

American Alpine Institute^{Ltd.}

MONT BLANC MASSIF PRIVATE ALPINE ROCK CLIMBING ASCENTS EQUIPMENT LIST

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This equipment list is for alpine climbing programs with an emphasis on alpine rock ascents and instruction. Because many of the best rock climbs involve a glacier approach (this in itself gives them a special quality) the equipment on this list is also adequate to make snow and ice ascents to a moderate standard including all those listed in levels I and II in the brochure.

Taking advantage of the quick and easy telepherique access climbers are often able to complete a fine route as a simple day climb starting and ending in Chamonix. Many excellent routes, however, require an overnight stay higher in the mountains and for these we will use one of the many alpine huts. One can choose to camp and establish a tent base camp (AAI will supply the tents and stoves).

Even though the mountains and huts are usually close at hand the climber cannot forget that the storms, the wind, and the cold of an early dawn are every bit as serious here as in other comparable ranges. The Alps are high with many peaks rising over 13,000 feet, Mont Blanc itself rises to over 15,700 feet. The moist maritime climate and the northerly latitude, about the same as Portland, Oregon or northern Maine, can combine to produce severe storms. Climbers must not underestimate the seriousness of the weather in the Alps.

The equipment you bring must function well in a variety of conditions. Your clothing should be warm, lightweight, dry quickly, and allow you good freedom of movement. The layering principle, which uses several thin layers of insulation (rather than one thick one), covered with an outer weather-proof shell, meets these needs well. The alpine rock climber must pay particular attention to weight and ease of movement. Frequently it is best to climb in a few lightweight insulating layers, keeping your Gore-Tex or other light wind shell in your pack in case the temperature drops or the weather deteriorates.

Please take the time to prepare your equipment carefully, and to the extent possible, become familiar with it by using it in the field. If you have any questions don't hesitate to call the Institute office.

CLOTHING

Boots - Many of the alpine rock routes are normally climbed in rock shoes. But nearly all of them require an approach which involves some snow or ice and for these you will need to bring a pair of mountaineering boots. Leather mountaineering boots are ideal for this use.

Some alpine rock routes, such as the South Ridge of the Moine or the Charmoz-Grepon Traverse, are best climbed in leather mountaineering boots and for routes like these the best boots are those which offer light weight and sensitivity for rock climbing. A good example would be the Trango or Trango Extreme by La Sportiva. (A good

selection is available in Chamonix. Be sure you allow time to shop for them if you plan to buy them there.)

Rock Climbing Shoes - An all around climbing shoe is recommended. Don't get them too tight as we'll be wearing them all day long. Slip lasted shoes are recommended, make sure you size them to be worn with a sock.

Gaiters - Knee high. Trips occurring August and later do not require knee high gaiters.

Socks - Wool or synthetic. Bring two complete changes. Climbers frequently wear a thin liner sock, and one pair of thick socks depending on boot fit.

Long Underwear Bottoms - Lightweight polypropylene or similar synthetic. These can be worn under your climbing pants for extra warmth on colder days.

Warm synthetic climbing pants - Ideally these should be made from a durable material such as Schoeller. Lightweight stretch Fleece pants will work however they are not as durable and can get torn up.(heavyweight pile is generally too warm).

Rain Pants or Bibs - These should be as light as possible. Gore-Tex or other waterproof breathable material recommended. Full side zips recommended for easy on and off over boots and crampons.

Long Underwear Tops - Lightweight polypropylene or similar synthetic.

Pile Jacket - Synthetic pile, fleece or Schoeller.

Rain Parka with Hood - Again, light is right. Gore-Tex or other waterproof breathable material recommended.

Liner Gloves - Polypropylene or wool.

Mittens - Synthetic, such as pile, or wool. The lighter the better. A light weight water proof breathable shell for your gloves or mittens is also recommended.

Warm Hat - Synthetic is less itchy than wool.

Sun Hat - A baseball cap serves well.

CLIMBING GEAR

Ice Axe - 55cm to 70cm length. The lighter the better.

Crampons - Semi-rigid or flexible. Be sure they fit all boots. Crampons with step-in bindings are usually the easiest to put on however, only certain leather boots are step-in crampon compatible. Please seek advice when purchasing crampons and make sure they can be put on your boots. (Many types of crampons can be purchased or rented in Chamonix.)

Climbing Harness - it is ideal to have adjustable leg loops for alpine climbing.

Carabiners - Bring two locking.

Climbing Helmet

Chalk Bag - (optional)

Water Bottles - Two one quart nalgens are best.

MISCELLANEOUS

Food - AAI does not provide food between climbs or while in the mountains. When we stay in huts, breakfast and dinner can be purchased there. Food for the climbs can be purchased in Chamonix. Plan to purchase food at local stores as the trip progresses.

Summit Pack - A summit pack is required. 30 to 40 liters (about 1900 to 2500 cubic inches) is about the right size. This pack should be as light as possible and preferably designed for climbing (narrow with compression straps and ice tool loops).

Ski Poles - this is an optional but **highly** recommended item that is useful in two ways:

- 1) taking the burden off your knees when coming downhill with a big pack and
- 2) giving you good balance points when making tricky stream crossings.

Telescoping (adjustable) poles are ideal, but non-adjustable ski poles at a length used in alpine (downhill) skiing will work too. Our guides have found them very helpful.

Headlamp - Bring an extra bulb and batteries. Flashlights are not acceptable.

Pocket Knife or Multitool

Repair Kit - Crampon adjustment tools.

Personal Medical Kit - For blisters, cuts, scrapes, etc.

Glacier Glasses - With side shields.

Sunscreen - With a protection factor of at least 16.

Lip Protection - With a protection factor of at least 16.

Personal Toiletries

Ear Plugs - Nice to have in noisy huts.

Camera - With lots of film and an extra battery.

CAMPING GEAR - We only camp at the request of course participants. If you decide to camp you will need these things. Keep in mind that you can readily rent these items in Chamonix. This may simplify your airline travel.

Sleeping Bag - A lightweight summer bag is adequate. Down or synthetic, rated to about 15°F.

Sleeping Pad - 3/4 or full length closed cell or Thermarest.

Utensils - Large cup and spoon minimum. Most also bring a bowl.