

MONTE ROSA 4000s

INFORMATION FOLDER

Many thanks for booking your Monte Rosa expedition with us. We're here to do everything possible to make your dream a reality. Our Monte Rosa package is specifically designed to make your week as comfortable as possible, as enjoyable as possible, and as successful as possible. We use great accommodation, the best Mountain Guides, and look forward to celebrating with you on your successful return to the valley from the mountains.

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ITINERARY

Day 1 – Your trip will start with a briefing at 6:30 pm at the Hotel Prieure in Chamonix. We will discuss the week ahead and answer any questions you may have before checking/issuing equipment.

Day 2 – Acclimatisation day around Chamonix. The aim of the day is to use local lifts to get above 3000m and then enjoy either a glacial hike or an easy peak. Locally we have the Aiguille du Midi lift, The Skyway lift and the Grand Montet lift (out of action currently) to choose from. This warm up day also gives us the perfect opportunity to test and adjust our equipment.

Day 3 - Chamonix to Refugio Quintino Sella. After breakfast you will be driven through the Mont Blanc tunnel into Italy, arriving in Staffal near Gressonney after around 2hrs. You will then take the chair lift up to the Colle Bettaforca and walk to the Refugio Quintino Sella (3585m) (3hrs30). Sometimes the approach to the refuge is completely dry, but at other times it is very snowy and may require the use of crampons and ropes.

Day 4 - Castor (4220m) - After an early start you will make our way up the glacier. The ascent of Castor is a great place to both teach and revise skills which will be essential for the rest of the trip. The summit is a special place, with fantastic views of the surrounding 4000m peaks and all the way down to Zermatt.

Day 5 - Refugio Quintino Sella to Gnifetti Hut – This day is begun with a long glacial hike beneath Lyskamm (4272m) towards the Passo del Nasso. This is potentially serious terrain and will only be undertaken if snow conditions are good (ie not icy). After the Passo there will be the option to ascend the Balmenhorn (4167m), Schwarzhorn (4321m) and Pyramid Vincent (4215m) before heading down to the Rifugio Gnifetti (3647m) or the Rifugio Mantova (just below the Gnifetti).

Day 6 – The grand finale ! Gnifetti Hut to Zumsteinspitz (4563m). This is a long trek up the glacier, followed by a short and exposed climb up a mixed ridge. The summit offers spectacular views and is

well worth the effort. On the way back you may visit the Margherita Hut which is built on the summit of the Signalkuppe (4554m). This is the highest manned refuge in the Alps. After that you will head back down the glacier to the Rifugio where you will collect your things before continuing down to the Indren lift which will eventually take you to the car at Stafal. After a two hour drive you'll be back in Chamonix and ready for a good shower !

Day 7 - Breakfast at the hotel is included before departure. It is recommended that flights be booked for around lunchtime or a little later to avoid needing an early departure.

EQUIPMENT

Each day you will be wearing the following:

- Mountain Trousers. *Mammut "Base Jump"* (Schoeller fabric) or similar recommended.
- Thermal shirt/T shirt. Merino wool (eg *Icebreaker*) recommended as they don't smell.
- Thick socks. *Smartwool* or *Teko* recommended.
- Mountain Boots. Boots must have a semi rigid sole and be capable of taking a step-in crampon. Scarpa "*Ribelle*" are usually quite sufficient, but in colder periods *La Sportiva "Nepal Extreme"* or similar are recommended. Excellent boots can be hired in Chamonix for around €50/week.
- Fleece/Soft Shell top. *Arc'teryx* recommended.
- Thin gloves. Fleece or leather gloves recommended.
- Gaiters. Gore tex. Black diamond recommended. Ankle length are fine.
- Sunglasses. Category 4 glacier glasses by *Julbo*, *Cebe*, *Vuarnet* and *Adidas* recommended. Good sunglasses are one of the most important things you'll need – please don't bring fashion glasses – they won't have dark enough lenses. Ray Ban and Oakley do not make any glasses with Category 4 lenses.

You should be carrying the following:

- Waterproof Jacket and Trousers. Gore Tex. *Arc'Teryx* Recommended.
- Warm Gloves. *Black Diamond "Patrol"* Gloves recommended.
- Sun Hat. Cricket or baseball style hats work well.
- Warm Hat
- Goggles. Low light lenses recommended as goggles most likely used in poor weather.
- Packed lunch and drink

- Sun cream and lip salve. SPF >30.
- Blister Kit and personal medication if required. "Compeed" recommended.
- Head torch. *Petzl* "Tika Plus" or similar recommended.
- Ear Plugs (in case of snorers in the huts). Wax ear plugs are far better than foam.
- Compact camera (fully charged)
- Wash kit ie toothbrush, small tube of toothpaste, wet wipes.
- Sheet liner to sleep in. These are mandatory for the Mountain Huts for hygiene reasons. Silk bags are best due to their weight. *Summit to Sea* recommended.
- Antiseptic hand gel – some huts do not have running water to wash with.
- Mitts. Dachstein wool mitts recommended, or fleece with Gore Tex shell.
- Duvet Jacket. Synthetic jackets recommended as they stay warm if wet. *Arc'teryx* and *Decathlon* recommended.

Technical Equipment:

- Harness. *Black Diamond* "Alpine Bod" and Beal "Aero Team III" recommended.
- Helmet. *Petzl* "Ecrin Roc" and *Black Diamond* "Half Dome" recommended.
- Ice Axe. *Grivel* "Air Tech" recommended. The bottom of your axe should reach your shin when held in your hand standing upright.
- Crampons. *Petzl* Vasak and *Grivel* G12 highly recommended.
- Walking Poles. These can be handy when crossing glaciers, and on paths for reducing shock on your knees. *Leki* and *Komperdell* recommended. Snow baskets essential. It is personal preference whether to use one pole or two.
- Rucksack. 30-40 litre maximum.

Anyone wishing to hire equipment in Chamonix rather than buy it can do so. We use a local shop for boot hire (allow €50 for the week), and other items are available as follows:

EQUIPMENT HIRE PRICES IN €

Ice Axe	20
Harness	13
Helmet	13
Crampons	28
Duvet Jacket	24
Mitts	10

Full Package: Duvet Jacket, Mitts, Axe, Harness, Crampons, Helmet – €85, payable in cash in Chamonix

Valley Accommodation

For this trip we will be using the Hotel Prieure in Chamonix. This is a lovely hotel, ideally situated so you can stroll into town. There is a spa facility so remember to take your bathing costume. Rooms are on a twin-sharing basis. If you are a couple, please let us know and we can arrange a double bed for you. The hotel is located at 149 Allee Recteur Payot. The number for reception is +33 450 53 20 72.

Packed Lunches:

Packed lunches can be collected each morning from a local bakery.

Evening Meal

Dinner can be taken in a choice of restaurants in Chamonix and is not included.

Transfers to and from Geneva Airport

The transfer is approximately 70 minutes. The following company is recommended:

www.mountaindropoffs.com When booking use code SMGUIDE15 to receive a discount on your transfer

Please do not arrive at the hotel before 1500.

At the end of the trip, try and arrange your return flight for early afternoon. This will allow you to have breakfast before you leave. Transfers usually leave Chamonix 3 hours before flights depart.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How much does the trip cost ?

The week costs €1950. There are additional costs, and these are outlined later in this section.

A 20% deposit is payable upon booking via www.stuartmacdonald.org.

The balance is required two months before the start of the trip.

What is included in the week ?

- B+B Accommodation in a quality hotel in Chamonix x 2 nights. Accommodation is usually sharing in twin rooms. Single rooms can sometimes be arranged (supplement TBC) but this is not always possible.
- Half Board accommodation in Mountain Refuges x 4 nights.
- Transport to and from training venues.
- All Guiding and Guides expenses.
- Mountain Uplift (as per itinerary).

What costs extra ?

- Flights.
- Transfers.
- Insurance.
- Equipment hire.
- Lunches, snacks, drinks.
- Evening meals in Chamonix.

Do I need specialist Insurance for the trip ?

Absolutely. To go on an alpine climbing trip without insurance would be foolhardy. Rescue costs and medical bills are something you don't ever want to worry about, so we insist on everyone being fully insured. If you are UK based, then we recommend BMC Insurance - www.thebmc.co.uk/modules/insurance/Default.aspx . If living outside the UK then we recommend World Nomads (www.worldnomads.com).

What if the trip does not run ?

If the trip does not run, through insufficient bookings, sudden illness, or other unforeseen circumstances, you will be offered a full refund, or transferred onto an expedition with one of our partner firms.

What are the mountain huts like ?

Mountain Huts are mostly owned by the Alpine Clubs. They are there to provide accommodation and food for mountaineers. They often cater for large numbers (>100), and hence can be quite busy. Meals are usually simple but plentiful, and anyone with special dietary requirements must let us know in advance so we can inform the hut guardian. Please note that while huts will usually try and accommodate vegetarians etc they do sometimes struggle with more specialised requirements such as gluten free. Showers and running water are not usually available. Meals, drinks, and snacks can be purchased for cash. The rooms are usually dormitory style, with large alpine bunks (up to 15 people in a row). Indoor footwear is provided in the refuges so there is no need to take your own.

How long are the days ?

The length of days will vary when Alpine Climbing, but everyone taking part in a Monte Rosa trip should expect to be moving for 6-9hrs per day.

How much water should I carry each day ?

Do not carry too much water – it is very heavy. As a general rule 1-2 litres is the right amount. Avoid using Camel Back style systems with drinking straws. They leak, the tubes freeze, and they will always let you down when you need them most. Nalgene style plastic bottles are the best.

What type of food should I carry ?

Everyone is different, however it is essential to eat well in the mountains. Sandwiches are hard to beat, supplemented by fruit and chocolate bars. Don't carry too much food, and remember that some foods will freeze solid unless kept in jacket pockets.

What camera should I take ?

Avoid carrying bulky SLR style cameras. They are too heavy, and slow to use. Compact cameras that fit into a pocket are best. **CAMERAS IN RUCKSACKS NEVER TAKE PHOTOGRAPHS.** Digital cameras must be kept warm in a pocket or they will freeze and cease to function.

What sun cream do you recommend ?

Any brand will be fine. The most important thing is the SPF – Do not bother with anything under SPF 30. Creams with UVA and UVB protection are best. Any don't forget lip salve.

If there is no water in the huts for washing, what should we do ?

Take some wet wipes to give yourself a clean in the evening. A toothbrush, some wet wipes, and a small tube of toothpaste (shared between several people) is plenty. Some alcohol hand gel is also handy.

Why do some people use different huts to us ?

The Gnifetti Hut and Mantova are located within a few hundred meters of each other. The Mantova is slightly lower, but has more spacious accommodation. Both are great places to stay.

How does every company claim to use the best Mountain Guides ?

We always use the very best Mountain Guides possible. But then every company says that don't they ? To ensure we genuinely do use the best Guides, we pay our Guides more than any other Guiding Company operating on Mont Blanc. That way we always have the pick of the very best.

Are all Mountain Guides certified ?

All Guides operating in the European Alps must be Internationally Certified. Training and Assessment takes a minimum of three years and anyone caught operating without a license will be prosecuted.

Occasionally we employ trainee guides (known as Aspirants). They are in the final stages of qualifying as Guides and are allowed to operate under the tutorage of an experienced Guide.

Where can I get a packed lunch for each day ?

Before leaving Chamonix you can buy lunch from a local bakery. Once in the mountains you can buy a good packed lunch from the Mountain Refuge (don't forget to order the night before).