

# CLIMBING IN THE ALPS

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# CLIMBING IN THE ALPS

## MONT BLANC, MATTERHORN, & THE EIGER



### TRIP DESCRIPTION

We have been Guiding for well over a decade in the Swiss and French Alps. The Alps are one of our favorite destinations! We begin in the charming town of Chamonix, France. Chamonix is considered the world capital of alpinism, where easy access and quality climbing is a key characteristic. Chamonix is situated at the foot of the Mont Blanc Massif. From anywhere within Chamonix, we have impressive views of the highest point in Western Europe, Mont Blanc, reaching an altitude of 15,771 feet. Mont Blanc will be our first objective on this trip. We do a spectacular traverse via Mont Blanc du Tacul, Mount Maudit, and finally summit Mont Blanc, then descend via the Gouter route, on the other side of the range! The climb is absolutely spectacular! We are constantly surrounded by some of the most beautiful glaciated peaks in the world.

We then move to Zermatt, Switzerland to tackle our next objective, the Matterhorn (14,691 feet). One of the most beautiful peaks in the Alps, the Matterhorn speaks for itself raising 9,500 feet above Zermatt, dominating the town with its majestic presence. Our route will follow the original route climbed by Edward Whymper in 1865, "The Hornli Ridge". This route is a spectacular granite rock climb, with occasional snow patches and a final snowy summit ridge.

Our last adventure takes us to Grindelwald, located in the heart of the Bernese Oberland, in Switzerland. This beautiful Swiss village, and the valley in which it sits, epitomize the typical Swiss alpine setting. Grindelwald is situated at the foot of the impressive Eigers north face and majestic peaks like the Monch, and the Jungfrau. Our objective here is to climb the Eiger via a semi technical rock arete called the Mittellegi Ridge. Depending on conditions we also have the option to climb the easier south ridge of the Eiger. The Eiger is a fun climb and a very attainable summit. This peak has a false reputation of being a "killer mountain" based on the history of the climbs attempted on its infamous North face. Participants must be in excellent physical condition and some rock and snow climbing experience is required.



# CLIMBING IN THE ALPS

## MONT BLANC, MATTERHORN, & THE EIGER ITINERARY



### COST INCLUDES

Professional Mountain Guides, all local transportation except train to the Eiger from Grindelwald (train, bus, téléphérique), all community gear (ropes, hardware, medical kit, radios, etc.), food while in the mountains, and one hut day.

### YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR

Flights and transportation to Chamonix and from Grindelwald, Train to the Eiger, personal equipment, food in towns, hotels in town, \*extra nights in alpine huts if needed, passport, personal items and services (laundry, drinks, tips, etc.), and expenses incurred in the event of a rescue.



**DAY 1:** Team meets in Chamonix, France. Equipment check and afternoon briefing at the hotel. Dinner in one of the many fine restaurants of Chamonix.

**DAY 2:** The trip starts with a one-day ascent of the Cosmiques Arete (12,600'). The idea is to get familiarized with the Mont Blanc Massif and to begin our acclimatization for Mont Blanc. We get to the base via téléphérique and climb this beautiful and classic mixed route on high quality Chamonix granite. Easy scrambling.

**DAY 3:** Weather depending we may climb a peak in the Mont Blanc Massif /or head to Mont Blanc the next day.

**DAY 4:** Begin climb of Mont Blanc. We have several alternative routes to choose from. Depending on conditions, most likely we will ascend via Mont Blanc du Tacul and Mont Maudit. After spending the night at an alpine hut we have an early start toward the summit of Mont Blanc, the highest point in Western Europe (15,771') and a heavily glaciated mountain offering spectacular snow and ice climbing. Our routes follow the tremendous glaciers that cover the North and West side of Mont Blanc. Late return to Chamonix and dinner!

**DAY 5:** Travel to Zermatt, Switzerland where our next objective is the prominent Matterhorn, one of the world's most classic climbs. Spend the night at Hornli Hut.

**DAY 6:** Early start. We have a very long day ahead, beginning our climb of the Hornli Ridge with headlamps. Challenging and fun rock climbing will take us to the Matterhorn summit at

14,691'. Return to the Hut, and possibly down to Zermatt. Connect with train to Sion.

**DAY 7:** Travel to Grindelwald, Switzerland our final destination located in the heart of the Bernese Oberland where we will begin our climb of the Eiger. One of the major European peaks, the Eiger speaks for itself.

**DAY 8:** Aboard the Jungfrau Railway, an amazing engineering feat, this cog railway will take us actually through the infamous North Face. We disembark and climb to the Mittellegi Hut.

**DAY 9:** Weather permitting, we climb the Mittellegi Ridge, an exposed and exciting ridge that will take us all the way to the Eiger summit. Descend to the Hut and possibly Grindelwald.

**DAY 10:** Train to Geneva, Fly home or continue traveling in Europe.

*NOTE: \*Aventuras Patagonicas will cover only one hut day (night, dinner and breakfast) per peak. Only one night at each hut is needed to accomplish each peak, however if a second night is needed due to poor weather you will be responsible to cover that additional night.*

*This itinerary is intended to be a guideline only, weather days and rest days are always a possibility while on a climbing trip.*

## ALPS EQUIPMENT LIST



## FEET

- Socks, thick wool or synthetic - 2-3 pair (outer socks)
- thin silk , synthetic, or wool - 2 pair (inner sock )
- Cotton or synthetic socks - 2 pair
- Climbing boots: Single leather boots are best. Any single leather model with binding (clip-on) crampon use will do. Plastic double mountaineering boots are too much for the Eiger and the Matterhorn, you can still use them but they make the climbing much harder. They can be good for the Mont Blanc, but it is best to have just one pair of good leather boots.
- Sturdy approach shoes or tennis shoes
- Rock shoes (make sure they fit with socks on). These are for other climbs in case of poor weather
- Gaitors

## UPPER BODY

- Lightweight synthetic or wool long underwear top - 2
- Midweight synthetic or wool long underwear top - 1
- Fleece coat or similar weight down or synthetic microlight puffy
- Breathable windproof and water resistant outer jacket, such as goretex, with hood
- Down Vest, for Mont Blanc only can be a good idea for cold mornings.
- Cotton or synthetic T-shirts - 3 or 4

## LOWER BODY

- Lightweight synthetic or wool long underwear bottoms- 1 pair
- Climbing Pants (Scholler fabric is best) Patagonia, Mt hardware, Marmot, Arcterix, etc will work.
- Breathable windproof and water resistant pants or bibs, such as Goretex (full length side zippers recommended)
- Shorts - 1 pair





## HANDS

- Insulated Finger Gloves (windproof and water resistant)
- Gloves, polypropylene or capilene - 1 pair



## HEAD

- Ski hat, wool or fleece
- Lightweight balaclava, wool, polypropylene or capilene
- Baseball cap



## PACK

- 1 1/2 day pack



## PERSONALS

- Head lamp and 2 sets extra batteries
- Sun glasses
- Sun screen lotion SPF 29 - 1 tube
- Sun screen lip protection - 1 stick
- Water bottles (2 )nalgene -1 quart capacity each, wide mouth
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Toilet paper - 1/2 roll
- 1 Large duffle bag (to carry gear around)



## TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT

- Ice axe
- Crampons, 12 points. Binding (clip on), non-rigid recommended.
- Seat harness
- Carabiners, 4 regular, 3 locking
- Climbing helmet



## OPTIONALS

- Camera
- Journal, pencil, book , i-pod
- Cotton bandana
- All terrain sandals
- Hydrating system, such as camel bags, however for Mont Blanc you still need reg water bottles since the tube most likely will freeze while climbing Mont Blanc.

## REFERENCES

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# AVENTURAS PATAGONICAS CLIENT COMMENTS



To contact past AP clients directly refer to: <http://www.patagonicas.com/clientcontacts.html> We hope that the experiences and comments of our past clients will help you better to understand the dedication of Aventuras Patagonicas.

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## Re: Aventuras Patagonicas

Gentlemen,

For the past five years have I known Mr. Mujica and Bonnie Schwahn as Guides both on Denali and Aconcagua. I personally have been twice on expeditions with his company, Aventuras Patagonicas, on Aconcagua. I also feel I have a fair assessment of guide companies and their quality of guides. I am very pleased to inform you that Aventuras Patagonicas scores a solid A+ in virtually all areas:

The cost of the Aconcagua expedition is less than others I was aware of.

Their information and communication before the climb are thorough, helpful and geared toward your individual needs. Someone is always available.

Once in South America you find yourself in the top hotels available. You feel safe, looked after and entertained in a tasteful first class manner. Everyone goes out of their way to show you the

interesting parts of the Chilean culture, which of course as locals only they can do.

The arrangements for the hike-in and climb are flawless and professional. Nothing is left to chance. You begin to feel in competent and safe hands. The equipment is state of the art. On both of my expeditions the tents were brand new, a trademark of the Company

Once on the mountain you begin to realize what a superb guide Rodrigo Mujica really is. He is very sensitive to his clients, anticipates their strengths, their weaknesses and uniquenesses. The food is good and plenty as I have ever had on a mountain. Most important he is a safe topnotch climber and knows Aconcagua better than any person I know, to the point that guides of other companies rely on his input, decisions and judgment, especially in tight spots. Truly, cowboys, rangers, guides, and climbers alike consider Rodrigo as Mr. Aconcagua. You feel he owns the mountain. His summit success ratio speaks by itself and you know if anyone can get you to the summit, Rodrigo will.

-On the way down, you get surprised with all kind of niceties. While other companies camp at Plaza de Mulas, we stayed at the hotel, showered, ate quasi restaurant food and slept in beds. What a treat, and all part of the package fee. At the trailhead watermelon and beer was waiting



for us, followed by an incredible feast of a meal, followed by another first class hotel in Santiago, which again is part of the fee. An evening of dinner and top entertainment are followed by a sad good bye.

If you don't already know by now, in my opinion Aventuras Patagonicas is a first class act. I recommend them highly and you are welcome to give out my name for future references. As busy as our lives are, one does not want to go wrong and expose oneself to three weeks of misery or possibly danger. Both of my trips with this company were marvelous, safe and extremely enjoyable. Sincerely,

*Hubertus Guenther, Spokane, WA (509) 838-1543  
hpguenther@aol.com*

### **Dear Rodrigo**

Thanks for your kind note on the recent Aconcagua climb. I also hope we can climb together again. I have filled out the evaluation sheet, and you'll see that I've given you and your Aventuras Patagonicas colleagues top marks in every category. However, I would like to briefly record my assessment in words.

In all respects, your management and leadership of the Aconcagua climb was outstanding. I say this not merely because your support enable me to reach the summit, although that was certainly a key goal of mine.

Your concern for the health and safety of all the group was exemplary. The well-paced itinerary gave us the conditioning and acclimatizing to altitude that we all needed to give us the best opportunity to summit. You showed great skill and or-

ganizational ability in managing the difficult job of assuring that all the necessary gear for the climb was where it needed to be, when it needed to be there. In the Andean world, this is no small feat!

Third, the food and equipment were all first class. Nobody expected a gourmet experience on the mountain, but we had excellent food, which fueled our effort. Also, your professionalism and friendliness brought a group of strangers together into a real team, which not only succeeded in the climb, but enjoyed this demanding experience. I know that i will be keeping up whit these new friends in the future. All the information you provided on equipment, conditioning, preparation and travel was concise, accurate and helpful. Our accommodations in Santiago and Penitentes were quite well chosen. And finally, the cost of the trip was reasonable and fair, considering everything included in the package.

In short, I would enthusiastically recommend that anyone wanting to climb Aconcagua (or any other mountain, for that matter) strongly consider doing so with you.

Best regards, and keep in touch

*Carlton Stoiber Washington, DC.*



Designed for Aconcagua Expedition, some points may not apply for these climbs where Expedition Style are not part of the climbs.

It is imperative that everyone joining a mountaineering expedition be in a high standard of physical fitness when the expedition begins. The amount of time needed for training is completely dependent on the general level of fitness a person is in prior to the expedition.

For the person that has spent the last ten years behind a desk with no emphasis on keeping in shape, it may take two years to regain top physical ability. The person that has always prioritized conditioning and a rigorous workout as a part of their daily routine may only take a few months to fine tune for the demands of mountaineering.

Consider, when setting up your program, that you will need to develop the endurance to carry a 15 lb. pack, wearing climbing boots, for 6-8 hours per day. Though it is impossible to “train” for altitude you can put yourself on a conditioning program that will best prepare you for this type of physical stress. How to do this? It is impossible to be specific and say if you do this and that you will be ready for a physically demanding expedition. Each person is different and everyone has different terrain and time at their disposal. After many years of observing climbers there are some reoccurring training schemes that seem to help some people be better prepared than others.

**1- Train for developing stamina.** Run, bike, ski, fast walk. Vary your routine to prevent over-use injuries and push yourself without injuring yourself. Do warm up and cool down stretches.

**2- Progressive resistance weight training.** This type of training improves anaerobic metabolism that feeds much of muscular work. This type of human energy production is fed by stored carbohydrates that require no additional oxygen to metabolize.

**3- Train on hills or stairs with a pack on.** You must be prepared for several thousand feet uphill and downhill, ideally wearing a 15lb pack. Never run with a pack on.

**4- Wear 2 lb. ankle weights to help condition for the extra weight of climbing**

**boots, soft snow and loose scree.** (Don't wear these while running).

**5- Train as often as possible by skiing or hiking for all day, weekend or longer trips.** Train for what you are going to do! If you want to be good at climbing big mountains with a big pack on, start on little mountains with a small pack on and work your way up. Conditioning by climbing is the best thing you can do. Get comfortable moving in mountainous terrain all day long!! Heavy packs tend to tire climbers the most. Be prepared by training ahead of time and you will do fine. Don't expect to get used to wearing a pack while you are on the expedition.

**6 - A good diet cannot be underestimated.** Research out a diet that will help develop stamina and strength and that you can live with.



There are lots of books and articles that will get you started or consult a professional nutritionist that has worked with athletes.

**7 - Be mentally prepared for the expedition.** Know before you start the climb and accept the fact that at times you will be uncomfortable and that your body is going to be uncooperative. You are going to have to push yourself (unless you are superhuman). If you don't have the ability to do this you won't be successful. You may be in a cramped tent for many storm days. You are leaving the comforts of home in order to experience a unique challenge and a remarkable mountain. It is worth it! You must also be well enough "in tune" with yourself to know the difference between pushing yourself and acute mountain sickness, pulmonary or cerebral edema. These are all serious altitude related problems, which must

be acknowledged. It is possible to "push yourself" too far. For the safety of the team, the chief guide will make a final decision on who needs a rest day, who continues to ascend, or who descends.

We hope this gives you ideas on which to base your training schedule. We recommend talking to a professional exercise trainer and setting up a conditioning program that you can incorporate into your daily routine, which will meet these goals. This type of training can easily take two hours per day, 5 days a week. Be committed to it and be consistent. It will pay off many times over! Start today with your training and keep it up. Good luck and please call or email us, if you have any questions.





# CLIMBING IN THE ALPS

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