

Chamonix Alpine Climbs - Mont Blanc Massif and Environs

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IMG is proud to announce our newest 8-day program in the Alps, **Chamonix Alpine Climbs**. Come join us on this exciting adventure in Chamonix, France located at the base of the Mont Blanc massif in the heart of the Alps. Chamonix is the birthplace of mountaineering, and the home to some of the finest quality alpine climbs in the world.

If you were to choose one place to spend the rest of your life climbing, Chamonix would be a very good choice. With an endless list of high quality rock, snow and ice climbs, Chamonix has it all. The bustling town of Chamonix provides a perfect staging area for our climbs and is a great place to return to for rest and relaxation after a day of hard climbing. Mont Blanc provides the perfect backdrop to the town, providing spectacular scenery and vistas.

Qualifications for Participation:

If you attend the program with a compatible partner, then any level of climbing ability is acceptable. The guides will be happy to climb at your level and work with you to improve your skills over the course of the trip.

General requirements for participation in the program by individual climbers include:

- Past participation in an IMG Alps program and a positive referral from your lead guide. For non-IMG participants the requirements are:
- Comfort following 5.4 to 5.6 rock climbing in rock shoes and 4th class to moderate 5th class rock in mountain boots.
- Previous glacier travel experience including use of ice axe and crampons and traveling on a rope as a team and in short-rope situations.
- Ice climbing experience following up to Grade III ice.
- The ability to do all of the above efficiently and at a steady pace in an alpine environment.

Dates and Prices: August 9-16, 2010

Landcost: \$3,500 (Guide Ratio 2:1)

Private: \$5,500 (Guide Ratio 1:1)

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

All guides are IMG veterans from the U.S. and are UIAGM/AFMGA certified.

The Alps: Just The Facts

Size Matters:

The Alps are the largest mountain system in Europe. The mountains begin near the Mediterranean Sea and form a border between France and Italy. They extend northward and eastward through northern Italy, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, southern Germany, Austria, and Slovenia. The range forms a chain about 660 miles long, covering an area of about 80,000 square miles.

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.

First Boot-Prints on Top:

Many of the Alpine peaks were climbed for the first time during the mid-1800's, when mountaineering gained popularity as a sport. In 1855, a group of Swiss and British men made the first successful climb to the top of Monte Rosa. In 1865, climbers reached the top of the Matterhorn. Most Alpine summits had been climbed by 1900.

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.

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 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 insure a safe 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. Get out and climb!

Equipment

The enclosed list of items is required of each individual. I have attempted to give a brief description of each piece of equipment so there should be no difficulties in compiling your gear. Read over the list carefully and pack your gear well in advance.

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 \$50 per night including breakfast and dinner.

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

- There is the traditional IMG base, Hotel Gustavia (3 star): <http://www.hotel-gustavia.com/gb/hotel.html> , located conveniently across from the rail station in downtown Chamonix. 2006 rates start at 71 Euros for a single (about \$90) including breakfast.
- A less expensive option includes the Hotel Touring (2 star): <http://www.hoteltouringchamonix.com/en/home.html> . 2006 rates start at 44 Euros (about \$56) or 72 Euros for a double (about \$92).
- Of course there are many other options in Chamonix, most in close proximity. Feel free to contact IMG's travel agent, CTT Destinations, img@cttdestinations.com for help.

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 three nights of the program, and the last two in a hotel. 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. There are several direct flights from the U.S. to Geneva, the closest and most convenient point of arrival. You may also choose to fly to another city such as Zurich, depending on the carrier you fly if you find a more favorable airfare to a different destination.

The train system in France is functional and efficient. The rail pass you buy is dependent on the amount of travel you will do before and after the program in Chamonix, but the minimum pass needed is a round trip ticket to Chamonix from your point of arrival. You can buy your ticket upon arrival at the train station. For more information on train fares, visit www.raileurope.com. With some passes you get a further reduction on select gondola and cog rail train rides required for access to the climbs. Be sure to ask about this as you can gain substantial savings this way. If two or more people purchase their passes together, they can qualify for a saver pass price, but the requirement is that you travel together at all times. If you plan to travel on a Eurail Pass, make sure it covers your travel to Chamonix. Some private lines are not included on Eurail Passes.

Another option is arranging a bus shuttle ride from Geneva to Chamonix. This costs slightly more than the train ride, but is non-stop and faster. This can be booked online in advance of your trip.

Participants should be sure to make allowance for the significant time change when arranging a flight to Europe. Plan to arrive at least a day in advance in order to overcome jet lag. Please notify the IMG office of your expected arrival time and flight plan prior to the start of the program.

IMG's travel agent, CTT Destinations, is well versed in our European operations. Please contact them directly, IMG@CTTDestinations.com, for help in booking airfare, lodging for your program and transportation to Chamonix. They'll be glad to help.

It is generally best to fly directly to Geneva, arriving in the morning, and then catch a train departing hourly for Chamonix. Plan to arrive no later than the evening before the starting date of the trip, but it is 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.

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.

Insurance

International Mountain Guides highly recommends purchasing travel and trip cancellation insurance. We offer several plan choices in conjunction with TravelEx Insurance (www.travelex-insurance.com). You can sign up online or you can call direct to the Customer Service desk at 800.228.9792. Please note that IMG's location number is #47-0050. You **will** want to purchase a rescue policy to help cover rescue or evacuation costs if necessary. In France, national rescue insurance (Carte Neige) is available to all climbers for a reasonable fee. It can be purchased in Chamonix at the tourist office, and covers helicopter rescue in the Alps. All participants will be required to purchase this insurance prior to the start of the program. Cost for 8 days in 2006 was 42.50 Euros. An even better option is joining the French Alpine Club. For around 70 Euros, you receive international rescue insurance as well as substantial discounts at the climbing huts. This is well worth it! You can join the FAC upon your arrival in Chamonix; the guides can assist with this.

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.

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. Extra cash can be carried in the form of U.S. traveler's checks. These can be easily exchanged at any major town. Check with your bank prior to the trip, however, there was an alert in 2006 that American Express (the largest issuer of traveler's checks) was likely to go out of business. 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.

I hope this information will help you in preparing for the trip. If you have any questions at all, please contact us at IMG.

Sincerely,
George Dunn, Program Director

Chamonix Alpine Climbs Itinerary

The trip starts and finishes in Chamonix, France. It is the responsibility of each participant to arrange transportation to Chamonix by the night prior to the starting date. The simplest route is to fly to Geneva arriving in the morning and take a train directly from the airport to Chamonix. There is frequent daily train service. Another option is a van shuttle. This is faster and easier than the train, but a bit more expensive. When making arrangements, keep in mind the time change. It would be wise to allow a day of rest prior to the start of the program to help deal with jet lag. If you would like help with your flight arrangements, recommendations for a hotel in Geneva or Chamonix, or plan to arrive in Europe early, feel free to contact IMG's travel agent, CTT Destinations (formerly Travel Time), img@cttdestinations.com. They are knowledgeable of our programs and will be happy to help you work out your itinerary.

Day 0 The evening prior to the starting date the guides will want to meet with the group to arrange first day objectives and assign guides. Meeting time and place to be determined at the group's convenience, but tentatively will be the lobby of the Gustavia (kitty corner from the railway station) at 7:00 p.m the evening prior to the starting date.

Day 1 Meet at the Hotel Gustavia at 8:00 a.m. Be all ready to go with alpine day pack, extra layers, lunch, water, sun protection, alpine boots, crampons, ice axe, helmet, harness and minimum 2 locking carabiners. Exact personal gear will of course be dependent on the group's objective for the day. For the entire 8 days the climb of the day will be determined based on current weather, current climbing conditions and group interest. Most days will be one day outings and back to the hotel for the evening. Plan on at least one or two overnights at a climbing hut, the most common one being the Cosmiques Hut. 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.

Days 1-8 Listed below are just some of the many possible objectives we might choose from:

- Petite Aiguille Verte 3512 meters PD
Approach via the Grand Montets Cable Car
Mixed steep snow/ice and rock up to 3b (5.4+)
- West Face of the Tour Rhonde 5.7 9 pitches
Approach via Point Helbronner, Torino or Cosmiques Hut
Easy glacial approach and rappel descent
- East Ridge of Pyramid du Tacul 5.7 9 pitches
Easy glacial approach from Aiguille du Midi, Cosmiques or Torino Hut
Rappel descent
- Midi Plan Traverse
Long day of snow and rock ridge climbing
Approach from Aiguille du Midi or Cosmiques
- Arete du Cosmiques
Classic traverse from the Cosmiques Hut to the very platform of the Aiguille du Midi station.
- Traverse of Point Lachenal
Ice and rock traverse
Approached from the Midi or Cosmiques
- Traverse of Aiguille d'Entreves
A step up in difficulty and length from the Arete du Cosmiques
Approached via Pt. Hellbronner
- Many routes in the Aiguille Rouge
Crakoukass on Le Clocher 5b (5.8) 5 to 8 pitches of pure rock
Clocher-Clochenton 4c (5.6) cool traverse with rappels and tyroleans
Aiguille du Gliere (4c) Long rock ridge climb 13 pitches
L'Index 4b to 5b several rock routes just off of the Index lift
East Face of the Crochues 4b 4 pitches of rock climbing reaching the traverse
- Many other options are possible, depending on your experience and past climbs in Chamonix.

Day 8 End of program after the day's climbing. You will of necessity need a hotel room for this night as well. All the better to allow for a good night on the town to celebrate your successes. Plan your departure from Chamonix no earlier than the a.m. on Day 9.

Chamonix Alpine Climbs 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. Don't cut corners on the quality of your gear.

- Boots: Lug-sole leather/synthetic climbing boots. A modern, technical single boot will foot the bill. A more flexible boot is better on the rock (like the La Sportiva Trango S Evo). A more rigid boot is better on snow and ice (like the La Sportiva Nepal Top). Bring your favorite, best fitting boot.
- Rock Shoes: Highly recommended! A comfortable fitting, all purpose rock shoe is best. One that is comfortable on longer days. You can purchase these in Chamonix.
- Socks: 2 changes of heavy wool or synthetic
- Gaiters, Ankle length
- Longjohns: Synthetic tops and bottoms
- Pants: Synthetic stretch climbing pants (Schoeller fabric) or light fleece
- Shell pants: With full length zippers to go on over boots and crampons. Light is right.
- Shirt: Expedition weight (100 weight "Polartec")
- 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 a Patagonia Micro Puff Pullover jacket 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.
- Crampons: 12 point, reasonably sharp
- Seat harness
- Carabiners: Two locking pear shaped biners. Bring a couple of non-lockers if you have them
- Climbing helmet UIAA rated climbing helmet
- Headlamp: Bring a lightweight LED with an extra set of batteries
- Sunglasses: Very dark, with full side protection. Spare pair recommended
- Water bottles: 2 one-quart, wide mouth, plastic bottles. Consider a Camel Back type hydration system that fits in your pack for the long days.
- 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
- 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; Ibuprofin; antacid (Pepto Bismol, Roloids, etc.); Bandaids; athletic tape; moleskin or Compede.
- Lightweight toilet kit - toothbrush and toothpaste, earplugs for the huts
- Hiking shorts; T-shirts
- Light approach shoes or tennis shoes (can double for in town wear)
- Small digital camera