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## Self-Guided Walker's Haute Route

Welcome to one of the best long-distance hikes in the world!!

The Classic Walker's Haute Route, linking the famous mountaineering capitals of Chamonix and Zermatt, is one of the best multi-day trekking journeys in the world. Your adventure begins at the foot of Mont Blanc in the Chamonix Valley. En-route from France into Switzerland, the lower sections of the trek journey through green alpine valleys, pretty mountain hamlets and flower-strewn meadows. The higher sections of the trek take you across high alpine passes, with spectacular views over 10 of the 12 highest peaks and glaciers in the Alps.

Throughout this 180km (111 mile) trek, you'll follow good paths and tracks, travelling through picturesque valleys and crossing over numerous 3000m (10,000 ft) passes. The trek ends in Zermatt, beneath the Matterhorn, one of the most iconic mountains in the world.

There are so many versions of the Walker's Haute Route - unlike many multi-day hikes, there is no fixed itinerary, so there are a number of options for you to choose from.

All of our self-guided itineraries are bespoke, so if there's anything in particular you would like to add, such as a particular hotel, a faster itinerary, a slower itinerary, then just let us know and we can arrange it. We have a 7 day version, an 8 day version, our Classic 10 day version, or 11, 12, 13, 14 or 15 day versions for those who want to do every step of the way or take their time high up in the mountains. Or, we can modify the trip for anyone

who really doesn't want to stay in a mountain hut. We also do a "Deluxe" version, or a "Budget" version - just let us know your preference!

For those who don't want too much decision-making, you can opt for our 10 day "Classic Walker's Haute Route" that we think is one of the best ways of doing the route, staying in comfortable hotels all the way round, with 2 nights in mountain huts.

You can opt for luggage delivery if you like (we can deliver to all hotels on the route, just not the mountain huts as they don't have vehicle access). Or, you can choose a single luggage drop from Chamonix to Zermatt if you don't need luggage daily. And some people opt to leave a bag in Chamonix and return by train at the end of the trip, whilst others decide to carry everything - the choice is yours!

## Day 1: Arrive in Chamonix



### Arrive in Chamonix - Self-Guided

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.

We recommend Mountain Drop Offs for shared transfers: Visit [www.mountaindropoffs.com](http://www.mountaindropoffs.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.

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



### Chamonix

Chamonix, RHONE-ALPES, FR, 74400



### 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: Trek from Montroc to Trient or Forclaz



### Train from Chamonix to Montroc

The day begins with a short but scenic train journey on the famous Mont Blanc Express, to reach the hamlet of Montroc at the head of the Chamonix valley, the starting point for today's hike.



### Hike from Montroc to Trient or Col de la Forclaz

From Montroc, you climb up through larch woods to reach your first summit, the stunning Aiguillette de Posettes. It's a decent climb, but there are plenty of incredible views towards the Le Tour glacier and back towards Mont Blanc to distract you from the climb.

From the Col de Posettes, you have another short climb: the standard route descends to Trient from the Col de Balme (the border with Switzerland), but you have a couple of options if you'd like to take a variant: either a quiet, and beautiful, variant through the meadows of Les Tseppes, or via Les Grands. Both variants add around an hour on to the standard route.

You either stay in the village of Trient, or you'll have a 45 minute climb up to the Col de la Forclaz: we base this on where we can find private rooms rather than dormitories, as it's a bottleneck area with limited availability.

Distance: 14 km / 8.7 miles

Ascent: 1100 m / 3609 ft

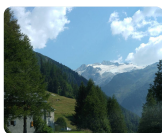
Descent: 1100 m / 3609 ft

Approximate walking time: 7-8 hours

Accommodation: Simple hotel with basic shared bathrooms. Supplement payable for (limited) en-suite rooms.

Meals: Breakfast and Dinner

Luggage Access: Yes



### Trient

Trient, VALAIS, CH



### Col de la Forclaz

Trient, Valais, CH, 1929



#### Option: Add a day from Chamonix to Argentière

As many of our guests have already done the Tour du Mont Blanc, we tend to start our standard Haute Route trips from Montroc. If you'd prefer to walk every step of the way, or if you'd simply like more time in the Chamonix valley, then you can start your trip with a hike from Chamonix to Argentière: either via the famous Lac Blanc, or via one of the Petit Balcon paths if you'd like an easier start.

**This option extends the trip by 1 day.**

## Day 3: Trient or Forclaz to Champex



### Hike from Trient or Forclaz to Champex

There are 2 options today: either via the Fenêtre d'Arpette (the official Haute Route), or you can take an easier route via Bovine. Both are spectacular treks and offer wonderful views. We would not recommend the Fenêtre d'Arpette in bad weather.

#### The Fenêtre d'Arpette

If you stayed in Trient, you will climb up to the bisse (Swiss Irrigation system), and if you stayed at Forclaz, you start with an easy stroll along the bisse to the Chalet des Glaciers, a small café next to the impressive Trient glacier. Here you begin a long and often steep ascent through spectacular scenery up to the high pass known as the Fenêtre d'Arpette, from which there are wonderful views of the Trient glacier. Next is a steep descent through the Val d'Arpette to your accommodation in Champex.

#### Bovine

Bovine is a lovely alternative if you'd like an easier day, or a good option if the weather is bad. You start with a climb up to the Col de la Forclaz, if you stayed in Trient. From here, the path climbs further up through woods until you emerge with a fantastic view of the Rhone valley. You've reached Bovine, a high pasture for grazing cattle and a lovely place to stop for refreshments. From here there's a traversing path with wonderful views of the Grand Combin as you descend to Champex.

Distance: 14 km / 8.7 miles (or 16 km / 9.9 miles via Bovine)

Ascent: 1411m / 4629ft (or 929m / 3048 feet via Bovine)

Descent: 1200m / 3937ft (or 710m / 2329 feet via Bovine)

Approximate walking time: 8 hours (or 6 hrs via Bovine)

Accommodation: 3\* hotel

Meals: Breakfast and Dinner

Luggage Access: Yes

## Day 4: Champex to the Cabane du Mont Fort



### Hike from Champex to the Cabane du Mont Fort

You leave the picturesque village of Champex and hike through summer meadows and farmland to reach the little village of Sembrancher. From here it's a short walk to Le Châble, a traditional village below the famous resort of Verbier. From Le Châble, you take the cable car to Les Ruinettes, above Verbier. Next, you follow another bisse on the way up to the well-known Cabane du Mont Fort, and are rewarded with fantastic views of the Mont Blanc massif and the Grand Combin: it's around an hour's walk from the cable car to the Cabane.

Distance: 20 km / 12.4 miles  
 Ascent: 1350m / 4429ft  
 Descent: 1300m / 4265ft  
 Approximate walking time: 8 hours  
 Accommodation: Mountain Refuge  
 Meals: Breakfast & evening meal  
 Luggage Access: No



### Cabane du Mont Fort

The Cabane du Mont Fort is a mountain hut in the Verbier ski area, with fantastic views. There are some twin or quad rooms, and some dormitories. It isn't possible to book the twin rooms in advance - it's just luck of the draw! There are shared bathroom facilities.

If you'd like a shower, it's 5 CHF for a token that will last a couple of minutes. The showers are slightly nicer here than at the Prafleuri, in case that affects your decision about where to have one!



#### Cabane du Mont Fort

Tortin, Bagnes, Valais, CH, 1936  
 +41 27 778 13 84



### Option: stay overnight in Le Chable or Verbier. For those who either want a shorter day, or who are doing "every step of the way"

For those who would like a shorter day, simply hike from Champex to Le Chable today (approx 4 hours). You can either stay in Le Chable (this is recommended for anyone wanting to do "every step of the way", as tomorrow you would then hike to either the Cabane du Mont Fort, or the Cabane de Louvie).

Or if you're happy to take the cable car, you can take the cable car from Le Chable to Verbier and stay the night there (Verbier is a famous ski town with glitzy hotels and bars, and it does come with a price tag!).

Staying in either Le Chable or Verbier extends the trip by 1 day.



### Option: stay at the Cabane de Louvie instead of the Cabane du Mont Fort

We recommend a stay here if you are using the cable car from Le Chable to Les Ruinettes. There is a spectacular hike from the Cabane du Mont Fort to reach the Prafleuri, known as the Sentier des Chamois, and it's why our "Classic" trip stays here. We also love the location of the Cabane, the friendly staff, and the fact that it's an iconic part of Verbier's ski area. The hike there from Les Ruinettes lift is lovely.

Note: if you are doing "every step of the way", then the hike from Le Chable to the Cabane de Mont Fort is approximately 7 hours of rather steep climbing.

## Day 5: Cabane du Mont Fort to the Cabane de Prafleuri



### Hike from the Cabane du Mont Fort to the Cabane de Prafleuri

This is one of the most spectacular days of the trek, crossing 3 cols with fantastic views throughout. You start by taking the "Sentier des Chamois", which takes an improbable route amongst imposing cliffs (there is a path!) to the Col Termin, perched at 2648 m.

From here, you make a dramatic traverse (with a couple of chains to aid the way), followed by a climb across boulders to reach the Col de Louvie (2921 m). Here, the scenery changes as you look down onto the moraine of the aptly-named Grand Désert glacier. A steep descent takes you towards the lake and to the Grand Désert itself. From here you climb up to the Col de Prafleuri (2987 m), then descend to the Cabane de Prafleuri (2642 m) for the evening. A very long, but truly stunning day in the wilderness.

Distance: 16.7 km / 10.4 miles  
 Ascent: 1377 m / 4517 ft  
 Descent: 1170m / 3838 ft  
 Approximate walking time: 8 hours  
 Accommodation: Mountain refuge  
 Meals: Breakfast and Dinner  
 Luggage Access: No



### Cabane de Prafleuri

The Cabane de Prafleuri was originally built to house the workers who constructed the Dix dam, although it has been rebuilt since then! It is in a dramatic setting, and accommodation is in large, mixed dormitories. Tap water is not drinkable here (it is possible to buy bottled water) and there are fairly basic bathroom facilities, but the location makes up for this.



#### Cabane de Prafleuri

Hérémece, Valais, CH  
 +41 27 281 17 80



### Option: Stay in a hotel instead of a hut

If you're not sure about staying in all the mountain huts, it is possible to stay in a hotel tonight. It is an extra 1.5 hours walk, and we definitely do not recommend this early season (due to there being too much snow to descend easily between the hut and the hotel - we recommend from late July onwards). The hotel isn't luxury - but it does have en-suite bedrooms, and we can deliver luggage there. It is worth noting that this is already a fairly long and tiring day - so adding 1.5 hours of descent on to the day doesn't work for everyone!



### Hotel du Barrage, Grande-Dixence

We recommend making the day longer by approx. 1.5 hours and staying in this hotel. It's by no means luxury, but it does have en-suite rooms and it means that you don't have to stay in a mountain refuge (the Prafleuri hut, which is very basic), and we can also deliver luggage here.

This hotel is often referred to as "The Ritz", so-named by the dam's construction workers for whom the building was originally built. Don't be taken in by the name!



#### Hotel du Barrage

Hérémece, Valais, CH, 1987  
 +41 27 281 13 22

## Day 6: Cabane de Prafleuri to Arolla



### Hike from the Cabane de Prafleuri to Arolla

You are greeted by a short, steep climb and should quickly reach the Col des Roux (2804m). Early morning on this col, with views towards glaciers and the milky waters of the Lac de Dix, is a great start to the day. Rewarded with views of the Pigne d'Arolla and Mont Blanc de Cheilon, you descend gently to reach the lake, usually passing a few noisy marmots on the way. You then walk along the lake to its end.

Next you make a steep ascent to reach the Dix glacier, and an exciting part of the trek as you cross the glacial moraine to the base of the Col de Riedmatten. Here, you have the option of either climbing up to the col, or taking a more direct route up the Pas de Chèvres ladders, which having been replaced in 2015 make for a much easier crossing than in previous years.

There are more spectacular views of the Dix glacier, then the rest of the day is all downhill to the alpine village of Arolla, nestled in its very own forest of Arolla pines.

Distance: 18.6 km / 11.5 miles  
 Ascent: 1041 m / 3415 ft  
 Descent: 1639m / 5377 ft  
 Approximate walking time: 7-8 hours  
 Accommodation: Hotel  
 Meals: Breakfast & evening meal  
 Luggage Access: Yes





## Arolla

Evolène, Valais, CH, 1986



### Option: Add a Rest day in Arolla or La Sage

Some of our guests opt to build in a rest day in either Arolla or La Sage, as by this point in the trek, it might feel like you could do with a rest!

There isn't a lot to do here.....both Arolla and La Sage are tiny villages. They are both very pretty, and are great places to simply relax. Both the hotels that we use here are gorgeous, with either a garden, terrace or beautiful reading room to relax and read your book.

## Day 7: Arolla to La Sage



### Hike from Arolla to La Sage

You are nearing the halfway point of the trek, and today is something of a recuperation day, involving a leisurely walk through woodland (although there are 1 or 2 chains!) to the Lac Bleu, a hidden local beauty spot. From here, there is an easy descent through a beautiful gorge to Les Haudères, a good lunch spot. After a final short climb, this stage finishes at the charming hamlet of La Sage.

Distance: 11.7 km / 7.2 miles

Ascent: 521 m / 1709 ft

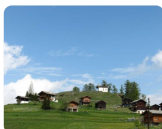
Descent: 940 m / 3084 ft

Approximate walking time: 5 hours

Accommodation: Charming boutique hotel

Meals: Breakfast and Dinner

Luggage Access: Yes



## La Sage

Evolène, Valais, CH, 1985

## Day 8: La Sage to Zinal



### Hike from La Sage to Zinal

You need an early start today as you have quite a long day and 2 high passes to cross! The first ascent to the higher of the two, the Col de Torrent (2912m), is long, but not too difficult, and the path is in good condition. You then descend to the turquoise Lac de Moiry. Ahead you can see some of the giant peaks of the Pennine Alps, including the Dent Blanche and the Weisshorn.

The next ascent is the Col de Sorebois, a shorter climb than the Col de Torrent, but a fair bit steeper. From here, there are spectacular views of the Weisshorn, the Dent Blanche and the Zinal Rothorn. You now enter the Zinal ski area, and have a 2 hour descent to Zinal. For those whose knees are suffering, there may be the option to take the cable car from the mid-station down (if it is running: it does not run every day in the summer. This is not included in the trip price).

Distance: 21.6 km / 13.4 miles

Ascent: 1918 m / 6286 ft

Descent: 1888m / 6194 ft

Approximate walking time: 8-9 hours

Accommodation: Hotel

Meals: Breakfast & evening meal

Luggage Access: Yes



## Zinal

Ayer, Valais, CH, 3961



### Route option: extend by a day and stay at the Cabane de Moiry

If La Sage to Zinal in one day is going to be too long, then it is possible to break the journey into 2 stages.

You could do La Sage to the spectacularly-located Cabane de Moiry on one day, then Moiry to Zinal the next (this is good if you'd like 2 shorter days).

The Cabane de Moiry must have one of the best views of any alpine hut!!!!

Or, you could stay up in the mountains and do La Sage to the Cabane de Moiry on one day, then Moiry to the Hotel Weisshorn the next, rather than stay the night in Zinal.

Another option could be La Sage to the Cabane de Moiry, then Moiry to the Cabane de Bella Tolla (for a longer second day).



## Hotel Weisshorn

Saint-Luc, Valais, CH, 3961

+41 27 475 11 06



## Cabane de Moiry

Cabane de Moiry CAS, 3961 Grimentz, Suisse

+41 27 475 45 34

## Day 9: Zinal to Gruben



### Hike from Zinal to Gruben

The day begins with a steep but pleasant ascent through larch forest, where you can look out for nutcrackers, before the path takes a rising traverse that opens up into a fantastic balcony trail with excellent views across the Val d'Annivers. There is some beautiful trekking through alpine pastures until you reach a junction: you have a choice of 2 passes today, the Forcletta (2874m) or the Meidpass (2790m).

The Forcletta is the most direct route and is probably the more sensible option. From here you can see into the Turtmantal, and you enter the German-speaking part of Switzerland. You can often see the rare edelweiss on your descent of this col, if you can manage to take your eyes away from the incredible vista of 4000m peaks on offer.

If you are keen to do more mileage, or to visit the Hotel Weisshorn, then you could consider doing the Meidpass - but it is a fair detour!

Tonight you stay in the tiny hamlet of Gruben.

Distance: 16.5 km / 10.2 miles (or 19km / 11.8 miles via the Meidpass)

Ascent: 1184 m / 3884 ft (or 1314m / 4311 ft via the Meidpass)

Descent: 1052 m / 3487 ft (or 1167m / 3828 ft via the Meidpass)

Approximate walking time: 6-7 hours (or 8-9 hours via the Meidpass)

Accommodation: Simple hotel - usually in twin rooms with shared bathrooms but there is limited availability. Sometimes we are in dorms. It's fairly basic but it's the only choice in Gruben.

Meals: Breakfast & evening meal

Luggage Access: Yes



## Gruben

Gruben, Oberems, Wallis, CH, 3946



**Option: Extend by 1 day to stay in the Hotel Weisshorn or the Cabane Bella Tola**

People often want to add a day and stay either at the famous Hotel Weisshorn, or stay at the Cabane de Bella Tolla. If you're interested in these options just let us know - we'd either split the journey from Zinal to Gruben into 2 short days, or you could stay in the Cabane de Moiry one night, then Hotel Weisshorn or Cabane Bella Tola the next night, and then Gruben the night after that.

**Hotel Weisshorn**

Saint-Luc, Valais, CH, 3961

+41 27 475 11 06

**Cabane Bella Tola**

+41 27 476 15 67

**Day 10: Gruben to St Niklaus****Hike from Gruben to St Niklaus**

A really superb trek today as you start out through open woodland, then across high pastures followed by an alpine rocky wilderness. The trek soon opens up to some of the most spectacular views in the Swiss Alps. Your final pass is the Augstbordpass (2894m), beyond which there's a steep descent to the wonderful viewpoint known as the Twära - and here is your first view into the Mattertal. A steep descent takes you to the hamlet of Jungu, perched on the mountainside. From here there is a steeper descent of a couple of hours to take you down to St Niklaus. No one will judge you if you take the cable car down from Jungu, as it will save your knees around 1000m of steep downhill!

Distance: 19.3 km / 11.9 miles

Ascent: 1207 m / 3959 ft

Descent: 1873 m / 6145 ft

Approximate walking time: 8 hours

Accommodation: Hotel

Meals: Breakfast & evening meal

Luggage Access: Yes

**St Niklaus**

Saint Niklaus, Valais, CH

**Option - stay in Grächen**

One very nice option is to take the bus to stay in Grächen tonight. If you want to walk every step of the Haute Route, then we would definitely recommend having an early start today and staying in Grächen otherwise the day would be very long tomorrow (if you are doing the Europaweg). Grächen is around an hour and a half's walk from St Niklaus. Grächen is a prettier village than St Niklaus, with a larger choice of excellent hotels, plus it would allow you an early start tomorrow morning without having to catch a bus.

The only downside of staying here is that it does add a time constraint on today's walk over the Augstbordpass, and if walking the whole thing, without using the bus, it is a long day!

You could also choose to have a night in St Niklaus tonight, and then have a very short day to Grächen tomorrow if you wanted a rest before tackling the Europaweg.

**Grächen**

Grächen, Valais, CH, 3925

**Day 11: St Niklaus to Zermatt****Hike from St Niklaus to Zermatt**

Following the closure of the section of the Europaweg high level walk between Gasenried and the Europahutte (mentioned in most guide books), we have altered our itinerary to stay in St Niklaus, as this gives you 2 options for today.

If the weather is good and you're up for a fun, challenging hike, then we would recommend taking the train to Randa, and climbing up towards the Europhutte to join the open section of the Europaweg. You can choose whether you climb up to take in the new, famous Charles Kuonen suspension bridge (the longest pedestrian suspension bridge in the world!), or if the thought of that does not appeal, you can take a different ascent route to avoid it.

From the bridge, you then join the original Europaweg, a high level traverse that brings you to Zermatt in style. A real "champagne finish" to any Haute Route trek. This route has been prone to rockfall and landslides in previous years, and work has been done on the path to protect it in vulnerable places.

Alternatively, if the weather is bad, or if you'd simply like an easier day, you can take the well-marked trail along the valley floor from St Niklaus to bring you to Zermatt.

### Europaweg Route from Randa to Zermatt

Distance: 22.3 km / 13.9 miles

Ascent: 1544 m / 5065 ft

Descent: 1308 m / 4291 ft

Approx hiking time: 8-9 hours

### Valley Route from St Niklaus to Zermatt

Distance: 20.3 km / 12.6 miles

Ascent: 1154 m / 3786 ft

Descent: 662 m / 2172 ft

Approx hiking time: 4-5 hours



**Zermatt**

### Option - add a day and stay at the Europahutte

In previous years, there was a high level path from Grachen / Gasenried to the spectacularly-located Europahutte, known as the Europaweg.

This path has often been prone to dangerous rockfall, and in 2018, a huge rockfall meant that the decision was made to close this section of the Europaweg permanently (and incidentally, most guide books have not yet been updated to reflect the new route).

There is now a new, mid-level section between Gasenried and the Europahutte. The trail mostly stays in the forest, and is not as interesting as the previous days on the Haute Route: for this reason, we have omitted it from our standard 10 day itinerary.

For those wishing to do a more complete Haute Route, you may wish to add a day to your itinerary and stay at the Europahutte: if that's the case, just let us know and we'll add a day. It's a great place to stay, with friendly owners, great views, and the following day's trek is stunning.

### Europahütte

The Europahütte is a simple mountain hut perched above Randa, with dramatic views directly across to the Weisshorn. There are no private rooms here, but we do always try to book the smaller dorms rather than the large dorms. There are a couple of showers (not segregated into male / female), and there are shared bathrooms.



**Europahütte**

Randa, Valais, CH, 3928

+41 27 967 82 47

### Option: Extend your stay in Zermatt

There are some amazing walks to do in Zermatt - if you do choose to stay on, then make sure you do the Höhbalmen. We'd rate it as one of the most spectacular walks in the world! Also well worth doing is a ride to the top of the Gornergrat for a spectacular panorama, and a trip up Europe's highest cable car, the Klein Matterhorn.

Just let us know if you would like us to book any extra nights at the end of your trip.

## Day 12: Depart Zermatt



### Depart Zermatt

It's easy to take the train to Geneva or Zurich from Zermatt and takes around 4 hours.

## Trip Information & Documents



### What's Included

- All accommodation in the itinerary (please note that we aim for the suggested hotels, but where they are fully booked we choose an equivalent alternative)
- All breakfasts
- All evening meals apart from in Chamonix and in Zermatt (we can include these if you prefer, just let us know)
- Expert office support
- Detailed notes with our expert tips
- Walker's Haute Route guide book
- 1:50,000 Swiss Maps



### Not included - Self-Guided Haute Route

- Flights
- Airport transfers to Chamonix and from Zermatt (but we can add these if required)
- Luggage delivery (but we can organise this if required - either a single luggage drop from Chamonix to Zermatt, or we can do daily luggage delivery to the accessible hotels - not the mountain huts)
- Cable cars
- Buses or trains
- Evening meals in Chamonix or Zermatt
- Packed lunches, personal snacks and drinks
- Bottled water or showers in the mountain huts
- Any transport, accommodation or additional expenses due to a participant being unable to complete the itinerary
- Mountain rescue or travel insurance
- Tips



### Self-Guided Trips - Route Notes

We have purposefully not written step-by-step directions to follow, as the Haute Route conditions change so frequently that it would be almost impossible to keep them accurate - but also, because we firmly believe that if you cannot read a map, then you should not be doing the Haute Route.

Our Route Notes are intended to enhance your trip, with suggestions about where to eat lunch, which route variants are best, transport options and updates on route conditions where the guide books are likely to be out of date.

Used in conjunction with a map, we hope you will find them useful and informative.

Used without a map, they will not get you very far.

Please do be aware of this, and if you end up thinking you have bitten off too much, then do not hesitate to take transport for the harder, more remote days, and do think about booking a guide. It may add a lot to the price of the trip, but it gives you peace of mind about tackling a challenging route.

This is not intended to alarm you, merely make you aware that the Haute Route is a more serious undertaking than the Tour du Mont Blanc, is less crowded, and whilst it is generally fairly well signposted (it is in Switzerland, after all), there are no actual sign posts saying "Haute Route" - so you do always need to know where you are going.



### Haute Route Travel Arrangements

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

This trip starts in Chamonix, France and finishes in Zermatt, Switzerland. Most people fly into Geneva airport, and out of Zurich airport, but a return flight from Geneva is also no problem.

### **Arriving in Chamonix**

The starting point for this trek is Chamonix-Mont-Blanc in 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, 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 hotel with all your luggage.

### **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 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: 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 each occasion we've used them, they have never turned up (and we waited an hour).

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 Chamonix from Geneva are slow (around 3-4 hours), so it is still best to use a minibus transfer. You can arrange a private minibus to pick you up from Geneva main station, or you can easily take a train from Geneva main station to Geneva airport (every 15 mins and takes 7 mins) and take a shared minibus transfer from here.

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)

### **Returning from Zermatt to Zurich airport or Geneva airport**

This trek ends in Zermatt in Switzerland. Cloud 9 Adventure services end after breakfast on the departure day.

The nearest airport is Zurich, but it is also easy to use Geneva airport - and the best way to reach either airport is by train.

There are railway stations at both Geneva Airport and Zurich Airport (the train station is called Zurich Flughafen), and trains run regularly throughout the day. **When booking flights, do make sure that you can get to the airport in time** – the first train out of Zermatt is normally just after 06:00, and it takes approximately 3.5 hours to reach Zurich airport, and around 4 hours to reach Geneva airport. The journey usually costs approximately 100 CHF, but significant savings can be made if you book online in advance, and you can often choose a supersaver ticket (non refundable, non exchangeable, valid one specific trains only) or a Saver Day Pass which is valid all day on any train and can be very good value.

Tickets can be booked in advance at [www.sbb.ch](http://www.sbb.ch) – note that the Swiss Rail website defaults to the "half-price" fare, for which you need to buy a "half-price card", so most people will need to untick this box.

If you are doing any additional travelling in Switzerland at the beginning or end of this trip, then it can often be worth purchasing the half-price card, as almost all cable cars, mountain railways, trains, buses and boats are then half-price. For example, it's worth having on its own if you intend to go up the Jungfrauoch in Grindelwald!

## **Self-Guided Haute Route - What to Expect**

### **The trekking**

This is a classic Alpine walking route on mostly good trails. The average distance covered each day is around 19 km (12 miles) and there is a considerable amount of ascent and descent, with several passes close to 3000m. Do not let the short distances lull you into a false sense of security – the ups and downs make sure that the days are fairly long and hard work! It is slightly harder than the Tour du Mont Blanc and we grade it "Challenging". Regular hill walkers will find this trek to be well within their capabilities, but we expect trekkers to be fit and up to the trek rather than hoping the trek will make them fit.

### **Altitude**

This holiday involves going to moderately high altitude, and during the course of your trip you will reach altitudes nearing 3000m. Most people will have no difficulty with this as we take it slowly and you will usually find you acclimatise during the course of the trip.

### **Accommodation**

We always aim to choose the best accommodation possible, with en-suite facilities wherever possible. As some of the villages are tiny and have a very limited choice, some of the places we have chosen will not be as luxurious as we would like (for example, in Trient, Forclaz and Gruben the only choice is shared bathrooms). The bottom line is, the only time we use shared facilities is where there is no better alternative.

In the mountain huts, and sometimes in Gruben, the accommodation will be in non-segregated dormitories. They are simple and basic but in fantastic locations.



## Food

All breakfasts and evening meals are included in the holiday price, apart from dinner in Chamonix, and in Zermatt. For lunches, our notes will advise on the best place to buy them each day. There will be the opportunity on some days to purchase them in local shops as buying them in the accommodation can be expensive. Drinks are not included with the dinner, but you can normally order beer, wine and soft drinks at all hotels including the mountain huts. Breakfasts in the mountain huts tend to be more basic and usually consist of tea, coffee, bread, jam and cereal. Mountain huts are becoming more used to dealing with vegetarians and more specific dietary requirements, although gluten-free can be tricky for the packed lunches as most places provide sandwiches, so it would definitely be worth bringing your own gluten-free bread if this is required. Vegans are still a mystery to the Swiss and we would recommend contacting us to discuss before booking. Feel free to ask us if you are concerned, and please do let us know in advance if you have dietary requirements.

## Luggage delivery

We can offer various different luggage delivery options.

1. No luggage delivery: you just carry everything with you each day. As it's a linear trip, you'd need to either carry everything you have travelled with to Chamonix, or you would need to return to Chamonix to pick up anything you leave here. That would be a very long, expensive detour.
2. One-off luggage delivery from Chamonix to Zermatt - we will deliver your main luggage to your Zermatt hotel so that it will be there when you arrive.
3. Daily luggage delivery (apart from mountain huts) - most people choose our luggage option to have the main kit bag each day that it is accessible, which on this trip is everywhere apart from the mountain huts. If you opt for this service, then for these days the only extra things you need to carry will be a sheet sleeping bag liner, a travel towel and a basic wash kit, along with a change of clothes.

We ask you to keep your main luggage to one kit bag of less than 15 kg, plus a small day pack (around 30 litres, which you will carry). Your kit bag will be collected each morning around 08:00, and is normally delivered by 16:00. Please note that you cannot usually travel with the luggage as there are no passenger seats. If you wish to have more than one kit bag, please let us know in advance as there will be a supplement to pay.

## Money

There are cash machines at Geneva airport, Chamonix, Champex, Arolla, Grimentz, Saint Luc, Zinal, St Niklaus, Grächen & Zermatt. Note that Geneva is in Switzerland, so you should get Swiss Francs there, as the trek start in Chamonix in France, and you can only get euros here. Mountain huts do not normally accept cards, but most of the hotels do. A coffee or soft drink costs around 4 CHF, and a beer around 5-7 CHF. Bottled water can be expensive but you can usually fill up with tap water. The first night of this trip is in France, but all of the other nights are in Switzerland, so it could be useful to have some euros in addition to your Swiss Francs. Around 300 CHF plus 50 euros 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.

## General Information - Self-Guided Trips

### Self-Guided Trips

Note that you are opting for a self-guided trip. We provide a guide book, maps, and additional Route Notes containing extra info that you often don't find in a guide book. We provide a bespoke app for your trip, downloadable on your smartphone or tablet, detailing the Route Notes and the hotels that we have booked for you - this will also be printed out for you as a booklet.

As you are booking a self-guided holiday, you must ensure that you are comfortable looking after yourselves in the mountains, that you can read a map and use a compass, and that you can make sensible decisions according to the weather and how you are feeling. By booking this holiday, you are taking the responsibility for making these decisions - any set of route notes is useless without a map, and you are taking the responsibility that you are happy route-finding in the mountains. If you are at all in doubt about your ability to do this, then we would recommend booking a guided trip.



## 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, our local office will help make any alternative arrangements required.

As a reputable tour operator, Cloud 9 Adventure supports the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office "Travel Aware" 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 UK government website <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>. 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 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.

### **Preparing for your holiday**

We have tried to grade the holiday as accurately as we can, with the intention of ensuring you've booked the right trip for your ability. 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 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 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 recommend trying 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.



### **Haute Route Kit List - Self-Guided - we will update this depending on your luggage delivery option** **Essential items:**

**Rucksack** – approx. 30-40L - for you to carry each day

**Kit bag or suitcase** - for your main luggage to be transported

**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, you'll need boots as well 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).

**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 really 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** (essential as you may spend some time walking on snow)

**Suncream** (small bottle to save weight)

**Lip protection** (with sun protection) 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 – everywhere else provides towels.

**Wash kit** – Bring whatever you like for wash kit - but for any refuge nights where you have to carry it, 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

**Basic first aid kit** – you should bring a small first aid kit containing plasters, blister treatment, dressings & tape, bandages, painkillers & diarrhea treatment (rehydration sachets & immodium)

**Compass**

**Whistle**

**Mobile phone** - in case of emergency

**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 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, especially if you want to have a wander round Chamonix, Champex or Zermatt.

**Hiking Trainers** – it can be nice to give your feet a break from your walking boots on some days.

**Umbrella****Earplugs**

**Snacks** – not essential as you 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 swimming pools or saunas

**Travel kettle, mug & tea bags / coffee** - it is not common for hotels in continental Europe to provide tea and coffee-making facilities in the rooms

**Flask****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. Every time this happens, we meet people who have been really surprised and caught out by not having the right kit - don't let it be you!

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 a good idea to be able to put your waterproof trousers on without having to remove 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.