Reaching the top of Mont Blanc: A concern for climbers

For us climbers, who sometimes travel thousands of kilometres to climb this summit, Mont Blanc, at 4,810m high, stands as a beacon for experienced mountaineers. The normal route via Grandes Jorasses is quite demanding, even more so than the Italian normal route via the Goûter. The standard route does not avoid difficulties and requires very careful planning. The summit plateau is only traversable by experienced climbers.

A concern for climbers

Reaching the top of Mont Blanc can be a form of group success. Perhaps another climb would be a better option for that particular day. One of the main dangers of Mont Blanc is getting lost in sudden fog, particularly close to the summit or between the Gotthard and the Aiguille du Midi. In spring, the snow and ice are often mixed with deep snowpacks, especially between the Grandes Jorasses and the Aiguilles d’Argentière. In summer, the snow and ice can be deceptive, and the risk of falling increases with the steepness of the slope.

Getting lost

The danger of falling increases with the steepness of the slope and the steepest areas include the Goûter ridge, the Aiguille and the Dôme du Goûter. Never set out without a map, navigation instruments and the knowledge of seracs falls.

4. The Petit Plateau. The alternative is to climb the north ridge of the Dôme du Goûter (or Aiguilles Grises). Long, exposed expedition along a complicated route. Good preparation, information and equipment are fundamental prerequisites. It takes time to acquire expertise in mountaineering techniques and knowledge of the mountain environment. You want to ensure the safety of others, so you must avoid the risk that comes with it. In fact, the art of climbing mountains resides in knowing how to reduce this risk. The first thing to do is therefore understand nature and identify the particular dangers you will be facing in order to ensure suitable solutions.

3. Grande Jorasses and the Dôme du Goûter ridge. Alpine grade: PD+ (somewhat difficult +). Ascent: 900 + 1800m or 800 + 1600m. A check is done and descents, this hike, however, not recommended in fast because it means being exposed for too long to the risk of rock falls from the Petit Plateau. One of the main dangers of Mont Blanc is getting lost in sudden fog, particularly close to the summit or between the Gotthard and the Aiguille du Midi. It is important to be able to recognise the warning signs and to know when it is best to wait.

2. The three summits. (Veysonnaz, Mont Maudit, Mont Blanc). Alpine grade: PD+ (somewhat difficult +). Ascent: 1200m. More technical and physically demanding than the normal routes, this itinerary is attracting increasing numbers of climbers. Descend on either Goûter or Grands Mulets.

1. Grands Mulets and the Dôme du Goûter ridge. Alpine grade: PD (somewhat difficult). Ascent: 700 + 1600m. A check is done and descents, this hike, however, not recommended in fast because it means being exposed for too long to the risk of rock falls from the Petit Plateau. One of the main dangers of Mont Blanc is getting lost in sudden fog, particularly close to the summit or between the Gotthard and the Aiguille du Midi. It is important to be able to recognise the warning signs and to know when it is best to wait.

Freedom means giving yourself the chance to try again.
Preparation

To attempt Mont Blanc with a good chance of success, experience of high mountains, regular training and preparation are essential. Good guides are also a decisive factor.

In terms of physical preparation for this route, you should not only be in good physical condition, but also have tested your level of fitness at altitude, if you have experience of an ascent of 4,000m and at least one night spent recently at more than 3,000m will give you a better idea of your real condition.

The techniques you will need to know include knowing how to use crampons, how to climb on varied terrain and cross ridges, and being able to adjust your rope (long on the glacier, short along the ridges, etc.).

Psychologically, you must be prepared for bad nights and long days in a fabulous, but hostile, different and changing environment.

Preparing your expedition means studying the terrain by reading maps, topoguides and expeditions reports. A climb can help you to find a partner for your expedition, an initial experience and training courses.

A professional guide can advise, prepare and supervise you, taking you on responsibility for the expedition.

Remember that you must be prepared to:

- protect yourself: helmet, glasses, sun-cream (avalanche transmitters, shield and probe, depending on your route and local conditions).
- find your way: map, topo, compass, altimeter, whistle, headlamp (GPS).
- eat: drinks, food rations, hot drinks.
- rescue operations: compass, rescue kit (5 karabiners, 3 ice screws, self-locking pulley, 2 rope clamps, sling, cordelette), crevasse rescue kit (5 karabiners, rations, hot drinks).
- first aid kit.

For rescue operations:
- to eat and drink: telephone or radio, appropriate first aid kit.
- to protect yourself: be prepared:
- to know how to do in case of an accident: helmet, rope, harness, etc.
- to have the right information and make the right decisions: to prevent other blocks being pulled down.
- to find a partner and training courses.
- to know what to do in case of an accident: telephone or radio, appropriate first aid kit.
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