



WHAT YOU'LL FIND HERE:

- › Welcome to the Chugach!
- › Floatation Backpacks
- › What to Expect
- › Shipping Information
- › Equipment List
- › 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 26 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 and the easier your guide's job will be. Just as you need to depend on your guide, he or she also needs to be able to depend on you. A guide's job is an extremely dangerous one. 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 if 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 while 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 bergshrund is created when a glacier pulls away from the bottom of a steep slope. The size of the bergshrund 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.



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.

Personal injury. Ski in control. Use skis designed for off-piste skiing, not racing. Fat skis, sold by Salomon, are highly recommended for the type of terrain and snow conditions you will be skiing in Valdez. These high-performance skis make skiing in powder and variable snow a dream and increase the longevity of your leg muscles.

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 client.

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 package guests 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.

If you have an **ABS backpack** (non-refillable compressed nitrogen), we recommend you ship your full cartridges to the VHSG office in Alaska.

If you have a **Snowpulse or BCA backpack** (refillable compressed air), you will likely need to have the canister filled in Alaska. If this is the case, VHSG can provide this service for a \$50 fee. You need to ship your canister directly to us in advance of your trip; we will fill it and have it ready for you upon your arrival. **Please include your name and the dates you are skiing with your cartridge, and send 2 weeks prior to your arrival.**

KEEP IN MIND, Mammut airbags are complimentary with your package. Feel free to use one of ours to avoid the hassle of carrying or shipping your own bag!

SHIPPING INFORMATION

If you are shipping skis, snowboards, or other gear to Alaska, we recommend shipping through FedEx. USPS 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
Milepost 35 Richardson Highway
Valdez, AK 99686
(907) 835-4528



info@valdezheliskiguides.com / valdezheliskiguides.com / 907.835.4528

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 clients 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. Other Ravn Alaska flights are available but these work best with your VHSG heli-ski itinerary. If you arrive or depart at unscheduled times, an additional shuttle fee may be incurred.

There are two other options for getting to Valdez, allowing you to see a little more of Alaska if you can allocate the time in your travel schedule. 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.) From mid- to late-April, you can also board the high-speed ferry just 40 miles south of Anchorage for a four-hour sailing across Prince William Sound (www.dot.state.ak.us/amhs/).

But no matter how you get here, you need to be in Valdez by 6 p.m. or at the Tsaina Lodge by 6:30 p.m. on the first Saturday of your itinerary for our evening orientation with drinks and appetizers.

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. Travel Guard Insurance is a VHSG favorite.

TRAVEL GUARD
CHARTIS 



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 new this season. Have the cants adjusted a Mammut harness to each guest.
- › **Mammut Airbag.** VHSG provides a Mammut airbag pack to carry extra gloves, goggles, hat, clothing, food, and water.
- › **Skis and bindings.** All-mountain skis or powder skis are highly recommended. High-performance racing skis are not recommended! Use only top-quality bindings that are properly adjusted before you arrive in Alaska. Powder skis give you the confidence to ski challenging terrain and snow conditions with ease, taming even the steep and deep slopes of Valdez. Rental skis are complimentary for all VHSG package guests. **Advanced reservations are required due to limited sizes and styles.**
- › **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 rental 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 5,000 vertical feet in a day. VHSG recommends Mammut ski and mountaineering clothing to keep you warm and dry! Valdez Heli-Ski Guides logo jackets, vests, hats, and other items are available for sale onsite in the VHSG office.

- › **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 IN THE LODGE

First and foremost, **you are here to SKI.** Pack only the necessities; leave the rest behind. Your travels will be easier, and you'll have more space in your small but cozy room nestled in the pristine Chugach Mountains. With a complimentary guest laundry room, you can pack light. You can store your outerwear in our gear room at the end of each day. Leave your boots on the boot dryers overnight, and they'll be warm and ready to charge each morning.

- › **Street shoes or boots.** Suitable for walking in snow, in mud, and on ice outside the lodge or in town.
- › **Slippers or booties**
- › **Book(s) and magazines**
- › **Gym clothes.** If 125,000 vertical feet in a week isn't enough for you!
- › **Laptop and charger.**
There's wifi throughout the lodge.
- › **Souvenir from home.** It's always nice to leave a little bit of yourself in the Tsaina Bar!

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.

