

Russia – Mt. Elbrus Expedition

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Dear Climber:

Thanks for your interest in our Mt. Elbrus Expedition.

Our two-week expedition is a great way to climb Mt. Elbrus (18,541'), Europe's tallest mountain, and to see some of Russia. We'll fly as a group to St. Petersburg. After our climb, we'll head to Moscow and depart for home from there. Most organizations travel in and out through Moscow and you miss an opportunity to see one of Russia's most impressive cities. Our Russian hosts will meet us at upon our arrival in St. Petersburg and handle all logistic arrangements within their country. In two weeks, we'll visit both St. Petersburg and Moscow, have time to acclimate and train and then knock off another of the Seven Summits. Makes for a nice package.

This information should answer many of your initial questions and also guide you through the next stages of preparing for the climb. The material is quite self-explanatory but should you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at any time.

-- Phil Ershler, Program Director

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

We'll spend two nights and one day visiting St. Petersburg. We then fly to Mineralnye Vody and travel by bus to the Caucasus Mountains. Our base of operations is a hotel in the small town of Terskol. We will take several days acclimatizing and training in the Caucasus. Good terrain is available near by and we'll make use of it while continuing to acclimate and prepare for our attempt on Elbrus.

We then make our attempt on Elbrus. Summit day on Elbrus is STRENUOUS but not very difficult technically. It is close to a 5,000 foot day. Ice ax arrest, basic cramponing and rope travel are required skills.

We'll spend two nights on Elbrus prior to our summit attempt. The huts are basic but adequate. The trip ends by our flying from Mineralnye Vody to Moscow. We'll have a chance to tour Moscow for a day and we will spend one night there. We have organized tours of both St. Petersburg and Moscow with an English speaking guide.

Our local guides are great climbers and great companions. They know their country well and support us through all phases of the trip. Having long-term friends and connections like these makes our trip special. It is very important to work with solid local help in Russia. This adds greatly to our enjoyment and safety. Join us to "knock off" another of the Seven Summits.

Elbrus: Just The Facts
Summit: 18,481' • 5633m
Set Your GPS: 43° 21' N, 42° 26' E
No Higher: The top of Elbrus is the highest spot in Europe.
First Climbed: 1874 by A. W. Moore, F. Gardiner, F. Cruford Grove, Horace Walker, & Pete Knubel
50 Glaciers: Cover about 56 sq miles
August Snow-line: 11,483' • 3400m

“Probably the most incredible experience of my life. Phil taught us everything we needed... Couldn't be a nicer guy; probably one of the toughest, strongest guys I ever met; I felt extremely safe with him. Highly recommended.”

—Jeff.

CLIMB AND SKI ONE OF THE SEVEN SUMMITS

IMG now offers the opportunity to climb and ski one of the world's coveted Seven Summits. Nestled in the Caucasus Mountains, Elbrus is the tallest peak in Europe. In addition to spectacular scenery and an exciting ski/climb, we also get to experience one of Europe's richest cultures.

Our itinerary is exactly the same as for our later summer climbing trips. But, our focus is different. We're there not only to summit but to ski from that summit. Trip will be led by one of IMG's top ski/climbing guides. Excellent conditioning and a strong skiing ability are needed.

Although not technically demanding, participants should be prepared to climb nearly 5,000 vertical feet. This will include a pack with standard mountaineering gear in addition to a pair of skis or snowboard. Although most of the descent will be on moderate slopes of less than 30 degrees, we will encounter a variety of snow conditions, indulging power, ice, breakable crust and spring corn. We'll have several contingency days in order to take advantage of the best snow and weather conditions. Participants should be able to ride or ski in a safe and controlled manner, regardless of conditions.

Have you been thinking about skiing one of the 'Seven Summits? Then, this is the trip for you. Be ready to climb hard and ski hard.

Elbrus Expedition Dates:

~~July 7-21, 2012~~ (FULL; led by Mike Hamill)
~~August 11-25, 2012~~ (FULL; led by Phil Ershler)

Elbrus Skiing Expedition:

June 2-16, 2012 (led by Aaron Mainer)

LANDCOST: \$4,600 US

COSTS INCLUDED:

Included in your land costs are guide fees including our Russian staff, all sightseeing in Russia, double accommodations in hotels, shared accommodations in huts, group transportation, group equipment including stoves and fuel, ropes, cooking gear, group first aid kit, technical climbing equipment, radios, etc., meals while climbing (except snack foods) and restaurant meals in Russia.

COSTS NOT INCLUDED:

Not included are airport taxes, airport taxi if arriving/departing at times different from the group, international airfare and the flight to/from Mineralnye Vody, visa fees, excess baggage fees, personal equipment, bottled drinks, items of a personal nature and hotels/meals on forced layovers during international flights.

APPLICATION/CANCELLATION

Application and cancellation policies are discussed in the General Terms and Conditions sheet that was included in the sign up documents package. <http://mountainguides.com/signup.shtml>

“Thank you for a professional, safe and successful climb. We had the experience of a lifetime...”

—John H.

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

ROUTE DESCRIPTION

Elbrus itself is a relatively straight-forward glacier climb. Several thousand feet of glacial snow and ice can be expected. We will also do a couple of days of training and climbing in the Caucasus Mountains. These will involve glacial snow and ice and perhaps some rock scrambling. These are considered alpine climbs of an intermediate degree of difficulty.

CONDITIONING

You cannot over train for high altitude climbing. Concentrate on your heart, legs and lungs. Climb or hike at any opportunity. You will enjoy the trip more if you are properly prepared. An aerobic program of running, bicycling, or stair climbing, plus a conditioning program for the thigh muscles, is strongly recommended. You owe it to your team mates to be in excellent condition for the trip.

CLIMBING SKILLS

Prior knowledge of cramponing, ice ax arrest and rope team travel are **REQUIRED**. Everyone needs to be familiar with these basic climbing skills.

EQUIPMENT

The enclosed **PERSONAL EQUIPMENT LIST** is for your guidance. Most items are **REQUIRED**, a few are optional. Please consider each item carefully and be sure you understand what each piece of equipment's function is before you substitute or delete items from the list. Keep in mind that this list has been carefully compiled by IMG. Check with your equipment outfitter if you are unsure about a particular item. If that doesn't answer your question, call us.

FOOD

All mountain food is being provided for you as are all meals while we are in the Caucasus region. Also included are most meals in St. Petersburg and in Moscow. You are also responsible for any bottled drinks and alcohol. We also recommend and encourage everyone to bring a bag of snack foods with them. It's always nice to have a personal stash of candy bars and other snack items with you. Powdered drink mixes like Crystal Light are often appreciated.

WEATHER

There is no way to predict what the exact weather conditions will be during our ascents. Temperatures should be comparable or slightly lower than those experienced on Mt. Rainier during the summer season. Snow storms and windy conditions are possible at any time of year.

A light jacket or sweater will be needed during our travel days and in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

“Phil, you did a great job at providing superb leadership and it's only in hindsight that I realized how much I did learn in the several days that we all worked together. Your concern for safety and the well-being of the group was certainly expressed succinctly and in the end it paid dividends. But, what I particularly liked was your strong emphasis on the fact that we participate together as a team up to the top and back down. We succeeded, and in large part I think, it's due to the fact that you emphasized that we all do it together...”

—Todd H.

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

MEDICAL INFORMATION

While it's always nice to have a doctor as a participant on our trips, we cannot guarantee one's presence and you should be aware of this. We do ask that you to carefully fill out the Medical Information form that is part of the sign up packet which you completed as part of the registration procedure. We need to be informed of any allergies you may have, medicines you are currently taking and any medical conditions which could possibly affect your ability to safely participate on a climbing expedition.

In addition to the first aid items listed on the equipment list, there are a few additional medications that you should consider. These should be discussed with your personal physician and will require his prescription. We want everyone to bring a course of the prescription antibiotic Ciprofloxacin. You should also bring some Imodium for treatment of traveler's diarrhea. Please consider both of these medications as part of your REQUIRED equipment list. We do not recommend the automatic use of Diamox for altitude sickness but you can also discuss this with your physician and he can make this available to you if you and he deem it appropriate. Any medication should be used only if necessary and use should be discussed thoroughly with your physician and with your guide before you take the medication.

Water purification is also very important. An efficient and effective and inexpensive method is the use of iodine crystals. These are available commercially at mountaineering stores as a product called 'Polar Pure'. Iodine tablets, such as 'Potable Agua' are also available and work well. Filters, such as the ones made by MSR, are also good. Either can be used or both can be used in combination. Bottled water is also readily available.

There are some immunizations that you should consider. Your local health department is the best source of information. They are cheap insurance. Start preparations now so that these vaccinations can be spaced out. We strongly suggest receive the Hepatitis A vaccination and a tetanus vaccination. Most people like to be current with these vaccinations regardless of whether they are traveling or not.

We also recommend that each participant brings a small bottle of a hand disinfectant such as Purell. Anything that we can do to stay healthy is worthwhile.

Health issues will be discussed during the expedition and we encourage you to contact us if you have any questions before or during the trip.

IMMUNIZATIONS

No immunizations are currently required to enter Mexico. We do recommend that you consider the following:

- Tetanus/Diphtheria:** There is no natural immunity to the tetanus toxin and since it is found throughout the world, immunization is a universal recommendation regardless of age. A combined tetanus/ diphtheria booster is available, good for ten years.
- Hepatitis Vaccine:** New vaccines are available for both hepatitis A and B.

Please consult your physician or local health department for their recommendations.

You should also ask your physician for a prescription for a course of the antibiotic Ciprofloxacin. Please consider this to be part of your required equipment.

PERSONAL TRAVEL INSURANCE

You are advised and encouraged to buy your own life, personal medical, travel baggage, trip interruption and all other types of insurance that may pertain to this trip as they are not provided for you. Again, please call if you have any questions.

<http://www.mountainguides.com/travel-insurance.shtml>

PACKING AND TRAVELING SUGGESTIONS

Most of us will pack our gear in two duffel bags. We put our climbing pack in one of these bags. Most airlines limit checked luggage to two pieces each weighing no more than 50 lbs. Use zip ties to close the bags or purchase TSA approved locks. TSA approved locks really are a good idea. These are nice for your peace of mind. They help to prevent pilfering. In addition to these two bags, we like to use a small rucksack as our carry-on luggage. You then have this small rucksack available for day hikes, shopping, etc.

Flights within Russia have stricter weight limitations. Excess luggage fees are imposed for luggage above 20 kg total.

We also would suggest that you purchase one of the many light money belts that are available or get one of the pouches that you can hang around your neck and place inside your shirt. This is a little safer way to carry your money and travel documents. Experienced travelers will also carry a couple of extra passport photos with them as well as a copy of the first pages of your passport. These should be carried in a place separate from your passport. Having them available will greatly facilitate the replacement of your passport if you ever lost it.

Get to the airport early and make sure your luggage gets checked through to the correct destination. Also, make sure that your flight connections aren't too tight. Lost luggage is a pain. Try to keep the number of connections to a minimum when you are making travel plans and use the same airline as much as possible.

Leave expensive jewelry and watches at home. We would like everyone to have a wrist watch with an alarm along. They are quite handy. It's convenient to have a pen with you for filling in travel forms.

VISA APPLICATION

A visa is required for entry into Russia. We will handle these arrangements in conjunction with CTT Destinations. The process begins with us requesting a Visa Invitation from Russia. Then, we need a visa application, passport and passport photo and visa fees from you. This application form and instructions will be sent to you as a separate attachment. The visa application will be handled as a group. Please send the required form, **YOUR PASSPORT** (copies can NOT acceptable), 1 passport photo as well as payment for the processing fee, to CTT Destinations directly. We will begin this application process in the spring and you will be advised when to send in your passport, etc. We have tried to make this whole process as simple as possible. Call if you have any questions.

CTT Destinations will charge a nominal fee for processing and Fed Ex return of your passport with visa.

CTT Destinations
38579 SE River St. #2
P.O. Box 887
Snoqualmie, WA 98065

FLIGHT INFORMATION AND TRAVEL PLANS

All flight arrangements should be handled through CTT Destinations, in Russia flights in particular. They know our programs and it is so much easier when you work with them. Flights are typically in short supply so it is very important that everyone makes their reservations early. CTT Destinations is linked from our web site or you can contact them at: 800 909 6647 or by email at: img@cttdestinations.com This is an agency that specializes in group travel. We've worked with them for years and we can highly recommend them to help make your travel arrangements. It is also beneficial for us to have knowledge of everyone's travel arrangements.

Lufthansa Airlines currently has good connections through Frankfurt. CTT Destinations has the latest flight information. We want everyone on this flight if at all possible. Our return flight from Moscow will also be through Frankfurt. You are also responsible for your overnight in Frankfurt. CTT Destinations can easily make those arrangements for you.

CTT Destinations will also make the reservations for your flight from St. Petersburg-Mineralnye Vody-Moscow. They have all that flight information and will take good care of you. They are aware of the logistic difficulties that can exist within Russia and closely monitor all our connections.

Call CTT Destinations. You'll be glad you did.

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

Keep your street clothes for Russia casual. Days in St. Petersburg and Moscow can be quite warm in the summer. However, rain is also common. A light jacket or sweater can come in handy in the evenings. We typically carry personal cash in smaller bills. We recommend taking about \$500 (or more if you intend to shop a lot). As noted, mountain food and food in the Caucasus region is included but the Russians are not exactly famous for their cuisine. We always urge everyone to take a stash of goodies including: drink mix, candy, nuts, etc.

“People always ask me, 'why would you want to spend your vacation huffing and puffing and suffering climbing a mountain'? and I tell them beside the obvious challenge and self-reward... it is a tremendous way, and an excellent excuse, to actively see the world with a purpose. How would any of them be able to meet and spend a couple weeks with people like Romalo and the Igors? To see and learn about their cities their country their culture and their people?... To climb great peaks of the world, and not to mention to sit back with a couple of adult beverages while jumping back and forth from steamy sauna to a freezing cold pool with a bunch of buddies that were with you on a great adventure? We see so much more than just a tourist would see...”

—Brian S.

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

RUSSIA - MT. ELBRUS ITINERARY

- Day 01** Depart the United States.
- Day 02** Arrive in Frankfurt and connect with our flight to St. Petersburg. We'll be met at the airport and transfer to our hotel for the night.
- Day 03** Sight seeing in St. Petersburg with English speaking tour guide. We will visit the Fortress of Peter and Paul, St. Isaacs Cathedral and take a boat ride through the canals in the afternoon. A second night spent at the hotel there.
- Day 04** Fly from St. Petersburg to Mineralnye Vody and then transfer by bus to our hotel in the town of Terskol.
- Day 05** Acclimatization hike. Night in Terskol.
- Day 06** Training day at a nearby glacier. Technique review with emphasis on the French technique of cramponing. Night in Terskol.
- Day 07** Begin our Elbrus climb. We will take the tram and ski lift to the Barrels Hut on Elbrus. Altitude is approx. 12,500 ft. From there, we hike about 1 ½ hours to our private hut at the site of the old Pruitt which burned many years ago. Altitude here is approx. 13,500 ft.
- Day 08** This is an acclimatization day with a 2 ½ hour hike to a major rock landmark above our hut. A second night will be spent at the hut.
- Day 09** Attempt Elbrus. Early morning start with almost 5,000 vertical feet of cramponing. Return to hut for the night.
- Day 10** Return to the valley and our hotel in Terskol.
- Day 11** Probable ice climbing day. We can also use this as a weather contingency day for Elbrus, if needed.
- Day 12** Sight seeing day in the Baksan Valley. This day is also available as a weather contingency day, if needed.
- Day 13** We will drive back to Mineralnye Vody and then fly to Moscow. An English speaking guide will join us during our sightseeing in Moscow that day. We'll spend our final night at a hotel there.
- Day 14** We'll visit Red Square and the Kremlin during the day and then go to the airport for our flight to Frankfurt. Most folks will have a forced overnight in Frankfurt.
- Day 15** Transfer back to the airport for flights home.

Russia – Mt. Elbrus Personal Equipment List

- large size internal frame pack
 - ice ax (60-70 cm length is the most useful)
 - 12 point crampons (must be reasonably sharp)
 - climbing harness
 - climbing hard hat is also REQUIRED
 - 2 locking and 2 regular carabiners
 - sleeping bag (down or synthetic)
 - Thermarest pad
 - double climbing boots
 - gaiters
 - light weight hiking shoe
 - light hiking pants and shirt. Models made of Supplex nylon are nice
 - 2 sets of wool socks
 - climbing pants
 - Gore-tex shell pants with full-length leg zippers
 - Gore-tex shell-type parka
 - light to medium weight insulated parka (down or synthetic)
 - polypropylene underwear - 2 tops and 1 bottom
 - soft shell or Wind Stopper fleece jacket
 - wool or fleece stocking hat
 - ski gloves
 - polypro gloves
 - warm mittens
 - bandanna and baseball cap
 - sun glasses AND ski goggles
 - suntan lotion and lip protection (SPF #15)
 - 2 wide mouth water bottles (1 quart size) with insulated bottle covers
 - good size insulated mug with lid, bowl and spoon
 - good headlamp with 2 sets of new batteries
 - camera, extra batteries, and consider a small usb to share photos with teammates
 - light weight toilet articles and personal medications
 - personal first aid kit to include the following:
 - aspirin
 - moleskin
 - Ciprofloxacin – required
 - band aids
 - antacids
 - Imodium – required
 - iodine crystals for water purification these are available at mountaineering stores as a product called Polar Pure or in pill form as a product called Potable Agua
 - adjustable ski poles
 - swim suit
 - pocket knife
 - 3 very large plastic garbage bags
 - wrist watch with alarm (Splurge and get an altimeter watch from Suunto.)
- toilet paper and small bottle of Purell

“I was very impressed with how everything was so well organized. It seemed like every little detail was covered. IMG is way better than the others. Way better! You guys are the best in the business...”

—Jim P.

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