



Chamonix Snowshoeing (Guided)

Please email us at info@alpineexploratory.com or call us on +44 (0)1729 823 197 to chat about this holiday. You'll find all the latest information at www.alpineexploratory.com/holidays/chamonix-snowshoeing.html.

About these Holiday Notes

These Holiday Notes help you decide whether this holiday is right for you. Before your trip we send you final detailed information.

Details

Length 6 walking days, 7 nights
Grade Intermediate
Region Chamonix Mont Blanc area
Country France

Introduction



Aiguille Verte across a snowy le Buet

Explore the Alps in winter without going skiing! Snowshoeing is a winter mountain activity that's growing rapidly in popularity. This trip operates in and around the Chamonix valley, based in the village of Argentière, much of the time with views of Western Europe's highest mountain Mont Blanc (4,808m). Numerous side valleys and small peaks are waiting to be discovered. The group's footprints can often be the first to mark the pristine snow of a hidden valley or high pasture.

What does snowshoeing involve?

Snowshoeing is no more difficult than walking and within 15 minutes you should be confident on your feet. The equipment needed is the usual winter walking clothing; to this it is necessary to add snowshoes, a pair of walking poles and an avalanche transceiver (a beacon to help rescue in the unlikely event of an avalanche). Bring your own poles, preferably with larger-diameter snow baskets fitted, then hire snowshoes, a transceiver and any other equipment from a shop in Argentière or Chamonix.

Our approach

The trip makes use of the excellent local transport in and around the Chamonix valley to reach some classic snowshoeing routes. Walks are varied, taking in forests and small peaks, but with the emphasis on more challenging walks and ascents. The holiday is aimed at snowshoers who've tried it before and would like to learn more, and snowshoeing novices with good winter walking experience.

Because of the unpredictable nature of the Alps in winter, in large part due to the avalanche risk, the itinerary must be flexible and some walks might not be offered - but the group will almost always be able to go snowshoeing in the valleys if not higher up.

Two types of accommodation are available: a very friendly 2-star hotel in the centre of the village, or a luxurious chalet.

Profile

This holiday involves 6 days of moderate walking on snowshoes, typically climbing 800m in 12km. The highest altitude you might reach is around 2,525m and the valleys are around 1,000m above sea level.

Terrain

The mountains of the French Alps are transformed in winter. Underfoot conditions are very different to the summer because where there is a footpath in summer, in the winter it could be one or two feet deep with snow. There might be a line of snowshoe prints, with the tell-tale pole marks along the sides, or it could be untouched. Much also depends on recent snowfall and temperatures. Thin compressed snow is possible, in which case the metal spikes on the snowshoes will be very useful. There could be some short steep slopes to climb... but there should also be some exhilarating descents in deep snow calling for a mix of stomping and sliding.

Group size

The group will be a maximum of 8 people, plus the leader.

Itinerary

This holiday starts with arrival in Argentière, the mountaineering and skiing village, on the first day of the trip. The holiday ends with departure from Argentière in the morning on the last day of the trip.

This itinerary is a plan only and can change according to the group and conditions. Snowshoe walks in particular are very dependent on snow and weather conditions, so it will often not be possible to offer all of the walks below.

You are of course free to enjoy your own activities during the day instead of joining the guided walking. There is a lot to see and do in the area or you might just prefer to spend a day in the town. Please note that walking routes and activities other than those led by Alpine Exploratory leaders do not form part of this holiday. Alpine Exploratory cannot be held liable for any loss or injury resulting from an activity whether the activity is part of the holiday or not.

Day 1: Arrival in Argentière

Evening meeting in Argentière. We will have an introductory meeting before going out for a meal in Argentière to start the trip. **Hotel or chalet, Argentière**

Day 2: Chamonix valley

There's plenty of chance to sort out kit on this first morning before setting off for a full day's snowshoeing. The walking is on straightforward terrain as an introduction or refresher to the simple skills involved. Today's route will be based in the Chamonix valley and perhaps heading up into the forests. **Hotel or chalet, Argentière**

Day 3: Berrard valley

Today the group can take the train from Argentière to le Buet which is a hamlet just over the Col des Montets at the top of the valley. Walk from le Buet up into the secluded Berrard valley, becoming more and more aware of the quietness and tranquility of winter as you climb higher up the valley. **Hotel or chalet, Argentière**

Day 4: Le Prarion

Le Prarion (1,969m) is an easy peak with great scenic rewards. Starting from Les Houches a short bus ride down the valley there are a few ways up to the Col de Voza, along some trails taken by the Tour du Mont Blanc. The summit of Le Prarion is a delightful, twisting yet simple ridge leading to the summit with views across many areas from the Contamines valley down to St.Gervais and a great stretch of the Chamonix valley. **Hotel or chalet, Argentière**

Day 5: Swiss border country

From the train line at the Swiss border, around the Vallorcine area, climb forest paths to take in some brilliant views. The group should by now be well accustomed to

snowshoeing in the terrain, snow and weather conditions of the week. **Hotel or chalet, Argentière**

Day 6: Aiguillette des Posettes

A rest day is an option here. While there might be time to shop in the evenings during the week, some people might like a good run at stocking up on gear and other supplies. For a walk, Aiguillette des Posettes (2,201m) from le Tour presents itself as a good option, being a short bus ride away near the head of the valley. There is the option of taking a telepherique up to either of two altitudes. An extension could be made to Col de Balme and two small summits nearby. **Hotel or chalet, Argentière**

Day 7: Aiguillette des Houches

The last day could be spent tackling Aiguillette des Houches (2,285m), an ambitious walk from the Brevent cablecar above Chamonix. Views of Mont Blanc will be awesome in the right conditions. Nothing is guaranteed in the Chamonix valley! Many alternatives exist to round off what is hoped will be a very memorable winter trip. The group will go out for a celebratory meal in town. **Hotel or chalet, Argentière**

Day 8: Departure

Morning departure from Argentière

Accommodation

Two types of accommodation are available for this holiday.

Hotel: Our hotel is a very friendly and comfortable 2-star hotel right in the centre of Argentière overlooking the square. Breakfasts are included. Accommodation is in doubles or singles (with supplement).

Chalet: Alternatively try a luxurious chalet in Argentière. Accommodation is in doubles or triples; unfortunately single accommodation cannot be booked but might turn out to be available at the time.

Details of your accommodation will be sent on booking.

Insurance

Clients must have insurance to cover themselves for helicopter search & rescue, medical expenses and repatriation.

We recommend, but it is not compulsory, that you also have cover for personal liability, cancellation and your baggage and money.

You might find that your annual multi-trip travel insurance covers these items already. We will send you details of suitable insurance policies on booking.

The walks

Please note that during any walking, whether following a guided walk or making your own route, you are responsible for your own

actions and safety, and further that if you follow your own choice of route then you will have left the holiday for the duration.

Money

France's currency is the Euro.

Local expenses

Local expenses include local transport and cable cars, food and drink (except breakfast which is included), snowshoeing equipment hire and any local attractions and extras.

Food

The Chamonix valley is in the Savoy region of France which is famous for its great family cooking and local specialities. The cheeses are particularly special and so readily available. You will have plenty of opportunity to buy food for lunches at the shops and supermarkets in Argentière and Chamonix. For eating out there is plenty of scope in the town centre.

Please note that no food is included in the holiday except breakfasts.

Local transport

Some of our walks use the good local buses and trains. We might also use some ski lifts.

A **bus** runs several times a day up to le Tour at the head of the valley and another bus runs down valley to Les Houches.

The **train** runs from Argentière to Martigny in Switzerland in one direction and to St. Gervais-Les Bains-Le Fayet in the other direction. The route is very scenic for most of its length, especially between the Swiss frontier and Martigny where it is carved into the rocky mountainside with enormous views across the valley. This stretch also has a surprisingly local feel despite being right between Chamonix and the Rhône valley.

Language

French is the local language. It is considered polite to always open a conversation with *bonjour!* before starting your question. **English** is spoken to some degree by most local people, but it is wise to assume that you will have to speak in French.

Travel from the UK

Travel from the UK to Argentière is not included in the holiday price. We leave it to you to make the arrangements that suit you best. We recommend easyJet who fly to Geneva from the UK.

Argentière is easily reachable from Geneva by bus (1h 45m) or train (3h 30m). Full information on flight and transfer options will be sent to you on booking.

Passports and visas

UK passport holders do not need a visa to enter France or Italy. Please check that your passport is in date.

Health hazards

France and in particular the Mont Blanc region do not require tourists to take any vaccinations. However, it is recommended to keep tetanus vaccines up to date.

Weather

Alpine winter weather is generally drier, sunnier and more stable than in the UK's mountains. It would be usual for a week to contain some sunny and bright days, some overcast days, some days with snow showers and perhaps a day or more of bad weather. There is a great range of weather patterns that might prevail during the trip.

Equipment

We will send you a suggested kit list on booking.

You will need good walking boots, waterproofs and sun protection and the usual equipment for mountain walking.

In addition you will need extra warm clothing for winter plus snowshoeing equipment including snowshoes, walking poles, ski goggles and an avalanche transceiver (also known as a beacon or ARVA). The snowshoes and transceiver can be hired in Argentière or Chamonix.

Further information

Please email us with any questions at info@alpineexploratory.com.

Disclaimer

This information is given in good faith and is believed to be correct at the time of issue. Alpine Exploratory cannot be liable for any loss or injury incurred.