



Elbrus Challenge - 5642m Highest Mountain in Europe



Elbrus is an impressive extinct volcano located in the central Caucasus mountains, and dominates the skyline. It has two distinct rounded summits, East and West. At 5,642m, the West summit is 21m higher than the East which still has remnants of the large crater nearly 250m in diameter. Due to the mountain's volcanic origins it has rounded summits and easy-angled slopes compared to many of the other surrounding mountains.

Our trip plans to ascend Elbrus from the south side, where there is a ski resort and a climbing hut. The South route is the most popular, fastest and most reliable route on Mt. Elbrus. However, don't imagine alpine log cabins, wood burners and hot tubs – this is deepest south-west Russia! It's pretty small with only a couple of lifts.

At the top of these lifts, at 3,845m, we will use the famous "Barrel" huts. At the hut there is electricity so you can keep your tech kit charged. Our team of cooks will prepare a variety of meals with fresh eggs, meat and vegetables. To give you an idea you can expect to eat porridge, salads, soups, meat dishes. We can also provide vegan, vegetarian and gluten-free

options if required. Water is brought from the town and doesn't require additional purification.

The snow-line starts at around 3,600m on the south side, initially at a gentle angle, so crampons are often not required until higher up the mountain.



On summit night we have the option to use the Snowcat (additional cost) to transport from the huts to Pastukhov Rocks at 4,650m, which still leaves a chunky summit day of 1,000m. From there we will be working together as a team walking on snow slopes and using ice axe and crampons to move efficiently but still need to take care

as slips here can have consequences. There will be a team of upto 4 guides for summit night, depending on numbers in the team.

Having the right kit is essential on any big mountain, especially ones where the weather is very unpredictable. Elbrus can feel very airy and relaxed on a perfect August day, but equally it can offer a harsh, bitterly cold experience more akin to a healthy battering on the Cairngorm plateaux but at 5000m!

Planning and taking advice on the correct equipment will contribute as much to your success as proper training. You will need hooded winter weight down jacket, mitts, goggles and double skin mountain boots. In good weather you can use lighter gear, but if it's a cold day, as it often is, you will have to turn back. We will supply you all the technical equipment such as ropes, ice axe, crampons and harness as there are some crevasses around so you don't

need to worry about that. Please ensure you fully read the High Altitude Mountain kit list and ask us if you have any questions about any of it.

Having some experience and knowledge of winter walking will set you up well for your ascent of Elbrus. Plenty of hill walking, using crampons and ice axe and some expedition experience (eg. Toubkal, Kilimanjaro) would help, too.

You will have at least 1 UK based International Mountain Leader (IML) with experience on the mountain working alongside our local team.

We will spend the first couple of days acclimatising on local peaks such as Mount Cheget and sleeping in the valley around 2,300m. There a number of good options for day treks around our valley base and we will take in some surrounding sights.

When we reach the summit of Elbrus we hope for far reaching views across the entire range as we watch the moonset and the sunrise, equally we could be in a gnarly blizzard! Either way standing a top of this European giant will fill you with a huge sense of pride and achievement and all for a brilliant cause.

For the trip we are looking for a keen team of 8-12 who are up for the challenge. The dates for the trip are confirmed as 4th to 14th August and we will be running a training weekend in February/March in Scotland so you get to know each other, practice using the winter equipment and get a feel for where you are with fitness levels, leaving plenty of time to up your game if needed!



Advice & inclusions

Below we have sought to set out some useful information for you relating to your expedition. We have made every effort to ensure that the details are correct but things often change so please do check any included links for up to date information.

VISAS

For UK citizens you will need to complete and print out an application form from <http://ru.vfsglobal.co.uk> then apply either in person or by post. Further information will be sent to you with your Letters of Invitation.

(If you are self-employed, you may need to supply bank statements so give yourself plenty of time to arrange this). If you are not a UK citizen, please check with your in-country Russian Embassy about application procedures.

INSURANCE

Insurance which covers mountain rescue and medical expenses is **essential**. We will require details of your insurance prior to departure. The British Mountaineering Council will currently cover the Elbrus region for UK clients. If using other Insurer's, please check carefully to make sure they cover this area and the Foreign Office status 'advise against all but essential travel'.

FLIGHTS AND JOINING ARRANGEMENTS

When you book your flight our suggested route to Mineralnye Vody is via Moscow using the scheduled services of Aeroflot or similar but we recommend that you contact Sam Wotton



from Travel Counsellors samantha.wootton@travelcounsellors.com who will hold all the trip timings and can assist you in finding a suitable flight plus aid in any additional stay over days you may wish to include. Please do not contact her until you have had confirmation of your space on the trip.

Once you have made your way to Mineralnye Vody you will meet the rest of the group at the airport at on day 2 of the itinerary (see below). It is really important that you arrive at the agreed time as we have to travel onwards from here with the other team members ready for the transfer, so please ask for details if you wish to book your flights. Alternatively you can meet up with the rest of the group at Moscow Sheremetyevo airport early in the morning of Day 1 for the domestic flight to Mineralnye Vody (again, ask for details). The cost of this domestic flight is **NOT** included in the land only price.

FCO

Foreign Office Advice is to avoid all but essential travel to this region.

“The FCO advise against all but essential travel to:

- *within 10km of the border with the Ukrainian Kharkiv Oblast*
- *North Ossetia, Karachai-Cherkessia and Kabardino-Balkaria (including the Elbrus area)”*
(from Foreign Office Website updated since 04/03/2018)

For more information please visit: www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/russia

If you decide to participate in an Elbrus Expedition you must understand you are travelling against Foreign Office advice and accept the risk and any consequence. By running this expedition RAW Expeditions are not overruling Foreign Office advice and it is important that you fully understand and accept this.



ALTITUDE & FITNESS

Some of you may have been to altitude before, trekking in Nepal or on Kilimanjaro. If you have you will have an understanding of how you will likely 'feel' above 4000m. We have agreed an Itinerary for you that allows for maximum opportunity for acclimatisation. This build up period will be trekking to other local summits and trails during the day and then returning to the valley to sleep lower down, with the heights gradually increasing everyday up to 4700m. The length of day will vary from 5-6 hours through to a 12 hours+ summit day. The action of sleeping lower each night helps the body adjust and prepare, increasing your chances of summit success. These days will also allow us to gain views across the entire Caucasus range, with Elbrus dominating the horizon.

This is very much an endurance event, both mentally and physically, spending several hours every day on your feet does not take Olympics levels of fitness and is very achievable for an average, keen hill walker.

What you will find different to previous "treks" is that you will be using crampons and ice axe to help us cross the snow slopes safely. The slopes towards the summit are very similar in angle to upper section of Snowdon or Ben Nevis but will be fully snow covered (barring any climatic disasters!). This may include use of a 'fixed rope' to help guide you and for assurance.

Due to the snow slopes we will also be working more closely together than on Kilimanjaro where there may be more summit guides and generally just more people. Elbrus is a 'proper' mountaineering experience to enjoy.



High Altitude Expedition Kit List

RAW Adventures Expeditions has endeavoured to offer some guidance and advice on what equipment you will need for your high-altitude expedition. This list is not exhaustive and if you require any further advice or clarification please do contact us directly or our retail partners Joe Brown Shops/The Climbers Shop who can offer expert advice and an agreed discount (*discount code will be included in reply email once deposit is paid*).

Mountain Clothes

- **Base layer** – top & bottoms. T-shirts and long-sleeves. Full length top & leggings to sleep in and for summit day. **NOT cotton.** (*Polypropylene, merino wool or mixed*)
- **Light-weight fleece**
- **Mid-layer insulation** – heavier weight fleece of synthetic jacket (*Primaloft, Micro Puff or similar*)
- **Trekking trousers** – soft shell, light weight trekking trousers. **Not jeans or cotton fabrics**
- **Waterproof jacket** – Fully taped seams breathable mountain jacket with hood (*Gore-Tex, H2No or Event fabric or similar*)
- **Waterproof over-trousers** - Fully taped seams breathable. Full or part leg length zips are helpful (*Gore-Tex, H2No or Event fabric or similar*)
- **Down jacket** – Mountain quality down jacket for summit day (*RAB Neutrino or similar*)

Head & hands

- **Sunglasses** - Cat3/4 for snow/glacier travel
- **Ski goggles** – essential protection from winds and UV glare
- **Sun hat** - wide brim/cap
- **Buff/balaclava** – essential for cold temperatures to protect nose and face
- **Warm hat** – covers ears ideally
- **Liner gloves** – thin windproof/fleece or similar
- **Heavier weight mountain/ski gloves** - go over liner gloves for added warmth
- **Over mitts** – keeps fingers warmer



Feet

- **Mountain boots** – double lined or plastic 6000m. ensure properly fitted. (*La Sportiva G2Sm, Scarpa Phantom 6000m or similar*)
- **Trekking socks** - for trekking days, merino or mixed. Minimum 3 pairs
- **Mountaineering weight** - socks for summit, longer and heavy loop stitch. Minimum 2 pairs
- **Hut/Trekking trainers** – a good pair can be used for lower altitude days
- **Gaiters** – to stop snow entering your boots for deep snow (*OR Crocodile or similar*)

General Trekking & Travel items

- **35/40 litre rucksack** – Day bag. Rugged , good quality with hip belt.
- **Large holdall/duffel bag** - minimum 75 litres & lockable
- **4-season down sleeping bag** – with hood and compression sack
- **Sleeping bag liner** – silk liner help keep you snug and your bag cleaner for longer
- **Dry bags** – for your kit (including sleeping bag) and to line rucksack. One for dirty clothes to keep the stink out!
- **Shorts** – for some trekking days and travelling
- **Trekking poles** – huge assistance over multiday treks and expeditions

Itinerary, Costs and inclusions

Proposed Itinerary *(Variations to this may occur during the delivery of the trip but every effort will be made to make you aware of these changes before or at the time)*

Date	Day number	Notes
4 th August	1	Depart UK for Moscow. We will direct you to the time you need to arrive at Mineralnye Vody airport (MRV).
5 th August	2	Arrival at the MRV before 2 pm (final time TBC). We will meet one of our in-country team here and then we will travel for 4 hours overland to our hotel. Once we arrive here will have some free time to relax before having a full briefing and sorting kit ahead of the next few days then dinner.
6 th August	3	Today we will stretch our legs out and head out for a bit of acclimatisation with an ascent of Terskol (3100 m). This is steady trekking for around 5 hours. Overnight at the hotel.
7 th August	4	Acclimatization hike up to Mt. Cheget (3100 m). The hike will take 4-5 hours. Overnight at hotel.
8 th August	5	Transfer to Azau lift station on Mount Elbrus which will take around 10 minutes. Ascend up to Mir station (3500m). Acclimatization trek up to 4100m. Descent to hotel. As this is the last day where we will be based in the valley before moving to the hut at 3800m, once we come back to the hotel we will visit the local outdoor hire store for any additional equipment required and get packed for the next day. Overnight at hotel.
9 th August	6	Today we will ascend to the mountain hut at 3800 m. You can leave a bag with kit at the hotel as we will only need our mountain kit for the next few days. Using the cable car it will take around 1 hour. After reaching the hut, which is about 10 minutes from the top of the lifts we will have a short break and check how everyone is feeling. We will then done our full mountain kit, including crampons and head to 4300 m. Overnight at hut.
10 th August	7	Acclimatization trek up to Pastukhov rocks (4800 m). This will take around 6 hours and will include some further winter skills. Overnight at hut.

11th August	8	Day of rest. There will be no planned treks this day but we will get out and practice our ice axe and crampon skills plus a few other games to keep us amused. We won't be far from the hut and keeping well hydrated is key. Early to bed for tomorrow.
12th August	9	Summit day. After early breakfast at 02:00 where we will be picked up by a snow-cat and taken up to 4800 m or even higher. From here the summit takes on average 4-6 hours. Overnight at hut.
13th August	10	Descent to the hotel or reserve day for the summit if there has been poor weather. Overnight at hotel and a celebration meal.
14th August	11	Depart to the airport depending on flight times. If this time doesn't suit you, it is possible to order a private airport transfer.

Costs

This trip is a land only cost option for a 10 day with the inclusion/exclusion below. The total cost to be paid is **£2195**. *(The additional costs of flights should be in the region of £300-500 per person).* You can register your interest by following this [link](#) and when prompted please enter the code **Elbrus2020**

Inclusions:

- Invitation letter for visa. We send this to you as soon as we get your deposit and passport copy.
- Local registration as required for all external visitors
- All land-based transfers and transportation from MRV - MRV
- Accommodation in accordance with itinerary (Huts and hotels)
- 3* hotel shared twin or triple room in the foot of Elbrus
- Mountain hut in mixed dorm (8 person)
- All cable car and chair lifts in-line with our itinerary
- All meals whilst on the scheduled itinerary (breakfast, lunch and dinner)
- One UK International Mountain Leader to a maximum ratio of 1:12 with additional in-country guides for the group throughout and additional guides for the summit day in ratio 1:3.
- Snowcat to high point on summit day for the entire team
- Expedition commemorative technical top
- Climbing certificate on completion



- All Park fees
- Staff and instruction for UK Winter Preparation Training weekend

Not Included:

- Personal clothing and equipment
- Flights to or from Mineralnye Vody (MRV)
- Personal travel insurance (recommended for all participants)
- Personal travel expenses – for souvenirs and duty free!
- Russian visa – between £85-110. You may be required to attend in person for identification verification and fingerprints being taken.
- Single room supplement, please contact us for further details but these are approximately £170 for all hotel stays. This is not an option on the mountain.
- Drinks at the valley base hotel
- Personal equipment hire for training or expedition. We can hire some directly to you and have links to UK based hire companies and discounts for specialist outdoor retailers.
- Any additional costs incurred due to the expedition finishing early, you having to leave the expedition early or trip being extended delays due to poor weather or other circumstance
- Travel or accommodation for the UK winter training weekend