GUIDED MOUNTAINEERING COURSE · CHAMONIX, FRENCH ALPS

Essential Alpine Skills

A 5-day introduction to climbing safely and independently in the Alps

A comprehensive, introductory-level skills course for beginners who aspire to climb independently on alpine peaks, and for those who want to build the skills needed for more technical guided ascents in the future. The course covers all of the fundamentals required to climb safely and independently in the Alps. Over five full days of training, you will also make ascents of classic alpine peaks, potentially exceeding 4,000 m.

DURATION	BASE	LEVEL	PRICE
5 full days	**Chamonix, France**	**Introductory**	**€1,170 per person**

Who is the course suitable for?

Fitness. A good general level of fitness is needed. If you regularly train or play sport for 2–3 hours per week and can complete a 6-hour hill walk without becoming exhausted, you will likely have the right fitness level for this course.

Previous technical experience. No technical mountaineering experience is required. However, some experience of mountain walking is needed, and previous experience of scrambling, climbing or via ferrata is recommended. If you would like to check that the course suits your experience and ambitions, please feel free to call me.



Where is the course based?

The course is based in Chamonix, in the French Alps. It starts and finishes in Chamonix, which is easily accessible from Geneva airport. During the week we stay flexible and will travel to peaks in Switzerland and possibly Italy.

Example itinerary

Pre-course briefing

On the evening before the course starts, we meet in Chamonix. This is a chance to meet, ask questions, go through the plan for the week, check equipment and discuss the current weather and conditions.

DAY 1 — Rock Day

After a scenic walk to a crag, we cover the basics of rock climbing and alpine rope work. The day is tailored to your previous experience, with input and coaching to help you progress your climbing and rope-work skills. It builds a solid foundation for the alpine rope work and movement skills you will need for the rest of the week.



Skills covered

- Opportunity to achieve and progress your climbing experience
- Tying on to the rope
- Belaying
- Rock movement coaching
- Clipping and basic knots
- Safe abseiling techniques
- Tying chest coils and the beginnings of “short roping”
- Prusiking up a rope and the beginnings of self-rescue
- Establishing the skills to sport climb in the future

DAY 2 Ice Day and Hut Approach



We drive to Lac de Moiry, above Grimentz in Switzerland, and walk to the Cabane de Moiry, a beautiful mountain hut. From there, a 45-minute walk takes us onto the Moiry Glacier, where we learn the basic techniques for using ice axes and crampons safely.

This dry glacial approach is an excellent opportunity to practise and develop good technique in cramponing and in using the mountaineering axe.

Skills covered

- Putting on crampons
- Different crampon techniques
- Movement skills on ice, with practice and coaching
- Holding and using ice axes
- Stowing ice axes efficiently
- Steeper ice-climbing techniques
- Understanding glacial hazards
- Tactics for glacier travel
- Building ice anchors
- The foundations of glacier travel and crevasse rescue

Staying at the Cabane de Moiry

In the main part of the season the hut is open and staffed, offering a charming and comfortable refuge with breakfast and an evening meal.

From mid-September onwards, at the end of the summer season, the hut is usually closed and we stay in the “Winter Room”. In that case we will likely light the log fire, melt snow for water and cater for ourselves. It is a fantastic place to stay.



DAY 3 Glacier Travel, Short Roping and Crevasse Rescue

Incorporated into the ascent of a summit. Leaving the hut early, we climb one of the nearby peaks, possibly the mixed north ridge of the Pigne de la Lé (graded PD, 3,396 m). This is a big day, finishing with a descent to the valley, where we either stay in local accommodation or return to Chamonix for the night. The ascent offers plenty of learning opportunities, with a strong focus on:

- Short-rope technique over mixed ground
- Building reliable snow anchors
- Full crevasse rescue of your partner
- Route choice in glacial terrain
- Mixed climbing up ridges
- Becoming more efficient in the mountains
- Decision-making and risk assessment

DAYS 4–5 Progression and Consolidation of Skills on an Alpine Summit



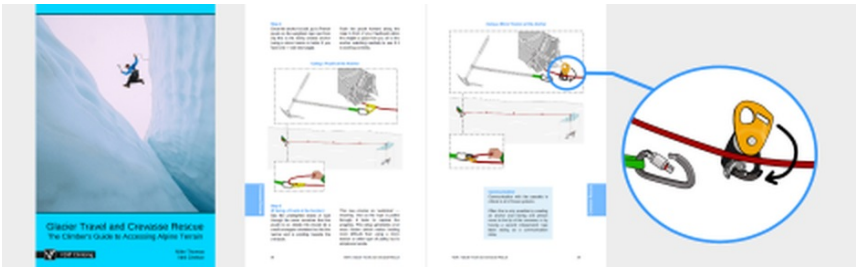
For the final two days we choose an appropriate objective based on the weather and conditions. This is often the **Gran Paradiso** (4,061 m) in Italy or the **Bishorn** (4,153 m) in Switzerland.

On day 4 we approach the appropriate mountain refuge, and on the final day we make the summit attempt.

These two days are a great opportunity to put your new skills into practice and to become a progressively independent alpinist, involved in the judgement and decisions while climbing a big alpine peak.

Course instructional book

I have written a core text covering the main technical skills of the course. It is very helpful for consolidating your skills afterwards, and I can send it to you as an ebook.



Price

COURSE PRICE	€1,170	per person

What is included

- 5 full days of mountain guiding with an IFMGA Mountain Guide
- Evening briefing the day before the course starts
- All fuel and transport during the course, starting and finishing in Chamonix
- Personal technical equipment hire: helmet, harness, crampons, ice axe, belay plate, sling, carabiners and prusik loops
- Management of the trip and itinerary, and booking of all mountain huts

What is not included

- **Chamonix accommodation.** You can arrange the accommodation you prefer; everything is available in Chamonix, from camping and hostels to hotels.
- **Mountain huts.** Allow around €65 per person per hut night (dinner, bed and breakfast), less if we use the “Winter Room”.
- **Valley accommodation** during the course, if we choose to stay in the valley. This is usually a similar cost to the mountain huts.
- **Mountain lift passes.** In some situations we may choose to use a mountain cable car during the week.
- **Flights.**
- **Lunches,** extra drinks, snacks and similar items during the course.
- **Personal mountaineering boots and clothing.** Suitable boots can easily be rented in Chamonix.
- **Insurance.** It is your responsibility to arrange cover and to ensure you are insured for alpine mountaineering in the European Alps.
- **Any other personal expenses.**

About your guide

I am a British IFMGA Mountain Guide and a WMCI in the UK instructional system, and I hold a degree in Outdoor Education. Over the last 20 years I have worked and climbed all over the world.



My work combines guiding and teaching. I come from a strong teaching background, having worked for several years at the UK National Mountain Centre, Plas y Brenin, with a focus on delivering rock and mountain skills courses.

My real passion is helping people develop their mountain skills, and in doing so helping them access the world of mountains and adventure, and all that comes with it. Climbing has been a valuable part of my own life, which is why I do the job I do and thoroughly enjoy passing these skills on to others.





Book your place

If you have any questions, need more information or would like to book a place on this course, feel free to call or message me.

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Mike Thomas · IFMGA Mountain Guide