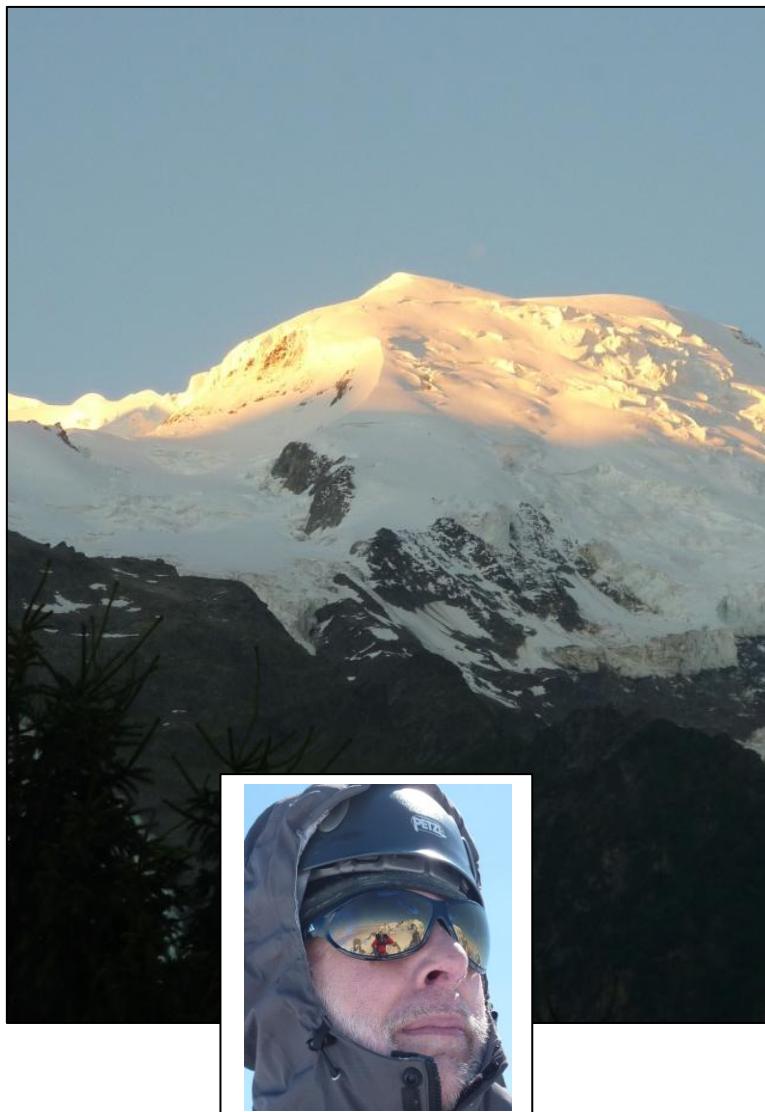


BARRY ON MONT BLANC

(4810m, 15,782 ft)

26 June – 1 July 2011



Mont Blanc (4810m, 15,782 ft) – straddling the borders of France, Italy and Switzerland - is the highest peak in western Europe and an excellent place to hone ice climbing and glacier travel skills and techniques for crevasse escape.

In June 2011, I joined a team of six others from the UK to climb in the Mont Blanc massif with Dream Guides – a Chamonix-based guiding company set up by Kenton Cool (nine times Everest summiteer) and Guy Willets. Our base was the Adventure Base chalets in Chamonix.

Initially, we spent several days acclimatizing in the mountains above Le Tour - close to Chamonix. We first trekked up to the Albert Premiere Hut and overnighted there. Then we ascended the Glacier du Tour, summittting Petite Fourche (3,520m) - with a nice rock climb to the summit. The descent from the top was followed by a 50m abseil over the cornice on the Col Blanc to drop onto the Plateau du Trient and then a very long slog through deep snow to the Cabane du Trient in Switzerland overlooking the Glacier d'Orr. My crampons seemed to focus my weight on the thin snow crust causing me to drop through every other step - up to my knees or thighs. Very hard going. Snow shoes would have helped. The next day we retraced our route and returned to Chamonix for rest and to prepare for Mont Blanc itself.



Mont Blanc from Chamonix



Adventure Base Viper Chalet, Chamonix



Chamonix



Mont Blanc massif



Rock climbing near Chamonix.



Track to Albert Premiere Hut



Crossing Glacier du Tour



Glacier du Tour



Balcony of Cabane du Trient,



View of le Portalet at head of Glacier d'Orr, seen from Cabane du T.



Heading for Petite Fourche





Petite Fourche



Canadian Guide – Ross Berg



Summit Petite Fourche



After descent from Petite Fourche



Taking a rest after Petite Fourche



Abseiling over cornice on Col Blanc



Cornice and ice wall seen from below



Dawn on Col du Tour

Ascent of Mont Blanc du Tacul

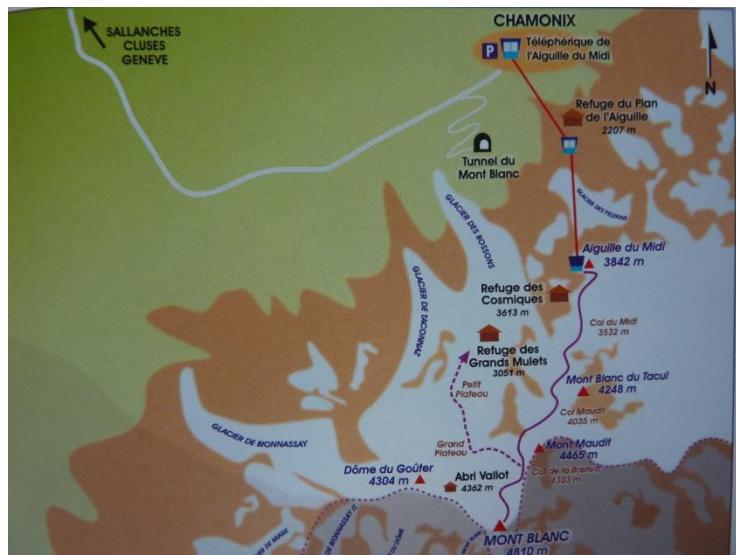
The ascent of Mont Blanc itself (2-3 days) may take two different routes, depending on weather conditions:

- The Gouter route- via the Refuge du Tete Rousse, the dangerous Grand Couloir, Dome de Gouter, Bosses ridge and summit ridge.
- The Three Monts route - from the Aiguille du Midi, traversing the shoulders of Mont Blanc du Tacul and Mont Maudit.

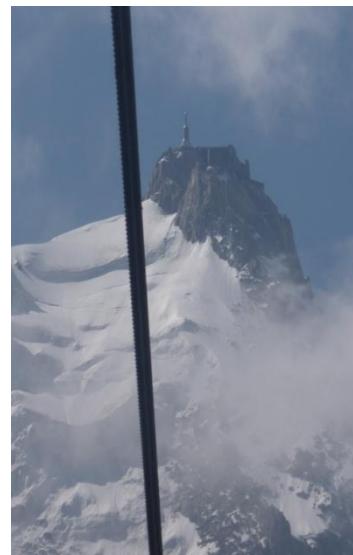
Due to predicted adverse weather mid week, this was the route our guides decided on, but thunderstorms and heavy snow delayed the departure from the Refuges des Cosmiques and I had to settle for climbing Mont Blanc du Tacul.



Team setting out for Mt Blanc



Route



Cabling up to Aiguille du Midi



Climbers tunnel



Setting onto Aiguille du Midi arete



Descending the Aiguille du Midi arete





Arete descent route and down onto Col du Midi



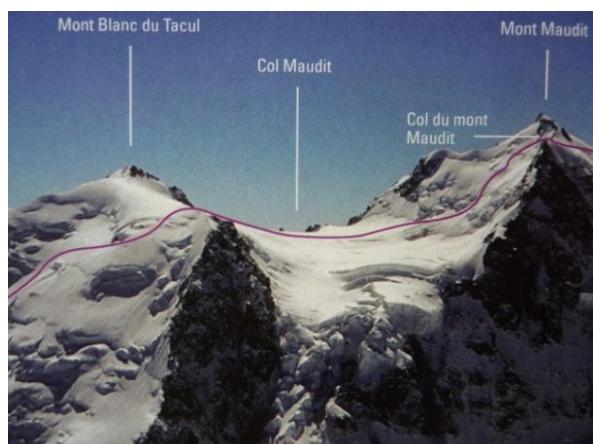
Climbers reaching top of arête



My guide leading down off the arête onto glacier - start of Vallee Blanche ski run



Face of Tacul seen from Refuge des Cosmiques



The Mont Blanc traverse



Mt Blanc du Tacul facing Cosmique refuge



Guide leading up Mt Blanc du Tacul.



Fellow climbers trudging up



Beneath ice seracs



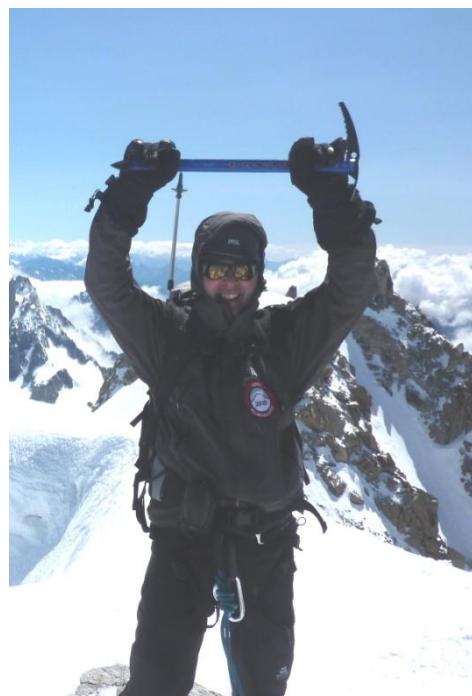
Negotiating crevasse fields



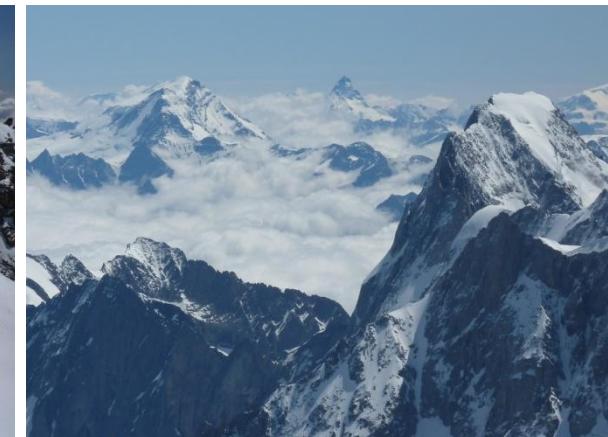
Below rock ascent to summit



Made it !!



Summit salute



Views from the top



A steep tricky descent in warming slushy snow