

Team Ascent

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MONT BLANC:

Mont Blanc (4808 meters) is Western Europe's highest mountain; it dominates the Mont Blanc massif which borders Switzerland, France and Italy. First climbed in 1786 when local Doctor Michael Gabriel Paccard and Jacques Balmat eventually reached the summit 26 years after a professor De Saussure offered a large cash prize to stand on the lofty summit. Mont Blanc still remains a magnet to mountaineers, walkers and skiers basing themselves in the Chamonix valley with its concentration of spectacular Alpine peaks, magnificent glaciers and good rack railway trains and cable car access making Chamonix the centre of world Alpinism.

We have planned the itinerary based from Chamonix to allow for basic training in crampon and ice axe work, glacier travel skills and good three day expedition which allows relative beginners the opportunity to learn the basic alpine mountaineering skills and to also give the opportunity to acclimatise so as to make a realistic and enjoyable attempt to summit Mont Blanc. All week you will be guided by IFMGA mountain guides.

Although the route is not very technical it is a long way and due to the altitude, terrain and early Alpine starts, it makes it an arduous expedition, so please, arrive fit!

It's important to note that while we will do our best to keep to our itinerary there is a high chance that variations may be necessary. Many factors can effect climbing high mountains. Individual abilities vary as does their ability to assimilate the skills required. Adverse weather and snow pack stability may leave the mountain in a dangerous and difficult condition. Any of these factors may mean that we have to re-arrange the programme.

ITINERARY:

Evening before Day 1. Our Guide(s) meet at the pre-arranged meeting point, welcoming you with an introductory brief around 5.30 pm. This also allows time for everyone to go along to the shops with the mountain guide to hire or purchase any equipment they may require. (HOTEL/GITE)

Day 1: You will meet the guide again in the morning and after your breakfast we take you to the Mer de Glace rack railway station where we board the train for Montenvers (1910m). From Montenvers it's a short walk with a descent of some steep ladders which lead us to the glacier Mer du Glace. We spend many hours on the glacier covering crampon, ice axe and glacier travel skills. The day includes basic rope work and some top rope ice climbing on the easily climbed plastic like summer ice. (HOTEL/GITE)

Day 2: Meeting slightly later (to allow you to pack your sack and visit the shops if required) we take the Bus to Le Tour from where we take a cable car and chairlift system to Charmillion/ Col de Balme (2000m) and then walk up to the Refuge Albert 1'er (2702m). On arrival we have a well earned rest and practice some further skills returning to the hut in time for dinner. (Mountain Hut)

Day 3: After breakfast we walk to the edge of the glacier, don crampons and rope up with your guide(s) and tackle some moderate Alpine peaks. Tete Blanche (3429m) and Petit Fourche (3502m). After this we descend into Switzerland traverse the Trient Plateau to spend the night in Switzerland at the Cabane du Trient. (Mountain Hut)

Day 4: An early start, after breakfast we rope up on the glacier and attempt another Alpine peak. More often than not the guides choose Aiguille du Tour (3540m) as this gives similar rock scrambling and snow slope angles that you will encounter on Mont Blanc. After descending from this summit we cross a col and descend back into France and walk back down the glacier route to the Albert 1'er hut and on to the top of the chair lift system taking us back to Le Tour. The bus takes us back to Chamonix. (Hotel/Gite)

Day 5: It's time now to tackle Mont Blanc: there are two route choices (details below). Both routes mean that we spend the day going up to a mountain hut. Again the guide(s) make the route choice based on the groups skill level, the snow pack/glacier and weather conditions at the time. With Team Ascent the guide ratio for Mont Blanc is 1 "Guide" to 2 "clients" and this may mean that some guides will choose differing routes. All such route choice will be based on the safety of the group and the guide. (Mountain Hut)

Day 6: From the Mountain hut we usually wake up at around 1.00 am and after breakfast depart for our attempt of the summit. It's a tough mountain and which ever route you take, everyone needs to be efficient and follow the guide's not fast, but steady pace. It's around four to six hours to the summit and then you have to go all the way down again, safely! The

Mountain train and cable car system will take us back to the valley where we return to the Hotel. In the evening the group usually meet up for a meal and drinks. (Gite/Hotel)

MONT BLANC ROUTE CHOICES:

1. **Les trios Mont Blanc:** For this route we depart Chamonix mid-afternoon taking the cable car to the Aig Du Midi (3845m), from where after some sight seeing we rope up to the guides and descend the famous exposed arête and walk round on the glacier to the Refuge Des Cosmiques (3613m). The walk is quite short and can take 35 - 60 minutes. At the hut we make ourselves comfortable and go to bed after dinner (MOUNTAIN HUT)
2. For the summit day we wake for around 1.00am and after breakfast rope up and under head torch light commence our climb to the summit, The route takes us along part of the vallee Blanche to the Col du Midi (3532m), then zig zag ascent to the shoulder of Mont Banc du Tacul (to approx 4900m), day light usually arrives about then. From here we traverse round to Mount Maudit and again a steeper zig zag trail leads us to the breche du Mont Maudit (4325m), via a steep little col, with usually a fixed rope, ice axe required to climb up this short section. An easy but exposed traverse brings us to the Col de la Brenva (4303m). From there it is still quite a long way, although the summit is more or less in sight. A nice steady high altitude pace brings us to the summit (6-8 hours from the Hut). The descent is either via the same route or via the Goutier ridge. Eventually you end up back in the valley and the Hotel.

1. **The Goutier Ridge:** From Chamonix we take vehicular transport to the village of Les Houches (5-10 minutes) and then take the Bellevue cable car system to La Chalette (1807m), and then take the rack railway train to Nid d'Aigle (2372m). From here it's a long but quite interesting walk up the rocky trail passing the Tete Rousse mountain hut (3167m) where we normally rope up with the guides. From there we traverse up and around to the infamous Grand Couloir (3207 m approx). We cross this (stone fall risk) and then continue up over quite steep rocks (scrambling) and partly snow free to reach the Goutier Hut (3817m). Mountain Hut.
2. An early start the next day, around 2.00 am, we wake up have breakfast and get out on to the glacier. We rope up at the hut and with head torch light walk up on a relatively easy zigzag trail towards the Dome du Goutier (4303m). We gradually traverse around this dome and then by pass the Vallot emergency shelter (4362m), continuing up along the Bosses ridge to the very exposed summit ridge and on to the summit. The descent is via the same route, although in very good conditions stronger parties may decide to descend via the other route. Around 4-6 hours from Goutier hut to summit).

Equipment:

Hart Hat*
Wool hat and sun Hat
Goggles
Glacier sun glasses
Sun Cream and Lip salves
Thermal underwear
Thermal mid layers
Fleece top layer
Wind and Shower proof layer (Trousers and jacket with hood)
Good Ski type gloves
Light fleece wind stopper gloves
Mittens for spare and summit
Good Sturdy warm boots which will take a crampon
Walking general alpine ice axe
Harness and two screw-gate pear shaped Karabiners*
Crampons*
Head Torch with spare bulb and good batteries
Trekking Poles (if you already like to use them for walking)
Pack Lunch food
35-45 Litre rucksacks
Water Bottle/ re-hydration system
Scarf/ Neck/face tube
Silk sleeping bag liner (for use at huts (Scratchy wool blankets provided as bedding at all huts!))
Tiny wash kit, (wet wipes are useful)
Small personal first aid kit, Blisters and perhaps Aspirin or Panadol)
Camera

* indicates available for hire.