



ADVENTURE
BASE

OLLY ALKEMA

LET'S TALK ABOUT
MOUNTAINEERING BOOTS.

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Are you struggling to understand the world of mountaineering boots? Don't worry, you're not alone.

In recent years, the various designs of mountaineering boots have developed and the market is now flooded with a wide range of options. This can be confusing to navigate so we hope this article will help simplify it for you.

A question we get asked a lot is, *"Can I Climb Mont Blanc in B2 boots?"*. The short answer is **yes**. In warm temperatures B2 boots can provide enough warmth.

However please note, as explained below, B2 boots are lightweight and therefore provide less warmth than B3 boots, meaning you can experience cold feet on Mont Blanc which can put an end to your summit attempt. If you are someone who gets cold easily, is new to mountaineering and doesn't want to take any risks, we highly recommend B3 boots for Mont Blanc.

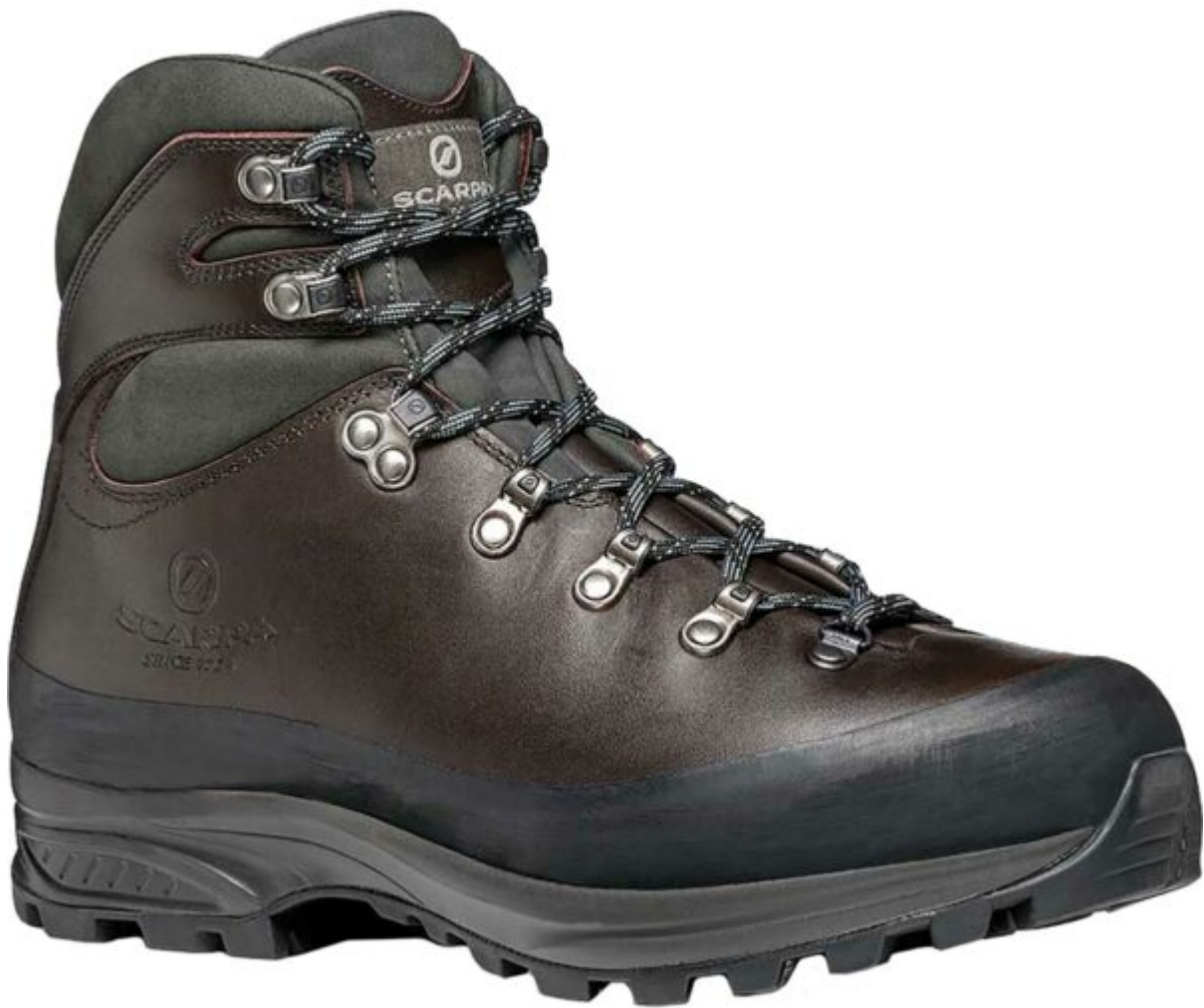
Let's start with the B1, B2 and B3 categories.

B1 boots

- Not stiff
- Not warm
- Lightweight
- Compatible with C1 crampons only
- No heel welt

This is typical a 3 season hiking shoe suitable for hiking and basic mountaineering in non-technical zones. Think Toubkal, Ben Nevis, trekking the TMB, Alta Via and Haute Route, and going anywhere that avoids ice and sufficient amounts of snow. If there is a sprinkling of snow on Toubkal or Ben Nevis for example, the B1 boot with a C1 crampon will suffice. If there is a significant amount of snow or ice on those peaks a B2 boot will be recommended.

Example of a B1 boot: Scarpa SL Active



B2 boots

- Fairly stiff
- Fairly warm
- Fairly lightweight

- Compatible with C1 and C2 crampons
- Heel welt

This is a 4 season mountaineering shoe particularly suitable for mountaineering on most peaks in the Alps where you will encounter a mixture of rock scrambling and snowy approaches. Think Matterhorn, Eiger as the classic B2 boot climbs, and Mont Blanc and the Spaghetti Tour in Monte Rosa when temperatures aren't too cold. The extra flexibility in a B2 boot compared with a B3 boot gives you more control when scrambling on rocks.

Example of a B2 boot: Scarpa Manta Tech GTX



B3 boots

- Very stiff
- Very warm
- Not lightweight

- Compatible with C2 and C3 crampons
- Heel welt and toe welt

This is the solid, reliable and warmest option out of the 3 categories. Historically, this is the boot recommended to climb peaks like Mont Blanc, Monte Rosa, and Elbrus. Think big, cold snowy peaks that you spend the majority of the time traversing and climbing up snowy and icy terrain with less rocky scrambling sections. The extra stiffness and thickness in a B3 boot gives you more stability and warmth when walking in snow and on ice. This is also the recommended category for ice climbing due to the stiffness of the boot.

Example of a B3 boot: La Sportiva Nepal Cube GTX



Hopefully this gives you a basic understanding of the categories available when it comes to mountaineering boots and what they are designed for. You will then need to match up the boot with a suitable crampon. All mountaineering boots will need a suitable crampon to use when encountering snow, ice and rock.

A brief explanation of the crampon categories, C1, C2 and C3

C1 crampons are flexible and can be attached to any B1 boot. They provide basic grip when encountering some snow and ice but are not suitable for anything technical or a big glaciated peak in the Alps such as Mont Blanc. Suitable trips: Toubkal, Ben Nevis

Example of a C1 crampon: Grivel G10 LUX



C2 crampons are rigid and considered to be the ‘all-rounder’ when it comes to crampons for most alpine peaks. They provide security on snow, ice and rock. Suitable trips: Matterhorn, Eiger , Mont Blanc, Monte Rosa

Example of a C2 crampon: Black Diamond Sabretooth Clip



C3 crampons have a metal bar at the front and are typically used for technical climbing like ice and mixed climbing. They are only compatible with a B3 boot that has a toe welt. Suitable trips: Mont Blanc, Monte Rosa, Ice Climbing

Example of a C3 crampon: Black Diamond Sabretooth Pro



This is our advice if you are planning on buying or renting a pair of mountaineering boots and crampons for your next mountain adventure.

You are:

Climbing Mont Blanc and planning to attempt other similar snowy Alpine peaks = buy a B3 boot with C2 crampons

Climbing Mont Blanc and planning to attempt other lower, more rocky Alpine peaks such as Matterhorn, Eiger = buy a B2 boot with C2 crampons

Climbing Mont Blanc for the experience and not planning to continue mountaineering = rent a pair of B3 boots and C2 crampons

Climbing the Matterhorn, Eiger and similar peaks in the Alps = Buy a B2 boot with C2 crampons

Planning to climb Toubkal and / or Ben Nevis to commence your mountaineering journey = buy a B2 boot with C2 crampons