



SMART
MOUNTAIN GUIDES

Haute Route Tour Ski Kit List

This is a list of the recommended clothing and equipment you will need if you are coming on one of our Haute Route Ski Tours.

During the tour you will be staying most nights in catered high mountain huts and will need to carry all the equipment and clothing you require for the duration of the tour. The huts are comfortable but basic with limited facilities – running cold water, European-style toilets, dormitory-style accommodation. All the huts provide ‘hut slippers’ – these days they are usually crocs - and so you will not need to carry additional footwear.

Any clothing or other items not required on the tour can be left in a travel bag at your hotel ready for your return on the final night.

We recommend keeping the weight of your pack as light as possible. If you are new to alpine multi-day ski touring, try taking your pack out on the slopes before the tour to see how it feels. You quickly realise the benefit of ‘skiing light’.

Part 1: Clothing

Part 2: Ski Equipment

Part 3: Accessories

Part 4: Safety equipment

Part 5: Technical Equipment

Part 6: Hiring Equipment

Part 1: Clothing

When choosing clothing for ski touring you want to think light, warm and versatile. During the trip weather conditions will change and you’re likely to go from warm afternoons where you’ll be carrying most of your gear in your rucksack, to cold mornings where might be wearing all your clothes to keep warm. Choosing high quality, light kit that is versatile and can be layered is key.

- Headwear should include a warm hat and sun-cap or wide-brim hat for extra protection from the sun. Helmets are not mandatory but we recommend wearing them for skiing, a lightweight, well vented helmet is ideal for any ski touring trip.
- A Buff or neck-gaiter, this can protect your face in cold weather and also double as a head-band if required.
- An outer shell jacket made of waterproof and breathable material like Gore-Tex or similar with a built-in hood. The lighter the better and so a shell is preferable to an insulated jacket.

- 1-2 thin fleeces - rather than a thick layer between your skin and the outer shell - an approach which gives better heat retention and good flexibility. These tops are known as 'mid layers'. The principle of 'layering' e.g. allowing you to easily add/remove layers depending on the temperature and the activity is recommended to ensure comfort on the mountain.
- Insulation layer like a down or primaloft jacket is a good item to have ready to wear in the event of cold weather, it can live in your rucksack as a spare layer and can come in very handy for sudden changes in the weather.
- For the lower half it's essential that you have a pair of thermal base layer pants (longjohns). These can then be combined with either:
 - (a) a good pair of 'technical shell' pants in a waterproof and breathable fabric like Gore-Tex
 - (b) a pair of mountain or alpine pants in a softshell material together with a pair of lightweight, breathable over trousers with long side zips.
- Top and bottom underwear made of a synthetic or natural fibers. Wool base layers are great as they dry quickly, smell less than synthetic ones and can be worn for a number of days.
- Good quality Gore-Tex gloves and a thin pair of softshell or grippy-palmed fleece gloves for when it is hot and for ski touring in.
- Silk inner gloves if you feel the cold
- Technical Socks - Investing in good quality ski socks will improve fit, warmth and feel when skiing for long periods. Bring along a few pairs.

Part 2: Ski Equipment

For these trips it is essential that you ski with a freeride/touring type skis, ski touring boots and ski touring bindings. If you have your own skis but they do not have ski touring bindings then you will need to rent skis. The same applies if you have downhill ski boots, you will need to rent ski touring boots.

● Skis

For alpine ski touring we recommend a freeride/touring ski that isn't too heavy, a really lightweight ski comes at a cost to performance on the descents so are only recommended for very good off-piste skiers.

There are plenty of great skis to choose from, an example of a great all-round touring ski would be the K2 Wayback 96 ski.

If you are planning on buying skis for ski touring and general skiing and have any questions do not hesitate to call us to discuss the options available to you.

● Boots

It is essential that you have ski touring boots for these trips as walking up hill is much more comfortable in these types of boots with a walk mode and great flex; a dedicated touring boot or a hybrid freeride boot is best.

Again there are many manufacturers to choose from, the most essential part of any ski boot purchase is that the boot fits your foot correctly and is suitable for the task for which you intend to use it for. Visiting a reputable boot fitter is your best way forward to get the correct boot. An example of an ideal boot for the Haute Route and ski touring would be the Scarpa Maestrale RS ski boot.

● Bindings

You need to have ski touring bindings on your skis for any ski touring trip. Many more people are seeing the advantage of the “pin” binding system now offered by a number of manufactures; they are light and offer ever improving security despite their minimalist looks! Dynafit, Marker, Salomon, G3 and others all offer a Pin system binding and most touring boots and hybrid freeride boots now have Pin inserts in them so are compatible with this binding system.

● Ski Poles

We recommend telescopic poles. They must have wide powder baskets. Go for an alloy rather than carbon poles which are lighter but have a nasty habit of snapping near the basket due to ski edge nicks.

● Rucksack

For most ski tours especially multi-day hut-to-hut tours you will need a 35 - 40 litre rucksack. You might get away with a big 30 liter pack if you are an experienced ski tourer and know what to pack. Most people will find a 35-40 liter pack is a good size for touring. Key features are a method of attaching your skis in either a A-frame (one either side) or both together on a diagonal ski carriage; easy access into the main compartment without having to empty the sack to get something at the bottom; separate pocket for avalanche shovel, handle and probe; small top pocket for items like wallet, sunglasses/goggles etc; an ice axe loop and possibly a built in rain cover and a secure method of attaching/stowing a ski helmet (if you use one). It's essential that the pack has a good hip/waist belt and adjustable shoulder straps. Avalanche airbag rucksacks can be used for touring but they are heavy, adding somewhere between 5-8kg just for an empty pack with cylinder in; so unless you are sure you can carry it and fit all you need in, we do not recommend you use one.

Over a long multi day tour every gram of weight is important as you have to carry and move it yourself; carrying a heavy pack will hinder and tire all but the most experienced and fit ski tourer.

Part 3: Accessories

- Good pair of ski goggles with a lens for mixed light conditions is best and versatile. Good quality sunglasses with 100% UV protection
- 35 – 40 liter rucksack (see above).
- Ski Strap - you will need to have an elastic or velcro ski strap to tie your skis (and poles) together with e.g. Black Diamond Ski Strap.
- 1 – 1.5 Liter water bottle – we don't recommend hydration systems (e.g. camelbak) in winter as they can freeze.
- Food – bring some of your favorite hill nibbles (chocolate, energy bars)*
- Suncream and lip salve
- Camera with a large capacity memory card!
- Money & passport – most hotels, shops and restaurants accept credit cards, but not all the alpine huts do. You should allow about 30-40 Swiss Francs or 20-30 Euros per day for lunch and drinks (amount approximate and depends on consumption).

- Please note that your guide will have a few “spares” and other safety items that he or she will ask the group to carry between them; so leave a small space in your sack for an item e.g. spare skin, spare ski pole, emergency shelter.

For a hut night:

- Lightweight sleeping bag liner – now compulsory in most huts.
- Wash kit with small personal first aid items – should include:
 - Sun cream and lip salve
 - Toothbrush and paste - a mini one is ideal
 - Soap
 - Anti-bacterial hand cleaner
 - Wet wipes – essential to try to maintain hygiene
 - Tissues and toilet roll
 - Plasters – of various sizes and possibly some adhesive wound dressings.
 - Pain Killers – aspirin or Paracetamol/Nurofen
 - Antiseptic cream or wipes
 - Blister kit – compeed and elastic tape to hold it in place (essential)!
 (Note: Guides will have comprehensive first aid kits and are qualified in mountain first aid)
- Small light quick dry towel
- Earplugs – it can get quite noisy in the dormitories so these are essential
- Headtorch - lightweight and carry spare batteries.
- Book, a pack of cards and or Ipod/MP3 player – It’s nice to have something to read or listen to when you are in the huts or to challenge your fellow travelers to a game of cards. These items are not essential but if you have space you might appreciate them.
- What to wear in the hut - we are often asked by people what they should wear in the hut. It's a good question as you don't want to carry many or any extra clothes with you if they are not required. In the winter you will probably end up wearing your base layer thermals (top & bottom) or you can carry a lightweight pair of loose trousers to wear around the hut in the afternoons/evenings. Your base layer top is what you will probably wear on your top half or you can carry a t-shirt to wear in the hut that can double to sleep in.

Food and Water

We suggest you bring with you or buy before leaving snack food that you can take out on the mountain with you each day. Things like cereal bars, dried fruit and nuts, chocolate, sugary sweets or your favorite hill snacks. When you’re staying overnight in huts its best to take supplies for the days you are away. Huts do sell food (but it’s expensive) and you can usually get a packed lunch of some form each day.

If you have any food allergies or dietary requirements, especially if you are a Coeliac (Gluten free) or have a dairy allergy we strongly recommend you bring some food with you that you can supplement your dinners with. The huts are fairly good at providing for vegetarians but less so for other dietary needs.

You have to buy bottled water in the huts as usually any running water is non-potable. Bottled water is expensive in Italian/French/Swiss huts; you can be paying upto 8-10€/12-16CHF per 1.5L bottle of water. So please ensure you budget for this cost.

Part 4: Safety equipment

- Avalanche Transceiver/Beacon - with new batteries and spare ones brought along incase
- Avalanche shovel

- Avalanche probe

Part 5: Technical Equipment

Along with your ski equipment you will also need to have:

- Ski Skins – these are skins which, now made of artificial fabric, stick to the bottom of your skis and allow you to walk up hill. They must be cut to fit your skis exactly, so if you are bringing your own skis you must provide your own skins.
- Ski Crampons (aka couteaux) - most ski touring bindings have ski crampons specifically designed for the binding. Again if you are bringing your skis and touring bindings you must provide your own ski crampons.
- Ice Axe - general lightweight mountaineering / alpine axe. Ideally this needs to be short enough to fit in your pack or securely on the outside (back of your pack).
- Boot Crampons - ideally lightweight aluminum ones although steel crampons are required for more demanding tours. Petzl Irvis Hybrid are ideal ski touring crampons.
- Climbing Harness - a simple lightweight harness. The key feature is that it should have fully adjustable leg loops for putting on over ski boots, crampons, etc. Petzl Altitude harness is a perfect ski touring harness. If you are bringing your own harness please bring 2 x locking carabiners, belay device, 1 x prussic loop and 1 x long 1.2m sling

On some tours in non-glaciated terrain an ice-axe, boot crampons and climbing harness may not always be required. However as conditions and itineraries can change we do generally recommend that you bring these items with you. If you do not own these items they can be rented to you by our guides or via one of the local sports shops.

Part 6: Hiring Equipment

Most resorts have ski shops that hire ski equipment and we try to provide relevant contact details for all our courses and tours. If you need to hire any items of technical equipment for your tour then please contact us as soon as possible so we can assist you in arranging this.

Other Information

- Maps – optional. Your guide will have these: French IGN 1:25,000 Chamonix, Swiss 1:50,000 Martigny 282 (S), Arolla 283 (S) and Mischabel 284 (S). Note: ‘S’ indicates that ski routes are shown.
- You can use the online [Swiss Geo Maps](#) to look at any area in Switzerland, choose “Snowsport” under “change topic” to reveal the ski route overlay.
- Recommended guidebook: The Haute Route, Chamonix-Zermatt by Peter Cliff ISBN 1871890217

If you have any questions or are uncertain about anything then please [contact us](#).