



## **WELCOME TO THE CHUGACH**

You have taken the first step in immersing yourself in one of the most famous and coveted heli-ski mountain ranges on the planet. With almost 30 years of experience under our rotors, Valdez Heli Ski Guides is excited to lead you safely through every step. Please review the information we've compiled for you and don't hesitate to call or email us with questions any time up until your trip.

### **WHAT TO EXPECT**

We pride ourselves in being an education-based guide service. This means you will be guided through the learning process by professionals, and applying these new skills and knowledge to your experience every day through a progression. Whether you are a seasoned veteran or completely new to heli-skiing in Alaska, the development of your mountain expertise is an infinite and rewarding pursuit. Your growing knowledge and skills will combine with capable guides into lifelong relationships forged in the some of the wildest, steepest, and deepest mountains in the world.

Cooperation and communication are the keys to safety. Be ready to absorb the experience and let us guide you through the steps. The more you know, the safer you will be, and the more you follow your Guide's lead, the more the experience will blossom. Just as you need to depend on your guide, they need to be able to depend on you. Your knowledge and cooperation will lessen the overall risks for everyone. You are a valuable member of a small, elite team, set in the backdrop of the magical Chugach Mountains.

### **POSSIBLE HAZARDS**

You are well on your way to an epic heli-ski trip out of the famous Tsaina Lodge in Valdez, Alaska. It's important to you that you are aware

of all the hazards this trip entails. It's impossible to completely eliminate all risk, but you want to study up, and be able to mitigate those risks, and increase your safety margins. Some of the unique Alaskan hazards in the Chugach Mountains are Avalanches, Exposure, and Crevasses.

On day one, before you fly into the majesty of the Chugach, you will go through an extensive mountain safety and helicopter safety briefing, avalanche rescue training, and gear orientation and outfitting.

Our guide's are trained to the highest industry standards in avalanche education. We run a professional avalanche forecasting and snow safety program developed for the specific conditions of our area. Each guide plays an integral role in this daily hazard reduction program run by a lead avalanche forecaster.

It's called the Alaska Factor. Everything that makes this the greatest skiing in the world, also makes for big hazards and exposure. Controlled skiing is extremely important. Your guide will be grooming you for a long career of mountain adventure. What the movies portray about Alaskan skiing and riding and what the VHSG safety program is all about are different. "There are old skiers, and there are bold skier's, but there are no old, bold skiers." You will notice we have some seasoned, old ski guides.

The Chugach mountains are covered in big glaciers. Many of our runs are on glaciers. Bergschrunds and crevasses are common. You will need to follow your guides instructions closely to avoid these hazards. Normal precaution for skiing in glaciated terrain in Alaska requires wearing a harness while skiing. Each guide is skilled at crevasse rescue, but the number one safety tool is following your guides instructions and safe travel protocols.



The Chugach is legendary for steep slopes where maritime, moist snow, sticks to some of the steepest faces ever skied. Sluffs, or loose snow avalanches, can occur in steep terrain throughout the Chugach Mountains. There's nothing more exhilarating than skiing down a steep face with sluffing snow. While it can be safe, the risk is obvious. If your group chooses to venture into these conditions, your guide will expertly teach and guide you through the progression of sluff management.

### **LIABILITY WAIVER**

Please take the time to read through our liability waiver. You are embarking on a true adventure, and you need to clearly understand the risks. All heli skiing is not alike, and we advise against making general assumptions. Instead, you should carefully read the liability waiver, and all materials we share with you before your trip starts.

### **AIRBAGS/FLOATATION BACKPACKS**

We offer [Mammut airbag packs](#) to all guests. If you plan to bring your own, we recommend smaller size packs, 20 liters or less.

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.

Use the following address for shipping equipment to Alaska:

**Valdez Heli Ski Guides**  
**HC-1 Box 85**  
**Mile 35 Richardson Hwy**  
**Valdez, AK 99686**  
**907-835-4528**

### **TRAVEL INFORMATION**

To start your VHSG trip, you must first get to the Anchorage International Airport, serviced by daily flights from several major U.S. cities.

Next, most guests fly to Valdez on a 35 minute shuttle flight available from [RavnAir Alaska](#). The Saturday flights depart Anchorage around 5:05 pm, and arrive in Valdez around 5:50 pm. A VHSG representative will meet you here for transport to the Tsaina Lodge or other accommodations. Your departure from Valdez on the following Saturday will be on the same flight, departing around 6:10 pm, and arriving in Anchorage around 6:55 pm.

Another option which allows for a little more time to see Alaska, is to rent a vehicle and [drive to Valdez](#). All major rental car companies are available at the Anchorage Airport. The Glenn and Richardson Highways are well maintained. The average drive time is approximately 5 hours.

### **LODGING IN ANCHORAGE**

We recommend the [Crowne Plaza Anchorage](#) or the [Hotel Captain Cook](#).