

# Mount Elbrus

Conquer one of the 'Seven Summits', Mount Elbrus 5,642m



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# Conquer one of the Seven Summits

## Mount Elbrus 5,642m / 18,510ft

A visit to Russia is an encounter with an undiscovered land. Winston Churchill's apt description of Russia as a 'riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma' still remains today.

Dramatic changes that have taken place in Russia and the former Soviet Republic over the past two decades. Russia is a renewed celebration of the wealth of its past and its potential for the future. Throwing off the blanket of communist uniformity, Russia today is a nation of tremendous vitality.

The Caucasus stretches for about 1,000 kilometres from the Black Sea to the Caspian, separating Europe from Asia. North of the main Caucasus ridge lays a land of mountain ridges running down to the Russian steppes. Each of these ridges is composed of many forested side valleys and snowy summits. Mount Elbrus - the highest summit in Europe - lies just a few kilometres into Europe and into Russia. The double-breasted summit of Elbrus can be seen for miles around from different parts of the Caucasus region. Both East (5,621m) and West (5,642m) summits are permanently covered with snow.

Almost all first time visitors to the Caucasus are keen to ascend Mount Elbrus, 5,642m, Europe's highest mountain and known as one of the seven summits of the world to 'bag'. An extreme trek and an amazing once in a life-time challenge!



# Detailed itinerary

## 6 September

Overnight flight from London (via Moscow).

## 7 September

Arrive in Mineralnye Vody airport. Drive to hotel (about four hours) in the Baksan Valley near Elbrus at the altitude of 2,100m. Tonight we will meet the guides and have a briefing about the challenge ahead. Dinner in hotel.

## 8 September - Irik Chat Valley

### 7-8 hours trekking

There is a short drive to the village of Elbrus to start our first acclimatisation walk in the Irik Chat Valley. We start walking from approx. 1,900m on a good path which zigzags up a steep slope to a rich pine forest where we catch the first impressive view of Mount Elbrus. From here, the path becomes more gentle with an approx. two ascent before we stop for lunch with amazing views at 2,600m. After lunch we keep walking in the alpine meadows to another good viewpoint at 2,800m before returning via the same route to the vehicles to take us back to the hotel for dinner.

## 9 September - Cheget Region

### 5-7 hours trekking

This morning we walk from the hotel on a good trail. The trail is steeper than yesterday. We initially zigzag up the slope which is covered by wild flowers, rhododendrons and small native bushes. We follow the path of the Cheget chair lift system (people can use this if they wish) and we are blessed with excellent views of Mount Elbrus for most of the ascent to our summit – Cheget Shoulder, 3,100m. Here, we have lunch enjoying the incredible view of Mount Elbrus, before descending the same way to the hotel. Dinner in the hotel.



## 10 September - Terskol Region

### 9-11 hours trekking

Another acclimatisation walk but we are ascending higher and the walking is harder than yesterday. Again, we leave directly from the hotel, with the first 20 mins following the road towards the town of Terskol. From here we take an old abandoned road which is now being used as the main walking path leading all the way up to the Elbrus Ice Base. We continue to zigzag through the pine forest, before the path leads us from the forest to the alpine meadows where the terrain becomes more gentle but we are now at the highest altitude of the trek so far, but we enjoy excellent views of the Main Caucasus Range. At the Ice Base (old ruined lodge) we reach the snowline, and our summit for the day. We follow the path the same way down back to the hotel. Dinner in the hotel.



# Detailed itinerary

## 11 September - Refuge 3900 to 4,050m 4-6 hours trekking

After breakfast we have a short transfer from the hotel to Azau Cable Way station, (part of the largest ski resort in the region) where we catch the cable car. The run from Azau to the upper station takes about 40 min. At the top, we will head to the Refuge 3900, our home for the next four nights. From the refuge we then complete an acclimatisation walk to 4,050m before returning to the refuge. Dinner in the refuge.

## 12 September - Refuge 3900 to 4,600m 4-6 hours trekking

After breakfast we have another acclimatisation walk up to Pastukhov Rocks at 4,600 or, depending on the weather and how the group are faring, slightly higher at 5,000m. From here return back to Refuge 3900. Dinner in refuge. Tonight we will have a full briefing about tomorrow's summit attempt.



## 13 September - Summit day, 5,642m 14-16 hours trekking/climbing

We depart just after midnight for the summit attempt – this is a tough day. The first few hours we are walking on hard snow. When we reach 4,600m the slope becomes steeper. From 4,700m the glacier surface will be very icy, so crampons are a must. The pace is slow until 5,100m. From here we start traversing the slope towards the Elbrus Saddle between the East and West Summits. This 'traverse' from 5,100m to the saddle, 5,350m, will take us a few hours to complete, but there is a chance to rest on reaching the saddle. Above the saddle the path to the Western Summit is comparatively steep and icy. Your guide may belay you by rope, and then the very last section is a flat walk on an upland plateau to the West Summit of Mount Elbrus at 5,642m! We descend the same route returning to the Refuge 3900.

For this expedition we have to be physically fit and focused. Although it is not a complex climb, we need enough training and mountain safety knowledge before leaving the UK.

## 14 September - Spare day

This day is spare allowing for weather conditions if unable to summit yesterday. However, if we were able to summit we will enjoy a relaxing walk to Ice Base, 3,550m. This is a gentle walk (slightly downhill) in the snow. There are excellent panoramic views of the Main Caucasian Ridge. Overnight in Refuge 3900.

Please note, if you summited and want to go down to the valley today this is possible but all accommodation and meals are to be paid for by you as these are not included in the costs.





# Detailed itinerary

## 15 September - Baksan Valley

After breakfast we descend via the cable car back to hotel in Baksan Valley. If people want it, some valley walks can be organised. Alternatively, there is a chance to explore or rest before the well-deserved celebration dinner this evening.

## 16 September

Transfer to the airport in Mineralnye Vody for the flight home to London.

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*This itinerary is complex and subject to change*

## Challenge grade:

The treks which involve river, moraine, glacier and snow crossings in our **extreme** category of our event programme.

You need to be fit for this challenge, have high altitude experience (we will be asking for a signed medical form to be completed by your GP before you are accepted onto the trip), and be very familiar with mountain walking, and possess a fair degree of stamina.

The final few days are devoted to the ascent of Elbrus. Although no advanced mountaineering experience is required for the ascent of Elbrus it is necessary to be familiar with the basic use of crampons and ice-axes.

