



MONT BLANC Equipment list **MOUNTAINVISION**

This exhaustive list does not have to be followed to the letter. I appreciate that individuals might have their own preference regarding clothing, but I hope this list will ensure that nothing is overlooked. I am able & pleased to offer more detailed advice on equipment, brands & manufacturers. Get in touch by email or 'phone.

GENERAL CLOTHING

- [] Trousers, lightweight for travelling
- [] 'T' shirts. Two or three, lightweight one for hut use
- [] Underwear
- [] Socks (see below for 'hill' socks)
- [] Shorts
- [] Shoes/trainers – for wear in the valley or to walk in up to huts
- [] Sandals or 'Tevas' as above

CLOTHING (FOR CLIMBING)

Work on the principle of 'multi layering' rather than one thick layer such as a Buffalo top. Pre-dawn starts are often below freezing, later in the day it is very much warmer especially on a glacier under a hot sun. So being able to 'strip off' down to a base layer is useful.

[] **Base layer.** A synthetic wicking layer, with a long-sleeved top (with a deep neck zip for ventilation), and a pair of long-johns. 'Smartwool' material wicking layer top & leggings are good & don't smell so much after a day out.

[] **Fleece jacket.** Polartec 200gm - 300gm weight recommended. As main warm layer.

[] **Fleece shirt or waistcoat.** On the layering principle, mid-weight 100gm to 200gm weight. Something to carry in the rucsac as a spare, does not need pockets, but a neck zip is recommended.

[] **Underwear.** Not cotton M&S! A synthetic pair of pants dries sweat off quickly.

[] **Climbing trousers or salopettes.** Fleece or synthetic/nylon or polyester. Avoid cotton trousers such as jeans or trekking trousers such as Rohan 'Bags' or Tenson trekkers. This material absorbs moisture very easily & when damp it loses any insulation properties it might have. Powerstretch fleece is good, but gets quite hot on a glacier, good for Mont Blanc though perhaps with a windproof shell or salopettes. Polyester tracksuit bottoms are OK, but Ron Hill 'Tracksters' are too thin for Mont Blanc unless combined with long-johns & a windproof shell. Schoeller material/Patagonia/Marmot/Mammut/Mountain Hardware/ski trousers are good for the Alps, & some are good also for Scotland in winter conditions. Don't forget a belt!

[] **Weatherproof jacket & trousers.** Made from Goretex or similar breathable material. There is a huge choice of well designed lightweight jackets & trousers available. Make sure that the jacket has a good hood, especially for Mont Blanc. Make sure that trousers have a full-length or $\frac{3}{4}$ zip to get them on over boots & even crampons. Must be able give good protection against wind & precipitation, whether rain or snow.

[] **Warm hat.** Fleece, must cover the ears, must be able to fit under a helmet, so no bobbles & the like! A good idea to carry a spare lightweight hat, Such as a lightweight balaclava.

[] **Sun hat.** Very important, To protect the head & neck. Kept in the top pocket of the rucsac until the sun comes up on the glacier. Baseball hat or wide-brimmed. Not so important for the Matterhorn, but certainly so for Mont Blanc & any hut walk & for acclimatisation days.

[] **Neck – gaiter or 'tube'.** Useful to keep drafts & snow out of neck opening. Good for Mont Blanc to warm breath & keep the nose warm! Weighs nothing but very useful.

[] **Gloves.** One pair of heavyweight insulated gloves, with a weatherproof outer. Mitts are warmer, but more cumbersome, especially for the Matterhorn, but just about OK for Mont Blanc. A good pair of gloves by Black Diamond, Marmot, Patagonia, Mountain Hardware etc, would cost from £45 upwards. A removable fleece inner

is a good feature, allowing you to dry the inner overnight. Ensure that gloves are big enough so that your fingers are not constricted, with plenty of room around each finger. Tight fitting gloves will be cold! It is worth buying top-of-the-range, for the added surety this provides, as at altitude your extremities will be excessively prone to cold, due to the lack of oxygen. Make sure gloves have a good long wrist closure, preferably over the jacket sleeve and able to be tightened with one hand or your teeth!

[] **A lightweight pair of fleece gloves.** EG Terra Nova 'Thicky Stickies', or any fleece glove with a grippy palm. Terra Nova 'Thicky' glove, or Outdoor Designs 'Bora Grip'. There are lots more to choose from.

[] **Socks.** Two pairs of thick 'loopstitch' eg Thorlo or Smartwool, two pairs of thinner liners. Wear if hiring or buying boots.

BOOTS & OTHER EQUIPMENT

[] **Boots.** At least a three-quarter length shank, for stiffness when wearing crampons. A full-length shank is better, as this generally means that the boot will be warmer & more supportive. Plastic boots are now considered heavy, hot & clumsy especially for the acclimatisation peaks & for walking up to huts. Although Scarpa Vega's and Omega's still do get seen. For use on Mont Blanc, amongst others Scarpa Phantom Lite's are recommended, the ones with a big zip over the inner laces. These are very light, comfortable, warm & keep dry – expensive though at £300 a pair. Other 'Mont Blanc' boots include the Sportiva Nepal Top or Extreme and Nepal Evo GTX, or Scarpa Cumbre. The Sportiva Nepal Top & Extreme are well proven designs, both are very popular with Guides & get seen a lot in the Alps. Good for Scottish winter climbing and mountaineering too. Salomon Super Mountain 10 are good as well. Other boots include Scarpa Freny GTX, very popular & suitable for Winter walking & climbing in the UK as well. It is possible to hire boots in Saas Grund and Chamonix, but it is better if you can to break your own boots in, a few months before your holiday. 'Trekking' boots such as Scarpa Manta are OK for up to 4000m, but too cold for Mont Blanc.

[] **Gaiters.** Large enough to fit over the boot laces and to keep snow out of the top of the boot. Must have a full length zip to enable you to put them on whilst still wearing boots. Should have a strap to do up under the instep, to keep them in place. They are needed for Mont Blanc and for acclimatisation ascents, but not for the Matterhorn itself. Yeti gaiters still get seen, but are quite heavy & hot usually.

[] **Glacier glasses.** Very important to have, with full UV protection. Must be stronger or darker than normal sunglasses, with good side protection as well.

[] **Snow/ski goggles.** I sometimes carry one for Mont Blanc, but never seem to wear them. Some people swear by them for windy conditions when there is lots of spindrift blowing into the face. Optional.

[] **Climbing rucsac.** At least 45 to 55 litres, suitable for carrying crampons, spare fleece, water containers, camera, food, waterproofs, helmet, harness, sometimes a rope, personal first aid kit, mobile phone, etc. As uncomplicated as possible, as a fancy rucsac with lots of pockets & buckles weighs twice as much as a simple rucsac. Add a rucsac liner – a fertiliser bag is OK, a bin-liner is next to useless – it is noisy in the hut & lasts just minutes before getting holed. EXPED bags are very good & cheap, with a 'role top' seal. £11.99 for a large.

[] **Waterbottles.** At least 2 litres capacity. I use a 1 litre Nalgene bottle, then a couple of supermarket 'Evian' half-litre bottles. Platypus type water systems are OK but take care that the tube is well-insulated for Mont Blanc. Even then it might freeze! Keep any bottles inside rucsac. Aluminium Sigg bottles OK but more prone to freezing, also they have a narrow neck, so get easily blocked by ice. Never carry a Sigg bottle on the outside of your rucsac – it will slip away!

[] **Trekking Pole.** I use just the one for the hut walks & for Mont Blanc & similar ascents. Not needed for the Matterhorn, but very useful for other mountains. One at least recommended.

[] **Headtorch.** Diode torches such as Petzl Myo 5 or XP; Black Diamond Helion, Zenix IQ, Night Ray; Silva – a huge choice these days. Make sure that there are at least 4 diode bulbs for a good spread of light. The Petzl Tikka XP & Myo XP have 1 'new technology' bright LED & are very good torches. The old design Petzl 'micro' torches with filament bulbs & AA batteries die after a couple of hours in the cold & are not recommended for Mont Blanc. A torch is used from 3 to 4 hours on Mont Blanc.

[] **Sleeping bag. NOT NEEDED;** you also do not need a heavy down duvet jacket. Bunk-rooms in huts all have blankets & are very warm. Silk sleeping bag liners are used by some people for protection against wool blankets.

CLIMBING EQUIPMENT

[] **Crampons.** One pair, that fits the boot reliably. 12 or 10 point, 'Clip-on' bindings need a boot with a good welt at the heel, and attach with a wire bale at the toe, they are quickest to fit. Eg Grivel G10 or G12 Crampomatic. Better are bindings with a plastic toe bale, and a clip at the rear – Grivel call this system 'New Matic', it is better because the front attachment is not dependent on an accurate & snow free fitting. Eg Grivel G10 or G12 New Matic. For boots with not such a good heel welt, get a 'New Classic' type binding, with plastic front bale & plastic cradle at the heel. Eg Grivel G10 or G12 New Classic. **ANTI-BALLING PLATES ARE A 'MUST'**, on Grivel crampons they are included in the price usually. Grivel 2F's are very bad for balling up in the snow & are not recommended. **I can supply crampons if needed**

[] **Ice-axe.** 55 to 65 cms depending on your height. The longer the ice-axe relative to your height the more unwieldy & awkward it is to carry & manage. Suitable for general mountaineering. One ice-axe only needed. Large choice, DMM Cirque is recommended, as is the Grivel Jorasses or Air Tech. Evolution. Or Mountain Tech. Technical or Alpine Axe. Bring a wristloop but we will discuss when to use it. **I can supply an ice-axe if needed.**

[] **Harness.** A sit harness suitable for mountaineering. Black Diamond 'Bod' and 'Alpine Bod' are lightweight & simple, easy to put on over crampons & even skis! Make sure your harness is big enough to go over bulky outer clothing. DMM Alpinist, Troll Alpinist & Quartz harness are all designed for Alpine mountaineering & are recommended. **I can supply a harness if needed.**

[] **Helmet.** Designed for mountaineering & climbing, not mountainbiking! Petzl Ecrin & Elios & Vertex Vent are all good as well as Black Diamond 'Half Dome'. **I can supply a helmet if needed.**

[] **Prussic loops.** 3 metres of soft 6mm cord make up two prussic loops for crevasse rescue.

[] **Karabiners.** Two screwgate & one snaplink karabiners. **I can supply the above if needed.**

GENERAL EQUIPMENT & MISCELLANEOUS

[] **Sun screen.** Take a high factor > 20 & APPLY FREQUENTLY.

[] **Lip Block.** 1 stick – Piz Buin good. APPLY OFTEN & keep your lips kissable to the end!

[] **Stuff – sacs.** A range of different sized & coloured - small to large stuff sacs are very useful for keeping kit organised in a rucksac or at a hut. EXPED make lots of different sizes & colours, and are relatively cheap.

[] **Repair kit.** Needle, strong thread, safety pins, spare rucksac buckles, zip-ties, 5 metres of gaffer tape wrapped 'round your Nalgene bottle, allen key for your ice-axe, wire for crampon repair - the list can be endless!

[] **Camera & spare batteries.** Battery chargers & adapter for digital cameras & iPod's/mobiles, as well as enough storage medium. I will be able to record your digital photo's onto CD if you run out of space on your camera storage card.

[] **Toiletries.**

[] **Travel wash.**

[] **Wet wipes.** Very useful in the Gouter & Tete Rousse huts as there is no running water.

[] **Passport.** With a photocopy in case of loss.

[] **Insurance documents,** including the contact numbers.

[] **Driving licence & car insurance documents** – if you are travelling by car.

[] **Airline telephone number.** In case of lost baggage.

[] **Hill food.** Your favourite chocolate bars, Kendal mint cake, Marmite, magic muesli bars, sports drink etc.

[] **Binoculars.** Lightweight, optional.

[] **Money belt or bumbag.** Handy for keeping valuables.

[] **Batteries.** Spares for cameras, radios, GPS devices, iPods, mobiles etc.

[] **Small Thermos.** Optional.

[] **Hipflask.** Optional!

[] **Maps.** Visit www.cordee.co.uk for a good range of Swiss & French maps. The Saas Grund & Zermatt area is covered by the 'Landeskarte der Schweiz' 1:50,000 map called 'Mischabel' number 284. There are others at

different scales, best looked at locally. Swiss maps are very expensive, but seem to last longer than UK OS maps. Mont Blanc is covered by the IGN - St-Gervais-les-Bains, Massif du Mt Blanc (3531ET) 1:25000

[] **Credit & Debit cards.** Switzerland is not in the EU, the currency is the Swiss Franc. The supermarkets and petrol machines in Saas Grund and Chamonix take Debit as well as Credit cards (Mastercard, Visa & AMEX), and there are cash machines also that take both. **REMEMBER YOUR PIN NUMBERS HOWEVER.**

PERSONAL FIRST AID KIT

*To cope with or treat commonly -
headaches, sunburn, blisters, muscle strains.*

[] **Painkillers.** Paracetamol, Aspirin. I will not be carrying any drugs in my first aid kit, except for Aspirin.

[] **Non steroidal anti – inflammatories.** Eg. Nurofen, Ibuprofen

[] **Cough lozenges.** In case of a dry throat. Linctols or Strepsils for example.

[] **Plasters.** Assorted for blisters. COMPEED is very good for treating blisters & for prevention as well.

[] **Antiseptic wipes.** Or cream, for applying to sunburn or blisters.

[] **Contact lens solutions,** enough for emergencies! Spare case, spare lenses, or think about DAILY DISPOSABLES, they are simple & light to carry & more hygienic.

[] **Spectacles,** spare. Check that your sun protection wearing spectacles is adequate.

[] **Medical card (EHIC).** Switzerland is part of the 'reciprocal rights' EU scheme, so it is as important to have this card - as it is in France, if you are from the UK. E111 forms do not work from the end of December 2005, you must have a card and carry it! Free from UK post offices & www.ehic.org.uk

GUIDES WILL CARRY ALSO A COMPREHENSIVE FIRST AID KIT, AND ALL ARE QUALIFIED IN FIRST AID

Some useful websites

www.aiguillealpine.co.uk Makes excellent rucksacs, can order online. They have a workshop in Staveley, between Kendal & Windermere in the 'Lakes. Call into the workshop to choose your colours or bespoke design!

www.needlesports.com A very friendly & comprehensive online gear-shop. Good solid advice. Their 'physical' shop is in Keswick

www.rockrun.com Another good gear-shop in Ambleside, the 'Lakes, with a good website.

www.cham3s.com 'Snells' in Chamonix, sometimes cheaper to buy crampons & ice-axes from this site, even after postage, than in the UK. In English.

www.cordee.co.uk Huge range of maps & guidebooks to the Alps & UK. Can order online.

www.dmm.co.uk Details their range of harness' & ice-axes. Cannot order online.

www.eyeshop.com Good range of sunglasses for Alpine mountaineering, especially Vuarnet. Possible to order online.

www.vuarnet.com Vuarnet sunglasses, probably the best eye protection you can buy. Can order online. In English.

www.scarpa.co.uk Good site covering their range of boots & crampon fitting. Cannot order online.

www.sportiva.com The same for Sportiva.

www.swisstravelsystem.co.uk .. Buy a 'Swiss Card' from this site. Also a Swiss motorway Vignette. For £18.50 you need this to drive legally on Swiss motorways. An English site.

www.sbb.ch Swiss timetables & buying rail tickets online. Also able to order a Swiss Card & a 'Swiss Pass'. In English.

www.apartment-in-the-swiss-alps.co.uk Our apartment Opal in Saas Grund for Winter letting.

www.saas-grund.ch The Saas valley tourist website. Good webcams & weather forecasts for the Valais region.

www2.sfdrs.ch/sfmeteo/ Weather forecast for Switzerland, and movies of daily TV weather forecasts.

www.ehic.org.uk The UK government website for the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) which replaces the E111 form.

www.skyeguide.co.uk Guiding on the Cuillin Ridge & in North West Scotland. Matterhorn training.

MOUNTAINVISION

BOOKS & MAPS OF THE ALPS

There is a huge choice of climbing, mountaineering & walking books to the Alps and Mont Blanc & the Matterhorn in particular.

'100 Finest Routes in the Mont Blanc Massif' by Gaston Rebuffat.

There are lots of colour pictures, all with clear blue sky & perfect snow. Very inspirational all the same, it lists 100 routes in order of difficulty & seriousness. Should be in your public library, it has just been re-printed by Baton Wicks at £25. ISBN 1-898573-64

'Men and the Matterhorn' by Gaston Rebuffat.

Another classic book by Rebuffat on the history of mountaineering on the Matterhorn. Out of print now but in public libraries.

CLIMBING GUIDEBOOKS IN ENGLISH

'Valais Alps East & West'

Two volumes, by Alpine Club Guide Books. Edited by Les Swinden. Two plastic covered guidebooks, selected climbing & mountaineering routes on every significant mountain in the Valais Alps. Cost £20 each. The Matterhorn is in the 'West' guidebook.

'Mont Blanc Massif, Selected Climbs,

Volumes one & two. Edited by Lindsey Griffin, published by the Alpine Club. Plastic covered guidebook to the Mont Blanc range. £20 from most gear-shops in the UK & Chamonix.

'The Alpine 4000 metre peaks, (by the Classic Routes)'

By Richard Goedeke. Published by Baton Wicks & Menasha Press. Cost £18, re-published in 2003. Semi – guidebook . Very good for descriptions of all the classic routes up every 4000 metre peak in the Alps. Recommended. From www.cordee.co.uk or www.amazon.co.uk

'The 4000m Peaks of the Alps', Selected Climbs

Alpine Club & Martin Moran. An up-to-date guidebook of all the 4000's, better & more descriptive than Goedeke. £22.95 from www.cordee.co.uk & www.amazon.co.uk

COFFEE TABLE PICTURE BOOKS

'The High Mountains of the Alps' by Helmut Dumler & Willi P. Burkhardt. A large picture book with fantastic photographs of all the 4000 metre peaks in the Alps. Good descriptions of the main routes as well as some history. £35

GENERAL BOOKS

'Killing Dragons' by Fergus Fleming, published by Granta. A marvellous account of the early exploration of the Alps first by gentleman scientists, then the British pioneers. Includes an excellent account of Whymper's great efforts, over many attempts, to achieve the first ascent of the Matterhorn.

'In Monte Viso's Horizon – Climbing all the Alpine 4000 metre peaks' by Will McLewin. He was the first British mountaineer to ascend every 4000 metre peak in the Alps. Some good photographs including panoramas with every distant mountain named. Interesting chapters on what he thinks of guides, huts, what he recommends to eat & drink (1 part whisky, 8 parts water). Won the Boardman Tasker award for Mountain literature. Account of the ascent of the Italian Route on the Matterhorn, with his son. Recommended.

'Hutten der Schwiezer Alpen' by the Swiss Alpine club. In German & French, with a key in English. A guide to every SAC hut in Switzerland, very useful for planning a hut or ski tour, photos of every hut. From www.cordee.co.uk

'Ulrich Inderbinen' by Heidi Lanz & Liliane De Meester. In English. Published by Rotten Verlags AG. 1997. An autobiography of the famous Zermatt guide, born in 1900, working as a guide until his late 90's. He last guided the Matterhorn when in his late 90's.