

Profilcheck – Expedition Finder

Guideline for expedition members

1. Objectives and Purpose

Every Expedition that we offer has its peculiarities and has a different requirement profile. The following points give a short overview on the topic of expeditions and provide a basis for decision-making.

Originally, an expedition was a (often scientifically inspired) journey into yet unknown territory in order to gain knowledge about topographic or geological characteristics of the region in question (e.g. Albert Heim's Himalaya expedition). Mountain climbers, too, set out to summit the virgin peaks and searched for possible routes. Not only the summit, but also the journey itself was their reward. These men were pioneers and often the best mountain climbers of their time. However, they frequently sacrificed their lives for the enterprise.

Except for first ascents, such undertakings are less risky today, as the route and destination are generally known and the logistics, as well as the weather forecasts are significantly optimised and more precise. Starting from our own experiences and the experiences of our predecessors, our expeditions are also suitable for «average consumers», i.e. alpinists, who are physically and mentally fit and have stamina. Our expeditions are no longer journeys into the great unknown, but they offer impressions regarding local customs and culture, weather conditions, cold, altitude (etc) which can indeed be new to the participants. Last but not least, participants also have to exhibit mental toughness, patience and endurance.

It is irresponsible and even dangerous to take part in an expedition that is – physically and/ or mentally – excessively demanding. For this reason, we have tried to define as precisely as possible the requirement profile of every expedition on offer. This document offers the possibility to self-evaluate your abilities and skills on an objective basis.

We deliberately avoid asking potential expedition members to hand in so-called «tour lists» (a written collection of tours/ expeditions/ trekkings done so far), since they are generally misleading. We carefully plan and prepare our expeditions, and we expect our clients to do the same when it comes to personal preparation. Our highest aim is to accompany our clients during every phase of the expedition, beginning from the budding dream to climb a certain mountain and ending with the journey back home. Reviewing his or her expedition experience, every participant should come to the conclusion of having chosen the right expedition with the appropriate requirement profile.

2. Criteria

2.1 Basic Criteria for Expeditions

To allow for a quick classification of every expedition destination, we have evaluated and grouped all mountains according to difficulty and the objective risks. A simple four-stage scale has been chosen to differentiate between the individual levels.

Grade	Difficulty ¹⁾	Objective Risks ²⁾
A	demanding	high
B	intermediate	medium
C	moderate	moderate
D	easy	low

¹⁾altitude, cold, exposition, duration, general difficulties

²⁾avalanches, seracs/ crevasses, rock slides, weather

2.2 Technical Requirements

We have adopted the grading systems for alpine tours of the SAC (Swiss Alpine Club) or the UIAA (International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation), respectively. The gradation is as follows:

Grade/Points	Rock
1	Easy walking terrain (scree material, easy rock ridge)
2 2 plus	Mostly walking terrain, surefootedness required, easy and clearly laid out climbs Sometimes fixed ropes needed ³⁾
3	Repeated securing necessary, long and exposed climbs
4	Good sense of orientation en route, efficient rope handling, long climbs, requires securing at halting-points
5	Permanent securing between belays, challenging climbs

Grade/Points	Corn snow and Ice
1	Easy corn snow slopes, almost no crevasses
2 2 plus	Rarely any steep slopes, short steep route portions possible, few crevasses Sometimes fixed ropes needed ³⁾
3	Steep slopes, sometimes securing at halting-points necessary, many crevasses, small bergschrund
4	Very steep slopes, mostly securing between belays necessary, many crevasses, big bergschrund
5	Permanently steep terrain, permanent securing between belays

³⁾ Many expeditions require ascending with fixed ropes, since they offer support and security. However, as this technique is only seldomly used in the Alps, we offer workshops for alpine mountaineers on how to handle fixed ropes.

2.3 Endurance

By endurance we mean general physical condition and stamina. It is not easy to objectively evaluate endurance, as pace and stamina are equally important factors. Often, being fast equals staying safe (cold, avalanches, rock slides). Nevertheless, it is indispensable to pace oneself with respect to physical strength. The following simple test (altitude: Alps) will help you to roughly evaluate your own performance and endurance.

Covering a difference in altitude of 1000 metres in easy terrain carrying an 8 - 10kg backpack, takes me (for normal mountain and ski tours):		Points
2 hours	3 points	
2 1/2 hours	2 points	
3 hours	1 point	
Last year, I completed the following mountain tours:		
Day trips over 5 hrs. of hiking, backpack of 8-10 kg	1/4 point per tour max. 1 point	
Multiday hike over 2000m difference in altitude, Backpack of 8-10 kg	1/2 point per tour max. 2 points	
I am a long-distance runner or cross-country skier (min. 20 km / week)	1 point	
Total points		

Physical condition:

excellent	5 points (and more)
good	4 points
intermediate	3 points
reasonable	2 points
rather bad	1 points

2.4 Mountaineering Experience

Objectively evaluating mountaineering experience is rather difficult and problematic.

For participation in an expedition, the following factors are prerequisite: good health (no severe respiratory, cardiac and metabolic disorders), capacity for teamwork, no fear of heights, resistance to altitude sickness (experience over 4000m), mastery of rope-handling, confident hiking with crampons, roped ascent with rope clamps (jümar), optional experience in ski touring.

The following criteria help you evaluate your aptitude for expeditions:

I have been mountain climbing for x years	1/2 pt. per 4 years max. 1 point	
In the past three years I have participated in x multiday alpine tours	1/2 pt. per 3 tours max. 2 points	
I am used to plan and lead multiday alpine and climbing tours	1 point	
I have bivouacked/slept in a tent several times during the past six years	1 point	
I am a trained and certified tour guide (SAC, ÖAV, DAV, etc.)	1 point	
I want to be accompanied by a personal Sherpa*	1 point	
Total points		

* If you need a personal porter, Kobler & Partner can provide you with an experienced high porter.

Mountaineering experience:

- excellent 5 points (and more)
- good 4 points
- intermediate 3 points
- reasonable 2 points
- little 1 points

3. Destination, requirements, evaluation

Based on the preceding evaluation, the following table presents expeditions suited to your qualifications. The technical difficulties of every mountain are summarised in its total number of points.

Thanks to our many years of experience and our careful organisation, most expeditions were successfully completed. However, it is not possible to guarantee successful ascents, even though you may have the required number of points.

If you have been on an expedition with at least two high camps during the past six years, you may add an extra point. In case you are an actively working, certified mountain guide, you may add two extra points.

Copyright by Kobler & Partner, Die Bergführer GmbH