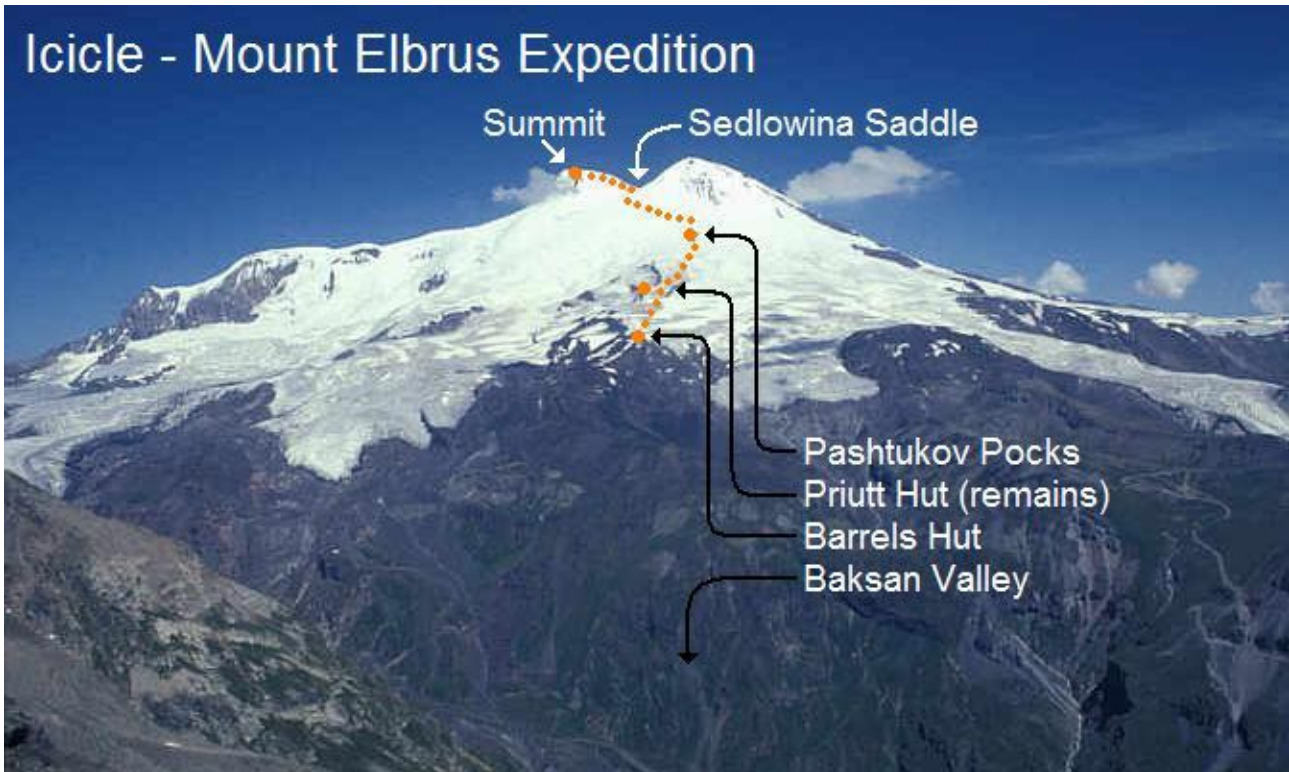




Icicle Mountaineering, Ski & Adventure

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Elbrus 5642m Expedition 2008 / 2009 courses detailed itinerary



Day 1, Saturday

Travel out to Mineralnye Vody airport, usually via Moscow Sheremetyevo airport. As you land there are good views of the twin snowy peaks of Elbrus on the horizon. Those who are on the same flight can let us know, and we will arrange for you to meet in Heathrow, so that you may travel together. All our leaders have travelled in Russia before. We are met in Mineralnye Vody airport by our local partners, who drive us to the Baksan valley. The transfer takes approximately three hours. This will be your base for the duration of the expedition. After the evening meal, the leaders will check all of your equipment and fully brief you on the itinerary of the expedition. Overnight stay in the comfortable lodge.

Day 2, Sunday

Today is an acclimatization route above the Baksan valley. You will also familiarize yourself with using crampons, ropework and glacier travel again. This day is very important in the preparation for your ascent of Elbrus at the end of the week. After the acclimatization route, you descend to the Baksan valley again, and have another overnight stay in the comfortable lodge.

Day 3, Monday

After breakfast, a short bus ride takes us to the cable car and chair lift. Depending on how much fitness training the group needs, we either take the cable car or one of the Reps takes the bags up in it so you can travel light and collect your bags at the top. We arrive late morning at the Barrels (large Nissan-huts). Here we are allocated our bunks where we will spend the next few nights acclimatizing and preparing for the summit climb. In the afternoon, we go on to the snow covered glacier near the Barrels for additional ice axe and crampon practice, then to assist acclimatization we trek out to the site of the Priutt Refuge (which is also known as the Diesel hut, which burnt down years ago), which can be reached in 1-1½ hours. As this is all on a wet glacier this provides ideal training for moving as roped teams. We return to the Barrels hut for the evening.

Day 4, Tuesday

To assist acclimatisation and further develop our climbing skills, we climb up to and beyond the Pastuckhov Rocks (about 5000m). Just to the north lies the twin summits of Elbrus. When you are looking at them, the higher peak (Elbrus West) lies to the left of the obvious saddle between the peaks. This climb provides us with some fabulous views, including the famous Ushba, the Matterhorn of the Caucasus. The night is spent in the Barrels mountain hut.

Day 5, Wednesday

This is a rest day in order to prepare yourselves for the summit attempt on Elbrus. Most spend the day reading and relaxing. If everyone is feeling fit and well, everyone in the group has acclimatised sufficiently, and the weather is particularly good, a summit attempt could be made on this day. The day may also be used to ascend again to the higher Priutt Refuge, and to bivouac there for the night, to give us a higher established starting point for the summit attempt(s).

Day 6, Thursday

Today is the scheduled date for the summit attempt on the higher West peak of Mount Elbrus (5,642m), technically the highest peak in Europe, and so one of the seven summits. The climb is started very early, setting off from the Barrels mountain refuge pre-dawn (usually just after midnight), to be well established on the route as first light comes over the horizon. Alternatively, if we have already ascended to the Priutt Refuge we may set off at first light. From a starting point at either refuge, it is a long, steady climb up to Sedlowina Saddle, the col between the two peaks of Elbrus. Most teams take a short break here to take some atmospheric photos, before setting off again to climb from the saddle of the col towards the summit. This is the most technically challenging part of the climb, and involves a 200m long steep snow slope, leading to the crater rim (Elbrus is an extinct volcano). We follow the crater rim easily for about 20 minutes, to reach a small summit pyramid about 9 hours after leaving the Barrels (or about 6 hours from the Priutt Refuge). The scenery from the summit is magnificent, with snow peaked mountains in every direction. After the summit celebrations, we descend back to the col, and at this point, if the group is moving well, we can divert to take in the smaller East summit, which is a far easier climb than the higher West summit. Again, you return to the col and then back to the Barrels Refuge. The night is bound to see some big celebrations.

Day 7, Friday

Our second day to provide a wide weather window for the ascent in case of bad weather or strong wind the day before. This is also an option for anyone who failed the ascent the day before due to altitude or fitness. For those who summited yesterday, after breakfast we descend from the mountain refuge, back to our hotel in the Baksan Valley, to celebrate and relax after the climb. The comfort of the hotel and the restaurants and bars in the valley is always welcome after all the efforts of the climbing. This is the last night in the Caucasus, so will likely see a few too many vodkas being drunk, and a good party.

Day 8, Saturday

After breakfast you have the early morning off to explore the Baksan valley, before the transfer from the hotel to Mineralnye Vody airport, and the check in for the flight to Moscow and back home.

ITINERARY NOTES: Where possible we follow itineraries. Mountain adventures are weather and conditions dependant, so occasionally we are forced to alter the plans. If this is the case, suitable alternatives are offered. Please use this outline itinerary as a guide to the types of route / activity that you will attempt.

TRAVEL ADVISORY: Please note that currently all Elbrus expeditions are suspended, following the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office Advisory on the region. Click on the logo to the right for further information on the region. The current advice reads "We also advise against all but essential travel to ... Kabardino-Balkaria (including the Elbrus area), since terrorism and kidnapping in these regions remain a serious problem". We support the FCO "Know Before You Go" campaign. If you are interested in a future Icicle Elbrus expedition, we advise you to get in contact with us to register your interest. As soon as the FCO Travel Advisory changes, we will inform all those who have expressed interest. We hope that the situation will change in time for the 2010 season.

