

# **ALPINE DEVELOPMENT WEEK INFORMATION FOLDER**

Many thanks for booking your Alpine Development Week with us. We're here to give you the best week of alpinism possible. With a ratio of 1 Guide to 2 climbers the sky is the limit. Rocky ridges, steep faces, and high summits are all waiting for you. The Saas Valley is an absolute gem of a venue, with numerous high quality routes and a lot of 4000m peaks to go at.

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### **ITINERARY**

Day 1 – Your trip will start with a briefing at 6:30 pm at your accommodation.

Day 2 – Warm up day. Usually this will be a day route from the valley to blow off the cobwebs. You will most likely be in the valley again for that evening.

Day 3-7 – At a ratio of 1:2 there are a huge number of routes than can be undertaken. Some will require nights in mountain refuges. A few examples of typical routes undertaken on this week are below:

- Rock Climbing on the Jegihorn. Rock Climbs up to 14 pitches long.
- Hohlaubgrat (PD) on the Allalinhorn (4027m). This is a beautiful snow ridge, with some rocky steps to negotiate just below the summit. To climb this we usually take the first Metro Alpin train from Saas Fee.
- South ridge (PD+) on the Wiesmies (4017m). This is one of the finest routes at this grade in the Alps. After a night at the Almageller Hut we walk for an hour before reaching the stunning South Ridge. This rises almost directly to the summit and is usually quite dry until we are high on the route. Descent is usually the NW flank to Hohsaas, which is very quick (around 90 minutes).
- Feechopf traverse (PD+) to the Alphubel (4206m). Another early start on the Metro Alpin allows us to climb the glacier towards the Allalinhorn, before leaving the main track and beginning the traverse across the Feechopf. This rocky ridge allows climbing in a wild position above the glacier. After the traverse it's a fairly simple snow climb to the summit of the Alphubel.
- South ridge (AD) on the Lagginhorn (4010m). This is a stunning route, and perfect for your first AD ! Usually we start from the Hohsaas Hut and climb the glacier to the Lagginjoch. From there we turn left and climb this beautiful rocky ridge, traversing a series of towers involving down-climbing and lowers. The rock is mostly excellent and there are some superb airy positions to get your heart pumping. The descent is down much more straight-forward terrain and back to the lift in around 2hrs.

Day 8 -Time to go home. It is recommended that flights be booked for the afternoon 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. La Sportiva “Nepal Extreme” recommended. Boots must have a rigid sole for crampons. Excellent boots can be hired in Saas Grund for around 70CHF/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 – 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.
- Rock Shoes. If the weather and conditions dictate then you may go rock climbing this week. Rock shoes can be hired very cheaply in Switzerland, so if you don’t own any then don’t feel you need to buy them !

Anyone wishing to hire equipment in Switzerland rather than buy it can do so. We use a local shop for boot hire (allow 70CHF for the week), and other items are available as follows:

#### **EQUIPMENT HIRE PRICES IN €/CHF**

Ice Axe 24

Harness 16

Helmet 16

Crampons 34

Duvet Jacket 27

Mitts 12

Full Package: Duvet Jacket, Mitts, Axe, Harness, Crampons, Helmet – €99/CHF, payable in cash in Switzerland. Anyone needing to hire kit should confirm this when booking so we can put some aside for you.

**Valley Accommodation** We usually use the Pension Heino in Saas Grund for this trip. This gives us a well located base, where we can keep our rooms while we are on the hill. The accommodation is simple, but clean, and they provide good meals.

**Packed Lunches:** Packed lunches can be bought from local bakeries. On the mountain these can be purchased from a mountain refuge.

**Getting to Saas Grund** Look at flights to both Geneva and Zurich. Either airport works well. Both airports also have integrated railways so you can get off your flight, and then easily take a train. Your train will get you to Visp (regardless of the airport you start from). From Visp you transfer to a bus, which takes you to Saas. Book your ticket to Saas Grund Schulhaus (the stop is a short walk from the Pension). Allow approx. 3h40 from Geneva, and 3h20 from Zurich. At the end of the trip, try and arrange your return flight for mid/late afternoon. This will allow you to have breakfast before you leave.

#### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

How much does the trip cost ? Trip prices are shown on the website. There are a few additional costs, and these are outlined later in this section. A 20% deposit is payable upon booking via [www.stuartmacdonald.org](http://www.stuartmacdonald.org). The balance is required two months before the start of the trip.

### **What is included in the week ?**

- All Guiding and Guides expenses at a max ratio of 1:2 for 6 days
- All mountain refuges at Half Board
- All Valley Hotels at Half Board
- Mountain Uplift in **Saas Grund**. NB – Lifts outside Saas Grund are not included.
- Local bus journeys inside the valley

### **What costs extra ?**

- Flights
- Transfers
- Insurance
- Equipment hire
- Lunches, snacks, drinks
- Mountain Uplift outside of Saas Grund.
- Travel beyond the local area

**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](http://www.thebmc.co.uk/modules/insurance/Default.aspx) . If living outside the UK then we recommend World Nomads ([www.worldnomads.com](http://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 you 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.

**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 ?** When leaving the valley, we can make a packed lunch at the hotel. Once in the mountains you can buy a good packed lunch from the Mountain Refuge (don't forget to order the night before).

**How fit do I need to be ?**

Fitness requirements are different for every peak. For the Development week, you are generally making a transition from walking peaks to climbing peaks. Hence you will likely need to be moving quicker, and have improved upper-body strength.

Stamina, endurance, and upper body strength 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 start around £100/month.

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