

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.

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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.

Day 0 – If flying to Geneva, allow 30-45 minutes to get through baggage collection and arrivals before taking an onward transfer to Chamonix (allow 70-90 minutes for the transfer). When planning travel please avoid arriving at the hotel before 16:00 or your room might not be available. Rooms will be booked under your name. You'll be met at your hotel (Hotel Prieure in Chamonix) for a briefing in the foyer around 6:30pm. Your Guide will confirm the current conditions, weather forecast and itinerary. They will also discuss clothing and equipment. Hire kit will be distributed. If you need to hire boots, you can either collect these from Snell Sports on the day you arrive, or on the morning of Day 1. If you tell them you're going to Gran Paradiso they'll know which boots to give you. You may wish to reserve your boots in advance – if so, please do so directly with the shop.

Day 1 – Your Guide will meet you at the hotel at 08:30 for a kit check and will then drive through the Mont Blanc tunnel to the Skyway lift. After getting tickets you will take the lift to the Torino Refuge where you can dump excess kit, and then head out onto the ice for the afternoon to refresh your crampon skills. You will spend the night in the refuge.

Day 2 – Depending on weather, conditions, and how the group are feeling, there are a few options for this morning. You might undertake a climb, a glacial hike, or do some valley rock climbing. In the afternoon we will take the lift back down and then drive around an hour to the National Park, before walking up to the Rifugio Chabod. The hike takes around 2-2 ½ hrs.

Day 3 - We usually get up early (around 5am), and after breakfast we will start trekking uphill. It

is likely that we will start without our crampons and harnesses etc, but this all depends on the conditions at the time. After about an hour of trekking we should arrive at the glacier. From there it's around 3 hours 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 we will head back down onto the glacier and then make our way down to the Rifugio where we often have a pasta lunch before carrying on back down to the car park. You'll then be driven back to the hotel in Chamonix for a well-deserved shower and a meal.

Day 4 – You're free to leave anytime you want. Checkout is usually before 10am. Best to try and book flights (if needed) for around lunchtime so you have time for a good breakfast before getting a transfer.

Included:

Guiding and Guides' expenses for 3 days
Transport throughout the trip
Hotels and Refuges on Half Board

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) 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 Ribelle* recommended. Boots must have a rigid sole for crampons. Excellent boots can be hired in Chamonix.
- 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.
- 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 €35 for three days), and other items are available as follows:

EQUIPMENT HIRE PRICES IN €

Ice Axe	15
Harness	7
Helmet	9
Crampons	18
Duvet Jacket	16
Mitts	6

Full package - €60

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

What is included ?

- Transport to and from training venues.
- All Guiding.
- Hotels and Refuges on Half Board.

What costs extra ?

- Flights
- Transfers
- Mountain uplift
- Mountain Refuges
- Insurance
- Equipment hire
- Lunches, snacks, drinks

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 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.

How fit do I need to be ?

Fitness requirements are different for every peak. For Gran Paradiso, you need to be capable of moving steadily for 10-12 hours at altitudes between 2700m and 4000m. To reach the summit and then go all the way back down to the valley is a big day out. Prepare yourself for a tough physical challenge.

Stamina and endurance are just some of the things you might need to work on for this trip. To best prepare yourself, I would strongly recommend you consider some professional training before your trip. I now work together with Mountain Guide and Personal Trainer Euan Whittaker to help prepare people to achieve their goals. Euan operates an on-line training facility and will develop an individual training plan for you. This will include an initial consultation, goal setting, and a systematic program including video analysis, heart-rate monitoring and regular communications. Training programs cost around £100/month.

If you're interested in working with Euan, please contact him directly here: +44 (0)7765 823545.