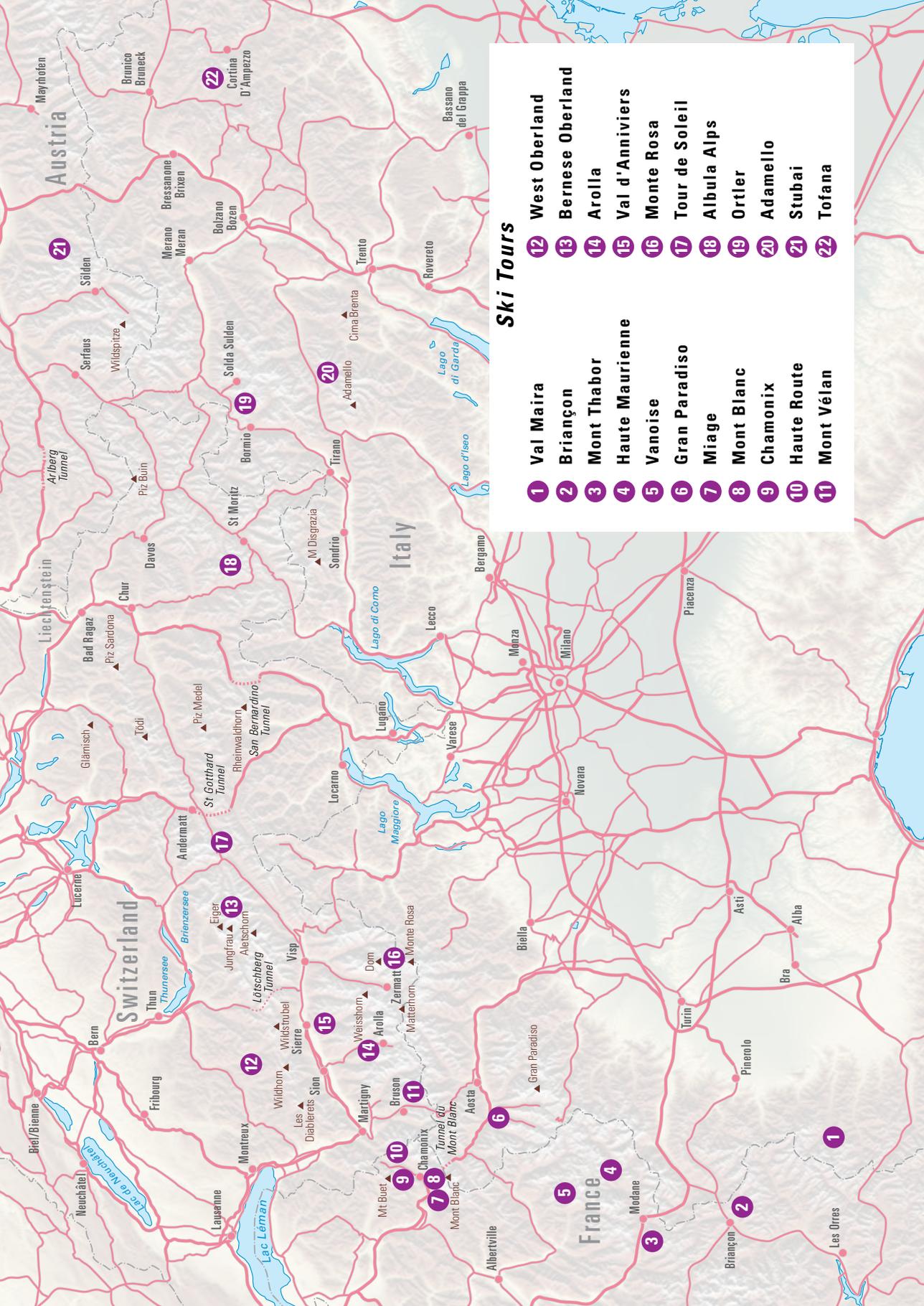


Bruce Goodlad et al.

ALPINE SKI TOURING

SELECTED SKI TOURS IN THE EUROPEAN ALPS





Ski Tours

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ALPINE SKI TOURING

Selected ski tours in the European Alps

By Bruce Goodlad et al.

Contributors: Martin Chester, Al Powell, Mark Charlton, Andy Teasdale, Tim Blakemore, Jonny Baird, Graham Frost, Terry Ralphs, Rob Collister, Ollie Allen, Cain Olsen, Andy Perkins and Mike Austin

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Maps by Bute Cartographics

Maps based on OpenStreetMap (Open Database License) licensed as CC BY SA
with SRTM topography data and local information sources
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Acknowledgements

The idea for this book came about sitting in the cabin of a boat while on a ski and sail trip in the Arctic which I do each year. Dave Crichton, one of the most regular ski clients and a good friend, suggested a selected ski touring guide to the Alps. Over the years Dave has skied most of the Alpine Arc, so we started chatting about what areas would be included and what we would leave out. As the wine flowed I started making notes and, as is usually the case after a few drinks, the whole thing seemed like a great idea and we would have it done over the summer.

In the cold light of an Arctic dawn the enormity of the project struck me – apart from the amount of work involved, the intimate knowledge of each area required to produce a guidebook goes way beyond one quick ski tour in perfect weather. I felt it was too much so parked the idea, but my subconscious wouldn't let it go. One day the idea popped back in there again, but instead of me writing the whole book I would ask a number of my colleagues if they would contribute one or two tours. I would then pull the whole thing together.

A summer had now elapsed and I was sitting in a lodge in Japan (on the floor as there are no chairs). I got my laptop out and started to pull the idea together, asked Franco at Pesda Press if he was interested in the idea, and put a plan together. I also started speaking to guides to see if they would be interested in contributing and which tours they would be happy to submit.

The criteria would be classic ski tours at a variety of grades spread through the Alps, with some venues that were well known and others that were not really on the radar for British ski tourers. In many respects the list is a starting point for the reader to get a feel for the Alps; then they can head out and explore, putting their own tours together.

When choosing who to ask to be involved, there was only so much space in the book, so I focused on friends who I have skied with, guides who spend most of their winters on skis, and guides who friends and clients have enjoyed skiing with. If we had infinite space I'm sure we could have expanded further, maybe there is space for another volume.

When you start reading the book you will see that it is genuine collaboration between fourteen guides. The team has been incredible in their attention to detail, with everything from the text through choice of photographs, through to checking the edits and making sure the maps allow the reader to orientate themselves with the real map and get a feel for an area.

One of the criteria for involvement was that the guide had done the tour recently, so while conditions vary from year to year, and global warming has had a massive effect on the Alpine glaciers, the information is as current as you will find in a guidebook.

I could go through and name each author individually but I won't as their contributions are all equally valued and I owe a massive debt of gratitude to them for their hard work.

I also need to thank Don Williams at Bute Cartographics who has drawn all the maps – this was an area of the book that was a big challenge to both of us. To bring the mapping from four countries all with different scales together into a common base map, then decipher the scribbles and vague lines drawn on maps then photographed with a smart phone, has been a tour de force. Don may never look at another foreign map again, but he can be proud of this achievement and I am very grateful to his hard work for pulling everything together.

About the author and contributors

Franco and the team at Pesda Press have been a pleasure to work with for the third time. Even though the team is spread round the globe it works seamlessly: if ever there was an advert for a virtual office this is it. Thanks for all your support and patience.

Finally, can I thank my wife Kate. When we finished *Ski Touring*, just as our son was born, she thought books were a thing of the past. Since then we have had a daughter, reprinted *Alpine Mountaineering* and produced a second edition of *Ski Touring*. I promise no more – for a bit at least. Thanks for your patience, tolerance and all the fun days we have had on skis together.

Photo acknowledgements

Photos in the first part of the book are by Bruce Goodlad, unless otherwise captioned. Photos of the tours are by the contributor, unless otherwise captioned.

About the author and contributors

A pen portrait of the author and each of the contributors can be found in the description of the first of the tours they have written.



Brian O'Connor on his way to Mont Rogneux.

Introduction

Ski touring / ski mountaineering is one of the best ways to enjoy the winter mountains. What other sport can open access to un-tracked wilderness, where you can lay your own trail as you climb up, then whoop with joy as you carve magnificent turns down through soft untracked snow?

In recent years ski touring, or as it seems to be increasingly referred to 'backcountry skiing', has undergone a revolution. Kit is lighter and easier to use, avalanche and weather forecasts are more sophisticated, and the advance in digital mapping on smart phones and GPS has made the winter mountains more accessible than ever. Accessibility does come at a price: it is easier to access wild remote places and so it is easier to get yourself into trouble if you don't have the skills to match.

This book is a selected guidebook to ski touring in the European Alps. While we will remind you of a few key skills, kit considerations and what avalanche skills you should have in the coming chapters, it is not an instructional manual, and the author assumes that you are comfortable with the skills outlined in his previous book *Ski Touring*.

This is a unique collaboration between a number of guides who have volunteered to contribute some of their favourite ski tours; you will see from their bios that we have accessed an incredible knowledge base, with decades worth of ski touring experience. The great advantage of being able to access this knowledge base is that the guides who have written up each tour have an intimate knowledge of the routes and have skied them recently so the information is correct and as up-to-date as possible.

This guidebook by its nature is selective; we have asked all the guides involved to share some of their favourite tours – there are many other ski tours out there but hopefully this book will help you explore the Alps before discovering your own favourite areas.

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The Author and Publisher of this book would remind the reader that:

Ski touring and ski mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. People participating in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions.

Every effort has been made to ensure that the content and instructions in this book cover all aspects of personal safety skills and techniques required in ski touring at beginner and up to intermediate level. The Author and Publisher cannot accept any responsibility for any accident, injury, loss or damage sustained while following any of the techniques described within.

If you feel that you need additional instruction in order to use this book then it is advised that you employ a suitably qualified and experienced mountain guide.



Heading for the Col Pale Rosse below the Grand Zebrù in the Ortler.

Ski Touring in the Alps

We can ski tour anywhere there is enough snow on the ground, and ski touring is happening all over the world. As a guide I have ski toured from the Arctic to the Antarctic and have been lucky enough to visit places as diverse as Japan and Armenia all on skis. So you may ask what is so unique and special about the European Alps? The answer is that there is no other mountain range on earth that has the incredible hut network and accessibility to high mountains that the ski areas in the Alps provide. There are many mountain huts in the world, but there are few other places where you can enjoy a hearty breakfast (well, bread and jam), wave goodbye to one guardian, and then eight hours later arrive at another hut, having had a great day's ski touring, to be greeted by a steaming cup of tea and then sit down to a three course dinner and wine, before settling in for a good night's sleep.

This hut network allows the ski tourist to travel up, over and through the mountains unencumbered with anything on their back other than their ski touring kit and essential safety equipment. Not having to carry any supplies other than the food for a day means you can glide through the mountains for days at a time with the minimum of effort. This allows the skier to enjoy the ups, as well as having the leg strength left to enjoy the downs.

When to ski tour in the Alps

Traditionally ski touring happened in the high mountains in the spring. This was because of a combination of factors. After the first big thaw and associated avalanche cycle the snow pack was much more stable, and as much of the touring was on glaciated terrain, we waited until later in the season when the glaciers were well covered in snow and the snow bridges were at their strongest. To a degree this is still the case in the high mountains, with the huts opening in early March when the glaciers have much of the winter's snowfall already lying on them.

However, this does not mean that you have to wait for the spring to go ski touring. As soon as the snow hits the ground you will see people out skiing; they just have to think about where and when they can tour.

It sounds obvious, but if the first few feet of snow in a season land on a hillside covered in big boulders then it will need a lot of snow to cover the boulders and allow you to ski. If the same snowfall lands on a grassy hillside then you will need far less snowfall to allow you to ski tour. When the first snow arrives I will look to go ski touring on the lower mountains where the ground allows us to ski without a huge depth of snow. This also has the advantage of generally more pleasant skiing conditions. The high mountains early in the season can be very cold, windy places, whereas the lower mountains with trees can be a much more pleasant place to start the ski season.

Early season ski touring is predominantly day tours, but the huts in some areas like the Queyras and Val Clarée open as soon as there is enough snow to tour, so in an average season this can be from early January or even December onwards.

As the season progresses, the more rocky areas will fill in, and many classic day tours are possible from January onwards. If you are looking to the higher mountains, the Silvretta huts in Austria open mid February, then the higher glaciated huts open from early March, most of them staying open until early May. The highest huts in areas like the Bernese Oberland stay open until the end of May or even into June, and the best ski touring conditions on the highest peaks like Mont Blanc can be mid April onwards, depending on the season.



Brian O'Connor skiing cold winter snow on the descent from Mont Ragneux.

Travelling to the Alps

It is always best to travel hopefully but have a plan B and C at the ready. So when you are planning your trip, think about how you will rearrange your logistics should the weather and conditions not let you carry out plan A. The key to this is not only having plan B and C, but being able to get to it.

I once had a trip booked to do a ski tour starting in Meiringen in northern Switzerland. I met the team there with a terrible forecast that was going to kick in after the first day. Luckily we had enough cars that we could change the plan. We spent the first day doing a brilliant day tour in good weather, then with a strong, disturbed northerly airstream we drove five hours south, escaped the weather and skinned to the Benevolo hut in the Gran Paradiso. We spent the rest of the week skiing great snow in the sun, whereas if we had stayed put we would have achieved very little. This relocation did require having enough vehicles, as doing it by public transport would have been almost impossible. I am not suggesting that you should drive from the UK, or always hire a car, but it is worth thinking about how to relocate should the weather dictate.



Mateo Maino skiing down from Mont Vélan in perfect spring snow.

How to use this book

The objective of this book is threefold: to inspire you to get your skins and skis out of the cupboard and get into the mountains; to make sure you have the skills you need to ski tour effectively and safely; and to suggest some amazing places to go ski touring.

Each ski tour has been selected by a mountain guide who has done the ski tour and has shared their experiences of the tour with the reader. Each tour includes a brief description of the tour, an overview map, its highlights and an overall flavour for the area. It then goes on to outline the best time of year to ski the tour, where you can find hut and accommodation information, weather and avalanche forecasts and other useful information. There is then a day-by-day tour description, with each day broken down into its key sections. We will not lead you by the nose through the tour; the description needs to be studied with a map. There are no GPS coordinates, so you will need to study the tour and put your own tour plan together. While it may seem as if this is the information that should be supplied in this book, it is only by studying the map that you will become intimate with the tour and its possibilities, making your life easier when on the mountain. (See also Tour Planning.)

Maps

We have included an overview map for each tour. This is not intended to replace the local topographic map for the tour, but it has enough detail to give you an overview of the area and help you to orientate the map. You will notice that the maps use a variety of scales; this has been necessary so that each tour will fit on a page or double page spread, so it is essential that you look at the local maps as some of the scales will not be ones that you may have come across before.

Ski tour grading

Most guidebooks use a grading system to help you select an appropriate tour for your experience, the weather and conditions. Any scale is extremely subjective and the same tour will never feel the same on any two days – the grading is given for ‘average conditions’. Average conditions would mean the average conditions that a particular ski tour would be done in, so for example, if it’s a glacial tour then mid season with a good covering of snow on the glacier.

There are a number of tour grading systems out there that all end up in roughly the same place, so rather than presenting the systems we can look at the terrain and then give the grade that will match. The three grading scales we will look at are the Blanchère, Traynard and that used by the Swiss Alpine Club (CAS). The latter can be particularly confusing if you are a mountaineer, as they use the same nomenclature as the Alpine Mountaineering grading system. To make life easier we will describe the terrain then mark up all the possible grades that it may equate to, though the Traynard scale is usually used to describe the steepest section of skiing on a tour and is often combined with the Blanchère. I have included the Blanchère in French, German and Italian as these are the languages that many of the ski texts are in.

Ski mountaineering

When you move into ski mountaineering terrain where you will need crampons, ice axe, use of a rope and crevasse rescue knowledge, the Blanchère Scale extends to:

	Terrain up to 30 degrees with basic mountaineering skills	SAM – Skier Alpiniste Moyen MAS – Mittlere Alpineskifahrer MSA – Medio Sciatore Alpinista
	Terrain 30 to 35 degrees and more advanced mountaineering terrain that may require short pitches of climbing.	BSA – Bonne skier alpiniste GAS – Gute Alpineskifahrer BSA – Buon Sciatore Alpinista
	Terrain over 35 degrees and necessary use of mountaineering techniques such as abseiling.	TBSA – Tres Bonne Skier alpiniste SGAS – Sehr Gute Alpineskifahrer OAS – Ottimo Sciatore Alpinista



Helen Muir enjoying some great powder in the Val Maira.

Val Maira Day Tours

By Martin Chester

Area overview

Val Maira is nestled in the bulge on the Italian / French border, about 100 miles south-west of Turin. It is just south of Monte Viso, with the Queyras over the border to the north-west. To the south-west is the Mercantour National Park and we are to the north of Isola 2000 on the main Alpine frontier chain. While it might be a long way south, the snow conditions are remarkably reliable here, with a wacky micro-climate dumping plentiful powder on this side of the range throughout the early winter.

Val Maira is a long, curving valley, running mostly east-west for 45 kilometres before curving north at the end. There are numerous side-valleys that shoot off the main feature, all adding up to provide a plethora of ski touring options on every aspect. With the valley floor at 1000 to 1600 metres above sea level, and the summits ranging from 2300 to 3400m, the valley is the perfect scale for day tours – from the mellow to the adventurous. Typical days out will involve at least 1000m of skinning, but you can usually ensure a greater descent by choosing a linear trip from a high starting point to a lower pick-up at the end of the day.

Within this relatively small corner of the Alps you can find almost every type of terrain imaginable. Wide, open slopes offer amazing spring snow to the north of Elva and Acceglio. The major peaks of the frontier ridge offer everything from classic couloirs to exposed ridges and mountaineering summits. But if the snow keeps falling and the avalanche risk mounts up, you can always find easy-angled, tree-covered slopes up as high as 2500m – so there is always something safe and enjoyable to do, whatever the weather gods throw at you.

A number of day tours are described, to demonstrate the variety of the area. As such they can be adapted and undertaken in any order to suit the conditions.



0 1km

▲
Monte
Pertusa
2738m

▲
Monte
Albrage
2908m

▲
Monte
Eighier
2574m

▲
Monte
Cervet
2984m

▲
Monte
Ruissas
2746m

▲
Rocca
Bianca
3021m

Ponte Soubeyran

▲
Monte
Boulliagna
2908m

▲
Monte
Cappel
2303m

**Monte Cervet
Tour**

**Monte Ruissas
Tour**

**Monte Soubeyran
Tour**

Chiapperra

Grange Pausa

Saretto

Ponte Maira

Lausetto

Acceglio

To
Dronero

Punta Bessie

▲
Monte
Soubeyran
2701m

Passo della
Cavalla

Lago Visaisa

**Monte Estelletta
Tour**

▲
Monte
Midia Sopra
2341m

▲
Monte
Estelletta
2316m

Lago d'Apsoi

**Traverse of the
Col d'Enchiausa**

Vale d'Apsoi

Col d'Enchiausa

Chialvetta

▲
Monte
Cros
2242m

▲
Monte
Oronaye
3104m

Pratorotondo

**Bric Boscasso
Tour**

▲
Bric
Boscasso
2588m

Lago Superiore
di Roburent

▲
Monte
Scaletta
2840m

La Bandia Longa

Cunial Vallonetto

▲
Monte
Cassorso
2778m

SS21

Argentera

▲
Monte
Oserot
2861m

To
Borgo San Dalmazzo

Grade

A collection of day tours with a range of difficulties – see the description for each day.

Season

Ski touring is possible here from the first snows of the winter to the early spring. The season is usually at its best here from early February to mid March.

Map

[Esquiar en Val Maira](#) 1:20000 sheet by Bruno Rosano. This excellent map has all the classic ski tours marked on it with colour grading.

Kit

These peaks are not glaciated, so lightweight ski touring day packs are adequate. Mountaineering equipment (rope, harness, crampons, axe etc.) can be added to suit the requirements of any mountaineering or steep skiing objectives.

Weather forecast

www.meteomont.gov.it/infoMeteo/index.do?inglese=true and your favourite weather app!

Avalanche forecast

www.arpa.piemonte.gov.it/englishversion

www.meteomont.gov.it/infoMeteo/index.do?inglese=true

Hotel information

The Hotel Londra is a popular choice, run by ski touring enthusiast Alessandro Bolfi.

Info@hotel-londra.eu

Another popular choice is the Pensione Ceaglio

www.ceaglio-vallemaira.it/index.php?lang=GB

Both hotels offer plenty of information regarding routes, conditions and transfers.

Useful information

Val Maira tourist information

www.vallemaira.org/en/tag/tourist-information/

Sort any ski rental equipment before you come, either in Cuneo www.ravaschietto.com/ or in the UK at

Outdoor Hire www.outdoorhire.co.uk/snow.php

Alternative guide books

The excellent guide book, *Charamoi mai en Val Maira* by Bruno Rosano is a true labour of love. It is only available in Italian and German, but with photos, illustrations and details this good, it hardly matters.

It is complemented by a superb annotated map [Esquiar en Val Maira](#) that gives you a lifetime's worth of information in one magnificent 1:20000 sheet.

At the time of writing, these are readily available in the valley, but not so easy to pick up in the UK.



Iain Muir descending Monte Ruissas.

Day tour 1 – Monte Ruissas

Grade F S2 SM	Starting altitude 1510m	
Aspect SW	Ascent 1230m	Descent 1230m

The north peak of Monte Ruissas is a great first day for any visitor to the valley. The route is obvious and uncomplicated, the open slopes give expansive views all the way to the summit (which provides a great viewpoint across the rest of the valley), and you return by a variation on the skinning line.

Start at the end of the cleared road in Lausetto (1510m) and follow the snow-covered road until it meets the river (1590m). Cross over and loosely follow the line of the summer road (as snow conditions dictate) to the first collection of buildings. Here you can follow the line of least resistance to the collection of buildings at Gr Durazza Sopra (1815m). Skin across open slopes, heading towards the top corner of the obvious stand of trees. The slopes ease in angle and open up to reveal the faint summit of Monte Cappel. Pass this on the right (leaving the high point on your left) to gain the broad col below the twin peaks of Monte Ruissas. These upper slopes are often ravaged by wind and sun, so pick the line of best snow cover to gain the ridge, and the marginally higher north peak. In descent, follow the rough line of skinning track or, if spring snow conditions prevail and your timing is right, traverse under the south peak to access the open south-facing bowl below. From c. 2500m traverse diagonally right (west) to regain the broad col and pass the high ground of Monte Cappel. From here the open slopes await and you can straighten out the line of ascent to enjoy a great ski back to Durazza to pick up the road back to the valley.



The final skin on the traverse of the Col d'Enchiausa.

Day tour 2 – Traverse of the Col d'Enchiausa

Grade PD S3 PD	Starting altitude 1485m	
Aspects NE, WNW and N	Ascent 1260m	Descent 1210m

An ideal second day in Val Maira is to complete one of the classic tours of the valley. The traverse of the Col d'Enchiausa is a long journey that allows you to explore the wealth of options in the area, and proves there is more to skiing in Val Maira than day tours to bag summits. From the car park in Chialvetta, a veritable hub of the valley where a great number of tours begin, skin up the frequented track to the hamlet of Pratorotondo. Follow the main skinning track (in common with many routes) past Viviere to pick up the switchbacks in the summer road. Follow the route of least resistance to point 1840m, where a prominent flattening in the gradient of the path coincides with an obvious bend and a summer trail sign to the Valle and Col d'Enchiausa. Take care not to blindly follow the wrong skinning track from here on, as many routes diverge in this area.

Skin up and over the flat plateau, taking care to identify the ridgeline of Arpet and the prominent feature of point 2285m. At 2130m, three paths fork, so be sure to take the central fork into the bowl of the true Valle Enchiausa. Skin up the right-hand flank of the hanging bowl above, to access the upper valley by passing to the right of Bric Mouliniere. The valley now stretches out again before you, with obvious route finding, to steepen and access the Col d'Enchiausa (2736m) at last.

A short, steep descent quickly eases to give mellow skiing on north-west facing slopes into the Valle d'Apsoi. A prominent roll (short steepening) at 2530m marks the start of the long descending traverse to the right (north) to reach the prominent shoulder above the north-east tip of Lago Apsoi, and traverse round above the Bonelli bivouac hut. Keep enough height on the traverse and it should be possible to easily ski to the east, to crest the edge of the flat area without too much effort. The shallow valley

(and broad ridge to its left) is north-facing and often contains fantastic snow, shaded by the ridgeline above. Ski, with pleasure, down the slopes to Visaisa Sopra. Then either, keep enough height and stay left with enough speed to gain the Visaisa lake, or milk every last roll through the trees and pole down the track. The lake will often be frozen, but make a judgement whether to skin around or across on the day (1900m).

Any hotel you are staying in should be able to organise a taxi pick-up.

Day tour 3 – Bric Boscasso

Grade PD S3 BS	Starting altitude 1485m	
Aspect NW	Ascent 1110m	Descent 1110m

You will, by now, have realised that the main focal hub in the valley is undoubtedly the bustling hamlet of Chialvetta. This is a starting point for a huge number of routes and gives you the best range of options on a day when you cannot decide. Just set off and let the conditions (and the other parties) dictate where to go, or where to avoid. Most teams head for the classic peaks of Bric Cassin and Monte Vanclava, which are great, leaving the quieter summits of Sologlio Bue or Bric Boscasso for those seeking fresh tracks.

Follow the common start from the previous route, to the bridge before Pratorotondo. Turn left across the river, widely passing the small Cassin chapel. Locate the open slope between the two streams. A prominent rocky crag will be obvious before you. Pass to the left of this to gain La Bandia Longa. Skin gently through trees and clearings. As you come out of the trees for the last time

Enjoying some great powder on Monte Midia Sopra.



(c. 2300m) the wide, open bowl will funnel you towards the ridge of Bric Boscasso. After gaining the prominent col where you can leave your skis, a short bootpack up the narrow ridge yields a rewardingly small summit with excellent views.

From the ski depot, you have a choice of descents: down the far side of Preit (if you have arranged a taxi); return by the route of ascent; or the best route in good snow is to descend the Cumbal Vallonetto (described below), taking a parallel line to the south of the ascent route.

Pole and push south along the ridge to gain the col at 2534m. A number of lines are possible, so let the conditions and best snow dictate the best line into the wide bowl. All tracks funnel together to the prominent stream junction and small flat area where two valleys meet at c. 2100m. From here, loosely follow the line of the stream, staying on the left bank as the stream bed deepens. When you reach the next stream junction (c. 1850m) be ready to break out left into more open slopes. A steepening at 1750m will bring you back to the line of the stream. It is easy to be drawn down the riverbed all the way – but some steep, rocky steps make this challenging in this lower section. Once past the craggy spot height (c. 1800m) on your right, the tight valley quickly opens out to regain the mellow pastures of the ascent. Ski back to the bridge and follow the tracks back to Chialvetta.

Day tour 4 – Monte Estelletta and Monte Midia Sopra

Grade F S2 SM	Starting altitude 1401m	
Aspects N and E	Ascent 1000m	Descent 1000m

Sooner or later you are bound to get a day of bad weather. When you do, be reassured that the Val Maira has a number of routes that provide superb tree-skiing (in well-spaced mature larch forest) on easy-angled slopes. Furthermore, being so far south, the tree line reaches up to 2350m in places. An ideal choice is the ascent of Monte Estelletta, continuing to the summit of Monte Midia Sopra if conditions and aspirations allow.

From the car park in Ponte Maira (in front of the café) cross the ski de fond area, past the pavilion, to enter the woods. There is a faint summer track which is often followed on snowshoes, but this is not such a good skinning line. Work your way up by any route to pass the farm buildings of Grangia Rossetto at 1534m. From here you take the line of least resistance between the stream beds, generally keeping right (west) to avoid most of the steeper rolls and occasional crags in the woods. Resist the temptation to swing left too soon as the skinning is easier on the open slopes to the right, and this will leave the good snow for the descent. Undulating and fiddly terrain soon yields to the open slopes above the forest as the slope eases, and you come out of the trees to skin the final, open slopes to Monte Estelletta.

Ski off to the north, following the broad ridge after a short step before putting the skins back on. The keen may ski a few pitches down the enticing meadows before going back up for more. The ridge-line of Monte Midia Sopra has a flat area, where you can leave your skis (at 2300m), before a short, sharp and exposed ridge leads, on foot, to a summit cross. If you are here on a clear day, the views from these summits (and especially down over the valley to Acceglio) are stunning.

From the ski depot, savour the meadows below before descending into the trees. It is possible to straighten out the line of ascent a little to get fresh tracks, but be sure to get across the Rio Selletta before too long to join the environs of the skinning track. Great skiing in well-spaced trees leads back past the farm buildings for a well-earned beer at the café and car park.



Matching turns on the descent from Monte Soubeyran.

Day tour 5 – Monte Soubeyran

Grade PD S2 BS for the easiest line; S3-S4 for the steeper descents	Starting altitude 1539m
Aspects W, N and S	Ascent 1160m
	Descent 1160m

This is a great trip weaving through some spectacular terrain, providing a number of options for steeper descents on return.

Park near the bridge just north of the lake beyond Saretto (1539m). An easy skin over open slopes soon leads to the steeper switchbacks of the road past Sorgente Pausa (1920m). Take time to check out the conditions of the appealing couloirs above and left of you as you skin this section – they are options for the way down. Let the valley (and road, if obvious) funnel you upwards to the flat area below Grangia Pausa. From here, hug the left flank to curl around Point Bessie to the south, then east of you. The slope eases again before a switchback up a steeper roll to gain a flat shoulder above the first of the prominent couloirs.

Cresting another small rise, head SSE toward Punta le Teste and the end of this mellow valley. Near the end, curl right (west) to gain the final bowl under Rocciasetto to gain the col at 2539m.

Skin diagonally up the right-hand slopes of this open bowl, aiming to gain the ridge below Monte Soubeyran at c. 2650m before the final 50m climb to the summit. You may have to do this on crampons depending on the conditions.

From the summit, there are a number of options for the descent, depending on conditions and ski ability. The easiest line is to return via the skinning route without difficulty or surprise.

A lofty traverse under the summit ridge to the north will give access to the col between Monte Soubeyran and the Aiguille de Barsin (2627m). From here, a steeper descent to the north-east will soon regain the skinning line at the prominent flat area above 2350m.

From this point where both routes come together, you can re-evaluate your options: continue via the route of ascent; or take one of the enticing couloirs spied on the ascent at the start of the day. The left-hand (north-westerly) is the least serious of the two and gives a great ski. Cruise easily northwards down the upper bowl, to gather at the start of the steeper ground. An initial roll hides the terrain from view, but not for long. Ski the obvious line of the couloir (35 to 40) knowing you are able to pass either side of the rocky divide halfway down. All too soon you will regain the switchback road and the skinning line, to ski the scrub-covered slopes back to the car.

Day tour 6 – Monte Cervet

Grade PD S2 BS	Starting altitude 1631m	
Aspect S and NW	Ascent 1350m	Descent 1350m

At the head of the valley, above Chiapperra, the terrain starts to feel much more rugged and wild. From here, the quintessential peaks of Monte Eighier, Monte Cervet and Monte Freide come into reach. These are great days out, and feel longer and more serious than those lower down the valley. With the right conditions and the correct timing (with an early start) this tour on Monte Cervet can provide powder and spring snow in equal measure.

From Ponte Soubeyran, the rocky ridgeline of Rocca Provenzale is obvious. Work your way up to gain the hanging valley to the right (east) of this feature. Follow the easiest line (usually on the right side) but being careful to recognise the threat from the slopes of Monte Boulliagna above and right. Before the angle eases to the col (at about 2150m), turn right to skin up the faint bowl, which steeply guards access to the hanging valley above. Quickly gain the plateau of the lake at 2461m before curving round to the right. Follow the obvious valley south-east at a steady gradient to the Passo di Cervet at 2861m. From the col turn left (north) away from the south ridge, taking the easiest-angled terrain across to the north-west ridge. These slopes are often hammered by the wind, and you may need to proceed on foot, depending on conditions. Follow the easiest line up the ridge (increasingly rocky) to gain the summit. Again – this is a stunning viewpoint.

For the descent, follow the line of ascent to gain the Passo di Cervet. Enjoy the great skiing in this north-west facing bowl, before carefully turning left. You are now heading onto steep south-facing slopes, so be aware of the temperature and increased risk if you are late or it is especially hot. Once in the south-facing valley, it is often possible to enjoy fine spring snow back down to the car at Ponte Soubeyran.

Possible variants or alternatives

There are endless variations and combinations in this valley, so buy the local guide book and map, then let conditions and local knowledge steer you.

About Martin Chester

www.martinchester.co.uk

As an International (IFMGA) Mountain and Ski Guide, kayak coach, and previously the Director of Training at Plas y Brenin (National Mountain Centre), Martin is one of the most experienced and highly qualified professionals in the outdoor industry. While he may be a jack-of-all-trades across the spectrum of adventure sports, skiing is his primary passion and self-confessed 'desert island' activity. Martin originally fell in love with skiing as a way to explore the Alps in winter – exploring the nooks and crannies of the mountains with his wife to be. Exploration and adventure has been a constant theme since, leading guided ski trips from the obscure corners of the Alps to the Himalaya, and everywhere in between.



Martin has a passion for helping others to fulfil their potential in challenging environments, and has played a key role in the development of coach education and leadership awards for numerous National Governing Bodies of sport. He is now the Coaching Development Officer for Mountain Training UK, has been involved in developing UK avalanche education, and been a technical expert for both the BMG and BBC following avalanche incidents. Martin wrote, produced, and presented the educational *Off Piste Essentials* DVD for the British Mountaineering Council, provided the climbing expertise and coaching for *Hidden Talent* on Channel 4, and has made numerous appearances as a subject matter expert for the BBC on TV and radio. He is the backcountry editor for *Fall-line Skiing* magazine and has been a regular contributor to the outdoor press.

Martin now enjoys a diverse range of work – all connected by making great things happen in the great outdoors. Whether that is as a Guide with a wide range of private clients, or as an industry expert helping organisations fulfil their potential. He can be found via www.martinchester.co.uk and is always up for a great adventure or interesting project.

ALPINE SKI TOURING

SELECTED SKI TOURS IN THE EUROPEAN ALPS

This is a guidebook of selected ski tours in the European Alps. We have chosen classic ski tours at a variety of grades spread throughout the Alps, with some well-known venues and others not yet on the radar of British ski tourers. The 22 places selected have ample routes to keep you busy for a week or more of ski touring and will allow you to get to know the area sufficiently well to inspire you to make up your own tours.

In order to be as up-to-date as possible, the routes have been contributed by UIAGM/IFMGA guides who know the area well and have toured there recently.



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