

Swiss Alps Development Week

Europe | 4,206m



360 
EXPEDITIONS

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Have you ever looked at steeper peaks and wondered what it would be like to climb there? Do you have ambitions for the Matterhorn or the Eiger but just don't know how to begin the journey? Mountaineering at lower grades often involves mostly walking on snow, and whilst this is great fun, it's nothing compared to the challenges that can be had in the Alps. Imagine a week of guided climbing, at a 1:2 ratio, getting coached by our expert Mountain Guides, learning how to move more quickly, efficiently and safely over technical ground.

This Alpine development week is intended to bridge the gap between peaks like Mont Blanc and the Matterhorn. It will take you into more steep and serious terrain, with a logical progression through the grades, finishing on an AD grade route.

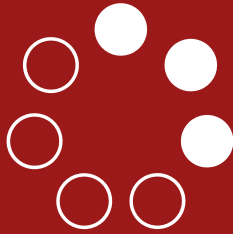
If you want to boost your alpine level, and try more challenging routes, then this is the week for you, run by Mountain Guides with vast experience, designed to prep you for your next great adventure!

The itinerary is an example. The actual itinerary will depend on the weather, the conditions and your teams abilities and goals.

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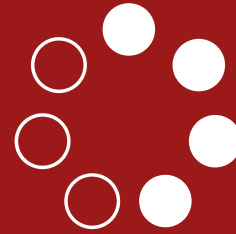
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Physical – P3

This trip is physically tough. Frequent exercise is necessary to prepare properly for this expedition. Regular walking mixed with training at the gym to build up endurance and cardiovascular fitness is key. Expect to be able to do 8 hour days in hilly and often steep terrain, carrying a pack of 6-10kg in weight with the occasional extra long day.



Technical – T4

A good grounding in Alpine climbing is ideal. Knowledge of basic knots and ropework with a background in Scottish Winter II or Alpine PD. Competence in use of crampons and self arrest techniques is preferable. All still will be re-taught and practiced in situ.

Please note that the grading system used is a rough guide only.



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ITINERARY

DAY 1 : Depart UK & briefing

The itinerary is an example. The actual itinerary will depend on the weather, the conditions and your teams abilities and goals.

Your trip will start with a briefing around 6.30pm at your accommodation in Saas Grund. Your briefing will cover things like:

- discussing the week ahead
- talking through clothing and kit – we'll use the opportunity to check the kit over too
- answering any of your questions

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 back in the valley for the evening.

Whatever your strengths and weaknesses, we will use today to focus on developing our technical skills whether this be a refresher on ice skills or mountain rock-climbing.

(BD)

DAY 3-7 : Alpine Training and Development

The Saas Valley is an absolute gem of a venue, with numerous high quality routes and a lot of 4000m peaks to go at, rocky ridges, steep faces and high summits are all waiting for you.

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. (BD)

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ITINERARY

DAY 8 : Return home

Breakfast at the hotel is included before departure. We recommend you book your flights for early to mid-afternoon to avoid needing to depart too early! For transfer information between Saas Grund and Geneva / Zurich airport, please see our FAQ's.

(B)

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KIT LIST

Bags & Packs

Rucksack

30-40 litre maximum. If buying a rucksack get one with ice axe loops.

Sleeping Gear

Sleeping bag liner (sheet sleeping bag)

These are mandatory for the refuges for hygiene reasons. Silk bags are best due to their weight. Summit to Sea recommended.

Headwear

Warm headgear

This can be a warm hat, beanie, balaclava, anything to reduce the heat loss from your head

Wide brimmed hat

Keeps the sun off exposed areas like ears and the nape of the neck

Ski goggles

Low light lenses recommended as goggles most likely used in poor weather.

Sunglasses

Category 4 glacier glasses by Julbo, Cebe, Vuarnet and Adidas recommended. For glacier work side and nose protectors are very good.

Upper Body

Thermal shirt/T shirt

Merino wool is best as they don't smell quite as much.

Fleece top/jacket or Softshell

Waterproof jacket

Gore Tex. Arc'Teryx Beta AR recommended

Duvet jacket

Synthetic jackets recommended as they stay warm if wet. Arc'teryx recommended

Thin gloves

Fleece or leather gloves recommended

Warm gloves

Black Diamond Patrol gloves recommended.

Mitts

Dachstein wool mitts recommended, or fleece with Gore Tex shell

Lower Body

Mountain trousers

Mammut "Base Jump" (Schoeller fabric) or similar recommended

Waterproof overtrousers

Like the jacket, an essential piece of kit to stay dry and should also be Goretex

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KIT LIST

Feet

Thick socks

Smartwool or Teko recommended

Mountaineering boots (B2 or B3)

Boots can be fully rigid (B3) e.g. Scarpa Mont Blanc Pro, or semi rigid (B2) e.g. La Sportiva Nepal Extreme or Scarpa Ribelle. Excellent boots can be hired for around 70CHF/week.

Gaiters

In case of deep snow. Gore tex. Black Diamond recommended. Ankle length work fine.

Climbing shoes

Do bring along your climbing shoes if you own them, though they can be hired locally if you don't.

Technical Equipment

Head torch

Petzl Tika Plus or similar recommended

Climbing harness

Black Diamond Alpine Bod and Beal Aero Team III recommended

Climbing 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

Trekking poles

These can be handy when crossing glaciers, and on paths for reducing shock on your knees. Gipron recommended because they are ultra light and split down into 4 segments, meaning they can be stored inside your rucksack when climbing. Snow baskets essential. It is personal preference whether to use one pole or two.

Hydration

Water bottles

Nalgene style plastic bottles are the best. 0.5l-1l thermos flasks can also come in handy on very cold days! 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.

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KIT LIST

Toiletries

Lip salve

Sun cream will not work on your lips and they are very susceptible to burn without proper protection

Sunblock

Atleast factor 30

Wash kit

Toothbrush, small tube of toothpaste, wet wipes, antiseptic hand gel.

Ear plugs

For protection against the inevitable snorers!

Medications

Med-kit and personal medication

Blister Kit and personal medication if required. Compeed recommended.

Miscellaneous

Camera

Compact camera, fully charged

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FAQ'S

General

What previous experience is required?

You should have previously climbed to F+/PD standard in the Alps. Examples of this would be Grand Paradiso or Mont Blanc.

How fit do I need to be for this trip?

This is a very demanding trip. You should be in excellent physical shape – think capable of jogging a half marathon in 2hr20. Our past experience has shown that those not up to this fitness level struggle to complete many of the peaks.

You need excellent stamina and should be prepared for days to last up to 12 hours.

How long are the days?

The length of days will vary when alpine climbing. Days could easily start around 04:00, and last for ten hours.

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 a fully qualified Guide.

What will the Guide:Climber ratio be?

This week is all about technical climbing so we have a maximum ratio of 1:2

What if the conditions are too bad for the itinerary?

The itinerary is an example and the actual itinerary we complete will depend on the weather and the conditions. There are always lots of options, all of which will help you develop your skills!

Why is the itinerary flexible?

The actual itinerary will depend hugely on your teams abilities and goals. The purpose of the week is about development and we will work closely with you to ensure this is what you get.

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FAQ'S

Food and Water

How much water should I carry each day?

Do not carry too much water as 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.

Where do I get drinking water from?

All drinking water is from the refuge or can be bought at various stops for the first day's walking. We pass streams in various places that you can top up from if you should run out, so take purification to add to it in the form of silver chloride or chlorine.

What is the food like in the mountain huts?

Mountain huts 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.

Where can I get a packed lunch for each day?

You can pick up food from Saas Grund before you leave to head into the mountains or you can buy a packed lunch from the refuges, which you'll confirm directly with them the night before it's wanted. Once you're in the mountains, the only option for lunch is to order it from the refuge unless you take food up with you.

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.

Can allergies or dietary requirements be catered for?

Definitely – huts will usually try and accommodate vegetarians etc. but they do sometimes struggle with more specialised requirements such as gluten free. If you have a food allergy or specific dietary requirement please do let us know on your booking form.

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FAQ'S

Accommodation

What is the hotel in Saas Grund like?

We usually use the Hotel Schoenblick in Saas Grund for this trip. Although a little “retro” in style (those who’ve stayed in Swiss mountain hotels will understand!), this gives us a well located base, where we can keep our rooms while we are on the hill.

What are the mountain huts like?

Mountain huts/refuges 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. Showers and running water are not usually available. The rooms are usually dormitory style, with large alpine bunks (up to 15 people in a row).

Can you get a hot shower there?

Showers and running water are not usually available. although at Hohsaas there are showers.

If there is no water in the huts for washing, what should I 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.

Should I carry shoes for the evenings in the huts?

This isn’t necessary, all of the mountain huts provide indoor footwear for your comfort.

Can I have a single room?

Single rooms at the hotel may be available for a supplement of around £315, however please let us know as far in advance as possible if you’d like to do this as it’s a very small hotel and cannot be guaranteed.

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FAQ'S

Health and Safety

What happens if there is an issue on the trek – a fall or an illness?

360 Expeditions have conducted detailed risk assessments and put the necessary plans in place to cope with any accidents or illness whilst out on the trek. Our Mountain Guides are highly qualified and experienced mountain leaders who hold expedition first aid qualifications and are used to working in remote environments. Their training allows them to deal with situations quickly and safely.

Should someone find themselves requiring further medical attention, the guide will organise for that individual to be taken from the trail and transferred to the nearest hospital. The guide and the 360 office team will also be on hand to offer guidance and support for insurance claims and contacting next-of-kin.

Is there any risk of altitude sickness?

There is minimal risk of altitude sickness on this trek.

Kit

Can I hire kit?

You can hire equipment in Saas Grund rather than buy it. We use a local shop for boot hire (allow 65CHF for the week).

A full kit package for 6 days includes Duvet Jacket, Mitts, Axe, Harness, Crampons, Helmet and costs €99 to rent.

Individual costs:

Ice axe – €24

Harness – €16

Helmet – €16

Crampons – €34

Duvet jacket – €27

Mitts – €11

You can also hire climbing shoes if needed.

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.

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FAQ'S

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

What camera should I take?

We'd recommend you 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.

Travel

What are the transfer options between Saas Grund and Geneva / Zurich?

The Saas Valley (Saastal) is the valley parallel to the Mattertal which is where Zermatt is. Swiss public transport is excellent and we would encourage you to get to the Saas Valley using it.

If you are flying you can land at either Geneva or Zurich. Both then have rail links to Visp, where you will switch to a bus, which will take you to 'Saas Grund – Unter den Bodmen' (the stop is just past the hotel on the opposite side of the road) you should buy your tickets to and from here.

Allow 3:40 from Geneva and 3:20 from Zurich to transfer between the airport to Saas Grund. Swiss public transport tickets can be purchased online in advance at www.sbb.ch, or directly from the train station at the airport. If purchasing in advance, a return ticket should be around 150CHF from either airport.

When purchasing your tickets you may be offered Halbtax. This is a discount card which offers you a 50% saving on all public transport. Unless staying in Switzerland for at least an extra week in addition to your climbing trip we don't think it's worth paying for Halbtax.

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FAQ'S

Insurance

Do I need special travel insurance for the course?

You must carry individual travel insurance to take part in the expedition. We cannot take you on the mountain without proof of insurance.

Our team are insured through [True Traveller](#), and we are part of their affiliate programme. Other recommendations can be found on [our links page](#).

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the appropriate insurance for your intended trip, to include (at a minimum) medical evacuation and coverage up to the maximum altitude of this trip.

Your insurance details are requested on the booking form; however this can be arranged at a later date if you wish, though we would always suggest having at least insurance to cover you for cancellation in place at the time of booking. 360 Expeditions will be requesting your insurance details 8 weeks before your departure if we have not received them prior to this.

Do I need an European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) for this expedition?

If you are eligible and it is available, as the trip is based in Switzerland it is also worth having a UK Global Health Insurance Card or GHIC (which replaces what was the European Health Insurance Card / EHIC). If you don't already have one, details to apply for one are [here](#).

Do check with your insurance whether your medical costs would be paid, in the unlikely event that you need medical treatment whilst you are away, if you are not covered by a GHIC.

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TRAINING PROGRAM

To begin 6 months prior to the expedition where possible.

1. CVS: Cardiovascular exercise which is low impact such as swimming, cycling, cross trainer, rowing.

2. Weekend walk should be done over undulating terrain. Only a light rucksack needs to be carried.

3. For specific exercises it is worth doing static squats and heel raises on a regular basis to improve leg muscles prior to the trip. Static squats are especially useful to help protect the knees. Please remember that it is still important to have a well balanced workout using a variety of muscle groups.

4. It is worth winding down and resting in the week leading up to the trip, doing several light walks to keep things going.

5. When walking going at a pace of a brisk walk with a light sweat and enough to feel breathless is recommended

6. During the program, rather than step up suddenly each month (example, going for 3 one hour walks each week during the weekdays in April to 3 one and half hour walks suddenly in May) it is better to build up gradually each week so there isn't a large transition (example, going for 3 one hour walks during week 1 in April, going for 3 one hour and ten minute walks during week 2 in April, going for 3 one hour and fifteen minute walks during week 3 in April, going for 3 one hour and twenty minute walks during week 4 in April)

6. It is important you seek medical advice prior to starting any training program, especially if you are not used to regular physical exertion

All the best with your training!

MONTH 1

OPT 1

2 x 30 mins weekday walk
1 x 1 hour weekend walk
1 x 10 mins CVS

OPT 2

1 x 30 mins weekday walk
2 x 1 hour weekend walk
1 x 10 mins CVS

MONTH 2

OPT 1

2 x 45 mins weekday walk
1 x 2 hours weekend walk
2 x 10 mins CVS

OPT 2

1 x 45 mins weekday walk
2 x 2 hours weekend walk
2 x 10 mins CVS

MONTH 3

OPT 1

2 x 45 mins weekday walk
1 x 2 hours weekend walk
2 x 10 mins CVS

OPT 2

1 x 45 mins weekday walk
2 x 2 hours weekend walk
2 x 10 mins CVS

MONTH 4

OPT 1

3 x 1 hour weekday walk
1 x 4 hours weekend walk
3 x 15 mins CVS

OPT 2

2 x 1 hour weekday walk
2 x 4 hours weekend walk
3 x 15 mins CVS

MONTH 5

OPT 1

3 x 1.5 hours weekday walk
1 x 5 hours weekend walk
3 x 20 - 25 mins CVS

OPT 2

2 x 1.5 hours weekday walk
2 x 5 hours weekend walk
3 x 20 - 25 mins CVS

MONTH 6

OPT 1

3 x 2 hours weekday walk
1 x 6 hours weekend walk
3 x 30 mins CVS

OPT 2

2 x 3 hours weekday walk
2 x 6 hours weekend walk
3 x 30 mins CVS



"Life should not be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty & well preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside in a cloud of smoke, thoroughly used up, totally worn out & loudly proclaiming 'Wow! What a Ride!' "

Dream it. Plan it. Live it.