

8-DAY ADVENTURE

## CLASSIC TOUR DU MONT BLANC – LITE

France

Join us on this eight-day, classic Alpine circuit of Mont Blanc. On this trek we stay in traditional gites and refuges along the route, which gives you the full Alpine experience and great camaraderie along the way. The historic Tour du Mont Blanc is one of the most spectacular walks of the world. Trekking around the “top of Western Europe” means discovering an incomparable universe of high mountains and glaciers. You will discover the French, Italian and Swiss slopes, from Chamonix to the Courmayeur valley, and from the Fenêtre d’Arpette to the wild Val Ferret. The path winds between mountain pastures, glaciers and peaks, crosses high mountain passes, lush valleys and highway-sized glaciers. On our 'Kandoo Lite' trips your service will end once you leave the group at the end of your trek.

## TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

- Trek through outstanding alpine scenery
- Pass through Italy, Switzerland and France
- Discover towering peaks, huge glaciers and lush valleys



# ITINERARY

## DAY 1

### ARRIVE IN CHAMONIX

Arrive in the beautiful mountain town of Chamonix. You can check in at your hotel and spend some time exploring the town. There are many typical Savoyard restaurants close to your hotel where you can sample some alpine specialties, such as cheese fondue, tartiflette or raclette. A pre-trek briefing will be held at your hotel in the evening.

Accommodation: **Hotel**

## DAY 2

### CHAMONIX TO LES CONTAMINES

We will catch the bus or train to Les Houches where we will take the Bellevue cable car. From the top cable car station there is a beautiful panoramic view of Mont Blanc, the Aiguilles Rouges, the Fiz chain and the Aravis. We then begin our trek in earnest, following a 1800m-high balcony that leads us to the bottom of the Bionnassay glacier. Crossing the Col de Tricot (2120m) we will descend to the village of Les Contamines-Montjoie where we will spend the night.

Hiking time: **6 - 7 hours**

Ascent: **1085 m**

Descent: **956 m**

Max. altitude: **2120 m**

Accommodation: **Refuge**

Meals included:

**Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner**

## DAY 3

### LES CONTAMINES-MONTJOIE TO LA VILLE DE GLACIERS

Today begins with a leisurely trek along the river to the beautiful baroque Church of Notre Dame de la Gorge, which marks the start of the mountain trail. A long and steep ascent leads us to the Col de Bonhomme (2329m). This pass has been used for centuries by shepherds and their herds, armies and soldiers, pilgrims and hawkers – and now the hikers of the Tour du Mont Blanc!

Hiking time: **7 - 8 hours**

Ascent: **1501 m**

Descent: **876 m**

Max. altitude: **2665 m**

Accommodation: **Refuge**

Meals included:

**Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner**

We have a further climb to cross the Col des Fours (2665m) before we drop gently down to the mountain pastures where we find ourselves among herds of Tarine and Abondance breeds. The milk from these cows is used to make many cheeses, especially the Beaufort and Abondance which are local specialties. Your guide will be sure to visit some local farms to stock up for your next picnic!

## DAY 4

### LA VILLE DE GLACIERS TO MONTE BIANCO REFUGE

Today we cross our first border, from France into Italy, via the Col de la Seigne (2516m), which lies on the watershed between the Mediterranean and the Adriatic. The view from here is breath-taking, with a series of snowy peaks appearing in front of the Italian side of 'Monte Bianco'. As we descend into the Val Veny we will pass by picturesque glacial lakes. We spend the night at the Monte Bianco refuge, situated at the foot of the Glacier de la Brenva, under the impressive Aiguille Noire de Peuterey.

Hiking time: **6 - 7 hours**

Ascent: **727 m**

Descent: **660 m**

Max. altitude: **2516 m**

Accommodation: **Refuge**

Meals included:

**Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner**



#### DAY 5

### MONTE BIANCO REFUGE TO BONATTI REFUGE

This morning we will take the bus down to the charming town of Courmayeur where we will have some free time to enjoy a delicious Italian coffee. We then hike up from the town and continue along the Val Ferret in the shadow of the impressive Grandes Jorasses. Our last night in Italy is spent at the Bonatti refuge, named after Walter Bonatti, the great Italian mountain climber. There is no vehicle access to this refuge so your luggage will not join you tonight – everything you need for your stay and tomorrow's trek needs to be carried with you.

Hiking time: **5 - 6 hours**

Ascent: **169 m**

Max. altitude: **2025 m**

Accommodation: **Refuge**

Meals included:

**Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner**

#### DAY 6

### BONATTI REFUGE TO CHAMPEX

Time to lace up those boots and head into Switzerland! Today we will continue to ascend along the Val Ferret to reach the Grand Col de Ferret (2537m) where we will cross the border. As we head up the pass we can admire the Glacier de Pré de Bard and Mount Dolent, the summit of which is shared by France, Italy and Switzerland. The Grand Ferret is an ancient pass connecting the Aosta Valley of Italy to the Valais Canton of Switzerland. From the village of Ferret we will catch a local bus to Champex, a quaint lakeside village.

Hiking time: **6 - 7 hours**

Ascent: **512 m**

Descent: **1069 m**

Max. altitude: **2537 m**

Accommodation: **Refuge**

Meals included:

**Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner**

#### DAY 7

### CHAMPEX TO ARGENTIÈRE

We leave Champex, taking the Bovine Way through the high meadows where the beautiful Herens cows spend their summer months. This balcony path gives us a panoramic view of the surrounding Rhône valley, the Coude du Rhône and the Great Combins massif. We descend through a beautiful forest to the Col de la Forclaz. Then we follow the Bisses path (a Valais word meaning a water channel carved from stone or wood) to reach the village of Trient. From here, a private vehicle will take us through the Montets pass, crossing back into France, to our final destination of Argentière.

Hiking time: **6 - 7 hours**

Ascent: **507 m**

Descent: **723 m**

Max. altitude: **1975 m**

Accommodation: **Refuge**

Meals included:

**Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner**

#### DAY 8

### ARGENTIERE TO CHAMONIX

On this final day of our trek, we will discover the Aiguilles Rouges massif and reserve, facing Mont Blanc across the Chamonix valley. We will trek up to the Cheserys Lakes and on to Lac Blanc, from where we can enjoy a breath-taking view of Mont Blanc and the Mer de Glace while enjoying our picnic lunch. On the way we can often see ibex, chamois and marmots. We head down on a balcony trail, crossing La Flagère and Le Brévent to reach Chamonix. Time to say goodbye to the group and continue on our onwards travels.

Hiking time: **7 - 8 hours**

Ascent: **1100 m**

Descent: **2217 m**

Max. altitude: **2352 m**

Accommodation: **Hotel**

Meals included: **Breakfast / Lunch**

### PLEASE NOTE

*This programme may be modified by the guide or tour organiser, according to mountain and weather conditions, required physical condition of participants and, above all, your safety. For safety reasons and to ensure the programme operates smoothly, we need to ensure that all participants have the required level of mental and*

*physical ability. We reserve the right to end your participation if your ability does not match the minimum required level. In this eventuality, there will be no reimbursement or payment of compensation.*

# TRIP INFORMATION

## DIFFICULTY

The Tour du Mont Blanc is not to be underestimated, there is a lot of steep ascent and descent on this trek, so your legs will be getting a good workout. Yet, whilst a high level of fitness will make the days a lot easier it by no means requires super human fitness. A solid training plan will allow you to better prepare for the hikes and enjoy yourself when you're on the trail. You will need to reach particular points on the trail each night so you may find the pace of walking to be a little faster than on Kilimanjaro, for example. This is by no means a sprint, however a good level of fitness will ensure you have a positive experience.

Trekking poles are also a lifesaver, especially on the steep Alpine passes! If you are comfortable walking for 6-7 hours with an ascent of 1000m over consecutive days then you are certainly fit enough to succeed on the Tour. Think of it as climbing Snowdon or Ben Nevis every day for six days! If you can do this then there is no reason why you can't complete the entire Tour du Mont Blanc. We find that all successful hikers share a real *Kandoo* attitude and that means high levels of grit and determination.

## FOOD & DRINK

This trip is on a full board basis (except for the first night in Chamonix). For your evening meal in Chamonix, there is a wide range of local restaurants for you to sample. If you have a dietary requirement or are a vegetarian then just let us know when you book so that we can plan suitable lunch menus.

The refuges provide hearty, traditional and generous meals. Drinks are not included with dinner, so please make sure you have some Euros and Swiss Francs with you. Refuges do not normally accept card payments.

Packed lunches will be produced by your guide and include local meats and cheeses, crusty bread and fresh seasonal vegetables. The lunch items will be shared between all of the group for carrying each day. Remember to bring your favourite snacks (cereal or energy bars, dried fruits, chocolate) with you to keep you going through the day.

Tap water is typically safe to drink in France so you can fill up your water bottle each morning at the hotel or refuge. On the trek itself, you will be passing many refuges where you will also be able to top up your water if needed.

## ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation in Chamonix will be in a 3-star hotel in twin rooms. You will stay in Chamonix on the first night of the trip. Please note that your evening meal is not included when you are in Chamonix.

The mountain refuges we use are authentic huts with catering facilities and shared mixed-sex dormitory rooms of anywhere between 4-16 beds: blankets, pillows and mattresses are provided but you will need to bring a sleeping bag liner. Please only bring very basic toiletries as sometimes there is no running water available at the huts. On arrival at the huts, you will be expected to take off your boots and use the indoor shoes that the refuge provides (these are often clogs).

## LUGGAGE

[www.mountaindropoffs.com/](http://www.mountaindropoffs.com/) You will need two bags for this trip. One travel bag for your replacement clothes which will be transferred between locations vehicle (max 10kg) Tip: Bring a bin liner to protect your clothes from humidity. Please do not lock your luggage as they may need to be checked by Swiss customs. Please note: Do not leave computers, tablets, cameras and valuable objects in your travel bag. One 30-40L rucksack with a large chest strap that you will carry during the day. You will carry your own personal equipment (spare warm clothes, waterproofs, water bottle, camera and sun screen) and valuables, as well as your packed lunch in your rucksack

## HOW DO I GET THERE?

For travellers based in the UK or the US, it is best to fly to Geneva International Airport (GVA). Lots of airlines fly to Geneva from all of the major UK airports, and many of the larger US international airports as well. There are lots of companies offering transfers from Geneva to Chamonix. The cheapest options tend to be with [Alpybus](#) or [Chamexpress](#) who provide regular shared bus transfers allocated by arrival time. These are usually around 40 Euros each way for a shared transfer. Another option is to book through [Mountain Dropoffs](#), they offer smaller minibus style shared transfers for around 50 Euros each way. With Mountain Dropoffs, it is also possible to pay an additional fee for a private transfer.

You will meet the rest of the group at the pre-trek hotel in Chamonix.

### Travelling Responsibly

Alternatively if you wish to travel more responsibly, then there are other ways to reach Chamonix. [Flixbus](#) and [BlablaCar](#) offer routes from London to Chamonix with a change in Paris. These take around 22 hours and tend to cost between £75-120 each way. The other option is to travel by train. This is a much quicker option taking between 10-12hrs London - Chamonix, with changes at Paris and Chambéry, however this does come at an increased cost. Expect to pay around £250-300 each way on an advance ticket. Tickets can be found at [Rail Europe](#).

If you choose to travel via train or bus, get in touch and let us know because we like to reward our responsible travellers!

## BUDGET & CHANGE

The currency in France and Italy is the Euro (EUR) and in Switzerland the Swiss Franc (CHF). Euros are accepted in Switzerland although the exchange rate will not be very good. However, if you are only likely to be buying the odd drink or snack while you are in Switzerland, this would probably be easier than exchanging money into Francs. Foreign money can be exchanged at the Global Exchange in Geneva airport on arrival or you can bring money already exchanged with you, as both these are open currencies. We would recommend the latter as it is no longer possible to exchange foreign currency notes in banks in France, so you may find it difficult to exchange your money after leaving the airport. The only places that exchange foreign banknotes are bureau-de-change which can be found in large cities. You will, however, be able to withdraw money from ATMs in Chamonix on Day 1 of your trip.

The simplest way to pay for things in France is to use an international credit card or debit card. Visa and Mastercard are accepted everywhere alongside standard travel cards such as Monzo and Revolut. You may wish to have some Euros to hand, to pay for smaller items or souvenirs in case the trader does not accept cards. Credit and debit cards are also not accepted at the mountain refuges so you will need to carry enough cash for snacks, drinks and any personal expenses.

The average cost of a meal for 2 in Chamonix is around €50 (\$55). It's not a cheap place to eat out, however it makes up for this by offering free public transport all around the town. If you are wanting to buy some souvenirs to take home then these generally cost anywhere between €5 (\$6) for small items to €500 (\$550) for larger more bespoke gifts. Don't forget you will also need to budget for drinks whilst in the refuges too. Therefore, our recommended guidance for spending budget in the Alps would be roughly €220 on top of any tips, to give you ample souvenir spending money.

## **TIPS**

Tipping customs vary all over the world and can be very confusing when travelling to a new country. There is not a strong culture for tipping in France, but that said, anything you wish to give your guide in appreciation of his services will be welcome. You may wish to buy him a drink in the refuge or hotel.

Tips are not a substitute for good wages: our guides are all well paid and well looked after. Tipping is completely voluntary, and at your discretion. If you are unsure of how much to tip, a general guide of €10 per person for the entire trip should suffice. On the other hand, if you receive bad service or have not been treated well, you would not be expected to tip at all.



# FORMALITIES & HEALTH

## PASSPORT

Most travellers will require a passport valid for at least 6 months after your return date. It is your responsibility to confirm your specific requirements and please be aware that proof of onward travel may be required.

## VISA

Travelling to France is visa free for up to 90 days, for UK and US citizens

## VACCINATIONS

There are no specific health risks in the Mont Blanc region. However, you should ensure that your routine vaccinations and boosters are up to date, such as tetanus and MMR.

## INSURANCE

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are fully and adequately insured for the duration of your trip. Please ensure that all activities, excursions and destinations in your itinerary are included in your travel insurance policy, in addition to your regular cover for cancellation and medical expenses. Many insurance policies will have a maximum altitude limit, if you are climbing Gran Paradiso you should ensure you are covered for climbing up to 4100m.

We ask that you keep a copy of your policy summary (containing policy number and the emergency contact number for your insurer) in your day sack at all times, so that we can access this information should we need to contact the insurer on your behalf.

## MEDICATION

Your guide carries a first aid kit at all times but we recommend you carry the following items: - Painkillers - Anti-inflammatory tablets/gel - Second Skin Elastoplast (to prevent blisters)/ bandages - Sunscreen and Biafine cream (for sunburn) - Sleeping aids and/or earplugs - Personal medication

# EQUIPMENT & CLOTHING

## CLOTHING TO BRING

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- Sun Hat (preferably wide brimmed for protection )
- Sunglasses
- Neck gaiter or scarf
- Warm beanie style hat
- Gloves - warm fleece or wool
- Short sleeved t-shirts - light weight and quick drying
- Long sleeve t-shirts - light weight and quick drying
- Fleece or soft shell jacket
- Insulated jacket
- Waterproof/windproof hard shell jacket
- Trekking shorts and/or trousers
- Windproof and waterproof hard shell trousers
- Gaiters
- Trekking boots - with good ankle support
- Comfortable trainers for the evenings
- Light weight trekking socks / warm socks

## EQUIPMENT TO BRING

- 80-100 litre duffel bag or backpack (not a rigid suitcase)
- 30-40 litre daypack
- Sleeping bag liner
- Trekking poles
- Water bottles or hydration pack
- Drybags for your kit (if your duffel bag is not waterproof)
- Cutlery set
- Head torch with spare batteries

## Other Accessories

- Pocket knife
- Camera
- Thermos flask
- Snacks
- Microfibre towel
- Ear plugs
- Plug adapter
- Wet wipes and hand sanitiser

# HOW TO BOOK THIS TRIP

## **1 CHOOSE YOUR DATE AND CHECK AVAILABILITY**

A full list of available dates can be found on our website.

## **2 CONTACT US**

Contact us by phone, email or through our website. We will answer any questions you may have and send you a personalized itinerary and quote.

## **3 COMPLETE BOOKING AND PAYMENT**

When you are ready to book, we will send you a link to our online booking forms and participation agreements. We accept all major credit and debit cards and require a low 20% deposit to secure your place.

