



CLOUD 9 ADVENTURE



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Tour du Mont Blanc Highlights 7 day - MBH

The Tour du Mont Blanc is one of the world's classic trekking journeys, covering 166 km and with about 10,000 m of ascent and descent. Standing on the border of France, Switzerland and Italy, Mont Blanc is the highest mountain in Western Europe at 4810 m.

Our route takes us over varied terrain including rugged cols, high alpine meadows and conifer forests. We will see plenty of alpine flowers, and we are likely to see marmots, chamois, ibex and birds of prey.

As well as Mont Blanc, we should have fantastic views of many other famous peaks in the area: the Domes de Miage, the Aiguille Verte, the Aiguille du Chardonnet, the Grandes Jorasses, Mont Dolent and the Grand Combin amongst others.

It truly is a trip to remember, with every day bringing varied and spectacular

scenery.

Our TMB Highlights trip does the route in a very comfortable way, using cable cars and transfers to enable us to complete the trek over 7 days of trekking, whilst still making sure we see the best bits of the Tour du Mont Blanc.

This trip is specifically designed to maximise time off work, and to incorporate the stunning section from Courmayeur to the Bonatti hut, which most other "highlights" trips miss out. There aren't any rest days on this trip, so we do grade it 8 out of 10 as we try to take the harder, quieter variants wherever we can.

Trip Summary

Day 1 Arrive in the Chamonix Valley

Arrive in the Chamonix Valley

Explore Chamonix - Chamonix

Day 2 - Lac Blanc

Lac Blanc trek

Day 3 Trek from Les Contamines to Les Chapieux

Transfer from Chamonix to Notre Dame de La Gorge - Notre Dame de La Gorge

Trek from Les Contamines to Les Chapieux - Les Chapieux

Day 4 Les Chapieux to Courmayeur

Trek from Les Chapieux to La Visaille - Courmayeur

Day 5 Trek from Courmayeur to Rifugio Bonatti

Trek from Courmayeur to the Bonatti hut

Rifugio Bonatti - Rifugio Bonatti

Day 6 Rifugio Bonatti to Champex

Trek from Rifugio Bonatti to La Fouly - La Fouly

Transfer to Champex - Champex

Day 7 Trek from Champex to Col de la Forclaz

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

Day 8 Trek from Col de la Forclaz to Argentière

Trek from Forclaz or Trient to Argentière - Argentière

Transfer to Chamonix

Day 9 Depart Chamonix

Option: Airport transfer

Day 1 Arrive in the Chamonix Valley



Arrive in the Chamonix Valley

The easiest way to arrive in Chamonix is by minibus transfer. Please aim to arrive in time for a 18:00 briefing at your accommodation (this normally means flights should arrive before 16:00).



Explore Chamonix

Your trip begins in Chamonix, a mountain town world-famous for its mountaineering history, and the dramatic scenery that greets you as you approach the valley is just a taste of the trip to come.

Overlooked by Mont Blanc, western Europe's highest mountain, and surrounded by jagged peaks and tumbling glaciers, this Alpine valley is breathtakingly beautiful.

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 your accommodation 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

Day 2 - Lac Blanc



Lac Blanc trek

We start our trip with a journey on the famous "Mont Blanc Express" train to Montroc. From here we hike up to the famous Lac Blanc via the Lacs des Chéserys, with simply the best views of Mont Blanc. We use a series of ladders and chains to make our way up to the lake – this is nothing to worry about and is not difficult!

We are in the heart of the Aiguilles Rouges nature reserve, and are often lucky enough to see ibex, chamois and marmottes. After a hard-earned refreshment at the Lac Blanc refuge, we descend to the Flégère and take the cable car to Les Praz, then transfer back to our hotel by bus or train, or if we still have enough energy, we can walk along the river all the way back to Chamonix.

Distance: 9 km / 5.6 miles

Ascent: 1000m / 3280 feet

Descent: 550m / 1800 feet

Approx walking time: 6 hours



Day 3 Trek from Les Contamines to Les Chapieux



Transfer from Chamonix to Notre Dame de La Gorge



Notre Dame de La Gorge

3782 Route de Notre Dame de la Gorge, Les Contamines-Montjoie, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, FR, 74170



Trek from Les Contamines to Les Chapieux

Today we have around 40 mins on the flat to reach the chapel at Notre Dame de la Gorge. Here we join the Roman road: it's a bit of a rude awakening with a steep uphill, but we soon get into our stride! We continue past the Chalet de Balme (if we're doing well, it's a perfect coffee stop!) and up to the Col de Bonhomme (2329m) for a well-earned lunch break. We then have a climbing traverse, often with snowy patches until mid-July, to the Col de la Croix de Bonhomme (2479m), from where we have a great view towards the Vanoise National Park. Next we have a 2 hour walk down to Les Chapieux, and stay either in an auberge or a chambre d'hôte, depending on availability.

This is one of the longest days on the TMB - it does feel quite hard because there's a long ascent, and it's only the second day so we haven't had time to acclimatise.....however, the day shouldn't pose any real problems and we take the climb slow and steady and split it into stages to make it perfectly manageable.

Distance: 19 km / 11.9 miles

Ascent: 1348m / 4450 feet

Descent: 960m / 3150 feet

Approx walking time: 8 hours

Accommodation: Auberge

Luggage access: Yes



Les Chapieux

Bourg-Saint-Maurice, RHÔNE-ALPES, FR, 73700

Day 4 Les Chapieux to Courmayeur



Trek from Les Chapieux to La Visaille

We take a newly-cut path up to Ville des Glaciers (in previous years the TMB took the tarmac road). There is usually the option to have a minibus transfer from Les Chapieux if you prefer (included). The leader will let you know about this. At Ville des Glaciers, if the farmer is on hand you might have the opportunity to see how the Beaufort cheese is made. After passing Refuge des Mottets, we start to climb more steeply up to our goal, the Col de La Seigne, at 2516m the 2nd highest pass on the Tour du Mont Blanc. We've reached the border with Italy!

From here we descend past the Elisabetta hut (we may divert here for lunch or coffee, depending on how we're doing for time) and the Lac de Combal to La Visaille, where we take a bus to the vibrant mountain town of Courmayeur.

Distance: 21km / 13 miles

Ascent: 1004m / 3300 feet

Descent: 850m / 2800 feet

Approx walking time: 6 hours

Accommodation: Hotel

Luggage access: Yes



Courmayeur
Aosta, IT, 11013

Day 5 Trek from Courmayeur to Rifugio Bonatti



Trek from Courmayeur to the Bonatti hut

We start the steep walk up to the Bertone hut and the Mont de la Saxe ridge. If the weather is good and there is not too much snow, we can take the lesser-travelled variant to the Mont de la Saxe ridge, up the Tête de la Tronche, and then down steeply to the Col Sapin. We then have a descent, followed by another climb to the Col Entre Deux Sauts: it's a fairly long, but really stunning day – there are usually not many people, and the scenery is breathtaking. We overnight at the delightful Rifugio Bonatti, from where you can watch the beautiful sunset behind Mont Blanc. Definitely one of life's special moments.

If the weather isn't so good, or if we want a more relaxing day, we can take a fabulous balcony path from the Bertone hut to the Bonatti, high above the Val Ferret. It is a shorter day, but by no means a "second choice", as the scenery is stunning.

Distance: 17km / 10.5 miles

Ascent: 1584m / 5200 feet

Descent: 940m / 3080 feet

Approx walking time: 7-8 hours

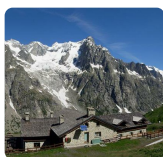
Accommodation: Mountain refuge

Luggage access: No



Rifugio Bonatti

This is one of our favourite huts in the alps and it's often fully booked. There is a limited selection of private rooms (twins or triples) which we offer to those who book early enough, but most of the accommodation is in dormitories.



Rifugio Bonatti

Courmayeur, Valle d'Aosta, IT, 11013
+39 0165 185 5523

Day 6 Rifugio Bonatti to Champex



Trek from Rifugio Bonatti to La Fouly

Today we start our day with a rising traverse, then ultimately descend to the head of the Val Ferret at Arnouva. From here our climb up the Grand Col Ferret begins. At 2537m it is the highest col on the official TMB route. We'll stop for our last Italian coffee at the Rifugio Elena, then from here we climb steadily to the col where we are rewarded with stunning views of the Grandes Jorasses, the Grand Combin and Mont Dolent (the summit of which is on the border of France, Switzerland and Italy). At the top of the col we cross over into Switzerland, where the scenery changes yet again.

If we're doing well for time we might stop for a coffee at La Peule. Here we leave the signposted TMB and head to La Fouly via a higher balcony path (or, in early season TMBs, the gullies might be full of snow in which case we take a straightforward track). La Fouly is a lovely alpine village with traditional Swiss "chocolate box" chalets.

Distance 20km / 12.5 miles

Ascent: 1128m / 3700 feet

Descent: 1580m / 5180 feet

Approx walking time: 6-7 hours

Accommodation: Simple hotel / auberge

Luggage access: Yes



La Fouly

Orsières, VALAIS, CH, 1944



Transfer to Champex

We take a short transfer to the pretty lakeside resort of Champex



Champex

Orsières, Valais, CH, 1938

Day 7 Trek from Champex to Col de la Forclaz



Trek from Champex to Col de la Forclaz or Trient

There are 2 options today. If we're feeling fit and the weather is good, we can consider taking the Fenêtre d'Arpette, the highest col on the TMB at 2665m. It's a fantastic route with stunning views of the Trient glacier.

If we want to be a little more relaxed, we can take the normal route via Bovine to the Col de la Forclaz - our guide will make the decision according to the weather conditions and fitness of the group. If we are staying in Trient, we continue a further 30 mins down to the valley floor.

Distance: 15 km / 9.3 miles

Ascent: 1480m (or 570m via Bovine)

Descent: 1760m (or 600m via Bovine)

Approx walking time: 8 hrs (or 6 hrs via Bovine)

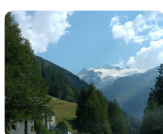
Accommodation: Simple hotel, usually with shared bathrooms

Luggage access: Yes



Col de la Forclaz

Trient, Valais, CH, 1929



Trient

Trient, VALAIS, CH

Day 8 Trek from Col de la Forclaz to Argentière



Trek from Forclaz or Trient to Argentière

Today our plan is to take another variant from the official TMB – depending on whether we start from Col de la Forclaz or Trient, we can take a choice of 2 lesser-travelled routes: either via Les Tseppes (from Trient) or via Les Grands (from Col de la Forclaz). Both routes are beautiful, have hardly any people taking them, offer better views than the normal TMB, and add around an hour to the usual route: it's well worth the extra time and effort.

If the weather is bad then we might just take the normal TMB. Either route takes us to the Col de Balme, where we are back in France at the head of the Chamonix valley. From here, we have some more choices. If the group is strong and the weather is good, we might do the Aiguillette des Posettes, and descend to the Chamonix valley at Tré-le-Champ, from where there's an hour's walk to Argentière along the river and through the old town. Alternatively we might descend directly to Le Tour, and take the Petit Balcon Nord into Argentière.

Distance: 18 km / 11 miles

Ascent: 1200m / 3940 ft

Descent: 1450m / 4760 ft

Approximate walking time 7-8 hrs

Accommodation: 3* hotel

Luggage access: Yes



Argentière

Chamonix, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, FR, 74400



Transfer to Chamonix

A short transfer takes us back to Chamonix for our final night.

Day 9 Depart Chamonix



Option: Airport transfer

Just let us know if you'd like us to organise airport transfers back to Geneva.

Trip Information & Documents



What's Included

- All accommodation (including arrival day and final evening)
- All breakfasts and evening meals
- All transport mentioned in the itinerary
- All cable cars that form part of the itinerary
- Daily luggage delivery (apart from any hut nights where vehicle access is not possible)
- Fully qualified and expert trekking guide (International Mountain Leader)



Not Included

- Flights
- Airport transfers
- Packed lunches
- Personal snacks and drinks
- Any transport, accommodation or additional expenses due to a participant being unable to complete the itinerary
- Mountain rescue / travel insurance

- Tips



Travelling to Chamonix

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

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 1 hour). Details of the different types of transfer as follows:

1. Private minibus transfer - door to door

Private transfers cost around 200 euros each way for up to 8 people. They pick you up from your flight, and drop you at your hotel. For a return journey from Chamonix to Geneva, they usually pick you up approximately 3 hours before your flight departure time. If you would like us to book your transfer for you, just let us know - we charge £195 each way for up to 8 people.

2. Shared minibus transfer - door to door

A shared transfer combines up to 12 other people on similarly-timed flights. You can expect to wait at the airport for up to 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. With a shared minibus transfer, each passenger is dropped off at their hotel. For the return journey, you are also picked up from your hotel, but you have no choice in the time. It could be anywhere between 3 to 5 hours before your flight, and you receive a text message the evening beforehand telling you what time your pick-up will be. Shared transfers usually cost around 32-45 euros, depending on the time of day and whether it is peak season or out of season. If you would like us to book it for you, just let us know - we charge £40 per person each way.

3. Scheduled bus service - Geneva Airport to Chamonix Sud bus stop

If you would like to save some money, then the best value transfer is a fixed bus service either by Oui Bus or Easy Bus - these only go to Chamonix Sud bus stop, so do bear in mind that you then have to reach your Chamonix hotel with all your luggage.

Booking your transfer

If you would prefer to book your own transfers, it's easy to do online and you'll 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 recommend Mountain Drop Offs, and Cloud 9 Adventure clients normally receive a small discount (www.mountaindropoffs.com). 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.

We have had great service from: Haute Transfer, Mountain Drop Offs, 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.

A warning about Easy Bus: we have had terrible service from them and would advise steering clear of them unless it is your only option! There is no customer service - we've almost never experienced an Easy Bus turn up on time and have had to waste money on last-minute private transfers in order not to miss flights. No refund from Easy Bus even though on each occasion we've used them, they have never turned up (and we waited an hour).

A warning about Cham Express: looks cheap to start off with but once they've hit you with a fee for luggage, then tax, it's often no different from the other companies. They do show online availability, which is good. If you are booking a Chamonix to Geneva journey, then they give you a half-hour window rather than a fixed departure time - you have to stand in the street waiting, and if you're not there they leave without you, whereas all the other companies will try and look for you if they can't find you.

Train from Geneva 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!

Taxi from Geneva to Chamonix

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

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 from Geneva to Chamonix are slow (around 3-4 hours), so it is still best to take the train from Geneva Cornavin to Geneva Airport (takes 7 mins, trains run every 15 mins), and then use a minibus transfer. Alternatively you can arrange a private minibus to pick you up from Geneva main station to Chamonix.

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



TMB Guided Group Trek - What to Expect

The trekking

The trekking is relatively strenuous, but we follow good quality trails all the way round. A number of days have over 1000m of ascent and descent, but we walk at a steady pace so that we can enjoy the walking and the scenery. This trip is suitable for people with a good level of fitness who hike regularly. Your luggage is transferred for you for each day (apart from one, where we stay in a mountain hut with no vehicle access), so you only need to carry a day pack.

Accommodation

Wherever possible we will be in good quality, comfortable hotels, and in most of the hotels we book rooms on a twin-share basis. We always try to book rooms with en-suite facilities, but there are a couple of places where this isn't possible (notably Les Chapieux, Bonatti and Trient/Forclaz). The Bonatti hut does not have en-suite facilities, and the only other places where this is difficult are at Les Chapieux and at Trient/Forclaz - there are hardly any en-suite rooms so we book what we can.

The Tour du Mont Blanc is becoming increasingly popular, and accommodation is limited in some places. We book accommodation the moment a trip is confirmed, and the earlier we book, the more choice we have. Our rule of thumb is to try to book private rooms rather than dorms, and to always try to book the better quality establishments. We allocate the rooms according to who books first.

We sometimes take transfers to stay in nicer places if our first choice was full (eg. we'll often transfer from Les Chapieux to either Bourg St Maurice or Roselend, and from Forclaz to Vallorcine). And we sometimes stay at Les Mottets if we can't get rooms at Les Chapieux.

We have 1 night in a mountain hut: the Rifugio Bonatti, one of our favourite huts in the Alps. We try to book small private rooms here rather than dorms, but they are often booked a year in advance so it does depend at which point the trip guarantees. There are no en-suite rooms at the hut. There are no single rooms at the hut, so if you've paid a single supplement, it doesn't apply here. There are hot showers, which are limited to a few minutes. If we are in dorms, these are mixed-sex dorms of anything from 10-20 people.

Food

All breakfasts and dinners are included. We tend to eat in the hotel or refuge where we are staying most nights, but occasionally we may go out to a restaurant. We will experience excellent local food from France, Italy and Switzerland.

Packed lunches are not included: the reason being to offer more flexibility: if we want to have a sit-down lunch in one of the refuges, for example. Each day we can either order lunch via our hotel, or stop in a shop or bakery to top-up on snacks: our leader will advise on this.

Drinks are not included, but you can normally order beer, wine and soft drinks at all hotels including the mountain refuges.

Hotel breakfasts are continental style. Breakfasts in the mountain huts & simpler auberges tend to be more basic and usually consist of tea, coffee, bread, jam and cereal.

Tap water is drinkable on this trip.

Luggage delivery

We deliver your main luggage each day that we have vehicle access (which is every day apart from the Bonatti hut). Please ensure that your main kit bag weighs no more than 15kg. Luggage is normally picked up from 08:00 and delivered by 17:30 - we use a luggage delivery company rather than a private driver so it is not possible to ride with the baggage vehicle.

Money and Tipping

There are cash machines in Chamonix, Les Contamines, Courmayeur, La Fouly, Champex and Argentière. Mountain huts do not normally accept cards, but most of the hotels do. Lunches cost around €12-15 per day if we order them in the hotels, but we can stop at shops en-route to make our own lunches for considerably less. A coffee or soft drink costs around €3-5, and a beer around €5-7. Part of this trip is in Switzerland, so it could be useful to have some Swiss francs, or you can use the cashpoints in La Fouly or Champex. It is also possible to use euros in Switzerland, but you will normally receive your change in francs, and it won't be a very good exchange rate. Around €200-250 per person should be enough to cover your personal expenses but it does depend how many coffees, beers and wines you consume!

If we eat in a restaurant or stop for coffees, we normally round up the amount to leave a tip, but usually only if the service has been good.

Tipping your guide is the accepted way of saying thank you for excellent service. Do remember that tipping is voluntary and should only be done if you were pleased with the service: 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

'Tour of Mont Blanc', Kev Reynolds, Cicerone

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

'Cham' – Jonathan Trigell

The 1:25,000 IGN maps 3630 Ouest and 3531 Est cover the TMB. If you just wanted one map as a general overview then the 1:50,000 IGN Tour du Mont Blanc map is excellent. Please note that you are not expected to carry maps, it's just in case you are interested! If you would like to order any maps then just let us know and we can add it to your booking.



Electric Supply - France, Switzerland & Italy

The electricity sockets in France, Switzerland and Italy are all slightly different.

France is a standard European 2-pin plug (left-hand picture).

Switzerland uses "Type J" with 3 pins (2nd picture) - careful, a round plug won't usually fit into these sockets.

Italy uses "Type L" with 3 horizontally-aligned pins (3rd picture)

All countries are 220-240V.

All European travel plugs should fit into the French sockets, but with the Swiss & Italian sockets you need to make sure that the pins are slightly thinner and will fit (a type C plug will not fit a Swiss or Italian socket). An adaptor that is the same shape as the Swiss socket will be your best bet (4th picture).

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 £4.75 per day, or £6.75 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 www.ehic.uk.com. 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.