



## **Trip Factsheet: Heliskiing in Italy**

### **Gressoney**

One of the classic Italian villages in the Monte Rosa ski region, this pretty village situated at 1637m offers excellent access into the ski area. The ski area links Gressoney with Alagna and Champoluc and in total there are about 200km of pisted terrain. The off-piste options include everything from wide open powder fields, perfect for mastering your technique, to excellent treeskiing and steep, narrow couloirs. Add in the vertical drop of around 2000m from the top lift and over 25 landing sites it provides the best base for Heliskiing.

### **Our top reasons to visit Gressoney**

- Extensive off-piste terrain and a reputation for great freeriding
- Gressoney, together with Champoluc and Alagna make up the Monterosa ski area, one of the largest in Italy
- Charming Italian ambience
- One of the best heliskiing resorts in the Alps
- Minimal touristic development area means the slopes are often deserted especially during the week
- Easy access from Turin Airport make it a viable weekend or short break destination

### **Travel to and from Gressoney**

You want to arrange to arrive in Gressoney by late afternoon on the first day.

At the end of the week the course finishes after breakfast on the last day and we recommend that you arrange your return/onward flight for mid morning onwards to give yourself plenty of time to get to the airport without having to rush!

The most convenient airport is Turin a 1.5hrs by road or you have a choice of Milan Malpensa (2hrs by road) or Milan Linate airports. There are train connections from all the airports to the town of Pont Saint Martin, which is in the main Aosta valley at the point where the road towards Gressoney turns off the motorway. Journey time to Pont Saint Martin from Turin is approximately 1hr 20mins by train. For train connections visit <http://www.trenitalia.com/tcom-en>

At Point Saint Martin you can catch the bus to Gressoney. There are several services during the day and the line is run by VITA <http://www.vitagroup.it/en/timetables> a copy of the timetable can be found from this page.

Savda also operate buses from Turin and Milan airports [www.savda.it/](http://www.savda.it/)

Private road transfers can be booked with "Tour Shuttle" who offer one way and return transfers to Gressoney from 220€ for 1 – 4 persons.

[www.tourshuttle.com/EN/italy/transfer\\_turin-airport\\_gressoney.html](http://www.tourshuttle.com/EN/italy/transfer_turin-airport_gressoney.html)

Or with "Airport Transfers" who do private transfers to Gressoney from 220€ for a group of 4 or more, details are on their website: [www.airporttransfers.it/index\\_eng.php](http://www.airporttransfers.it/index_eng.php)

### **Rendezvous in Gressoney**

The week begins with a welcome meeting in Gressoney at around 7pm on Saturday evening. Your guide will brief you on the itinerary, update you on the prevailing weather and snow conditions for the week and carry out an equipment check. It is also an opportunity for you to ask any last minute questions.

### **Accommodation**

You will be staying in twin-room accommodation in one of the hotels in Gressoney La Trinite or Staffal. Our preferred hotels are the Hotel Dufour and the Hotel de Gletscher. This is on a half board basis for 7 nights. Single rooms are sometimes available but are subject to a supplement that is usually in the region of about 50% of the room cost so around £300 - £400 for the week.

### **Guides and Group Sizes**

Our Heli-ski trips are run by our team of IFMGA Mountain Guides led by Olly Allen, Matt Dickinson and Nick Parks. Each trip has no more than 4 skiers per guide. We run this trip with a maximum of 8 skiers with 2 mountain guide.

### **Itinerary**

On the first ski day you have a day to explore the off piste skiing in Gressoney with your guide. This is a good warm up and your guide will also take you through avalanche safety with a brush up on your skills and procedure with the helicopter.

The remaining 4 days are Heliskiing where you typically have 2 drops per day with around 2000+ of descent per drop. Usually we ski a minimum of 4000m+ vertical daily. If it's not possible to heliski because of the weather then your guide will take you to ski the best snow available in the resort area.

### **Typical Day**

Each day you will leave the hotel around 8.45am and will ski all day stopping only for lunch and a couple of coffee breaks (as required!) You will usually return to the hotel at about 5pm for a well earned rest before dinner!

### **Preparation for our Heliskiing trip**

It is essential that you prepare yourself well in advance by taking regular aerobic exercise so you arrive on the trip as fit as you can. Off piste skiing is physically demanding and as a relative newcomer to skiing in varied snow off piste you will find it more demanding on your leg strength and aerobic fitness than on piste skiing.

Doing sports that increase your aerobic fitness and leg strength are key. So when preparing for this trip nothing beats activities that increase your heart rate and build your aerobic levels e.g. running, cycling and swimming.

Movement skills - agility, balance, flexibility - which allow you to turn your skis and adjust to uneven terrain - are also very relevant. If time permits try to include some yoga or pilates into your training schedule.

#### *Frames of reference:*

- If you are a long distance runner e.g. half marathon or are a regular mountain or road bike riding 2 or 3 times a week for up to 4-5hrs or train and enjoy for other similar sporting activities, then you can stop reading now, just keep up the good work!
- If you have run a few 10ks, ride a bike at the weekends for a few hours or go to the gym for a weights and cardio session then you will be fine too but focus on some long slow walking or running to build your endurance levels a little.
- If you have done very little apart from the occasional 30 minute jog, short cycle ride (mountain bike or road) or you occasionally go to the gym after work – then you have some work to do but fear not you can attain the fitness levels you need but you do need to increase the amount of exercise you do each week and do this well in advance of your trip (ideally 3-4 months out).

For any trip involving off piste skiing you will be doing exercise that requires you to operate for long periods but often in short bursts of activity. This means you're more likely to suffer from the burning pain of lactic acid building up in your muscles. To train to overcome this you need to increase your lactic threshold by doing some short sprint training (running or biking) so your leg muscles get used to dealing with the lactic acid that is produced when doing a high intensity exercise.

It's best to get prepared in plenty of time, not by trying to pack in as much training in the last 2-3 weeks as it takes about this length of time for the body to adapt to an increase in exercise. Don't think that you will get fit during the programme you won't and don't think that simply going to the gym to run on the treadmill for 40mins twice a week will be enough – it won't! In the last 2 weeks you can decrease the amount and intensity of the exercise you do; so you arrive fresh and ready for the challenge.

Good fitness will make your trip overall much more enjoyable and you will get more out of it! For more information do contact us and request a copy of our 12 week training guide

#### **Snow Conditions and Climate**

We hope you will have plenty of fantastic snow on your trip, our guides will do their utmost to find you the best snow available during your stay. Sometimes when the weather is poor (heavy snow, high winds and high avalanche risk) the skiing can be limited due to lift closures. You need to accept this as part of being in the mountains and trust your guide/instructor to do the best he or she can with the conditions at the time.

December and January can be cold, so ensure you bring plenty of warm clothes you can layer with. The spring time (March and April) tend to have cold mornings but warming up during the day. The weather in the high mountains can change quickly and we always recommend you have some spare layers in your rucksack. Your guide or instructor will give you a weather forecast at the beginning of the week and update you frequently during the week.

#### **Ski Passes**

You will need to have a ski pass for the first ski day a pass for the area usually costs around 50 – 60€ per person. You may need to buy other ski passes depending on how the heli drops work and if there are any days when you cannot fly.

#### **What's included in the price of your holiday?**

7 nights half board hotel accommodation based on 2 sharing.

5 guided days with your IFMGA Mountain Guide  
8 helicopter drops over 4 days

#### **Scheduled expenses**

Travel to and from Gressoney  
Additional helicopter flights (typically 150€ per person per flight)  
Lift passes  
Lunches  
Equipment hire  
Personal Insurance  
Single room occupancy charge (subject to availability)

#### **Equipment and Kit Hire**

A copy of our recommended ski kit list can be found on our website or you can call or email us and we will send you a copy.

If you need to rent skis or boots then we recommend you contact Laurent Noleggi, the sports shop in Staffal. Please contact them on +39 0124 366309.

For this trip a downhill ski set up acceptable, however if you have ski touring equipment then this is also fine to use and preferred by our guides as it give options throughout the week. If the weather was such that you could not heliski then your guide may suggest a day's ski touring; if so then skis with touring bindings would be necessary. You can rent in resort if necessary.

You will also need to ski with the 3 items of safety equipment, avalanche transceiver, shovel and probe, if you do not have your own equipment. Your instructor or guide can rent these to you for a cost of 65€ for the 3 items for the week. Please let us know in advance if you need to rent these items.

#### **Essential items you need to have:**

- Skis preferably with ski touring bindings (Fritschi Diamir or similar)
- Alpine ski boots or ski touring boots
- Ski poles
- Skins that are cut to fit your skis and couteaux (crampons for your skis)
- Harness with karabiner

***NOTE*** You cannot hire skins or couteaux on their own! If you are bringing your own skis you must purchase skins that are cut to fit and couteaux that work with your bindings.

- 20- 30 litre rucksack with straps on the side for carrying your skis

#### **Non-essential items but if you have them bring them with you:**

- Boot crampons
- Ice axe

#### **Insurance**

You need to have personal insurance that covers you for off piste skiing and the cover must include helicopter rescue.

For UK & European residents we recommend the Ski Club's insurance. For more details and to purchase a policy online visit <http://www.skiclubinsurance.co.uk/> If you need assistance with arranging insurance please let us know.

You should bring a copy of your insurance certificate with you to the Alps.

For EU residents we recommend that you also obtain the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) prior to travel and take this with you in addition to your personal insurance.

See <https://www.gov.uk/european-health-insurance-card>

### **What happens next?**

We will contact you 8 weeks before your arrival date to request the final balance payment.

Around 2-3 weeks before your arrival date we will email you final joining instructions with relevant contact details for your guide(s), hotels, etc.

### **More information**

If you have any questions or need further details don't hesitate to contact us:

Email: [info@mountaintracks.co.uk](mailto:info@mountaintracks.co.uk)

Phone: +44 20 8123 2978

Skype: mountaintracks