

# Russia

## Mt. Elbrus – Seven Summits Challenge



**August 1 -11, 2010**

**Hosted by Priyantha Amarasinghe**  
Mt Elbrus & Russia Specialist

# Our successful expedition - 2009

# Trip Overview

Mt Elbrus summit – 100% team success



Mt Elbrus stands between the great landmass of Europe and Asia, dynamic in both region and terrain. Elbrus is the highest peak in the continental Europe at an elevation of 18,498 feet (5642m). It is also one of the fabled Seven Summits, the highest peaks of the seven continents.

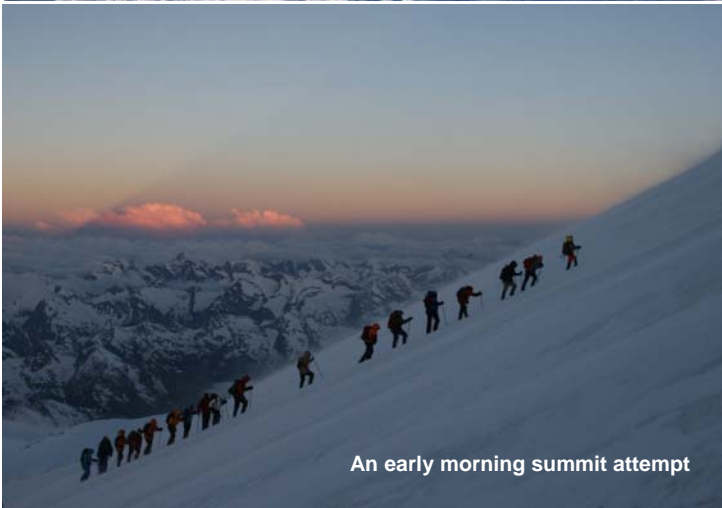
Our expedition begins in the city of Moscow, the capital and focal point of commerce and politics in Russia. Moscow is a mix of old and new, ever-changing with markets and state shops dominating the street life. We take time to visit the Kremlin area, walk around the Red Square along the Moscow River and take in some of the highlights of the city. We then fly to the Southern Russian town of Mineralnye Vody at the foothills of the great Caucasus mountain range. Our base hotel is in Basken Valley.

Prior to summit climb we engage in a couple of acclimatization hikes along the well-traveled trails and get ourselves fully accustomed to the weather and altitude. Once we have acclimatized and established the high camp, we prepare for an attempt on the West Summit of Elbrus (the higher of the twin volcanic peaks). From our base camp, the route ascends 1000m of moderate snow climbing to the saddle. From there the climb is harder with 300m of steeper terrain. We may rope up climbers for safety before we finally reach the summit plateau.

We have had 100% success on this route in the past and due to this we will retain the same itinerary in 2010. Our experienced crew makes a huge difference between success and failure. For example, on a smaller group of 6 climbers, we employ two experienced summit guides with more than hundred summit successes between them plus your Canadian leader, who has also summited Elbrus a couple of times, taking complete charge. For every three additional climbers we employ an extra local guide for the summit day and adhere to the highest safety standards whilst on the climb as well as on the descend.



An acclimatization hike & crampon training



An early morning summit attempt

**For Whom:** Anyone with a physically active lifestyle. This is not a technically difficult climb but usually requires the use of crampons and sometimes the ice-axes. 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 18,500' 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, Rainier or Everest Base camp may be advantageous in this expedition.

**Equipment:** We provide you a complete list of equipment required for this climb. We can arrange to rent some of the key equipment from our local outfitter. See "Essentials & Equipment List". Page 3 & 4

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



Just above the Pastuckhov Rocks - 4600m

# Itinerary in Brief

August 1-11, 2010

Including 2 nights Stopover in Moscow

**August 1 - Depart Toronto, Canada.** Afternoon flight on American Airlines to Chicago, USA. We remain in transit in Chicago and take an onward flight to Russia's capital, Moscow.

**August 2 - Moscow** Arrive in the afternoon. We are met on arrival and transferred to our hotel in Moscow for 1 night. After freshening up, we do a 2-hour guided tour of Moscow. Dinner at a local restaurant, hosted by your Group leader. (D)

**August 3 - Moscow/Mineralnye Vody (2300m/7550 ft)** After breakfast we take a 3-hour flight to Mineralnye Vody in the Caucasus region. On arrival, travel by bus for approx 4 hours to our lodge in the Baksan Valley. The Baksan is known as the center of mountaineering and tourism in the Caucasus where climbing centers are situated. Mountaineers from all over the world come to the foot of Mt. Elbrus to make ascents and develop the technical skills necessary to climb great peaks around the world. A thorough equipment check and orientation with local guides. Dinner. (BD)

**August 4 - Mt Cheget Acclimatization hike (3600m/11,800 ft)** After breakfast, we walk from the hotel to Cheget village. When we reach the Cheget village we use ski lifts (chairs) to get as high as possible and hike the mountain to the summit of Cheget. If the weather is good we spend 40 minutes on the top for pictures and sightseeing. Then we go down to Cheget village for lunch at a local cafe. On our return, if you wish to rent any mountain equipment, your guide will make a stop at a local equipment shop. Return to hotel for dinner and overnight. (BLD)

**August 5 - Climb/Base camp Barrel Huts(3900m/12,800ft)** After breakfast leave the hotel with all necessary climbing gear to our base camp at the Barrels huts. You will carry your own equipment and clothes from hotel to the huts. After a short rest and tea we start a hike up to the beginning of the Pastuckhov rocks (4300 m/14,100 ft). Depending on weather and time your guide may offer to have a short snow\ice\rope\self-belay technique course. Lunch, dinner and overnight at the Barrels huts. (BLD)

**August 6 - Acclimatization Hike & Rest day at Barrels Huts** This day we will go for an acclimatization hike slightly higher than 4600 m (15,000 ft) and return to the huts for rest. Depending on weather and time we will have another short snow\ice\rope\self-belay technique course. Breakfast, lunch, dinner, overnight in the Barrels huts. (BLD)

**August 7- Summit Day - (5642m/18,498 ft)** Leave the huts at about 3 am for an attempt on Elbrus' west summit. The idea is to meet the sunrise somewhere over the Pastuckhov rocks. It is possible to hire a snow-cat for the group at an additional cost (optional). This vehicle carries climbers (12 people) up to Pastuckhov rocks and saves 3-4 hours and a lot of energy. Generally, it takes about 8-9 hours to reach the top and 3-4 hours to descend to the Barrels huts. Overnight at the Huts (BLD)

**August 8 - Reserve day** for climbing Elbrus (in case of bad weather on the summit day). (If summited on the first day we descent to the Basken valley today). Overnight. (BLD)

**August 9 - Descend to the Basken Valley.** There are some options to visit mineral springs, hike to a side valley or shopping. Relax, take a walk or try Banyas "Russian sauna". Celebratory dinner and overnight at the lodge. (BLD)

**August 10 - Basken Valley-Mineralnye Vody/Moscow** Drive to Mineralnye Vody airport for your flight to Moscow. Arrive in Moscow and transfer to your hotel for 1 night stay. This afternoon is free. Spend an optional evening at the Moscow Circus or Bolshoi theatre show (Own account/advance bookings required). An extension of stay in Moscow is possible at special rates (B)

**August 11 - Moscow - Chicago - Toronto.** Breakfast and transfer to Moscow airport for our flight home via Chicago, USA (B)

## Pricing (Land Only)

CA \$2695 per person

**Approx. airfare with American Airlines**

CA \$1100/Tax \$350-400 approx / From Toronto

### Land Only Price Includes:

Domestic airfare Moscow - Mineralnye Vody - Moscow; Fully guided Mt Elbrus climb; Meals as indicated - BLD ; Hotel and lodge accommodation on shared twin room basis; Shared Barrel Huts accommodation (5-6 climbers per hut) during the climb; a 3-4 star hotel in Moscow; All transfers as mentioned in the itinerary, by bus and car lifts. All park permits and registration, rescue fees and a professional mountain guide for the group throughout. One Russian mountain guide for every three people for the summit attempt; A short snow/ice/rope/self-belay technique basic course during acclimatization hikes; and Group equipment (ropes, ice screws etc); professional local guide for sightseeing in Moscow; the services of an experienced Canadian group leader cum guide.

### Not Included:

Round trip international airfare to Russia & back; Rental of personal equipment such as the sleeping bag, trekking poles, crampons, ice axes and boots); Optional snow-cat ride, taxes/fees on air; mandatory medical, emergency & cancellation insurance; meals other than specified; Russian visa fees (Approx \$75); Personal expenses, tips for guides, hotel, barrel huts and restaurant staff.

## Essentials & Equipment List

The weather in Elbrus region is unpredictable and conditions can deteriorate rapidly in case of a storm. Be prepared for temperatures between 20 and 70 degrees F (-7C - +21C) with a chance of rain or snow. Temperatures could fall to -5F (-20C) higher up on the mountain and you may encounter severe winds. Like any large mountain, Mt. Elbrus creates its own weather. There can be serious storms on the mountain, while the next valley is in bright sunshine.

Test your equipment before you go, making sure your crampons fit your boots and that you can put them on and take them off quickly and efficiently. Test your clothing systems and determine what works best for you. There is no one right way to dress, but layering is essential. Make sure your clothes fit and that they are roomy enough for strenuous activity. Proper broken-in boots are of great importance.

### Camping Gear

- Sleeping bag rated to -5 °C

### Outerwear

- Insulated parka/jacket, down or synthetic, rated to -10°C and able to fit over other sweaters and layers

- Rain jacket and pants (side-leg zippers are helpful), roomy and water repellent

### Clothing

- Mid weight fleece jacket

- Fleece pants or tights

- Mid weight thermal underwear tops and bottom

- Hiking socks

## Essentials & Equipment List (Continued)

### Footwear

- Hiking boots, sturdy, ankle-support, water-resistant, broken-in
- Camp shoes: running shoes or trail shoes, sneakers

### Mountaineering Gear

- Plastic boots or crampon-compatible heavy leather mountaineering boots are a must. Cold feet could force you to turn back or result in frostbite. We strongly recommend plastic boots. A very important advantage of plastic boots is that they may be dried easily on the field. If you have your leather boots wet on day one most likely they will stay wet the whole trip.
- Crampons (Suggest: Grivel10 or G12)
- Ice axe. - An ice axe sometimes is not necessary. This depends on weather (snow conditions). However one must carry one in case it becomes necessary.
- Protectors for ice axe and crampons; (when you ride the chairlifts, they will often be crowded and an unprotected axe or crampons can do damage).
- Headlamp. - The climb starts at night and for some hours you walk in the dark. Also a headlamp is extremely useful while visiting the toilet at night at the Barrel huts.
- Big backpack or a bag which may be carried like a backpack. (In case the chairlifts are closed for any reason you will be forced to carry your own personal gear to the Barrels Huts, the base camp. It is an hour's walk depending on one's pace.
- Flask (thermos bottle). Do not rely on those backpack hydration tanks with a pipe as they are most likely to freeze.
- A small backpack for hikes and for the summit attempt.
- A pair of Ski or trekking poles
- Windproof mask or goggles
- Harness with a short piece of rope for self belay & 2 carabiners.

### Clothing Accessories

- Sun hat, a Warm hat, Bandana, Fleece windproof gloves.
- Thin liner gloves and Waterproof over mitts (to protect gloves from snow)
- Balaclava
- Gaiters, knee-length (super gaiters, which cover the whole boot, are excellent)

### Travel Accessories

- Water bottles, wide mouthed preferred
- Sunglasses with retainer strap (side-shields or glacier glasses highly recommended) or use goggles
- Spare contact lenses if used
- Sun block and lip balm.
- Plastic bowl, cup and spoon
- A pee bottle
- Personal first-aid kit.
- Any prescription or medications used regularly (these will not be available in the Caucasus).
- Watch/Travel alarm
- Adapter for any electrical appliances. The voltage is 220V in Russian electric outlets and it will ruin the110V appliances.
- Knee supports

### Supplementary Food/Power bars

- Range of goods in Russia is not the same as in North America so you may wish to bring some food items that are probably not available in Russia and which may make your trip more pleasurable.
- Your favorites: instant coffee, herbal teas, powdered milk, sugar substitute, other instant drinks; trail snacks, dried fruits, candy bars, gumdrops, peanut butter.
- Vitamin supplements
- Power bars



### Equipment Rental in Elbrus

(Our outfitter has a limited stock of these items for rentals in Russia. Costs are per trip. Payments in cash locally)

- **Ski poles - 10 Euros per pair per person**
- **Crampons - 15 Euros per pair**
- **Harness – 10 Euro**
- **Ice axe - 15 Euro**
- **Sleeping bag - 20 Euro**
- **Plastic boots - 30 Euro per pair**

**Deposit: \$500 per person**

**Balance Due: June 1, 2010**

**Group size: 6-12 persons**

**Contact Your Expedition Leader**

**Priyantha Amarasinghe**

**1 800 263 2995 Press 3 & Ext 2680**

**416 - 391 0334 Press 3 & Ext 2680**

**Priyantha@tourcanvacations.com**

**www.tourcanvacations.com**