

CHAMONIX EXPERIENCE

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MONT BLANC 6 DAYS COURSE

Duration 6 days Physical level 4/5 Technical Level 2/5

The combination of Gran Paradiso and Mont Blanc provides a challenging week of Alpine climbing. Led by professional IFMGA guides using a 1:4 ratio on Gran Paradiso and a 1:2 ratio on Mont Blanc, this trip will provide the opportunity to practice roped glacier travel and guided climbing, using crampons and a single ice axe.

The ascents of each of the peaks will be strenuous on account of the altitude and group members should not only have a high level of fitness but also be capable of completing long days in the mountains.

While the ascent of Gran Paradiso and the ascent of Mont Blanc via the Normal Route (Dome de Gouter) used to involve little in the way of technical difficulty. However, with the increasing impact of the climate change our glaciers are changing and the climbing terrain is becoming steeper and more technical. Very good crampons skills and scrambling skills are essential for safe ascent of the Mont Blanc. You can expect to encounter scrambling on exposed ridges and steep and exposed passages on snow and ice in high altitude. Ropes, crampons and an ice axe will be used throughout the climb. Therefore previous experience in technical scrambling and walking on crampons is strongly recommended. If you have never used crampons before, check our [First steps to Mountaineering](#) courses.

Climbing Mont Blanc, like any high-altitude ascent, is very weather and mountain conditions sensitive. Due to climate change, rockfalls on the normal Goûter route have become more common. By signing up for this trip, you acknowledge that the ascent may be not happen if weather or mountain conditions are unfavourable. In such a case, an alternative summit, such as one in the Monte Rosa range, will be attempted instead. No reschedule or cancellation / refund is possible.

It's important to book your trip with us before the end of November to secure spots in the Tête Rousse and Goûter huts. Once online bookings open after November, availability becomes very limited.

Mont Blanc Route

This route, also known as the 'Gouter' or 'Bosses' ridge, starts with a steep climb mostly on rock to the Aiguille du Gouter from where it is a steady ascent on easy-angled broad snow slopes to a final steeper snow arête to the summit. This is the most technically easy of all the routes on Mont Blanc, graded alpine PD.

The normal route is accessed from one of two huts, the Tete Rousse at 3167 metres and the newly refurbished Gouter on a high ridge at 3817 metres. There are pros and cons for starting from either hut. Starting from the Gouter means a shorter summit day than from the Tete Rousse (although preceded by a longer first day), but many people prefer to get a better night's sleep at a lower altitude prior to the ascent. The actual choice of hut for any particular climb will be determined by the guide after taking into account conditions on the mountain, the make up of the group and availability of beds.

Please note that bed space in both these huts is in high demand and is allocated on a first come, first served basis. Irrespective of the status of any of our departures, we can only confirm your booking on our Mont Blanc Ascent course once we have reserved a bed for you.

ITINERARY

The group will meet at the Chamonix Experience office on the evening before start of the trip. Here, we will have an informal chat about the week ahead, weather, conditions, itinerary etc. Your guide will also want to check all of your equipment. You will then have time to decide if you need to pick up any missing equipment or leave some behind to lighten your pack before setting out in the morning.

Day 1. Hike up to Rifugio Vittorio Emanuele II

The day will start with drive to Italy and a hike through the Gran Paradiso National Park forest up towards the Rifugio Vittorio Emanuele II hut (2732m). Before leaving the Chamonix town, you will stop at a rental shop to pick up your rental gear and buy anything that you will need for the week. After lunch you will practice ice axe and crampon skills on the glacier above the hut. If you haven't used crampons or ice axes before, this is where your introduction will take place. You stay overnight at the refuge, sleeping at altitude is one of the best ways to acclimatise.

Day 2. Gran Paradiso Climb

Today you will climb the Gran Paradiso, at 4061m the highest mountain entirely within Italy. This is a great way to acclimatise for Mont Blanc, and summit a 4000m peak at the same time. After the climb we will descend to the valley and drive back to Chamonix.

Day 3. Aiguille du Midi & the Vallée Blanche, or Crampon Skills on the Mer de Glace

Today we will do 1 of 2 plans, depending on the group and the weather. We will either take the lift up to the Aiguille du Midi (3842m) to traverse the Vallée Blanche, in order to gain further acclimatisation and continue your practice with ice-axe and crampons. You will walk on a spectacular glacier to reach the Helbronner, taking the lift back to the Aiguille du Midi in the Panoramic gondola. Or, in the case of bad weather or needing to rest before the Mont Blanc ascent, we can take the Montenvers railway up to the Mer de Glace and practise our crampon skills on the glacier there.

Day 4. Mont Blanc Ascent - First Day

Now that your training is complete, you are ready for the ascent of Mont Blanc. You will walk up to the Tête Rousse (3167m). You will be at the hut by early afternoon, giving you plenty of time to enjoy the dramatic location.

Day 5. Mont Blanc Summit Day

The big day! Weather permitting you will aim to summit Mont Blanc today. The ascent takes about 6 to 7 hours. You will return by the same route to the Gouter hut where you will spend the night.

Day 6. Mont Blanc Summit Day

If you could not try for the summit the day before you will make the attempt today requiring a 01.00 start. Please note that this does not mean that you can try for the summit two times! After reaching the summit we will have to descend all the way down to the valley and should be back in Chamonix by mid-late afternoon. This is the end of your course. You will return your equipment at the shop. Your effort will be celebrated with your guide in the Chamonix town.

PRICE DETAILS

Included in trip package:

- 6 days of guiding
- 3 nights in mountain huts with breakfast and dinner
- Lift passes as per the itinerary
- Transport as per the itinerary
- Group safety equipment
- Office based support

Not Included in the trip package:

- Drinks, lunches and snacks in huts
- Personal equipment
- Accommodation in Chamonix
- Travel to Chamonix
- Mountain rescue and travel insurance (covering course cancellation for any reason)

EQUIPMENT

30 - 35 litre rucksack (important that it fits you and is comfortable to carry even when heavily loaded)

Harness (with adjustable leg loops to fit over your waterproof trousers and jacket)

Crampons (12 point clip-on crampon recommended; antiballing plates are a must, plus safety traps)

Ice axe (normal mountaineering/walking axe, should be 50-70cm depending on your height)

Climbing helmet (should be big enough to fit over your hat)

Mountaineering boots

Walking poles

Headlamp with fresh batteries

Sunglasses factor 4

Ski goggles

Sleeping bag liner (not a sleeping bag!)

Water bottle (at least 1 litre)

Sun cream (high factor for lips and face)

Warm hat

Sun hat

Neck protection (buff)

Thermal underwear (top preferably with long sleeves and long johns - wearing cotton next to your skin can mean you get cold as it does not disperse moisture in the same way as a thermal, wicking garment)

Fleece layers (better to carry several thin layers than thick bulky ones, to allow you to adjust your clothing according to temperature, weather and activity)

Light down jacket

Wind & waterproof jacket (Gore-Tex or similar breathable material with a hood, a shell jacket is good)

Wind & waterproof trousers (Gore-Tex or similar breathable material, preferably with leg zips to make them easier to take on and off without having to remove your boots)

Thick gloves (insulated warm gloves or mitts, gloves make it easier to fiddle with climbing gear but mitts tend to be warmer)

Thin gloves (a fleece wind stopper glove with reinforced palms gives better grip)

Gaiters (to keep snow out of your boots, best if they are made of a breathable material)

Ear plugs

FURTHER INFORMATION

EARLY / LATE SEASON

Typically, the Tramway du Mont-Blanc remains closed until mid-June and after mid-September. When the lifts are not in operation, the journey on D4 and D6 takes an extra 1 hour and 30 minutes, making the ascent more physically demanding.

HUTS

The high alpine huts are one of the big attractions to mountaineering or trekking in the Alps. They allow us to enjoy the mountains with only light packs and without having to worry about meals or finding somewhere to sleep! Most huts have only very basic facilities.

Sleeping arrangements are in mixed sex dormitory-style rooms with bunks. Washing facilities are limited and generally there is no running water in any of the huts although this may vary in some huts. There are basins in which you can use bottled water to wash the best you can and clean your teeth, but they are NOT generally in private cubicles and are mixed sex. Toilets are generally septic-tank type (non-flushing) and again mixed sex. You need to be prepared for simple living in the huts and appreciate they are located at high altitude and in inhospitable terrain.

Breakfasts and evening meals are served by the guardian and his team and the food is usually nourishing and filling. Beer, wine, soft drinks and snacks are also available to buy. All food and drink in the huts is delivered by helicopter and consequently prices will be high e.g. around 10€ for a 1.5litre bottle of still water.

There are a few basic hut 'rules' that you need to follow so that you (and your fellow climbers) have a pleasant stay:

1. On arriving at the hut you must take off your boots and leave these together with your ice-axe, crampons in the foyer. Be sure to store these carefully as the hut is likely to get very busy and you'll need to find all your kit in the morning rush!
2. House slippers are provided and must be worn in the hut
Your guide will register you with the guardian and will assign you your bunk.
3. Follow the instructions of your guide and keep requests to the guardian and his team to a minimum – they are usually very busy sorting out groups, cooking meals, keeping the hut clean.
4. In the morning your guide will often want to leave early – be sure to have all your kit ready to go the night before. Be organised and everything will be much easier!
5. It is recommended to bring ear-plugs for the nights – but make sure that you get up on time!

It is very important to book your trip before November. You will need places in the Tete Rousse and Gouter huts in order to climb Mont Blanc. It will be extremely difficult to find places for you after that as the huts get fully booked very fast.

MONT BLANC SAFETY & FITNESS REQUIREMENTS

At 4810m Mont Blanc is the highest mountain in the Alps and western Europe. Climbing Mont Blanc is physically very demanding - you will spend the whole climb traveling over glaciated terrain at high altitude.

Please be aware that high altitude has a profound impact on physical performance and overall wellness, therefore we stress the importance of sufficient acclimatisation as well as technical training. However fit you are, you will feel significantly less fit at altitude!

It is your responsibility to prepare yourself physically for your Mont Blanc trip. You need to start several months prior the trip and it should include regular running, swimming or steep hiking are all very good forms of training. Anything that increases your stamina and your cardiovascular ability will be of benefit as you will certainly feel short of breath once you reach a certain altitude – some people even feel it in Chamonix town, a good 3800m below the summit of Mont Blanc!

Many people find that they make it to the summit without any problems but struggle on the way back down as they have expended all their energy. The descent is just as strenuous, and potentially dangerous, as the ascent so having the stamina to make it safely all the way back down is very important.

A good level of fitness will significantly increase your chances of summiting Mont Blanc and make the ascent more fun - rather than just hard work.

Our 6 day Mont Blanc course is divided into two parts: the first 3 days are dedicated to technical skills, training and acclimatisation. The last 3 days are dedicated to the Mont Blanc ascent. The acclimatisation days also serve as a test for the climbers. You will have to climb the Gran Paradiso at certain speed to show that you do have the fitness and stamina required for safe Mont Blanc ascent. At the end of the first 3 training days we will get together for a briefing. This briefing is very important as it will be decided if you have the required level of fitness and technical skills to continue for the Mont Blanc ascent.

Most of our clients complete the 3 training days successfully - but **please note that for safety reasons we can not allow climbers who are too weak or don't have the minimal technical level in mountain skills to go on to**

attempt the Mont Blanc ascent. We have to make sure that everyone who is climbing Mont Blanc with our guides is able to reach the summit and get back to Chamonix in safety, without jeopardising themselves or the rest of the group. **Please note that there is no refund possible in this case.**

FOOD

We suggest you bring with you or buy in resort snack food that you can take into the mountains each day - cereal bars, dried fruit and nuts, chocolate, sugary sweets or your favourite trail mix. When you're staying overnight in huts it is best to take extra supplies for the days that you are away. Huts do sell food but it's expensive and sometimes stocks run low.

If you have any food allergies or dietary requirements especially if you are Coeliac (gluten free) or have a dairy allergy we strongly recommend you bring some food to supplement your hut dinners. The huts are fairly good at providing for vegetarians but less so for other dietary needs. The huts can provide a small basic packed lunch of bread, salami, cheese and chocolate that you can order but it's important that you don't rely on this option only. You do need to carry some snack food for each day.

You will also generally stop for short breaks each hour where you should eat something each ,me so you maintain your energy levels throughout the day.

OUR GUIDES

On this trip, we will take a maximum of 4 clients per group. Sometimes the actual maximum group size can be dictated by the availability of beds in the mountain huts. The number of guides employed will depend on the group size. Guiding is at a ratio of 1:4 during the first 3 days of training and on Gran Paradiso. The guiding ratio drops to 1:2 during the ascent of Mont Blanc. All the guides for this trip are IFMGA qualified and English speaking.

DOCUMENTS

Mountain search and rescue and repatriation insurance is mandatory on all our trips. We highly advise you to also have a travel insurance policy covering the cost of medical treatment and to protect the value of your trip in the event of cancellation or curtailment. When taking out insurance please ensure the policy you choose covers you for the activities and altitude included in your itinerary.

You will need to bring your ID with you.

SPENDING MONEY

The package price includes valley transport, cable cars and mountain railway tickets, 3 nights in mountain huts with breakfast and dinner, and guiding. You will need to allow an amount for lunches, drinks and snacks. Please note that the huts do not accept credit cards, you will need to have € in cash for your snacks, drinks and packed lunches. Your guide will advise you how much you need; there are numerous cash points in Chamonix.

ACCOMODATION

Please note that the accommodation is not included in the course. While there are 3 nights on mountain huts in the programme and price, we cannot guarantee that you will have place to stay on these 3 nights. If the weather or conditions are unfavourable and we cannot reach any of these huts, you may have to return to Chamonix for the night.

BAD WEATHER AND CONDITIONS

If the weather forecast is poor or the conditions are not favourable, there are alternatives. From the Aiguille du Midi you can access the Cosmiques or Torino refuges. These are ideal bases to ascend classic mountaineering routes such as Arête de Cosmiques, Point Lachenal, Tour Ronde and the Aiguille du Entrèves. In poor weather we can drive to Italy or Switzerland and attempt the Grand Paradiso, Monte Rosa or the Weissmies in the Saas valley – please note there will be additional transport costs for options in Italy or Switzerland.

As the weather and conditions are variables which sometimes force climbers to change the objective of the trip – this is normal in the world of mountaineering - we do not offer reschedule or refund in these cases.