Leader)
- Grade 6: Moderate

The Chamonix Valley is iconic for so many reasons and this is one of our most popular snowshoe trips. Located right on the border with both Italy and Switzerland, France's mountain capital is the perfect location to explore off the beaten track and get away from the crowds.

The trip is open to both beginners and experienced snowshoers: it's ideal for those who have good hill-walking fitness and who are used to spending full days in the mountains.

If snow and weather conditions allow, we plan to spend 1 night in the Grand Saint Bernard monastery; a refuge for travellers since 1049 and home to the famous Saint Bernard dogs.

For the rest of the trip we aim to stay in excellent chalet accommodation in Argentière, complete with sauna and hot tub, and have graded this trip 6: Moderate.

Trip Summary

Day 1 - Arrive in Argentière

Arrive in Argentière

18:00

Trip briefing

Explore Argentière or Chamonix - Argentière

Yeti Lodge, Argentière - Chamonix Snowshoe Week - Yeti Lodge, Argentière

Day 2 - Chalets de Chailloux

Chalets de Chailloux - Chalets de Chailloux

Day 3 - Mont de l'Arpille, Switzerland

Transfer from Argentière to Ravoire

Mont de l'Arpille, Switzerland - Mont de l'Arpille

Day 4 - Chalets de Loriaz

Chalets de Loriaz - Refuge de Loriaz

Day 5 - La Crête des Bénés

La Crête des Bénés - La Crête des Bénés

Day 6 - The Grand-Saint-Bernard Monastery

Overnight at the Grand-Saint-Bernard Monastery

Great Saint Bernard Monastery - Great Saint Bernard Monastery

Day 7 - Col Ouest de Barasson

Col Ouest de Barasson - Col Ouest de Barasson

Day 8 - Depart Argentière

Depart Argentière

Day 1 - Arrive in Argentière



Arrive in Argentière

The nearest airport is Geneva, and the easiest way to reach the Chamonix valley is by minibus transfer (a 1.5 hour journey). Please aim to arrive in time for a 18:00 briefing at your accommodation (this normally means that flights should arrive before 16:00).

Please see the Travel Arrangements section for more detailed information.



18:00 - Central European Time

Trip briefing

Meet your guide and fellow trekkers this evening for a briefing about the trip and to answer any questions that you may have. We usually meet at 18:00 in your hotel or chalet.



Explore Argentière or Chamonix

Your trip begins in Argentière, at the head of the Chamonix valley, an area world-famous for its mountaineering history, and the dramatic scenery that greets you as you approach the valley is just a taste of the trip to come. Overlooked by Mont Blanc, western Europe's highest mountain, and surrounded by jagged peaks and tumbling glaciers, this Alpine valley is breathtakingly beautiful.

Argentière is a small village located at the base of the Argentière glacier and the Grands Montets ski area.

You can normally check-in to your accommodation and access your rooms from around 16:00. If you arrive earlier, it's no problem to leave your bags at your accommodation and explore either Argentière (the village has several bars, restaurants, and outdoor shops), or take the train or bus to Chamonix to explore the town. Here you'll find a larger choice of shops and cafés. (Do ask your accommodation for a Guest Card in order to travel free of charge on the buses and trains).



Argentière

Chamonix, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, FR, 74400



Yeti Lodge, Argentière - Chamonix Snowshoe Week

We usually aim to stay in Yeti Lodge in Argentière, as they offer a great place to stay and are well-used to looking after our trekking clients. There are various chalets and our group will be housed in the most appropriate available chalet for our group size. The rooms are twins: most are en-suite but some do have shared bathrooms. Very occasionally we may need to use a triple but we will discuss this with you first if this is the case.

All meals: breakfast, picnic lunch and evening meal are included. The chalet staff have one day off and on this day you'll be eating out in a restaurant in Argentière (this is included in the price of your trip).

If Yeti lodge is not available for your trip dates then we will be a hotel in the Chamonix valley (not always Argentière).



Yeti Lodge, Argentière

75 Clos du Chantey Mourry, Chamonix-Mont-Blanc, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, FR, 74400

+33 6 77 94 20 10

Day 2 - Chalets de Chailloux



Chalets de Chailloux

Our aim for the day is to climb up to the cluster of chalets at Chailloux - perched on the hillside high above the Chamonix valley, and with spectacular views looking directly across to Mont Blanc.

It's the perfect introduction to snowshoeing in the Chamonix valley, with plenty of time to accustom ourselves to the snowshoes and make any adjustments if we need to. The guide will aim to run through the use of safety equipment and avalanche transceivers.

The day begins with a drive up to the hamlet of Le Bettay, above Coupeau, from where we start our hike.

We zig-zag our way up the steep snowy trail through larch forests, until eventually we reach a clearing at the Chalets de Chailloux, a collection of old shepherds' huts, and the views open up to a spectacular vista of the Mont Blanc massif.

We can add a loop on at the end via the hamlet of Samoteux to descend via a slightly different route.

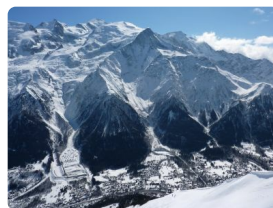
If time allows we can stop off in Chamonix on the way back to the chalet (or if you'd like more time, you can alight at Chamonix and make your own way back to Argentière using the bus or train).

Distance: 8.5 km / 5.3 miles

Ascent: 600 m / 1960 feet

Descent: 600 m / 1960 feet

Accommodation: Chalet or hotel



Chalets de Chailloux

Les Houches, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, FR, 74310

Day 3 - Mont de l'Arpille, Switzerland



Transfer from Argentière to Ravoire

A short transfer (30-40 minutes) takes us to today's snowshoe route, which starts from the Swiss village of Ravoire.



Mont de l'Arpille, Switzerland

Today's route is just over the border in Switzerland, and is an ascent of one of our favourite summits with some seriously impressive views. The route starts from the village of Ravoire, above Martigny.

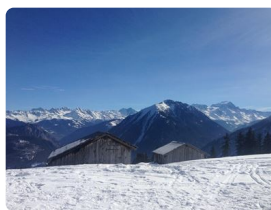
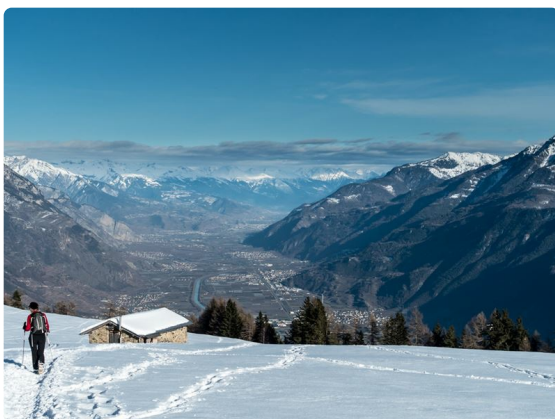
We start by winding our way up through pine forests before we pop out above the tree line and into lovely, open meadows. We'll pause at the Alpage de L'Arpille (a summer grazing ground), which is left unattended in winter. From here, we can see our route up to the summit itself. The terrain steepens as we head upwards, until a final easy push to the top, where we'll be rewarded with a fantastic 360 panorama of beautiful mountains: the Mont Blanc range, the Dents du Midi, and if we're lucky on a clear day we can see over to the Jungfrau region and have a glimpse of the Eiger. High above the Rhône Valley, this is one of the finest viewpoints in the region.

Distance: 9 km / 5.6 miles

Ascent: 840 m / 2750 feet

Descent: 840 m / 2750 feet

Accommodation: Chalet or hotel



Mont de l'Arpille

Martigny-Combe, Valais, CH, 1921

Day 4 - Chalets de Loriaz



Chalets de Loriaz

We'll begin today's snowshoe route in the charming village of Vallorcine, the last French settlement before the Swiss border. Vallorcine takes its name from "Valley of the Bears", although bears are no longer found roaming around here, having died out in the Alps in the late 1800s / early 1900s.

Located between 2 mountain passes (the Col des Montets and the Col de la Forclaz), the valley can occasionally be cut-off from the outside world if heavy snowfall closes the cols, but the village retains its old-world character and unspoilt charm.

Our snowshoe route takes us up through forested trails until the tree-line, well above the valley floor. Although we're still close to Chamonix, this valley has a distinctly different feel about it.

The views open up at the Alpage de Loriaz, and as we head towards the Refuge de Loriaz, there are stunning views of the Mont Blanc Massif and the surrounding mountains. If the refuge is open we can also enjoy hot chocolate and homemade cake!

Distance: 10 km / 6.2 miles

Ascent: 700 m / 2295 feet

Descent: 700 m / 2295 feet

Accommodation: Chalet or hotel



Refuge de Loriaz

Vallorcine, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, FR, 74660

+33 4 50 18 04 91

Day 5 - La Crête des Bénés



La Crête des Bénés

Today's route, high above the Arve valley, offers a full panorama of the Mont Blanc range, from an angle that most visitors to Chamonix don't get to see.

We start with a transfer to Le Peray, a tiny parking place above the market town of Sallanches. From here we'll climb up a forest trail below the Tête Noir (1619m), passing old farm buildings on the way.

Leaving the trees, be prepared to have your breath taken away as one of the best views of the Mont Blanc range comes into view. Looking across at Europe's highest mountain on one side, we'll turn our heads to look out over the Aravis range on the other, with the peak of the Croisse Baulet (2236m) directly in front of us as well as the huge cliffs of the Rochers des Fiz opposite.

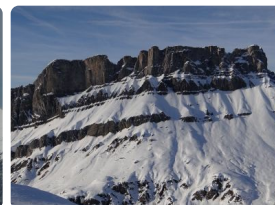
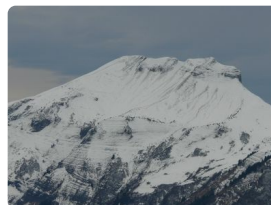
We then head along the Crête des Bénés ridgeline, absorbing the phenomenal views, and we'll have time to pause and relax, and take a moment to just "be": up in the high mountains, well away from the crowds.

Distance: 7.6 km / 4.7 miles

Ascent: approx 600m / 1970 feet

Descent: approx 600m / 1970 feet

Accommodation: Chalet / hotel



La Crête des Bénés

Cordon, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, FR, 74700

Day 6 - The Grand-Saint-Bernard Monastery



Overnight at the Grand-Saint-Bernard Monastery

Today our 2 day adventure into the Swiss mountains begins, as we head up to the Great St Bernard monastery for the night. Located at the mountain pass of the same name, marking the border between Switzerland and Italy, the Great St Bernard hospice is a working monastery and has been welcoming pilgrims and travellers since it was founded in 1049 by St Bernard de Menthon, an Augustinian monk.

The Great St Bernard pass, as a logical route to cross the Alps, has been an important trade route for over 3000 years, with evidence of use as far back as the Bronze Age. Roman troops headed by Julius Caesar, crossed the pass in 57 BC on their way from Aosta to conquer Martigny.

Shortly after this, Emperor Claudius ordered the cart track to be widened for military traffic: as part of their planned invasion of Britain.

Throughout the Middle Ages, the hospice provided free shelter and food to those crossing the pass: a welcome refuge of safety on what was a very dangerous route.

In 1800, Napoleon led 40,000 troops across to Italy (en route, they consumed 21,724 bottles of wine, a tonne and a half of cheese, 800kg of meat, and ran up a bill with the hospice of 40,000 Swiss francs, which was finally settled by French President Mitterand in 1984).

Hannibal was rumoured to have crossed the pass in 218 BC with 20,000 infantry, 12,000 cavalry, and 40 elephants. His exact route across the Alps has been disputed for centuries by historians. Some claim he crossed the Grand St Bernard pass, and others claim that his route must have taken the Petit St Bernard pass (between Italy and France). There are many postulations and arguments - for those who are interested, my favourite account is here:

[How Hannibal Crossed the Alps](#)

Nowadays, the St Bernard pass is better known for its iconic Saint Bernard mountain rescue dogs, which were originally bred here. The col is fairly isolated, and during the winter months it is only accessible on snowshoes or by ski touring, so it is a truly special experience to spend the night up here.

We begin our day by visiting the Great St Bernard museum in Martigny, to set the scene and understand the important history of the area, before heading up to Super Saint Bernard to start snowshoeing.

The ascent is fairly mellow with a gentle climb, and it usually takes around 2.5 hours to reach the hospice.

Please note that due to the remote nature of this col, we need stable snow conditions to be able to access the monastery. If it is not possible to reach the Grand Saint Bernard pass safely, then we will try to arrange a suitable alternative in a remote mountain location, such as the Cabane Brunet or perhaps the Refuge Tornieux (above Sallanches).

Your guide will make this decision.

Distance: 6 km / 3.7 miles

Ascent: 510 m / 1670 feet

Descent: 10 m / 30 feet

Accommodation: mountain refuge (dormitory)



Great Saint Bernard Monastery



Great Saint Bernard Monastery

Col du Grand-Saint-Bernard, Bourg-Saint-Pierre, Wallis, CH, 1946

+41 27 787 12 36

Day 7 - Col Ouest de Barasson



Col Ouest de Barasson

After breakfast in the monastery, we explore the vast expanse of terrain near the monastery and head for the Italian frontier.

Our goal is the Col Ouest de Barasson (2635m), an impressive view point. From here we can see the Mont Blanc range, Italian peaks such as the Gran Paradiso, and on our horizon nearby is the distinctive outline of the Pain de Sucre (sugar loaf) summit at 2900m.

After enjoying a picnic lunch in the snow, we make our way back down to Super St Bernard for our journey back to the Chamonix Valley.

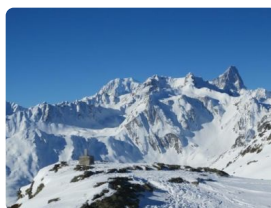
Please note that today's route is dependent upon our ability to stay at the Grand-Saint-Bernard monastery, so if it has been necessary to stay elsewhere, then today's route will be appropriate to that location.

Distance: 7 km / 4.3 miles

Ascent: 370 m / 1210 feet

Descent: 900 m / 2950 feet

Accommodation: chalet or hotel



Col Ouest de Barasson

Vallée d'Aoste, IT, 11010

Day 8 - Depart Argentière



Depart Argentière

Our trip ends after breakfast.

Transfers to Geneva Airport are easy to arrange: we recommend Mountain Drop Offs. More detailed travel information can be found in the Travel Arrangements section towards the end of this document.

Trip Information & Documents



What's included

- All accommodation (including 1 night in a mountain refuge if conditions allow)
- All meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner)
- All local transport to reach the start and finish of each day's snowshoeing
- Fully qualified and expert snowshoe guide (International Mountain Leader)
- Snowshoes, walking poles and avalanche safety equipment



Not Included

- Flights
- Airport transfers (but we can add these if required)
- Personal drinks and snacks
- Any transport, accommodation or additional expenses due to a participant being unable to complete the itinerary
- Mountain rescue / travel insurance (we can organise mountain rescue insurance if required)
- Tips



Travelling from Geneva to Argentière

The easiest way to arrive in Argentière is by minibus transfer from Geneva Airport. If you'd like us to book it for you, just let us know: it costs £40 per person each way for a shared minibus transfer, or £195 per minibus each way for a private transfer (for up to 8 people).

Private minibus transfer

Private transfers cost £195 each way for up to 8 people. They pick you up from your flight, and drop you at your hotel. For a return journey, they usually pick you up from your hotel approximately 3 hours before your flight departure time.

Shared minibus transfer

A shared transfer combines other people on similarly-timed flights. You can expect to wait at the airport for around 45 minutes or so while you wait for other people's flights. Most of the time it works really well, but it can be frustrating if you end up having to wait for a delayed flight. Then you'll end up dropping others off on your way to the Chamonix valley, depending on where they are staying. Depending on the company, you are usually dropped off at your hotel. For the return journey, you are picked up from your hotel, and you have no choice in the time. It could be anywhere between 3 to 5 hours before your flight, and you receive a text message the evening beforehand telling you what time your pick-up will be. Shared transfers cost £40 per person each way.

Booking your transfer

If you would prefer to book your own transfers, it's easy to do online and you'll often find cheaper deals depending on the time of day / date. There are many companies offering this service and we do find that you get what you pay for.

We have had great service from: Haute Transfer, Mountain Drop Offs, Cham Van, Chamonix Valley Transfers and Alp Links. The best of the budget options is Oui Bus, but note that they do not offer a door-to-door service: they only use the bus stop at Chamonix Sud.

We recommend Mountain Drop Offs, and Cloud 9 Adventure clients normally receive a small discount (www.mountaindropoffs.com). Use discount code CLOUD13

A warning about Easy Bus: we have had terrible service from them and would advise steering clear of them unless it is your only option! There is no customer service - we've almost never experienced an Easy Bus turn up on time and have had to waste money on last-minute private transfers in order not to miss flights. No refund from Easy Bus even though on each occasion we've used them, they have never turned up (and we waited an hour).

A warning about Cham Express: looks cheap to start off with but once they've hit you with a fee for luggage, then tax, it's often no different from the other companies. They do show online availability, which is good. If you are booking a Chamonix valley to Geneva journey, then they give you a half-hour window rather than a fixed departure time - you have to stand in the street waiting, and if you're not there they leave without you, whereas all the other companies will try and look for you if they can't find you.

Train from Geneva to Argentière

It is also possible to take the train (www.sbb.ch) - the journey takes around 3 hours, with 2 changes. As it costs more than a shared minibus transfer, and takes 2 hours longer, it's not the first choice for everyone, but it is an extremely scenic journey, and much nicer than the motorway, so could be worth doing if you have the time!

Taxi from Geneva to Argentière

We would not recommend arriving at Geneva airport with no transport planned - it's an expensive taxi ride from Geneva to Chamonix if not booked in advance.



Chamonix Snowshoe Week - What to Expect

The Snowshoeing

This snowshoeing trip is Grade 6: Moderate. It is suitable for hikers with moderate fitness levels. We snowshoe at a pace that suits the group, on rolling terrain for around 5-7 hours each day. There are some significant ascents and descents during the trip, but they are generally low angle and we will be sure to take these at a steady pace. Any previous snowshoeing experience is a bonus but this trip is open to first-timers who want to find out what it's all about.

Accommodation

We usually stay at the lovely Yeti Lodge in Argentière, which offers very comfortable chalet accommodation with excellent facilities and catering, at a very reasonable price. Argentière is just 10 minutes' drive from Chamonix. With fantastic views of the Mont Blanc range, as well as a hot tub and sauna to relax in, the chalet is the perfect base for a week's mountain adventure. Accommodation in Yeti Lodge is normally on a twin-share basis; if you are travelling alone, we will pair you to share with another group member of the same sex. Single supplements may be available at an additional cost. We will also spend 1 night in a high mountain refuge, staying in mixed-sex dormitory accommodation. Normally, this is the Grand-Saint-Bernard Monastery; however, if this is not accessible due to weather or snow conditions we will try to offer an alternative option. Single rooms are not available in refuges.

For weeks where Yeti Lodge was already booked before our trip was confirmed, then we will arrange alternative hotel accommodation. A popular option is the Hotel Aiguille du Midi in Les Bossons, which offers excellent evening meals in a cosy, family-run atmosphere. It's certainly my favourite hotel in the Chamonix valley, and is an excellent alternative to our chalet base in Argentière.

Please note that we aim to provide the above accommodation, but if it is already booked at your time of booking, then we have to provide an alternative, and will let you know at the time of booking if either of the above options aren't available.

Food

All breakfasts, packed lunches and evening meals are included, as well as afternoon tea if we are staying at Yeti Lodge.

Breakfasts are continental style and usually consist of hot drinks, fruit juice, cereals, bread, jam, cheese, local meats and sometimes eggs. Breakfasts in the mountain huts tend to be more basic and usually consist of tea, coffee, bread, jam and cereal.

The evening meals in the mountain huts are usually just right: hearty but basic, 3-course meals, perfect for hard days in the mountains.

Vegetarians, lactose-free and gluten-free diets can be catered for on this trip but please inform us in advance as it is usually not possible for local hotels and mountain huts to cope with this without prior warning.

Tap water is drinkable on this trip.

Luggage

Please bring a day pack for everything you need on the mountain; this should be big enough to carry overnight essentials for our night in a mountain refuge (we cannot deliver luggage to the monastery). Your main luggage can stay in your hotel or chalet for the night that we are away.

Money and Tipping

All accommodation, guiding and meals are included in this trip, but please bring additional cash for snacks, drinks and tips. Beer, wine and soft drinks are available every night.

We spend most nights in France, and 1 night in Switzerland, so you will mostly need euros for any coffee stops that we have. For the night in Switzerland, you can either bring some Swiss francs, or you can use euros (but won't get a great exchange rate). We recommend an additional budget for coffees and snacks of around 20 € per person per day. There are ATMs at Geneva airport (for both euros and Swiss francs), and in Argentière and Chamonix for euros.

If we eat in a restaurant or stop for coffees, we normally recommend rounding up the amount to leave a tip, but usually only if the service has been good.

Tipping your guide is the accepted way of saying thank you for excellent service. Do remember that tipping is voluntary and should only be done if you were pleased with the service: our staff are all paid fairly.

Winter Weather In The Alps

In mountainous terrain in the winter, the weather can vary enormously. We can experience anything from clear blue skies and sunshine, to bitter cold, to heavy snowfall and strong winds: which means that you need to be prepared for any eventuality.

Temperatures vary according to the month, but in general, December and January are colder, February can be warm or cold, and usually by March and April the temperatures are warming up and spring is on the way.

Temperatures usually reach -15°C on cold days (and occasional cold spells have led to -25°C), but a spring-like +10-15°C is also possible. If the sun is shining, we may find ourselves snowshoeing in our base layers and feeling quite warm, but if it's windy, cold or snowing, we will need adequate insulating layers, waterproofs and warm gloves. Staying warm and dry in the mountains is very important: so please be prepared for any eventuality!



Electric Supply - France, Switzerland & Italy

The electricity sockets in France, Switzerland and Italy are all slightly different.

France is a standard European 2-pin plug (left-hand picture).

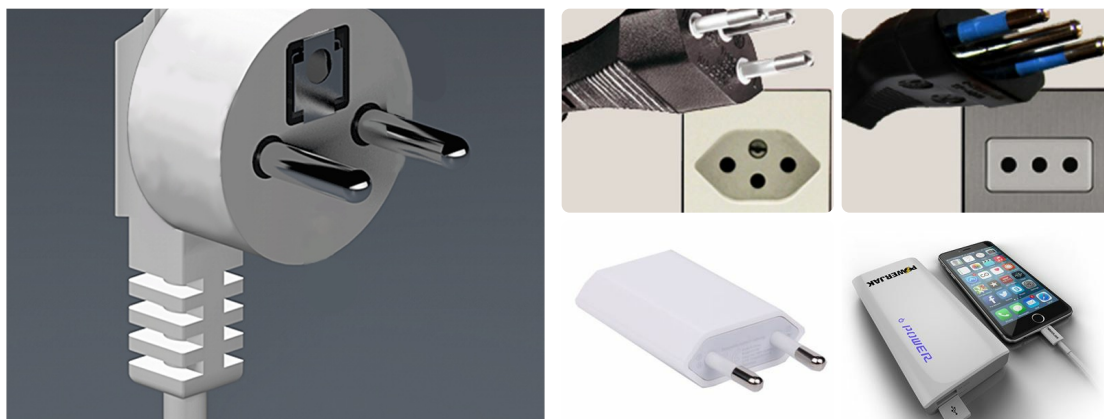
Switzerland uses "Type J" with 3 pins (2nd picture) - careful, a round plug won't usually fit into these sockets.

Italy uses "Type L" with 3 horizontally-aligned pins (3rd picture)

All countries are 220-240V.

All European travel plugs should fit into the French sockets, but with the Swiss & Italian sockets you need to make sure that the pins are slightly thinner and will fit (a type C plug will not fit a Swiss or Italian socket). An adaptor that is the same shape as the Swiss socket will be your best bet (4th picture).

There are usually some plug sockets available in mountain huts but they are limited. Bringing a separate booster charger for your phone may be a good solution.



General Information - Guided Group Trips

Insurance

It is a condition of booking this holiday that you must be insured against medical and personal accident risks (this must include helicopter rescue and repatriation costs). You may find that your annual multi-trip insurance covers this trip, but you should check that you are covered for trekking up to 3000m. We would also recommend that you take out holiday cancellation insurance: your deposit is non-refundable once you have booked, and the full balance is usually non-refundable (see our Terms and Conditions for further details).

We recommend The BMC www.thebmc.co.uk or Snowcard www.snowcard.co.uk for UK residents, or Travelex www.travelexinsurance.com for US citizens or residents.

We can organise mountain rescue insurance for EU residents for £4.75 per day, or £6.75 per day for US and the rest of the world. You can book it online here: <https://www.cloud9adventure.com/online-store/Mountain-rescue-insurance-p101294506>

In addition to travel insurance, UK citizens should also obtain or renew the EHIC card from www.ehic.uk.com. This is not a replacement for insurance but it does mean you are entitled to the same treatment as any EU citizen, and unlike insurance it includes treatment of a pre-existing condition. You would normally have to pay for treatment at the time and then make a claim on return to the UK.

Please remember to bring a credit card with you on the trip: in the event of a medical problem or injury, you may be unable to complete the trek. You would normally need to pay for treatment, and would often have additional transport and accommodation costs. Although you can claim this back on your insurance, you usually have to pay at the time and make the insurance claim afterwards, so you must have a means of paying for this if necessary.

Responsible Travel

We care about the places we visit, and our philosophy is simple: that each and every one of our trips has a positive impact on the local community and environment. We use family-run hotels, gîtes and restaurants in order to support the local communities. And it's a small step but we also recommend carbon off-setting. Visit www.climatecare.org.

Adventure Travel

Please note that we specialise in Adventure Travel, the nature of which means that we cannot always follow our itinerary for a variety of reasons. All of our holidays can be subject to unexpected changes and you should be prepared to be flexible to accommodate these where necessary.

We update our itineraries on a regular basis to take into account such things as changes to trekking routes and the conditions of footpaths, but it is not always possible to guarantee that any of our holidays will run exactly according to the proposed itinerary. If during your holiday the itinerary is affected by immediate or local circumstances, the leader will make any changes that are necessary.

As a reputable tour operator, Cloud 9 Adventure supports the British Foreign & Commonwealth Office "Know Before You Go" campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas, and we recommend that all our clients take a look at the FCO Travel Advice for their chosen destination on the official FCO website www.fco.gov.uk. North Americans can also check out the US Department of State website: www.travel.state.gov for essential travel advice and tips.

Cloud 9 Adventure treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss alternatives. We have a local office in Chamonix, and our expert team monitor the conditions regularly to ensure that our trips are run safely, and are on hand to help if we need to change arrangements.

Group Size and Holiday Status

For each of our group adventures, there is a minimum number of participants required in order for the trip to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from "Available" to "Guaranteed". In order to achieve minimum numbers, we run the trips in conjunction with several other small companies. We find that this means almost all of our trips become "Guaranteed". We are a small company with a high level of customer service, and we make sure that we only run trips in conjunction with companies who share our ethos. We know them well and have worked with them for years, and only use leaders who we know and trust to do an excellent job. We steer clear of large groups and cap our group size at 10 people for summer hiking trips, and 8 people for winter snowshoe or cross country ski trips, whilst many of the larger operators take up to 16 people.

Preparing for your holiday

We have tried to grade the holiday as accurately as we can, with the intention of attracting people of similar abilities to each trip. As a general guideline, if we have described a trek as being tough or challenging, then you need to be fit and capable of the challenge. If you don't arrive in good shape for your trip, then you could be putting yourself and others in danger: if you're taking too long each day, at best it cuts into the time you have to relax and shower before dinner, and at worst, it can be the difference between the whole group being caught in an afternoon storm. As we are as accurate as we can be writing our trip notes, we do tend to be pretty good at making sure that the right people book each trip, but we do require a certain amount of personal responsibility for arriving fit and ready for your trip. We're not on a route-march so we are never expecting to be going too fast - we try to walk at a slow, steady pace, without the need to stop too frequently for rests. If you're worried about this, then please start with one of our easier trips graded Easy or Moderate, and you can build up to a Challenging trip. If you've booked an Extremely Tough trip, then you definitely need to be an experienced and fit hiker, used to long days in the hills.

Rather than hoping your trek will make you fitter (it will definitely help!), it makes a lot of sense to spend some time before your trip getting some additional exercise and preparing properly. The fitter you are, the more enjoyable your trip will be. The best preparation is long day hikes in the run-up to your trip.

We would also recommend that you adopt a weekly exercise regime leading up to your trip. Jogging, circuit training, squash and swimming are good for developing better stamina. Before departure, we also suggest that you try to fit in a number of long hikes in hilly terrain.



Snowshoe Kit List - with hut night

Essential items :

- **Rucksack** – approx. 30L - for you to carry each day. You may need to attach snowshoes as we sometimes need to carry them before we reach the snowline. Also bear in mind that you'll be given a portable shovel and avalanche probe to carry, so make sure you will have room for this
- **Kit bag or suitcase** - for your main luggage
- **Hiking boots** – you need to have a pair of waterproof hiking boots **with ankle support** and a good sole. Most of our guests use the same boots that they wear for hiking in the UK - this is fine most of the time but you do want to make sure your feet will be warm enough. A very lightweight pair of summer hiking boots is not going to be okay, but a sturdy leather pair should be fine. It will make a difference whether your trip is in Jan, Feb or March - Jan is colder! If you are thinking of buying a winter pair of boots, then good examples are Salomon Quest or Merrell Thermo Adventure or similar.
- **Waterproof jacket and trousers** – goretex jacket and trousers are perfect. Insulated ski trousers and jackets are likely to be too warm for snowshoeing, so a goretex shell is a better option.
- **Socks** - bring a mixture of both normal hiking socks and perhaps a couple of pairs of warmer merino wool socks for the colder days. Take care if you are bringing thicker socks - it is logical to think that a thicker pair will be warmer, but the reality is that it can make your boots a bit too tight and result in colder feet due to lack of circulation - so do check them first! My favourite socks are merino wool for winter walking.

- **Underwear**
- **Trekking trousers** - there are so many types of trousers for the outdoors, that it can be overwhelming trying to decide what to bring. If you go for something with too much insulation, you'll be far too hot, but standard trekking trousers are likely to be too cold in the winter (although they would be fine on a warm spring day). Some folk like to wear leggings with a goretex layer over the top. My personal choice is to wear a thinly-insulated pair of goretex trousers (Arcteryx Sabre) with no leggings underneath: these have seen me through years of snowshoeing and I don't have to worry about layering. Softshell trousers can also be a good idea. If in doubt, bring goretex trousers, trekking trousers, and thermal leggings, and a combination of those 3 options will see you through your trip.
- **Thermal base layer trousers** - such as long johns or thermal leggings
- **Base layer t-shirts** – wicking t-shirts are better than cotton as they are lighter and dry faster
- **Base layer top** - a long-sleeved merino wool top is the ideal base layer
- **Mid layer top** - fleece jacket is good
- **Warm jacket** - we recommend bringing a lightweight down jacket.
- **Warm hat** - woolly or fleece hat
- **Buff or fleecy neckwarmer**
- **Gloves** - we recommend bringing 2-3 pairs. I tend to bring 1 pair of lighter gloves for when it's warm (and when exercising uphill you can get quite warm, even in winter), an insulated mid-range pair which I wear most of the time, and a much warmer pair which rarely get used but when they do, in the cold weather, I'm really grateful for them
- **Sun Hat**
- **Sunglasses** - essential as the effect of the sun reflecting off the snow can make its rays much more intense
- **Suncream** (small bottle to save weight)
- **Lip protection** (with sun screen)
- **Water bottle** - we'd recommend nalgene bottles. On cold weather days I usually take half a litre of water, plus a hot flask of tea. On warmer winter days I'll take a 1L water bottle plus a flask of tea. We don't recommend camelbaks in the winter due to the tube freezing up.
- **Sheet sleeping bag** – only needed for any nights in a mountain refuge (duvets or blankets are provided). Silk is best, it's lighter than cotton.
- **Travel towel** – again, only needed for the mountain refuges – the hotels provide towels.
- **Wash kit** – Bring whatever you like for wash kit - but for any refuge nights where you have to carry it, small bottles will be perfect: you would normally just take a toothbrush, travel size toothpaste, mini contact lens solution if applicable, a couple of wet wipes and a tiny travel soap.
- **Head torch** – just a lightweight torch, such as a Petzl Tikka / Zipka is fine for this trip.
- **Plastic bags / dry sacks** to keep essentials dry.
- **Passport** – to be carried whilst snowshoeing (we often cross borders on the drive to each venue). Make sure you keep it dry.
- **Cash** – for any coffee stops whilst on the trip
- **Credit card** - for emergencies
- **Basic first aid kit** – your leader will carry a large first aid kit, but you should bring a small first aid kit containing plasters, blister treatment, painkillers & diarrhea treatment (rehydration sachets & immodium)

Optional items:

- **Walking poles** - we do provide poles, but you are welcome to bring your own if you prefer: please ensure that they have snow baskets.
- **Buff** – can be useful for extra warmth if it's cold, or sun protection for your neck on a sunny day
- **Camera**
- **Book**
- **Lightweight sandals / crocs** – whilst these are usually provided at the mountain refuges, you can bring your own if you prefer.
- **Mobile phone** – there is phone reception for the majority of the trip. It is a good idea to have a phone in case of emergency or if you need to leave the group for any reason.
- **Earplugs**
- **Snacks** – not essential as we are in the vicinity of shops most days, so you can top up your supply of snacks fairly regularly
- **Antibacterial handwash**
- **Swimwear** - some of the hotels have a swimming pool, spa or sauna
- **Boot dryers** - not many places in the Alps have drying rooms, so since I discovered these, I don't go anywhere without them: <https://www.sidas.com/en/products/204-drywarmer.html>
- **Travel kettle, mug & tea bags / coffee** - it is unusual for hotels in continental Europe to provide tea and coffee-making facilities in the rooms
- **External battery pack** - for charging your phone in a hut
- **Flask & selection of tea bags** - whilst it is on the optional list, I really rate having a flask of hot drink in the winter and would strongly recommend bringing one (plus your favourite tea bags).

The following items are provided:

- Snow shoes
- Ski poles
- Avalanche probe
- Snow shovel
- Avalanche transceiver