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Dossier: TMB/Guided/Hotels/11 days/2017

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Tour du Mont Blanc / Guided: 11 days

Trip starts: Day 1 at Geneva Airport at 15:00hrs

Trip ends: Day 11 at Geneva Airport at 12:30hrs

The 11-day Tour du Mont Blanc covers the complete circuit on foot. There are 5 major passes, 165km of walking and we cross into France, Italy and Switzerland.

Starting in Chamonix, we trek in a clock-wise direction along well-maintained trails to small villages where we spend the night. The views are outstanding throughout: huge granite spires, tumbling glaciers, snowy peaks and fast-flowing rivers. You will see magnificent Alpine flowers, birds of prey and animals such as ibex, chamois, stoats and marmots.

During the trek, we stay at hotels for nine nights and spend one night at an auberge at Les Chapieux where twin rooms are normally provided. We have chosen to include most of your meals when on the trek we have found it is simpler for you and often costs less overall. There is a rest day in La Palud (Courmayeur) on day 7 where you can relax in the town or take a day-walk.

The walking will be mostly on well-maintained trails, though it is likely that we will encounter some rougher ground. Some ascents will be tough and you should be confident of climbing and then descending over 1000m in a day. The walk should appeal to people who regularly take walking weekends and are happy covering 16-22km (10-14 miles) each day, with a number of ascents and descents. This is a challenging trek and you should be confident of your fitness. We trek in a clockwise direction as the days are less strenuous at the beginning: it allows you to build your fitness and have a day off in La Palud (Courmayeur) before the last three big days.

The trip will be led by a fully qualified International Mountain Leader (IML).





ITINERARY

Day 1 Arrive Geneva; transfer to Les Houches

Meet at Geneva airport at 15:00hrs (3pm). We will then transfer you to our hotel in Les Houches in the Chamonix Valley - the trip takes just over an hour. Les Houches is a small town 7km from Chamonix and has a few restaurants, bars and outdoor equipment shops. If you want to visit Chamonix town, it takes 15 minutes by public bus. There will be a short briefing by our Trek Leader about the week ahead, followed by dinner at a local restaurant. **(Hotel. Meals included: none)**

Day 2 Les Houches – Lac Blanc – Argentiere

After breakfast we take the local bus for 15 minutes from Les Houches to Chamonix (1030m) where we start our trek. We hike to Les Praz (1065m) and then take the Flegere cable car up to 1900m. From here we hike through open countryside for 1.5-2 hours to Lac Blanc (2352m). There are incredible views of the whole Mont Blanc range, including Les Grandes Jorasses, Aiguille Vert and Les Drus. We then follow a beautiful path through the forest to Argentiere (1244m). You are re-united with your luggage at the hotel. Hiking time is approximately 6 hours. Ascent 450m, Descent 1100m. **(Hotel. Meals included: breakfast, lunch & dinner)**

Day 3 Argentiere – Col de Balme – Col de la Forlcaz (Switzerland)

From the hotel we hike through old Argentiere and up to the Col des Posettes (1997m) for superb views Mont Blanc and the Chamonix Valley. From here, we



traverse to the Col de Balme (2191m) and look directly into Switzerland. We descend through open country with views of glaciers to Trient (1297m) and then a short climb to the Col de la Forclaz (1526m) where we spend the night. You will have your main luggage delivered to the hotel tonight. Hiking time is approximately 7 hours. Ascent 1180m, Descent 894m. **(Hotel. Meals included: breakfast, lunch & dinner)**

Day 4 La Forclaz – Bovine Route – Champex

From Forclaz we hike along the 'Bovine Route' to Champex (1486m). 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 and just before Champex there is an auberge where you can sit in a garden amongst the charming forests of Champex d'en haut. You arrive at Champex Lac with its beautiful lake-side hotels and cafés. You will not have access to your luggage tonight and tomorrow night and so you need to pack appropriately. Hiking time is approximately 6 hours. Ascent 461m, Descent 543m. **(Hotel. Meals included: breakfast, lunch & dinner)**

Day 5 Champex – La Fouly

From Champex d'en haut it is a gentle 5-6 hour trek to La Fouly (1600m) along the Val Ferret. We start our walk from the auberge continuing to 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 South Face of the Mont Blanc range. You have no access to your luggage tonight. Hiking time is approximately 5-6 hours. Ascent 550m, Descent 440m. **(Hotel. Meals included: breakfast, lunch & dinner)**

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

We continue from La Fouly along the Val Ferret and cross into Italy via the impressive Grand Col Ferret (2537). 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 (1350m), a small hamlet 3km outside of the centre of Courmayeur (45mins walk / 10mins bus ride). You will have your main luggage delivered to the hotel tonight. Hiking time is approximately 7-8 hours. Ascent 970m, Descent 1170m. **(Hotel. Meals included: breakfast, lunch)**

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 Helbonner cable car, the spa at Pre St Didier and lots of walking options. **(Hotel. Meals included: breakfast)**

Day 8 Courmayeur – Val Veny – Col de la Seigne – Les Chapieux

We take 2 public buses (approx 10 and 20 minutes each) and 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 (2516m) which marks the border between France and Italy. We then descend to Les Chapieux (1549m). Today is quite a long day, although it is not steep. You will not have access to your luggage tonight and tomorrow night and so you need to pack appropriately. Hiking time is approximately 7 hours. Ascent 860m, Descent 967m. **(Auberge. Meals included: breakfast, lunch & dinner)**



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 2 cols (2479m and 2329m) 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 (1167m) – a pretty ski village with an interesting church. The hotel is located 1km outside of the centre of Les Contamines. You have no access to your luggage tonight. Today is a long day: hiking time is approximately 7-8 hours. Ascent 930m, Descent 1320m. **(Hotel. Meals included: breakfast, lunch & dinner)**

Day 10 Les Contamines – Les Houches

We ascend through pretty forests and meadows to the Chalets du Truc perched under the great west-face of the Mont Blanc range. There is a small peak we can climb before descending to the Chalets de Miage at 1559m. We then make a steep climb to the Col du Tricot (2120m) and then on towards the plateau above Les Houches. 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 quickly by cable car and take a short ride by public bus to our hotel. We check into the hotel and are reunited with our luggage. Hiking time is approximately 6-7 hours. Ascent 1170m, Descent 650m. **(Hotel. Meals included: breakfast, lunch)**

Day 11 Les Houches – Geneva

Free at leisure until your transfer to the airport. We will depart Les Houches at 11:00hrs and arrive at the airport by 12:30hrs. Those not taking the group transfer to the airport will leave the hotel at 11:00hrs (11am) and make their own arrangements. **(Meals included: breakfast)**

Extending your stay in the Chamonix Valley

If you would like to arrive earlier or stay longer in the Chamonix Valley, please let us know and we can book you some extra accommodation. Prices start at £84 for a twin room with breakfast.

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day route as printed above, a degree of flexibility is built into the itinerary. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested. Occasionally, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned. This may be for a variety of reasons – climatic, political, physical or other. In these circumstances we will make the best alternative arrangements possible that maintains the integrity of the original itinerary.



PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Is it for me?

This trip should appeal to you if you regularly take walking weekends and are happy covering 16-22km (10-14 miles) each day, with a number of ascents and descents. On the TMB we normally walk for between 6 and 8 hours each day and be outdoors for 8 or 9 hours. We generally follow good, well-maintained paths and the highest altitude we walk to is 2537 metres, so you should not feel the altitude apart from a little shortness of breath. In late June and early July we may encounter patches of snow, particularly at the cols, and may have to kick steps to make the path secure. We aim to have twin-bedded rooms throughout, though occasionally there may be more than two in a room at the auberge at Les Chapieux.

Group size

- Minimum 6, maximum 14.

Price and what it includes

- Accommodation on a twin-share basis. At Les Chapieux there may be more than two people in a room.
- Transfers to and from the airport (specified times only – see Airport transfers below).
- All transfers and cable cars throughout when part of the organised trek.
- 10 breakfasts, 8 picnic lunches and 6 dinners.
- Luggage transfers so that you have your main luggage for 6 of the 10 nights (Les Houches, Argentiere, La Forclaz and Courmayeur).
- The trek is led by a qualified International Mountain Leader (IML).

What is not included

- Dinners and lunches on the first and last night and in Courmayeur.

Accommodation and meals

We stay in hotels for 9 nights and an auberge for 1 night. Rooms are on a twin-share basis: some have attached bathrooms, others have bathrooms along the corridor. For the night at Les Chapieux, we aim for you to be in a twin room, but this is not always possible: you may be in a room with more than 2 people and possibly a dormitory. The showers are along the corridor for all guests.

Bedding is provided at each night stop, so there is no need to carry sleeping bags.

For the night at the auberge at Les Chapieux, duvets are provided.

Towels are provided at all night stops except Les Chapieux, though you can hire one at Chapieux.

Please note that we do not use mountain refuges or huts for any of the night stops.

Meals included are normally 3 courses and are eaten in the hotel's restaurant area.

Tea and coffee at dinner and all other drinks are not included.



Typical meals on trek

Breakfast: tea, coffee, juice, cereals, bread, butter, jam.

Picnic lunch: baguette, mayonnaise, cheeses, cold meats, salad, fruit.

Dinner: starter, main course, dessert or cheese.

The hotels and auberges also sell soft drinks, beer, wine, mineral water, cakes and a variety of chocolate bars.

The hotels offer meals for vegetarian diets. Not all of the hotels cater to other diets, such as vegan and gluten-free, and so we are regretfully not able to offer this.

If you chose not to take or eat any of the meals provided throughout this trip, there is no refund.

Luggage transfers

You will have access to your main luggage for 6 of the 10 nights. This will be at Les Houches, Argentiere, La Forclaz and La Palud (Courmayeur). On the days you do not have access to your luggage (4 nights in total) you will need to carry your over-night gear, which will most likely include spare socks, underwear, T-shirt and basic toiletries. This is light back-packing and we recommend you have a 40 litre rucsac. We do not transfer your luggage to every night stop as we feel it is unnecessary and environmentally unsound. In addition, it adds a great deal to the cost of the tour as some of the drives between hotels are 5 hour round-trips.

Please restrict the weight of your main luggage to 15-20kg and use a soft sports bag / kit bag. This helps us with the luggage transfers.

We strongly recommend that you do not leave any valuables or any object of high value in your main luggage. When your luggage is transferred and then delivered to the next hotel, it is likely that it will be left in the reception area or in an unattended back-room. We recommend that you lock your luggage.

Airport transfers

We arrange an airport pick-up from Geneva International Airport on Day 1. We meet in the Arrivals Hall near the Information Desk at 3pm (15:00hrs) where a representative will be holding a sign with Salamander Adventures. **Our minibus will leave Geneva Airport at 3.30pm (15:30hrs) so that we arrive at the hotel in the Chamonix Valley at 5pm (17:00hrs).** Many clients arrive in Geneva on different airlines and at different times of the day so we leave the transfer until 15:30hrs so that most people can take it. If you arrive at Geneva airport early in the day you can take a short train ride into the city and spend the day sightseeing or shopping. You can leave your baggage at 'Left Luggage' at the airport train station.

Clients arriving after the minibus has departed at 15:30hrs should call us for information about how to get to the Chamonix Valley: any costs incurred will be the responsibility of the client.

For the 'drop-off' at the end of the tour (Day 11), we ensure that you are at Geneva International Airport by 12:30hrs. If clients need to be at the airport earlier, we will organise a transfer that must be paid for by the client.

You are of course welcome to arrange your own transport to the hotel in Argentiere, but at your own expense.



Transport during the tour

All transfers to the walks are included in the price of the tour: we use a mix of private and public transport. The transfer from the airport is in a private minibus.

Occasionally we may use cars – it depends on the size of the group. No journey is longer than 40 minutes, except the trip to and from the airport which takes just over an hour. We intend to use cable cars to gain or lose altitude on some days. These are included in the cost.

Staff

Throughout the trip, you will be accompanied by a qualified International Mountain Leader who has a First Aid certificate and carries a First Aid Kit.

Weather

In the summer, daytime temperatures can vary from 15-25°C in the valleys to 0-20°C at higher altitudes (at the cols it can be cold and windy). It all depends on whether the sun is out and it can often feel very hot: occasionally it reaches 30°C in the valley and can feel quite muggy in the late afternoon. At night the temperature is 5-12°C in the valley and can drop close to 5°C at some of the night stops. As with all mountain ranges it can rain – either as frontal weather or as thunder storms after a hot day – and you should come prepared for this. It can be cold and windy at higher elevations and snow is not unknown. We pay special attention to the local weather forecasts and will adjust the day-to-day itinerary if we feel it is necessary to get the best from your tour.

Clothing and equipment

- Good walking boots: leather or fabric and should be worn-in before you arrive.
- Full set of good-quality waterproofs. Gore-Tex or e-Vent recommended: a 'pac-a-mac' is not good enough.
- Trousers or skirts, short trousers.
- T-shirts and tops that includes a jumper or fleece jacket.
- Rucsac that will give you enough room to carry a few clothes plus other items for the 2-day periods when you do not have access to your main luggage: 40 litres is recommended.
- Sun hat, sun cream, sunglasses, water bottle, warm woolly hat and gloves.
- Torch, blister kit, any personal medicine.

For the night stops when you will not have access to your main luggage we recommend you carry a change of underwear, socks and T-shirt, basic toiletries and a torch – please remember that you will have to carry it all. You will need to carry your picnic and will probably have your camera and blister kit with you.

You may like to take a small towel or easi-dry towel for the night at Les Chapieux, although the auberge do have towels to rent, usually for 1 euro.

Although it may be cold outside at night, it will be very warm inside and so down jackets are not needed.

Extra expenses & money

There is an ATM in Les Houches, Argentiere, Chamonix and Courmayeur. There are also a couple of Bureau de Change kiosks in Chamonix. Do not use the ATM's at



Geneva airport as they will give you Swiss Francs – France is part of the Euro Zone - so wait until you arrive in the Chamonix Valley. On trek, euros are accepted everywhere.

You will need extra money for drinks and evening meals not included. In addition, postcards, souvenirs, snacks you might buy at mountain refuges or cafés and any optional activities. Chamonix and Les Houches have cafés, map shops and outdoor stores with a huge range of equipment.

Typical costs

These are approximate costs: you can spend more or less than indicated.

Dinners Allow €25-30 per meal for 4 nights: Chamonix Valley & Courmayeur.

Misc Wine (€10-15), beer (€3-5), soft drinks (€2-3), cakes & snacks, coffee.

Passports, visas and insurance

It is essential that you are in possession of an up to date and valid passport. You must check the visa and entry requirements of your chosen destination and any countries that you may be stopping off at en-route. Whilst we are able to offer general advice to British citizens, personal circumstances such as criminal records, may affect your eligibility to enter certain countries. It is therefore your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct documentation to gain entry into your chosen destination(s). For any further information, please consult the relevant embassy or for British residents visit: www.fco.gov.uk

Adequate and valid travel insurance is compulsory when you travel with us and it is a condition of accepting your booking that you agree you will have obtained adequate and valid travel insurance for your booking by the date of departure. We recommend that you take out insurance as soon as your booking is confirmed.

We recommend that your travel insurance includes repatriation, that you are covered for trekking in the Alps up to 2600 metres, helicopter rescue, all the activities mentioned in this dossier and any optional activities you may take part in. You must check with your insurer that you have adequate and valid cover for your tour. Anyone who does not have insurance will not be allowed to take part in the tour until cover is arranged. This is part of our booking conditions.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of this dossier immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from clients. You will be informed of any major changes to your trip but small changes may just be added to this dossier.

