



## The Treasures of the Alpine Club and the Golden Age of Alpinism

Chamonix Alpine Museum, from December 19th 2015 to April 17th 2016

Chamonix has a long history as the Mecca of mountain sports, that pre-dates the arrival of skiing by a hundred years. The first ascent of Mont Blanc in 1786 was to put the small farming village on the map, whilst the exploits of Victorian pioneers and their guides during the Golden Age of Alpinism (1854 to 1865), turned Chamonix into a legendary destination.

To celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this remarkable period, the palatial Alpine Museum in Chamonix offers visitors a unique opportunity to discover Chamonix through the eyes of the first pioneers. What magnetism drew so many international and indeed illustrious travellers to the bourg of *Chamouny*? Why did alpinism develop into a sporting activity during the mid-1800s? What role did the British play in mapping and exploring the Alps? What did Chamonix and its glaciers look like then? Discover the earliest photos of Chamonix!

Visitors may contemplate a superb display of mountaineering heritage, collectively known as ***The Treasures of the Alpine Club***, exhibited for the first time on the continent. Indeed, following the immense success of the summer show, a second selection of artwork, on loan from the prestigious Alpine Club, has taken up its winter quarters at the Alpine Museum. Landscapes from the Alps, but also the Himalayas, the Caucasus and Scotland, immortalised by **30 talented 19<sup>th</sup> century artists: oils, watercolours, lithographs, etchings...**

Some artists were professionals, such as Edward T. Compton, Sir Robert Collier, Gabriel Loppé, John Ruskin, and Elijah Walton; others developed artistic skills to illustrate their expeditions, at a time when photographic material was too heavy, cumbersome and unreliable. All were passionate mountaineers! Many of these artist's works can be found in major British, European and American museums.

Literature also contributed considerably to the development of mountaineering during this period and the role of the Alpine Club founded in 1857 by the early Golden Age pioneers, was fundamental. The books, which its exponents made available to an ever growing public "had readers scrabbling for their climbing boots!" **A number of rare illustrated first editions are temporarily on loan to the museum from private collections.**

Edward Whymper's book "Scrambles amongst the Alps" is one of the classics in mountaineering literature; and indeed his talented engravings were to illustrate many mountaineering adventures, not least the first ascent of the Matterhorn 150 years ago, where he paid such a heavy price for victory. **His remarkable campaign in 1865, illustrated by his engravings, demonstrates the endurance and determination of those early pioneers. Whymper's climbing equipment is also on loan from the Alpine Club.**

It was thanks to the knowledge and commitment of local guides, that the Alpine campaigns were so successful, and friendships forged between guides and their employers were one of the great features of the Golden Age. **Discover the superb leather bound "carnets" of Michel Croz, Christian Almer, Jakob Anderegg and other leading guides of the time.**

**The museum is very child-friendly: Meet *Tschingel* the hardy beagle and partake in many hands-on activities.**

Free for children under 18 years and for all MBU lift pass holders. Normal tariff: 5,50 €

[Opening times and further information](#) Musée Alpin Chamonix, Avenue Michel Croz, tel. +33(0)450 966 122 Media contact: [claire.burnet@chamonix.com](mailto:claire.burnet@chamonix.com), Chamonix Tourist Office, tel. +33 (0)450 533 454

