

Eagles Grimentz Week



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The Grimentz off piste training week (9th — 16th March 2019) served as my introduction to the Eagles. It's been a while since I've had any ski lessons and wasn't sure what Eagles level I'd be skiing at so this seemed perfect.



Grimentz is a lovely little Swiss village. Combined with the Zinal area it has a reasonable amount of resort skiing and as we soon

found out, lots and lots of the good stuff. The group numbered 24 in total and was split into 4 groups on the first day. The first two days we spent half a day with each of the 4 instructors or guides, so they could each see what our skiing was like and give us some tips to work on through the week. Following that we would spend a full day with each instructor/guide. The format worked well as each had their strengths.

The groups were carefully chosen and our group got on well. We were all strong skiers and everyone was in their 20's or 30's, apart from Ed who seemed to be the most youthful of all of us with endless amounts of energy and a keen-ness to do any jump or bit of tree skiing possible.

On the first two days we had some fresh snowfall but with poor visibility we took the opportunity to work on technique and do some avalanche drills. At one point I was getting so much feedback and trying to think about it, I almost forgot how to ski altogether!



Fresh tracks down Lona 2

On day three the sun came out so it was time to play in the fresh powder. Marco found some nice lines down Lona 1 as we waited in anticipation for the Lona 2 drag to open. We waited longer than expected but first tracks was worth it. No lunch stops when you have weather and snow like this! We skied the back of the Orzival in the afternoon with a nice skin out to Grimentz. It wasn't long before everyone had removed all but a baselayer.



Marco giving some tips before we drop in



Ben Pfender





1: Instructor Tom Saxlund skiing the back of Orzival. 2: The skin back out to Grimentz

Kenny was next. We started with a hike along the Roc D'Orzival ridge to ski into the North East face, which was completely untouched — so good we did it again. In the afternoon we skied the Zinal side off the Corne down to the famous Moiry dam. Ben sat on the dam taking pictures and I felt the pressure to ski it well for the camera. I set off gung-ho and as you would expect, I had a spectacular crash. Fortunately Ben's camera didn't work and I pretended the crash never happened!



Hike along the Roc D'Orzival ridge



The hike was worth it. Ed Young skiing the North East side of the Orzival



View of the ski down to the Moiry dam



Ben Kelsey skiing the Moiry dam edge

On day five Graham took us down some steeper couloirs off the north side of Corne De Sorebois towards Grimentz. After a few runs of this we took another tour to the dam. This time we opted for the left side. Although it was steeper it had a bit more snow and I was able to ski it a little better. The wind and snow picked up but Graham didn't hold back taking us down some more gullies on the north side of Orzival. Although not the best visibility or weather, it was another superb day of skiing.



Ben P and Ben K ski down steeper gullies



Ben Pfender skis the right side of the Moiry dam

By the end of the week I was feeling confident in the deeper snow, however this changed on the final day. A dump of thick heavy snow dubbed 'elephant snot' was tough going and on my thinner skis. I was struggling to stay standing. Tom taught us a different technique to get down, which I just about got the hang of. The avalanche risk was at 4 and we stuck to areas under 30deg. A slope right next to us avalanched as some snowboarders traversed over it. We took the opportunity to do some drills with Tom to work on technique and finish the week in style.



The group on the final day

Throughout the week the Salamin family looked after us well in the Moiry Hotel. The meals were delicious with excellent Eagles company.

The conditions and group made it the perfect week of skiing. I've returned with a better understanding kit, technique, and mountain safety and a new enthusiasm for ski touring. I will definitely be back for a second Eagles trip next year.