

# BACK TO THE WILDERNESS

## ADVENTUROUS SKIING



**If traditional skiing is not for you and you want more of an adrenaline rush from your winter sports, perhaps you should consider some other versions of an old favourite. How about freeriding, backcountry or even ski touring? Though they require different equipment and different techniques, they have one thing in common: They take people from the marked ski runs and return them to the dangerous wilderness.**

### Freeriding

Freeriding is the easiest way of skiing in natural terrain. It means going down unmarked slopes, usually on freshly fallen snow called powder. You can use a ski lift to get to the top of a hill; snowboarders can also find snowshoes handy if they want to start their ride from a nearby peak and need to get there through deep snow. Otherwise, all you need is the same equipment for downhill skiing, and you should be physically fit and know the local avalanche risk.

### Backcountry

If downhill skiing is not your cup of tea and you prefer a romantic trek through a snow

covered landscape, there is a wilder version of cross-country skiing for you. In backcountry, you ride over flat land or mild hills, not following marked paths. You need comfortable warm boots and cross-country skis with free-heel bindings.

### Ski touring

When you set out on a longer trip, this sport is called ski touring. In ski touring, you do not use ski lifts, you just travel on skis over the

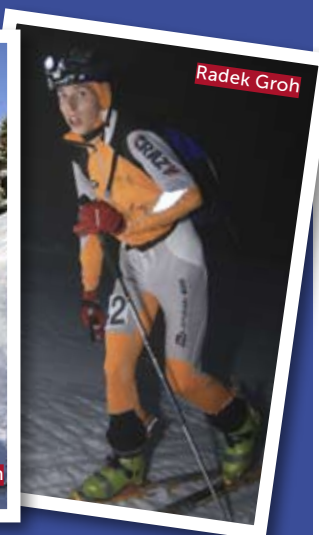
wild landscape – which can be both flat or very steep. You need lighter downhill skis, special binding which can be used both for downhill skiing and for going uphill, and special boots, lighter and softer than usual ski boots and having a solid sole, so they can be used even for walking. Another handy thing is the skins you attach to the bottom of skis to be able to go uphill without sliding down. In the past, they used to be made from animal skins, now they are made from nylon.

## CZECH CHAMPIONS

Brother and sister Karolína and Radek Groh have been competing in ski touring since childhood. They come from Krkonoše and now study at a grammar school in Jilemnice. They have both won medals at the European championships and have been among the European elite for a long time. In the Czech Republic, they even compete successfully against adults.



Karolína Groh



Radek Groh

If you choose an extreme terrain, we call this ski mountaineering. The goal is to climb a mountain and then to ski down. Sometimes you have to take off your skis and carry them on your shoulders or even attach them to your backpack and use climbing equipment, such as a rope, **ice axe** and **crampons**. It's very popular to go for a weekend trip to some mountain cottage, sleep there, reach the top of the mountain on Sunday and then ski down.

## Races

Ski touring can be competitive too. It is one of the most demanding sports. For safety reasons, people usually compete in pairs and the **obligatory** equipment includes a helmet, rope, ice axe, crampons, **first-aid kit**, **shovel**, avalanche transceiver\* (often called pieps) and avalanche probe\*. Exhausting runs uphill in high mountains are very hard, but it is usually the **hellish** downhill which decide the winner of the race. Imagine going down through a valley, several kilometres long, surrounded by rocks and avalanches, without any path. At the end, racers often have to run on foot across a snowless meadow or a forest, carrying skis on their shoulders.

**Jakub Turek** (CR), www.horydoly.cz

# THE MOST FAMOUS RACES

## Trofeo Mezzalama

The most prestigious and most difficult one-day competition of teams of three. It has been in existence since 1933. It is held each **odd** year at the height of 4000 metres **above the sea level**, on the Swiss-Italian border around the Matterhorn.

## Dachstein Xtreme

A very quick and technically very difficult race held around Dachstein in Austria. Racers have to run up steep hills and ski down flat glaciers and slopes like a kamikaze.

## Sella Ronda

This race takes place on well-known ski slopes in the Italian Dolomites. But while recreational skiers ski there in the daytime, using ski lifts, racers do it at night and rely only on their own strength.

## Pierra Menta

The French region of Savoy hosts this four-day race in which teams of two have to travel a combined height difference of ten kilometres.



Competitors in the Pierra Menta race

## VOCABULARY

**rush** – přívál  
**ski run** – sjezdovka  
**slope** [sləʊp] – svah  
**powder** [ˈpaʊdə] – prašan  
**ski lift** – lyžařský vlek  
**snowshoes** – sněžnice  
**peak** [pi:k] – vrchol  
**avalanche** [ˈævələ:ɪŋ] – lavinový, lavina

**downhill skiing** – sjezdové lyžování  
**trek** – putování  
**cross-country skiing** – běh na lyžích  
**free-heel bindings** [ˈbaɪndɪŋz] – vázání s volnou patou  
**steep** [sti:p] – příkrý, prudký  
**sole** – pata  
**to slide** – sklouznout  
**ice axe** – cepín  
**crampons** [ˈkræmpənz] – horolezecká stoupací železa

**obligatory** [əˈblɪgət(ə)rɪ] – povinný  
**first-aid kit** – lékárnička  
**shovel** [ˈʃʌv(ə)] – lopata  
**hellish** [ˈhɛlɪʃ] – pekelný

## THE MOST FAMOUS RACES

**odd** – lichý  
**above the sea level** – v nadmořské výšce

## GLOSSARY \*

**avalanche transceiver** – a device that emits a beeping sound and helps locate a victim buried in an avalanche (lavinový vyhledávač)  
**avalanche probe** – an equipment with which it is possible to examine the snow, several metres in depth, to find a victim under an avalanche (lavinová sonda)

## COMICS

