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Learn to Cross Country Ski in Italy ISW

- 4 nights in an excellent local hotel
- Set in Cogne, in the Gran Paradiso National Park
- Enjoy authentic Italian food & wine
- 3 days' instruction from a fully-qualified nordic instructor
- Ski stunning trails, away from the crowds
- Geneva airport transfers included

Grade 1 - Beginners

Our Italian Cross Country Ski Weekend is based in the delightful mountain village of Cogne, in the Gran Paradiso National Park.

Cogne is the perfect location for a cross country skiing trip in the heart of the Italian Alps, with 80 kilometres of ski trails across 12 circuits.

We'll ski freshly prepared cross country trails through peaceful forests, passing streams and frozen waterfalls along the way. We may even be able to spot some local wildlife amongst the unforgettable alpine scenery.

Trip Summary

- **Day 1 - Arrive in Cogne**
4:30 PM Transfer from Milan Malpensa Airport to Cogne
Arrive in Cogne - Cogne
Hotel du Grand Paradis, Cogne - Hotel du Grand Paradis, Cogne

- **Day 2 - Cross Country & Cappuccino**
Cross Country & Cappuccino - Cogne

- **Day 3 - Skills & Drills**
Skills & Drills

- **Day 4 - Touring the Trails**
Touring the Trails

- **Day 5 - Depart Cogne**
Depart Cogne
Transfer from Cogne to Milan Malpensa Airport

Day 1 - Arrive in Cogne



4:30 PM - Central European Time

Transfer from Milan Malpensa Airport to Cogne

The group transfer is scheduled to depart from Milan Malpensa Airport at 16:30, and arrive in Cogne in time for dinner (journey time approx 2 hrs 40 mins), however we may bring this forward once we have the group arrival details if it suits group members to arrive earlier.



Arrive in Cogne

Your trip begins in the mountain town of Cogne, at the edge of the Gran Paradiso national park. Cogne is an international centre of cross country skiing, with 80 km of cut tracks. It is also famous for ice-climbing and mountaineering.

Cogne also hosts some of the biggest events in Nordic skiing in Italy, including a World Cup sprint event and the Gran Paradiso Marcialonga. Hosted every February, the 45-kilometre Gran Paradiso Marcialonga features 12 loops through woods, across bridges and along streams in the stunning countryside around Cogne.

Your ski instructor will meet you at your hotel this evening to brief you on the days ahead. This is usually around 19:30 after the transfer arrives from the airport.



Cogne

Cogne, Valle d'Aosta, IT, 11012



Hotel du Grand Paradis, Cogne

The Hotel du Grand Paradis is a gorgeous family-run 3* hotel in the centre of Cogne. The hotel offers easy access to the shops, cafés, ski tracks and ski hire, as well as having its own spa - La Baita - complete with hot tub, Finnish sauna, Turkish bath, Scottish shower and more. Massages are also available.

Meals

Your evening meals will be taken at the 4* Hotel St Orso, a 2 minute walk away - the 2 hotels are run by the same family, and the restaurant at the St Orso is fantastic with a huge menu choice of amazing Italian cuisine. I usually find that 4 nights isn't enough!



Hotel du Grand Paradis, Cogne

Rue Dr. Grappein, Cogne, Valle d'Aosta, IT, 11012
+39 0165 74275

Day 2 - Cross Country & Cappuccino



Cross Country & Cappuccino

Our hotel is just 5 minutes from the ski tracks, so after fitting our skis we'll get straight onto the snow. Our instructor will start with a few exercises to introduce us to the techniques of classic style cross country skiing and what is known as the basic 'diagonal stride'.

Cogne has beautifully groomed tracks in a large, flat area and a range of trails suitable for every level of skier, so it really is the perfect place to learn to ski.

Mid-morning we usually take a break for coffee and cappuccino... it is a holiday after all! Lunch is taken in a local restaurant or café, after which, we'll don our skis to practice what we've learnt and consolidate our new skills. Depending on how much progress has been made and how the group is feeling, we also have the option to ski some shorter routes.

That still leaves us plenty of time to explore the shops, enjoy a pre-dinner apéro or relax in the hotel spa, La Baita. Post-ski massages can also be booked directly with the hotel.



Cogne
Cogne, Valle d'Aosta, IT, 11012

Day 3 - Skills & Drills



Skills & Drills

The Cogne Valley has around 80 kilometres of ski trails, so it's no surprise that many regional and national cross country ski competitions, such as the Marcia Gran Paradiso, take place here. The trails are flat or gently undulating and are the perfect training ground for all levels, from beginners to racers.

Using the free ski bus we can explore a bit further afield today, starting in one of the neighbouring villages such as Epinel or Lillaz. We will review and practice the skills we learned yesterday, and take a short tour to our lunch stop.

The aim is to make sure you progress each day at your own level, and really enjoy the experience. In the afternoon we will adapt our basic diagonal stride for the different types of terrain, with plenty of chance to learn new skills and practice along the way.



Day 4 - Touring the Trails



Touring the Trails

Today we take a longer tour that can be adapted to suit all levels reached so far, and put all the skills we've learned into practice. We'll aim to ski to the delightful upper valley of Valnontey, which is famous for ice climbing. We might even spot some ice climbers tackling the spectacular frozen waterfalls that line the valley on both sides.

We'll stop for lunch at the charming family-run Hotel e Restaurant La Barme, which sits in a tiny hamlet of old wooden houses with stone-tiled roofs. After lunch we continue along the undulating trails, following the river's edge to the head of the valley. We may even spot ibex and chamois on the slopes of the valley, and in the woods next to the trails.

As we head down we have some enjoyable downhill sections which can be adapted - or even avoided! - depending on how you're feeling. In the evening we'll enjoy our final Italian meal - a fitting finale to our Ski Weekend in the glorious Italian Alps.



Day 5 - Depart Cogne



Depart Cogne

Our trip finishes after an early breakfast.



Transfer from Cogne to Milan Malpensa Airport

The return transfer will leave Cogne at approximately 07:30 in order to arrive at the airport between 10:30-11:00. Your flights from Milan Malpensa airport should be booked to depart no earlier than 12:00 midday. We may bring this later if everyone departs on a later flight.

Information & Documents



What's Included

- All accommodation (including arrival day and final evening)
- All breakfasts and evening meals
- Fully qualified (BASI or equivalent) and expert nordic ski instructor
- Single-timed transfer from Milan Malpensa Airport to the start of the trip in Cogne, departing approx 16:30
- Single-timed return transfer from Cogne to Milan Malpensa Airport at the end of the trip, arriving Milan approx 10:30-11:00 for flights from midday onwards.



Not Included

- Flights
- Lunches
- Ski hire
- Ski pass for the cross country tracks
- 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

Italian Cross Country Ski Weekend - Travel Arrangements

- **IMPORTANT: Please do not book your flights or transport until we have confirmed to you via email that the trip is guaranteed to run. Once booked, please inform us of your flight times as soon as possible.**

Fly to Milan Malpensa Airport

We are currently using Milan Malpensa airport (we previously used Geneva Airport but for the time being we would like to keep the trip entirely within Italy and not add the complication of entering Switzerland to drive through France).

Transfer from Milan Malpensa Airport to Cogné

On the arrival day there is a private transfer scheduled to depart Milan Malpensa airport at 16:30 for the 2hr 40 min journey to Cogné. However, once we have all the guests' arrival times we may bring this forward if it suits all the members of the group.

Early arrivals in Milan

If your flight arrives early, you can take some time to explore the cosmopolitan city of Milan (journey from the airport to Milan centre takes approx 1 hour and you can find more details [here](#)) otherwise, if your flight arrives earlier in the day you can use the time to explore Milan.

Left luggage facilities at Milan airport are open from 06:00 - 22:00 and are located in the Arrivals section of the airport.

Making your own way to Cogné from Turin or Geneva

If flights to Milan don't work for you, you can fly to Turin and reach Cogné either by public transport or consider hiring a car. You can park in Cogné just a few minutes' walk from the hotel, and the hotel will provide a parking permit.

If you choose to make your own way to Cogné, this is not included in the trip, and there is no discount for not using the group transfer.

Departure - transfer from Cogné to Milan Malpensa

We provide a private transfer leaving Cogné at approx 07:30 back to Milan Malpensa Airport (arriving around 10:30). Please do not book your flights any earlier than midday. Once we have all the group members' flight details, we may bring this transfer time later if need be.

Italian Cross Country Ski Weekend - What to Expect

The Skiing

This trip is graded 1 (beginners) and is perfect for active people who are cross-country-skiing for the first time, as well as those looking to brush up their skills. (If you already have some experience, we do also run "improvers" weekends).

The trip is run by a qualified ski instructor and will teach you the basic classic technique of diagonal stride on flat or slightly undulating ground so that you can propel yourself forwards across the snow in the most efficient way. As we master the skills we will ski for longer, but at a pace that suits you. Cross country skiing can, if you want it to, be a very aerobic activity, which makes it ideal for winter 'cross-training', or you can take your time and just enjoy being out in the mountains.

While we will be on our skis for a large part of the day, we will stop for rests, photos, and of course, lunches! We're usually on the ski tracks for around 2-3 hrs in the morning - with a well earned Italian coffee break in the middle if we can! After lunch we aim for around 1-2 hours of skiing practice in the afternoon. This may vary depending on how you are feeling, as this is definitely a holiday and we want you to enjoy the experience!

Altitude

Cogné is situated an altitude of 1534 m (5032 feet) - some of the ski areas we go to are a couple of hundred metres higher than this, but we don't go too high. We do not reach altitudes that would be problematic on this trip.

Accommodation

We stay at the charming, family-run [Hotel du Grand Paradis](#), a centrally-located 3* hotel in Cogné. The hotel's spa - La Baita - has plenty of options for relaxation and pampering - from the the Finnish sauna and the Turkish bath to the Scottish shower and the mezzanine relaxation area. Massages are also available and can be booked directly through the hotel.

Food

All breakfasts and evening meals are included. On our Italian Ski Breaks, the lunches are definitely one of the highlights! We do not include the cost of lunches in your trip fee, as we find that our guests prefer to make their own choices. There are plenty of options for characterful cafés and restaurants in Cogné, serving excellent local dishes at a very reasonable price.

Ski Hire and Ski Pass

We will use classic cross-country track skis, which usually feature a skin or fishscales (not skate skis or waxables), compatible with NNN boots and bindings.

The total ski & boot hire for the weekend is approximately 45 euros per person, to be paid directly to the ski shop. We will book your ski equipment hire when we have received your Client Details form, and your guide accompanies you to collect it on the first morning.

We will need to know your height, weight, normal shoe size (you must give us your everyday shoe size and not your personal adjustment for wearing boots), and the measurement of your height up to your armpits (for ski pole hire).

Ski passes (for using the pressed tracks) usually cost approx 20 euros in total for the 3 days, and our guide will organise buying these (to be paid directly to the hotel: please bring euros in cash).

Money and Tipping

All accommodation, ski instruction, breakfasts and dinners are included in this trip, but please bring additional cash for lunches, snacks, drinks and tips. Beer, wine and soft drinks are available each evening (not included).

All our nights are spent in Italy and we recommend an additional budget for lunches, coffees and snacks of 40-50 Euros per person per day. Euros can be taken out of certain cashpoints at Geneva Airport, or on arrival in Cogné.

Please also remember to bring a credit card in the event of a medical problem or injury.

Tipping: Tipping your guide is the accepted way of saying 'Thank You' for good service. But do remember that tipping is voluntary and should only be done if you were pleased or delighted with the service. The amount is entirely up to you. Our staff are all paid fairly.

Weather

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 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 - Italy

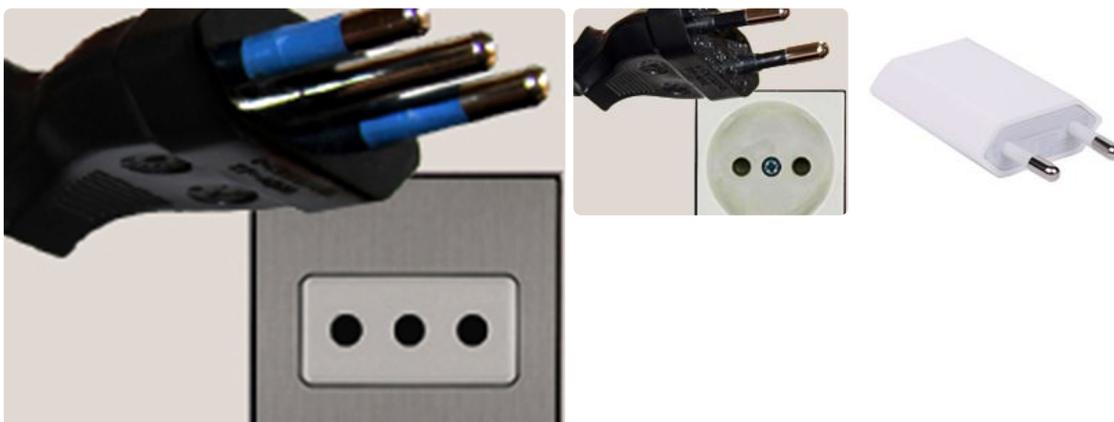
Some electricity sockets in Italy are slightly different from the rest of Europe: Italy in general uses "Type L" with 3 horizontally-aligned pins (left-hand picture).

Some are a standard European 2-pin plug (2nd picture).

All plugs are 220-240V.

You should make sure that the pins on your adaptor are slightly thinner than those in the first picture (a type C plug will not fit an Italian socket), as this will be the best solution for compatibility with all sockets.





Hotel-based Cross County Skiing Track Trip - Kit List

Essential items :

- **Rucksack** – approx. 30L - NO BIGGER! for you to carry each day. You may need to attach your skis as we sometimes need to carry them before we reach the snowline - side straps make this easier to do.
- **Kit bag or suitcase** - for your main luggage
- **Waterproof jacket and trousers** – goretex jacket and trousers are perfect. Insulated ski trousers and jackets are likely to be too warm for the level of activity you will do, 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. My favourite socks are merino wool for cross country skiing, but these can be a bit hot if we have spring temperatures.
- **Underwear**
- **Cross country ski trousers** - we would recommend a pair of cross-country ski trousers, designed for the job! These usually have a light amount of insulation - just enough to keep you warm on a cold day, but not so much that you will overheat whilst exercising. They usually have a windproof front, but breathable back (again, designed to keep you warm enough without overheating). And they are usually made of a stretch-type material so as not to restrict your movement whilst skiing, whilst not being too loose, which would hinder your technique. Decathlon do a good range of very reasonably-priced cross country ski pants. My other favourite brands are Swix, Maloja and Bjorn Daehlie.
- **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. You can buy specific cross country ski gloves, but it's not essential for all your gloves to be specific to xc. You will want to check that your warmest pair can fit in the wrist loops of your ski poles - most can, but bulky mitts probably wouldn't.
- **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.
- **Goggles or cross country ski visor** - Needed in very snowy weather. I prefer a visor, because it allows good air flow and therefore rarely mists up. If you don't have a visor or xc-specific goggles, then clear/coloured cycling glasses would be okay. Normal ski goggles would be passable, but can also mist up more easily when exercising.
- **Wash kit**
- **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**
- **Cash** – for any coffee stops / lunches 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:

- **Head band** - As you are generating quite a lot of heat whilst nordic skiing, a woolly hat can sometimes be too hot. So a head band is a great idea to keep your ears warm on a cold day.
- **Buff** – can be useful for extra warmth if it's cold, or sun protection for your neck or head on a sunny day. I bring at least one to use instead of a sun hat (a sun hat probably won't stay on properly if you're moving fast!)
- **Camera**
- **Book**
- **Comfortable shoes** – for the evenings
- **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
- **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
- **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).
- **Gaiters** - either short or long - I haven't needed these on alpine track-skiing trips.....so definitely not worth rushing out to buy some. But some folk like to bring them and they could be helpful in very heavy snow.

The following equipment is not included, but we can arrange hire:

- Classic cross country track skis (we recommend fishscales)
- Ski poles - these are specific to classic cross country skiing
- Classic cross country ski boots

General Information - Guided Cross-Country Ski 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 cross-country skiing up to 2500m. 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 £4.90 per day, or £11.50 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 the [NHS](http://www.nhs.uk). 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 route changes and diversions, 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 co-selling in this way means that almost all of our trips become "Guaranteed", and means that rather than 2 or 3 different companies all selling trips with 2-3 clients each, combining together with 1 guide means that we can offer the trips at a better price to you, and means that we achieve the minimum number faster. 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, for cross-country ski trips it is important that you are honest about your ability.

Our beginners trips are intended for anyone who is active, but who haven't cross-country skied before (or perhaps you tried it a while ago, but didn't have tuition, and would like to go back to the beginning and see how it's done). We also run improver, intermediate, advanced & expert trips - so please do check out the descriptions on our website particularly before committing to an advanced or expert trip.

If we have described a trip as being tough or challenging, then you need to have the fitness and skills to cope with 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 arriving in the dark! 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 racing, so we are never expecting to be going too fast - we try to ski at a constant, 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 Improver or Intermediate, and you can build up to an Advanced or Expert trip.

Cross-country skiing is very good for you, and will certainly make you fitter! It's a low impact sport without too much stress on the limbs - HOWEVER - it is guaranteed to use muscles that you might not be used to using in everyday life, so we do recommend that you do some advance training.

The fitter you are, the more enjoyable your trip will be. 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. The "elliptic cross-trainer" in a gym in particular mimics the movement that you would make for cross-country skiing. And strength training for the arms would also be useful (you don't have to go overboard, but a small amount of training in advance will help to avoid injury on the trip).