

Tour Du Mont Blanc Guided Trail

Tour Style: Guided Trails

Destinations: France, Italy, Switzerland, Mediterranean & Alps

Trip code: XMLDW

Trip Walking Grade: 5



HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Relish awe-inspiring panoramas of glistening glaciers, snow-covered summits and the majestic Mont Blanc itself. This classic trail traverses the Alpine passes and pastures of France, Italy and Switzerland with stunning views and picturesque villages throughout. Justifiably considered to be the finest long distance trail in Europe, this famous Alpine trek circumnavigates Mont Blanc, Western Europe's highest mountain at 15,781 feet (4,810m). Our holiday takes a comparatively leisurely 10 nights. There are stops at beautifully sited mountain cafes and farms for you to try fromage rosti or picnic on speciality Swiss breads and local cheeses, and comfortable overnight stays in traditional hotels and an auberge along the way. Travelling in a clockwise direction you get to find your trekking feet by easing in to the Tour before the big three days, with plenty of time along the route to soak up the spectacular scenery, flora and fauna. There's a rest day in Courmayeur just before the final stages too, so you're in great shape to complete the Tour comfortably and enjoyably.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Transport and luggage transfers on all walking days*
- Experienced IML Guide
- 'With flight' holidays include return flights from the UK and hotel transfers
- Full Board en-suite accommodation**

- 10 breakfasts, 9 lunches, 8 evening meals

*luggage transfers on 8 days **non en-suite accommodation on 2 nights

HOLIDAYS HIGHLIGHTS

- Soak up the spectacular scenery, flora and fauna on Europe's top trail
- Circumnavigate the majestic Mont Blanc massif
- Look out for marmots, ibex and chamois
- Try delicious dishes and hearty regional food at mountain cafes and farms
- Shop with your guide for speciality breads, local cheeses and traditional treats

TRIP SUITABILITY

This trip is graded Activity Level 5, We follow established paths with long ascents and descents that can take 3-4 hours. Some of the descents can be steep in places and walking poles can be useful. There is no issue with steep drops or exposure on any part of the TMB – so is not a problem if you have a fear of heights. Our route avoids the long ladders and fixed equipment above Argentiere. We only use one short ladder (15 feet high) on the descent from Lac Blanc (Day 2). The Guide will be happy to assist if you find this ladder a bit tricky. In the early season we may encounter patches of old winter snow and so walking boots and walking poles are essential.



ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrival In Geneva

Transfer to our hotel in Argentiere in the Chamonix Valley in 1 hour 30 mins. Argentiere is a small village 7km from Chamonix and has a few restaurants, bars and outdoor equipment shops. If you want to visit Chamonix town, it takes 20 minutes by public bus or train.

Day 2: Chamonix – Lac Blanc – Argentiere

After breakfast we begin our journey. We take the short bus ride to Chamonix (20 minutes) and then walk along the river to the pretty village of Les Praz. We take the Flegere cable car and continue our walk to Lac Blanc. We walk through open countryside with incredible views of the whole Mont Blanc range and may hear the occasional whistle from a marmot. Our descent follows a beautiful path, through the forest, descending to Argentiere and back to our hotel for a second night.

12 miles (19km), with 1460 feet (450m) of ascent, and 4,264 feet (1,300m) of descent.

Day 3: Argentiere – Col De La Forclaz (Switzerland)

From the hotel we hike through old Argentiere and up to the Col des Posettes for superb views of Mont Blanc and the Chamonix Valley. From here, we traverse to the Col de Balme and look directly into Switzerland. We descend through open country with views of glaciers to Trient and then a short climb to the Col de la Forclaz where we spend the night.

11 miles (17 ½ km), with 3,820 feet (1,180m) of ascent, and 2,932 feet (894m) of descent.

Day 4: Col De La Forclaz – Bovine Route – Champex

From Forclaz we hike along the 'Bovine Route' to Champex. The route winds its way through meadows, forests and open country with views of the mountains of Verbier and the great Sion Valley. There are no great ascents today. We pause at Bovine farm, set on a beautiful alpage, with cows and Alpine flowers everywhere. A favourite with HF guests, lunch here is fromage rosti, a traditional meal made with pan-fried potatoes, onions, herbs, cheese and sometimes egg or lardons added. It's delicious. The farm also has home-made cakes and biscuits, cheese and charcuterie. Later, we arrive at our hotel, located in central Champex overlooking the beautiful lake.

9 miles (14km), with 2,300 feet (700m) of ascent, and 2,400 feet (730m) of descent.

Day 5: Champex – La Fouly

From Champex it is a gentle 6-7 hour trek to La Fouly along the Val Ferret. We start our walk from Champex Lac and then descend to the valley floor and follow the river through forests and meadows to Praz-de-Fort. We then ascend in similar surroundings with wonderful views of Mt Dolent and the surrounding mountains.

12½ miles (20km), with 1,804 feet (550m) of ascent, and 1,443 feet (440m) of descent.

Please be prepared to carry overnight clothing with you in your day sack on Day 5 (La Fouly) and Day 8 (Les Chapieux), when you will not have access to your luggage. The remainder of your luggage will be transferred on to the next evening's accommodation.

Day 6: La Fouly – Grand Col Ferret – Courmayeur (Italy)

We continue from La Fouly along the Val Ferret and cross into Italy via the impressive Grand Col Ferret. From

here, the descent is slightly steeper but rewards us with outstanding views of two of the Alps most iconic mountains – Les Grandes Jorasses and Mont Blanc. Our hotel is in La Palud - a small hamlet 3km outside of the centre of Courmayeur (45mins walk / 10mins bus ride).

This is a long day if the entire walk is done, and many choose to take the bus from Arnuda to the hotel. You will have the choice of both options. If you take the bus the total distance for the day is 14 miles/ 22km. 18 miles (29km) or 14 miles (22km) if you take a bus ride, with 3,181 feet (970m) of ascent, and 3,837 feet (1,170m) of descent

Day 7: Rest Day In La Palud, Courmayeur

Courmayeur is one of Italy's premier ski resorts and is full of pretty shops, cafés and restaurants. Close by, there is the new Skyway cable car, the spa at Pre St Didier and lots of walking options.

Day 8: Courmayeur – Col De La Seigne – Les Chapieux

We travel to Val Veny under the spectacular South Face and ridges of Mont Blanc. We trek along a wide glacial valley surrounded by glaciers and high peaks to the Col de la Seigne which marks the border between France and Italy. We then descend to Les Chapieux. Today is quite a long day, although it is not steep.

13 miles (24km), with 2,829 feet (860m) of ascent, and 3,171 feet (967m) of descent.

Day 9: Les Chapieux – Col Du Bonhomme – Les Contamines

We make a steep ascent above Les Chapieux through marmot country and on through open meadows to more barren scenery. We cross two cols in wild surroundings with fabulous Alpine flowers and marmots, weasels and chamois. We then head down through open country and on to a narrowing valley. Our destination is Les Contamines – a pretty ski village with an interesting church. The hotel is located 1km outside of the centre of Les Contamines.

13 miles (21km), with 3,050 feet (930m) of ascent, and 4,329 feet (1,320m) of descent.

Day 10: Les Contamines – Les Houches

We follow the Bon Nant river for approximately 4km and then head into the hills near la Gruvaz. We pass the pretty villages of le Champel and Bionassay and then make our final climb of the holiday to the Col de Voza (1653m). This is a fitting end to our trek with the most outstanding views of the Chamonix Valley, the Chamonix Aiguilles and the Mont Blanc massif. We descend by cable car to Les Houches. From here you can elect to take the bus back to the hotel in Argentiere (40 minutes) or continue on foot to Chamonix town – a further 7km – to complete the circuit. From Chamonix it is 20 minutes by bus or train to our hotel.

9 miles (14km), with 2,625 feet (800m) of ascent, and 650 feet (200m) of descent.

Day 11: Departure Day

Free leisure time until your transfer to the airport.

ACCOMMODATION

Hôtel De La Couronne - Tour Du Mont Blanc

Hôtel La Couronne is situated at the foot of the Mont Blanc massif in the alpine village of Argentière. The hotels wooden frame rooms are furnished with TV and private bathroom with shower or bathtub and free WiFi access.

Hôtel Du Col De La Forclaz - Tour Du Mont Blanc

Set on the Col de la Forclaz mountain pass this is a relaxed, family-run hotel first constructed in 1830. Rooms are simply decorated. There is no internet access available.

Hotel Du Glacier - Tour Du Mont Blanc

This is a traditional hotel that dates back over 100 years. The hotel offers well-furnished rooms with shower or bath, WC, radio, telephone and TV. Free WiFi is available throughout the hotel and also in bedrooms.

Hôtel Edelweiss La Fouly - Tour Du Mont Blanc

Hôtel Edelweiss La Fouly is situated under the Grand Col Ferret and is one of the most authentic valleys of the Valais region. There are 20 rooms in this small family run hotel with private bathrooms and cable television. The hotel benefits from free Wi-Fi, a sauna, and private tennis courts.

Hotel Astoria - Tour Du Mont Blanc

The Astoria Hotel is located in La Palud, a few meters from the entrance of the Mont Blanc Tunnel and 3km from Courmayeur town. The hotel has 34 rooms furnished in wood with typical mountain taste; all equipped with telephone, private bathroom, satellite TV and hairdryers. Free Wi-Fi is available in the lobby.

Auberge De La Nova - Tour Du Mont Blanc

Auberge de la Nova is a small hostel nestled in the mountains. The hostel consists of 15 rooms and 4 dormitories with hot showers, hand basins and toilets. A drying room is available for clothes and shoes (slippers can be borrowed). There is no internet access. Please be aware that there may be occasions where you will need to share a triple room, rather than a twin.

Chalet Hôtel La Chemenaz - Tour Du Mont Blanc

This family-owned chalet style hotel is located in a peaceful spot, just ten minutes walk from Les Contamines. It has 27 spacious, soundproof rooms that have separate bathrooms with bathtub or shower, hair dryer, satellite TV, direct telephone, safety deposit box & free WiFi. This hotel also features a sauna, hot tub and heated outdoor swimming pool.

USEFUL HOLIDAY INFORMATION

Joining Instructions (With Flights)

A group transfer is included in the price for those who have booked the "with flight" option.

Start: For those who have booked our "with flight" holiday, a coach transfer from Geneva Airport direct to your first accommodation is automatically included. A representative of our partner agent will meet you upon arrival and direct you to your transfer.

Finish: Similar arrangements apply. A coach transfer to Geneva Airport will be arranged to connect with the HF Holidays flight.

Please note that these transfers will be timed to connect with the HF Holidays' flights. We cannot make separate arrangements for guests arriving/departing at different times.

Transfer times:

Arrival day - transfer departs from Geneva Airport (details to be confirmed)

Departure day - transfer arrives at Geneva Airport (details to be confirmed)

Joining Instructions (Without Flights)

If you are travelling independently but would like to use this transfer, please contact our Reservations team for details.

If you are travelling independently, please re-confirm these timings, 2 weeks prior to departure.

What To Bring

Essential Equipment

- Walking boots are essential on the Tour du Mont Blanc as they provide the best ankle support and grip. Because there are stream crossings and occasionally snow on the route we do not recommend Approach shoes - however, if desired, they can be worn on days with no snow or stream crossings.
- Walking socks suitable for warm weather – major sock manufacturers such as Bridgedale make socks specifically designed for warm weather – just ensure that your footwear fits correctly if you're used to wearing thicker socks.
- Good quality windproof/waterproof jacket (with hood) and waterproof trousers are essential at all times of the year.
- Shorts and T-shirts - lightweight wicking materials are best.
- Warm fleece, trousers and lightweight hat and gloves.
- For sun protection please bring a sunhat, sunglasses and suncream.
- Fleece or other purpose designed synthetic tops give good lightweight insulation and nylon or cotton trousers can provide unrestricted movement. A layering system is better than one thick top.

Optional Equipment

- Rucksack - this needs to be large enough to carry your picnic lunch, drink, waterproofs and spare clothing. A size of 35-40 litres is best: a smaller rucksack is not adequate. A waterproof liner as well as a rucksack cover will keep the contents dry. On two separate days (day 5 and 8) we do not provide a luggage transfer and so you will need to carry kit for an overnight stay (the rest of your belongings will be transferred to the next day's accommodation). For the two nights without luggage you just need to take spare underwear, socks, T shirt and toiletries. You do not need bedding or towels as these are provided. This is light back-packing.
- Water bottle - 2 litres is recommended
- First Aid Kit - containing plasters, insect repellent wipes, antiseptic wipes, painkillers, blister kit, and medical tape
- Spare food - Leaders cannot carry emergency food for the whole party. As this walk crosses remote areas it is essential that you take some high energy food. Energy bars, nuts, dried fruit, chocolate etc are not included in your picnic so please take supplies, or pick up some en route.
- Camera and charger.
- Small head torch.
- Trekking poles aid balance and take some of the strain off your knees during steeper descents. They are useful for early-season treks when we may encounter patches of old winter snow.

HOW TO BOOK

When you're ready to book, you can choose to **book online** or book **over the phone**. Our website offers secure online booking for our holidays, is available 24/7, and offers more in-depth information about all our holidays. If you prefer to call us, our experienced and knowledgeable team are available to answer any specific questions you have and can offer guidance as to which holiday is best suited to your needs.

Our office is open: Monday to Friday: 9am – 7pm Saturday & Sunday: 9am – 1pm Bank Holiday Monday: 9am – 1pm

PAYING YOUR DEPOSIT

To secure the holiday of your choice, you will need to pay a deposit: UK & European Holidays: £150 per person and Worldwide Holidays: £250 per person. You can pay your deposit by debit or credit card with no additional card fees charged or make an online BACS payment directly into HF's bank account, please see details under BACS payments. You can also pay your deposit by cheque within seven days of booking. Cheques should be made payable to 'HF Holidays Ltd' with your booking reference / Order ID on the back.

NON-MEMBER FEE

Non-members can join our holidays by paying a Non-Member's fee of £10 per person per holiday. Alternatively, full membership is available from £100 – visit hfholidays.co.uk/membership for details.

BACS PAYMENTS

Please quote your booking reference / Order ID when you make your payment online: Bank Name: Svenska Handelsbanken AB (publ) Account Name: HF Holidays Ltd Account Number: 35923304 Sort Code: 40-51-62 IBAN: GB92HAND40516235923304 Swift / Bic Code: HANDGB22

Once we have received your booking and deposit, we will send a confirmation invoice to the lead name. Please check this carefully. For bookings 'with flights' it is essential that the names on your booking confirmation invoice match those on your passport for bookings overseas. Please advise us immediately of any errors. Any name changes after the balance of your holiday has been paid will be subject to a fee levied by the airline.

MANAGE MY BOOKINGS

Payments can also be made through the Manage My Booking function on our website. Click on the link at the top of our homepage. This is available to all customers who provide an email address at the time of booking.

YOUR FINAL BALANCE

The balance is due 10 weeks before departure. As with paying your deposit, you can pay your final balance by debit or credit card, make an online BACS payment directly into HF's bank account or pay by cheque.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Travel insurance is an important part of any booking and essential for one of our holidays. HF Holidays works with specialist. Insurance Brokers Campbell Irvine Direct. For more information or to obtain a quote call them on 01702 427 236 or visit hfholidays.co.uk/insurance

PEACE OF MIND

ATOL:

The air holidays and flights in this brochure are ATOL-protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 710. In the unlikely event of our insolvency, the CAA will ensure that you are not stranded abroad and will arrange to refund any money you have paid us for advance bookings. For further information visit the ATOL website atol.org.uk

MEMBER OF ABTOT:

HF Holidays is a member of ABTOT (The Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited) which provides financial protection under the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992 for HF Holidays Ltd and in the event of their insolvency, protection is provided for the following: 1. non-flight packages commencing in and returning to the UK; 2. non-flight packages commencing and returning to a country other than the UK; 3. flight inclusive packages that commence outside of the UK and Republic of Ireland, which are sold to customers outside of the UK and Republic of Ireland. 1, 2 and 3 provides for a refund in the event you have not yet travelled. 1 and 3 provides for repatriation. Please note that bookings made outside the UK and Republic of Ireland are only protected by ABTOT when purchased directly with HF Holidays Ltd.

TRIP NOTE VALIDITY

These Trip Notes are valid based on the date printed at the bottom of the page. They will occasionally be updated post booking and pre-departure. We will send you the latest trip notes prior to departure through a link in your pre departure documents or we can send you a copy in the post if preferred.

In booking this trip you should be confident in your ability to participate in all activities described in these Trip Notes. If you have any doubt about your suitability you should call HF Holidays and ask to speak to one of the team about this itinerary.

The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith. Where differences exist between the Trip Notes and our current brochure, the Trip Notes supersede the brochure. All holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; so please be prepared to be flexible where necessary. At times, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned due to weather conditions, political, physical or other factors. In these circumstances we will make the best possible alternative arrangements to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

PRICE GUARANTEE

We promise that our earliest published prices will always be the best and if we reduce our holiday price after your booking has been confirmed, we will pass this reduction on to you. Our price promise applies if any subsequent offer price is for an identical holiday, duration, location and date and does not cover any optional extras, flights or additional services.

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