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## Ultimate Tour du Mont Blanc UTM

This challenging and unique route stays higher than most classic routes wherever it can to make this the Ultimate Tour du Mont Blanc trek.

- Stay in high quality small hotels and chalets while in towns
- Trek from hut to spectacularly-located hut
- Overnight in the fabled Rifugio Bonatti and Cabane d'Orny huts
- Experience Alpine wildflower meadows, panoramic views and balcony trails
- Excellent IML guide and baggage transfers included

World-renowned Mont Blanc sits at the meeting point of France, Italy and Switzerland. Its glaciated massif is home to one of the world's greatest and most popular long distance walking circuits: The Tour du Mont Blanc. Trek our specially devised, 'ultimate' version of this historic route, with quieter

and little-known variants to get you deeper into the serenity and majesty of this incredible part of the world.

This route features high-level passes and cols including the Col des Fours (2,665m) and Col de la Broya (2,401m) as well as the epic Monte de la Saxe ridge. Enjoy comfortable chalets, hotels and lodgings and marvel at seemingly precariously-perched mountain huts. With great food and full luggage support (except on two nights), prepare to have your breath officially taken away - actually and metaphorically - by your Ultimate Tour of Mont Blanc.

## Trip Summary

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### Day 1 - Arrive in Argentière

Arrive in Argentière

Explore Argentière or Chamonix - Argentière

18:00 Trip briefing

### Day 2 - Trek from Les Houches to Les Contamines

Transfer from Argentière to Les Houches

Trek from Les Houches to Les Contamines - Les Contamines-Montjoie

### Day 3 - Les Contamines to Les Mottets

Trek from Les Contamines to Les Mottets

### Day 4 - Refuge des Mottets to Courmayeur

Trek from Les Mottets to Courmayeur - Courmayeur

### Day 5 - Courmayeur to Rifugio Bonatti

Trek from Courmayeur to the Bonatti hut

### Day 6 - Rifugio Bonatti to La Fouly

Trek from Rifugio Bonatti to La Fouly - La Fouly

### Day 7 - La Fouly to the Cabane d'Orny

Trek from La Fouly to the Cabane d'Orny - Cabane d'Orny

### Day 8 - Cabane d'Orny to Trient

Trek from the Cabane d'Orny to Trient - Trient

### Day 9 - Trient to Argentière

Trek from Forclaz or Trient to Argentière - Argentière

### Day 10 - Lac Blanc Trek

Circular trek from Argentière to Lac Blanc - Refuge du Lac Blanc

### Day 11 - La Flégère to Les Houches

Trek from La Flégère to Les Houches - Les Houches

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## Day 12 - Depart Argentière

Depart Argentière

## Day 1 - Arrive in Argentière

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### Arrive in Argentière

The nearest airport is Geneva, and the easiest way to reach the Chamonix valley is by minibus transfer (a 1.5 hour journey). Please aim to arrive in time for a 18:00 briefing at your accommodation (this normally means that flights should arrive before 16:00).

Please see the Travel Arrangements section for more detailed information.



### Explore Argentière or Chamonix

Your trip begins in Argentière, at the head of the Chamonix valley, an area 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.

Argentière is a small village located at the base of the Argentière glacier and the Grands Montets ski area.

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 either Argentière (the village has several bars, restaurants, and outdoor shops), or take the train or bus to Chamonix to explore the town. Here you'll find a larger choice of shops and cafés. (Do ask your accommodation for a Guest Card in order to travel free of charge on the buses and trains).



#### Argentière

Chamonix, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, FR, 74400



**18:00** - 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 meet around 18:00/18:30 in your hotel or chalet, and will confirm a more precise time a little nearer the time.

## Day 2 - Trek from Les Houches to Les Contamines

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### Transfer from Argentière to Les Houches

We start with a 20 min transfer from Argentière to Les Houches to start our trek.



### Trek from Les Houches to Les Contamines

Our day's hike commences with an ascent through forests to reach the Col de Voza, where we should have time to stop for a coffee. We'll then drop to the Bionnassay Glacier, with the Aiguille de Bionnassay towering above. See the meltwater's torrent beneath us as we cross on a suspension bridge to reach the Col de Tricot, with the magnificent Domes de Miage straight in front of us. We can stop for a drink in the delightful Chalet de Miage below. Next we'll tick off the Col du Truc, and from here we'll descend to Les Contamines.

Distance: 22 km / 13 miles

Ascent: 1500m / 4921 ft

Descent: 1350m / 4429 ft

Approx walking time: 8-9 hours

Accommodation: Hotel

Luggage access



### **Les Contamines-Montjoie**

Les Contamines-Montjoie, RHONE-ALPES, FR, 74170

## **Day 3 - Les Contamines to Les Mottets**



### **Trek from Les Contamines to Les Mottets**

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 climb to the Col des Fours. If conditions are good, we can summit the Tête Nord des Fours before our steep descent to the Ville des Glaciers. Another 20 minutes along the river take us to our base for the night, the newly-renovated Refuge des Mottets.

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. If you think it'll be too hard, there's usually the option to take a bus for approx 40€! (needs to be booked the day before).

Distance: 19 km / 11.9 miles

Ascent: 1348m / 4450 feet

Descent: 960m / 3150 feet

Approx walking time: 8-9 hours

Luggage access

## Day 4 - Refuge des Mottets to Courmayeur



### Trek from Les Mottets to Courmayeur

We'll start the day with a climb up to the Col de La Seigne, at 2516m the second highest pass on the Tour du Mont Blanc and offering unparalleled views of Mont Blanc's Brenva face. Congratulations will be in order as we reach the border with Italy!

From here we'll descend past the Elisabetta hut (coffee diversions possible here if we are making good time), before continuing down into the Val Veny.

From the Lac du Combal, the Tour du Mont Blanc climbs up high above the Val Veny on a spectacular balcony path.

In June or early July there can be too much snow for the balcony path - but there are a couple of options. We'll either take a lower route via the Rifugio Monte Bianco to rejoin the TMB at the Col Chécrouit, or if an easier day is preferred we can take a bus from La Visaille (July and August).

From the Col Chécrouit there's a pretty steep descent (probably the steepest of the trip!) down to Courmayeur, taking the cable car down can be an option (extra cost) for tired legs (July/August only). Then we'll catch a bus up to La Palud to check in to our hotel.

Distance: 24 km / 13 miles

Ascent: 1200m / 3937 ft

Descent: 1850m / 6070 ft

Approx walking time: 8-9 hours

Accommodation: Hotel

Luggage access



**Courmayeur**  
Aosta, IT, 11013

## Day 5 - 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

## Day 6 - Rifugio Bonatti to La Fouly



### 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

## Day 7 - La Fouly to the Cabane d'Orny



### Trek from La Fouly to the Cabane d'Orny

Though relatively short in distance, today is quite possibly the toughest day to date of your Ultimate Tour du Mont Blanc, so do not underestimate it! We'll hike through the Alpine village of Praz de Fort before diverting left into the Val Saleina on a little-travelled variant.

The Glacier d'Orny is ahead and way up on our right is our focus for the day: the incredibly located Cabane d'Orny, from where the views are worth every step of the 1,700m ascent! Switchbacks ease the gradient and will lead us up onto a stunning path over the lateral moraine above the glacier itself. There's no luggage access tonight and the Cabane d'Orny is more basic, with no showers. Soak up the simplicity of travelling light and the truly spectacular setting.

Distance: 16 km / 9.9 miles

Ascent: 1700m / 5577 feet

Descent: 500m / 1640 feet

Approx walking time: 6-7 hours

No luggage access



## Cabane d'Orny

Orsières, Valais, CH, 1943

## Day 8 - Cabane d'Orny to Trient

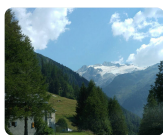


### Trek from the Cabane d'Orny to Trient

Today is a fairly technical day with a descent over glacial moraine. Balcony paths (with a few chains) and rough 4x4 roads will take us to the pretty Val d'Arpette, after which we'll climb once more up through boulders and rock-strewn canyons to reach the Fenêtre d'Arpette (2,665m).

Enjoy phenomenal views over the Trient glacier and the long descent which follows towards the Chalet du Glacier for a drink stop. More restful paths and woods fill the end of the day as we head into Trient. This approach is definitely a good weather variant and involves some steep and exposed sections. Another option is available if there is bad weather, or conditions aren't optimal on the Fenêtre d'Arpette (via the Bovine route).

Distance: 21 km / 13 miles  
 Ascent: 1020m / 3346 feet  
 Descent: 2500m / 8202 feet  
 Approx walking time: 9-10 hours  
 Luggage accesss



**Trient**  
 Trient, VALAIS, CH

## Day 9 - Trient 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 Tseppes (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

## Day 10 - Lac Blanc Trek



### Circular trek from Argentière to Lac Blanc

Today isn't a particularly long trekking day but it crams in a surprising amount of diverse views and technical interest. We'll trek up through larch and spruce forests towards the Chéserys cliffs. We soon reach the Aiguillette d'Argentière, where we'll start the ladders section of the TMB. There's a series of around 7 ladders - they are all fairly short and aid our progress up the hill.

We eventually reach the spectacular Lacs des Chéserys, and another ladder then leads us to the Lac Blanc with its fabulous views of the region, and a well-earned coffee stop at the Lac Blanc refuge. We'll head back down into the valley and Argentière via a different route to complete the loop.

Distance: 14 km / 8.7 miles

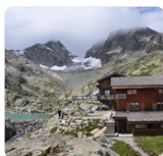
Ascent: 1200m / 3937 ft

Descent: 1200m / 3937 ft

Approximate walking time 7 hrs

Accommodation: Chalet

Luggage access: Yes



### Refuge du Lac Blanc

Chamonix-Mont-Blanc, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, FR, 74400

+33 602 05 08 82

## Day 11 - La Flégère to Les Houches



### Trek from La Flégère to Les Houches

Today is a long day, taking us high above the Chamonix valley with spectacular views of the Mont Blanc massif throughout the day, so we start as early as we can. If we stayed in the Chamonix valley last night, we take the cable car back up to where we left off yesterday.

From the Flégère we pick up the famous Grand Balcon Sud. As we head to Planpraz, we are rewarded with views across to Mont Blanc, the Drus and the Aiguille Verte. From Planpraz it is a steady climb to the Col du Brévent (2368m) and from here we tackle a short ladder section to reach the summit of Le Brévent (2525m) where there are superb 360 degree views across to the Fiz, the Aravis and of course, the Mont Blanc Massif.

Then it is time to start the long descent (approx. 3 hours) to Les Houches, passing the Refuge de Bel Lachat and eventually reaching the pine forest to the Christ Roi statue, before completing our circuit in Les Houches.

Today is long, but it is a really beautiful day's trekking.

There are various cable car options for those wishing to shorten the day.

Distance: 17 km / 10.5 miles

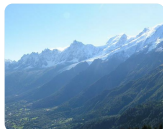
Ascent: 772m / 2530 feet

Descent: 1546m / 5070 feet

Approx walking time: 8 hours

Accommodation: Hotel

Luggage access: Yes



### Les Houches

Les Houches, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, FR, 74310

## Day 12 - Depart Argentière



### Depart Argentière

Our trip ends after breakfast.

Transfers to Geneva Airport are easy to arrange: we recommend Mountain Drop Offs. More detailed travel information can be found in the Travel Arrangements section towards the end of this document.

## Information & Documents



### Ultimate Tour du Mont Blanc - What's Included

- All accommodation (including arrival day and final evening)
- All breakfasts and evening meals
- All transport mentioned in the itinerary
- Cable cars that are part of the itinerary (not optional extra trips)
- Daily luggage delivery (except 2 of the refuge nights where there is no vehicle access)
- Fully qualified and expert trekking guide (International Mountain Leader)



### Ultimate Tour du Mont Blanc: What's Not Included

- Flights
- Airport transfers (but we can add these if required)
- Packed lunches
- Personal drinks and snacks
- Any transport, accommodation or additional expenses due to a participant being unable to complete the itinerary
- Optional cable car trips i.e. to voluntarily shorten a day
- Buses and trains unless mentioned in the itinerary
- Mountain rescue / travel insurance (we can organise mountain rescue insurance if required)
- 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.

### Arriving in Chamonix

The starting point for this trek is Argentière in the Chamonix valley, France. The nearest airport is Geneva, and the easiest way to reach the Chamonix valley is by minibus transfer (just over 1 hour). Details of the different types of transfer as follows:

#### 1. Private minibus transfer - door to door

Private transfers cost around 200 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.

#### 2. Shared minibus transfer - door to door

A shared transfer combines up to 12 other people on similarly-timed flights. You can expect to wait at the airport for up to 45 minutes or so while you wait for other people's flights. Most of the time it works really well, but it can be frustrating if you end up having to wait for a delayed flight. 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 32-45 euros per person, depending on the time of day and whether it is peak season or out of season. If you would like us to book it for you, just let us know - we charge £40 per person each way.

#### 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 Oui Bus or Easy Bus - these only go to Chamonix Sud bus stop, so do bear in mind that you then have to reach your Chamonix, Les Houches or Argentière hotel with all your luggage. Personally I would only do this if my hotel was very near the Chamonix Sud bus stop.

### Booking your transfer

If you would prefer to book your own transfers, it's 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, and Cloud 9 Adventure clients normally receive a small discount ([www.mountaindropoffs.com](http://www.mountaindropoffs.com)). Use discount code CLOUD13 - 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: Haute Transfer, Mountain Drop Offs, Cham Van, Chamonix Valley Transfers and Alp Links. The best of the budget options is Oui Bus, but note that they do not offer a door-to-door service: they only use the bus stop at Chamonix Sud.

A warning about Easy Bus: we have had terrible service from them and would advise steering clear of them unless it is your only option! There is no customer service - we've almost never experienced an Easy Bus turn up on time and have had to waste money on last-minute private transfers in order not to miss flights. No refund from Easy Bus even though on numerous occasions that we've used them, they have failed to turn up (and we waited an hour). We only use them if there really isn't anything else.

A warning about Cham Express: looks cheap to start off with but once they've hit you with a fee for luggage, then tax, it's often no different from the other companies. They do show online availability, which is good. 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.

### **Train from Geneva 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!

### **Taxi from Geneva to Chamonix**

We would not recommend arriving at Geneva airport with no transport planned - it's a very expensive taxi ride from Geneva to Chamonix if not booked in advance.

### **Eurostar from London to Geneva Centre 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 is often more expensive than flying, but booking 3 months in advance often gives special offers. Book tickets at [www.trainline.eu](http://www.trainline.eu)

### **Train from Paris to Saint-Gervais-Le-Fayet or Chamonix**

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)

## Ultimate Tour du Mont Blanc - What to Expect

### The trekking

The trekking is relatively strenuous (very strenuous at times) and the Ultimate Tour du Mont Blanc is considerably more challenging than the Classic Tour du Mont Blanc. The clue's in the name! There are some brief sections of chains and ladders.

We have specifically chosen to incorporate variants wherever we can, to make trip a real challenge and to avoid the "beaten track". This route generally follows good quality trails all the way round: some may be narrow balcony paths or be a bit exposed. Almost all of the days have over 1000m of ascent and descent, but the itinerary is designed so that you walk at a steady pace throughout to enjoy the walking and the scenery. This trip is suitable for people with a very good level of fitness, who are well-used to long days in the hills and mountains, and who hike regularly. Your luggage will be transferred for you for each day (apart from the 2 nights when we stay at the Rifugio Bonatti and the Cabane d'Orny, as these mountain huts have no vehicle access). For the most part, you will only be carrying a day pack.

### Accommodation

Wherever possible we book good quality, comfortable hotels. In most of the hotels we can book you a twin room. At Les Mottets, Rifugio Bonatti and Trient, we are limited to what is available and sometimes it has to be dorms. We always try for private rooms but they are usually booked a year in advance so it will depend at what point you booked. You have 3 nights in mountain huts: firstly at the Refuge des Mottets, which has small dorms of 4 people (we do try to avoid the huge dorms there), then at the Rifugio Bonatti, which is one of the nicest mountain huts in the Alps, and another at the spectacularly-located Cabane d'Orny, which is a much more basic hut with communal dorms and no showers. There are showers in both the Mottets and Bonatti huts. They are limited to a few minutes.

### Food

All breakfasts and most evening meals are included. Each night you usually eat in the hotel or refuge where you are staying, and will experience excellent local food from France, Italy and Switzerland.

Packed lunches are not included, but each day you can either order lunch via your hotel, or stop in a shop or bakery to top up on snacks.

Drinks are not included, but you can normally order beer, wine and soft drinks at all hotels including the mountain refuges.

Hotel breakfasts are continental style. Breakfasts in the mountain huts and simpler auberges tend to be more basic and usually consist of tea, coffee, bread, jam and cereal.

Tap water is drinkable on this trip.

### Luggage delivery

Your main luggage will be delivered each day that vehicle access is possible (which is every day apart from 2 of the hut nights). Please ensure that your main kit bag weighs no more than 15 kg.

Luggage is normally picked up from 08:00 and delivered by 17:30 - we book with a luggage delivery company rather than a private driver so it is not usually possible to ride with the baggage vehicle.

## Money

There are cash machines at Geneva airport, Chamonix, Argentière, Les Contamines, Courmayeur and La Fouly. Mountain huts do not normally accept cards, but most of the hotels do. Lunches cost around €12-15 per day if you order them in the hotels, but you can stop at shops en-route to make our own lunches for considerably less. A coffee or soft drink costs around €3-4, and a beer around €5-7.

Bottled water can be expensive but you can usually fill up with tap water. Part of this trip is in Switzerland, so it could be useful to have some Swiss francs, or you can use the cashpoint in La Fouly. 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 €300-350 per person should be enough to cover your personal expenses but it does depend how many coffees, beers and wines you consume!

## Weather

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

## Recommended Reading and Maps

'*Tour of Mont Blanc*', Kev Reynolds, Cicerone (included)

'*Killing Dragons – The Conquest of the Alps*', Fergus Fleming

'*Cham*' – Jonathan Trigell

The 1:25,000 IGN maps 3630 Ouest and 3531 Est cover the TMB, or if you'd just like an overview, then the new 1:50,000 IGN "Tour du Mont Blanc" map is excellent.



## 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.



## 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 & immodium)

#### 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.



## General Information - Guided Group Trips

### 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 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: your deposit is non-refundable once you have booked, and the full balance is usually non-refundable (see our Terms and Conditions for further details).

We recommend The BMC [www.thebmc.co.uk](http://www.thebmc.co.uk) or Snowcard [www.snowcard.co.uk](http://www.snowcard.co.uk) for UK residents, or Travelex [www.travelexinsurance.com](http://www.travelexinsurance.com) for US citizens or residents.

We can organise mountain rescue insurance for EU residents for £4.90 per day, or £8.95 per day for US and the rest of the world. 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 the EHIC card from [www.ehic.uk.com](http://www.ehic.uk.com). 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 FCO Travel Advice for their chosen destination on the official FCO 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 FCO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss alternatives. We have a local office in Chamonix, 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 this means almost all of our trips become "Guaranteed". 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.