



Trip Factsheet: Off-Piste Coaching Introduction, Chamonix

Chamonix

Chamonix has some of the best off piste skiing in the world. The bustling town sits below the mighty Mont Blanc (4810m) in a spectacular valley surrounded by high glaciated peaks. The Chamonix Valley runs for 20kms and has 5 main separate ski areas along its length, offering a variety of pisted and acres of off piste terrain. The legendary Aiguille du Midi cable car which accesses the Vallee Blanche leaves from Chamonix town centre. From its high glaciated peaks to the lower tree lined skiing it really does give the aspiring off piste skier the ideal environment in which to learn. The town of Chamonix itself is a busy, cosmopolitan town with lots of shops, cafés, bars and restaurants to sample during your stay.

Objectives of the course

- To improve your off-piste technique and style through intensive instruction with our excellent team of ski instructors
- To give you the confidence to ski varied snow conditions and challenging off-piste terrain.
- To provide practical mountain awareness training on the risks and hazards of backcountry skiing.

Travel to and from Chamonix

You want to arrange to arrive in Chamonix 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 Geneva and from here the transfer time up to Chamonix by road is just 1 hr 15mins. To travel between the airport and Chamonix we recommend you reserve a seat on one of the many commercial shuttle buses. Mountain Tracks can book this for you and the usual prices are from £40 per person one-way. Please supply your full flight details to us so we can make the reservation.

Want to take the train to the resort? No problem – it's possible to get to Chamonix by train from the UK using the Eurostar from London St. Pancras to Paris, then the TGV to Bellegarde and a regional train to Chamonix. The journey can be done in 1 day. For more information and other useful train travel details look at www.snowcarbon.co.uk

Rendezvous in Chamonix.

The week begins with a welcome meeting in Chamonix at around 7pm on the first evening this meeting will be taken by your hosts in the chalet or a representative from Mountain Tracks.

Your instructor will meet you on the evening before the first guided day for a short meeting this is a chance for them to 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 and Meals

For our Off-Piste Coaching trips in Chamonix our preferred accommodation is Chalet Les Pelerins, which is a comfortable, privately owned chalet run by David Robertson and his team. The chalet has a comfortable lounge area, computer/Wifi access, TV and freesat. The rooms are clean and comfortable and are booked on a twin share basis, unless you wish to have a single room (supplement). Some rooms have private facilities others share with the next door room. You are provided with breakfast and tea each day in the chalet and a 3-course evening meal on 6 nights of the week. On one night you will eat out at your own expenses at a restaurant in Chamonix.

You will be transported to and from the chalet to ski either by your instructor or a private minibus each day.

Instructors & Group Sizes

Our Off Piste Coaching courses are run by our team of inspirational BASI 4 instructors led by Dave Meyer and Will Evans. Our courses run with up to 6 skiers with 1 instructor. For larger groups the lead instructor will be joined by one of our Mountain Guides and you'll alternate between skiing with the instructor, where the focus is on improving your technique and style, and skiing with the mountain guide with the emphasis on teaching you about mountain and avalanche awareness.

Itinerary

Our Chamonix courses usually run Sunday – Sunday unless otherwise stated on the website. The courses are 5 full days instruction, where you have the first day as a warm up free ski day (no instruction) and your guided days are Tuesday - Saturday inclusive. During the week your instructor will search out the best snow in the area and you'll ski as much varied terrain as possible taking in the best descents the region has to offer. Typically you will spend a day in each of the principal ski areas in Chamonix – Brevent, Flegere, Le Tour and Grands Montets.

Typical Day

Usually you will leave the chalet around 8.45am each morning and will ski all day only stopping for lunch and coffee breaks (as required!) You will usually return to the chalet around 5pm for a well earned cup of tea and slice of cake! The ski areas in Chamonix are not linked and you need to travel around the valley to access the slopes.

Preparation for our Off Piste Coaching trips

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 and instructors 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

We recommend that you wait to speak to your instructor who will advise on the best pass to buy for the course. You can purchase your ski pass on the first morning at the bottom of the lift.

What's included in the price of your holiday?

5 full days instruction

7 nights half board accommodation in the chalet in rooms on a twin share basis

Daily ski transfers in a private vehicle too and from the chalet.

Scheduled expenses

International travel and airport transfers too and from Geneva airport

Lift passes

1 evening meal

Lunches

Equipment hire

Personal Insurance

Single room occupancy charge is £250

Equipment and Kit Hire

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

If you need to hire skis and/or boots while in Chamonix we work with Sanglard Sports who have 2 large shops one in Chamonix and one in Argentiere stocked with the latest skis and boots. Mountain Tracks customers receive a 15% discount when you book your ski/boots with them. You need to request the specific booking form from the Mountain Tracks office and email it to resa@rentski.com

We strongly recommend you do this in advance of your holiday. They have a selection of skis for off piste and ski touring, all touring set up's come with skins cut to fit the skis and couteaux.

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.

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

Phone: +44 20 8123 2978

Skype: mountaintracks