



CLOUD 9 ADVENTURE



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## Tour du Mont Blanc Highlights 7 day - MBH

The Tour du Mont Blanc is one of the world's classic trekking journeys, covering 166 km and with about 10,000 m of ascent and descent. Standing on the border of France, Switzerland and Italy, Mont Blanc is the highest mountain in Western Europe at 4810 m.

Our route takes us over varied terrain including rugged cols, high alpine meadows and conifer forests. We will see plenty of alpine flowers, and we are likely to see marmots, chamois, ibex and birds of prey.

As well as Mont Blanc, we should have fantastic views of many other famous peaks in the area: the Domes de Miage, the Aiguille Verte, the Aiguille du Chardonnet, the Grandes Jorasses, Mont Dolent and the Grand Combin amongst others.

It truly is a trip to remember, with every day bringing varied and spectacular scenery.

Our TMB Highlights trip does the route in a very comfortable way, using cable cars and transfers to enable us to complete the trek over 7 days of trekking, whilst still making sure we see the best bits of the Tour du Mont Blanc.

This trip is specifically designed to maximise time off work, and to incorporate the stunning section from Courmayeur to the Bonatti hut, which most other "highlights" trips miss out. There aren't any rest days on this trip, so we do grade it 8 out of 10 as we try to take the harder, quieter variants wherever we can.

## Trip Summary

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### **Day 1 Arrive in the Chamonix Valley**

Arrive in Chamonix - Chamonix

6:00 PM

Trip briefing

Explore Chamonix - Chamonix

### **Day 2 - Lac Blanc**

Lac Blanc trek

### **Day 3 Trek from Les Contamines to Les Chapieux**

Transfer from Chamonix to Notre Dame de La Gorge - Notre Dame de La Gorge

Trek from Les Contamines to Les Chapieux - Les Chapieux

### **Day 4 Les Chapieux to Courmayeur**

Trek from Les Chapieux to La Visaille - Courmayeur

### **Day 5 Trek from Courmayeur to Rifugio Bonatti**

Trek from Courmayeur to the Bonatti hut

Rifugio Bonatti - Rifugio Bonatti

### **Day 6 Rifugio Bonatti to Champex**

Trek from Rifugio Bonatti to La Fouly - La Fouly

4:00 PM

Transfer from La Fouly to Champex - Champex

### **Day 7 Trek from Champex to Col de la Forclaz**

Trek from Champex to Col de la Forclaz or Trient - Col de la Forclaz, Trient

### **Day 8 Trek from Col de la Forclaz to Argenti  re**

Trek from Forclaz or Trient to Argenti  re - Argenti  re

Train or bus to Chamonix

### **Day 9 Depart Chamonix**

Depart Chamonix

Option: Airport transfer from Chamonix to Geneva

## Day 1 Arrive in the Chamonix Valley

### Arrive in Chamonix

The nearest airport is Geneva and the easiest way to reach Chamonix is by minibus transfer, and the journey usually takes just over an hour.

Your guide will meet you this evening for a trip briefing, usually at 18:00 (this means that your flights should arrive before 16:00), but we will confirm the precise briefing time nearer to the trip start date.

We recommend Mountain Drop Offs for shared transfers: Visit [www.mountaintdropoffs.com](http://www.mountaintdropoffs.com) and use the discount code CLOUD9CHX - the code will work for normal shared transfers, and for private transfers. For out of hours transfers (before 08:00 and after 19:00), the code does not apply. We have found the discount code to be slightly temperamental - if this is the case then just email info@mountaintdropoffs.com and they should be able to help you.

Please see the Travel Arrangements section towards the end of this document for more detailed travel information.



### Chamonix

Chamonix, RHONE-ALPES, FR, 74400



**6:00 PM - Central European Time**

### Trip briefing

Meet your guide and fellow trekkers this evening for a briefing about the trip and to answer any questions that you may have. We usually aim to meet at 18:00 in your hotel or chalet.



### Explore Chamonix

Your trip begins in Chamonix, a mountain town world-famous for its mountaineering history, and the dramatic scenery that greets you as you approach the valley is just a taste of the trip to come. Overlooked by Mont Blanc, western Europe's highest mountain, and surrounded by jagged peaks and tumbling glaciers, this Alpine valley is breathtakingly beautiful.

You can normally check-in to your accommodation and access your rooms from around 16:00. If you arrive earlier, it's no problem to leave your bags at your accommodation and explore the town. There's a wealth of outdoor shops so you should have a little time for last minute supplies before your trip.

Ask at the hotel reception to receive your Guest Card, which will entitle you to free trains and buses in the Chamonix valley.



### Chamonix

Chamonix, RHONE-ALPES, FR, 74400

## Day 2 - Lac Blanc



### Lac Blanc trek

We start our trip with a journey on the famous "Mont Blanc Express" train to Montroc. From here we hike up to the famous Lac Blanc via the Lacs des Chéserys, with simply the best views of Mont Blanc. We use a series of ladders and chains to make our way up to the lake – this is nothing to worry about and is not difficult!

We are in the heart of the Aiguilles Rouges nature reserve, and are often lucky enough to see ibex, chamois and marmottes. After a hard-earned refreshment at the Lac Blanc refuge, we descend to the Flégère and take the cable car to Les Praz, then transfer back to our hotel by bus or train, or if we still have enough energy, we can walk along the river all the way back to Chamonix.

Distance: 9 km / 5.6 miles  
Ascent: 1000m / 3280 feet  
Descent: 550m / 1800 feet  
Approx walking time: 6 hours



## Day 3 Trek from Les Contamines to Les Chapieux

### Transfer from Chamonix to Notre Dame de La Gorge



#### Notre Dame de La Gorge

3782 Route de Notre Dame de la Gorge, Les Contamines-Montjoie, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, FR, 74170

### Trek from Les Contamines to Les Chapieux

Today we have around 40 mins on the flat to reach the chapel at Notre Dame de la Gorge. Here we join the Roman road: it's a bit of a rude awakening with a steep uphill, but we soon get into our stride! We continue past the Chalet de Balme (if we're doing well, it's a perfect coffee stop!) and up to the Col de Bonhomme (2329m) for a well-earned lunch break. We then have a climbing traverse, often with snowy patches until mid-July, to the Col de la Croix de Bonhomme (2479m), from where we have a great view towards the Vanoise National Park. Next we have a 2 hour walk down to Les Chapieux, and stay either in an auberge or a chambre d'hôte, depending on availability.

This is one of the longest days on the TMB - it does feel quite hard because there's a long ascent, and it's only the second day so we haven't had time to acclimatise.....however, the day shouldn't pose any real problems and we take the climb slow and steady and split it into stages to make it perfectly manageable.

Distance: 19 km / 11.9 miles  
Ascent: 1348m / 4450 feet  
Descent: 960m / 3150 feet  
Approx walking time: 8 hours  
Accommodation: Auberge  
Luggage access: Yes



**Les Chapieux**  
Bourg-Saint-Maurice, RHÔNE-ALPES, FR, 73700

## Day 4 Les Chapieux to Courmayeur



### Trek from Les Chapieux to La Visaille

We take a newly-cut path up to Ville des Glaciers (in previous years the TMB took the tarmac road). There is usually the option to have a minibus transfer from Les Chapieux if you prefer (included). The leader will let you know about this. At Ville des Glaciers, if the farmer is on hand you might have the opportunity to see how the Beaufort cheese is made. After passing Refuge des Mottets, we start to climb more steeply up to our goal, the Col de La Seigne, at 2516m the 2nd highest pass on the Tour du Mont Blanc. We've reached the border with Italy!

From here we descend past the Elisabetta hut (we may divert here for lunch or coffee, depending on how we're doing for time) and the Lac de Combal to La Visaille, where we take a bus to the vibrant mountain town of Courmayeur.

Distance: 21km / 13 miles

Ascent: 1004m / 3300 feet

Descent: 850m / 2800 feet

Approx walking time: 6 hours

Accommodation: Hotel

Luggage access: Yes



**Courmayeur**  
Aosta, IT

## Day 5 Trek from Courmayeur to Rifugio Bonatti

### Trek from Courmayeur to the Bonatti hut



We start the steep walk up to the Bertone hut and the Mont de la Saxe ridge. If the weather is good and there is not too much snow, we can take the lesser-travelled variant to the Mont de la Saxe ridge, up the Tête de la Tronche, and then down steeply to the Col Sapin. We then have a descent, followed by another climb to the Col Entre Deux Sauts: it's a fairly long, but really stunning day – there are usually not many people, and the scenery is breathtaking. We overnight at the delightful Rifugio Bonatti, from where you can watch the beautiful sunset behind Mont Blanc. Definitely one of life's special moments.

If the weather isn't so good, or if we want a more relaxing day, we can take a fabulous balcony path from the Bertone hut to the Bonatti, high above the Val Ferret. It is a shorter day, but by no means a "second choice", as the scenery is stunning.

#### **Mont de la Saxe Route:**

Distance: 17km / 10.5 miles

Ascent: 1584m / 5200 feet

Descent: 940m / 3080 feet

Approx walking time: 7-8 hours

#### **Balcony Route:**

Distance: 12 km / 7.5 miles

Ascent: 860m / 2820 feet

Descent: 700m / 2296 feet

Approx walking time: 4-5 hours

Accommodation: Mountain refuge

Luggage access: No



#### **Rifugio Bonatti**

This is one of our favourite huts in the alps and it's usually fully booked. There is a limited selection of private rooms (twins, triples or quadruples) which we always try to book, but most of the accommodation is in dormitories. Those who book before October usually get a room: for those who booked later, we'll have put you on a waiting list for a room.

The hut is in a spectacular location high above the Val Ferret and directly opposite the Grandes Jorasses, with fantastic Mont Blanc views.

The rooms here are simple and do not have en-suite bathrooms. There are hot showers available at the hut (a token is included and lasts for a couple of minutes). Environmentally friendly shower gel is provided, but you should bring your own travel towel and wash kit.

A sheet sleeping bag liner is required; duvets are provided.



### Rifugio Bonatti

Courmayeur, Valle d'Aosta, IT, 11013

+39 0165 185 5523

## Day 6 Rifugio Bonatti to Champex



### Trek from Rifugio Bonatti to La Fouly

Today we start our day with a rising traverse, then ultimately descend to the head of the Val Ferret at Arnouva. From here our climb up the Grand Col Ferret begins. At 2537m it is the highest col on the official TMB route. We'll stop for our last Italian coffee at the Rifugio Elena, then from here we climb steadily to the col where we are rewarded with stunning views of the Grandes Jorasses, the Grand Combin and Mont Dolent (the summit of which is on the border of France, Switzerland and Italy). At the top of the col we cross over into Switzerland, where the scenery changes yet again.

If we're doing well for time we might stop for a coffee at La Peule. Here we leave the signposted TMB and head to La Fouly via a higher balcony path (or, in early season TMBs, the gullies might be full of snow in which case we take a straightforward track). La Fouly is a lovely alpine village with traditional Swiss "chocolate box" chalets.

Distance 20km / 12.5 miles

Ascent: 1128m / 3700 feet

Descent: 1580m / 5180 feet

Approx walking time: 6-7 hours

Accommodation: Simple hotel / auberge

Luggage access: Yes



### La Fouly

Orsières, VALAIS, CH, 1944



**4:00 PM - Central European Time**

### Transfer from La Fouly to Champex

We take a short transfer to the pretty lakeside resort of Champex (approx 20 mins).



**Champex**  
Orsières, Valais, CH

## Day 7 Trek from Champex to Col de la Forclaz



### Trek from Champex to Col de la Forclaz or Trient

There are 2 options today. If we're feeling fit and the weather is good, we can consider taking the Fenêtre d'Arpette, the highest col on the TMB at 2665m. It's a fantastic route with stunning views of the Trient glacier.

If we want to be a little more relaxed, we can take the normal route via Bovine to the Col de la Forclaz - our guide will make the decision according to the weather conditions and fitness of the group. If we are staying in Trient, we continue a further 30 mins down to the valley floor.

Distance: 15 km / 9.3 miles

Ascent: 1480m (or 570m via Bovine)

Descent: 1760m (or 600m via Bovine)

Approx walking time: 8 hrs (or 6 hrs via Bovine)

Accommodation: Simple hotel, usually with shared bathrooms

Luggage access: Yes



**Col de la Forclaz**  
Trient, Valais, CH, 1929



**Trient**  
Trient, VALAIS, CH

## Day 8 Trek from Col de la Forclaz to Argentière



### Trek from Forclaz or Trient to Argentière

Today our plan is to take another variant from the official TMB – depending on whether we start from Col de la Forclaz or Trient, we can take a choice of 2 lesser-travelled routes: either via Les Tseppe (from Trient) or via Les Grands (from Col de la Forclaz). Both routes are beautiful, have hardly any people taking them, offer better views than the normal TMB, and add around an hour to the usual route: it's well worth the extra time and effort.

If the weather is bad then we might just take the normal TMB. Either route takes us to the Col de Balme, where we are back in France at the head of the Chamonix valley. From here, we have some more choices. If the group is strong and the weather is good, we might do the Aiguillette des Posettes, and descend to the Chamonix valley at Tré-le-Champ, from where there's an hour's walk to Argentière along the river and through the old town. Alternatively we might descend directly to Le Tour, and take the Petit Balcon Nord into Argentière.

Distance: 18 km / 11 miles  
 Ascent: 1200m / 3940 ft  
 Descent: 1450m / 4760 ft  
 Approximate walking time 7-8 hrs  
 Accommodation: 3\* hotel  
 Luggage access: Yes



### **Argentière**

Chamonix, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, FR, 74400

#### **Train or bus to Chamonix**

Depending on where we have hiked to, we either take a bus or a train back to Chamonix (we could potentially finish in Le Tour, Montroc or Argentière).

## **Day 9 Depart Chamonix**



#### **Depart Chamonix**

Our trip finishes after breakfast this morning.



#### **Option: Airport transfer from Chamonix to Geneva**

We usually recommend Mountain Drop Offs for airport transfers from the Chamonix valley to Geneva. Use discount code CLOUD9CHX

## **Trip Information & Documents**



#### **What's Included**

- All accommodation (including arrival day and final evening)
- All breakfasts and evening meals
- All transport mentioned in the itinerary
- All cable cars that form part of the itinerary
- Daily luggage delivery (apart from any hut nights where vehicle access is not possible)
- Fully qualified and expert trekking guide (International Mountain Leader)



#### **Not Included**

- Flights
- Airport transfers
- Packed lunches
- Personal snacks and drinks
- Any transport, accommodation or additional expenses due to a participant being unable to complete the itinerary
- Mountain rescue / travel insurance
- Tips

## Travelling to the Chamonix Valley

**IMPORTANT:** Please do not book your flights or transport until we have confirmed to you via email that the trip is guaranteed to run.

The starting point for this trip is the Chamonix valley in France. The nearest airport is Geneva, in Switzerland, and the easiest way to reach Chamonix is by minibus transfer (just over 1 hour). The Chamonix valley is a long valley made up of various small villages, including Les Houches, Les Bossons, Chamonix centre, Les Praz, Les Tines and Argentière - all of which have railway stations and bus stops with regular trains and buses linking the stops along the valley. The transfer companies below can all take you anywhere within the valley so if staying in any of the satellite villages, the information below still applies.

Shared minibus transfers pick-up and drop-off from Geneva Airport (not Geneva Cornavin, the centre). Private transfers can pick-up from either airport or centre. Geneva Airport is approx 7 minutes by train from Geneva Centre - Cornavin. You can take a train from either the airport or the centre. And scheduled buses such as Oui Bus and Flix Bus are from Geneva city centre.

**We would highly recommend booking these transfers in advance** (and by that we mean at least a week ahead), as short notice transfers can be much harder to organise. Do not leave it until you arrive at the airport - a taxi from Geneva airport to Chamonix will set you back around 300-350 CHF.

### HOW TO REACH CHAMONIX FROM GENEVA

#### 1. Shared minibus transfer - door to door - Geneva Airport to Chamonix

A shared transfer combines up to 12 other people on similarly-timed flights. On a day with no delays, you can expect to wait at the airport for anything from 5 to 45 minutes while you wait for other people's flights. With a shared minibus transfer, each passenger is dropped off at their hotel. For the return journey, you are also picked up from your hotel, but you have no choice in the time. It could be anywhere between 3 to 5 hours before your flight, and you receive a text message the evening beforehand telling you what time your pick-up will be. Shared transfers usually cost around 32-50 euros per person, depending on the time of day and the company you use (early mornings and late nights cost more), and whether it is peak season or out of season.

Booking your transfer is easy to do online and you'll often find cheaper deals depending on the time of day / date. There are many companies offering this service and we do find that you get what you pay for.

**We recommend Mountain Drop Offs** ([www.mountaindropoffs.com](http://www.mountaindropoffs.com)), and Cloud 9 Adventure clients normally receive a small discount . Use discount code CLOUD9CHX - note that the discount code does not apply for very early or very late flights, or out of season transfers. If you have any difficulty with the discount code, please email [info@mountaindropoffs.com](mailto:info@mountaindropoffs.com) and let them know you are with Cloud 9 Adventure, and they should be able to apply it manually.

We have had great service from: Mountain Drop Offs, Haute Transfer, Cham Van, Chamonix Valley Transfers and Alp Links. Alpy Bus are also good, and are a little cheaper as their buses are larger (so spend longer dropping people off in Chamonix).

A warning about Cham Express: looks cheap to start off with but once they've hit you with a fee for luggage, then tax, there's not much in it. Although they do show online availability, which is good. However, if you are booking a Chamonix to Geneva journey, then they give you a half-hour window rather than a fixed departure time - you have to stand in the street waiting, and if you're not there they leave without you, whereas all the other companies will try and look for you if they can't find you.

If you would prefer us to book your transfer for you, just let us know: this costs £50 per person each way and you can book here:

GVA to CHX:

<https://www.cloud9adventure.com/online-store/Shared-Transfer-Geneva-Airport-to-Chamonix-Valley-p111710463>

CHX to GVA:

<https://www.cloud9adventure.com/online-store/Private-Transfer-Chamonix-to-Geneva-Airport-p113329203>

## 2. Private minibus transfer - door to door - Geneva Airport or City Centre to Chamonix

Private transfers cost approx 200-220 euros each way for up to 8 people. They pick you up from your flight, and drop you at your hotel. For a return journey from Chamonix to Geneva, they usually pick you up approximately 3 hours before your flight departure time. If you would like us to book your transfer for you, just let us know - we charge £195 each way for up to 8 people:

GVA to CHX:

<https://www.cloud9adventure.com/online-store/Private-Transfer-Geneva-Airport-to-Chamonix-Valley-p112763217>

CHX to GVA:

<https://www.cloud9adventure.com/online-store/Private-Transfer-Chamonix-to-Geneva-Airport-p113329203>

**Note: it costs approx £20 more to be picked up from the city centre than from the airport.**

## 3. Scheduled bus service - Geneva Airport to Chamonix Sud bus stop

If you would like to save some money, then the best value transfer is a fixed bus service either by Flix Bus (from Geneva Centre), Oui Bus (from Geneva Centre) or Easy Bus (from Geneva Airport) - **these only go to Chamonix Sud bus stop**, so do bear in mind that you then have to reach your Chamonix, Les Houches, Les Bossons or Argentière hotel with all your luggage. Personally I would only do this if my hotel was very near the Chamonix Sud bus stop (eg. Aiglons, Heliopic or Oustalet).

A warning about Easy Bus: there is a reason this is the cheapest service. It can be useful if you cannot find anything else (eg early morning or late night) - but we've had a couple of experiences where buses haven't turned up, and there is no customer service to speak of. I hesitate to use them unless I really have to.

### Train from Geneva Airport or Centre (Cornavin) to Chamonix

It is also possible to take the train ([www.sbb.ch](http://www.sbb.ch)) - the journey takes around 3 hours, with 2 changes. As it costs more than a shared minibus transfer, and takes 2 hours longer, it's not the first choice for everyone, but it is an extremely scenic journey, and much nicer than the motorway, so could be worth doing if you have the time!

You can either travel mostly via Lake Geneva, changing in Martigny & Vallorcine. Or you can take the new Léman Express which links Geneva centre (Cornavin) with St Gervais-Le Fayet. Change here for trains to Chamonix. Léman Express timetables are here:

<https://www.lemanexpress.ch/en/downloads/timetables>

## EUROSTAR FROM LONDON TO GENEVA OR CHAMONIX

There is a Eurostar service from London to Geneva via Paris. This service does involve changing stations in Paris (from Gare du Nord to Gare de Lyon), and currently arrives at Geneva main railway station: the trip takes just over 7 hours to Geneva. Rail connections to from Geneva to Chamonix are slow (around 3-4 hours), so it is still best to take the train from Geneva Cornavin to Geneva Airport (takes 7 mins, trains run every 15 mins), and then use a minibus transfer. Alternatively you can arrange a private minibus to pick you up from Geneva main station to Chamonix.

If you are lucky and timings work out, you can sometimes get a smooth connection from London to Paris to Bellegarde-sur-Valsérine, and take the train to Chamonix from Bellegarde. When you get a good connection, it can take less than 9 hours from London to Chamonix - but on some days you cannot do this.

Book train tickets well in advance: it can be more expensive than flying, but if you book 3 months in advance you will often find special offers. Book tickets at [www.trainline.eu](http://www.trainline.eu)

### TRAIN FROM PARIS TO SAINT-GERVAIS-LE FAYET

If coming via train from Paris, you can sometimes find connections to Saint Gervais-Le Fayet and connect to Chamonix from here. The nearest TGV line is **Bellegarde-sur-Valsérine**, from where it is a 2.5 hour train journey to Chamonix (or a 1.5 hour private minibus). Book tickets at [www.sncf.fr](http://www.sncf.fr)

## TMB Guided Group Trek - What to Expect

### The trekking

The trekking is relatively strenuous, but we follow good quality trails all the way round. A number of days have over 1000m of ascent and descent, but we walk at a steady pace so that we can enjoy the walking and the scenery. This trip is suitable for people with a good level of fitness who hike regularly. Your luggage is transferred for you for each day (apart from any nights when we stay in a mountain hut with no vehicle access - this is usually just the Bonatti hut), so you only need to carry a day pack.

### Accommodation



Wherever possible we will be in good quality, comfortable hotels, and in most of the hotels we book rooms on a twin-share basis with en-suite facilities.

In Chamonix, Les Contamines (if relevant), Courmayeur, Champex and Argentière (if relevant), we use 3\* hotels as a minimum.

In the smaller hamlets such as Les Chapieux, La Fouly, and Trient/Forclaz, where there are simpler "auberges", hostels or guest houses, you can rest assured that we will have chosen the best one available. Note that in these locations we are less likely to be able to provide en-suite facilities, but we do what we can. As always, early booking is more likely to secure the nicer rooms and we allocate them according to those who booked first.

We sometimes take transfers to stay in nicer places if our first choice was full (eg. we'll often transfer from Les Chapieux to either Bourg St Maurice or Roselend, and from Forclaz to Vallorcine, if it means that we can have private rooms rather than dorms). And we sometimes stay at Les Mottets if Les Chapieux is fully booked.

We have 1 night in a mountain hut: the Rifugio Bonatti, one of our favourite huts in the Alps. We try to book small private rooms of 2, 3 or 4 people here rather than dorms, but they are always fully booked. These rooms could be mixed but we do try to avoid that. Bookings open on a set date and we simply book what we can. There are no en-suite facilities at the hut. There are hot showers, which are limited to a few minutes. If we are in dorms here, these are mixed-sex dorms of anything from 10-20 people.

For those who have paid a single supplement, this excludes Les Chapieux and Bonatti, where there are no single rooms. We may not be able to provide a single at Trient/Forclaz - it just depends at which point you booked.

## **Food**

All breakfasts and evening meals are included. We tend to eat in the hotel or refuge where we are staying most nights, but occasionally we may go out to a restaurant if our hotel doesn't have an evening restaurant. We will experience a range of excellent local food from France, Italy and Switzerland. On trips where we have included the evening meal (most of our group trips), there is usually a fixed 3-course menu.

In general, this will be hearty mountain food. Both the French Savoie region where the trip begins, and the Valais region in Switzerland where we spend several days, are famous for local cheese and cured meats, and you will find these feature on a lot of the evening menus.

Vegetarians can be catered for on the Tour du Mont Blanc, and we are finding that this is improving each year with the increasing demand. There are still certain places where you might just be served an omelette or pasta, so you shouldn't expect the same choice that you might be used to at home, but you can expect to be fed a hearty meal. Vegans can also be catered for, to a certain extent. Again, this is continually improving, but you should expect the occasional breakfast to consist of just fruit, and might consider bringing a few snacks to allow for this. In general, you can eat well as a vegan with the very occasional hotelier that doesn't "get it". Our leaders will always be looking out for you and we're trying to help local hoteliers adjust their mindsets, so we'll always try to rectify this on the spot.

If you have a special diet because of an allergy or intolerance to a certain food which will make you ill, then the accommodation will endeavour to cater for this as best they can: eg. gluten-free, nut-free, lactose-free. Although please note that most hoteliers and huts are serving a set meal for up to 80 people a night, so a lot of them don't have the facility to cook for a large range of different options - but they will try their hardest to cater for you. We'll have asked you about any dietary requirements in advance, but would ask you to stick to the diet you specified (suddenly wanting a particular diet without warning is not usually possible).

Lunches are not included: the reason being to offer more flexibility, if we want to have a sit-down lunch in one of the refuges, for example. Each day we can either order lunch via our hotel, or stop in a shop or bakery to top-up on snacks, or we can have a sit-down lunch from time to time: our leader will advise on this.

Drinks are not included, but you can order beer, wine and soft drinks at all hotels including the mountain refuges. Tap water is drinkable on this trip.

Hotel breakfasts are continental style and usually consist of tea, coffee, hot chocolate, juice, croissants, bread, jams, cereals, yoghurts, and often eggs, cheese and local meats. Breakfasts in the mountain huts & simpler auberges tend to be more basic and usually consist of tea, coffee, bread, jam and cereal.

## **Luggage delivery**

We deliver your main luggage each day that we have vehicle access (which is every day apart from the Bonatti hut). Please ensure that your main kit bag weighs no more than 15kg, and that it is in a kit bag style or rucksack, rather than a hard suitcase. Luggage needs to be ready by 08:00 daily, and is delivered by 17:30 - we use a luggage delivery company rather than a private driver so it is not possible to ride with the baggage vehicle.

Please note that your luggage will spend time in unlocked baggage rooms and unattended hotel reception areas: these are all in village hotels or mountain towns. We have never experienced a loss or theft but it is important to acknowledge that you are happy with this system and pack accordingly. The luggage company accept no responsibility for loss or damage to kit and advise that you do not bring any valuables. These can be either carried on you, or stored in a secure luggage room or safe in the Chamonix hotel. We advise using a padlock on your luggage.

### **Money and Tipping**

There are cash machines in Chamonix, Les Houches, Les Contamines, Courmayeur, La Fouly, Champex and Argentière. Mountain huts do not normally accept cards, but most of the hotels do. Lunches cost around €12-15 per day if we order them in the hotels, but we can stop at shops en-route to make our own lunches for considerably less. A coffee or soft drink costs around €3-5, and a beer around €5-7. Part of this trip is in Switzerland, so it could be useful to have some Swiss francs (or you can use the cashpoints in La Fouly or Champex). It is also possible to use euros in Switzerland, but you will normally receive your change in francs, and it won't be a very good exchange rate. Around €250 per person should be enough to cover your personal expenses but it does depend how many coffees, beers and wines you consume!

If we eat in a restaurant or stop for coffees, we normally round up the amount to leave a tip, but usually only if the service has been good.

Tipping your guide is the accepted way of saying thank you for excellent service. Do remember that tipping is voluntary and should only be done if you were pleased with the service: our staff are all paid fairly.

### **Weather**

In mountainous terrain the weather can vary. Temperatures can reach to over 30°C in the height of summer (June/July/August), but can be as low as 5°C on the mountain passes. It is often sunny with good weather, but it can rain, and even snow (yes, even in July or August!) so you should be prepared for any eventuality. The average temperatures range from 15-25°C in the valley floor, to 5-15°C on the passes.

### **Recommended Reading and Maps**

- ‘Tour of Mont Blanc’, Kev Reynolds, Cicerone
- ‘Killing Dragons – The Conquest of the Alps’, Fergus Fleming
- ‘Cham’ – Jonathan Trigell

The 1:25,000 French IGN maps 3630 Ouest and 3531 Est cover the TMB. If you just wanted one map as a general overview then the 1:50,000 IGN Tour du Mont Blanc map is excellent. Please note that you are not expected to carry maps, it's just in case you are interested!

### **Electric Supply - France, Switzerland & Italy**

The electricity sockets in France, Switzerland and Italy are all slightly different.

France is a standard European 2-pin plug (left-hand picture).

Switzerland uses "Type J" with 3 pins (2nd picture) - careful, a round plug won't usually fit into these sockets.

Italy uses "Type L" with 3 horizontally-aligned pins (3rd picture)

All countries are 220-240V.

All European travel plugs should fit into the French sockets, but with the Swiss & Italian sockets you need to make sure that the pins are slightly thinner and will fit (a type C plug will not fit a Swiss or Italian socket). An adaptor that is the same shape as the Swiss socket will be your best bet (4th picture).

There are usually some plug sockets available in mountain huts but they are limited. Bringing a separate booster charger for your phone may be a good solution.



## General Information - Guided Group Trips

### Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking this holiday that you must be insured against medical and personal accident risks (this must include helicopter rescue and repatriation costs). You may find that your annual multi-trip travel insurance covers this trip, but you should check that you are covered for trekking up to 3000m. We would also recommend that you take out holiday cancellation insurance at the time of booking: your deposit is non-refundable once you have booked, and the full balance is usually non-refundable depending on the timeframe (see our Terms and Conditions for further details).

You could try the following for quotes:

- World Nomads <https://www.worldnomads.com/travel-insurance>
- Staysure (UK only - they had an excellent covid policy compared to other providers) <https://www.staysure.co.uk/>
- Battleface - this is on the pricier side - but excellent cover and one of the few companies who covers you when the FCDO are advising against travel to a particular destination (this has been useful during covid) <https://www.battleface.com/en-gb/>
- The BMC - UK only - <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/modules/insurance/>
- Ripcord by Redpoint Travel Protection - <https://redpointtravelprotection.com/plan/ripcord/>

Please note, the above are insurance companies with whom our clients have previously had excellent service. Do note that policies and companies change: we are not a travel insurance provider, and it is your responsibility to take out insurance and to check that it provides the correct cover. We cannot answer questions about specific policies.

### Mountain Rescue Insurance

If you already have some form of travel insurance, but are unsure whether mountain rescue is covered, or perhaps that the specific activity of your holiday may not be covered under your annual travel policy, then it is possible to organise just the mountain rescue aspect.

For EU residents (and for the purposes of this policy this does include Norway, Switzerland and the UK) it is £4.90 per day, and for US and the rest of the world it is £11.50. You can book it online here: <https://www.cloud9adventure.com/online-store/Mountain-rescue-insurance-p101294506>

In addition to travel insurance, UK citizens should also obtain or renew your EHIC or GHIC card from the [NHS](#). This is not a replacement for insurance but it does mean you are entitled to the same treatment as any EU citizen, and unlike insurance it includes treatment of a pre-existing condition. You would normally have to pay for treatment at the time and then make a claim on return to the UK.

Please remember to bring a credit card with you on the trip: in the event of a medical problem or injury, you may be unable to complete the trek. You would normally need to pay for treatment, and would often have additional transport and accommodation costs. Although you can claim this back on your insurance, you usually have to pay at the time and make the insurance claim afterwards, so you must have a means of paying for this if necessary.

### Responsible Travel

We care about the places we visit, and our philosophy is simple: that each and every one of our trips has a positive impact on the local community and environment. We use family-run hotels, gîtes and restaurants in order to support the local communities. And it's a small step but we also recommend carbon off-setting. Visit [www.climatecare.org](http://www.climatecare.org).

## Adventure Travel

Please note that we specialise in Adventure Travel, the nature of which means that we cannot always follow our itinerary for a variety of reasons. All of our holidays can be subject to unexpected changes and you should be prepared to be flexible to accommodate these where necessary.

We update our itineraries on a regular basis to take into account such things as changes to trekking routes and the conditions of footpaths, but it is not always possible to guarantee that any of our holidays will run exactly according to the proposed itinerary. If during your holiday the itinerary is affected by immediate or local circumstances, the leader will make any changes that are necessary.

As a reputable tour operator, Cloud 9 Adventure supports the British Foreign & Commonwealth Office "Know Before You Go" campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas, and we recommend that all our clients take a look at the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination on the official FCDO website [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk). North Americans can also check out the US Department of State website: [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) for essential travel advice and tips.

Cloud 9 Adventure treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCDO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss alternatives. We have a local office in France, and our expert team monitor the conditions regularly to ensure that our trips are run safely, and are on hand to help if we need to change arrangements.

### Group Size and Holiday Status

For each of our group adventures, there is a minimum number of participants required in order for the trip to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from "Available" to "Guaranteed". In order to achieve minimum numbers, we run the trips in conjunction with several other small companies. We find that co-selling in this way means that almost all of our trips become "Guaranteed", and means that rather than 2 or 3 different companies all selling trips with 2-3 clients each, combining together with 1 guide means that we can offer the trips at a better price to you, and means that we achieve the minimum number faster. We are a small company with a high level of customer service, and we make sure that we only run trips in conjunction with companies who share our ethos. We know them well and have worked with them for years, and only use leaders who we know and trust to do an excellent job. We steer clear of large groups and cap our group size at 10 people for summer hiking trips, and 8 people for winter snowshoe or cross country ski trips, whilst many of the larger operators take up to 16 people.

### Preparing for your holiday

We have tried to grade the holiday as accurately as we can, with the intention of attracting people of similar abilities to each trip. As a general guideline, if we have described a trek as being tough or challenging, then you need to be fit and capable of the challenge. If you don't arrive in good shape for your trip, then you could be putting yourself and others in danger: if you're taking too long each day, at best it cuts into the time you have to relax and shower before dinner, and at worst, it can be the difference between the whole group being caught in an afternoon storm. As we are as accurate as we can be writing our trip notes, we do tend to be pretty good at making sure that the right people book each trip, but we do require a certain amount of personal responsibility for arriving fit and ready for your trip. We're not on a route-march so we are never expecting to be going too fast - we try to walk at a slow, steady pace, without the need to stop too frequently for rests. If you're worried about this, then please start with one of our easier trips graded Easy or Moderate, and you can build up to a Challenging trip. If you've booked an Extremely Tough trip, then you definitely need to be an experienced and fit hiker, used to long days in the hills.

Rather than hoping your trek will make you fitter (it will definitely help!), it makes a lot of sense to spend some time before your trip getting some additional exercise and preparing properly. The fitter you are, the more enjoyable your trip will be. The best preparation is long day hikes in the run-up to your trip.

We would also recommend that you adopt a weekly exercise regime leading up to your trip. Jogging, circuit training, squash and swimming are good for developing better stamina. Before departure, we also suggest that you try to fit in a number of long hikes in hilly terrain.

### Summer Kit List - Guided Groups with Luggage Delivery

#### Essential items :

- **Rucksack** – approx. 30-40L - for you to carry each day
- **Kit bag or suitcase** - for your main luggage to be transported. Max 15 kg and 1 per person (extra bags may incur a supplement).

- **Hiking boots** – you need to have a pair of waterproof hiking boots with ankle support and a good sole. Hiking trainers are okay for some days, but would not be appropriate in really bad weather, on rougher terrain, or when there is snow, so if you are thinking of bringing hiking shoes or trainers, you'll need boots in addition to those for the more rugged days. Sandals are not appropriate for mountain walking so please do not bring these for trekking.
- **Waterproof jacket and trousers** – both essential items, should be as light as possible (not insulated: your other layers should provide the insulation). Please ensure that you do not need to remove your walking boots in order to put on your waterproof trousers.
- **Socks**
- **Underwear**
- **Trekking trousers** – bring something lightweight.
- **Shorts**
- **T-shirts** – wicking t-shirts are better than cotton as they are lighter and dry faster.
- **Mid layer** - fleece jacket is good
- **Warm jacket** – We recommend bringing a lightweight synthetic belay jacket (eg. Rab Photon / Arcteryx Atom / Patagonia Nano) – just in case it gets cold. Remember, you are carrying this in your rucksack so it should be as light as possible. You don't normally need to bring a down jacket because it won't be much use if it gets wet.
- **Warm hat** - lightweight woolly hat is fine
- **Gloves** - we recommend bringing 2-3 pairs. A light liner pair are good for most of the trip. Then a pair of waterproof gloves such as Seal Skinz can be very useful in bad weather. And a warmer pair of gloves can be essential if it snows.
- **Sun Hat**
- **Sunglasses**
- **Suncream** (small bottle to save weight)
- **Lip protection** (with sun screen)
- **Water bottles / camelback** – you should have the capacity to carry at least 2 litres of water, but on very hot days you could need 3L.
- **Walking poles** – These often go in the “optional” section, but if there is snow, they are essential.
- **Sheet sleeping bag** – only needed for any nights in a mountain refuge (duvets or blankets are provided). Silk is best, it's lighter than cotton.
- **Travel towel** – again, only needed for the mountain refuges – the hotels provide towels.
- **Wash kit** – Bring whatever you like for wash kit - but for any refuge nights where you have to carry it, small bottles will be perfect: you would normally just take a toothbrush, travel size toothpaste, mini contact lens solution if applicable, a couple of wet wipes and a tiny travel soap.
- **Head torch** – just a lightweight torch, such as a Petzl Tikka / Zipka is fine for this trip.
- **Plastic bags / dry sacks** to keep essentials dry.
- **Passport** – to be carried whilst trekking. Make sure you keep it dry.
- **Cash** – for packed lunches and any drinks whilst on the trip
- **Credit card** - for emergencies
- **Basic first aid kit** – your leader will carry a large first aid kit, but you should bring a small first aid kit containing plasters, blister treatment, painkillers & diarrhea treatment (rehydration sachets & imodium)

#### Optional items:

- **Thermal base layer**
- **Long johns / thermal leggings**
- **Buff** – can be useful for extra warmth if it's cold, or sun protection for your neck on a hot day
- **Camera**
- **Book**
- **Lightweight sandals / flip flops** – whilst these are usually provided at the mountain refuges, they aren't provided in the hotels, so it's really nice to have footwear to change into in the evening
- **Hiking Trainers** – it can be nice to give your feet a break from your walking boots on some days. Your leader can advise on which days this might be suitable, and if you are thinking of doing this, your shoes must be suitable for trekking in!
- **Mobile phone** – there is phone reception for the majority of the trip. It is a good idea to have a phone in case of emergency or if you need to leave the group for any reason.
- **Umbrella**

- **Earplugs**
- **Snacks** – not essential as we do go past shops most days so you can top up your supply of snacks fairly regularly
- **Antibacterial handwash**
- **Insect repellent**
- **Swimwear** - some of the hotels have a swimming pool, spa or sauna
- **Boot dryers** - not many places in the Alps have drying rooms, so since I discovered these, I don't go anywhere without them: <https://www.sidas.com/en/products/204-drywarmer.html>
- **Travel kettle, mug & tea bags / coffee** - it is unusual for hotels in continental Europe to provide tea and coffee-making facilities in the rooms
- **External battery pack** - for charging your phone in a hut
- **Flask** - we do try to have regular tea and coffee stops, but a flask can be a comfort on bad weather days

#### A note about the kit:

Most of the time the weather is warm, usually fairly stable, and most people don't need too much extra kit to see them through the trip.

However, **you must bring all of the items on our essential list**. At least once per summer we experience unseasonal conditions that really do make every item on the above list essential. **If you do not have the correct kit, you can put yourself and others at risk of hypothermia**, and our guide may ask you to leave the trip until you have purchased the necessary kit.

Every year we experience unseasonal snow at least once. It can also rain very heavily and temperatures can go from being in the mid 30s celcius (96 F) one week, to below zero (32 F) the next.

So, if it rains, you *will* need waterproof jackets AND trousers, and will be glad of several pairs of gloves. If it snows, you *will* need decent hiking boots (NOT hiking trainers), walking poles, warm clothes and warm hat and gloves. It's also essential that you can put your waterproof trousers on without removing your boots.

It is also possible to experience several weeks of heatwave at a time - if this happens, you will likely get through numerous sachets of rehydration salts and will need to be carrying 3-4L of water, and a sun hat will be absolutely essential.

Note that this is not meant to alarm you - most of the time we enjoy stable weather and are in shorts and t-shirts - we just want to make sure that your trip isn't ruined if you come unprepared - we'd far rather you have extra kit and don't need it, than the other way round.