



COSLEY & HOUSTON ALPINE GUIDES
151 Route de Lausenaz • 74310 Les Houches • France +33 (0)4 50 21 24 47
www.cosleyhouston.com • kathyandmark@cosleyhouston.com

BERNER OBERLAND SUMMER GLACIER TREK
Personal Equipment List

The Alps are noted for incredible climbing in a very civilized setting. The high towns and villages, mechanical lift systems and extensive network of huts and high refuges permit multi-day travel carrying little more than a small daypack.

Our route will take advantage of these amenities. Our first day starts with a chair lift to the Col de Balme. The huts have blankets, pads, corks or slippers for use indoors, and all the eating utensils and plates you could possibly want.

The trekking on this program is strenuous, occasionally delicate and exposed, and every day involves thousands of feet of ascent or descent. Because of this we will need to travel very light. On this program, weight is our enemy. Excess weight in the pack doesn't merely tire us more or slow us down, it can pose a real hazard.

CLOTHING

Semi-rigid of fully-rigid mountaineering boots (B2 or B3) - Boots continue to evolve, and lighter, warmer and more comfortable models appear with every passing year. If you are considering investing in a new pair, this trip might provide a good excuse to do so. Boots are rated according to intended use. On this trek, we spend a majority of our time on snow or ice. Your boots need to be reasonably warm and waterproof.

Boot ratings:

B0: Not really suitable for crampons.

B1: Flexible boots that are suitable for trekking and hill walking only. C1 crampons only.

B2: Semi-rigid boots designed for mountaineering and easier grade snow and mixed climbing, but not for steep ice and harder mixed climbs. C1 or C2 crampons.

B3: Fully rigid boots for mountaineering, ice and mixed climbing at all grades - but not always the most comfortable boots to walk in (though things are improving). C1, C2 or C3 crampons.

The ideal boot for this trip would receive a B2 rating. A B1 boot may serve but won't perform as well (feel as secure, be as warm or be as waterproof) as most B2 boots. A B3 boot will also be acceptable, but will not be enjoyable on the trail sections of the route.

Gaiters - In summer conditions an ankle gaiter is sufficient, is cool to walk in and weighs almost nothing. The REI Mistral Gaiters or Outdoor Research Flex-Tex gaiters are good examples.

Socks - For fitting your boots use a single medium thick sock, with an optional thin liner sock. We like to bring one pair / set of socks for use in our boots, and one lighter pair to use in the huts.

Pants - It's worth having some kind of light synthetic pant with a hard finish. In our opinion the best pants incorporate Schoeller or a similar light soft-shell type fabric. Stretchy and comfortable, this kind of fabric is also somewhat resistant to wind, snow and light rain. Many pants of this kind are made by both U.S. and European manufacturers. Patagonia's Alpine Guide Pant is one such example.

Rain/Wind Pants - Normally we do these climbs in our synthetic climbing pants described above. If the weather turns foul, however, you will need a pair of very lightweight waterproof rain pants to keep you dry. Our favorites are extremely light weight two-ply Gore-tex or equivalent waterproof and breathable hard shell fabric.

Rain/Wind Parka - Again, go for extreme lightweight.

Long Underwear Tops - Light synthetic or wool.

Long Underwear Bottoms - Light synthetic or wool.

Light fleece shirt - Something about the weight of Polartec 100, (very heavy synthetic underwear). One of our favorites in this category is the Marmot DriClima Windshirt.

Heavier insulating layer - A light-weight down or synthetic insulated sweater or pull-over. Marmot's Zeus jacket or Patagonia's down sweater are good examples of what we mean. A heavier and bulkier fleece or pile jacket will also work here.

Gloves - Fairly lightweight windstopper gloves are ideal, the Marmot Windstopper Glove is one example. Very light liner gloves are not sufficient. Additionally you should have a more rain-repellent shell to go over them or a slightly heavier glove that will resist becoming instantly soaked in wet conditions. Heavily insulated ski gloves or gloves for winter conditions are OK but will be too hot on most days.

Warm Hat or Balaclava

Baseball cap or other sun-hat with a brim.

Buff - The Buff is a Spanish invention. It's a stretchy lightweight neck gaiter, headband, pirate head piece, hair control unit, and Lord knows what else. Google "Buff" to learn more. Indispensable!

Around-town clothes and shoes - For around town only. You won't want to bring these on the trek. Please note that because all of the huts provide good hut shoes/slippers, you do not need to carry a change of shoes on the trek itself.

CLIMBING GEAR

Ice Axe - 50 to 60 cm maximum length is recommended. Again, look for a light weight axe for this purpose. For many nontechnical glacier climbs (and even on some steep terrain) our preferred axe is the very light 53 cm Air Tech Evolution axe. Other good options include the Petzl Summit, or slightly more technical Sum'Tec. All of these axes weigh in at 500 grams or less.

Crampons - Like boots, crampons are rated as to their attachment method and stiffness. Some boot types require one method while others will use another.

C1 crampons are flexible and will strap onto B1, B2 or B3 boots.

C2 crampons are stiffer and require a heel shelf on the boot and are compatible with B2 and B3 boots.

C3 crampons are quite stiff and require a toe and heel shelf, for example B3 boots.

C1 or C2 crampons are ideal for this program. Crampons **MUST** be equipped with anti-balling plates. (Nearly all modern crampons are.)

Harness - Most modern harnesses are great. A belay loop is a good idea, as are adjustable leg loops for multiple leg layers.

Carabiners - Bring one locking and one non-locking carabiner.

Trekking Poles - (Optional) Some folks, ourselves included, like to use trekking poles for routes such as this. Poles are especially helpful in sloppy snow where the ice axe is too short to serve as a balance support. Three-section collapsible trekking poles are great, as they collapse shorter and are less cumbersome when packed. Many of the new folding carbon-fiber poles are very good, such as the Leki Carbon Micro Stick.

Be sure to bring the baskets! Baskets should be at least 5 cm in diameter. Some of the light trekking poles have tiny baskets. You'll need to replace these with larger baskets for the snow.

Avoid poles with "shock absorbers", they add unnecessary length and weight, without adding any significant benefit.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Food** - Breakfasts and dinners are provided by the huts. We can either buy lunch food in towns or huts or, if you prefer you can bring your own special bars, Gu's or potions from home. Keep it light!
- Back pack** - A simple and lightweight pack with a capacity of about 30 liters is recommended. The Black Diamond Speed and also the Deuter Guide Lite are some good choices.
- Water bottle** - Bring bottles or a combination of bottle and thermos to carry 1 to 2 liters of water. Bladder style hydrations systems are becoming increasingly popular.
- Head lamp** - We recommend a Petzl Tikka XP or similar LED headlamps. Bring a fresh set of batteries.
- Pocket knife** - Keep it simple and light. The Victorinox Spartan model is our favorite.
- Repair kit** - Crampon tools, if necessary (the Charlet Mosers and Grivels don't require anything).
- Blister kit** - Moleskin, athletic tape. Spenco Second Skin or Compeed or similar products are worth the price.
- Sun Glasses** - Make sure they screen out 100 % UV. Modern wrap-around glasses are great, if the lenses are dark enough to block 90% of visible light (it's very bright up there!). Traditional glacier glasses with side shields are also fine for this climb, though you may find them hot and annoying on the trail and approach. If you use prescription glasses you should get prescription dark glasses or use contact lenses if you can. We like to use sport sunglasses with dark lenses, designed for skiing or mountaineering.
- Sunscreen** - Look for as small a container as possible, or decant into a smaller container. There is no point in carrying month's worth of cream on a two-day climb.
- Lip Protection** -
- Toiletries** - Here again, try to minimize, for instance look for those small tubes of toothpaste, or simply don't bring any toothpaste up to the huts. A small bottle of Purel or singles packets of Handi-wipes would not be amiss.
- Silk Sleeping Sack** - A silk or cotton-blend sleeping sack is required for many of the huts. And it is more comfortable than scratchy blankets. This is NOT for insulation (the huts are often too hot as it is, and they provide plenty of blankets) but only for hygiene and comfort. Do not bring a sleeping bag!
- Ear Plugs** - VERY IMPORTANT! For noisy huts.
- Camera** - (optional, of course) To get the best photos, your camera will need to be accessible at a moments notice. An easy-to-use camera pouch that can be worn over a shoulder is ideal. Also, learn to use your camera with your gloves on. We recommend against SRLs. They are simply too big and bulky to be convenient.
- Entertainment** - We like to carry an iPod Nano. Preload it with a couple of good books from iTunes or Audible.com for days of listening pleasure. Don't watch movies as the battery won't last. Also popular are Kindles or a single paperback book or deck of cards. Try not to bring ALL of these!
- A note on mobile phones: Many folks like to carry mobile phones. In general, this is a good idea from a security perspective. Be aware, however, that coverage is often spotty when deep in the mountains and fewer than half the huts have reception. Likewise battery life is limited (especially when in and out of coverage and the phone is constantly trying to reconnect). Recharging is usually, but not always, possible in the huts, for a fee. Keep your phone in "airplane" mode to conserve the battery. Sorry, no wifi.
- Small duffel** - For leaving street clothes in hotels. It's a good idea to lock it.
- Money** - You will want to have some Swiss Francs cash for lunch in the huts. Plan on about 20 to 30 Francs per day for lunches and drinks. We usually use ATM cards to supply us with cash before the start of

the trip. Hotels, shops and restaurants all readily accept credit cards.

We recommend leaving your passport and credit cards with your baggage in the hotel, awaiting your return.