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Website: [www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk](http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk)  
Online: [shop.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk](http://shop.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk)



# 2024 trip dossier | **Mont Blanc Autonomy £2899**

Website link | <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/mtbintermediate.html>

## Key features

- Improve your skills to make you more autonomous, in a Chamonix based climbing holiday.
- 10 days guiding (Monday - Friday), and Chamonix B&B accommodation (Sunday - Saturday)
- No previous experience is required, as you are taught everything during the course.
- Led by top qualified guides (IFMGA), 1:6 ratio for first day then 1:3 and 1:2 for Mont Blanc (3 days).
- All technical equipment (e.g. B3 boots, crampons, ice axe etc.) can be hired from Icicle
- 2024 dates; 23 Jun – 6 Jul, 7 – 20 Jul, 21 Jul – 3 Aug, 4 – 17 Aug, 18 – 31 Aug, 1 – 14 Sep 2024.



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## Course overview

- For those with a little previous climbing experience, the Mont Blanc Intermediate course is the Alpine Autonomy Course with the Mont Blanc Summits course on the end to give a good chance of summiting Mont Blanc.
- Over two weeks you attempt famous Alpine routes, such as the remote Domes du Miages, and train and acclimatise for your ascent of Mont Blanc. There are up to three nights in huts to acclimatise.
- On the second week of this course, we are as flexible as possible with the itinerary so that, if you feel ready, fit and acclimatised, you can make your summit attempt on the first weather window.
- The technical content will be tailored to build on your current experience, with an emphasis on glacier travel and crevasse rescue on both dry and wet glaciers. The course also covers a whole host of ropework and Alpine safety issues such as avalanche awareness, belays and anchors, crampon and ice axe techniques.
- This course is set at just above the level of the Introduction course (summer or winter), so if you have a bit too much experience (such as previous rock climbing experience) this course is for you. The vast majority of the routes ascended are of the Alpine PD grade (roughly equivalent to Scottish Grade II/III).
- The second week is focused on you preparing and summiting Mont Blanc, with other summits and nights spent at altitude to increase acclimatisation. Read our dedicated information page on Mont Blanc: [summit focus](#).
- On the second week of this course, we are deliberately as flexible as possible with the itinerary so that, if you feel ready, fit and acclimatised, you can make your summit attempt on the first available weather window during this second week, after a final acclimatisation ascent of Gran Paradiso 4061m.

## Sample itinerary

- **Sunday** - Travel to Chamonix to arrive for the 17:00 check-in followed by and course safety and itinerary briefings. There is time for kit checks or rental of equipment. Briefings are over by 19:00 and the team accompany the group to pre-dinner drinks. Many clients opt to travel out a day or two early to do an acclimatisation weekend course to provide an extra night of accommodation, and to ascend a 3000m peak. Night in Chamonix.

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- **Monday** - Day to learn and practice using crampons and ice axes on the Mer de Glace glacier (2000m). You also climb vertical ice, create ice anchors, and learn glacier travel skills. This is one of your most important days of the course in terms of skills development as it is essential to have good footwork on Mont Blanc. Guiding ratio 1:6 (max). Evening theory session / meeting with course hosts: [click for info](#). Night in Chamonix.
- **Tuesday** - Alpine ridge route, such as the Traverse of Aiguille du Crochues, to focus on ropework, moving together, anchors, and the assessment of objective dangers. The route chosen for this day is generally a mixed route that is ascended in mountain boots rather than in rock shoes. Guiding ratio 1:3 (max). Evening theory session / meeting with course hosts: [click for info](#). Night in Chamonix.
- **Wednesday** - Today you really progress your altitude snowskills with an ascent of another peak, such as the Pointe Lachenal / Arete Lolo / Aiguilles Marbrees, and all skills previously learnt will be tested. This style of route will really work on your crampon skills and the selection of snow belays on steeper ground. Guiding ratio 1:3 (max). Evening theory session / meeting with course hosts: [click for info](#). Night in Chamonix
- **Thursday** - The start of a two day route with a night in a mountain hut, or a day route. It's up to you to decide the itinerary for the last two days of this course. Typically groups ascend the Domes du Miages, Aiguille du Tour, Petite Forche, or Mont Blanc du Tacul, and the route chosen is a reflection of your autonomy skills development and of the weather and mountain conditions. Guiding ratio 1:3 (max). Night in mountain hut / Chamonix.
- **Friday** - If you opted for a two day route, then today will be an Alpine start from the mountain hut to ascend one of the peaks mentioned on the previous day, or it could also be another day route if you have opted for that. After the main ascent of the week, you descend back to the Chamonix valley. Guiding ratio 1:3 (max). Evening social drinks, then a celebratory meal, with the final night spent in Chamonix.
- **Saturday and Sunday** – Breakfast, then you have two days off to really concentrate on resting and relaxation. Some people opt to book a tandem paraglider flight in the morning to celebrate the first weeks efforts, and prices for this are from c.100€ for a c.30 minute flight. These flights can be booked in resort up to the day before you wish to fly. On the Sunday evening you meet at 17:00 for a briefing on the plans for the second week.
- **Monday** - After breakfast you meet our resort team, and guide, for a weather briefing and final kit checks for Gran Paradiso. You are driven by minibus (core season) through the Mont Blanc tunnel to

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Val Savaranches in Italy, then ascend to the Rifugio Vittorio Emanuele II or Chabod mountain hut, where you spend the night on a half board basis. Guiding ratio 1:3 (max) in hut, or 1:6 (max) for approach. Night in mountain hut in Italy.

- **Tuesday** - Alpine start (c.4 am) to climb Gran Paradiso 4061, the highest peak completely in Italy. There are 4 possible normal routes to the summit, to cater for conditions / experience, all of which converge on the Col Montcorve. The route steepens to the final summit ridge, which although short is quite exposed, but well protected. The summit views are stupendous in all directions! Descend to Pont for return transfer to Chamonix. Night in Chamonix.
- **Wednesday** - This day is flexible to allow you to normally climb another acclimatisation route to a summit, or to start your ascent of Mont Blanc if weather or hut spaces dictate. Typical routes for the day include Cosmiques Arete, Aiguilles Marbrees, Pointe Lachenal or Aiguille du Toule. Return to Chamonix to prepare for Mont Blanc. Guiding ratio 1:2 (max). Evening briefing session / meeting with course hosts: click for info. Night in Chamonix.
- **Thursday** - Equipment and bag checks before you set off to climb up to one of the high huts, either the Gouter / Tête Rousse / Gonella mountain hut for the night. Guiding ratio 1:2 (max). The choice of route that you take on Mont Blanc, and which hut(s) you stay in is a function of the weather, conditions, and your skills and fitness. Often different teams suit different plans to maximise their summit chances. Night in hut on Mont Blanc.
- **Friday** - Summit Mont Blanc 4810m from an Alpine start from the high hut, and descend to Chamonix. It is usual to reach the summit just after sunrise, to take advantage of the best snow conditions, lowest winds, and to minimise the risks of stonefall or afternoon storms on the descent. You typically reach the valley in the afternoon. Guiding ratio 1:2 (max). Most teams opt to meet up to go out for drinks and a celebratory meal. Final night in Chamonix.
- **Saturday** - Breakfast then the accommodation check out is by 10:00. Most arrange their transfers for around this time for a flight from Geneva about midday. Some people opt to book a tandem paraglider flight in the morning to celebrate the weeks efforts, and prices for this are from 100€ for a c.30 minute flight. These flights can be booked in resort up to the day before you wish to fly. Depart for home.

ITINERARY NOTES: Where possible we follow itineraries. Mountain adventures are weather and conditions dependant, so occasionally we are forced to alter the plans. If this is the case, suitable alternatives are offered. Please use this outline itinerary as a guide to the types of route / activity that you will attempt.

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## Course Inclusions

1) IFMGA Mountain Guide for ten days, 2) Chamonix course hosts for logistics & briefings, 3) Self-catered accommodation in Chamonix (inc. beddings & towels), 4) Up to three nights half board in mountain huts (inc. costs for guides), two nights of which are paid for by Icicle (Gran Paradiso & Mont Blanc), 5) Pre course information booklet, 6) Equipment discount voucher for UK shops, 7) Free 36 page technical Course Instruction Booklet, 8) Road transport in Chamonix valley, 9) Icicle discounts privilege card for reductions in local shops and restaurants in Chamonix. 10) Evening technical instruction / briefing sessions.

## Course Exclusions

1) Travel to and from Chamonix, 2) Equipment hire, 3) Cable cars & uplift (c. 120 euros depending on itinerary), 4) Optional nights in a mountain hut on a half board basis for you and guide (1 in first week, and 1 in second week), 5) Personal laundry, telephone calls, lunches, evening meals in valley, & any purchases in mountain huts / hotels / restaurants, 6) Road transport outside Chamonix valley (not usually required), 7) Sunday pre-dinner drinks & Friday celebratory meal & drinks, 8) Activities insurance, & excess baggage charges.

## Pre-requisite skills

These are outlined on this page; <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/courses.html>, and this course is;

Course level: **Intermediate**  
Mountaineering: **Some experience as itinerary.**  
Ice & Rock: **Grades I/II gullies and / or rock 3 / V.Diff.**  
Fitness: **High fitness and stamina.**

## Fitness & stamina

The ideal fitness levels are detailed at; <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/trainingpreparation.html>, and there are links to general training advice and planners that you can adapt to suit and follow.

This trip is graded: **Level 4** - As an absolute minimum you should be capable of running a half marathon in a good time (under 1hr 45mins), but realistically you should be looking at marathon fitness for all courses of this fitness and stamina level to ensure your endurance is up to standard.

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## How to book

- All bookings are made securely online, and deposit of £250 is payable (with secure payments handled via our travel bonding by SinGS / Felloh). Ensure that when completing the form, you fill in all the required fields, in order for the 'SUBMIT' button to appear.
- All payments are protected by our Tour Operator travel bonding with ATOL and TTA, and your monies are held in trust until after you have travelled home. You are fully financially protected, in accordance with UK and EU laws.
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/booking.html>

## Before your trip

- As soon as you book online, you are sent confirmation of this, and attachments including joining instructions, course specific kit lists. If you haven't received this e-mail within half an hour of booking online, please check your junk / spam folder.
- At the office, we manually check all bookings, and you'll also receive a personalised e-mail from us formally confirming your course space, and sending you a deposit payment link. Once you have this office confirmation and paid the deposit, it's fine to go ahead and book your travel arrangements, and to arrange your activities insurance.
- Activities insurance is a requirement for all trip participants. Organise it as soon as you are booked, and ensure that it covers you for cancellation or curtailment, in case you injure yourself or get ill before your trip. This ensures you'd be fully reimbursed for the trip, and all travel costs.
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/insurance.html>

## Travel to the Alps

- The closest international airport to Chamonix, is Geneva (airport code GVA). There are many direct flights from the UK every day, and it's well served by the budget airlines e.g. EasyJet.
- Geneva is a small but busy airport, and it's only a very short walk from baggage reclaim into the arrivals area, where all the airport transfer companies meet. In the Course Information Booklet is a code for preferential rates from our reliable transfer partner Mountain Dropoffs.
- Chamonix is also very easy to travel to by rail, from the UK to Paris via Eurostar, then from Paris Gare du Lyon (or Austerlitz) to Saint Gervais by high speed TGV, then the local train up the valley to the Chamonix Aiguille du Midi (or Chamonix central) stop.

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- Driving can work out cheaper, if you're with others, and there's free parking close to the accommodation, on a first come first served basis. Generally a couple of laps, and a space will be freed up for you. See the Course Information Booklet map for the locations of this free parking.
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/travel.html>

## Meeting point

- Once you've booked, you'll receive the Course Information Booklet, which details the meeting point for Chamonix course clients.
- If you want an address for your airport transfer, provide the Aiguille du Midi cable car, on Rue Lyret, 74400 Chamonix. The accommodation is situated in a pedestrianized area, so you cannot be dropped off at the door, and the cable car station, or Chamonix Sud bus station are the closest access points. If arriving on EasyBus, Ouibus, or Flixbus, these all arrive at the bus station.

## Course accommodation

- Most course clients stay in Chamonix in en-suite rooms, in a purpose built ski village in Chamonix Sud. These have a small kitchenette, for those wishing to self-cater.
- Check in time is from 16:00 (4pm) on the Sunday, and the meeting point to be shown into your accommodation is detailed in your Course Information Booklet, that is sent upon booking.
- The flats are normally twin rooms for two people sharing. If you are travelling as a couple (or named friends), you will share. If travelling on your own, you will be matched with another course client of the same sex.
- This accommodation is small and basic, to provide you low cost accommodation in Chamonix, but it is functional and really well located. If you wish to upgrade to higher quality accommodation, there is a £100 discount available for sourcing your own accommodation, which is applied to your invoice.
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/chamflat.html>

## Course briefing

- The course briefing for this trip is at 17:00 on the Sunday evening. The Course Information Booklet will confirm the exact location for this briefing. When you attend the briefing, take your passport and activities insurance details, for these to be noted.
- The briefing takes about 45 minutes, and it aims to answer all your queries about the course.

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- Attendance at the course briefing is obligatory, and you are asked to sign a copy of the Terms & Conditions. These are the same as those you accepted online when you booked, but it's for us to have a signed paper copy on record.

## Equipment checks

- Take any equipment to the briefing that you would like one of our guiding team to advise you about. For some people that may be very little, whilst others want to double-check a few bits of kit. It's always a good idea to take your boots and crampons, so we can check the fit for you.
- If you've your own safety equipment, it's worth having one of the team check this over for you.
- Note that if you require any hire equipment, or any kit that is loaned on a course, you need to attend the course briefing, as it's straight after this that is when it is allocated.
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/hire.html>

## Late arrivals

- If they are pre-booked days ahead, we can accommodate late arrivals. We will organise for you to be able to check into your course accommodation at any time that you arrive. We do however ask you to assess how necessary a late arrival is, and for you to consider the disruption to your flatmate.
- You will require a separate Course Briefing, which involves an early start for our team, to fit this in before your guiding. It's not an ideal start to schedule a late arrival, followed by an early start, and sets you on the back foot. Please select suitable flight times to fit the advertised course timings.

## Cable cars

- For the days you are climbing in Chamonix, the most cost effective cable car pass is called the Mont Blanc multi-pass. For this course you require a 5 day pass, from Monday to Friday (plus extra days if you arrive earlier). The 5 day pass costs 99.20€ (\*2021 prices).
- Website link: <https://www.montblancnaturalresort.com/en/montblanc-multipass>

## Breakfasts

- When you are in town and accommodation is included on a self-catering basis. There are a great range of cafes, bakeries, and coffee shops in town, where you can get breakfast, and there are a few offering cooked breakfasts too. Alternatively you can self-cater in your accommodation.

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- As the room is self-catering, it's yours for the week, so no need to check out when you are away in mountain huts. Should you use up any items from your breakfast or room supplies, there's a supermarket located just across the pedestrian square from the course accommodation.
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/chamflat.html>

## Lunches & drinks

- Everyone has their own idea of what they would like for lunch whilst in the mountains, varying from a stack of Mars bars to a large ham sandwich. For this reason we let you choose your own lunches, which may be easily purchased locally from shops and supermarkets.
- You will be advised in the briefings as to how many days lunches you should plan ahead and purchase. There is never time to cook hot lunches while on a course, but you could take a thermos.
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/chamflat.html>

## Evening meals

- In town clients normally take advantage of the excellent variety of local restaurants, and also the town's bars to celebrate week's achievements. We are also happy to book places in restaurants for you, should you wish an evening on your own.
- Some clients want an early night or to budget, so opt to cook for themselves in the self-catering flats. In guardianned huts, the cooked evening meal is normally three courses.
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/chamonix.html>

## Mountain huts

- Mountain Huts are run by a 'Guardian' who cooks, cleans and is on hand for your assistance. On most courses, the itineraries detail a specific number of nights in mountain huts.
- Clients share rooms, which often are on tiered bunks. Each person is allocated a mattress with its own pillow and blankets, but you should take a sleeping bag liner for comfort.
- There are normally storage / drying rooms. Meals are on a half board basis, with a basic continental breakfast and a three course cooked evening meal. Any extras you order, such as bottled water, beer or wine, packed lunch, or chocolate, must be paid for by you.
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/chamflat.html>

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## Weather & conditions

- It's natural for you to be avidly checking the weather on the weeks and days preceding your course, and we try and keep our social media channels updated daily, so you can see what's going on, and how the conditions are evolving. The website links below give you trustworthy weather forecasts.
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/webcams.html> and [http://chamonix-meteo.com/chamonix-mont-blanc/weather/forecast/morning/5\\_days\\_weather\\_forecast.php](http://chamonix-meteo.com/chamonix-mont-blanc/weather/forecast/morning/5_days_weather_forecast.php)

## Maps & guidebooks

- You don't need to take any maps and guidebooks for your trip, as you are being guided, but it's always a good idea from a safety perspective to have a map with you. Here are the key links;
- Chamonix map; <https://shop.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/79/BooksMaps/Maps/Alpinemaps/IGNChamonix36300Tmap.html>
- Instructional book; <https://shop.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/165/BooksMaps/Books/Instructional/AlpineClimbing:TechniquetoTakeYouHigher.html>

## Equipment lists

- You will be sent a precise course specific kit list upon booking, but we have a huge amount of kit advice on our website; <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/boots.html>
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/icicleshop%2BKIT%2BMTR.html>

## Any questions?

Even if you've read all the detail here and in your Course Information Booklet, and on the website, you may still have some queries about your trip, so don't hesitate to get in touch.

- Telephone +44 (0) 1539 44 22 17
- E-mail [info@icicle.co.uk](mailto:info@icicle.co.uk)
- Facebook message <http://m.me/iciclemountaineering>
- Here's our office hours, and online chat <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/contact.html>
- When you're on a trip, you'll also be provided an in resort WhatsApp number for our team, so if you haven't already, please ensure that you download this free app to your phone.



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