

Elbrus (5642m), the Europe highest mountain.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Season, route, program etc.

✓ What is the difference between Elbrus ascents from the South and from the North?

In spite of that the North Elbrus face was the way of the first historical ascent in 1829, at present the South route is much more popular and frequented than the North one. The North slope is wilder and cleaner, and so the ascent from there is more attractive from the aesthetic viewpoint. But instead, there are no hotels at the North mountain foot, no mountain huts and refuges and no mountain lifts on the North slope, so the climber has to organize his Base Camp and upper bivouacs on his own (or/and with the aid of guides and porters) in tents. Technically both the ways are similar but some crevasses can be encountered when climbing from the North.

✓ What's about the political situation in Georgia and Chechen Republic actually, is it safe or not?

Georgia: Actually, the political situation in that country always influenced weakly on the mountaineering activity on the Russian side of the Main Caucasian Ridge. There were only several isolated instances of armed penetration through high mountain passes from Georgia in "wild 90's". For last years all is calm and peaceful, and after the presidential election in Georgia (January 5, 2008), president Saakashvily promised to control and to improve the frontier situation.

Chechenia: At present, after cease of the war, the situation is normalized; as a characteristic, foreign tourism to the Caucasus goes up for last years. Besides, all the places of interest for climbers and trekkers are outside the Chechenia – in Karachaevo-Cherkessia (Dombai), in Kabardino-Balkaria (Elbrus region, Baksan and Adyrsu valleys, approaches to Usba mountain, Bezenghi) and in North Ossetia (Tsei and Digoria).

✓ What is the difference between 9-day and 12-day programs?

The latter includes a longer acclimatization period – a hike into Adyl-su valley and climbing a lesser training top. Choosing the 12-day program provides better chances to reach the Elbrus summit.

✓ What is the program for ski ascent of Elbrus and when is the best time?

We offer two ski programs – one of them is for 8 days and another is for 11. April-May is the best period for skiing in the Elbrus area, though in 2007, just at the end of July an experienced and trained 7-person ski-team from Madrid had successfully reached the Elbrus West summit and descended down to the BARRELS refuge (3700 m) having enjoyed with almost 2000-meter level difference.

✓ When is the best time to climb up the Elbrus by feet?

July and August are the best period but too many climbers think the same so that Elbrus slopes are overcrowded in that time. Beginning of September is not worse – not cold and the weather is more stable.

✓ **What is typical temperature in the Elbrus region in July and August?**

Approximately (in shadow and protected against wind):
valleys' bottom (Terskol village, 2000 m) +5C (night) and +20C (day);
at 3800 m (BARRELS refuge) -5C (night) and +15C (day)
on the top (5642 m) -5C/-20C (day time)

✓ **We will appreciate also your co-operation by quoting of Madrid - Mineralnye Vody - Madrid flights on the basis of a cheap price and fast trip?**

Our recommendation is Aeroflot flights from Madrid to MinVody via Moscow.

✓ **How long does the trip take from Moscow to Elbrus?**

The flight takes about 3 hours (including luggage getting) and next 4 hours will be taken by car/minibus trip to Terskol village (200 km from MinVody) – totally up to 7 hours.

✓ **Do you organize trips for dates we have chosen or do we have to be there at the date chosen by you?**

Usually we organize your trip within dates chosen by you.

Ascent day – guide, snow tractor and porters

✓ **For the summit day, it is written 6 to 10 hours to go up but only 2 to 4 hours to go down, how is it possible?**

On a simple mountain terrains such as slightly sloping snow, ice or moraine, or a rock relief of F/PD grades, descending is 2-3 times faster than climbing up on condition that the climber retains normal physical conditions for both the ways. Figures quoted in the question are typical for an average client group but a strong, trained sportsman is able to reach the summit for 4-6 hours and to get down for 1.5-2 hours.

✓ **A guide-coordinator (organizer) is included in some of your programs, what does it mean?**

It is true that many of the participants are experienced enough to realize their ascent themselves, with no mountain guide support. But we do not let our groups go without our attendant because there are not too many persons speaking foreign languages in the region, on the one hand, but the strangers, in turn, are not well aware of local customs, so that a group alone may encounter some organization or/and communication difficulties. Our guide-organizer meets the group, accompanies it, accommodates it in a hotel, ascends along with it to a refuge/hut, provides recommendations concerning the route and the equipment but does not lead the group at climbing.

✓ **For the summit day, how many guides do we need for a group of 3 or 4 persons?**

Typically one guide is enough for such a group.

✓ **If one of the group have a problem for the summit, do all the group have to get down or is it possible for those who feel great to continue?**

Our agency policy is not to leave the client alone without necessary aide. Typically, the group and the guide accompany the sick person down and then use reserve days to attempt the summit again. In the presence of two and more guides included into the group, a different decision can be made.

Food and equipment

✓ **What is the volume of the backpack we need for the 9 and 12 days tours (50, 60, 70 litres or more)?**

To a great extent this depends on the climber personality. Typically 60 liters and more is enough to carry the gear and the food in our trips, the volume being practically independent of the hike duration. But an additional bag is necessary to keep belongings in the hotel. Another small backpack is desirable to be used immediately in trekkings and ascents.

✓ **For the boots you recommend doubled plastic one, mines are Salomon leather with rigid sole for semi-automatic crampons which I used at Mt Blanc last summer?**

Probably you can climb with the Salomon, though for the Elbrus ascent we usually recommend to use doubled plastic boots.

✓ **What kind of sleeping bag do we have to bring (summer, -10 or -25 degrees)?**

-10° sleeping bag is good.

✓ **Do the prices include all meals, lunches and lodging for the 9 or 12 days of the tour?**

Yes, they do, though some specific, personally preferable food stuffs you would bring up will sweeten your bivouac and ascent.

✓ **What is high altitude food and do I have to bring?**

It could be some snacks like "trail mix", "power bar", candy and so on (also see the previous question).

✓ **Are the tents heated at the Green Hotel during the days 3-4-5, are they light weight tents?**

Our agency provides normal light weight tents for 2-3 persons each.

Money

✓ **What kind of money do you use at Elbrus, rubles, euros?**

Russian rubles are used everywhere on the territory of the Russia with the exception of payments to porters and snow tractor drivers where Euros and US dollars are suitable. Currency exchange is available in the "Cheget" hotel.

✓ **Roughly the price including flight ticket from Moscow to Elbrus?**

Approximately €300-350 both ways.

✓ **What is the price for mountain guide until summit?**

€300 and €60/day during a bivouac stay in case of bad weather.

✓ **About porter, is it 30 euros for 20 kg each day or for the 12 days and is it possible to take one porter for 2 persons?**

€30/day/porter. You can hire as many porters as you want, but usually you may need porters only for 12-day program to bring equipment up to "Green hotel" field.

✓ **About snow tractor (ratrak), the price 400 euros, is it for 10 persons?**

This is price for 10-12 persons for one way up. You can share it with other climbers if they climb up at the same day. Sometimes climbers hire the snow tractor for descending for approximately €400 total. When ordering the ratrak a 50% nonrecoverable deposit is to be paid.

✓ **Is it easy to get euros or others at Elbrus and how do we pay, credit card, visa, master card, american express?**

See similar question above; your guide can, probably, help you to use your credit card only for cash receiving from a cash machine (ATM) in cities (e.g. MineralnyeVody).

✓ **If ever we decided to go to Elbrus with CET Neva, how do we pay?**

First, you pay nonrepayable deposit 100 Euros per person to the bank account. Second, the rest of the total price in cash is paid at the first day upon your arrival to the Caucasus, before start of the expedition.