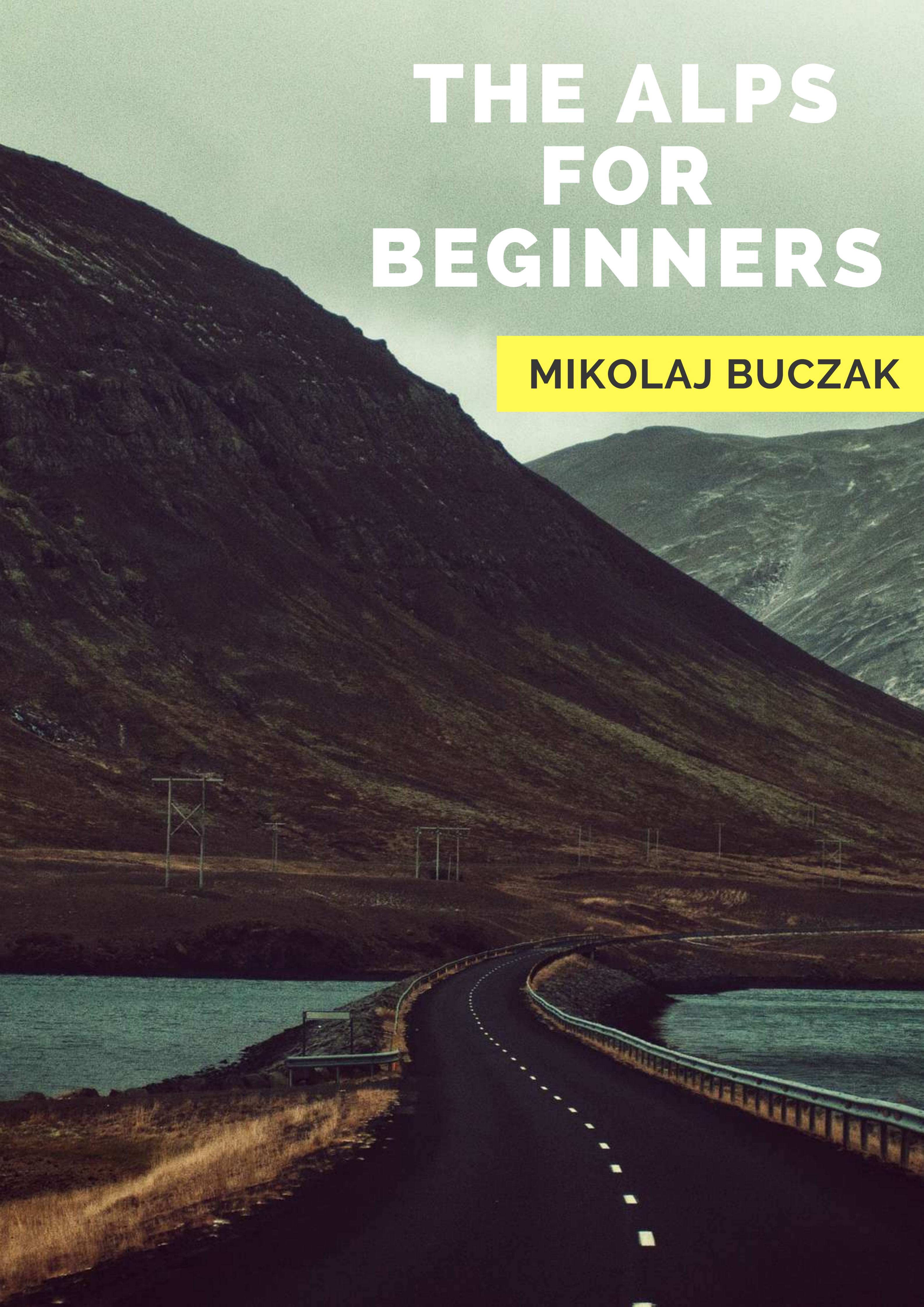


# THE ALPS FOR BEGINNERS

**MIKOLAJ BUCZAK**





# Hallo! Salut! Ciao! Živijo!

The Alps are an extensive mountain range system which is spread over eight countries: France, Germany, Monaco, Austria, Switzerland, Slovenia, Liechtenstein and Italy. In this guide you will find out how to travel through the Alps by yourself, you will get also a bunch of tips and maybe some answers to questions that plague you from time to time. It is very important that you keep in mind that every person experiences differently so you have to take all that I wrote here carefully and selectively. The sights, the cities, the places that I find beautiful, for other people may be nothing special. What I really want you to learn from this is how to travel responsibly and also provide you with useful tips which will make your journey enjoyable.







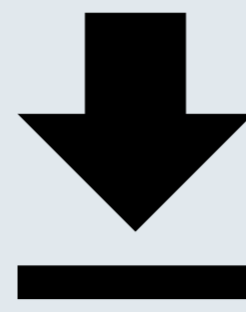
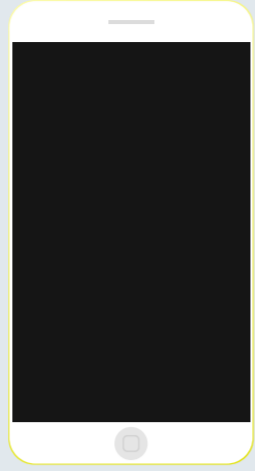
# Route

Just like always before traveling it is very important to plan your journey. If you go to the Alps for the first time, it is even more important because there are so many places to see and to visit that you have to choose what you want to do.

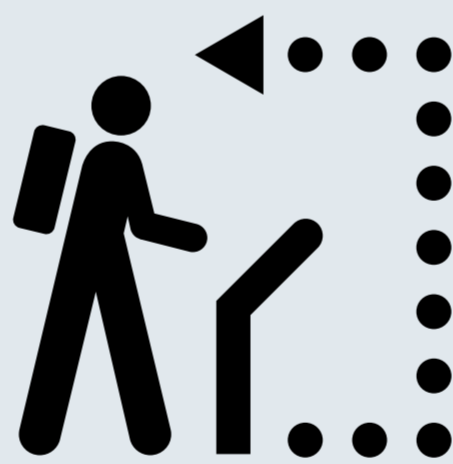
I recommend you to make a list of things that you are expecting to do. It doesn't matter if it is hiking, sunbathing, swimming or climbing. Just make a list of your favorite activities and that will help you find interesting places.



While planning the route I used a lot of blog articles, guides, maps, forums, and posts published on Yoalin Facebook-group. The last one is very useful because you get tips on where to go written by locals or from people who traveled a lot through the Alps. I also recommend you to buy e.g. Lonely Planet's guides where you can find some already described routes through Alpine countries. I used Lonely Planet's Switzerland to inspire me and to decide which places I wanted to visit. Don't be afraid of asking other participants about the Alps. Everybody is really helpful and knows things that you probably would never know from the Internet or guides.

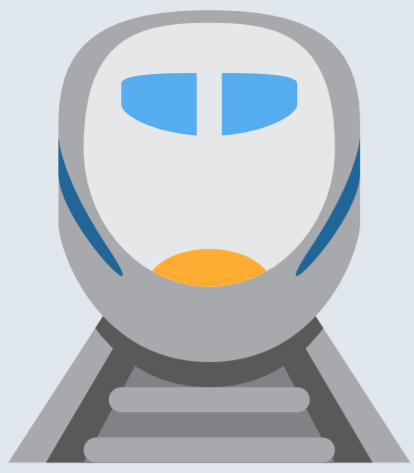


The very important part of planning your journey is to get to know with your Interrail Pass. Check if all the data is consistent (your name, surname, the month of traveling etc.) Download also the “Rail Planner” App which will help you to plan the train connections and will provide you also the benefits which come together with your ticket. You can find there information about which train companies are included in your pass, discounts in different countries and also if the seat reservation for a train is compulsory.



My route:

Poznań (PL) – Berlin (DE) – Basel (CH) – Bern (CH) – Brienz (CH) – Lucerne (CH) - Vaduz/Schaan (FL ) – Tirano (IT) – Como (IT)



# Important Traveling Information

Alpine countries are seen as very expensive countries.

I prepared some tips for you to make it budget!



## **TIP 1:**

Stay in **Swiss Youth Hostels**. In every hostel is the breakfast **included** in the price, moreover, with the ticket you get 15% discount for your stay (Rail Planner App -> Pass Benefits -> Switzerland -> Accommodation). Of course, you have to be a member of "hihostelling", the prices of the one-year membership differ in every country so it is better to check it on the Internet and buy it before your departure.

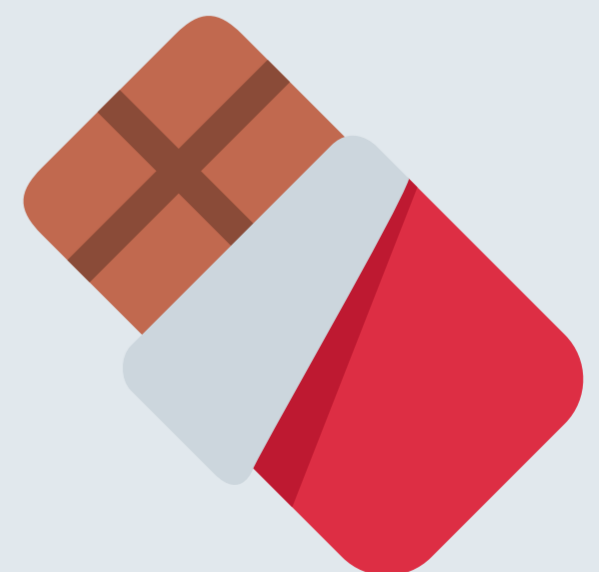
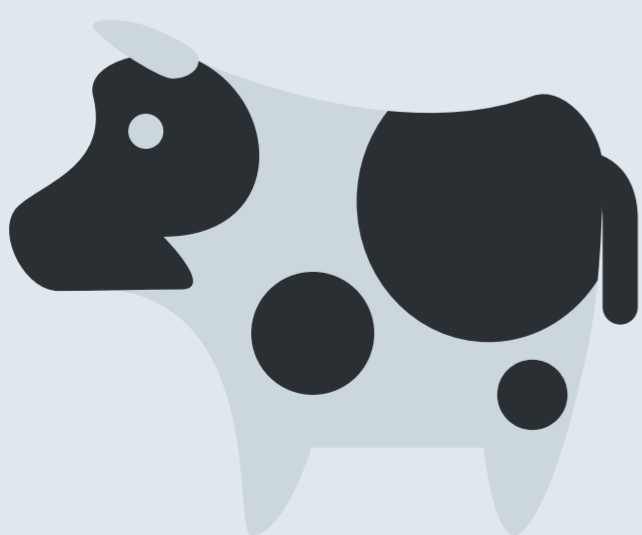
## TIP 2:

If you stay in any hotel or a hostel in Switzerland you get a **free** card for public transport! How cool is that? Even on the day of your arrival, if you travel from the train station, your hostel/hotel reservation is your free ticket. Moreover, in many places, together with the card you will get information about places where you will get a **discount**: it can be a museum, a boat or a restaurant so check it out carefully!

## TIP 3:

The most expensive thing in Switzerland is eating. The prices are rather high but there are three options:

- you can bring some food with you;
- in Swiss Youth Hostels you can buy a dinner for about 18 francs (you just have to tell at the reception that you would like to order it);
- there are also "Migros Restaurant" which offer dinner for 12-20 francs.





### **TIP 1:**

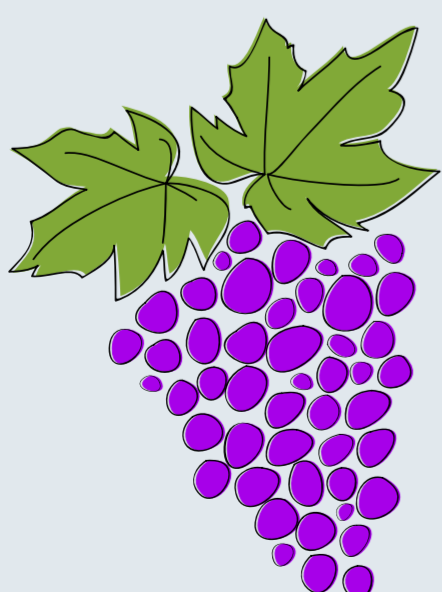
Make your booking in advance because it is often cheaper and also you have choice in which part of the country you want to stay.

### **TIP 2:**

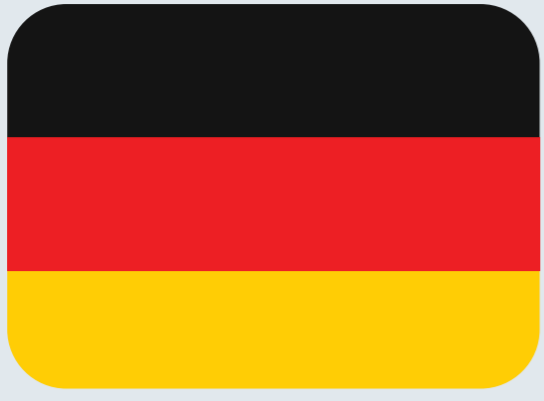
It is really worth to buy a day ticket (all zones) for public transport. It costs 15 francs and you can travel through the whole country and also to Switzerland (Sargans, Buchs) and Austria (Feldkirch).

### **TIP 3:**

If you are really on the budget it is worth going to Feldkirch, Austria to do the shopping or to go to a Gasthaus where you can eat for 10-15 euros.







**TIP 1:**

Download DB App “DB Navigator” where you can make seat reservations and also change it once for free.

**TIP 2:**

With your pass, you can get a one-year membership in German Youth Hostels for free.

**TIP 3:**

If you are visiting German cities remember that you can travel for free with S-Bahn!



**TIP 1:**

In the case of Italy it is worth visiting [www.booking.com](http://www.booking.com) for reservations because the choice is wide and the prices also differ a lot.

**TIP 2:**

There are many trains by Trenord between Italy and Switzerland for which you don't need a seat reservation.





# Places

Instead of describing every place where I have been I decided to present my top five. Remember! This list is based on my personal experience and shouldn't have a huge influence on your decision where you will go.





## Bern

A very picturesque city with its own atmosphere and a lot of flags waving on the street. In Bern, you can visit many museums, Swiss Federal Assembly but also experience something special: floating downstream in the river Aare. Very recommended for good swimmers! The entrance to this outdoor swimming pool "Marzili" is free. You can hire a locker for 5 francs/day. You can buy there also for 10 francs a special waterproof sack to swim with it downstream. Very cool souvenir!

**TIP:** take a snap link or waterproof sack with you if you are planning to swim in the river.



## Brienz

Beautifully located village by the lake surrounded by the mountains. It is very quiet but with huge potential. A perfect place if you want to rest a little, hike, ride a bike or just walk by the lake and admire the beauty of nature.

**TIP:** there is only one supermarket in Brienz which is open till 7 p.m. so you have to remember about buying or bringing some food with you.





## Aareschlucht + Reichenbachfall

I already mentioned the river Aare in Bern. In Aareschlucht you can walk along the river, among rocks to see how it begins. You have two options to get there by train – there are two entries Aareschlucht Ost and Aareschlucht West. I do recommend you to start in Aareschlucht Ost because then you end your trip in Aareschlucht West which is very close to the next attraction “Reichenbachfall” where you can see a waterfall and climb up to a restaurant on the top.

**TIP:** You can buy a combi-ticket for both attractions which is cheaper.



## Liechtenstein

This tiny country, despite many opinions that I found on the Internet, has a lot to offer. It's worth to visit Vaduz where you can climb between vineyards to the Prince's castle on the hill. I am also a huge fan of Badeseesee, a lake where you can enjoy a beautiful view of the mountains. Another point worth visiting is Balzers where you can take pictures of the beautifully located castle “Gutenberg”. Liechtenstein is a perfect place to stay for one night and also a good point to go further to Austria or Switzerland.

**TIP:** buy a day-ticket for all zones and go to picturesque Feldkirch in Austria.





## Mount Pilatus

A unique experience if you want to see the Alps but you are not a keen hiker. You can take a cable car from Kriens (Luzern) and ride to Pilatus (2070 m). On the top, you will find five easy hiking routes. I recommend you 50-minutes hike to Tomsilhorn (2132 m). You can go back to Luzern by cogwheel railway and a boat. A perfect one-day trip! TIP: During the summer there are many tourists so it is better to buy your ticket at least one day earlier to avoid queues. You can buy it in "Pilatus shop" in the heart of Luzern.

**TIP:** If you have Interrail ticket you will get 50% discount for the whole route (cable car + cogwheel railway + boat).

**I hope that you found out here some useful information for your adventure. The Alps are a very beautiful region which needs to be explored gradually. In this guide, I wanted to share my personal experience but remember to #createyourownstory. Enjoy!**

**Mikolaj Buczak**

# #youth alpine interrail 2018

Text: Mikolaj Buczak

The logo "Youth ALpine Interrail" was found on [www.yoalin.org](http://www.yoalin.org)

The rest of the photos, gifs and emojis were free and were found on [www.canva.com](http://www.canva.com)

Page 1: "Mountain Motivational Poster. Reychelle Ann Ignacio; Marketplace Designers. ID: MAB5aZoxF9U"

Page 2: "Mont Blanc, Tour Mont Blanc, Alps, Migration, Trekking. SteenJepsen CCo. ID: MACV37ZzhPk."