



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



Valaisian barns above 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 13 walking days and 14 nights
Total distance 196km or 122 miles
Typical day 14km (9 miles), 1,000m 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. Spend a fortnight crossing some exceptional mountain terrain with Zermatt as your goal.

Both Chamonix at the start and Zermatt at the end are absorbing, lively mountain towns. If you have the time, ask us to add a day or more at either end of your trek.

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, with no technical ground.

However, the trek is a challenging one. The route crosses a succession of passes at nearly 3,000m, guaranteeing stiff climbs most mornings. 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.

Other days are more gentle, dropping through verdant, pastoral Swiss valleys.

Our approach

Your route

Our trip gives a complete journey on foot from Chamonix to Zermatt. No transport is needed and on arriving in Zermatt's town centre you'll have completed the Haute Route under your own steam. Standardly our trip has 13 stages. The Haute Route is a loosely defined trail without its own waymarks on the ground; where the trail splits we follow routes via Fenêtre d'Arpette, Col de la Chau, Cabane des Dix, Col de Torrent, Forcletta and the valley through Randa.

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 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 is the most convenient airport 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 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 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 and our routecard has a variation to add interest. 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 and savoured 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 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 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. The sense of being among the high mountains is huge. Dropping to Arolla then becomes an easy afterthought! **Hotel in Arolla**

Day 9: Arolla to La Sage

This is a second easy valley walk. Begin with a stroll down to the useful and attractive village of Les Haudères in Val d'Herens, then finish with a short walk up to the hamlet of La Sage. As with the walk to Le Châble, this is a chance to amble along a verdant valley. **Hotel in La Sage**

Day 10: La Sage to Grimentz

Cross Col de Torrent to reach the Barrage de Moiry, the dam of the impressive Lac de Moiry. It's an unrelenting climb, but taken steadily it's not too hard work and the views back to Arolla are worth it. Good paths lead downhill below the dam and through woods to Grimentz. A night spent here is a treat; explore the old barns nestling in the village centre. **Hotel in Grimentz**

Day 11: Grimentz to Zinal

Return to the Barrage de Moiry either on foot or by postbus. A relatively short climb to Col de Sorebois leads to a descent, steep at the end, to Zinal. Alternatively, walk through the forest from Grimentz to Zinal. Zinal is an interesting little place to spend a night and has good options for eating 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, reach the Forcletta pass and enter the German-speaking part of the Valais. Gruben is a small village in the quiet Turtmantal 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. 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 you arrive in the valley at St Niklaus. **Hotel in St Niklaus**

Day 14: St Niklaus to Zermatt

Complete the route to Zermatt with a moderate day's trek in the valley. There are no more passes to cross, but the day still has plenty of ups and downs. The Matterhorn appears in its classic view just before you hit town, as a surprise as you cross a rise. Arrive with time to get to know Zermatt. It's a resort

with a lot going on. A day, or several, spent here would bring many rewards. **Hotel in Zermatt**

Day 15: Departure from Zermatt

Morning departure from Zermatt

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 1 night in a 4-star hotel, 3 nights in 3-star hotels, 4 nights in 2-star hotels, 4 nights in auberges or simple hotels, and 2 nights in mountain huts. The huts are comfortable and welcoming, and you do not need to bring bedding. Hut accommodation is in dormitories, either on Alpine-style communal sleeping platforms or in bunk beds. 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 5 evening meals (at Trient, at the two refuges, at La Sage and at Gruben). 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 there are good options along the way.

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. 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.