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WHAT YOU'LL FIND HERE:

- Welcome to the Chugach!
- What to Expect
- Equipment List
- Flotation Backpacks
- Shipping Information
- Travel Information and Insurance

WELCOME TO THE CHUGACH

You have taken the first step to putting yourself in one of the most exotic, wild, steepest, and deepest places on earth. With almost 30 years of guiding experience under our rotors, Valdez Heli-Ski Guides is excited to make this your greatest adventure. It is going to be an experience of a lifetime, and we are here, year-round, to help you prepare for the euphoria you are about to encounter. Please review the information we've pulled together for you, and don't hesitate to call or email us with questions any time prior to your trip.

WHAT TO EXPECT

It is important you understand the dangers involved with helicopters and backcountry skiing. Our guides are expertly trained and will do their very best to protect you in the dangerous heli-skiing environment. However, your personal knowledge and skills are your absolute best protection. Heli-skiing in Alaska's Chugach Mountains will be one of the most exciting adventures you will ever embark on, but please be aware of the risks involved.

Valdez Heli-Ski Guides prides itself on being an education-based guide service. We encourage you to learn as much as possible from our experience in the field. Feel free to ask your guide questions. Take advantage of his or her knowledge. The more you know, the safer your Chugach experience will be. Just as you need to depend on your guide, he or she also needs to be able to depend on you. Your knowledge and cooperation will help lessen the overall risks for everyone. Think of yourself as a team member and your guide as the team's leader. When your guide is confident in you and the team's safety, he or she will be more willing to take you into even more exciting terrain.

POSSIBLE HAZARDS

Avalanches. Before you come to Alaska, become familiar with avalanches and their dynamics. Our guide staff is trained to the highest industry standards in avalanche evaluation, and we will do our best to protect you. But the more you know personally, the safer you will be and the more fun you will have.

Exposure. The Chugach have long steep pitches, towering cliffs, and enormous hanging glaciers. Falling in the wrong place can be fatal. While not all of our ski runs include these hazards, many do. Controlled skiing is extremely important, no matter where you are. Do not ski over a knoll without knowing there is a skiable slope below. If possible study the slope you will be skiing during your approach in the helicopter. Try to remember where cliffs and ice falls are located. Do not deviate from your guide's route unless you have previously discussed other options. Do not ski an alternate route without first discussing it with your guide. Respect his or her decision to say no to your request. To learn from his or her experience, ask your guide why he or she has decided against the alternate route.

Crevasses. The Chugach are heavily glaciated mountains. Expect to ski on glaciers on most of our gentle terrain. The steep slopes at higher elevations are usually glacier free; however, expect bergshrunds and glaciation at the bottom of these steep slopes, a common spot for glaciers to begin.

A bergshlund is created when a glacier pulls away from the bottom of a steep slope. The size of the bergshlund can change in a single day, especially in warm weather, and will grow larger throughout the spring. Bergshrunds are usually easy to cross but may require a little jump. Once over, you are now on a glacier. Although the terrain is gentle and easy to ski, follow your guide's route exactly. Stay in his or her tracks, if he or she insists, to avoid falling into a crevasse that is not visible because of snow coverage.

Falling in crevasses can be fatal. Our guides are trained in crevasse rescue. You will be wearing a climbing harness at all times while skiing with us. If you fall in a crevasse, this harness will help your guide with a rescue.



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Some crevasses are shallow and the fall will not hurt you. But it may be impossible for you to extract yourself without your guide's additional equipment and training. Your guide carries this rescue equipment at all times. Lift his or her pack sometime: it's heavy!

Sluffs. Sluffs are small, loose snow avalanches and are often created by turns made by a skier or snowboarder. In the Chugach, most runs are steep and therefore prone to sluffs. Learn how to manage this slow-moving snow and ski with it conservatively. Your guide will teach you basic sluff management prior to skiing sluff potential terrain.

Liability waiver. Please take the time to read our liability waiver contained within these materials. You will be asked to sign it when you arrive at VHSG. The above list touches on just some of the skiing hazards encountered in the Chugach. The more you ski here, with attentive eyes and ears, the more you will learn. The more you learn, the safer your experience will be for you, your guide and the other skiers and riders on your team. A skier thought to be a threat to him or herself or to the team will be asked to leave without a refund and will not be allowed as a return guest.

It is not our goal to scare you away from skiing with us. We simply want you to understand the type of skiing we offer and the risks involved. It's these risks, and our guides, terrain and powder, that are sure to make heli-skiing with Valdez Heli-Ski Guides the most exciting experience of your life!

AIRBAGS/FLOATATION BACKPACKS

VHSG offers Mammut airbag packs to members who choose to use one. If you plan to bring your own, we recommend smaller-sized packs (20 liters or less) that will fit more easily into the helicopter basket.

Please be aware that not all airlines allow airbag cartridges in checked luggage.

SHIPPING INFORMATION

If you are shipping skis, snowboards, or other gear to Alaska, we recommend shipping through FedEx. UPS and other shipping options to Alaska can take longer than expected. With FedEx you can also "reverse the label," which is the easiest way to ship your gear home at the end of your ski week. We are happy to help you with your shipping needs, but please make sure your shipping plans are established prior to your departure from Valdez.

Use the following address for shipping equipment to Alaska:

Valdez Heli-Ski Guides
HC 1 Box 85
Mile Post 35
Richardson Highway
Valdez, AK 99686
(907) 835-4528



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TRAVEL INFORMATION & INSURANCE

GETTING TO VALDEZ

To start your Valdez Heli-Ski Guides adventure you must first get to the Anchorage International Airport, serviced by daily flights from several major U.S. cities.

Next, most of our members fly to Valdez on a 35-minute shuttle flight available from Ravn Alaska. The Saturday flight departs Anchorage around 5:05 p.m. and arrives in Valdez around 5:50 p.m. A VHSG representative will meet you here for transport to The Tsaina Lodge. Your departure from Valdez the following Saturday will be on the same flight, departing around 6:10 p.m. and arriving in Anchorage around 6:55 p.m. Ravn Alaska flights are available but these work best with your VHSG heli-ski itinerary.

Another option for getting to the Tsaina Lodge, allowing you to see a little more of Alaska if you can allocate the time in your travel schedule is to drive from Anchorage. The Glenn and Richardson highways are well maintained year-round and the five-hour drive from Anchorage to the Tsaina Lodge around the north side of the Chugach Mountains is stunning. (All major rental car companies are available at the Anchorage Airport.)

Ravn Alaska / 800.866.8394 / flyravn.com
Alaska Airlines / 800.252.7522 / alaskaairlines.com
Delta Airlines / 800.221.1212 / delta.com
United / 800.241.6522 / united.com

LODGING IN ANCHORAGE

You may choose to arrive in Alaska a day or two prior to your heli-ski adventure. If you're staying in Anchorage, VHSG recommends the Crowne Plaza Anchorage-Midtown or the Hotel Captain Cook.

[Crowne Plaza Anchorage-Midtown](#)

907.433.4100
109 W. International Airport Rd.
Anchorage, AK 99518

[The Hotel Captain Cook](#)

800.843.1950 or 907.276.6000
939 W. 5th Avenue
Anchorage, AK 99501

INSURANCE

As stated in the reservation form, our refund and cancellation policies are firm. Therefore we strongly recommend that you purchase travel insurance.



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EQUIPMENT LIST

SKI-DAY ESSENTIALS

- › Avalanche transceiver. VHSG provides a Mammut transceiver to each guest.
- › Shovel. VHSG provides a Mammut shovel to each guest.
- › Probe. VHSG provides a Mammut avalanche probe to each guest.
- › Skiing harness. VHSG provides a Mammut harness to each guest.
- › Airbag. VHSG provides a Mammut airbag pack to carry extra gloves, goggles, hat, clothing, food, and water.
- › Skis and bindings. All-mountain and powder skis and snowboards are highly recommended. Use only top-quality bindings that are properly adjusted before you arrive in Alaska. Powder skis and snowboards give you the confidence to ski challenging terrain and snow conditions with ease, taming even the steep and deep slopes of Valdez. Demo skis are complimentary for all VHSG members.
- › **Bring YOUR Ski boots.** Top-quality, well fitted, comfortable boots are critical! Make sure you have skied many days in your boots prior to arriving in Valdez, especially if they are new this season. Have the cants adjusted by a professional boot fitter early in the ski season. Poorly fitted boots can ruin your Chugach experience. *Be sure to bring your ski boots as carry-on luggage on your flight.*
- › Ski poles. Ski poles are provided with VHSG demo skis. If you bring your own skis and poles, make sure you bring an extra pole basket in case you lose one.
- › Goggles. Bring **two pair of goggles** with lenses for both fun sun and flat light. You may also need a fog cloth.

CLOTHING & PERSONAL ITEMS

- Think warm, dry, breathable layers!** Use a layering system to prevent overheating. The temperature can vary dramatically from summit to valley floor, and you can work up a sweat skiing up to 30,000 vertical feet in a day. Valdez Heli-Ski Guides logo jackets, vests, hats, and other items are available for sale onsite in the Tsaina Lodge.
- › GORE-TEX jacket.
A solid, waterproof shell jacket.
 - › GORE-TEX ski pants. High-quality pants are essential in deep snow.
 - › Ski gloves. Warm gloves for early season or lightweight gloves for late spring.
 - › Hat. Warm ski hat or headband.
 - › Fleece or down sweater and vest.
A sweater-vest combo is great for maintaining comfort in all temperatures.
 - › Long underwear. Light- or midweight polypropylene or wool.
 - › Sunscreen. Dermatone SPF 23 or equivalent.
 - › Chapstick. Dermatone SPF 23 or equivalent. It can also help prevent frostbite.
 - › Sunglasses. Quality lenses with ultraviolet protection are essential.

FOR LIFE AT THE TSAINA

- First and foremost, *you are here to SKI.* Pack only the necessities; leave the rest behind. With daily laundry service, you can pack light.
- › Street shoes or boots. Suitable for walking in snow, in mud, and on ice outside the lodge.
 - › Slippers or booties
 - › Book(s) and magazines
 - › Swimsuit for the hot tub.
 - › Gym clothes. If 200,000 vertical feet in a week isn't enough for you!
 - › Laptop and charger.
There's wifi throughout the lodge.

OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT

- › Ski helmet. Make sure you have used it, and it fits properly prior to arriving in Valdez.
- › Therm-ic or Hotronics foot warmers. Nice for March skiing but rarely needed in April.

