

# **FRANCE**

## **Mont Blanc Ascent**

**A Classic Alpine Adventure**



**June 26 – July 4, 2010**

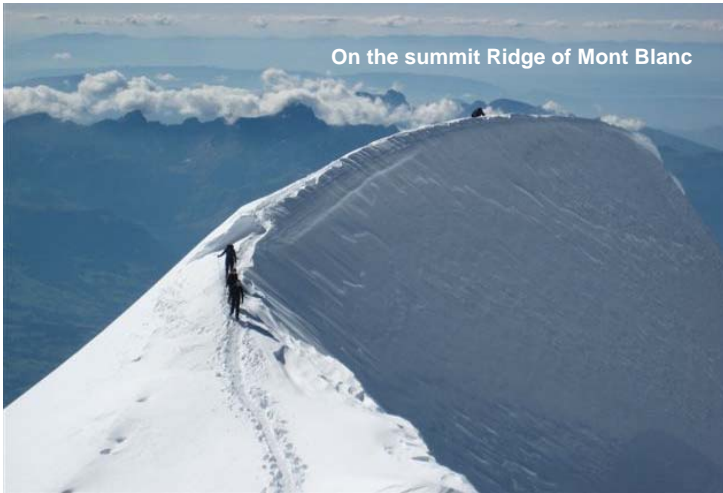
**Western Europe's Highest Peak in the French Alps**

# Mont Blanc & French Alps

# Trip Overview



Mont Blanc at 4600m



On the summit Ridge of Mont Blanc



An early morning summit success



Training Hikes in the Alps

The Chamonix valley in the French Alps is dominated by the white majestic dome of Mont Blanc, the highest mountain in Western Europe at 4,807m. Every year the rounded summit of Mont Blanc becomes the ultimate objective for mountaineers the world over, all striving to stand on the summit of Western Europe and admire the beauty of the alpine scenery and major summits of the French Alps.

While not technically challenging, ascending Mont Blanc requires a high level of physical fitness and experience using crampons and an ice axe. The featured Mont Blanc program is proven success over the years for our outfitter in France with maximum flexibility in terms of usage of lifts, huts and routes in preparation for the ascent of Mont Blanc. The key to success climbing Mont Blanc is preparation. Weather conditions aside, the physical challenge and effects of altitude will present more barriers to success than any technical obstacles. This climb Mont Blanc program includes four intensive preparation days with the primary goal being to spend as much time acclimatizing at altitude as possible. To achieve this we will be exploring the fantastic high mountain terrain of the Mont Blanc range, climbing lesser peaks and spending a night in a mountain hut to further the time spent at altitude. You will also be taught glacier travel techniques and have plenty of time to practice your crampon and ice axe skills in preparation for a safe and successful ascent of Mont Blanc.

The final two days are for the ascent itself. Check out our itinerary for more details. Depending upon conditions and the ability of the group, our guides will select one of two possible routes to climb Mont Blanc. Slightly more technical, the route from the Aiguille du Midi, over Mont Blanc du Tacul and Mont Maudit is generally quieter, and highly dependent on weather condition of the day. The slightly easier and more reliable option is via the Tramway du Mont Blanc to the Nid d'Aigle, then up the Aiguille du Gouter and the Bosses ridge. Our climbing itinerary is not fixed and our mountain guides will adapt the program to suit the group. The weather is an important factor and routes will be chosen to maximize training and preparation taking the weather and conditions into account.

We offer comfortable fully catered chalet accommodation at the Yeti Lodge our base in the charming village of Argentière in Chamonix Valley. The chalet has a large sunny terrace with a superb view of Mont Blanc. The bright and airy rooms are twin or triple bedded, so you should be prepared to share with one or two participants.

All meals daily (breakfast, lunch packs, afternoon tea and three-course dinner) are included and prepared by our hosts, so you can relax and fully enjoy the program.

***For Whom:** Anyone with a physically active lifestyle This is not a technically difficult climb but it does require use of crampons and ice axe as most of it is on glaciated terrain. No previous experience or climbing skills are required - our local guides provide necessary basic crampon, rope and ice-axe technique lessons during the acclimatization hikes.*

***Fitness:** Climbers should be fit enough for 4-14 hour climbing days at altitudes between 12,000' and 15,000' and in an aerobic fitness training program prior to the start of the trip. Check our Training Suggestions for more information and tips.*

***Experience:** Is not a must but a basic mountaineering course and previous high-altitude experience in Kilimanjaro, Elbrus, Rainier or Everest Base camp may be advantageous in this expedition.*

***Equipment:** It is possible to rent equipment required for this climb at our base in Chamonix.*

***Train for Ice/Snow Climbing in Canada:** There are several entities around the country that offer winter weekend courses. Contact us for our recommendations.*

# Classic Mont Blanc Itinerary

## June 26 – July 4, 2010

**June 26 - Depart Canada.** Evening flight to Geneva, Switzerland via one of the key European gateway cities.

### June 27 - Geneva - Chamonix Valley

Arrive in Geneva. We are met on arrival and transferred to our Lodge in the Chamonix Valley area. The group will rendez-vous at the hotel/chalet in Argentière (altitude 1,240m), just a few kilometres from Chamonix and at the foot of Mont Blanc. Here, you will be welcomed by our local outfitter staff and made to feel at home. In the evening, we will have an informal chat about the week ahead with our local guide. There will also be a chance for the guide to check out your clothing and gear and to decide if you will need to pick up any further items of equipment before setting out in the morning. After this, it will be time to sit down to an excellent 3-course dinner. (D)

### June 28 - Chamonix - Mer De Glace - Ice Skills Training

After a full breakfast, we will take the old rack and pinion railway up through the woods from Chamonix to the edge of the Mer de Glace (1,909m). This is the glacier where Frankenstein hid in Mary Shelley's novel. All around are granite spires, with the glacier flowing through the middle. This is the start of our acclimatization program. If you haven't used crampons or an ice axe before, this is where your introduction will take place. We'll spend some time getting used to walking in crampons and swinging an ice axe. Afterwards we'll weave our way through the crevasses to find a picnic spot with a view. If you are feeling brave, there will be an opportunity to climb some steep ice (supervised, of course). Then, we return to Chamonix by train. (Depending on the prevailing conditions, we may choose to complete this ice skills day on the glacier which is accessible from the Grands Montets lift). Dinner. (BLD)

### June 29 Hike Up to the Albert 1er Huts

To assist with our acclimatization, we plan to spend tonight in the Albert 1er refuge (2,702m) in preparation for an ascent of the Aiguille du Tour (3,544m) the following day. This is a wonderful mountain excursion and will provide us with excellent acclimatization and mountain skills training for your ascent of Mont Blanc. We will have a leisurely start in this morning, so there will be ample time to sort out ill-fitting boots and re-pack our rucksacks before leaving. Then, we will take the cable car from Le Tour to the Col de Balme (2,130m). From here, we walk along a footpath for about two hours to the Albert 1er refuge. Alpine refuges are unique places. There is invariably a sunny terrace, on which we can enjoy the view. After a rest, there is the opportunity to go out on to the glacier to further practice snow and ice skills. Or, if you prefer, you can simply stay on the terrace, soaking up the sun and enjoying the fantastic views of the Aiguille du Chardonnet. Accommodation is in basic dormitories. Slippers, blankets and pillows provided as well as dinner and breakfast. (BLD)

### June 30 - Climb the Aiguille du Tour

We are up bright and early at 5 a.m. As the sun comes up, we will be crunching across the glacier in our crampons. Our goal for the day is to make an ascent of the Aiguille du Tour (3,544m). This is a relatively easy alpine peak with a bit of technical scrambling towards the end. From the summit we can expect a view which stretches all the way from the Matterhorn to Mont Blanc. We return to our lodge for dinner and overnight. (BLD)

### July 1 - Aiguille du Midi and Vallée Blanche

We take the early morning lift from Chamonix up to the Aiguille du Midi (3,842m), one of the highest cable cars in the Alps. Today, we aim to traverse the Vallée Blanche in order to gain further acclimatization and continue our practice with ice-axe and crampons.

Did you know Vallée Blanche is Europe's longest off-piste ski run! At 22km long with a vertical descent of over 2,500m, the Vallée Blanche would stand out among the world's classics on these facts alone. Add to this some of the most awe inspiring high mountain scenery, towering 4,000m peaks, including Mont Blanc, and tumbling glaciers, and you have arguably the best lift-accessible ski descent in the world. We rope up at the top of the Aiguille du Midi to descend its classic snow arête to the Col Du Midi (3,532m).

This is a stunning day out, with superb views of the big mountains of the Alps - the Drus, the Jorasses, the Courtes and the Droites. You also get a very good view of the Traverse route to the summit of Mont Blanc. We are making our way between huge crevasses and seracs as we traverse this amazing glacier that finally take us to Point Helbronner right on the Italian border (the highest border station in Europe). We take the spectacularly scenic gondola back across to the Aiguille du Midi where we ride the cable car back down to Chamonix and return to Argentière for a relaxing afternoon and dinner at the chalet. (BLD)

### July 2 - First day of the Mont Blanc ascent

Now that our training is over, we are ready for the ascent of Mont Blanc. The group will be joined by more local guides (ratio 2 clients to 1 guide), in order to give us the best chance of success. The route we choose will depend on the prevailing conditions, the group's ability and ultimately on the guides' decision. There are two alternatives for the ascent: either the "Normal Route," via the Tête Rousse refuge or the Goûter refuge and the Dome de Goûter, or the longer "Traverse Route" which is a more technical ascent of the mountain via Mont Blanc du Tacul and Mont Maudit (descending via the Normal Route).

Because of the high guide-to-client ratio, we do have the option at this stage to split the group according to fitness and experience. For the Normal Route, we will set off from Les Houches, a short drive down the valley from Argentière. A cable car and then a train take us up to the Nid d'Aigle at (2,372m). From here, we follow a rocky trail for approximately two hours to the Tête Rousse refuge at (3,167m). We may stay here overnight or continue for another couple of hours to the Goûter refuge at (3,817m). Our choice of refuge depends on availability.

The longer Traverse Route (sometimes referred to as the Trois Mont Blancs route) starts out by way of the cable-car to the Aiguille du Midi (3,842m). Then, dropping down into a snow bowl, we have a short ascent via a snow arête and hanging glacier to reach our overnight accommodation at the Cosmiques refuge (3,613m). We will be at the refuge by early afternoon, giving us plenty of time to enjoy the dramatic location. (BLD)

### July 3 - Summit Day - Back to Chalet

The Big Day! Whichever route has been chosen, we can expect an early start. Approximately 1 a.m. from the Tête Rousse refuge, or 2 a.m. from the Goûter refuge on the Normal Route. On the Traverse Route, a similarly early start is required.

On the Normal Route, the whole of the ascent to the summit is on snow covered glacier. The climbing is never technical, although the final ridge is exposed. We are high up and the air is thin, so slow and steady is the way. Four to six hours of ascent, depending on our overnight stopping place.

## Classic Mont Blanc Itinerary (Continued)

On the Traverse Route, starting out from the Cosmiques refuge, the first obstacle is Mont Blanc du Tacul. This glaciated mountain averages 30 to 35 degrees inclination. After crossing the shoulder of Tacul we descend a little. The second mountain we have to get over is Mont Maudit which has even steeper sections, up to 40 or even 50 degrees, notably on the very last section. After this we have a fairly steady climb to the summit. Six to seven hours of ascent.  
For either route option, we should be on Mont Blanc's summit (4,807m) just after sunrise, in position to enjoy some of the most spectacular views in the whole of Europe. We will then descend the same route as we came up and we should be back down in the valley by mid-afternoon. In the evening, we have the opportunity to reflect on the adventures of the week, during the course of a celebratory dinner at the chalet. (BLD)

### July 4 - Transfer to Geneva Airport or optional extension in Geneva

After breakfast, we bid good bye to our Chamonix crew and leave for Geneva airport for your homebound departure. Ask us about our 2 nights Geneva extension. (B)

## The Mont Blanc Range Soft Trek For Non-Climbers/Spouses

### Itinerary in brief:

**June 26 & 27** : Same program as with climbing partners.

**June 28**: A soft trekking adventure on the Mont Blanc range begins today. Take the lift to Flegere and walk to Lac Blanc Walk back to Argentiere which is a nice route or take the lift down again to where you started.

**June 29 & 30** - Drive just out of the Chamonix valley and walk the Tour de Fiz in 2 days with a hut night with climbing party. This is an amazing hiking country with fantastic scenery, views of Mont Blanc, waterfalls and lakes.

**July 1** - An easy day with a drive and walk around the Emosson dam or if the group is up for another trek, hike up to the Dinosaur foot prints (yes, it is real dinosaur foot prints). Return to your chalet for the night.

**July 2 & 3** - Easy first day of hiking to Refuge de Berard and the following day you summit Mont Buet 3061m, also called the Ladies Mont Blanc. Meet your climbing partners at the chalet.

**July 4** - Departure transfer to Geneva airport.

**Price:** CA\$2495 per person

**Includes:** A trekking Guide; group equipment first aid and emergency shelter; Accommodation at the Yeti Lodge on twin or triple share basis including breakfast, packed lunches, afternoon tea and coffee and 3 course dinners and 2 hut nights that tie in with the nights when the Mont Blanc climbing party is in huts with dinner and breakfast included; Lifts and local transport.

## Tour Price (In Canadian Dollars)

**Climb Only: CA\$3790** per person  
Based on minimum 8- Maximum 12 participants

**Price includes:** Transportation between Geneva airport and your lodge in the Chamonix Valley on arrival and departure; Accommodation at the yeti Lodge on a twin or triple share basis including breakfast(B), packed lunches(L), afternoon tea and coffee and 3 course dinner(D); 2 hut(Refuge) nights with dinner and breakfast for clients and guides; IFMGA Certified mountain guide services throughout the climb and their fees; Local guide ratios are Day 1-4 One guide for every 4 participants & Day 5-6, One guide for every 2 participants) Group equipment - rope, first aid, emergency shelter etc is carried by the guides; Tickets for all lifts and local transportation during the program.

**Not Included:** Flights to/from Geneva: rental of personal equipment such as trekking poles, crampons, ice axes and boots); slings, carabineers, mandatory medical, emergency & cancellation insurance; meals other than specified; Personal expenses, tips for guides and hotel/restaurant staff.

**Equipment Rental Package:** Euro 120 approx. payable locally. Includes: mountaineering boots, crampons, ice axe, helmet and harness

### Sample Round Trip Airfares to Geneva from\*:

Toronto	\$980
Montreal	\$980
Ottawa	\$980
Winnipeg	\$1250
Calgary	\$1250
Edmonton	\$1250
Vancouver	\$1375
Victoria	\$1375
Halifax	\$980

\* Taxes/fees extra

**Deposit: \$500 per person**  
**Balance Due: April 26, 2010**  
**Maximum Group size: 12**

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