



## Mont Blanc Climb (4810m)

### Introduction

Mont Blanc (4810m) is the highest peak in Western Europe. Although an impressive and imposing mountain, it is a very feasible objective if you have a good level of fitness and previous hill walking experience. We teach all the necessary skills to make the ascent during this course.

You can expect several predawn starts during the week (but restful afternoons in the sun), with a 2am start on the Mt Blanc summit day!

Temperatures vary a lot, with below freezing dawn starts to 'roasting' on sunny afternoons. It is not unusual for it to be -10 to -15 degrees on the summit. But the views and relaxing beer in the sun afterwards make it all worthwhile!

We normally climb the Gouter Ridge route up Mt Blanc, giving a variety of climbing styles starting with a 2.5 hr walk to the Tete Rousse hut (lunch), followed by a 600m easy rocky scramble (2.5hrs) to the Gouter hut at 3800m, where we overnight. Summit day starts with glacial slopes and finally an airy, narrow snow ridge to the summit (5hrs up and a long way down!). This route offers the highest success rate!

However, at your guide's discretion, the traverse from the Aig du Midi may be attempted. This traverses over the shoulders of Mt Blanc du Tacul and Mt Maudit before climbing the long summit slopes of Mont Blanc. This is a more demanding undertaking requiring good snow conditions.

### Who is it for?

Anyone with a good level of endurance fitness and a sense of adventure! Previous mountaineering experience is a bonus, but not necessary as we teach all required skills during the week. Mont Blanc is high and the altitude makes it hard work and so determination is useful to keep going to the top!

### Dates:

Mid June to Mid September

### Meet:

We meet Saturday evening (day 0) at 6pm in Chamonix to deal with any equipment rental and run through the plan for the week. We finish in Chamonix on Friday afternoon and recommend you book your return flight on Saturday morning



## Mont Blanc – Typical Itinerary

Acclimatisation is crucial to success on Mont Blanc and our itinerary has a proven record.

### Day 1

Walk up to the Albert 1er hut followed by crampon/ice axe instruction in the afternoon. Overnight at the hut. Begin acclimatising. (2.5hrs to the hut)

### Day 2

Climb the Petite Fourche(3520m) and descend to the Trient hut (overnight). Glacier travel practice. (7hrs)

### Day 3

Climb the Aig du Tour(3540m) and descend to Chamonix for a well earned rest. (7hrs)

During this phase we will have acclimatised, climbed two quality peaks and learnt the necessary skills for the main event..

### Days 4-6

Climbing Mt Blanc takes two days, but we build in a spare day in case of bad weather to maximise the chance of success..

We enjoy an 80-90% summit success rate on this programme, and almost 100% enjoyment rate!

The above is a typical itinerary. We may need to change it if mountain conditions etc dictate.

Note 1: If we summit on day 5 then on day 6 we usually go rock climbing, or for those with the energy (not many!) a day on Via Ferrata or more mountaineering.

Note 2: If the weather/conditions are too bad for an attempt on Mont Blanc, we will change plan to climb a different worthwhile objective. This is often the Gran Paradiso in Italy, which at 4061m is the highest peak entirely in Italy and gives one of the best views in the Alps.



### **The Effects of Altitude**

As one climbs higher the air gets thinner and so there is less oxygen in each breath we take. The higher we go the less oxygen there is. This makes exercising much harder work than at sea level and so we have to slow down to help compensate. Because we have slowed down, we may feel colder.

Because there is less oxygen in the air as we get higher, this can lead to 'altitude sickness' or Acute Mountain Sickness which is like the worst hangover you have ever had (headache, nausea, weakness, fatigue, dizziness) and can develop into a very serious and even fatal (in extreme cases) problem.

To avoid these problems, enjoy the climbing and increase our chances of summiting we need to acclimatise by spending several days and nights at progressively higher altitudes, so our bodies can adapt. This is a very important part of our preparation.

### **Getting to Chamonix**

Once you have booked with us and bought specialist skiing/climbing travel and cancellation insurance (the BMC), it is best to book flights and airport transfers well in advance of your departure.

Easyjet have many cheap flights to Geneva from all over the UK. Swiss Air have cheap and convenient flights from London to Geneva.

Booking a place on a minibus airport transfer service is by far the best way to get from Geneva airport to Chamonix (it takes about an hour or so, is cost effective and is a door to door service). We can book your airport transfers at a competitive rate – just email us with your flight details...

### **Chalet Accommodation**

When staying in Chamonix, we stay in one of our comfortable Adventure Base Chalets, literally 6 minutes' walk from the town centre's restaurants and bars. Breakfast and packed lunch are included leaving the evenings free for you to explore the delights of Chamonix. Twin share basis.

### **What to expect from mountain huts**

They are basic but comfortable. They can cater for vegetarians. Food is usually on a set menu basis (3 course in the evening, hot drink and bread/jam/cereal for breakfast). Often there is no running water and so you have to buy water to drink and wash with (no showers). You can usually buy tea, coffee, wine, beer, soft drinks, chocolate bars and snacks. Sleeping arrangements are normally dormitory style bunkbeds (eg 6 people on the bottom, 6 on the top) with blankets or duvets. You can expect a good atmosphere and a stunning view!



### **Other Information**

[www.chamonix.net](http://www.chamonix.net) is a good source of information about the town.

There are lots of cash points in Chamonix and Maestro/visa/mastercard are all readily accepted. In mountain huts, however, you need to have cash (euros) to pay for any incidentals.

### **Insurance**

We strongly recommend getting specialist travel insurance that covers cancellation, medical and mountain rescue. Make sure that it covers glaciated mountaineering and climbing. We recommend the BMC ([www.thebmc.co.uk](http://www.thebmc.co.uk)) - they have comprehensive policies and a good reputation.

### **Training for Mont Blanc**

To maximise your chance of summiting Mont Blanc it is important to get as fit as you possibly can. Good fitness will also make it more fun and less exhausting! The process of training for your goal will help you focus on your goal and having a goal will help you focus on your training. So all in all training is good!

Mountaineering is all about being able to exercise at a moderate intensity for many hours (typically 5 to 12 hours) and your training should reflect this.

Probably the best training is going on long days hill walking as this simulates the real thing as closely as possible and prepares the mind (exercising for long periods in poor weather requires mental strength!). However not everyone has the opportunity to do this and so alternatives such as jogging, cycling and gym workouts are good.

The focus should be on training Cardiovascular Endurance and so if in the gym, cycling/running/rowing machines are much better than weight training. Try and exercise for up to a couple of hours at a time, 4 times a week. Remember to build up your workouts over time. If you are not used to exercising much, your muscles and joints need time to build up to avoid injury.

Try and choose an activity that you enjoy and keep a note of what you do and your times – this really helps with keeping the motivation up.

If you are not used to training then your local gym will be able to advise you on a plan and schedule to help you achieve your goals.

Training does not work overnight! The fittest athletes train as part of their lifestyles and have been doing it for years. Consider training for a good couple of months before coming out to the Alps.



## Kit List

Unfortunately we can't recommend a specific brand and model for each item on the kit list, as what is available is constantly changing and, of course, different people are different shapes and sizes with different budgets! However, in general, we use and endorse Mountain Hardwear products because in our experience they are excellent...

If you go to a good retailer such as Snow & Rock, explain to them you will be climbing Mont Blanc and they will be able to advise you on what is best for you. Bring this list with you...

Lastly, if necessary it is possible to rent most hardware items in Chamonix (ice axe, crampons, harness, helmet). You can hire boots too, but this is a last resort (no one likes uncomfortable boots).

1. Ice axe - for general mountaineering (at least 60cm long)
2. Crampons – 12 point crampons for general mountaineering with anti-balling plates. Whether strap on or clip on models they must fit your boots well. When buying crampons bring your boots to the shop so they can fit them for you – that way you can avoid buying incompatible ones!
3. Helmet – standard hard plastic climbing helmet.
4. Trekking Poles - optional
5. Boots - these must fit and be comfortable. We feel it is best not to rent boots. Rather buy some and have them fitted professionally - this will make your week much more comfortable, fun and blister free! Try and make sure they are broken in before the week. They should either be 'plastic' or high-end insulated leather (not fabric) and must be compatible with your crampons. Your boots should be stiff-soled (also known as B2 or B3 grade boots in the retail world). If your boots are not stiff enough not only will it compromise your comfort when walking/kicking steps in hard snow but also compromise your safety as crampons are more likely to fall off or even break. When buying boots bring your crampons to the shop to make sure they fit well.
6. Rucksack - 40-50L
7. Waterbottle 1L - not platypus type - they freeze and leak.
8. Harness (adjustable so that it is comfortable over all your layers), 2 screw gate karabiners, belay device, 1 8-foot sling
9. 2 pairs sunglasses (cat 4), goggles, sunhat, sunscreen, lip salve/block



10. 3 sets socks and light coloured thermal tops

11. Lightweight Goretex hooded top & bottoms – make sure pockets are accessible even when wearing a harness

12. Warm hat, thick gloves (eg ski gloves), thin gloves

13. Insulating layers. I use a thin '100' weight fleece and a synthetic duvet jacket. I think a synthetic or down duvet jacket is perfect because you can put it over all your other layers (including goretex) when taking a break or if it is really cold without taking anything off. This is very quick and very warm and practical. If you don't have a duvet jacket/can't afford one then make sure you have 1 or 2 thick fleece layers instead.

14. Trousers – there are many brands of fairly windproof/shower resistant trousers for hillwalking/mountaineering. 'Schoeller' fabric garments are great but there lots of other good ones too. Bring a pair of lightweight thermal leggings (long johns) too – it can be chilly on summit day!

15. Personal first aid - blister kit, ibuprofen.

16. Head torch and gaiters

17. Book/iPod for spare time in huts and earplugs (there is always someone snoring at night!)

## More info & Booking

To find out more about our course, availability, or to ask any questions, please get in touch with us by email to: [info@dream-guides.com](mailto:info@dream-guides.com) or by phone on +33 (0)645 139 406

Look forward to seeing you soon!