



Tour du Mont Blanc (Self-Guided)

Please email us at info@alpineexploratory.com to chat about this holiday.

You'll find all the latest information at www.alpineexploratory.com/holidays/tour-du-mont-blanc.html.



The Grandes Jorasses from Italy

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 Les Houches
Finish Chamonix
Region Mont Blanc
Country France, Italy, Switzerland
Length 11 walking days and 14 nights
Total distance 180km or 112 miles
Typical day 16km (10 miles), 1,000m ascent
Highest altitude 2,584m
Grade Red3

Introduction

The Tour du Mont Blanc is a trek of superlatives: the most famous trek in Europe, forming a circuit of Western Europe's highest mountain, Mont Blanc (4,808m).

This self-guided walking holiday takes 11 days to walk the complete Tour, starting and finishing in the Chamonix valley. This is a typical time and allows for chance to take short diversions or linger over a hut lunch.

The walking is on good paths throughout and while Tour trekkers are treated to grandstand views of Mont Blanc and the other peaks in the range, the standard route never strays from straightforward mountain walking terrain.

Cross from France to Italy to Switzerland and back into France. During most days the route climbs up hillsides to reach a col and then drops down to the next verdant valley and the hut, hamlet, village or town that will be your home for the night. This walking holiday is Alpine trekking at its best.

Our approach

Your route

Our routecards stick to the generally accepted Tour du Mont Blanc route, with some small and scenic diversions such as that to Lac Blanc for views across to Mont Blanc. Two rest days are also built in. Our standard schedule walks the Tour in the normal anti-clockwise direction; you can choose to walk it clockwise if you prefer.

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 Les Houches and ends in Chamonix. Travel to Les Houches 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. Full information on flight and transfer options will be sent to you on booking.

Itinerary

Arrival day: Arrival in Chamonix

Evening arrival in Chamonix. There is plenty of scope for eating out in town. **Hotel in Chamonix**

Stage 1: Les Houches to Les Contamines

On the first day on trek there is time to make any last minute adjustments and buy any food and kit needed. Start with a stiff climb up to Col de Voza (with optional cable cars) and say goodbye to the Chamonix valley. The normal TMB route drops through Val Montjoie, but an optional high route takes wilder paths over Col de Tricot, to Les Contamines. **Hotel in Les Contamines**

Stage 2: Les Contamines to Col de la Croix du Bonhomme

Today's stage is reasonably tough with an ascent to Col de la Croix du Bonhomme at 2,483m. The ascent is gradual to a first col, after which we traverse to the second col at which the Bonhomme refuge sits overlooking the valleys. **Mountain hut**

Stage 3: Col de la Croix du Bonhomme to Rifugio Elisabetta

The main route drops to les Chapieux then climbs up the Vallée des Glaciers; an alternative in the absence of snow is by Col des Fours. Then both routes climb to Col de la Seigne on the Italian frontier. We descend to Rifugio Elisabetta (Italy) walking towards the best views of the route so far. **Mountain hut**

Stage 4: Rifugio Elisabetta to Courmayeur

The route to Courmayeur is now straightforward but involves a surprising, short uphill section to gain a terrace path with stunning views of what is now called Monte Bianco. Courmayeur is in

some ways the Italian equivalent of Chamonix but has a very different atmosphere. **Hotel in Courmayeur**

Rest day: Rest day in Courmayeur

Today can be a rest day in Courmayeur. Many options exist for sight-seeing or activities such as mountain biking, or day-walks exploring the surrounding hillsides. **Hotel in Courmayeur**

Stage 5: Courmayeur to Rif. Bonatti

There is a definite feel of a new stage of the trek beginning as you leave Courmayeur with the goal of Rifugio Bonatti. Today will be the longest day and with the most ascent, but with arguably the finest high-mountain views. The Bonatti hut is an unusually well-equipped and modern building. **Mountain hut**

Stage 6: Rif. Bonatti to La Fouly

Switzerland beckons today as you cross into the Swiss Val Ferret. Another linguistic and cultural frontier is passed! The goal is La Fouly. **Hotel in La Fouly**

Stage 7: La Fouly to Champex

Today's stage is relatively easy, running through the valley towards Champex. The Tour is now well inside Switzerland, with ready transport links to the Rhone valley to the North instead of deeper into France or Italy to the South. **Hotel in Champex**

Stage 8: Champex to Trient

Walk among meadows and woods to Trient past Col de la Forclaz, now within striking distance of the Chamonix valley. **Auberge in Trient**

Stage 9: Trient to Argentière

The highlight of today's walk is undoubtedly reaching the Col de Balme from where there should be views of Mont Blanc (weather permitting) and a great stretch of the Chamonix valley. The end is in sight! Descend from the Col to climb Aiguillette des Posettes before dropping down into the Arve valley at Montroc and walking down to Argentière. **Hotel in Argentière**

Rest day: Rest day in Argentière

Today is a rest day in the Chamonix valley before the final two stages of the trek. Based near Argentière there are so many opportunities to visit places in the valley or try outdoor activities such as cable cars trips, mountain biking - or simply shopping in Chamonix. **Hotel in Argentière**

Stage 10: Argentière to La Flégère

The trip rejoins the Tour du Mont Blanc today for a final two days of hopefully some exhilarating views across to Mont Blanc. The route traverses the hillside on the North side of the valley and you can visit the famously picturesque Lac Blanc with its view of Mont Blanc. **Mountain hut**

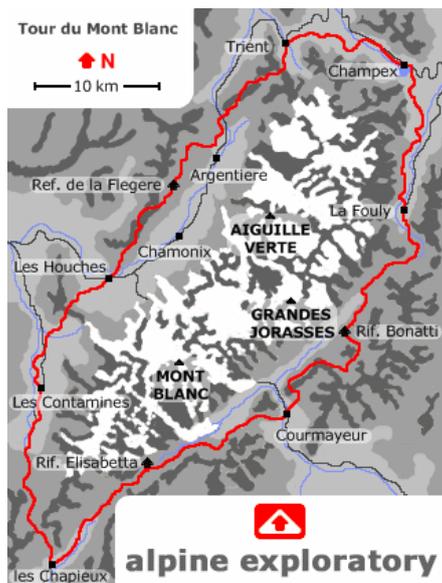
Stage 11: La Flégère to Les Houches

The aim today is Les Houches and the end of the Tour du Mont Blanc. Along the way some of the

Tour's best views unfold on the climb to Le Brévent before the long descent to the valley. At Les Houches it is then just a short bus ride to Chamonix to celebrate in style! We base our last night in Chamonix, despite it being off the TMB route, in order that you can enjoy the largest and most vibrant base in the valley. **Hotel in Chamonix**

Departure day: Departure from Chamonix
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

Our standard schedule of accommodation consists of 7 nights in 3-star hotels, 2 nights in 2-star hotels, 1 night in an auberge (simple hotel) 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 bunks.

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
The Tour du Mont Blanc is a very popular trail in summer and the good solid footpaths reflect this. The terrain in these parts of the French, Swiss and Italian Alps is sometimes steep but mostly the uphill sections are long gradual tests of stamina. There are wide tracks through forests, the odd country lane, zig-zagging hillside paths and some rockier sections. 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. All such sections can be avoided by following alternative routes given in your routecards. In

early or late summer there is a good chance of snow patches lying on the higher paths, but the lower paths are likely to be snow-free.

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 6 evening meals, at the 4 huts plus the small villages La Fouly and Trient.

For lunches there is lots of opportunity to stock up on ingredients along the route. You will 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 at Chamonix, Les Contamines, Courmayeur, Champex and Argentière.

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

Passport holders of the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Singapore do not need a visa to enter France, Italy or Switzerland.

Weather

The weather in the Mont Blanc area 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. On high passes, patches of snow left over from the Winter and Spring might linger into the start of 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 can be a quieter time as the season winds down, with the chance of 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, plus a sheet liner for use in the huts. 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, any local transport or 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, Italy, Switzerland 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.