

Russia – Mt. Elbrus Expedition

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Elbrus is the Triple Threat of mountaineering: as the highest peak in Europe, it is one of the Seven Summits; it offers a non-technical toe-dip into high altitude climbing; and it is the chance you've been waiting for to see urban and rural Russia as well as the great Caucasus Range. IMG is in its fourth decade of guiding on Elbrus -- longer than any other guide service -- and we work hard to maintain one the highest standards in the industry.

At 18,510', Mt. Elbrus is your opportunity to experience altitude. If you have climbed Mt. Rainier and have your sights on bigger peaks, Elbrus gives you a long, high summit day without other demands. This is the peak to learn about acclimating, how your body does at altitude, and work out what you need for a successful, long day up high while claiming one of the Seven Summits.

Anyone curious about the world has thought about seeing Russia, and this is your chance to pair a big climb with some serious history and culture. In Moscow, you'll stand nose to nose with the iconic onion domes of St. Basil's Cathedral, stroll along the banks of the Moskva River, visit Red Square, the Kremlin (the biggest fortress in the world), and maybe the Park of Fallen Heroes where statues from the Soviet era are now displayed as art with Lenin and Stalin hailing one another across grassy fields instead of on city streets.

Our trip begins in St. Petersburg where we will tour the "Venice of Russia" taking a boat trip down the legendary canals. Not known for restraint, Russian art and architecture is a full immersion experience, and we'll take in the highlights including the Hermitage (imperial Winter Palace) on the Neva River and Fortress of Peter and Paul. The Hermitage is also home to over 50 cats (with their own photo ids, press secretary and caretakers) who live and work there to protect the art from rodents. While absorbing the culture, we can attempt to practice reigning in our friendliness, as Russians don't believe in smiling at strangers and reserve their immense warmth and hospitality until at least brief introductions have been made.

From St. Petersburg, we'll fly to the Baksan Valley below the glaciers of Elbrus where we'll acclimate by hiking in the meadow foothills and enjoy views of Elbrus rising above its neighbors in the Caucasus Range. We'll continue to acclimate on Elbrus itself where the views and legends grow... Ask your guides about the old Priut Huts; they should have good stories. Summit day is long and scenic. While working your way up the massive glaciers, look over your shoulder to see more and more layers of Caucasus peaks reveal themselves, with big, bad Ushba dominating the craggy skyline. It's a world-class view, and you might take a moment to congratulate yourself on the good choices that brought you to this point.

We'll celebrate the climb with a day of exploring the Baksan Valley where vegetarians will be profoundly challenged by the smell of charred shashliks (shishkabobs) on the streets. This is a good place to chat with locals, shop for gifts, and enjoy views of the mountain you just climbed before gathering for the team dinner. The following day we'll fly to Moscow for another round of epic sights.

Between Elbrus, the Baksan Valley and touring two of the world's great cities, IMG's Elbrus Expedition will rank among your trips of a lifetime.

Please look over the rest of our expedition info and [contact us](#) with any questions.

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 Cheget. We will take several days acclimatizing and training in the Caucasus. Good terrain is available nearby and we'll make use of it while continuing to prepare for our climb.

We'll spend two nights in our huts at 12,500 feet prior to our summit attempt. The huts are basic but insulated and comfortable. You'll have shared sleeping quarters, a communal common room, and a separate dining hut with a dedicated team cook preparing breakfast, lunches and dinners for our team.

Summit day on Elbrus is STRENUOUS but not very technical. At close to 6,000 feet of total ascent, it is a very big day of elevation gain but remains attainable for anyone who has focused on training and preparing. Ice axe arrest, basic cramponing and rope travel are required skills on which you'll receive a refresher course during your stay in Cheget before the climb.

A couple contingency days built into our schedule allow for flexibility on the mountain if we need to wait for the best weather window. If we don't use those days, we'll have a bit of time available to explore the beautiful Baksan Valley region before we depart for Moscow as a team. In Moscow we relax, have a celebratory final dinner, and tour the city for an evening and morning with our tour guide before going our separate ways back home.

Our local guides are great climbers and great companions. They know their country well and support us through all phases of the trip. Long-term friends and connections like these makes our trip special. We can rest assured that the details have been taken care of and we have the resources in place for any contingencies that may arise.

Join us for an unforgettable experience on Mt. Elbrus!

“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: mountainguides.com/comments.shtml

PROGRAM FEES AND PAYMENT SCHEDULE

Elbrus 2022 Trip Dates:

July 23 – August 6, 2022

Landcost: \$5,300

COSTS INCLUDED:

- 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
- Meals while climbing (except snack foods and bottled drink or alcohol)
- Restaurant meals in Russia

COSTS NOT INCLUDED:

- 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
- REQUIRED Travel Insurance*
- Snow cat ride from hut on summit day (exact price TBD)

| Due | Payment of: | Elbrus |
|---|--------------------------|---------|
| At registration, if > 120 days of Trip Date | Application Fee | \$1,000 |
| At 120 Days Prior to Trip Date | Balance of Landcost Fees | \$4,300 |
| At registration <= 120 days of Trip Date | Total Landcost Fees | \$5,300 |

All IMG program fees are quoted in US dollars. All fees and payments are non-refundable and non-transferable. Payments must be received by IMG on or before the due dates noted above. If you require bank wire information, let us know. Our bank does not charge for incoming bank wires; however, please account for wire fees charged by your bank or correspondent banks.

IMG 2022 Mount Elbrus Itinerary

| | | |
|---------------|--------------|---|
| Day 01 | Sat, July 23 | Depart the United States. |
| Day 02 | Sun, July 24 | Arrive in St. Petersburg. We'll be met at the airport and transfer to our hotel for the night. |
| Day 03 | Mon, July 25 | Sightseeing in St. Petersburg with our English speaking tour guide. We normally visit the Fortress of Peter and Paul, St. Isaacs Cathedral and take a boat ride through the canals in the afternoon before having a nice dinner downtown close to our hotel. A second night spent at the hotel there. |
| Day 04 | Tue, July 26 | Additional walking tour in the morning. Fly from St. Petersburg to Mineralnye Vody and then transfer by bus to our hotel in the town of Cheget. |
| Day 05 | Wed, July 27 | Acclimatization hike above Terskol. Night in Cheget. |
| Day 06 | Thu, July 28 | Training day on Elbrus. Technique review with emphasis on movement efficiency, French crampon technique, ice axe arrest and fixed line protection. Night in Cheget. |
| Day 07 | Fri, July 29 | Begin our Elbrus climb. We will take the tram and ski lift to our huts on Elbrus. Elevation is approximately 12,500 ft. Short, easy hike to our team's hut before an afternoon of relaxing or taking a short hike before dinner. |
| Day 08 | Sat, July 30 | This is an acclimatization day with a 4 hour hike to around above our hut to 15,000 feet. A second night will be spent at the hut. |
| Day 09 | Sun, July 31 | Attempt Elbrus. Very early "alpine start" for anyone walking the full 6,000 vertical feet. Optional snowcat to a drop off higher on the mountain (as high as 16,000 feet). Return to hut for the night. |
| Day 10 | Mon, Aug 1 | Return to the valley and our hotel in Cheget. |
| Day 11 | Tue, Aug 2 | Possible trekking day. We can also use this as a weather contingency day for Elbrus, if needed. |
| Day 12 | Wed, Aug 3 | Sightseeing day in the Baksan Valley and surrounding area. Lots of activities available to the team but the day usually ends with a final visit to one of the local Russian style saunas outside the village of Cheget. This day is also available as a weather contingency day, if needed. |
| Day 13 | Thu, Aug 4 | Drive back to Mineralnye Vody and fly to Moscow. An English speaking guide will join us during our sightseeing in Moscow that day. We'll visit some of the most dramatic viewpoints overlooking the city and finish with a final, celebratory dinner in the vibrant city center. Final night at our hotel close by. |
| Day 14 | Fri, Aug 5 | We'll visit Red Square and the Kremlin during the morning before heading to the airport for our flights to Frankfurt. Most folks will have an overnight in Frankfurt due to the typically extended layovers for connecting flights. |
| Day 15 | Sat, Aug 6 | Transfer back to the airport for flights home. |

WHY CLIMB ELBRUS WITH INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN GUIDES?

IMG is widely recognized as one of the top expedition services in the world. Our US and international guide staff are second to none and will bring years of experience and expertise to your climb. We now have over three decades of successfully guiding Elbrus through all kinds of world events and challenges. You'll be hard pressed to find any guide service with a comparable history in this part of the world. In the end, you can be confident that on any IMG program you'll be well supported at all points during your expedition by a staff with a proven track record and a love for sharing the mountains with our guests.

ROUTE DESCRIPTION

Our route on Elbrus itself is a fairly straight-forward glacier climb. Several thousand feet of snow and ice travel on relatively lower angle terrain can be expected. The final slopes below the summit plateau are the steepest and most challenging but are typically protected by clipping the rope teams into several hundred feet of fixed lines.

SNOWCAT OPTION

Many climbers are now opting to hire a snowcat to take them higher on the mountain from the huts on summit morning. While fully optional for the team or individual members, we feel that the option is worth considering. Your guides will give you a full run-down of the positives and negatives, as well as the current cost (pay directly to snow cat operator). The snowcat option can significantly enhance both the climbing experience and the likelihood of summit success (and is certainly a unique experience in its own right!). Your guides are there to help you make any final decisions on this prior to your team's summit effort.

CUSTOM PROGRAMS

We have worked with many individuals and groups to organize custom programs in Russia. Whether its different dates, other mountains, or additional days before or after a trip, we're [here](#) to assist you.

WEATHER

Often the challenges of climbing Elbrus revolve around the environmental factors of cold temperatures and/or wind as much as anything else. Come prepared with clothing systems, goggles, face protection and the experience and fitness to deal with real-deal mountain weather and you'll be well positioned for a successful summit effort. A light jacket or sweater will be needed during our travel days and in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

AIR TRAVEL

There are numerous connections now into St. Petersburg at the beginning of the expedition and at the end of the trip departing Moscow. We will follow up with additional information about flights and visas.

VISA APPLICATION

You will need to obtain a Russia visa into your passport in advance of the Mt Elbrus Program. IMG will obtain the visa "invitations" from Russia, forward them to team members, and then help guide you through the actual process of obtaining your Russia Visa.

MONEY TO BRING

We typically carry personal cash in smaller bills but ATMs are readily available in the major cities as are money changing kiosks (change money in St. Petersburg as it gets more difficult in Cheget and Terskol). We recommend taking about \$500 (or more if you intend to shop a lot).

REQUIRED TRAVEL INSURANCE*

IMG requires that all participants on international programs purchase Travel Insurance that includes coverage for medical evacuation, repatriation and medical expenses for the duration of their IMG program. We strongly recommend that you add [Trip Cancellation](#) coverage to your policy to cover cancellation (before trip starts) or interruption (after trip starts.) If you have general travel insurance questions, please email [Becky Kjørvestad](#) . Please extend your insurance policy to cover your trip until you return to your home country.

CONDITIONING

Remember that good physical conditioning is always a necessity for high altitude climbing. Any Seven Summits attempt involves several thousand feet of continuous effort and may entail 10-12 hours or more of sustained physical output. Your training plan should be focused on these expectations. Follow a conditioning program that focusses on consistent and frequent “base building” exercise (long trail runs at an easy pace work well for this - 3-5 per week is a typical training load range). Include a series of strength exercises for your lower body as you progress (leg press, squats, etc). When possible, add in occasional longer training climbs with significant elevation gain (2-3 per month is ideal). If you live in an area without good access to hills or peaks to train on, we recommend options like stair climbing, box stepping, bike riding and stair sprints. Conditioning is a process that should continue throughout the year but give yourself a week to so of rest and easy maintenance level exercise prior to departing your home for the climb.

CLIMBING SKILLS

Experience with cramponing, ice axe arrest and rope team travel are required. We will brush up on them together as a group before the climb but keep in mind that your technical skills are integral to the safety and success of the entire team. IMG guides will work with you to shake off the rust and get things dialed but will still expect you to show up with some prior experience or training.

Additionally, any previous experience dealing with challenging, windy and cold mountain conditions will be HIGHLY valuable on Elbrus. While we can all hope for calm and comfortable conditions (and it sometimes happens!) Elbrus can also be a quite challenging environment. Good familiarity with your cold weather clothing systems is necessary and can dramatically up your chances of success.

FOOD

All mountain food is being provided for you as are all meals while we are in the Caucasus region. Also included are team meals in St. Petersburg and in Moscow. You are 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 your preferred candy bars, snack items, and powdered electrolyte drink mixes with you. Selection and availability of these kinds of snack items will be more limited in our village in Russia and we'd recommend arriving with your own stash already packed and ready.

WATER

Water purification is always a consideration while traveling. Iodine tablets are quick and easy but we have also had good experience with the UV light treatment (“SteriPen”) options available from most outdoor stores these days. Generally speaking the water in the areas we travel is reliably safe to drink, but it is still a consideration (your guide will give you advice along the way). If nothing else, bring those iodine tablets as a simple backup if you decide it is necessary. Bottled water is also readily available throughout the trip.

MEDICAL INFORMATION

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. Any medication should be used only if necessary and its use should be discussed thoroughly with your physician (and with your guide) before you take the medication.

IMMUNIZATIONS

Please review the recommendations of the CDC for travelers to Russia:

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/russia>

In particular we recommend that you update your routine vaccinations, and get vaccinated against Hepatitis A and B. IMG requires all team members to have Covid vaccination.

“It was an exciting and memorable trip. Russia's a bit like the old Wild West...”

—John

“In short, you run incredible expeditions to the degree that if all the 'clients' out there climb with you just once... all the other outfits will go out of business. And when people ask me how many people were on the trip, I don't say 3 guides and 9 clients, I say we had a team of 12. And that is very important. Thanks again for an outstanding 2 weeks...”

—Brian S.

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

MT ELBRUS PERSONAL EQUIPMENT LIST

This equipment list is meant to help you compile your personal gear specifically for our Elbrus expedition. Most items are required. Please consider each item carefully and be sure you understand the function of each piece of equipment before you substitute anything. Despite the reputation Elbrus has as one of the more straight-forward of the Seven Summits, the weather on summit day can be severe, cold and challenging. Cutting corners on your gear can have significant impacts on your summit experience and chances. We're happy to help you make selection and purchase decisions as you pull together the list below.

| MT ELBRUS PERSONAL EQUIPMENT LIST |
|---|
| Climbing Backpack, minimum 40L |
| 2 duffel bags |
| Small carry-on/travel bag |
| Ice Axe (50–60 cm) |
| Crampons |
| Adjustable trekking poles |
| Lightweight Climbing Harness |
| Climbing Helmet |
| 1 locking and 1 non-locking carabiner |
| Sleeping bag rated for 20°F or lower |
| Inflatable sleeping pad |
| Double mountaineering boots |
| Gaiters (optional if wearing boots w/ integrated gaiter) |
| Light hiking shoes |
| 2 sets of wool socks (fit these well with your climbing boots) |
| Short sleeve lightweight hiking shirt |
| Long sleeve lightweight hiking shirt |
| Light hiking shorts |
| Light hiking pants |
| 2 Pairs of synthetic underwear |
| 2 sports bras (ladies) |
| Synthetic base layer for legs (long underwear) |
| Soft-shell climbing pants (medium weight soft shell) |
| Waterproof Gore-Tex pants with full-length leg zippers |
| 2 Synthetic upper body base layers |
| 1 or 2 medium weight insulating layers |
| Soft-shell jacket |
| Heavy weight insulated parka (must have hood) |
| Waterproof Gore-Tex jacket |

| | |
|---|---|
| Wool/fleece beanie hat that fits under your helmet | |
| Light weight gloves | |
| Medium weight gloves | |
| Heavy weight gloves | |
| Buff | |
| Glacier glasses | |
| Goggles | |
| Sunscreen and lip balm (at least 30 spf) | |
| 2 wide-mouth Nalgene water bottles | |
| Water bottle insulating sleeves | |
| Headlamp with extra batteries | |
| Camera | |
| Power outlet adaptors | |
| Toiletries | |
| <p>Personal first aid kit:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Aspirin <input type="checkbox"/> Antacids <input type="checkbox"/> One roll of athletic tape</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Moleskin or second skin for blisters <input type="checkbox"/> Imodium</p> <p>High altitude and travel medications</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Acetazolamide (6 tablets @ 125mg)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Dexamethasone (4 tablets @ 4mg)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Nifedipine (2 tablets @ 30mg)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Azithromycin (1 course, advised)</p> | <p>Consult with your doctor to acquire high altitude medications and to complete the Physician's Certificate in the application package.</p> |
| 2 Large plastic compactor bags | We will use this to line our backpacks to protect our gear from precipitation. |
| Pocket knife | Victorinox Swiss Army Wenger |
| Alarm wrist watch | ideally an altimeter watch (Casio and Suunto make nice models) |
| Casual clothes | Make sure to bring some comfortable clothes for going out to dinner. Leave the black tie/dress at home, but a nice shirt with a collar will be appreciated for some of the restaurants where we will be dining. |
| Bathing suit | for the Russian saunas |
| Snack Food | Energy bars, etc, for summit day and while hiking. Bring some snack food you like to eat while climbing! |