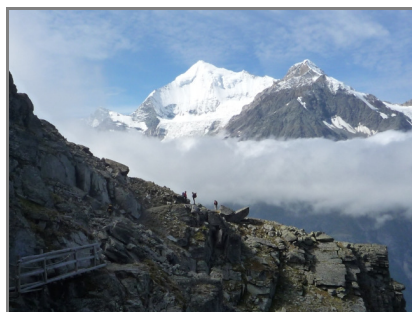




Walker's Haute Route (Guided)

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/walkers-haute-route-guided.html.



On the Europaweg heading to Zermatt

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
Finish Zermatt
Regions French Haute-Savoie, Swiss Valais
Countries France, Switzerland
Length 14 walking days and 15 nights
Total distance 188km or 117 miles
Typical day 14km (9 miles), 1,050m ascent
Highest altitude 2,987m
Grade Expert
Group size 4 to 8 people plus leader

Introduction

The Walker's Haute Route is one of the finest, if not the finest, trek of its type in Europe. Spend a fortnight crossing some exceptional mountain terrain with Zermatt as your goal, in the company of your expert leader.

Both Chamonix at the start and Zermatt at the end are absorbing, lively mountain towns.

This is the Walker's Haute Route as opposed to the Classic Haute Route, which takes to the high mountains and glaciers and is often made on skis. Our route is just a trek.

However, the trek is a challenging one. The route crosses a succession of passes at nearly 3,000m, guaranteeing stiff climbs most mornings. The high passes are steep and rocky in places. Typically they are free of snow during the summer, but in colder weather their altitude means rain can fall as snow. Other days are more gentle, dropping through verdant, pastoral Swiss valleys.

The Haute Route involves one simple glacier crossing, on a narrow and near-flat section

where crevasse precautions are not needed in all usual conditions. Shortly after this, the group takes a choice between steep ladders to a col, and an exceptionally steep and loose gully to an alternative col. On the Europaweg on the approach to Zermatt are some carries with loose rock where smart and steady-on-foot progress is needed.

Our approach

Your route

This guided trek gives a complete journey on foot from Chamonix to Zermatt. Nothing is missed out. No transport is needed and on arriving in Zermatt's town centre you'll have completed the Walker's Haute Route in its entirety, a magnificent achievement. Standardly our trip has 14 stages. Where the trail splits we follow routes via Fenêtre d'Arpette, Col de la Chau, Cabane des Dix, Col de Tsate, the Forcletta and the Europaweg.

Guided walks

Each day your leader guides the group along the stage. On some days there is a choice of route; which route we take depends on what people prefer and on the local conditions.

Getting there and back

Your holiday starts in Chamonix and ends in Zermatt. Travel to Chamonix and from Zermatt is not included in the holiday price - we leave it to you to make the arrangements that suit you best. Geneva (and Zurich for Zermatt) are the most convenient airports with several transfer options available. Full information on flight and transfer options will be sent to you on booking.

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Chamonix

Evening arrival in Chamonix. The group has a first

meal out in town. Hotel in Chamonix

Day 2: Chamonix to Argentière

For a grand first day, our route reaches Argentière via one of the Chamonix valley's most impressive spots, the high mountain lake of Lac Blanc. It's a shame to rush out of Chamonix as soon as we've arrived! Hotel in Argentière

Day 3: Argentière to Trient

We climb the first pass of the route, Col de Balme. This is the entry to Switzerland, home for the rest of the trek. The climb is one of the easier ones on the route. Auberge in Trient

Day 4: Trient to Champex

One of the most challenging passes comes on today's stage: the Fenêtre d'Arpette (2,665m). There are higher passes to come, but few as rocky and steep. We descend for a night in the quiet resort of Champex with its pretty lake. Hotel in Champex

Day 5: Champex to Le Châble

There follows a relaxing day's walk through quiet Swiss countryside to Le Châble. We drop to Sembrancher in the valley then walk steadily up to Le Châble. This is a half-day, one to be taken gently as an interlude before 3 tough days to come. Hotel in Le Châble

Day 6: Le Châble to Cabane du Mont Fort

The only way is up. Settle into a steady rhythm for this solidly uphill stage, our goal being a charming hut. Views widen throughout the day as we gain height. A hearty meal awaits and a first night in the mountains. Cabane du Mont Fort

Day 7: Cabane du Mont Fort to Cabane de Prafleuri In bad weather this remote, rocky stage will be among the trickiest and a challenge for everyone. It's also quite spectacular. Cross Col de la Chau, Col de Louvie and Col de Prafleuri (at 2,987m the highest point on the Haute Route) to arrive at the comfy Prafleuri hut. Cabane de Prafleuri

Day 8: Cabane de Prafleuri to Arolla

Perhaps the most consistently awe-inspiring and exhilarating stage of the whole journey to Zermatt, today sees the group walk almost the length of Lac des Dix, climb up a moraine to Cabane des Dix, cross the flat and simple Glacier de Cheilon and then



cross a choice of Pas de Chèvres (with ladders) or the rocky Col de Riedmatten. There is a sense of being among the high mountains. Dropping to Arolla seems trivial after this. **Hotel in Arolla**

Day 9: Arolla to La Sage

This is a second easy valley walk. The day begins with a stroll down to the attractive village of Les Haudères in Val d'Herens, then finishes with a short walk up to the hamlet of La Sage. As with the walk to Le Châble, this is a chance to walk in a verdant valley. **Hotel in La Sage**

Day 10: La Sage to Cabane de Moiry

This is a stage of 3 sections. First we climb to Col du Tsate, then drop to the foot of Glacier de Moiry and lastly climb again beside the glacier to Cabane de Moiry, perhaps the best-sited of all our Haute Route huts. **Cabane de Moiry**

Day 11: Cabane de Moiry to Zinal

A traverse and a relatively short climb lead to Col de Sorebois. Then a descent, steep at the end, brings you to Zinal. Zinal is an interesting little place to spend a night and has good options for the group to eat out. **Hotel in Zinal**

Day 12: Zinal to Gruben

A traversing path gains height steadily from Zinal with long views back to the head of the valley. Higher up, we reach the Forcletta pass and enter the German-speaking part of the Valais. Gruben is a small village in the quiet Turtmanntal valley. **Auberge in Gruben**

Day 13: Gruben to St Niklaus

The Augstbordpass at 2,893m is the last pass before the valley of Zermatt is reached. The ascent should feel very manageable, being well-angled and full of interest. We drop to Jungen above the Mattertal valley and with views into its upper reaches but not yet to Zermatt or the Matterhorn themselves. A last descent in woods and we arrive in the valley at St Niklaus. **Hotel in St Niklaus**

Day 14: St Niklaus to Europahütte

After an initial climb to Gasenried we join the Europaweg, the 2-day trail into Zermatt. The route is a traverse at a high level, crossing rocky combs sometimes on loose ground where rockfalls have occurred. Views to the Matterhorn open up later in the day. We arrive at a fine hut high above the valley. **Europahütte**

Day 15: Europahütte to Zermatt

The group completes the route to Zermatt, again crossing rocky ground but now with the aid of tunnels and shelters in places. An easy high traverse in full view of the Matterhorn takes us to Sunnegga above Zermatt from where we drop steeply via the hamlet Findeln. We arrive with time to get to know Zermatt. It's a resort with a lot going on. **Hotel in Zermatt**

Day 16: Departure from Zermatt

Morning departure from Zermatt

Accommodation

Our standard schedule of accommodation consists of 1 night in a 4-star hotel, 3 nights in 3-star hotels, 3 nights in 2-star hotels, 4 nights in auberges or simple hotels, and 4 nights in mountain huts.

The huts are comfortable and welcoming. Hut accommodation is in dormitories, either on Alpine-style communal sleeping platforms or in bunk beds. We can sometimes book private rooms at some of the huts. In the hotels and auberges we book ensuite accommodation except where it is not available, for example in older buildings or more remote locations. Your info pack contains full details of your accommodation and of course your leader checks the group in each evening.

The walking

Terrain

Haute Route terrain comprises wide tracks through forests, the odd country lane, zig-zagging hillside paths and steep, rocky mountain paths. In some places the paths are particularly steep and loose, for example on the final approaches to cols. At one point, Pas de Chèvres, there is a long section of steep ladders. (This can be avoided by a very steep and loose alternative path.) However, the Haute Route has no *via ferrata* or climbing sections and is a trek throughout, albeit a tough one. There is one short, flat glacier crossing: this is as simple as a walk and requires no special equipment or skills. On the Europaweg into Zermatt, some loose and rocky corries need extra care.

Self-guided days

On this guided holiday there is the option each day for participants to walk by themselves instead of joining the group's walk, either on their own route or following one of Alpine Exploratory's routecards and a map, both of which your leader can give to you.

Your own routes

While your guided walks and the optional 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 breakfasts and 7 evening meals (at Trient, at La Sage, at Gruben and at the 4 refuges).

For lunches there is lots of opportunity to stock up on ingredients along the route. You will sometimes find huts and cafés during the walking, useful for lunch stops. Your leader will advise about food shops and refreshment stops along the route, and will see that everyone is well supplied.

On nights when dinner is included, the group eats together at the accommodation. On other nights, typically the group heads to a restaurant, of which there are excellent ones in the villages.

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 or Switzerland. Please check that your passport is in date.

Weather

The weather in these parts of the French and Swiss Alps from July to 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. During cold spells in summer, rain can fall as snow on the Haute Route's higher passes. Additionally, patches of snow left over from Winter and Spring might linger into 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; the first half of September can be stable, with the chance of some beautifully clear days.

Thunderstorms are a particular danger in 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. For the huts you will need a sheet liner. 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 those meals that are included, plus any attractions and extras.

Hazards

Health

France and Switzerland 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. The weather can also be a hazard in itself. During any walking, whether following a guided walk or 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.