



CLOUD 9 ADVENTURE



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Classic Walker's Haute Route

- One of the best multi-day treks in the world: challenging and stunning
- Trek from the famous Mont Blanc to the iconic Matterhorn
- See 10 of the highest peaks in the Alps
- 10 days' trekking, 11 nights' accommodation
- Stay in a mix of comfortable hotels and auberges, with 2 nights in mountain refuges
- Luggage transfers included (except mountain refuges)
- Cross the new Charles Kuonen suspension bridge
- Fully qualified and expert International Mountain Leader.
- Grade 9: Extremely Tough

The Classic Walker's Haute Route, linking the famous mountaineering capitals of Chamonix and Zermatt, is one of the best multi-day trekking journeys in the world. Our adventure begins at the foot of Mont Blanc in the

Chamonix Valley. En-route from France into Switzerland, the lower sections of the trek take us through green alpine valleys, pretty mountain hamlets and flower-strewn meadows. The higher sections of the trek take us across high alpine passes, with spectacular views over 10 of the 12 highest peaks and glaciers in the Alps.

Throughout this 180km (111 mile) trek, we follow good paths and tracks, travelling through picturesque valleys and crossing over several 3000m (10,000 ft) passes. Our trek ends in Zermatt, beneath the Matterhorn, one of the most iconic mountains in the world. This trip combines luggage support with good quality hotels, with just 2 nights in mountain huts, making for as comfortable trip as can be done on this route. There is no need to carry a sleeping bag or a camping mat, and we have access to luggage on all but 2 nights. A superb trek, and a must-do on any hiker's tick-list.

Trip Summary

Day 1: Arrive in Chamonix

Option: Airport transfer from Geneva

Explore Chamonix - Chamonix

18:00 Trip briefing

Day 2: Montroc to Trient or Col de la Forclaz

Transfer from Chamonix to Montroc

Trek from Montroc to Trient or Forclaz - Col de la Forclaz, Trient

Day 3: Trient or Forclaz to Champex

Trek from Trient or Forclaz to Champex via the Fenêtre d'Arpette - Champex

Day 4: Champex to the Cabane du Mont Fort

Trek from Champex to the Cabane du Mont Fort

Cabane du Mont Fort - Cabane du Mont Fort

Day 5: Cabane du Mont Fort to Cabane de Prafleuri

Trek from the Cabane du Mont Fort to the Cabane de Prafleuri

Cabane de Prafleuri - Cabane de Prafleuri

Day 6: Cabane de Prafleuri to Arolla

Trek from the Cabane de Prafleuri to Arolla - Arolla

Day 7: Arolla to La Sage

Trek from Arolla to La Sage - La Sage

Day 8: La Sage to Zinal

Trek from La Sage to Zinal - Zinal

Day 9: Zinal to Gruben

Trek from Zinal to Gruben - Gruben

Day 10: Gruben to St. Niklaus

Trek from Gruben to St Niklaus - St Niklaus

Day 11: St Niklaus to Zermatt

Trek from Saint Niklaus to Zermatt via the Europaweg - Zermatt

Day 12: Depart Zermatt

Depart Zermatt

Option: Extend your stay in Zermatt

Day 1: Arrive in Chamonix



Option: Airport transfer from Geneva

The easiest way to arrive in Chamonix is by minibus transfer from Geneva airport. If you'd like us to book it for you, just let us know: it costs £40 per person each way for a shared minibus transfer, or £195 per minibus each way for a private transfer (for up to 8 people).

See the travel arrangements section for more details and alternative options.



Explore Chamonix

Our trip begins in the famous mountain town of Chamonix. You can normally check-in to your accommodation and access your rooms from around 16:00. If you arrive earlier, it's no problem to leave your bags at the hotel and explore the town. There's a wealth of outdoor shops so you should have a little time for last minute supplies before your trip.



Chamonix

Chamonix, RHONE-ALPES, FR, 74400



18:00 - Central European Time

Trip briefing

Meet your guide and fellow trekkers this evening for a briefing about the trip and to answer any questions that you may have. We usually meet at 18:30 in your hotel or chalet.

Day 2: Montroc to Trient or Col de la Forclaz



Transfer from Chamonix to Montroc

Our day begins with a short but scenic train journey on the famous Mont Blanc Express, to reach the hamlet of Montroc at the head of the Chamonix valley, the starting point for our trek.



Trek from Montroc to Trient or Forclaz

From Montroc, we climb up through larch woods to reach our first summit, the stunning Aiguillette de Posettes. It's a decent climb, but we take it steady and there are plenty of incredible views towards the Le Tour glacier and back towards Mont Blanc to distract us from the climb.

From the Col de Posettes, most other trekking groups head for the Col de Balme, but we stray from the standard route and take a quiet, and beautiful, variant through the meadows of Les Tseppes and into Switzerland. We descend to the village of Trient where we sometimes stay for the night. Often, we finish with a climb to the Col de la Forclaz and stay here for the night instead (if we have stayed in Trient, we'll have this climb the next morning). We base this on where we can find private rooms rather than dormitories, as it's a bottleneck area with limited availability.

Distance: 14 km / 8.7 miles

Ascent: 1100 m / 3609 ft

Descent: 1100 m / 3609 ft

Approximate walking time: 7-8 hours

Accommodation: Hotel with basic shared bathroom facilities. Supplement payable for limited en-suite rooms for those who book early enough.

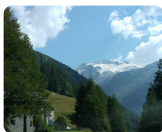
Meals: Breakfast and Dinner

Luggage Access: Yes



Col de la Forclaz

Trient, Valais, CH, 1929



Trient

Trient, VALAIS, CH

Day 3: Trient or Forclaz to Champex



Trek from Trient or Forclaz to Champex via the Fenêtre d'Arpette

If we stayed in Trient, we have a climb up towards the bisse (Swiss Irrigation system), and if we stayed at Forclaz, we have an easy stroll along the bisse to the Chalet des Glaciers, a small café next to the impressive Trient glacier. Here we begin a long and often steep ascent through spectacular scenery up to the high pass known as the Fenêtre d'Arpette, from which we have wonderful views of the Trient glacier. Next we have a steep descent through the Val d'Arpette to our accommodation in Champex.

In bad weather, or if there is a risk of rock fall, we will take the Bovine route: the leader will make this decision.

Distance: 14 km / 8.7 miles (or 16 km / 9.9 miles via Bovine)

Ascent: 1411m / 4629ft (or 929m / 3048 feet via Bovine)

Descent: 1200m / 3937ft (or 710m / 2329 feet via Bovine)

Approximate walking time: 8 hours (or 6 hrs via Bovine)

Accommodation: 3* hotel

Meals: Breakfast & evening meal

Luggage Access: Yes



Champex

Orsières, Valais, CH, 1938

Day 4: Champex to the Cabane du Mont Fort



Trek from Champex to the Cabane du Mont Fort

We leave the picturesque village of Champex and hike through summer meadows and farmland to reach the little village of Sembrancher. From here it's a short walk to Le Châble, a traditional village below the famous resort of Verbier. From Le Châble, we take the cable car to Les Ruinettes, above Verbier. We follow another bisse on our way up to the well-known Cabane du Mont Fort, and are rewarded with fantastic views of the Mont Blanc massif and the Grand Combin.

Distance: 20 km / 12.4 miles

Ascent: 1350m / 4429ft

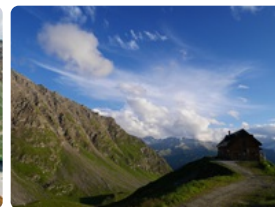
Descent: 1300m / 4265ft

Approximate walking time: 8 hours

Accommodation: Mountain Refuge

Meals: Breakfast & evening meal

Luggage Access: No



Cabane du Mont Fort



Cabane du Mont Fort

Tortin, Bagnes, Valais, CH, 1936

+41 27 778 13 84

Day 5: Cabane du Mont Fort to Cabane de Prafleuri



Trek from the Cabane du Mont Fort to the Cabane de Prafleuri

This is one of the most spectacular days of the trek, crossing 3 cols with fantastic views throughout. We start by taking the "Sentier des Chamois", which takes an improbable route amongst imposing cliffs (there is a path!) to the Col Termin, perched at 2648 m.

From here we make a dramatic traverse (with a couple of chains to aid our way), followed by a climb across boulders to reach the Col de Louvie (2921 m). Here, the scenery changes as we look down onto the moraine of the aptly-named Grand Désert glacier. A steep descent takes us towards the lake and brings us to the Grand Désert itself.

From here we make our way up to the Col de Prafleuri (2987 m), then descend to the Cabane de Prafleuri (2642 m) for the evening. A very long, but truly stunning day in the wilderness.

Distance: 16.7 km / 10.4 miles

Ascent: 1377 m / 4517 ft

Descent: 1170m / 3838 ft

Approximate walking time: 8 hours

Accommodation: Mountain refuge

Meals: Breakfast and Dinner

Luggage Access: No



Cabane de Prafleuri

The Cabane de Prafleuri was originally built to house the workers who constructed the Dix dam, although it has been rebuilt since then! It is in a dramatic setting, and accommodation is in large, mixed dormitories. Tap water is not drinkable here (it is possible to buy bottled water) and there are fairly basic bathroom facilities, but the location makes up for this.

There are basic showers (5 CHF each, included on guided trips).



Cabane de Prafleuri

Hérémence, Valais, CH, 1987

+41 27 281 17 80

Day 6: Cabane de Prafleuri to Arolla



Trek from the Cabane de Prafleuri to Arolla

We start out with a short, steep climb to reach the Col des Roux (2804m). Early morning on this col, with views towards glaciers and the milky waters of the Lac de Dix, is a great start to the day.

Rewarded with views of the Pigne d'Arolla and Mont Blanc de Cheilon, we descend gently to reach the lake, usually passing a few noisy marmots on our way. We walk along the lake to its end.

Next we make a steep ascent to reach the Dix glacier, and an exciting part of the trek as we cross the glacial moraine to the base of the Col de Riedmatten. Here, we have the option of either climbing up to the col, or taking a more direct route up the Pas de Chèvres ladders, which having been replaced in 2015 make for a much easier crossing than in previous years. The leader will decide which route we take, based on the weather and the group.

There are more spectacular views of the Dix glacier, then the rest of the day is all downhill to the alpine village of Arolla, nestled in its very own forest of Arolla pines.

Distance: 18 km / 11.2 miles

Ascent: 1041 m / 3415 ft

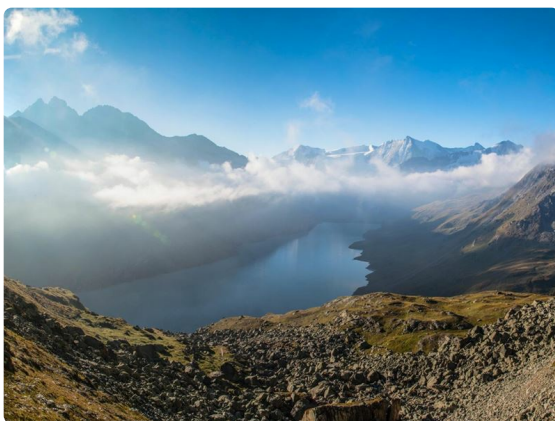
Descent: 1680m / 5511 ft

Approximate walking time: 7-8 hours

Accommodation: Hotel

Meals: Breakfast & evening meal

Luggage Access: Yes



Arolla

Evolène, Valais, CH, 1986

Day 7: Arolla to La Sage



Trek from Arolla to La Sage

We are nearing the halfway point of the trek, and today is something of a recuperation day, involving a leisurely walk through woodland (although there are 1 or 2 chains!) to the Lac Bleu, a hidden local beauty spot. From here, there is an easy descent through a beautiful gorge to Les Haudères, where we have lunch. After a final short climb, this stage finishes at the charming hamlet of La Sage.

Distance: 11 km / 6.8 miles

Ascent: 215m / 705ft

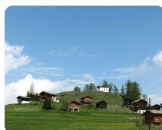
Descent: 550m / 1804ft

Approximate walking time: 4-5 hours

Accommodation: Charming boutique hotel

Meals: Breakfast and Dinner

Luggage Access: Yes



La Sage

Evolène, Valais, CH, 1985

Day 8: La Sage to Zinal



Trek from La Sage to Zinal

No rest today as we have quite a long day and 2 high passes to cross! The first ascent to the higher of the two, the Col de Torrent (2912m), is long, but not too difficult, and the path is in good condition. We then descend to the turquoise Lac de Moiry. Ahead we can see some of the giant peaks of the Pennine Alps, including the Dent Blanche and the Weisshorn. Our next ascent is the Col de Sorebois, a shorter climb than the Col de Torrent, but a fair bit steeper. From here, there are spectacular views of the Weisshorn, the Dent Blanche and the Zinal Rothorn. We now enter the Zinal ski area, and have a 2 hour descent to Zinal. For those whose knees are suffering, there may be the option to take the cable car from the mid-station down (if it is running: it does not run every day in the summer. This is not included in the trip price).

Distance: 23 km / 14.3 miles

Ascent: 2000m / 6561ft

Descent: 1850m / 6069ft

Approximate walking time: 8-9 hours

Accommodation: Hotel

Meals: Breakfast & evening meal

Luggage Access: Yes



Zinal

Ayer, Valais, CH, 3961

Day 9: Zinal to Gruben



Trek from Zinal to Gruben

We start with a steep but pleasant ascent through larch forest, before a rising traverse takes us through alpine pastures with excellent views across the Val d'Annivers. We have a choice of 2 passes today, the Forcletta (2874m) or the Meidpass (2790m), but we normally take the Forcletta as it offers a more direct route - it's quite a detour to do the Meidpass. From here we can see into the Turtmanntal, and we enter the German-speaking part of Switzerland. We often see the rare edelweiss on our descent of this col, if we can manage to take our eyes away from the incredible vista of 4000m peaks on offer. Tonight we stay in the tiny hamlet of Gruben.

Distance: 14 km / 8.7 miles (or 19km / 11.8 miles via the Meidpass)

Ascent: 1200 m / 3937 ft (or 1314m / 4311 ft via the Meidpass)

Descent: 1052 m / 3451 ft (or 1167m / 3828 ft via the Meidpass)

Approximate walking time: 6-7 hours (or 8-9 hours via the Meidpass)

Accommodation: Simple hotel - usually in twin rooms with shared bathrooms but there is limited availability. Sometimes we are in dorms. It's fairly basic but it's the only choice in Gruben.

Meals: Breakfast & evening meal

Luggage Access: Yes





Gruben

Gruben, Obererems, Wallis, CH, 3946

Day 10: Gruben to St. Niklaus



Trek from Gruben to St Niklaus

A really superb trek today as we start out through open woodland, then across high pastures followed by an alpine rocky wilderness. The trek soon opens up to some of the most spectacular views in the Swiss Alps. Our final pass is the Augstbordpass (2894m), beyond which we descend steeply to the wonderful viewpoint known as the Twära - and here is your first view into the Mattertal. A steep descent takes us to the hamlet of Jungen, perched on the mountainside. From here there is a steeper descent of a couple of hours to take us down to St Niklaus. No one will judge you if you take the cable car down from Jungen, as it will save your knees around 1000m of steep downhill!

Distance: 16 km / 9.9 miles

Ascent: 1070m / 3510ft

Descent: 1765m / 5790ft

Approximate walking time: 7-8 hours

Accommodation: Hotel

Meals: Breakfast & evening meal

Luggage Access: Yes



St Niklaus

Day 11: St Niklaus to Zermatt



Trek from Saint Niklaus to Zermatt via the Europaweg

Today we have a choice of two different routes. Either we take a short taxi journey to Randa, then head up to a high level route to finish the Haute Route in style. We cross the newly opened Charles Kuonen suspension bridge - at 500m it's the longest suspension bridge in the world - and then we finish along the high level Europaweg to reach Zermatt. This route has been closed in previous years due to rockfall and has only recently reopened. We can only take people who can move nimbly over rocky terrain, so anyone wanting to miss this section can either take the train to Zermatt or can walk up the valley floor on an easy path. If the weather is bad, or there is any other reason that there may be rockfall, we will all take the valley floor option - the guide will make the decision on this.

Distance: 13 km or 18 km / 8.1 miles or 11.2 miles

Ascent: 450m or 1400m / 1476ft or 4593ft

Descent: 0m or 1000m / 0ft or 3281ft

Approximate walking time: 4-5 hours or 8-9 hours

Accommodation: 3* Hotel

Meals: Breakfast & evening meal

Luggage Access: Yes



Zermatt

Day 12: Depart Zermatt



Depart Zermatt

Your trip finishes after breakfast. It's easy to take the train to Geneva or Zurich from Zermatt and the journey takes around 4 hours.



Option: Extend your stay in Zermatt

There are some amazing walks to do in Zermatt - if you do choose to stay on, then make sure you do the Höhenweg. We'd rate it as one of the most spectacular walks in the world! Also well worth doing is a ride to the top of the Gornergrat for a spectacular panorama, and a trip up Europe's highest cable car, the Klein Matterhorn.

Just let us know if you would like us to book any extra nights at the end of your trip.



Trip Information & Documents

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What's Included

- All accommodation
- All breakfasts and evening meals
- Fully qualified and expert International Mountain Leader
- Luggage delivery each day (apart from 2 nights in huts)
- All transfers mentioned in the itinerary
- Mont Fort cable car from Le Chable to Les Ruinettes
- Showers for the nights in the mountain huts

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Not Included - Haute Route

- Flights
- Airport transfers to Chamonix & from Zermatt
- Lunches, personal drinks or snacks
- Bottled water in the mountain huts
- Any transport, accommodation or additional expenses due to a participant being unable to complete the itinerary
- Optional cable cars
- Travel / mountain rescue insurance
- Tips

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Haute Route Travel Arrangements

- **IMPORTANT: Please do not book your flights or transport until we have confirmed to you via email that the trip is guaranteed to run.**

This trip starts in Chamonix, France and finishes in Zermatt, Switzerland. Most people fly into Geneva airport, and out of Zurich airport, but a return flight from Geneva is also no problem.

Arriving in Chamonix

The starting point for this trek is Chamonix-Mont-Blanc in France. The nearest airport is Geneva, and the easiest way to reach the Chamonix valley is by minibus transfer (just over an hour).

Minibus transfers from Geneva Airport

We recommend www.mountaindropoffs.com and Cloud 9 Adventure clients receive a discount by entering promo code Cloud13. We would also recommend booking at least several weeks in advance as it can often be difficult to arrange last-minute transfers.

If you'd like us to book it for you, just let us know: it's slightly more expensive at £40 per person each way for a shared minibus transfer, or £195 per minibus each way for a private transfer (for up to 8 people).

Private minibus transfer from Geneva Airport or Geneva centre to Chamonix

Private transfers cost £195 each way for up to 8 people. They pick you up from your flight, and drop you at your hotel. Just let us know if you would like to add it to your booking.

Shared shuttle bus from Geneva Airport to Chamonix

A shared transfer combines other people on similarly-timed flights. You can expect to wait at the airport for around 45 minutes or so while you wait for other people's flights. Most of the time it works really well, but it can be frustrating if you end up having to wait for a delayed flight. The companies that we recommend drop you off at your hotel. The cheaper companies drop off at fixed locations only. Shared transfers cost £40 per person each way: just let us know if you would like to add it to your booking.

Booking your own transfer from Geneva Airport to Chamonix

If you would prefer to book your own transfers, it's easy to do online and you will often find cheaper deals depending on the time of day / date. There are many companies offering this service and we do find that you get what you pay for. We have had great service from: Mountain Drop Offs, Haute Transfer, Cham Van, Chamonix Valley Transfers and Alp Links. The best of the budget options is Oui Bus, but note that they do not offer a door-to-door service: they only use the bus stop at Chamonix Sud.

We recommend www.mountaindropoffs.com and Cloud 9 Adventure clients normally receive a small discount: use discount code CLOUD13 - note that the discount code does not apply for very early or very late flights, or out of season transfers. If you have any difficulty with the discount code, please email info@mountaindropoffs.com and let them know you are with Cloud 9 Adventure, and they should be able to apply it manually.

A warning about Easy Bus: I have had terrible service from them and would advise steering clear of them unless it is your only option! We've used them 3 times. Two no-shows, and one on-time. No refund from Easy Bus for the buses that didn't show up (we waited an hour before making other arrangements).

Taxi from Geneva to Chamonix

We would not recommend arriving at Geneva airport with no transport planned - it's an expensive taxi ride from Geneva to Chamonix if not booked in advance.

Train from Geneva Airport or Geneva Centre to Chamonix

It is also possible to take the train (www.sbb.ch) - the journey takes around 3 hours, with 2 changes. As it costs more than a shared minibus transfer, and takes 2 hours longer, it's not the first choice for everyone, but it is an extremely scenic journey, and much nicer than the motorway, so could be worth doing if you have the time!

Eurostar from London to Geneva Centre or Chamonix

There is a Eurostar service from London to Geneva via Paris. This service does involve changing stations in Paris (from Gare du Nord to Gare de Lyon), and currently arrives at Geneva main railway station: the trip takes just over 7 hours to Geneva. Rail connections to Chamonix from Geneva are slow (around 3-4 hours), so it is still best to use a minibus transfer. You can arrange a private minibus to pick you up from Geneva main station, or you can easily take a train from Geneva main station to Geneva airport (every 15 mins and takes 7 mins) and take a shared minibus transfer from here.

If you are lucky and timings work out, you can sometimes get a smooth connection from London to Paris to Bellegarde-sur-Valsérine, and take the train to Chamonix from Bellegarde. When you get a good connection, it can take less than 9 hours from London to Chamonix - but on some days you cannot do this.

Book train tickets well in advance: it is often more expensive than flying, but booking 3 months in advance often gives special offers. Book tickets at www.trainline.eu

Train from Paris to Saint-Gervais-Le-Fayet or Chamonix

If coming via train from Paris, you can sometimes find connections to Saint Gervais-Le Fayet and connect to Chamonix from here. The nearest TGV line is Bellegarde-sur-Valsérine, from where it is a 2.5 hour train journey to Chamonix (or a 1.5 hour private minibus). Book tickets at www.sncf.fr

Returning from Zermatt to Zurich airport or Geneva airport

This trek ends in Zermatt in Switzerland. Cloud 9 Adventure services end after breakfast on the departure day.

The nearest airport is Zurich, but it is also easy to use Geneva airport - and the best way to reach either airport is by train.

There are railway stations at both Geneva Airport and Zurich Airport (the train station is called Zurich Flughafen), and trains run regularly throughout the day. **When booking flights, do make sure that you can get to the airport in time** – the first train out of Zermatt is normally just after 06:00, and it takes approximately 3.5 hours to reach Zurich airport, and around 4 hours to reach Geneva airport. The journey usually costs approximately 100 CHF.

Tickets can be booked in advance at www.sbb.ch – note that the Swiss Rail website defaults to the "half-price" fare, for which you need to buy a "half-price card", so most people will need to untick this box.

If you are doing any additional travelling in Switzerland at the beginning or end of this trip, then it can often be worth purchasing the half-price card, as almost all cable cars, mountain railways, trains, buses and boats are then half-price. For example, it's worth having on its own if you intend to go up the Jungfrauoch in Grindelwald!



Classic Haute Route - What to Expect

The Trekking

This classic Haute Route itinerary completes the trek over 10 days. We start hiking in Argentière or Montroc and trek all the way to Zermatt, using the cable car from Le Châble to Les Ruinettes above Verbier. This is a pure trekking trip and does not involve glacier travel (so no crampons or ice axe needed). This trip is graded 9: extremely tough. It is only open to fit, multi-day hikers with experience on rugged footpaths and who are comfortable trekking for 8-9 hours per day.

This is a classic Alpine walking route, mostly on good trails but with 3 days where the trail is tougher underfoot and not always obvious. The average distance covered each day is around 19 km (12 miles) and there is a considerable amount of ascent and descent, with several passes close to 3000 m (10,000 ft). Do not let the short distances lull you into a false sense of security – the ups and downs make sure that the days are fairly long and hard work! It is slightly harder than the Tour du Mont Blanc and we grade it "Extremely Tough", or 9 out of 10. The reason for this is because whilst there are some days that are comparable to the Tour du Mont Blanc, there are also some much longer days on rougher terrain. We'll need to cross boulder fields, and need to be able to keep going on days when there is a considerable amount of height gain.

The passes are higher on the Haute Route than on the TMB, and there are a number of passes that are nearly 3000 m (nearly 10,000 feet) - and as a result, the passes often hold snow well into the summer.

We offer luggage support throughout, apart from on the 2 nights spent in mountain huts where there is no access to trek bags, so on those days you do have to carry anything you will need for the overnights.

Accommodation

For this trip we have 7 nights in good-quality hotels, 2 nights in simpler hotels, and 2 nights in mountain huts.

Where possible, we stay in good quality, comfortable hotel accommodation; our hotels are hand-picked for their charm and local authenticity. If you are booking as a couple you can usually expect to be in a twin or double room, with en-suite facilities wherever possible, and if you are booking as a single traveller, you can usually expect to be in a twin room with another member of the same sex, also with en-suite facilities wherever possible.

If you would prefer to pay a single supplement and have your own room, this is sometimes possible but due to the nature of the accommodation on this trip, with small hotels in remote villages, we can't always book a single room, so places are limited.

In the hamlets of Trient and Gruben, the accommodation is in a hotel, but it is still fairly basic and there are shared bathroom facilities. Occasionally we are in dormitories here, depending on at which stage you book, but we will warn you if this is the case.

We also spend 2 nights in mountain refuges, where we will sleep in mixed sex dormitories with shared bathroom facilities.

Drinking water is not available in all of the huts (currently the water is not drinkable at the Prafleuri hut) in which case you may need to purchase bottled water.

Food

All breakfasts and dinners are included. Each night we tend to eat in the hotel or mountain refuge where we are staying, and we will experience fantastic, local food. Packed lunches are not included, but each day we can either order a packed lunch in advance, or you can often stop at shops en-route to re-supply. Please note that we do not go past shops every day. Drinks are not included with the dinner, but you can normally order beer, wine and soft drinks at all hotels including the mountain refuges. Breakfast in the hotels are excellent, but in the mountain huts it tends to be more basic and usually consists of tea, coffee, bread, jam and cereal.

Luggage delivery

Luggage is delivered each day to our next day's accommodation with the exception of 2 days where we will overnight in remote mountain refuges. On these days we will carry everything that we need for an overnight stay in our day packs so please make sure that your pack is large enough for a few additional overnight essentials. Remember, packing light is key!

For your main luggage, please allow 1 piece of moderately sized luggage per person. Please note that you will be asked to carry your own luggage from the reception area of the hotel up to your room, and bring it down again in the morning.

Money and Tipping

The currency in France is euros (first night only), and in Switzerland (where we will be for the majority of the trek) the currency is Swiss Francs. There are cash machines at Geneva airport (francs or euros), Chamonix (euros only), Champex, Zinal and Zermatt.

Lunches cost around 15 CHF per day if we order a packed lunch, and slightly more if we have a sit-down lunch in a refuge (not often possible on the Haute Route!). A coffee or soft drink costs around €3-4, and a beer around 7-8 CHF.

Hotels in the larger towns take cards, but many of the smaller places (including mountain refuges) only take cash - so do make sure that you bring some Swiss francs.

Around 50€ and 300 CHF per person should be plenty to cover your personal expenses but it does depend how many coffees, beers and wines you consume - it would be possible to be more frugal if you wanted.

Tipping your guide is the accepted way of saying thank you for good service. But do remember that tipping is voluntary and should only be done if you were delighted with the service. The amount is entirely up to you. Our staff are all paid fairly.

Weather

In mountainous terrain the weather can vary. Temperatures can reach to over 30°C in the height of summer (July/August), but can be as low as 5°C on the passes. It is often sunny with good weather, but it can rain, and even snow (even in July or August) so you should be prepared for any eventuality. The average temperatures range from 15-25°C in the valleys, to 5-15°C on the passes.

Recommended Reading and Maps

'Chamonix to Zermatt', Kev Reynolds, Cicerone

'Killing Dragons – The Conquest of the Alps', Fergus Fleming*

'Cham' – Jonathan Trigell

'Ulrich Inderbinen: As Old as the Century', Heidi Lanz / Lilian de Meester

The 1:50,000 Swiss Topo maps 5027T Grand St Bernard Combins – Arolla and 5028T Monte Rosa – Matterhorn cover the whole route. Please note that you are not expected to carry maps, it's just in case you are interested.



Walker's Haute Route - Why is our trip different from the rest?

All of our leaders are fully-qualified International Mountain Leaders and hold the UIMLA qualification. Unlike many companies, we do not use unqualified guides.

The Haute Route is a serious undertaking and we spend several days up in the mountains with no mobile phone coverage. All of our leaders carry either a satellite phone, or an emergency VHF radio with a direct link to the mountain rescue. We don't know of any other company who do this on the Haute Route, although we do consider it a basic requirement!

We give our leaders very thorough trip notes with transport details for each section. If we cannot complete any section of the route due to the weather conditions, we'll organise transport round and won't expect you to pay for it.

We have an office in Chamonix and are continually assessing our routes - we've adapted our Walker's Haute Route itinerary many times since we first did it, as this particular route does evolve fairly often - the route has suffered various landslides over the years, so we always make sure we are offering the safest option.

We're a small company, more interested in the enjoyment of our clients than making huge profits, and as a result we tend to have small groups, very experienced leaders and happy clients.



Electric Supply and Plug - Switzerland

The electricity supply in Switzerland is 220-240V and uses "Type J" electrical sockets with 3 round pins (left-hand picture).

This means that normal European "Type C" plugs (2nd picture) often don't fit into the socket as they are the wrong shape, and sometimes the pins can be slightly too big.

There are usually some "Type C" sockets in hotel rooms in Switzerland, but not always: so it is a good idea to have at least one small non-circular charger (3rd picture) to ensure compatibility.

There are usually some plug sockets available in mountain huts but they are limited. Bringing a separate booster charger for your phone may be a good solution.



General Information - Guided Group Trips

Insurance

It is a condition of booking this holiday that you must be insured against medical and personal accident risks (this must include helicopter rescue and repatriation costs). You may find that your annual multi-trip insurance covers this trip, but you should check that you are covered for trekking up to 3000m. We would also recommend that you take out holiday cancellation insurance: your deposit is non-refundable once you have booked, and the full balance is usually non-refundable (see our Terms and Conditions for further details).

We recommend The BMC www.thebmc.co.uk or Snowcard www.snowcard.co.uk for UK residents, or Travelex www.travelexinsurance.com for US citizens or residents.

We can organise mountain rescue insurance for EU residents for £4.90 per day, or £8.95 per day for US and the rest of the world. You can book it online here: <https://www.cloud9adventure.com/online-store/Mountain-rescue-insurance-p101294506>

In addition to travel insurance, UK citizens should also obtain or renew the EHIC card from the [NHS](http://www.nhs.uk). This is not a replacement for insurance but it does mean you are entitled to the same treatment as any EU citizen, and unlike insurance it includes treatment of a pre-existing condition. You would normally have to pay for treatment at the time and then make a claim on return to the UK.

Please remember to bring a credit card with you on the trip: in the event of a medical problem or injury, you may be unable to complete the trek. You would normally need to pay for treatment, and would often have additional transport and accommodation costs. Although you can claim this back on your insurance, you usually have to pay at the time and make the insurance claim afterwards, so you must have a means of paying for this if necessary.

Responsible Travel

We care about the places we visit, and our philosophy is simple: that each and every one of our trips has a positive impact on the local community and environment. We use family-run hotels, gîtes and restaurants in order to support the local communities. And it's a small step but we also recommend carbon off-setting. Visit www.climatecare.org.

Adventure Travel

Please note that we specialise in Adventure Travel, the nature of which means that we cannot always follow our itinerary for a variety of reasons. All of our holidays can be subject to unexpected changes and you should be prepared to be flexible to accommodate these where necessary.

We update our itineraries on a regular basis to take into account such things as changes to trekking routes and the conditions of footpaths, but it is not always possible to guarantee that any of our holidays will run exactly according to the proposed itinerary. If during your holiday the itinerary is affected by immediate or local circumstances, the leader will make any changes that are necessary.

As a reputable tour operator, Cloud 9 Adventure supports the British Foreign & Commonwealth Office "Know Before You Go" campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas, and we recommend that all our clients take a look at the FCO Travel Advice for their chosen destination on the official FCO website www.fco.gov.uk. North Americans can also check out the US Department of State website: www.travel.state.gov for essential travel advice and tips.

Cloud 9 Adventure treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss alternatives. We have a local office in Chamonix, and our expert team monitor the conditions regularly to ensure that our trips are run safely, and are on hand to help if we need to change arrangements.

Group Size and Holiday Status

For each of our group adventures, there is a minimum number of participants required in order for the trip to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from "Available" to "Guaranteed". In order to achieve minimum numbers, we run the trips in conjunction with several other small companies. We find that this means almost all of our trips become "Guaranteed". We are a small company with a high level of customer service, and we make sure that we only run trips in conjunction with companies who share our ethos. We know them well and have worked with them for years, and only use leaders who we know and trust to do an excellent job. We steer clear of large groups and cap our group size at 10 people for summer hiking trips, and 8 people for winter snowshoe or cross country ski trips, whilst many of the larger operators take up to 16 people.

Preparing for your holiday

We have tried to grade the holiday as accurately as we can, with the intention of attracting people of similar abilities to each trip. As a general guideline, if we have described a trek as being tough or challenging, then you need to be fit and capable of the challenge. If you don't arrive in good shape for your trip, then you could be putting yourself and others in danger: if you're taking too long each day, at best it cuts into the time you have to relax and shower before dinner, and at worst, it can be the difference between the whole group being caught in an afternoon storm. As we are as accurate as we can be writing our trip notes, we do tend to be pretty good at making sure that the right people book each trip, but we do require a certain amount of personal responsibility for arriving fit and ready for your trip. We're not on a route-march so we are never expecting to be going too fast - we try to walk at a slow, steady pace, without the need to stop too frequently for rests. If you're worried about this, then please start with one of our easier trips graded Easy or Moderate, and you can build up to a Challenging trip. If you've booked an Extremely Tough trip, then you definitely need to be an experienced and fit hiker, used to long days in the hills.

Rather than hoping your trek will make you fitter (it will definitely help!), it makes a lot of sense to spend some time before your trip getting some additional exercise and preparing properly. The fitter you are, the more enjoyable your trip will be. The best preparation is long day hikes in the run-up to your trip.

We would also recommend that you adopt a weekly exercise regime leading up to your trip. Jogging, circuit training, squash and swimming are good for developing better stamina. Before departure, we also suggest that you try to fit in a number of long hikes in hilly terrain.



Summer Kit List - Guided Groups with Luggage Delivery

Essential items :

- **Rucksack** – approx. 30-40L - for you to carry each day
- **Kit bag or suitcase** - for your main luggage to be transported. Max 15 kg and 1 per person (extra bags may incur a supplement).
- **Hiking boots** – you need to have a pair of waterproof hiking boots with ankle support and a good sole. Hiking trainers are okay for some days, but would not be appropriate in really bad weather, on rougher terrain, or when there is snow, so if you are thinking of bringing hiking shoes or trainers, you'll need boots in addition to those for the more rugged days. Sandals are not appropriate for mountain walking so please do not bring these for trekking.
- **Waterproof jacket and trousers** – both essential items, should be as light as possible (not insulated: your other layers should provide the insulation). Please ensure that you do not need to remove your walking boots in order to put on your waterproof trousers.
- **Socks**
- **Underwear**
- **Trekking trousers** – bring something lightweight.
- **Shorts**
- **T-shirts** – wicking t-shirts are better than cotton as they are lighter and dry faster.
- **Mid layer** - fleece jacket is good
- **Warm jacket** – We recommend bringing a lightweight synthetic belay jacket (eg. Rab Photon /

Arcteryx Atom / Patagonia Nano) – just in case it gets cold. Remember, you are carrying this in your rucksack so it should be as light as possible. You don't normally need to bring a down jacket because it won't be much use if it gets wet.

- **Warm hat** - lightweight woolly hat is fine
- **Gloves** - we recommend bringing 2-3 pairs. A light liner pair are good for most of the trip. Then a pair of waterproof gloves such as Seal Skinz can be very useful in bad weather. And a warmer pair of gloves can be essential if it snows.
- **Sun Hat**
- **Sunglasses**
- **Suncream** (small bottle to save weight)
- **Lip protection** (with sun screen)
- **Water bottles / camelback** – you should have the capacity to carry at least 2 litres of water, but on very hot days you could need 3L.
- **Walking poles** – These often go in the “optional” section, but if there is snow, they are essential.
- **Sheet sleeping bag** – only needed for any nights in a mountain refuge (duvets or blankets are provided). Silk is best, it's lighter than cotton.
- **Travel towel** – again, only needed for the mountain refuges – the hotels provide towels.
- **Wash kit** – Bring whatever you like for wash kit - but for any refuge nights where you have to carry it, small bottles will be perfect: you would normally just take a toothbrush, travel size toothpaste, mini contact lens solution if applicable, a couple of wet wipes and a tiny travel soap.
- **Head torch** – just a lightweight torch, such as a Petzl Tikka / Zipka is fine for this trip.
- **Plastic bags / dry sacks** to keep essentials dry.
- **Passport** – to be carried whilst trekking. Make sure you keep it dry.
- **Cash** – for packed lunches and any drinks whilst on the trip
- **Credit card** - for emergencies
- **Basic first aid kit** – your leader will carry a large first aid kit, but you should bring a small first aid kit containing plasters, blister treatment, painkillers & diarrhea treatment (rehydration sachets & immodium)

Optional items:

- **Thermal base layer**
- **Long johns / thermal leggings**
- **Buff** – can be useful for extra warmth if it's cold, or sun protection for your neck on a hot day
- **Camera**
- **Book**
- **Lightweight sandals / flip flops** – whilst these are usually provided at the mountain refuges, they aren't provided in the hotels, so it's really nice to have footwear to change into in the evening
- **Hiking Trainers** – it can be nice to give your feet a break from your walking boots on some days. Your leader can advise on which days this might be suitable, and if you are thinking of doing this, your shoes must be suitable for trekking in!
- **Mobile phone** – there is phone reception for the majority of the trip. It is a good idea to have a phone in case of emergency or if you need to leave the group for any reason.
- **Umbrella**
- **Earplugs**
- **Snacks** – not essential as we do go past shops most days so you can top up your supply of snacks fairly regularly

- **Antibacterial handwash**
- **Insect repellent**
- **Swimwear** - some of the hotels have a swimming pool, spa or sauna
- **Boot dryers** - not many places in the Alps have drying rooms, so since I discovered these, I don't go anywhere without them: <https://www.sidas.com/en/products/204-drywarmer.html>
- **Travel kettle, mug & tea bags / coffee** - it is unusual for hotels in continental Europe to provide tea and coffee-making facilities in the rooms
- **External battery pack** - for charging your phone in a hut
- **Flask** - we do try to have regular tea and coffee stops, but a flask can be a comfort on bad weather days

A note about the kit:

Most of the time the weather is warm, usually fairly stable, and most people don't need too much extra kit to see them through the trip.

However, **you must bring all of the items on our essential list**. At least once per summer we experience unseasonal conditions that really do make every item on the above list essential. **If you do not have the correct kit, you can put yourself and others at risk of hypothermia**, and our guide may ask you to leave the trip until you have purchased the necessary kit.

Every year we experience unseasonal snow at least once. It can also rain very heavily and temperatures can go from being in the mid 30s celcius (96 F) one week, to below zero (32 F) the next.

So, if it rains, you *will* need waterproof jackets AND trousers, and will be glad of several pairs of gloves. If it snows, you *will* need decent hiking boots (NOT hiking trainers), walking poles, warm clothes and warm hat and gloves. It's also essential that you can put your waterproof trousers on without removing your boots.

It is also possible to experience several weeks of heatwave at a time - if this happens, you will likely get through numerous sachets of rehydration salts and will need to be carrying 3-4L of water, and a sun hat will be absolutely essential.

Note that this is not meant to alarm you - most of the time we enjoy stable weather and are in shorts and t-shirts - we just want to make sure that your trip isn't ruined if you come unprepared - we'd far rather you have extra kit and don't need it, than the other way round.