



CLOUD 9 ADVENTURE



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Classic Tour du Mont Blanc 10 day Self-Guided

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

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

As well as Mont Blanc, you 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 Classic TMB does the route in a very comfortable way, using the occasional cable car and transfer to keep the trip to 10 days of trekking and to enable you to take some lesser-travelled variants from time to time.

Trip Summary

Day 1 Arrive in the Chamonix Valley

Arrive in the Chamonix Valley

Explore Chamonix or Les Houches

Sample 3* hotel, Chamonix: Hotel Oustalet - Hôtel L'Oustalet, Chamonix

Sample 4* hotel, Chamonix: Refuge des Aiglons - Le Refuge des Aiglons, Chamonix

Sample 3*hotel - Les Houches - Hôtel du Bois, Les Houches

Sample 5* hotel, Chamonix: Hotel Mont Blanc - Hotel Mont Blanc, Chamonix

Day 2 - Les Houches to Les Contamines

Hike from Les Houches to Les Contamines - Les Contamines-Montjoie

Hotel La Chemenaz, Les Contamines - Hotel La Chemenaz, Les Contamines

Day 3 Les Contamines to Les Chapieux

Hike from Les Contamines to Les Chapieux - Les Chapieux

Day 4 Les Chapieux to Courmayeur

Hike from Les Chapieux to La Visaille - Courmayeur

Sample 2* hotel, Courmayeur: Hotel Edelweiss - Hotel Edelweiss Courmayeur

Sample 3* hotel, Courmayeur: Bouton d'Or - Hotel Bouton d'Or, Courmayeur

Sample 4* hotel, Courmayeur: Hotel Cresta et Duc - Hotel Cresta et Duc, Courmayeur

Sample 5* hotel, Courmayeur: Royal E Golf - Grand Hotel Royal & Golf

Day 5 Trek from Courmayeur to Rifugio Bonatti

Option - Rest day in Courmayeur - add a day to your trip - Pré Saint Didier, Skyway Mont Blanc

Hike from Courmayeur to the Bonatti hut

Rifugio Bonatti - Rifugio Bonatti

Day 6 Rifugio Bonatti to La Fouly

Hike from Rifugio Bonatti to La Fouly - La Fouly

Hotel Edelweiss, La Fouly - Hôtel Edelweiss, La Fouly

Day 7 Trek from La Fouly to Champex

Hike from La Fouly to Champex - Champex-Lac

Hotel Splendide, Champex - Hotel Splendide, Champex

Hotel Alpina - Hotel Alpina, Champex

Day 8 Champex to Col de La Forclaz

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

Hotel du Col de la Forclaz - Hotel du Col de la Forclaz

Day 9 Trek from Col de la Forclaz to Argentière

Hike from Forclaz or Trient to Argentière

Hotel La Couronne 3* - Hotel de la Couronne, Argentière

Hotel Montana: 4* option - Hotel Montana, Argentière

Day 10 Argentière to the Flégère via the Lac Blanc

Hike from Argentière via the Lac Blanc to the Flégère, then down to Chamonix

Day 11 Brévent summit to Les Houches

Hike from La Flégère to Les Houches - Les Houches

Transfer back to Chamonix

Day 12 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.

We recommend Mountain Drop Offs for shared transfers: Visit www.mountaindropoffs.com and use the discount code CLOUD13 - the code will work for normal shared transfers, and for private transfers. For out of hours transfers (before 08:00 and after 19:00), the code does not apply. We have found the discount code to be slightly temperamental - if this is the case then just email info@mountaindropoffs.com and they should be able to help you.



Explore Chamonix or Les Houches

Decide whether you'd like to stay in Chamonix (it's a bigger town, lots going on, lots of places to eat out, and lots of shops), or whether you'd like to start in Les Houches (it's the official start point of the TMB and hotels are slightly cheaper here, but it's a bit quieter and if you did want a wider range of outdoor shops, you'd want to head into Chamonix).

You can check-in to your accommodation any time but you can't usually access your room until around 4pm. If you do arrive early, it's no problem to leave your bags at the hotel and explore the famous mountain town of Chamonix. There's a wealth of outdoor shops so you should have a little time for last minute supplies before your trip. It's easy to travel around in the Chamonix valley (ask your accommodation for a Guest Card - travel in the valley is free with one of these).

Les Houches is a long, thin village with a couple of shops in the centre, but Chamonix is much bigger.



Sample 3* hotel, Chamonix: Hotel Oustalet

A great family-run hotel in a quiet location in the centre of Chamonix. B&B only.



Hôtel L'Oustalet, Chamonix

330 Rue du Lyret, Chamonix-Mont-Blanc, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, FR, 74400
+33 4 50 55 54 99



Sample 4* hotel, Chamonix: Refuge des Aiglons

This is the best value of the Chamonix 4* hotels and we can often include this instead of the 3* option if booked in time.

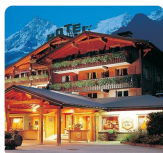


Le Refuge des Aiglons, Chamonix

270 Avenue de Courmayeur, Chamonix-Mont-Blanc, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, FR, 74400
+334 50 55 90 93



Sample 3*hotel - Les Houches



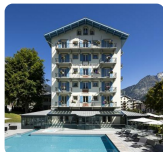
Hôtel du Bois, Les Houches

475 Avenue des Alpagnes, Les Houches, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, FR, 74310

+33 4 50 54 50 35



Sample 5* hotel, Chamonix: Hotel Mont Blanc



Hotel Mont Blanc, Chamonix

62 Allée du Majestic, Chamonix-Mont-Blanc, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, FR, 74400

+33 4 50 53 05 64

Day 2 - Les Houches to Les Contamines



Hike from Les Houches to Les Contamines

We recommend starting the day with a journey on the Bellevue cable car from Les Houches - it makes the day a sensible distance, and then makes it feasible to do the Col de Tricot variant to reach the Chalet de Miages, and also cuts out a 2 hour walk uphill on a track.

For folk who want to do "Every Step of The Way", it's still possible to hike up without using the cable car, but it makes for rather a long first day.

After reaching the Col de Voza, you then cross the spectacular suspension bridge at the foot of the Bionnassay glacier, from where you have several route choices to reach Les Contamines. We usually recommend crossing the Col de Tricot, with a coffee stop at the spectacularly-located Chalet de Miage (at the foot of the Dômes de Miage), but if the weather is bad then you can take a lower level route through the scenic villages of Bionnassay, Champex and La Gruvaz.

Distance: 15 km / 9.4 miles

Ascent: 837m / 2746 ft

Descent: 1520m / 4986 ft

Approx walking time: 6-7 hours

Luggage access





Les Contamines-Montjoie

Les Contamines-Montjoie, RHONE-ALPES, FR, 74170



Hotel La Chemenaz, Les Contamines

La Chemenaz, near Les Contamines' ski lifts, has cosy wood-clad rooms with spectacular views from their balconies. It's a chalet-styled hotel with a sauna, hot tub and heated outdoor swimming pool. Its La Trabla restaurant has a welcoming log fire and serves local dishes such as raclette. There's a free shuttle bus into the centre of town.



Hotel La Chemenaz, Les Contamines

10 Allée de Nant Rouge, Les Contamines-Montjoie, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, FR, 74170

+33 4 50 47 02 44

Day 3 Les Contamines to Les Chapieux



Hike from Les Contamines to Les Chapieux

Today you start with around 40 mins to an hour on the flat, following the river, to reach the chapel at Notre Dame de la Gorge. Here you join the Roman road: it's a bit of a rude awakening with a steep uphill, but it doesn't take long to get into a rhythm!

You continue past the Chalet de Balme (if you're doing well for time, it's a perfect coffee stop!) and up to the Col de Bonhomme (2329m) for a well-earned lunch break. Next is a climbing traverse, often with snowy patches until mid-July, to the Col de la Croix de Bonhomme (2479m), from where you have a great view towards the Vanoise National Park. After this there is a 2 hour walk down to Les Chapieux, where you can 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 you haven't had time to acclimatise.....however, the day shouldn't pose any real problems, especially if you take the climb slowly 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



Les Chapieux

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

Day 4 Les Chapieux to Courmayeur



Hike from Les Chapieux to La Visaille

There is now 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 (costs around 4€ per person and your accommodation will organise this for you if you wish).

After passing Refuge des Mottets, you'll start to climb more steeply up to your goal, the Col de La Seigne, at 2516m the 2nd highest pass on the Tour du Mont Blanc. You've reached the border with Italy!

From here you descend past the Elisabetta hut (you can divert here for lunch or coffee if you like) to La Visaille, where you take a bus to the vibrant mountain town of Courmayeur.

Distance: 21km / 13 miles

Ascent: 1004m / 3300 feet

Descent: 850m / 2800

Approx walking time: 6 hours



Courmayeur

Aosta, IT, 11013



Sample 2* hotel, Courmayeur: Hotel Edelweiss

This is a family-run hotel in central Courmayeur. The rooms are clean and simple, but the service is equivalent to 4*.



Hotel Edelweiss Courmayeur

42 Via Guglielmo Marconi, Courmayeur, Valle d'Aosta, IT, 11013

+39 0165 841590



Sample 3* hotel, Courmayeur: Bouton d'Or

At Courmayeur's family run Bouton d'Or, enjoy Alpine-styled accommodation and memorable views of the Chetif and Checrouit mountains. Local ski slopes are within a kilometre. Look forward to warming wood panelling, traditional carvings, colourful rugs, vintage Alpine art and a fantastic, hearty breakfast to set you up for the day.

This hotel offers breakfast only, so the evening meal is not included tonight - you can go out to eat in one Courmayeur's many excellent restaurants.



Hotel Bouton d'Or, Courmayeur

Strada Statale 26, 10
+39 0165 846729



Sample 4* hotel, Courmayeur: Hotel Cresta et Duc

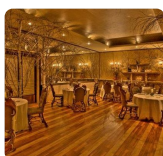


Hotel Cresta et Duc, Courmayeur

Via Circonvallazione, 7,
+39 0165 842585



Sample 5* hotel, Courmayeur: Royal E Golf



Grand Hotel Royal & Golf

Via Roma 87, Courmayeur, Valle d'Aosta, Italia, 11013
+39 0165 831611

Day 5 Trek from Courmayeur to Rifugio Bonatti



Option - Rest day in Courmayeur - add a day to your trip

Courmayeur is a great place for a rest day - you can visit the outdoor swimming pool above Dolonne (half way up the mountain), or take the famous revolving Skyway cable car for outstanding views of Mont Blanc and the Vallée Blanche from the Italian side. Or relax and visit the thermal baths at Pré St Didier (a 5 minute bus ride). Or simply enjoy the shops, gelato and atmosphere of Courmayeur.



Pré Saint Didier

Pre' Saint Didier, VALLE D'AOSTA, IT, 11010



Skyway Mont Blanc

48 Strada Statale 26, Courmayeur, Valle d'Aosta, IT, 11013
0165 89925



Hike from Courmayeur to the Bonatti hut

The day begins with a steep walk up from Courmayeur to the Bertone hut, which is a great little coffee stop (or lunch, if you decide to have a late start from Courmayeur).

From here, you have 2 choices: either the balcony route (signposted TMB), or the Mont de la Saxe ridge, a longer, more spectacular variant.

If the weather is good and you're feeling energetic, then the Mont de la Saxe ridge offers incredible views of Mont Blanc. You climb up to the summit of the Tête de la Tronche, and then down steeply to the Col Sapin. From here you descend into the Armina valley before climbing again to the Col Entre Deux Sauts. It's a fairly long, but really stunning day. There are not usually many people, and the scenery is breathtaking.

If you prefer an easier route, and a relaxed lunch at the Bertone, then you can take the official TMB route, along a spectacular balcony path. The views just don't stop: along the whole route between Bertone and Bonatti, you're directly opposite Mont Blanc and the Grand Jorasses, high above the Val Ferret. This is one of my favourite days of the TMB - whichever route you decide to take.

Mont de la Saxe Route:

Distance: 17km / 10.5 miles

Ascent: 1584m / 5200 feet

Descent: 940m / 3080 feet

Approx walking time: 7-8 hours

Balcony Route:

Distance: 12 km / 7.5 miles

Ascent: 860m / 2820 feet

Descent: 700m / 2296 feet

Approx walking time: 4-5 hours

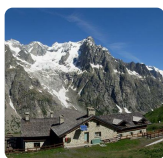
Accommodation: Mountain refuge

Luggage access: No



Rifugio Bonatti

This is one of our favourite huts in the alps and it's usually 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 La Fouly



Hike from Rifugio Bonatti to La Fouly

Today starts with a rising traverse, then ultimately descends to the head of the Val Ferret at Arnua. From here your climb up the Grand Col Ferret begins. At 2537m it is the highest col on the official TMB route. You can stop for a final Italian coffee at the Rifugio Elena, then from here, you climb steadily to the col and 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 you cross over into Switzerland, where the scenery changes yet again.

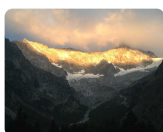
If you're doing well for time you can stop for a coffee at La Peule. Here you can choose to leave the signposted TMB and head to La Fouly via a higher balcony path (or, in early season TMBs, the gullies might be full of snow in which case you can take a straightforward track). La Fouly is a lovely alpine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

Distance 20km / 12.5 miles

Ascent: 1128m / 3700 feet

Descent: 1580m / 5180 feet

Approx 6-7 hours



La Fouly

Orsières, VALAIS, CH, 1944



Hotel Edelweiss, La Fouly

The 3* Hotel Edelweiss is in the centre of charming La Fouly. Renovated in 2018, the hotel offers a warm and relaxing stay with its cosy bar, and fantastic views of the glacier de l'A Neuve from the terrace.

Marielle and Christophe run the hotel. You will find your luggage in one of the little huts to the right of the front door, and the boot room is just beyond the huts. You won't be able to wear your hiking boots in the hotel, so best to leave your boots in the boot room and change into comfy shoes before trying to check in!



Hôtel Edelweiss, La Fouly

Orsières, Valais, CH, 1944

+41 27 783 26 21

Day 7 Trek from La Fouly to Champex



Hike from La Fouly to Champex

A much shorter day has you winding through beautiful Swiss alpine meadows, tiny rural villages and finally up to the lovely alpine resort of Champex, nestled alongside the lake that gives it its name.

Distance 16 km / 10 miles

Ascent 711m / 2330 ft

Descent 855m / 2805 ft

Approx walking time 5 hours

Luggage access



Champex-Lac

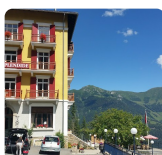
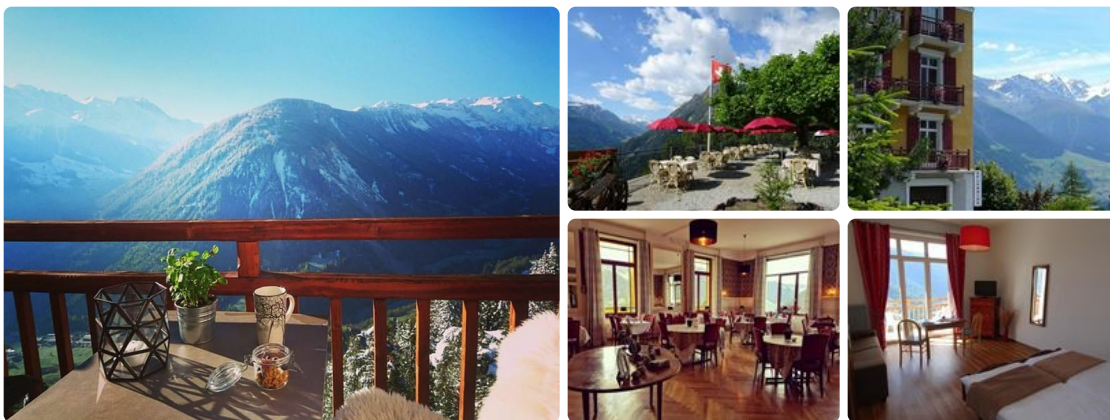
Orsières, Valais, CH, 1938



Hotel Splendide, Champex

This is a lovely, 3* family-run hotel perched on the hillside overlooking the valley, and around 10 mins walk from the centre of Champex. We love the high ceilings, the charming dining room, and the magnificent views towards the Grand Combin from the terrace: the best place in Champex for a post-trek beer.

The Hotel Splendide has been in the Lonfat family for 5 generations.



Hotel Splendide, Champex

Route du Signal, Orsières, Valais, CH, 1938

+41 27 783 11 45



Hotel Alpina

This is my favourite hotel in Champex. A real gem, and the photos do not do it justice. It's a small, family-run hotel with just 6 rooms. The food is superb. Early booking is the only way to secure rooms here!



Hotel Alpina, Champex

32 Route du Signal, Orsières, VS, CH, 1938

+41 27 783 18 92

Day 8 Champex to Col de La Forclaz



Hike from Champex to Col de la Forclaz or Trient

There are 2 options today. If you're feeling fit and the weather is good, you 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 you want to be a little more relaxed, you can take the normal route via Bovine to the Col de la Forclaz. If you are staying in Trient, then you continue a further 30 minutes down to the valley floor.

The choice of Forclaz or Trient is usually made according to the best rooms that are available. At Forclaz there are a couple of rooms with en-suite facilities, and at Trient there are no rooms with private facilities.

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)

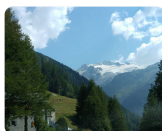
Accommodation: Auberge, dinner included

Luggage access



Col de la Forclaz

Trient, Valais, CH, 1929



Trient

Trient, VALAIS, CH



Hotel du Col de la Forclaz



Hotel du Col de la Forclaz

Col de la Forclaz, Trient, Valais, Suisse, 1929

+41 27 722 26 88

Day 9 Trek from Col de la Forclaz to Argentière



Hike from Forclaz or Trient to Argentière

Today you have the option to take another variant from the official TMB – depending on whether you start from Col de la Forclaz or Trient, you 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 or you want a shorter day, then you might just take the normal TMB. Either route takes you to the Col de Balme, where you are back in France at the head of the Chamonix valley. From here, you have some more choices. If you are feeling strong and the weather is good, you 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 you could 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: Hotel, dinner included

Luggage access



Hotel La Couronne 3*



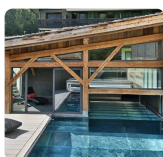
Hotel de la Couronne, Argentière

285 rue Charlet Straton, Argentière, FR, 74400

+33 450 540 002



Hotel Montana: 4* option



Hotel Montana, Argentière

24 Clos du Montana, Chamonix-Mont-Blanc, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, FR, 74400

+33 450 541 499

Day 10 Argentière to the Flégère via the Lac Blanc



Hike from Argentière via the Lac Blanc to the Flégère, then down to Chamonix

From either Argentière or Tré-le-Champ, you climb up towards the Col des Montets. From here, you hike up to the famous Lac Blanc via the Lac des Chéserys, with simply the best views of Mont Blanc. You can either take the route via the ladders taking you more directly to the Lac des Chéserys, or you can take a slightly longer route that zig-zags up from the Col des Montets.

Either route is spectacular and takes you through the heart of the Aiguilles Rouges nature reserve, and you are often lucky enough to see ibex, chamois and marmottes. After a hard-earned refreshment at the Lac Blanc refuge, you can descend to the Flégère.

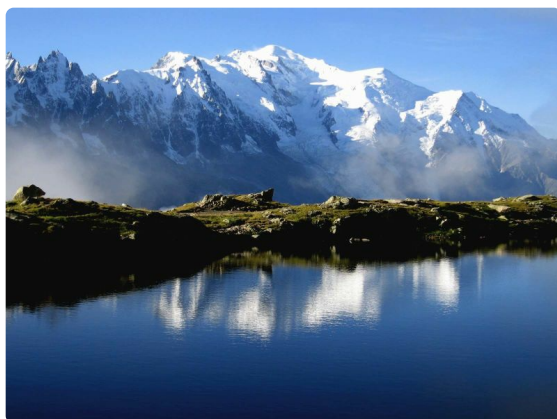
From the Flégère you normally take the cable car down to Les Praz, and walk along the river to Chamonix to stay in a hotel, but it is also possible to stay in the Flégère refuge if you prefer (it's fairly basic and doesn't have private rooms).

Distance 9km / 5.6 miles

Ascent 1000m / 3280 feet

Descent 550m / 1800 feet

Approx time 6 hours



Day 11 Brévent summit to Les Houches



Hike from La Flégère to Les Houches

Today's a long day so we would recommend as early a start as possible. If you stayed in Chamonix, you take the cable car back up to where you left off yesterday.

From the Flégère you take the famous Grand Balcon Sud, a wonderful balcony trail with Mont Blanc views the whole way. You then climb up to the Brévent summit - a steep but beautiful climb with 2 short ladder sections. This part often isn't possible in June due to snow, so you should modify the itinerary accordingly if this is the case.

From the Brévent summit there is a 3 hour descent to Les Houches. It's long, but it really is a beautiful day trekking.

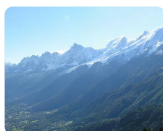
There are various cable car options for those wishing to shorten the day.

Distance 17 km / 10.5 miles

Ascent 772m / 2530 feet

Descent 1546m / 5070 feet

Approx 8 hours



Les Houches

Les Houches, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, FR, 74310



Transfer back to Chamonix

You take a short bus or train transfer back to Chamonix at the end of the trek.

Day 12 Depart Chamonix



Our trip finishes after breakfast this morning.



Option: Airport transfer

We usually recommend Mountain Drop Offs for airport transfers from the Chamonix valley to Geneva.

Use discount code CLOUD13

Trip Information & Documents



What's Included

- All accommodation
- All breakfasts
- Evening meals (apart from in Chamonix and Courmayeur)

- Luggage delivery each day (apart from the Bonatti hut night where no luggage access is possible)
- One set of 3 x 1:25,000 maps & 1 x guidebook per pair
- Detailed notes with our personal lunch recommendations, and extra route notes and transport information not found in the guide book.
- Office support from our local Chamonix office, staffed by guides who know every step of the route.



Not Included

- Flights
- Airport transfers (we can add this to the booking if required)
- Evening meals in Chamonix or Courmayeur
- Packed lunches
- Buses, trains or taxis
- Cable cars
- Any transport or accommodation due to a participant being unable to complete the itinerary
- Mountain Rescue/Travel insurance
- Personal snacks and drinks
- Tips



Travelling to the Chamonix Valley

- **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 per person, 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, Les Houches or Argentière hotel with all your luggage. Personally I would only do this if my hotel was very near the Chamonix Sud bus stop.

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 numerous occasion that we've used them, they have failed to turn up (and we waited an hour). We only use them if there really isn't anything else.

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 Luggage delivery

We have put some luggage tags and cable ties in your envelope at the hotel reception. Please ensure you put the luggage labels on your bags, and ask the reception where is the best place for you to leave it. Do explain that Taxi Besson will be collecting the luggage this morning.

Taxi Besson will add their own luggage labels as well as ours - please make sure you keep these on for the duration of your trip - very important as each group has an individual symbol. They deliver hundreds of bags every day so rely on this symbol. Let us know if anything happens to it!

Remember to have your luggage ready for 08:00 each day - this is very important: if it's not there, they don't usually wait.

They normally deliver by around 5pm each day, so don't panic if you have arrived early and it isn't there yet. If it has reached 5pm, please ask your hotel reception, or us, to call Taxi Besson asap so that we can maximise the window between 5pm-6pm where they are still in the office to see what has happened to it. We've only written this just in case - we've only ever had one bag not turn up, and that was resolved swiftly.

Please note that your luggage is kept in hotel rooms and open storage areas. We have never had a problem with anything going missing from anyone's luggage, but it would still be foolish to transport anything of value - we cannot be held responsible for something going missing.

The system relies on luggage being transported between hotel receptions and storage rooms which are often not locked. In tiny mountain hamlets, crime hasn't been an issue. But if you have something that you are particularly worried about, it's best to leave it securely stored in the safe at the first/last hotel, or carry it on you.



TMB Self-Guided - What to Expect

The trekking

The trekking is relatively strenuous, but the TMB follows good quality trails all the way round. A number of days have over 1000m of ascent and descent, but if you walk at a steady pace this should pose no problem. This trip is suitable for regular hikers and people with a good level of fitness. Your luggage is transferred for you each day (apart from one, where you stay in a mountain hut with no vehicle access), so you only need to carry a day pack.

Accommodation

Wherever possible we book good quality, comfortable hotels, and in most of the hotels we can book a twin room. In Les Chapieux, Rifugio Bonatti & Trient, we are limited to what is available and sometimes it has to be dorms, but we will let you know before you commit to the trip if this is the case. We always try for private rooms but they are usually booked a year in advance so it will depend at what point you booked. You have 1 night in a mountain hut: the Rifugio Bonatti, which is one of the nicest mountain huts in the Alps. There are showers in the refuge but they are limited to a few minutes – and aren't always warm! The refuge serves good Italian food, and there is a beautiful view.

Food

All breakfasts and most evening meals are included. Each night you usually eat in the hotel or refuge where we are staying, and will experience excellent local food from France, Italy and Switzerland.

Packed lunches are not included, but each day you can either order lunch via your hotel, or stop in a shop or bakery to top up on snacks.

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

If you have booked 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 15 kg.

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 usually possible to ride with the baggage vehicle.

Money

There are cash machines at Geneva airport, Chamonix, Les Contamines, Courmayeur, La Fouly and Champex. Mountain huts do not normally accept cards, but most of the hotels do. Lunches cost around €12-15 per day if you order them in the hotels, but you can stop at shops en-route to make our own lunches for considerably less. A coffee or soft drink costs around €3-4, and a beer around €5-7. Bottled water can be expensive but you can usually fill up with tap water. Part of this trip is in Switzerland, so it could be useful to have some Swiss francs, or you can use the cashpoint 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 per person should be enough to cover your personal expenses but it does depend how many coffees, beers and wines you consume!

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 A1 map also covers the route.



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 - Self-Guided 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, as your deposit is non-refundable. 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 5€ per day, or 8€ per day for US and the rest of the world. Just let us know if you'd like to add this to your booking.

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 allows you to be treated on the same basis as a resident of the country you are visiting, 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.

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 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 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. 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.



Tour du Mont Blanc Kit List - Self-Guided

Essential items:

Rucksack – approx. 30-40L - for you to carry each day

Kit bag or suitcase - for your main luggage to be transported

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, you'll need boots as well 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).

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 really 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 (essential as you may spend some time walking on snow)

Suncream (small bottle to save weight)

Lip protection (with sun protection) 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 – everywhere else provides towels.

Wash kit – Bring whatever you like for wash kit - but for any refuge nights where you have to carry it, 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

Basic first aid kit – you should bring a small first aid kit containing plasters, blister treatment, dressings & tape, bandages, painkillers & diarrhea treatment (rehydration sachets & immodium)

Compass

Whistle

Mobile phone - in case of emergency

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 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, especially if you want to have a wander round Courmayeur or Champex.

Hiking Trainers – it can be nice to give your feet a break from your walking boots on some days.

Umbrella

Earplugs

Snacks – not essential as you 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 swimming pools or saunas

Travel kettle, mug & tea bags / coffee - it is not common for hotels in continental Europe to provide tea and coffee-making facilities in the rooms

Flask

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. Every time this happens, we meet people who have been really surprised and caught out by not having the right kit - don't let it be you!

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 a good idea to be able to put your waterproof trousers on without having to remove 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.