

Bernina Ski Tour

The Bernina Ski Tour traverses the most extensive high altitude glacier touring region in Eastern Switzerland. Big days and complicated terrain make this a challenging and rewarding venue for experienced ski mountaineers wishing to enjoy a week of great summits and superb glacier skiing.

The Skiing

This is a technical ski mountaineering week aimed at experienced ski tourers looking for big glacial scenery, climbing summits and plenty of technical descents. Stable conditions are required to complete the route.

Sample Itinerary

Subject to weather and snow conditions, the plan is as follows. Please note that this is a sample itinerary only - on trips like this, itineraries are always subject to change as the current snow, weather and avalanche conditions need to be taken into account. This is an essential part of safety planning for all backcountry skiing, so please be ready for changes as part of your trip.

Saturday

Travel to St Moritz - arriving by 6-7pm latest in time for the evening briefing. Your guide will run through kit checks and safety routines, as well as hand out any rental equipment, before going on to discuss the current weather and mountain conditions and how these affect our plans. We'll have maps and guidebooks of the area to show you, so if you've any further questions or last minute requests, then this is the ideal time to bring them up. Overnight in the valley.

Sunday

Early train to Diavolezza - from where we make an **acclimatisation tour** up to the **shoulder of Piz Palu** in order to get a great north facing run back down again. Overnight at **Berghaus Diavolezza** at the top of the lift system. 1000m ascent, 1000m descent.

Monday

Ascent of Bellavista (3888m) and/or **Piz Argient (3945m)** and then on to the **Marco E Rosa Hut**. 1250m ascent, 650m descent.

Tuesday

If conditions are good, the plan is to climb **Piz Palu (3901m)** and ski on down into Italy to the **Marinelli Hut**. 500m ascent, 1100m descent.

Wednesday

A long climb back into Switzerland via the **Fuorcla de la Sella**, before climbing **La Sella (3564m)** to ski a great run down to the **Coax Hut**. 1050m ascent, 1250m descent.

Thursday

Ascent of Piz Gluschaint (3594m) before enjoying the long run down into **Val Roseg**. Overnight at the **Hotel Roseg** (6 bed dorm for skiers and climbers). 1000m ascent, 1500m descent.

Friday

Ascent of Piz Rosatsch (3134m) before making the long and classic descent down to **St Moritz**. 1200m ascent, 1400m descent.

Final hotel night.

Saturday

Depart St Moritz AM

Fitness and Experience

This is an advanced level trip. You need to be an experienced ski mountaineer with previous week long hut to hut touring experience, including some roped climbing or cramponing experience in order to join this tour. Typically there will be 1000-1500m of climb a day and sections of roped climbing and crampon work, so you can expect to be skinning for 3-5 hours a day. **Please see our website Fitness Levels and Tech Levels as a further reference point (detailed on this trips course page > Fitness and Experience section)** - you should be at **Fitness Level 3-4 and Tech Level 3-4** to enjoy this trip. If you need to top up your fitness before the trip and need some help, then please contact us, or check out the training advice page on our Knowledge Base: <https://www.alpine-guides.com/ski/insider-knowledge-ski/>

Guiding Team

All our Alpine programmes are staffed by IFMGA Mountain Guides working at a maximum ratio of 1:4 on the Bernina Ski Tour. We work with a small team of regular guides who's profiles can be found on our website, but we occasionally employ other guides during peak season.

Course Briefing

The course briefing is in the bar of your hotel at 7pm, the day before your first day of skiing. Your guide will make sure everyone has settled in to their rooms, do a quick equipment check and go through the weather forecast and general plan for the week. Hotel details will be sent to you with your final joining instructions.

Included in the Price

- Guides fees and all guides expenses
- 2 nights accommodation in St Moritz, including breakfast
- 5 nights accommodation in mountain huts, including breakfast and evening meals

Not included in the Price (see below for further info)

- Uplift and local travel
- Lunches and drinks
- Travel to resort
- Insurance
- Equipment hire

Ski FAQ's

Can I recharge my phone in a hut? Can I leave my luggage in the hotel whilst on tour? Answers to questions like these and many more can be found on our Ski FAQ's page here: <https://www.alpine-guides.com/ski/insider-knowledge-ski/ski-touring-fags/>

Taxis, Trains and Cable Cars

From the hotel, a short train journey and a cable car are required to access the tour start point and similar train journey at the end of the week. Budget approx. **90 CHF*** to cover these transport costs.

Evening Meals

For the nights spent in valley hotels you are free to eat in any of the nearby restaurants or in the hotel where you're staying. Budget around **30 CHF*** per night for the 2 nights in the valley.

Lunches and Drinks

Personal snacks and lunches can be purchased in local supermarkets in resort before departure, and in mountain huts en-route. The standard approach is to take enough hill snacks - e.g. cereal bars, nuts, energy bars, sandwich making materials etc - to last for the first few days, so you're not too weighed down. Ski days usually finish by early/mid afternoon and if you're running short of food you can buy a late lunch of rosti or pasta etc. in the huts towards the end of the week. In the ski season it's rare to find a natural water source in mountain huts so all drinking water must either be melted from snow or brought up by helicopter. Consequently drinks can be quite expensive, and there isn't a huge difference between the price of beer and water in many huts! Most huts provide a litre of fruit tea for your drinks bottle for use on the hill, but apart from that all drinks need to be purchased from the hut guardian. Budget approx. **30 CHF* or 20 Euros per day for lunches and drinks.**

***Based on this, the extra spending money you will need during the trip is approx. 240CHF and 40 Euros** (plus some contingency, depending on how much beer/wine you plan to drink). Please note that the majority of huts don't accept credit cards, so you need to carry cash.

Valley Hotels

Our meeting point for the Bernina Ski Tour is St Moritz – we will send hotel details along with your final joining instructions. Rooms are provided on a twin (or occasionally triple) sharing basis, but if you wish to book a single room please let us know and we will confirm availability. Details of our partner hotels can be found on our Accommodation page:
<https://www.alpine-guides.com/ski/planning-your-skiing-trip/accommodation/>

Mountain Huts

During your time in the high mountains you will be staying in mountain huts. These are operated as basic hotels, serving breakfast and an evening meal, which tends to be simple and wholesome with a fixed daily menu. For breakfast there is usually tea, coffee or hot chocolate, then cereal and bread with jam or cheese etc. Evening meals usually start with soup accompanied by bread and/or cheese, followed by pasta or rice with a meat/vegetable/sauce dish and finish with a small desert. Vegetarians are often served the same food as everyone else, with an egg/cheese dish instead of meat, but some huts are more creative and will serve excellent vegetarian food. Other types of diet can also be accommodated, but we must know about these and any requests for vegetarian food at the time you book.

Huts typically have shared dormitory style rooms with bunk beds, blankets/duvets and pillows, so there's no need to carry a sleeping bag. Italian huts insist on a sheet sleeping bag liner, so it's a good idea to carry one of those (the lightweight silk ones are best – packing up to the size of a tennis ball). Earplugs are also a good idea if you are a light sleeper! Washroom facilities are usually quite basic due to the limited supply of running water (often just a sink with cold water), so a simple wash kit will be fine - and every hut provides slippers for use inside the building (apart from Austrian huts, where you need to take your own), so you don't need to take any extra footwear besides your ski boots. Finally - if you are a member of the BMC or an Alpine Club, then please bring along your card as there is usually a small members discount. For more info on using mountain huts:
<https://www.alpine-guides.com/ski/insider-knowledge-ski/using-alpine-huts/>.

Also, our Multiday Ski Touring FAQs page answers some of the most common questions we are asked about multi day ski touring and logistics etc: <https://www.alpine-guides.com/ski/insider-knowledge-ski/multiday-ski-touring-faqs/>

Travel to Resort

The most common way to reach St Moritz is fly into Zurich, then take a train along the main line to St Moritz (3.5 hr journey time from Zurich).

- Fly to Zurich with numerous budget airlines, for an overview of the best options check out the excellent Sky Scanner website.
- Train from Zurich to St Moritz: <https://www.sbb.ch/en/home.html> (integrated Swiss travel website, displays all connecting bus and train services)
- Alternatively fly to Milan, hire a car and drive to St Moritz in around 2.5 hrs (public transport is tricky).
- If you plan to arrive by train and you also plan to travel around Switzerland before/after the trip, then purchasing a Swiss Travel Pass (details on website above) could save you some money, as you get half fare on the cable cars in many resorts, as well as on the trains and buses. If you purchase a Swiss card the journey from the airport to St Moritz and back will be included. It isn't worth buying one for this course alone however.
- Alternatively hire a car in Zurich (approx 4 hours driving time): www.arguscarhire.com / www.holidayautos.co.uk

Other travel options

- Driving from UK, take the ferry or Eurotunnel to Calais/Dunkerque, then 11-13 hours driving.
- Eurostar train from the UK to Zurich, then onward train service to St Moritz (excellent fast service)
- www.eurostar.com/uk-en

Further travel information including flights, airport transfers, railways and channel crossings etc. can be found on the Travel Planning page of our website: <https://www.alpine-guides.com/ski/planning-your-skiing-trip/travel-planning/>

Insurance

For this trip you must have specialist travel insurance providing medical, emergency search/rescue and repatriation cover for the following activities: off piste skiing and ski touring in glaciated areas requiring the use of ropes, up to 4000m altitude. We also strongly recommend that you purchase cancellation cover, in case you're unable to attend your trip due to personal circumstances or injury. You should also bring your existing European Health Insurance Card, or apply for a new Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) as UK/EU reciprocal health agreements are part of the Brexit deal, so these continue.

****Once we have confirmed that your trip is running, we strongly advise that you arrange your insurance immediately, so that you're covered for loss of course fees and other travel related costs if you need to cancel your holiday due to personal circumstances. Once you are insured, please email us the policy details, and carry a hard copy with you during the trip****

More information, including advice for non-UK residents, can be found on the Insurance page of our website here <https://www.alpine-guides.com/ski/planning-your-skiing-trip/insurance/>

Equipment

A full kit list is enclosed. If you need to purchase skis, boots, or any other items of touring equipment, then please check out the advice articles on our Ski Knowledge Base: <https://www.alpine-guides.com/ski/insider-knowledge-ski/>

If you need to hire any of the following items of specialist skiing equipment: ice axe, crampons, harness, avalanche safety equipment, skis and boots - this can be done through us or via equipment shops in resort. If you'd like to hire any of the above items please visit our Equipment Hire page for more info:

<https://www.alpine-guides.com/ski/planning-your-skiing-trip/equipment-hire/>

We recommend you do this well in advance, especially in peak season – some shops have online reservation systems and most speak good English for telephone bookings.

When hiring in resort - ski mountaineering skis usually come supplied with climbing skins and harscheisen as a package (skins and harscheisen cannot be hired separately from skis). Ski Mountaineering boots are essential for skinning and walking in, and should be well bedded in before the tour as blisters can be a serious problem. When contacting the hire shop for skis/boots/bindings, be aware that most shops carry a limited range of touring equipment, so it's easier to specify type of ski rather than exact makes/models etc. Telling the shop what type of skier you are and the intended trip will give them a good idea what to recommend. A good all round setup would be a lightweight all mountain ski with 85-100mm width underfoot and a lightweight pin binding with brakes.

To purchase any items of specialist backcountry ski kit, we recommend you speak to Backcountry UK - they are a leading UK retailer of specialist touring gear and always give friendly and expert advice – <http://www.backcountryuk.com>

Weather and Conditions

On a typical fair weather day the temperature can range from -10 to +20 degrees or more - ie from sub zero early in the morning to uncomfortably hot in the afternoon - so its essential to have a good versatile clothing system that can deal with this plus any bad weather you might encounter. Snow conditions in the high mountains can be equally varied – in an ideal world you will be skiing spring hero snow or fresh powder, but you also need to be prepared for the possibility of ice, crust, windblown snow and poor visibility!

Itinerary Changes

Bad weather and high avalanche risk can sometimes alter the itinerary. This is unavoidable but we will do our best, within safe margins, to stick to the itinerary. Potential changes and variations on the standard tour are numerous but will avoid unsafe avalanche terrain/bad weather days, sometimes using public transport/taxis to connect sections of the tour together as required, to ski it as continuously as possible. This may incur extra transport costs, but your guide will discuss the options with the group if this were to happen.

Maps and Guidebooks

If you want to buy a map or guidebook, then the best ones to get are:

- Maps: Carte National Suisse 1:50 000 blue ski series, 268 S 'Julierpass'
- Guide: Alpine Ski Mountaineering, Vol 2 - Cicerone

Checklist

- Please make sure you have all of the following before leaving home!
- Passport - with at least 6 months validity remaining
- All Skiing Gear (Check kit list)
- Flight + Travel Tickets
- Personal Medications
- European Health Insurance Card (or apply for a new GHIC - Uk-EU reciprocal health agreements continue with Brexit Deal)
- Camera + Spare Batteries
- Insurance Certificate
- Compeed &/or tape to stop blisters
- Credit Card + Foreign Currency
- Full Driving Licence and International Driving Permit (available from local Post Office) if hiring a car
- Green Card from your insurer if driving abroad (contact them at least 2 weeks in advance)
- NB If you travel regularly, check you won't exceed 90 days in Schengen Area in past 180 days - penalty is 1 year exclusion!

What Next?

- Bookings can be made online via our website. A deposit of £300 per person is required to secure your place, with the balance due 8 weeks before the course start date - we will email you a balance reminder including your invoice and possible payment methods.
- Once we have the minimum required number of bookings we will email you to confirm the course is running (confirmed trips will also be visible on our website). Once confirmed, you should arrange your travel insurance and travel to resort.
- We will email you 2 weeks before the course start date with any final info including your guides contact details, hotel details/directions and any other final info.

More Info

Please contact us for more info regarding any aspect of the trip – info@alpine-guides.com or 0113 8151904 (we might be out skiing or climbing – if so please leave a message and we'll get back to you asap, thanks!).

Multiday Ski Touring Kit List

Just remember, every extra kilo on your back knocks 10% off your enjoyment on the descents – so try and keep the weight down!

TECHNICAL CLOTHING

- **Waterproof jacket** – preferably lightweight and breathable
- **Softshell jacket** – mid weight wind/snow resistant jacket
- **Softshell trousers/Mountain Pants** – ideally designed for ski touring.
- **Waterproof overtrousers** – preferably with 3/4 or full length side zips
- **Spare lightweight insulated jacket** – lightweight synthetic/down jacket or other warm layer
- **Wicking thermal top** – ie a 'base layer' not cotton please...
- **Thermal leggings** – base layer 'long johns', light or mid weight (ie not exped weight!)
- **Socks** – specialist ski socks, or a warm loop lined pair of mountain socks
- **Thin inner gloves**
- **Warm ski gloves** – or mittens, if you suffer from cold hands
- **Warm hat**

PERSONAL ITEMS

- **Water container** – at least 1 litre, or a vacuum flask
- **Personal medications and blister kit** – any regular medications, zinc oxide tape, compeed, painkillers etc
- **Ski goggles**
- **Sun glasses** – CE rated 3 or 4, with side protection
- **Sun and lip cream** – factor 30+
- **Headtorch and batteries**
- **Wallet, passport and insurance docs**

HUT OVERNIGHT ITEMS

- **Small wash kit** – wet wipes are a good idea
- **Spare lightweight t-shirt/socks/underwear**
- **Silk sheet liner**
- **Ear plugs**
- **Alpine Club/BMC card** – for hut discount

TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT

- **Rucksack** – 35-40L - NB rucksack **MUST** have straps on to carry your skis and an ice axe
- **Ski mountaineering boots** – must have good, dedicated walk mode
- **Skis with Touring Bindings** – modern lightweight pin bindings recommended
- **Ski Strap** – to hold skis together on your rucksack if we need to carry them
- **Ski Poles** – with good size 5cm+ baskets (telescopic poles are not needed)
- **Climbing skins** – they come with the skis if you hire your kit
- **Harscheisen (ski crampons)** – they come with the skis if you hire your kit
- **Metal snow shovel** – must be a full metal shovel (plastic blades don't work in real avalanche debris!)
- **Avalanche probe**
- **Avalanche transceiver** – must be a modern digital model (older analogue models are now obsolete)
- **Climbing harness** – with 120cm sling and locking karabiner
- **Crampons** – steel crampons are required on this tour
- **Ice axe** – lightweight model preferable (NB must have a steel head – see our advice article)
- **Ski Helmet** – lightweight ski touring or backcountry model preferred. Wearing a helmet is compulsory on descents and may be needed on other parts of the route depending on conditions

Your guide will have all other ski safety kit, first aid and survival equipment.

For more advice on ski mountaineering equipment please get in touch, or visit:

<https://www.alpine-guides.com/ski/insider-knowledge-ski/ski-touring-equipment-advice/>



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