

Georgia Ushguli Ski Tour

Remote adventure ski touring in the High Caucasus, skiing in the shadow of Shkara, the highest mountain in Georgia. Our principal objective for the trip is to visit the 'lost world' village of Ushguli, exploring the surrounding mountains on ski. This remote and uniquely preserved Unesco World Heritage site is only accessible via a long 4WD journey. The village is surrounded by fantastic ski terrain and a backdrop of the huge 5000m peaks of the Bezingi Wall.

This is a remote trip, with 8 days of skiing for fit and experienced ski tourers, who already have previous hut to hut touring experience and are up for the challenge of some bigger (up to 1500m) skinning days. The terrain is extensive, with both north facing powder slopes and south facing spring snow slopes in the region. The trip also involves some difficult off road driving and we need to be more self-sufficient than on a typical ski touring trip to the Alps (see suitability notes below). Accommodation in Ushguli is at a local farm guesthouse: the food is great and the rooms have basic electric heating, but Ushguli is the highest permanently occupied village in Europe and therefore temperatures can sometimes be very low, so you will need to bring a 2-3 season sleeping bag to supplement the bedding and a good down jacket for this part of the trip. In terms of comfort/hardship, it's best think of Ushguli as a hut touring trip, rather than a valley based day touring week.

NB This is an 'off the beaten track' ski trip to a less developed nation, so a flexible mindset and sufficient fitness and experience to deal with unexpected challenges are a pre requisite for safety and enjoyment on this type of holiday. Expect the unexpected and you'll have a great time - but if you like everything to go like clockwork, then it's best to ski in Verbier and Zermatt! There is also some serious off road driving involved, which may leave you out of your comfort zone (we mean this seriously) - you need to be aware of these factors before considering joining the tour.

Skiing in Ushguli Georgia

The remote village of Ushguli lies in the Svaneti region of the western Caucasus mountains of Georgia – the mountain range that runs between the Black Sea and Caspian Sea, forming the boundary between Europe and Asia. Bigger than the Alps and with numerous 4000 and 5000m peaks, the range is far quieter and less developed, especially in winter.

Ushguli can only be accessed via a long and difficult 4WD journey, passing through deep gorges on narrow mountain tracks, so it's a major adventure just getting there in winter. As a result of it's location, the village has been uniquely preserved for over 1000 years, with iconic Svan Towers dotting the landscape and unpaved streets too narrow for vehicles. We stay at a local farm guesthouse in the heart of the village, enjoying authentic Svan meals, made from locally grown produce. It's best to treat this part of the trip a bit like a hut tour, as showers may or may not be available, depending on temperatures and the current water supply (ie things can freeze!)

The trip starts and ends with a days' skiing near the town of Mestia, with main body of the trip being spent in Ushguli, using the village as a base to explore the surrounding mountains in a series of day tours. There is great skiing available in all directions – with excellent north facing powder bowls on one side, a lovely panorama summit right above the village and long spring snow tours up onto the flanks of Shkara (at 5193m, the highest mountain in Georgia) and the other 5000ers that make up the famous Bezingi Wall, which dominates the skyline at the head of the valley. Although the village now sees regular visits by ski tourers, there is so much terrain that there are still plenty of fresh tracks for all.

Georgia itself is also a culturally fascinating place to visit: it's a Christian country with a passion for wine production (and enthusiastic consumption!) that has numerous incredibly well preserved 1000 year old monasteries, religious sites and other unique architecture – such as the famous Svan Towers that dominate towns and villages of the Svaneti region. We'll have a chance to explore some of these cultural aspects of the country during our trip. It's a westward looking nation that has come a long way since the end of the Soviet era and over the last 10 years, the infrastructure within Georgia has improved greatly; nowadays it's one of the safest countries in the world to visit. Visas are not required by UK, EU, US, AUS and NZ citizens as well as those from 98 other nations.

The trip starts at Luton Airport, where we meet up and fly to Kutaisi in Georgia. From Kutaisi the journey up to Mestia takes 5-6 hours where we break the journey and enjoy a days' skiing, then it's a further 4+hrs driving on narrow and difficult 4WD tracks to reach Ushguli.

For the two days skiing in Mestia, we are picked up at the hotel by a 4WD vehicle in order to access the different ski venues nearby. There are two small ski resorts in this area which offer good off piste skiing and lift assisted day touring, plus there are numerous good quality mid altitude day tours around Mestia.

NB This trip travels on Thursday out/Sunday return, in order to make use of direct flights from London Luton to Kutaisi, the nearest international airport to the region. Please read the travel notes carefully, as we have contingency planning regarding the flights.

Sample Itinerary

Subject to weather and snow conditions, the plan for the trip is as follows:

Thursday

Fly from **London Luton** to **Kutaisi** in western Georgia, overnight at Hotel in Kutaisi. **NB** The flight arrives very late, so our first day in Georgia is planned for traveling and some sightseeing.

Friday

AM 5-6hr drive up to Mestia. PM Exploring in Mestia – Svan Tower, sightseeing etc. Evening Briefing – your guide will run through kit checks and safety routines, before going on to discuss the current weather and mountain conditions and how these affect our plans. We'll have maps and information on 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.

Saturday

Warm Up Day – day tour/off piste skiing near Mestia. There are two small ski resorts in the area, both of which offer great off piste skiing, plus lift assisted day tours and there are numerous excellent day tours in the surrounding mountains – we'll choose a good objective for current conditions. Overnight in Mestia.

Sunday

Travel to Ushguli. AM 4WD journey to Ushguli – depending on weather and driving conditions, the journey usually takes between 2-4hrs. PM Arrive at the guesthouse, then make a short afternoon tour above the village.

Monday to Friday

Ski touring in Ushguli - outings selected to cater for group interest and the current snow and weather conditions. There is great skiing available in all directions – with excellent north facing powder bowls on one side, a lovely panorama summit right above the village and long spring snow tours up onto the flanks of Shkara (at 5193m, the highest mountain in Georgia). Our accommodation in Ushguli lies at an altitude of 2100m and tours will typically involve 1000-1500m of skinning per day.

On Friday, we do our final days' touring in Ushguli, before setting off back to Mestia where we spend the night.

Saturday

Final Ski Day and travel back to Kutaisi. On Saturday, we finish skiing above Mestia by mid-afternoon and set off back to Kutaisi, spending our final night at our hotel in Kutaisi.

Sunday

AM Possibility for some final sightseeing in Kutaisi, before heading to the airport and flights home.

Fitness and Experience

You need previous multiday touring experience in order to join this trip – ie be able to handle all off piste conditions whilst carrying a day sac, plus experience with ice axe and crampons is also needed. The trip includes 5-7 hour days with some steeper terrain, involving kick turns and the odd short boot track to reach summits. Typically we'll be doing 1000-1500m of ascent a day, at up to 400m per hour ascent rate (skinning at altitude) – so you can expect to be skinning for 4-5 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/>

Suitability

This is an adventurous tour, with some difficult off road driving that may leave you out of your comfort zone and we need to be more self-sufficient than on a typical ski touring trip to the Alps. The local mountain rescue team are well equipped and trained, but in the event of poor flying conditions, access could take longer than in western Europe, so we will be carrying a rescue sled for emergencies and we need to know that you are fit and experienced enough to deal with any unforeseen difficulties, such as poor weather or snow conditions. Temperatures can get very low in Ushguli, so a good down jacket is essential for chilly evenings and things like showers may or may not be available, depending on the current water supply (ie things can freeze!) - so in terms of comfort/hardship, it's best think of this as a hut touring trip, rather than a valley based day touring week.

Guiding Team

All our Alpine programmes are staffed by IFMGA Mountain Guides working at a maximum ratio of 1:6, or 8 clients with 2 guides on the Georgia Ushguli Ski Tour. We work with a small team of guides who's profiles can be found on our website.

Course Briefing

The briefing will be in our accommodation on Friday night. Your guide will do equipment checks, run through current conditions, the weather forecast and the general plan for the week.

Meeting Point

Our meeting point is **London Luton Airport at approx. 14.00 on Thursday afternoon**, or Kutaisi airport/hotel. If you plan to travel to Kutaisi via another route than from the UK, then please let us know so we can make suitable arrangements.

Included in the Price

- 8 days of guiding and all guides expenses
- 2 nights hotel accommodation in Kutaisi, including breakfast
- 3 nights hotel accommodation in Mestia, including breakfast and evening meals
- 5 nights guesthouse accommodation in Ushguli, including breakfast and evening meals
- Vehicle transport in Georgia

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

- Lift Passes
- Lunches and Drinks
- Evening Meal in Kutaisi
- Flights to Kutaisi
- Insurance
- Equipment hire

Uplift

Uplift costs will depend on the exact itinerary, which will be tailored to make best use of weather and conditions during the trip. The maximum spend will be **-80 GEL***, (£24!) which is enough to cover 2 days of uplift at the ski stations near to Mestia.

Evening Meal in Kutaisi

For the final night spent in Kutaisi, there are a selection of restaurants at the hotel and down the road in town – just pay for your evening meal and drinks directly. Budget around **40 GEL* for this**.

Lunches and Drinks

It's difficult to get some things like energy bars, trail mix and cereal bars etc in Georgia, so please bring enough of your favourite mountain snacks to last the trip (there are also bakeries in Mestia selling local bread and Katchapuris, which make excellent, filling hill food) **20-50 GEL*** should cover this. Bringing a vacuum flask along with you is also a good idea on this trip.

Local beer and wine is readily available in Mestia, but you will need to take a supply up to Ushguli if you want to enjoy a drink in the evenings whilst up there (wine and ChaCha – the local fire water – are provided with meals though). Georgians are particularly proud of their history of wine production, which has been going on for over 8000 years - as this is the place

where wine was invented! A selection of local wines are available at the hotel.

***Based on this, the extra costs during the trip are approx. 200-300 GEL**

The current **exchange rate** is approx **£1 sterling=3 GEL** (Georgian Lari). **NB** You can't easily exchange Georgian Lari (GEL) in advance in the UK, so it's best to visit an ATM at the airport when we arrive, or bring some Euros or Dollars to exchange locally. Very few places take credit cards, so plan on using cash.

Hotels and Accommodation

In Kutaisi and Mestia we stay in good 3 star local hotels, both of which are close to the centre of town and conveniently placed for cafes, bars and sightseeing. In particular, our hotel in Mestia is ideally set up for skiers, being fully centrally heated which is not often the case in this area – the reception staff are super helpful and speak good English. In Ushguli, we stay at a local farm guesthouse - this a great place to stay, right in the heart of Ushguli, with amazing views of the surrounding Svan towers and mountains. Due to the altitude and location, it can sometimes be very cold up here in winter, so you need to bring along a **2-3 season sleeping bag** to supplement the bedding on this part of the trip. The rooms have electric heaters at night, but not all communal areas are heated, so a good down jacket is also essential (ie it's best to think of this part of the trip as a hut tour rather than a day touring week - as things like showers may or may not be available, depending on the water supply).

All rooms are provided on a twin sharing basis, but if you wish to book a single room please let us know and we will confirm availability. Please let us know if you have any special dietary requirements.

Details of our partner hotels can be found on our Accommodation page: <https://www.alpine-guides.com/ski/planning-your-skiing-trip/accomodation/>

Flights

Ushguli is not an easy place to get to! – please read the following travel information carefully. You need to book the following flights for the trip:

Please Note: For this trip we advise you to book the outward and return legs of your flight separately, rather than as a combined return booking – please see *Important Note below as to why we recommend this!

- **Travel out:** You need to book on the **Wizz Air** (<https://wizzair.com/#/>) flight W9 6424 from **London Luton** to **Kutaisi** departing on **Thursday 27th February 2020** at **16.15** (5hr flight, arriving 00.55 local time, +4hrs GMT). Booking a **Wizz Go Package**, plus skis is probably your best option – at the time of writing (May 2019) flights are available for as little as £275 for the return flight, including skis and 20kg hold baggage.
- **Travel home:** **Sunday 8th March 2020** – Wizz Air flight W9 6423, Kutaisi to Luton, departing **14.20** local time (flight arrives Luton 15.45 local time).
- We advise you to book **1x Hold Bag** and **1x Ski Equipment** on all flights.

***Important Note:** In the winter time, there is a small risk of the mid week Wizz Air Thursday Luton-Kutaisi outward flight being cancelled due to insufficient booking numbers – so we have taken this into account in our planning! Please book your outward and return flights as separate bookings, rather than as a single return booking. If there is a cancellation of the Thursday direct flight to Kutaisi, then it's easier to get a refund on just the outward leg of your journey (you can still do it if you buy a return, but it requires phone time with customer services, rather than just an online refund).

If there is a flight cancellation, then we have three other ways to reach Kutaisi flying from Luton on Thursday afternoon, so that your other travel plans are not disrupted – we can fly to either Copenhagen, Berlin or Dortmund (choice to be decided if required!) where we will overnight, then take a flight to Kutaisi early on Friday morning and then travel direct from Kutaisi airport on Friday to up Mestia. This travel plan worked well for us last year, as it mean't no ski days were lost during the trip. All other travel options – eg flying to Tbilisi etc – create much longer travel times in Georgia and/or result in lost ski days, so we don't recommended them.

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/>

Travel During the Trip

We arrive in Georgia at the city of Kutaisi, which is approx. 5-6 hours drive from Mestia in our transfer minibus. 4WD travel up to Ushguli takes between 2 and 4+hrs depending on current weather and driving conditions. For the ski days in Mestia, we are picked up at the hotel by 4x4 vehicle to travel to nearby ski venues - these are reached in 10 to 45 minutes.

Georgia FAQ's

Do I need a Visa? Visas are not required by UK, EU, US, AUS and NZ citizens, as well as those from 98 other nations.

Is it a safe place to visit? Nowadays it's one of the safest countries in the world to visit – the people are friendly and crime rates are lower than in the UK.

Is the water safe to drink? Tap water is totally safe to drink (the Soviets knew how to do good public sanitation, if little else!)

What are the hotels like? Service standards are more like you'd expect in a quieter part of France or Italy, rather than Switzerland or Austria – but the staff are friendly and helpful and there's always someone around who speaks English.

What about WIFI? Everywhere has Wifi and in general it's similar to (or sometimes better than!) the UK.

Mobile Phones? The mobile phone infrastructure is also new and you often get 3G or 4G connections. If you are regularly use data, then it's a good idea to buy a local SIM card for the trip, in order to avoid high roaming charges.

What are the roads like? Not bad – there's sometimes a bit of crazy overtaking going on, or a few cows on the road, but everyone seems to get along Ok. Vehicles are often second hand imports: lots of older German Mercedes or Japanese 4WDs, plus there's some amazing old Soviet Era trucks and saloons around. Up in the mountains, having a 4x4 vehicle is essential at this time of year. The drive up to Ushguli in particular, is a long and difficult journey on narrow 4x4 tracks in winter, so it is definitely not for the faint hearted!

I'm a Vegetarian – will this be a problem? You'll be Ok - plenty of local Georgian dishes are vegetarian. In Kutaisi and Mestia the choice is good and in Ushguli our hosts are used to cooking vegetarian food, but the choice will be more limited – ie expect lots of local eggs and cheese, plus various vegetable dishes. Please let us know when you book and we'll do our best!

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, up to 4000m altitude. We also strongly recommend that you purchase cancellation cover, in case you are unable to attend your trip due to personal circumstances or injury. Please note this trip is outside European Territorial Limits, so you need to purchase Worldwide Cover.

****Once we have confirmed that your trip is running, we strongly advise that you arrange your insurance immediately, so that you are 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 avalanche safety equipment please visit our Equipment Hire page for more info: <https://www.alpine-guides.com/ski/planning-your-skiing-trip/equipment-hire/>

If you need to hire skis and boots they must be hired in the UK and taken out with you. 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 backcountry ski with 85-100mm width underfoot and a lightweight pin binding.

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

The Caucasus are at the same latitude as the Pyrenees and you can expect similar temperatures to skiing in the Alps at this time of year. 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 it's 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. This may incur extra transport costs, but your guide will discuss the options with the group if this were to happen.

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

- Geoland 1:50,000 Trekking Maps: Sheet 8 – Ushguli, Lashkheti, Mt.Shkhara, Sheet 9 - Mestia, Ushguli, Lashkheti and Sheet 10 - Mt Ushba, Mestia.

Checklist

- Please make sure you have all of the following before leaving home!
- Passport
- All Skiing Gear (Check kit list)
- Flight + Travel Tickets
- Personal Medications
- Camera + Spare Batteries
- Insurance Certificate
- Compeed &/or tape to stop blisters
- Bank Card + Euros (or Dollars) to exchange

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 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!).

Ushguli 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** is a good idea on this trip
- **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**

OVERNIGHT ITEMS

- **Small wash kit**
- **Spare clothing** - for evenings and travel
- **2-3 season sleeping bag** – for nights in Ushguli
- **Warm down jacket** – ~200g of down, for evenings/hanging out in Ushguli

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** – pin bindings are a must on this trip
- **Velcro 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** – lightweight alloy crampons preferable on most tours, steel crampons for ski mountaineering
- **Ice axe** – lightweight model preferable (NB must have a steel head – see our advice article)

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/>

Alpine Guides Ltd – Booking Conditions

1. All bookings are made with Alpine Guides Ltd, company number 4901552, whose registered office is at 14 Wrenbeck Close, Otley, West Yorkshire, LS21 2BU and whose directors are Alun Powell and Richard Cross.
2. We only accept bookings from persons over the age of 18 at the time of booking. Bookings by or on behalf of persons under the age of 18 may be accepted on certain courses, when accompanied on the course by another person over the age of 18 and subject to written parental consent.
3. Unless stated otherwise, your booking must be accompanied with a deposit of £300 per person per course booked, or if booked within 56 days (8 weeks) of the course start date by the full payment. When we receive your booking application, you will be sent a confirmation email. Once we have received payment and checked all information contained within your booking application, we will accept your booking. You will then be sent further information about the current status of your trip
4. We will store and process your personal information securely and in line with our Privacy Policy which can be viewed on our website.
5. Email and PDF attachments are our primary contact method, so you must provide us with a valid email address. You must also ensure that our email address: info@alpine-guides.com is added to your safe senders list, as we cannot be held liable for communication problems caused by personal firewalls, spam filtering systems, or your inability to open attached email documents.
6. Balance of payment is due 56 days (8 weeks) prior to the course start date. We prefer you to pay full balance by a direct bank transfer. If full payment is not received by this date we reserve the right to cancel your booking without refund.
7. For courses taking place outside the United Kingdom you must purchase specialist mountaineering insurance covering helicopter rescue, medical treatment and repatriation (plus on and off piste skiing for ski courses). You must bring all insurance documentation with you on the course. We reserve the right to cancel your booking at any time if we are not satisfied you have adequate insurance in place.
8. If you wish to cancel you must notify us in writing, where upon the following charges will be applied from the date we receive your notice of cancellation:-
 - More than 8 weeks (56 days) before start date – loss of deposit.
 - Between 4 and 8 weeks (28-56 days) before start date – 50% of course fee or loss of deposit, whichever amount is greater.
 - Less than 4 weeks (28 days) before start date – full course fee.
9. Requests for course transfers must be made more than 56 days prior to original start date and are subject to availability. You also have the right to transfer your booking to another person who satisfies all conditions for the course (including health, fitness and experience requirements), subject to the same conditions above.
10. We reserve the right to cancel any course due to insufficient numbers, or transfer bookings between courses to make numbers viable. In either event clients will be informed of our decision as soon as possible and not less than 21 days before start date. You will be offered either a free transfer, a full refund, or a mutually agreed alternative program. You must inform us as soon as possible which you choose to accept.
11. In the event of guide injury or illness, we will endeavour to find replacement guide(s) as soon as possible. If replacement guide(s) cannot be found part way through a trip, we will refund guiding fees for any days of guiding not provided and you may still use remaining accommodation nights unguided. In the event that we cannot find replacement guide(s) for the whole of your trip, you may choose to use the accommodation portion of your trip and receive a refund of guiding fees, cancel your trip with a full refund, or accept a mutually agreed alternative program.
12. We do not accept any responsibility for changes to travel arrangements that you make in order to join your trip or course. We accept no financial liability that may arise from any enforced change to your travel plans due to any alteration of the trip or course dates, the itinerary or its cancellation, howsoever caused. You are advised to book transferable, refundable travel tickets with no penalties should a cancellation be necessary.
13. At the discretion of the course director, guiding ratios may be varied from the stated course ratio to cover eventualities such as staff absence or change of itinerary, so long as this does not breach accepted local guiding ratios or other professional guidelines laid out by the British Association of Mountain Guides.
14. We do not accept bookings from groups or individuals participating in sponsored climbs or 'challenge events' of any kind. If we discover that you are seeking sponsorship or participating in such an event in connection with one of our courses, we reserve the right to cancel your booking without refund, or exclude you from further mountain activities whilst on the course with immediate effect.
15. Whilst we maintain high professional standards of client care and safety, you must realise and accept that climbing, mountaineering and skiing are activities which carry a danger of personal injury or even death, as they take place in remote and hazardous mountain terrain. All clients must be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement in such activities.
16. All information contained within our website, social media channels and other publicity is for guidance only. Whilst making every effort to ensure accuracy, we cannot be responsible for any inaccuracies or alterations beyond our control. Should any changes occur, clients will be notified before a booking is accepted.

17. Although we adhere to planned itineraries wherever possible, changes may occur to both travel and guiding itineraries due to external factors beyond our control. In particular, the guide has total discretion to alter programs at any time in the interests of client safety and current mountain, or weather conditions.

18. By booking you agree to abide by instructions and decisions made by the guide regarding individuals and the group as a whole. Our guides reserve the right to exclude individuals from a planned activity on the grounds of health, safety or the success and enjoyment of the rest of the party. Any individuals so excluded are not entitled to a refund. Any individual contravening the decisions or advice of their guide, or undertaking independent mountain activities during the course shall forfeit all protection and duty of care from the guide.

19. We accept no liability for the consequences of strikes, riots, acts of war or terrorism, disease outbreaks, government intervention, natural disasters or adverse weather conditions. If such occurrences cause us to have to cancel a course or trip we will offer an alternative holiday if possible, but accept no liability for return of fees paid prior to cancellation or curtailment.

20. If you have a complaint about the guiding or other services you receive during your holiday, you must notify ourselves or the guide involved as soon as possible, in order to give us the opportunity to put things right. Non of our guides have authority to promise refunds or compensation on behalf of Alpine Guides Ltd. Only the company directors are authorised to make such decisions.

If, despite our best efforts and having followed the above procedure for reporting and resolving your complaint, you feel that it has not been satisfactorily settled, we recommend that it is referred for arbitration under the ABTOT Travel Industry Arbitration Service. An Independent Arbitrator will review the documents relating to any complaint and deliver a binding decision to bring the matter to a close. Details of this scheme are available from The Travel Industry Arbitration Service, administered by Dispute Settlement Services Limited, 9 Savill Road, Lindfield, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 2NY. This scheme cannot however decide in cases where the sums claimed exceed £5,000 per person or £10,000 per booking form, or for claims which are solely or mainly in respect of physical injury or illness or the consequence thereof.

21. On courses that include accommodation in the course fee:

The Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT) provides financial protection under The Package Travel and Linked Travel Arrangements Regulations 2018 for Alpine Guides Ltd, membership number 5394 and in the event of their insolvency, protection is provided for the following:

1. non-flight packages and
2. flight inclusive packages that commence outside of the EEA, which are sold to customers outside of the EEA.

ABTOT cover provides for a refund in the event you have not yet travelled or repatriation if you are abroad. Please note that bookings made outside the EEA are only protected by ABTOT when purchased directly with Alpine Guides Ltd. In the unlikely event that you require assistance whilst abroad due to our financial failure, please call our 24/7 helpline on 01702 811397 and advise you are a customer of an ABTOT protected travel company. You can access The Package Travel and Linked Travel Arrangements Regulations 2018 here: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2018/634/contents/made>

22. All terms and conditions between clients and Alpine Guides Ltd are to be governed by and held under the exclusive jurisdiction of English Law.

23. Making your booking implies that you understand and accept the booking conditions and agree to abide by them.