

ITALIAN 4000s

The best of Gran Paradiso and Monte Rosa

INFORMATION FOLDER

Many thanks for booking your expedition with us. We're here to do everything possible to make your dream a reality. Our Italian 4000s package is specifically designed to make your week as comfortable as possible, as enjoyable as possible, and as successful as possible. We use the best Mountain Guides, have a great itinerary, and look forward to celebrating with you on your successful return to the valley from five 4,000m peaks.

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Itinerary:

Day 1: Meet in Chamonix.

Day 2: Drive through MB tunnel. Up lift to Torino hut. Glacier Skills Training.

Day 3: Hike on the glacier and then down to the Valley. Drive to Gran Paradiso Park and hike to Rifugio Chabod.

Day 4: Summit Gran Paradiso (4061m) and then down to Valley. Drive to hotel in Val d'Aosta.

Day 5: Drive to Gressonney. Lift to Punta Indren and then hike to Rifugio Gnifetti. If clients are feeling strong they can climb Vincent Pyramid (4215m) the same day.

Day 6: Ascend the glacier and climb the Signalkuppe (4554m) to the Rifugio Margherita (highest refuge in the Alps). After coffee and pizza head back down to Rifugio Gnifetti.

Day 7: A final morning hoovering up peaks in the area such as Balmenhorn (4167m) and Ludwigshohe (4341m) before heading down to the lift and then driving back to Chamonix.

Day 8: Depart from Chamonix.

Detailed Itinerary:

Day 1: Meet in Chamonix at the Hotel Prieure in the town centre. The hotel staff will be expecting you. For those travelling by plane the nearest airport is Geneva. Anyone needing to rent boots can do so when they arrive from a local sport shop. Your Guide will meet you at 18:30 in the lobby to brief you on the week ahead, and discuss clothing and equipment. Anyone needing hire kit will be given it at this point.

Day 2: After a filling breakfast you'll be driven (via a bakery) through the Mont Blanc tunnel to Courmayeur where you'll take the space-age "Skyway" lift to 3400m. From there it's a 2 minute walk down a long corridor to the Rifugio Torino where you'll be spending the night. After dropping off any kit you don't need for the afternoon you'll head out onto the glacier for some essential crampon skills training. After that you'll have some time to relax in the refuge bar before dinner.

Day 3: Depending on the needs of the group you will either go for a hike on the glacier, or head down to the valley for a via ferrata. In the afternoon you'll be driven to the stunning Gran Paradiso National Park and hike for 2 ½ hrs to the lovely Rifugio Chabod in preparation for your first 4000m peak.

Day 4: Gran Paradiso is no walk in the park. Hence you'll usually have breakfast around 05:00 and be on the move before 06:00. After about 1 ¼ hrs you'll arrive at the glacier where you will put on your crampons and rope up. From there the route follows a meandering glacier up to a flat shoulder where we may meet other climbers from another refuge. The final climb to the summit is a little steeper, and sometimes involves a ladder over a crevasse just for a little extra excitement. After an easy traverse we will head towards the summit and the final ladder rungs which take us to the summit (4061m. Allow 4-6hrs from the refuge). We follow the same route back to the refuge in about 3hrs. After a decent break for a drink and some pasta we head back down to the valley (2hrs) from where we drive to a comfortable hotel in the Aosta Valley for the night.

Day 5: After a nice breakfast we will drive 1 ¼ hrs to Gressonney where we take the lift to Punta Indren (3250m) before walking up to the Rifugio Gnifetti at 3590m. Those feeling strong can then carry on up the glacier to the summit of Pyramid Vincent (4215m) before returning to the Refuge for the night. Anyone still tired from Gran Paradiso can relax in the refuge.

Day 6: This is the best day to try and get as high as possible, with a likely objective being Punta Gnifetti (aka the Signalkuppe) at 4554m (4-5hrs). This is also the location for the highest refuge in the Alps – the Rifugio Margarita. It's a long hike up the glacier, but at the top you can enjoy an Italian coffee and quality pizza before heading back down to the refuge for the night.

Day 7: This is your final chance to bag some more 4000m peaks, but don't worry – there are some not too far away ! The Balmenhorn (4167m) and Ludgwishohe (4344m) are ideal objectives for early morning summits before you head back down to the Indren lift to begin your journey back to Chamonix (2 ½ hrs driving). That evening you'll enjoy a good shower and a well deserved dinner at the hotel !

Day 8: Depart for home. Best to arrange flights for early afternoon so you have plenty of time to enjoy breakfast before leaving

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. *La Sportiva "Nepal Extreme"* or *Scarpa "Mont Blanc Pro"* recommended. Boots must have a rigid sole for crampons. 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.

You should be carrying the following:

- Waterproof Jacket and Trousers. Gore Tex. *Arc'Teryx* Recommended.
- Warm Gloves. *Black Diamond "Patrol"* Gloves recommended.
- Sun Hat
- 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 – most huts do not have running water to wash with.

On summit day you will also need:

- Mitts/extra warm gloves. 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. *Gipron* recommended. Snow baskets essential. It is personal preference whether to use one pole or two. Gipron poles are best because they are ultra light and split down into 4 segments, meaning they can be stored inside your rucksack when climbing.
- Rucksack. 30-40 litre maximum. If buying a rucksack get one with ice axe loops.

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	22
Harness	16
Helmet	16
Crampons	33
Duvet Jacket	28
Mitts	11

Full Package: Duvet Jacket, Mitts, Axe, Harness, Crampons, Helmet – €99, payable in cash in Chamonix

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How much does the trip cost ?

The week costs €2250. There are additional costs, and these are outlined later in this section.

What is included in the week ?

- Half Board accommodation in Mountain Refuges x 4 nights.
- Half Board accommodation in Hotels x 3 nights.
- Transport to and from training venues, as per the itinerary.
- All Guiding and Guides expenses.

What costs extra ?

- Flights
- Transfers
- Mountain uplift (allow €110)
- Insurance
- Equipment hire
- Lunches, snacks, drinks

What previous Experience is Required:

Nil. We will train you in the first 24hrs to the standard required for these peaks.

How physically tough is this trip ?

This is a very demanding trip. You should be in excellent physical shape. If you are over-weight (BMI >25) you will struggle to complete many of the peaks and may have to leave the group. You should be capable of jogging a Half Marathon in 2hr20. You need excellent stamina and should be prepared for days to last up to 12 hours. If you are not exercising at least three times per week, and eating a healthy diet, then this trip is not for you.

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 ?

We need a minimum of 2 people to guarantee the trip. 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. Training days will usually start between 0600 and 0800, and last for 6-8 hours. Gran Paradiso will usually start very early, and can easily last 12 hours (it is usually the longest day on the trip).

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.

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 ?

You can buy a good packed lunch from a local bakery or order one at the refuge before dinner for collection the next day.

What are the hotels like ?

For this trip we will be using the Hotel Le Prieure in Chamonix. This is a lovely hotel, ideally situated so you can stroll into town. 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.

In the Val d'Aosta we use the Hotel Comtes de Challant in Fenis. This is a charming hotel, serving excellent food, with very friendly staff.

Single Rooms may be available for a supplement of €200.