



Chamonix Mountain Walking (Self-Guided)

Please email us at info@alpineexploratory.com or call us on +44 (0)1729 823 197 to chat about this holiday. You'll find all the latest information at www.alpineexploratory.com/holidays/chamonix-mountain-walking.html.



Les Drus from the Chamonix valley

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 Argentière
Finish Chamonix
Region Mont Blanc, French Alps
Country France
Length 6 walking days and 7 nights
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.

This trip gives an insight into many aspects of the Chamonix area. The itinerary suggested here involves four bases including one night at a hut, with walks from all points, thus quickly introducing you to the valley from all angles.

This itinerary is merely a suggestion and the basis for a superb introduction. Many variations on it are possible, for example in accommodation, bases and walks. You might only have a weekend, or want to stay a fortnight, and you might prefer just one base instead of moving around. All is possible and the flexibility lets us plan your itinerary to suit.

Everything is set up for walkers with a range of transportation, uplift (cable cars and mountain railways) 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.

Rest or rainy days

There's a lively feel to the whole valley and to 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

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

Hotel in Argentière

Day 2: 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 in Argentière

Day 3: Up to the hut

A stiff climb awaits, but it is worth it in order to spend extended time in the mountains. Highlights of the Chamonix area can be visited today, for example the high mountain lake Lac Blanc. Arrive at your hut in time for dinner, which is often a highly sociable affair.

Mountain hut

Day 4: Down to Les Houches

Wake up in the mountains! Today's theme is inevitably downhill, but a few options exist that mean some ascent along the way. Pick a route and enjoy the day, finishing in the village of Les Houches.

Hotel in Les Houches

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 in Les Houches

Day 6: Chamonix valley walk

Pleasant footpaths abound in the Chamonix valley. For an easier day after previous exertions, link Les Houches with Chamonix and perhaps Argentière along paths near the valley floor. The Petit Balcon Sud, with views of les Drus in profile, and the Petit Balcon Nord are two trails to be used.

Hotel in Chamonix

Day 7: Plan de l'Aiguille and Montanvers

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 in Chamonix

Day 8: Departure

Morning departure from 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 in its standard form stays in four different bases.

Argentière is a small village at the top end of the valley with its own shops and eateries and with a quieter atmosphere. We stay in a long-standing and friendly 2-star hotel right in the village centre.

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.

Moving to Les Houches, stay in our smart and modern 3-star hotel again right in the village centre. You'll be made very welcome.

Chamonix is then the climax of the trip; time spent here puts you in the heart of the valley's action. We stay in a long-standing family hotel that's tucked away in a quiet part of the town centre; it's a smart, neat and very friendly 2-star hotel. So many shops, restaurants and bars, not to mention great street life, are right by.

Different accommodation is available in all three villages and towns and we're always happy to plan your exact itinerary to suit your preferences.

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 are some rockier sections higher up on some routes and you might encounter steep and loose ground.

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. These tougher sections are often avoidable by alternative routes.

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, Les Houches and Chamonix.

For eating out there is plenty of scope in both the villages and especially in Chamonix.

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.

All bedding is provided at the hut and therefore no extra kit is needed for this night.

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.