



Chamonix Mountain Walking (Self-Guided)

Please email us at info@alpineexploratory.com or call us on +44 (0)1942 826 270 to chat about this holiday. You'll find all the latest information at www.alpineexploratory.com/holidays/chamonix-mountain-walking.html.



Les Drus from beneath Montenvers

About these Holiday Notes

These Holiday Notes help you decide whether this holiday is right for you. Before your trip we send you final detailed information.

Details

Start Chamonix or Argentière
Finish Chamonix or Argentière
Region Mont Blanc, French Alps
Country France
Length 3-6 walking days and 4-7 nights
Total distance To choice!
Typical day 15km (9.5 miles), 850m ascent
Highest altitude 2,525m
Grade Intermediate

Introduction

The Mont Blanc massif is arguably the most awe-inspiring in Western Europe. For mountain walkers the attractions of the whole region are immediately obvious; with views to Mont Blanc every day, walkers can reach many spectacular viewpoints.

Stay in the quiet village of Argentière or the main valley base of Chamonix. Both are well positioned as walking bases. We give you the choice between these alternative bases so that you can pick the type of surroundings that you prefer – village life or vibrant town.

This holiday also gives you the chance to make a short trek of 2 days, staying at a mountain hut with views across to Mont Blanc. This is entirely optional but might add an exciting element to your break. Walk up on the trails one day, visiting a high mountain lake *en route*, spend a cosy and convivial night in the hills with an evening meal included, before walking back down the next day by a different route.

Choose any length of stay – we suggest a long weekend of 4 nights or a week of 7 nights as ideas.

Everything is set up for walkers with a range of transportation, uplift (cable cars) and things to do.

Away from the more popular places there is plenty of quiet space to be found, and not just on the hillsides. Explore off the main paths in the bottom of the valley and you will soon find yourself in a very peaceful landscape.

Our approach

Your walks

Some walks aim for the top of the smaller mountains in the area, for example Aiguillette des Posettes. Others ascend to glacier viewpoints or include sections of the most amazing traversing paths (*balcons*) looking over the Mont Blanc massif. There are gentle walks exploring valley footpaths and woods. The excellent local buses, trains and cable cars in the Chamonix valley let you reach all the walks, but many walks will start from your base.

Rest or rainy days

There's a lively feel to the whole valley and to Argentière and Chamonix in particular. Any day off from walking can be filled with a number of alternative outdoor activities such as rafting, mountain biking, riding or climbing.

Routecards and maps

Each day you have a range of walking routes available to choose from, all explained in detail on your routecards. We give you the real maps for you to follow, not printouts or photocopies.

Getting there and back

Your holiday starts and ends in the Chamonix valley. Travel to and from Chamonix is not included in the holiday price - we leave it to you to make the arrangements that suit you best. Geneva is the most convenient airport with several transfer options available, for example the bus or a private transfer (1h 15m) or train (3h). Full information on flight and transfer options will be sent to you on booking.

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Argentière or Chamonix

Evening arrival in the Chamonix valley. There is plenty of scope for eating out at local restaurants.

Hotel at your valley base

Day 2: Lac Blanc

Try climbing to the famous Lac Blanc (2,350m) in the Aiguilles Rouges for some of the best views of Mont Blanc from its high position above the Arve valley. This is a classic walk in the region.

Hotel at your valley base

Day 3: Aiguillette des Posettes

For views of the whole Chamonix valley, climb the ridge of Aiguillette des Posettes (2,201m) which is near the Swiss border at the top of the valley. Views stretch far to the North and East into Switzerland as well as back to the Mont Blanc massif.

Hotel at your valley base

Day 4: Glacier d'Argentière

Climb from Argentière to the traversing path at Lognan, then take a detour for close-up views of the amazing seracs at the head of the glacier. In the afternoon take the traversing path across to another glacier viewpoint, this time over the Mer de Glace.

Hotel at your valley base

Day 5: Le Prarion

The narrow ridge of le Prarion above Les Houches gives wide views of the whole Aravis and Mont Blanc region. Ascend through forests, past the lovely *alpage* of Charousse, to the summit ridge. The peak is slightly detached from the main massif, making it a superb viewpoint.

Hotel at your valley base

Day 6: Chamonix valley walk

Pleasant footpaths abound in the Chamonix valley. Walk from Argentière downvalley to Chamonix along the Petit Balcon Sud, with views of les Drus in profile, then walk back up along the Petit Balcon Nord beside the river and through woods.

Hotel at your valley base

2-day hut alternative

Days 5 and 6

Spend the first day climbing up to your hut. The network of paths makes this a pleasure, although there's no getting away from the ascent! The day can be made as long or short as you choose, and it would be possible to walk up in a morning or an afternoon by the most direct route. Spend the night in contemplation of the scene, or in conversation with fellow guests, and enjoy a scenic walk back down to the valley the next day.

Day 7: Plan de l'Aiguille and Montenvers

The Aiguille du Midi cable car allows a last morning of breathtaking views to be had, before descending as far as the half-way

station and making a generally flat traverse to the famous glacial site of Montanvers above the Mer de Glace. Finish by dropping down to Chamonix through dense woods.

Hotel at your valley base

Day 8: Departure

Morning departure from Argentière or Chamonix.

Our usual schedule of accommodation might not be available, especially if there is not much time between booking and your trip starting. We will book accommodation as closely as possible to this itinerary and present you a schedule for you to check before we proceed.

Accommodation

This holiday stays in a choice of bases. Choose first from Chamonix and Argentière – Chamonix being the valley's main town and a lively, bustling centre for mountaineering and tourism, and Argentière being a much smaller place, a village up-valley from Chamonix with its own shops and eateries and a quieter atmosphere. Argentière and Chamonix are linked by excellent local buses and trains.

In either location, choose between 2-star and 3-star hotels. In Chamonix our 2-star hotel is a friendly, welcoming family-run establishment right in the town centre, and the 3-star is a smart central hotel with good facilities and another friendly welcome. In Argentière the 2-star hotel is again right in the village centre, has good standards and is a long-standing family hotel, whereas the 3-star is a very comfortable place with a swimming pool, a 5-minute walk from the village centre.

If you choose it, your night in the mountain hut will be a real experience typical of huts in the French Alps. Once the day walkers have gone back down to the valley, peace will descend properly and you can relax in a spectacular high mountain setting. Bedding and a set menu for the evening meal are provided. Accommodation is in dormitories.

Your info pack contains full details of your accommodation including contact details and directions.

The walking

Terrain

The massifs surrounding Mont Blanc are in many places quite steep. On the other hand there is almost always a good footpath. There will be some rockier sections higher up on some routes and you might encounter steep and loose ground and some sections of ladders and other aids to progress. In a small number of places on the trail you meet sections with ladders and other aids to progress. These should not present a problem to regular mountain walkers and are not *via ferrata* or climbing sections. In early summer there is a chance of snow patches lying on the higher paths.

Your own routes

While your routecards make up the walking for the trip, you are of course free to walk wherever you choose, taking side trips or going by a different route of your own choice. Please note that if you follow your own route you will have left the holiday for the duration.

Food

Meals included are all your breakfasts, plus your evening meal in the hut.

The Chamonix valley is in the Haute-Savoie region of France which is famous for its great family cooking and local specialities. The cheeses are particularly special and readily available.

You will have plenty of opportunity to buy food for lunches at the shops and supermarkets in Argentière and Chamonix. For eating out there is plenty of scope.

Insurance

Clients must have insurance to cover themselves for helicopter search & rescue, medical expenses and repatriation.

We recommend, but it is not compulsory, that you also have cover for personal liability, cancellation and your baggage and money.

You might find that your annual multi-trip travel insurance covers these items already. We will send you details of suitable insurance policies on booking.

Passports and visas

UK passport holders do not need a visa to enter France. Please check that your passport is in date.

Weather

The weather in the Mont Blanc area between July and mid-September is generally highly suitable for Alpine walking.

While snowfall is possible on higher ground all year round, it is unlikely in July and August. Higher up, snow patches might remain in early July, but should not pose problems.

July and August are commonly the hottest months but with greater amounts of rain and greater risk of afternoon thunder storms; and September will again be a quieter time as the season winds down, with some beautifully clear days.

Thunderstorms are a particular danger in high summer, occurring most often in the afternoons.

This all means that it is sensible to come equipped and expecting all the types of weather that might be experienced in a typical summer in the UK: from heavy rain storms with a chill in the air, to hot sunshine.

Equipment

You will need the usual equipment for mountain walking in the Alps. Especially important are good walking boots, waterproofs and sun protection.

No extra kit is needed for the hut night as all bedding is provided.

We will send you an equipment list on booking. Please also see the Equipment page of our website for more information.

Local expenses

Local expenses include food and drink other than breakfast, which is included, plus any local transport, cable cars, attractions and extras.

Guided days

Hire a professional mountain leader to join you on this self-guided holiday, for one or more days. A leader helps plan and carry out each day's walking and adds interest to your holiday by pointing out local features. Please contact us for prices and more information.

Groups

Walk by yourself or in your own group, or see if we can match you up with other like-minded walkers on the same holiday. Any group will be a maximum of 8 people.

Hazards

Health

France and the Mont Blanc region do not require tourists to take any vaccinations. However, it is recommended to keep tetanus vaccines up to date.

Safety

This is adventure travel! This holiday takes you to some wild and remote areas, in particular some areas of upland mountains where navigation can be difficult in poor weather. The weather can also be a hazard in itself.

During any walking, whether following a routecard or making your own route, you are responsible for your own actions and safety and you should join the trip with suitable skills, experience and equipment.

Further information

Please email us with any questions at info@alpineexploratory.com.

Disclaimer

This information is given in good faith and is believed to be correct at the time of issue. Alpine Exploratory cannot be liable for any loss or injury incurred.