



INTERNATIONALE VEREINIGUNG DER BERGFÜHRERVERBÄNDE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF MOUNTAIN GUIDES ASSOCIATIONS UNION INTERNATIONALE DES ASSOCIATIONS DE GUIDES DE MONTAGNE

The IFMGA world wide association, founded by guides from Austria, France, Switzerland and Italy, exists since 1965 and currently regroups mountain guide associations from more than 20 countries in Europe, Asia, the Americas and Oceania, representing a total of almost 6000 guides.

The aim of the association is to maintain close ties between all mountain guides; to harmonise the work regulations which govern the profession; to ensure better safety conditions for clients; and to facilitate the ability of mountain guides to work abroad, on mountains all over the globe. This last point materializes itself in the concrete solidarity which exists between all guides, no matter their country of origin, and the spontaneous assistance they provide to each other.

Highly competent guides with a high level of training, the highest in existence, is required in four different disciplines in order to become a certified IFMGA mountain guide: rock climbing, ice climbing, mountaineering and ski mountaineering. IFMGA training gives a guide the ability to work on any mountain range whether they already know the mountain or not. It takes five to 10 years to become a mountain guide, from the moment they start serious mountaineering to the moment when they receive their guide diploma.

Proper training guarantees an international standard. The Technical Commission at the IFMGA looks to its permanent working party in order to study the evolution of techniques and how to improve the level of guide training. This commission, made up of national technical heads, meets twice a year.

Guides are trained via the training schemes dispensed by their national associations, sometimes in collaboration with an organisation such as a school or university.

Becoming a member of the IFMGA is a long process of integration which must be backed up by national legislation. To be accepted into the IFMGA can take a new country from five to 15 years, or until the criteria required are fulfilled (notably in the capacity of the country's association to train guides to the required level).

Experience shows that the harmonious development in mountain guide activity, necessary for the safety of the public, is favoured by a legal status or strict regulations. Indeed, to obtain a valid IFMGA diploma requires a very long and very intensive investment on the part of the guide. Inversely, in the absence of rigorous guidelines, few guides put themselves through sufficiently high enough levels of training, giving the entire profession a confused image which does not bode well for the development of the profession or for the question of security. It is therefore sometimes difficult for the public to distinguish between the highly competent IFMGA guides and the lesser competent guides who have little or no qualifications.