



Walker's Haute Route West (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/walkers-haute-route-west.html.



A mountain lake near Col de Louvie

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 Arolla
Regions French Haute-Savoie, Swiss Valais
Countries France, Switzerland
Length 7 walking days and 8 nights
Total distance 98km or 61 miles
Typical day 14km (9 miles), 1,110m ascent
Highest altitude 2,987m
Grade Expert

Introduction

The Walker's Haute Route is one of the finest, if not the finest, trek of its type in Europe. This trip completes the Western section of the route as far as Arolla to give a week of exceptional Alpine trekking.

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 a trek only.

Chamonix at the start of your trek is a mountaineering town with a buzz. If you have the time, we can book you an extra day or more here before you set off on trek. Arolla is a peaceful village high in the hills and a suitable end to your route. It's a world away from Chamonix, but coming after two nights in huts and some remote country it will seem like a metropolis.

This trek is a challenging one. Navigation can be difficult in mist. 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.

The defining stretch of this week-long trek is the section from Le Châble to Arolla, involving 3 days and 2 nights in huts. This crosses the most remote ground on the trek and is a necessary hurdle between Chamonix and Arolla (and Zermatt). After this, your trek ends in Arolla on a real high.

This stretch to Arolla 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 is a choice between steep ladders to a col, and an exceptionally steep and loose gully to an alternative col.

Our approach

Your route

Our trip gives a complete journey on foot from Chamonix to Arolla. No transport is needed along the way. The Haute Route is a loosely defined trail where map and compass skills are needed to supplement any waymarks on the ground. There are no 'Haute Route' waymarks to follow. Where the trail splits we follow routes via Fenêtre d'Arpette, Col de la Chauv and Cabane des Dix, but our routecards describe alternative routes too. Once you've completed the route to Arolla, return in future to finish the route to Zermatt. The hardest walking and the multi-day stretch in the mountains will be behind you.

Routecards and maps

Each day's route is explained in detail on your routecards, to bring you to your night's accommodation. We give you the real maps for you to follow, not printouts or photocopies.

Getting there and back

Your holiday starts in Chamonix and ends in Arolla. Travel to Chamonix and from Arolla is not included in the holiday price - we leave it to you to make the arrangements that suit you

best. Geneva (and Zurich for Arolla) 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. There is plenty of scope for eating out. **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 you've arrived! To shorten our route by a day, this stage can be skipped. **Hotel in Argentière**

Day 3: Argentière to Trient

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. 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. 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, your goal being a charming hut. Views widen throughout the day as you 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 Chaux, 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 you 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: Depart from Arolla
Morning departure from Arolla

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

Our standard schedule of accommodation consists of 2 nights in 3-star hotels, 3 nights in 2-star hotels, 1 night in an auberge, and 2 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 including contact details and directions.

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.

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 breakfasts and 3 evening meals (at Trient and at the two 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 routecards give information about food shops and refreshment stops along the route.

For eating out on those nights where dinner is not included, there are good options in the village.

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 the French Haute-Savoie and the Valais area of Switzerland 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 local transport, 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 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 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.