

Mont Blanc, Chamonix, France

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Come join us on this exciting adventure to Mont Blanc, the highest peak in the Alps at 15,781 feet. Long considered the highest point in Europe until Mt Elbrus was recognized as the highest point in the European continent, Mont Blanc remains the crown jewel of the Alps and a major focus for climbing in Europe. The program bases out of Chamonix, France which sits right at the base of the Mont Blanc massif. Chamonix is a town based on tourism and adventure sports, primarily due to the draw of Mont Blanc, an incredible resource for the area.

Easily reached from the city of Geneva (or other European destinations) by rail or bus, the bustling town of Chamonix provides a perfect staging area to prepare and train for a climb of the mountain and is a great place to return for rest and relaxation after a day of hard climbing. Mont Blanc is the perfect backdrop to the town, providing spectacular scenery and vistas from all locations.

Qualifications for Participation:

Participants must have glacier travel skills including cramponing on snow and ice and use of an ice axe in climbing and anchoring situations. Also important is the ability to follow your guide up third and fourth class rock scrambling with some exposed moves. This occurs only in a section above the first hut, climbing up alongside the Great Couloir to the Gouter Hut. The rock is non-technical, but it is steep and exposed in places. Past participation in higher, moderately steep glacier climbs such as Mt. Rainier, other Northwest volcanoes, and 4,000 meter glaciated mountains around the world is required. Equally important is prior experience rock climbing/scrambling up easy hands and feet climbing with steep terrain below. The team will practice glacier travel skills and refresh their rock climbing techniques prior to the ascent of Mont Blanc.

Dates and Prices:

June 14-20, 2020

June 21-27, 2020

Landcost: \$3,500

Program fee does not include lodging, hut fees, transport or meals.

The program is guided at a ratio of 2 climbers per guide. All guides are IMG veterans from the U.S. and are AMGA/IFMGA certified.

Mont Blanc: Just The Facts

Size Matters:

At 15,781', Mont Blanc is the highest peak in the Alps and among the highest in Europe.

Scientist Hardguys:

Few people attempted climbing in the Alps until the 1700's, when scientists began to study the land and the biology of the region. In 1786, two Frenchmen, physician Michel G. Paccard and his guide, Jacques Balmat, became the first to reach the top of Mont Blanc. They recorded scientific observations along the way.

Look for Summit Seashells:

Geologists believe that a 100 million years ago, a large sea covered what is now the Alpine region. When land masses north and south of this sea slowly began colliding, the pressure forced the seabed to fold into ridges and valleys. The highest parts of the Alps include rocks such as gneiss, granite, and schist, which were formed deep within the earth. Many Alpine ranges consist chiefly of limestone that also formed in the seabed. Most of the Alps were formed about 15 million years ago.

It Really Is A Small World:

The Alps have a perennial snow cover at altitudes above 3000m and frequently experience warm, dry, violent winds, called Föhn's, that sometimes carry red dust from the Sahara and blow downward along mountain slopes. These melting winds are a major cause of avalanches.

Bring a Jacket:

The lowest recorded temperature on Mont Blanc is -43°C, set in January 1893.

REQUIRED Insurance: We invest in insurance coverage for commercial liability and medical and disability insurance for our employees while participating on our programs. We cannot insure you for your personal needs, but we do expect you to be as fiscally responsible as we are. We require that you insure yourself against potentially expensive difficulties that may arise. First, Trip Cancellation Insurance may provide financial relief should you be forced to withdraw from the program before it even happens. Next, make sure you have adequate Travel Insurance for coverage should you have a problem during the trip. IMG requires that all international trip participants purchase [Travel Insurance](#) that includes coverage for medical evacuation, repatriation and medical expenses for the duration of their IMG program. Rescue operations in the Alps are well organized and efficient, but the individual who is rescued must pay for the service on the spot. Rescue insurance covers your costs in this event. Note: Certain pre-existing medical conditions are eligible for coverage with some policies only if purchased within 14 days of initial trip payment.

Conditioning

The best training program for such a climbing trip is one that includes aerobic activities such as running, swimming and bicycling. Get in plenty of time hiking with a light pack or running up and down hills. Strive for longer training sessions - over an hour - and go on hikes during the weekend that gain a thousand vertical feet per mile for several miles whenever possible. Muscle strengthening exercises for the legs, arms and back are also important. Adequate preparation will ensure a successful and enjoyable trip for all. There is no substitute for previous climbing experience. Get out to your nearest local crag whenever possible. Take a weekend rock climbing course, or go ice climbing in winter with a guide. Hike up and down hills! Get out and climb!

Equipment

The enclosed list of items is required of each individual. A brief description of each piece of equipment has been included so there should be no difficulties in compiling your gear. Read over the list carefully and gather your gear well in advance. Use your gear in training, especially the boots you plan to bring.

Accommodations

Accommodations are **not** included in the land cost fee. Some nights will be spent in climbing huts during the program. The European huts are quite luxurious compared to those in the States and their convenience has made them popular with climbers throughout the Alps. Sleeping bags and pads are not needed on this trip. Bunks with blankets and pillows are provided by the staff at each of the huts. The guides will make reservations for you at the climbing hut when required, and that cost will be up to you to cover, approximately \$75 per night including breakfast and dinner.

Between climbs you will have your choice of hotels in Chamonix:

- The traditional IMG base is Hotel Pointe Isabelle, pointeisabelle.com located conveniently down the street from the rail station in downtown Chamonix.
- There is a wide range of hotel options in Chamonix, from five-star rated to one.

You will need to remain flexible with your lodging requirements. You will need to book a hotel in advance to confirm a place to stay upon arrival. Our suggestion is to confirm the night prior to the starting date of the program, the first night of the program, then days three and six in a hotel (see the itinerary). Let the hotel know you are a climber and wish some flexibility in your reservation. You will need to be willing to transfer hotels during the trip if you require lodging last minute and a room is not available. The hotels are normally happy to help you with finding an alternate place to stay.

Food

Each person is responsible for his or her own meals during the course of the program. At the huts, breakfasts and dinners are prepared by the hut personnel and are included in the hut fee. Between climbs we will have the opportunity to sample local specialties in some of the many excellent restaurants and specialty shops. We normally eat out together as a group when in town and the camaraderie of sharing an evening meal with the team is an enjoyable part of the trip. Restaurant prices are similar to those in tourist areas in the U.S. There will be opportunity to purchase lunch food in town prior to each of the climbs, and the guides will be happy to assist you with this. Many, but not all of the hotels include a continental breakfast in the price of lodging.

Travel Arrangements

You are responsible for your own travel to and from Chamonix, France where the trip starts and finishes. It is the responsibility of each participant to arrange transportation to Chamonix by the day prior to the starting date. The simplest route is to fly to Geneva arriving in the morning and take a mini bus or train from the airport to Chamonix. There is frequent daily train service. A van shuttle is actually faster and easier than the train. You'll want to book this in advance, there are a number of operators including ChamExpress, Alpybus and Mountain Dropoffs. If you would like help with your flight arrangements, recommendations for a hotel in Geneva, or plan to arrive in Europe early, feel free to contact IMG's travel agent, CTT Destinations, img@cttdestinations.com. They are knowledgeable of our programs and will be happy to help you work out your itinerary.

Participants should be sure to make allowance for the significant time change when arranging a flight to Europe. Please notify the IMG office of your expected arrival time and flight plan prior to the start of the program. It is generally best to fly directly to Geneva, arriving in the morning, and then catch a train or bus departing hourly for Chamonix. Plan to arrive no later than the evening before the starting date of the trip, but it is perhaps best to allow an additional day to aid in recovery from jet lag.

Weather

The weather in the Mont Blanc region is similar to that of the Cascades in the Pacific Northwest. One can experience several days of beautifully clear skies or be plagued by storms. However, late July, August and September is generally the best time to climb in this area, for reasons of weather and snow conditions. By bringing the proper clothing you will be prepared for all types of weather. The enclosed itinerary is designed with some allowance for bad weather but may require further alterations. IMG's our goal is to have a safe, fun climbing trip. Some flexibility is important for the smooth operation of the program. The guides will be open to input throughout the trip.

“I have to say, in my opinion, IMG ran one excellent expedition! I have done and do many sports that can get very dangerous very quickly if they are not managed correctly or respected accordingly. You nailed it!...”

—Mark

For more comments from IMG climbers, please see our website at: mountainguides.com/comments.shtml

Passports

If you do not have a passport, or if your current one is due to expire before, or during the trip, you must obtain a new one. Passports are required to travel in Europe. Passport information is available from your main post office or your local passport agency. Visas are not required for travel in France and Switzerland. It is a good idea to carry Xeroxed copies of your passport and birth certificate to ease matters in case of loss or theft of your passport.

Luggage

For travel to Europe, it is a good idea to have just two pieces of luggage: your pack with all of your climbing gear inside and a medium duffel bag for extra clothing and items to be strapped onto your pack at a later time, such as crampons and ice axe. A roller bag makes travel by train more efficient.

Clothing

The weather in this part of Europe is much like that of the Pacific Northwest, so be sure to bring appropriate summer clothing for travel to the mountains. Keep your street clothes simple and bring a good pair of light comfortable hiking shoes. A sweater should be sufficient for evenings in town. Casual dress will be fine for all of your dining. Hand washable clothing allows you to do laundry in your room and get by with less. There are self-service and full-service laundries in town.

Spending money

ATM's are found almost everywhere in Europe and give the best exchange rate but mind the exchange fee! Remember that your ATM card will probably have a daily limit for withdrawals. Visa, MasterCard, and American Express are accepted in most shops and restaurants and are convenient. Be sure to contact the company issuing your card and notify them of you travel plans in advance to avoid a hold being placed on your card for fraud verification. Train fares along with related gondola rides and cog rail trains will cost from \$300 total and can all be charged on a Visa. I would plan to spend from \$1,000 to \$1,500 total during the trip for all meals, train fares and personal expenses.

I encourage you to do as much reading on the area as you can. A little research on the history of Alpinism in Europe can add greatly to the experience once you are there.

A simple, easy guidebook of the route up Mont Blanc can be found in [The Alpine 4000m Peaks by the Classic Routes](#), by Richard Goedeke, 1991

We hope this information will help you in preparing for the trip. If you have any questions at all, please contact us at IMG. office@mountainguides.com or (360) 569-2609.

“Nothing was overlooked. Safety was always top priority, and no shortcuts were allowed. And if I didn't immediately recognize this, the contrast couldn't have been more apparent as we moved up the mountain. I was so glad to be an IMG client. I don't want to criticize other services, but there really is a world of difference, and it's worth every penny!...”

—Robert M

For more comments from IMG climbers, please see our website at: mountainguides.com/comments.shtml

Mont Blanc Itinerary

Day 0 (day before the starting date) You will want to arrive at the Hotel Pointe Isabelle (or other nearby hotel) by mid-day on this day. Get checked into your room and then plan on connecting with the rest of the team. The guides may choose to get together for a short team informational meeting in the evening so all are set prior to the official start in the morning. Plan on an optional meeting at 5pm (based on the team and guides' preference) and then perhaps a group dinner afterwards. **Overnight at Hotel.**

Day 1 Meet at the Hotel Pointe Isabelle at 8:00 a.m., all ready to go with alpine day pack, extra layers, lunch, water, sun protection, alpine boots, crampons, ice axe, helmet, harness and a minimum 2 locking carabiners. Exact personal gear will of course be dependent on the group's objective for the day. For the entire program the day's schedule will be determined based on current weather, current climbing conditions and group abilities. The first day will be used as a warm-up and re-familiarization of techniques, with a moderate day objective and a chance to shake out the cobwebs. Likely objective: a traverse of the Aiguilles Crochues, a lovely ridge climb with easy but exposed rock climbing and beautiful views, accessed by lifts from the valley below. **Overnight at Hotel.**

Day 2 Another morning start from the hotel with the destination being the Aiguilles de Marbrees. The team will normally take the gondola up to the top of the Aiguille du Midi and then another lift over to Point Hellbrenner near the Italian border. From there the climb is close by, with a fun combination of glacier travel, snow climbing and rock scrambling. The team will **overnight in the Torino Hut (11,073')**.

Day 3 An early morning rise at the Torino Hut for another enjoyable climb. The Aiguille d'Entrevies is a nice length climb, with more interesting rock, snow travel and crampon work as conditions require. After the climb, the group will reverse the gondola ride back down to Chamonix for showers, a good dinner and **overnight at Hotel.**

Day 4 Travel to Les Houches to catch the Bellevue Lift and then the train to Nid D'Aigle. From here a trail hike of approximately two hours to the Tette Rousse Hut (10,390'). **Overnight at the Hut.**

Day 5 Pre-dawn rise at the hut to climb to start the ascent. Shortly after departing the hut, the path crosses the Great Couloir, a hundred meter long path that crosses an area of potential rock fall. Once safely across, the route scrambles up a rock ridge past the old Gouter Hut to the crest of the Aiguille du Goûter at an altitude of 12,423'. The New Gouter Hut is nearby. From here the climb heads up the mountain on open snow field, finally passing on old rescue hut, the Vallot Hut at 14,311'. The final ascent is up a narrowing arête, to the summit which broadens out into a flat football field sized area. The team will descend to the Gouter Hut. **Overnight at the Hut.**

Day 6 Back to Chamonix, by mid-day for a well-earned shower, celebratory dinner, and a final good sleep at the hotel. **Overnight at Hotel.** End of program.

“In a nutshell, IMG was the class of the mountain. I can't imagine climbing with any other group.”

—Bruce D.

For more comments from IMG climbers, please see our website at: mountainguides.com/comments.shtml

Mont Blanc Gear List

This equipment list is meant to help you compile your personal gear for climbing in the Chamonix area. Most items are required. Please consider each item carefully and be sure you understand the function of each piece of equipment before you substitute or delete items. Keep in mind that this list has been carefully compiled by the trip organizer.

- Boots: Lug-sole leather/synthetic climbing boots. A modern, technical single boot will foot the bill. This climb can be cold on summit day, so a lighter weight boot is not recommended. A more rigid boot with good insulation (like La Sportiva Nepal Evo GTX or the Scarpa Mont Blanc) is recommended, a boot warm enough to climb over 15,000 feet in the early summer.
- Socks: 2 changes of medium weight wool or synthetic blend
- Gaiters, Ankle length
- Long underwear: Synthetic or wool tops and bottoms
- Pants: Synthetic stretch climbing pants with a tight weave
- Shell pants: With full length zippers to go on over boots and crampons. Light is right.
- Shirt: Expedition weight synthetic or wool blend
- Soft shell or fleece jacket
- Rain/wind shell: Waterproof/breathable jacket with hood. Light fabric is nice!
- Belay parka: Down or synthetic filled - should NOT be expedition weight. A sewn through down sweater or synthetic parka with a hood will do nicely.
- Hat: Wool or fleece
- Sun hat
- Gloves: Insulated Gore-Tex climbing gloves and fleece liners.
- Ice axe: 50-55 cm. maximum length. A shorter axe is preferred since it stows on the pack more easily when not in use and does not pose a danger to others (such as in crowded gondolas).
- Crampons: 12 point, reasonably sharp
- Seat harness with gear loops, a belay loop and adjustable leg loops.
- Carabiners: Two locking pear shaped biners. Bring a couple of non-lockers if you have them
- UIAA rated climbing helmet
- Headlamp: Bring a lightweight LED with an extra set of batteries
- Sunglasses: Very dark, wrap around or with full side protection. Bring goggles for stormy weather
- Water bottles: 2 one-quart, wide mouth, plastic bottles. Sun cream: And lip balm, SPF 15 or higher
- Pack: Internal frame pack with capacity of NO MORE THAN 30-35 liters (1800-2200 cu.in.). This should be a compact, streamlined pack. No big McKinley packs, please.
- One (1) collapsible, three section ski pole with snow basket
- First aid kit: Each individual should carry a small personal first aid kit to meet their personal needs. Consider the following items: aspirin or Tylenol; Ibuprofen; Band-Aids; athletic tape; moleskin or blister preparations such as Glacier Gell or Band-Aid blister pads.
- Lightweight toiletry kit, toothbrush and toothpaste, earplugs for the huts
- Hiking shorts; T-shirt(s)
- Light approach shoes or trail runners, these may work on some of the training climbs and the approach to the climbing huts and can also double for in town wear.
- Small digital camera or smart phone with battery backup