XC Skiing in Switzerland’s Magnificent Engadin Valley
AMC Adventure Travel Trip #2421
February 11-18, 2024

TRIP OVERVIEW

Enjoy a week of outstanding XC skiing in Switzerland’s Engadin valley. It is located about 135 miles southeast of Zurich in the middle of Engadin valley. The region is centered in Pontresina, Switzerland, a high altitude alpine resort renowned for its XC skiing facilities.
Pontresina can reasonably claim to be continental Europe’s top XC ski destination. It boasts of over 240KM of classically groomed XC ski trails, more than any other resort. In addition, Pontresina is located at close to 6,000’ elevation, the highest XC ski location by 1,000’-2,000’ of other major resorts. This ensures cool temperatures for optimal snow cover. These excellent attributes are well recognized: the Engadin ski marathon, world’s second largest classic-style XC race, takes place here every March.

Excellent support facilities contribute to our enjoyment of the area. The “Swiss-class” public transportation system - frequent buses and trains - quickly takes us to the furthest trail entry points. Many family-run restaurants are distributed throughout the entire ski area, allowing us to stop trailside every day for a hot lunch and a chance to warm up.

Scene from the Engadin ski marathon [Andy Mettler]

Location of the Engadine region in Switzerland and its primary local areas  Cicerone Press
We plan to stay at Pontresina’s historic Sport Hotel. Originally built in 1881 and recently completely renovated, its classic Art Nouveau styling provides old world comfort and charm. This is complemented by excellent cuisine and all modern conveniences.

While this trip is focused on XC skiing, there are other possibilities as well. Pontresina is also an exceptional downhill ski area with 88 slopes and ~350km of trails. There are also several hundred kilometers of prepared winter hiking trails. For those that are culturally minded there are several museums in the Engadin valley where one could learn about the history of the region, the evolution of local mountaineering activities, and local artists of national renown.

This trip can be enjoyed on its own or combined with #24xx XC Skiing in the Austrian Alps for a two-week adventure.

A summertime view of the Engadin valley [courtesy Steve Cohen]

**Itinerary**

Every day you can participate in ski expeditions guided by the trip’s leaders, targeted at participants with intermediate classic-style Nordic skiing ability. Breathe in the fresh, clean air as the trails take you through fields and hamlets with stunning views of the surrounding white-capped mountains. Usually we will leave mid-morning and return to the hotel mid to late afternoon. A typical day’s trip will depart after breakfast and stop for snacks or lunch during the day. We return to the hotel usually around mid-afternoon in time to relax or use its spa facilities. This is followed by a leisurely dinner.
More specifically:

- **Saturday February 10** - Depart the US for an overnight flight to Zurich.
- **Sunday February 11** - Arrive Pontresina after a 3-4 hour train ride. Rent XC skis at a local shop.
- **Monday February 12** - Full group ski together on easy trails.
- **Tuesday February 13** - **Saturday February 17** - Group splits into two sections each one led by a trip leader.
- **Sunday February 18** - Depart after breakfast.

**What to Expect**

**Difficulty Rating:** This trip is rated a difficulty of **Moderate**. To enjoy this trip, you should be able to ski 12-20km (8-14 miles) or ~4 hours daily for several days in a row. Our pace will be relaxed so that we may enjoy the scenery. Advanced skiers will have alternate and additional trail options for a greater challenge.

**Weather:** Weather wise, we can expect an even mix of sun and clouds during our trip. The typical daytime February temperatures are in the low twenty degrees. Mountain weather can be unpredictable and cross-country ski apparel including suitable insulation layers will be required. See the gear list at the end of this prospectus for more info.

**Meals & Lodging:** Our accommodations will be at a traditional Swiss hotel within walking distance to the trail system. All rooms have twin beds. Solo travelers will be paired with a same gender roommate. Single rooms *might* be available with a single supplement. Breakfast is a large buffet with all types of fruits, meats, eggs, yogurts, breads, pastries, etc. Dinner is a leisurely, elegant multi-course affair.

**Participant Expectations:** This is a group activity and we will be spending many, but not all, hours together. We expect that everyone will pitch in and contribute to helping each other have a great time.

**TRIP PRICE**

The trip will cost $2,800 for AMC members and $2,900 for non-members. Non-members can join AMC for $50 by clicking [here](#).

**Included in the price:** 7 nights of lodging at a 3* hotel, 7 breakfasts, 7 group dinners, local bus & train transport, trail pass, and emergency medical and evacuation insurance. A limited number of single rooms (single supplement) might be available at an additional cost.

**Not included in the price:** The cost of ski rentals, lunches, drinks, and incidentals - essentially anything not specifically detailed above, *is not* included in the price. We recommend budgeting ~$20/day for lunches, and ~$130/week for ski rentals.
Round-trip airfare (~$1300) and land travel to / from your airport is not included. We will provide information on suggested flights when it is time to book your flights.

The trip fee includes an AMC overhead charge to cover the administrative expenses of offering AMC Adventure Travel excursions and, in accordance with AMC, you are subsidizing some of the leaders’ cost. The trip fee also includes emergency medical and evacuation insurance coverage which is required by AMC.

The price for this excursion is based on quotes or estimates obtained at the time the trip was submitted to the Adventure Travel Committee for approval. The final price will be adjusted in accordance with the best final arrangements we can make. As with all Adventure Travel excursions, this trip is run on a non-profit basis; any savings we achieve, as well as any cost increases we incur, will be shared by trip participants.

Application Process

We expect a group size of 16 people, including the 2 leaders. This trip is likely to fill quickly. If you are interested, you should apply as soon as possible.

To apply, you need to download, complete, and submit the online application.

A deposit of $1,000 is due with application. A check payable to the Appalachian Mountain Club should be sent to: Stephen Cohen 2802 Arbor Drive #1 Madison, WI 53711. Your check will not be deposited until you are accepted onto the trip. Once both your application and deposit check have been received a telephone conversation will take place after your application is received with the leader/co-leader to determine if you are a good fit for the trip. The final balance of $1800 will be due September 1, 2023.

You will not be accepted and your check will not be deposited until the leaders have determined by telephone conversation with you that you and the trip are a good match. Deposit checks from waitlisted applicants will not be cashed until a spot is available, the applicant is accepted onto the trip, and they confirm their continued interest.

The price will be adjusted in accordance with the best final arrangements we can make and currency fluctuations. Any savings we achieve, as well as any cost increases, will be passed back to you. Our cost estimates are conservative, and so a refund is considerably more likely than a price increase.

Your acceptance onto the trip will not happen until the leader(s) have determined by a telephone conversation with you that you and the trip are a good match. Once you have been officially accepted your deposit check will be processed, the trip’s cancellation policy will take effect including a $300 minimum cancellation fee, and final payment will be due by September 15, 2022.
Terms and Conditions

By booking a trip with us, you agree with the terms and conditions. Please read this information and contact the trip leaders with questions. Cancellation after the trip has been declared a “go” will incur a minimum $300 fee.

Your Trip Leaders

Steve Cohen - Since 2012 Steve has planned and led thirty-three Adventure Travel trips to such destinations the Haute Route (from Chamonix, France to Zermatt, Switzerland), the Alta Via II through the Italian Dolomites, the tour of the Jungfrau region (Switzerland), Patagonia, the high mountains huts of Austria, etc. Steve is an avid XC skier for the past 15 years; he skis both classic and skate style. He developed the companion Austrian XC ski trip and led it in 2015, 2016, 2018, 2020. He lived in Europe for four years and is fluent in both the French and German languages. Steve can be reached at 617-997-6861 or scohen1234@gmail.com. He is past-chair of Adventure Travel.

Ann Boland - Ann is an associate leader with Adventure Travel and enjoys exploring new areas in hiking boots or on skis. She has traveled extensively in the United States, Europe and Asia, organizing multi-day hiking trips for friends and family. Ann started XC skiing during her college days in New Hampshire and it continues to be one of her favorite pastimes in the winter. She went on her first Adventure Travel XC ski trip to Italy as a participant in 2023 and is very excited to be co-leading a XC ski trip with Steve to Switzerland in 2024!
Required Gear:
- Passport, Medical Insurance Card, and EU-required Vaccine Credentials
- Backpack (20-25L) with waterproof pack cover
- 2 insulated water bottles
- Personal first aid kit with head lamp
- Outer-layer: xc ski jacket, pants, hat, gloves/mittens
- Base and Mid-Layers: wool or Polartec socks, pants, and tops
- Waterproof hiking boots for walking around town or in case you want to go snowshoeing
- Sun protection: sunglasses, lotion, and lip balm
- Leisure clothes for travel and hotel
- Personal toiletries

Optional Recommendations:
- Ski Gear. You can rent or bring your own.
- Gaiters
- Ear plugs for light sleepers
- Ziploc baggies for packing snacks
- Reading materials for breaks in the action
- Luggage locks