

# Ötztal Ski Tour 2017

By Gerry Kenny



*John Marjot & Liam Shaw Resting - Gerry Kenny*

On April 1 to 9 2017 AAC(UK) members Gerry Kenny, John Marjot, Eugene Mulholland and Liam Shaw ski toured in the Austrian Ötztaler Alpen. This was an intermediate grade high level hut to hut ski adventure taking in major peaks on route. Ski touring conditions were excellent and safe.

Ötztaler Alpen is a high altitude alpine touring destination with a number of beautiful mountains at over 3000 meters, many nestled in large glowing white glaciers. The closest ski resorts are Sölden, Obgurgl and Hochgurgl with free ski bus connections. We met at the lovely Pension Elizabeth in the village of Vent, one of the most beautiful alpine villages I have ever visited, a 20 minute bus journey from Sölden.

On Monday we climbed gently for about 4 hours to the Martin Busch hut (2501m). With snow starting at 2400m, parts of this climb were on foot with skis on our backs. That afternoon we practised with our transceivers and crevasse rescue, discussing all safety points and our tour plan. On Tuesday we continued in light snow fall over the glacier to the summit of Similaun (3650m), then back to the Similaun hut (3019m).

On Wednesday we waited for fog to clear and climbed to the Ötzi ice man monument on the Tisenjoch (3210m) where, in 1991 a husband and wife discovered Ötzi's 5,000 year old body, the archaeological find of the century. That night we slept in the large and friendly Schöne Aussicht hut (2820m). This was the busiest hut we encountered so best reserved well in advance. It has ski lift access, offers free showers (with towels), external hot tub, 2 wooden sauna huts and a 7 course dinner!

With more light snowfall and a strong cold wind on Thursday, we delayed our departure and took the 7 euro 300m lift to the broad Hintereis glacier. We skinned up the glacier towards Hintereiscol below the Weißkugel (3739m), the third highest mountain in Austria which lies on the border between Austria and Italy. We decided to stay below cloud level and had some fun climbing a

smaller peak. After our mid-day snack we descended perhaps 10km down this amazing and gently sloping glacier to the moraine tailings, from where a bit of stream bed scrambling and a short grassy climb of 70m on grass brought us to the Hochjoch Hospiz (2413m).

On Friday morning we got going at 6.30 am and after an hour of gentle uphill walking we reached the snow pack. We skinned up to a col at 3250m, then descended on a beautiful glacier run down to the Vernagt hut (2755m).

Saturday was a beautiful cloudless day as we crossed the Grosser and Kleiner Vernagt glaciers to Brochkogeljoch col (3423m). Here we encountered our steepest 70m vertical gully: it challenged our strength and skill a little. Then onto the Taschach glacier where we skinned horizontally about 2km to the WildSpitze (3772m). WildSpitze is the second highest mountain in Austria. Everyone leaves their skis at the base and ascends the final 1000m with boots or boots with crampons. This final push is a mix of rock, ice and snow with a mini Hillary step like feature near the summit. That afternoon we returned to the Vernagt hut.

On Sunday morning we had a lazy late breakfast start and then set off back to Pension Elizabeth in Vent. This was mostly a walk as the snow disappeared after about 1km. Close to Vent I saw the season's first marmots.

This trip took 7 days but the time passed quickly. Thanks to our super participants, everyone made this a very special experience which I will never forget. I can highly recommend Ötztaler Alpen as an amazing intermediate grade ski tour destination which would be a perfect preparation for the Haute Route or similar.



*View at the top WildSpitze - Gerry Kenny*



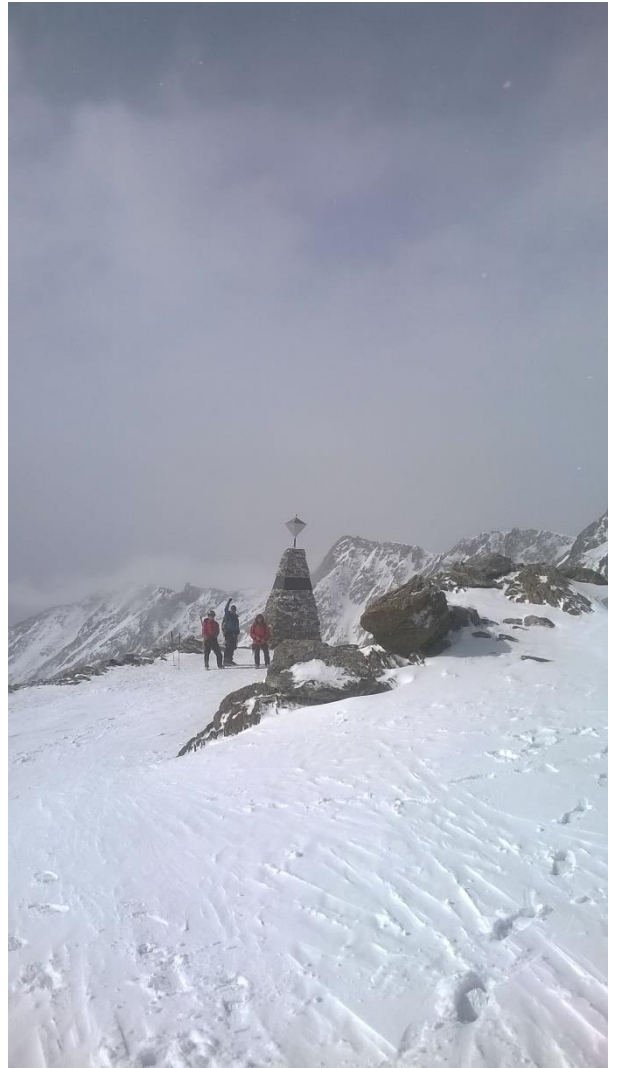
*Ötztal blue Skies - Liam Shaw*

*Gerry Kenny is an AAC(UK) Übungsleiter Ski Touring leader.*

# Ötzi, the Ice Man

By John Marjot

In 1991 a husband and wife discovered Ötzi's preserved body on the Tisenjoch. It was the Alpine archaeological find of the century. After establishing the age of Ötzi (he is over 5000 years old) the work began to analyse his possessions, and to determine the reason for him having been buried by ice on the col. Initially it was surmised that he had been overcome by exhaustion at the col and had lain down to rest, and die. The first autopsy suggested he had been wounded before reaching the col. It is now believed that Ötzi was murdered by person(s) unknown to us, but probably known to him! Recent research suggests that he was shot with an arrow from quite close range. An artery was severed, and death happened within minutes. He was probably then dragged to his "resting" site on the Tisenjoch. He was undoubtedly a shepherd, living in one of the Italian alpine valleys, and well used to exploring the high mountains of the Ötztal. In Vent there is a small municipal museum, and one of the most interesting exhibits concerns the transhumance that, to the present day, occurs across the Alpine watershed in the Ötztal. Sheep are still taken across glaciers at over 3000m to summer pastures, and grass cloaks, similar to the one worn by Ötzi, were still being worn by people in the rural areas of northern Italy in the 18th Century! Ötzi's body, and an exhibition of his life, is to be found in the South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology in the city of Bolzano, Italy. <http://www.iceman.it/en/>



Ötzi Monument - John Marjot