

GRAN PARADISO

4061m

INFORMATION FOLDER

Many thanks for booking your Gran Paradiso expedition with us. We're here to do everything possible to make your dream a reality. Our trip is specifically designed to make your trip 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 the summit.

Contents:

- Itinerary
- Equipment
- Valley Accommodation
- Frequently Asked Questions

ITINERARY

Gran Paradiso (4061m) is located within the Gran Paradiso National Park in the Val d'Aosta of Northern Italy. Being close to the Italian and Swiss borders it is a great place to observe the Mont Blanc Massif in France and the Valais Alps of Switzerland.

We offer a 3 day Gran Paradiso ascent. Many other providers offer trips as short as two days, but the simple fact is that the shorter the trip, the less chance you have of getting to the top. If you've not done any acclimatisation then a 2 day trip will feel pretty brutal !

Sample Itinerary:

Our trips usually convene on a Thursday and disperse on a Monday. Friday, Saturday and Sunday are mountain days. We stay at the Hotel Prieure in Chamonix, so you will have rooms reserved there for Thursday and Sunday evening.

Day 0 (Thursday) – Arrive at the hotel and get settled in. Reception will be expecting you and will have a room allocated for you. You will meet your Guide in reception at 18:30. They will then give a briefing on weather, conditions and itinerary. Kit will be checked and any hire kit needed will be distributed.

Day 1 – If anyone still needs to collect hire boots then you can do so first thing. A bakery stop is also a great idea to collect a sandwich for lunch. After driving through the Mont Blanc tunnel you will take the lift up to Punta Helbronner and the Rifugio Torino. The group will then head out onto the glacier where the focus is on learning how to use crampons and ice axes. You will also look at tying on to the rope and moving efficiently as a team. That evening you will sleep in the Rifugio Torino - at 3400m above sea level this is an excellent place to acclimatise for Gran Paradiso.

Day 2 - An early start before going for a glacial hike. A likely objective is the Col d'Entreves. Once back you will have lunch and then take the lift down to the valley before driving 45 minutes to the Gran Paradiso National Park. From there we will walk for 2 1/2 hours to the Rifugio Chabod. This is a very comfortable refuge serving excellent food and with staff who always make you feel welcome. The itinerary on this day is very flexible. Some groups prefer to save their energy for the summit push the next day.

Day 3 – An early breakfast is essential for Gran Paradiso so it's usually a 5am start. After trekking up to the glacier the team will put on our harnesses, crampons, and rope up. The glacier is long and meandering, arriving at a shoulder of Gran Paradiso after around 2 1/2 hours. At this point the route meets alpinists coming from the Rifugio Vittorio Emanuele. After another hour you will arrive at the end of the mellow terrain, where we usually adjust the rope for steeper ground. From there it's only around 45 minutes to the summit. The summit journey involves a short scramble, and some fixed ladders up to the dramatic summit block, complete with statue of the virgin Mary. After taking photographs you will head back down the dramatic summit ridge onto the glacier and then carry on down to the Rifugio Chabod. After a pasta lunch to re-charge the batteries it's a steady trek down to the car park. From there it's back to the hotel in Chamonix, and a well-earned shower and dinner !

Gran Paradiso is a worthy objective for someone who is fit and motivated, but has no prior mountaineering experience. It can also be used as preparation for Mont Blanc. If you would like to do a Mont Blanc extension, just ask for details.

Included:

Guiding for 3 days

Transport throughout the trip, as per the trip itinerary

Hotel (Half Board) for two nights in Chamonix.

Refuges (Half Board) for two nights

Group equipment (ropes etc)

Safety equipment (radio, emergency beacon etc)

Not included:

Lift tickets.

Lunches, drinks and snacks

Equipment Hire

Insurance

EQUIPMENT

Each day you will be wearing the following:

- Mountain Trousers. *Mammut "Base Jump"* (Schoeller fabric), *Arc'teryx Gamma* 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 Cube" or *Scarpa Ribelle* recommended. Boots must have a rigid sole for crampons (rated either B2 or B3). Excellent boots can be hired in Chamonix for around €40.
- 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.

On summit day you will also need:

- Mitts/extra warm gloves.
- 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. These can be purchased in Chamonix.
- 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 €40 for three days), and other items are available as follows:

EQUIPMENT HIRE PRICES IN €

Ice Axe	15
Harness	9
Helmet	9
Crampons	17
Duvet Jacket	15
Mitts	6

Full Package: Duvet Jacket, Mitts, Axe, Harness, Crampons, Helmet – €55, payable in cash in Chamonix. Please let us know in advance if you would like to rent equipment.

Packed Lunches:

Packed lunches can be collected each morning from a local bakery. In the mountain huts, always order your packed meal the evening before you need it, before dinner.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How much does the trip cost ?

Current trip costs are listed on the website.

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. Training days will usually start between 0600 and 0800, and last for 6-8 hours. Summit Day will usually start very early, and can easily last 12 hours.

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, or 0.5L plastic drinks bottles (like a coke bottle) 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. NB: Rifugio Chabod on Gran Paradiso does have running water and hot showers ! The hut does charge a small fee for using the showers.

Is it really necessary to bother acclimatising ?

Yes. Acclimatisation is absolutely vital. Many people spend insufficient time up high before attempting the summit, and often fail as a result. Failure to acclimatise properly can lead to sickness and even death.

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 very well. 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 by ordering in the mountain refuge.

What if the conditions are too bad to attempt the summit ?

If conditions are really bad we will find an alternative plan. This would usually involve climbing in either Italy or Switzerland. If possible we would still try and climb a major peak >4000m high.