

EXPLORE!

Self-Guided Tour du Mont Blanc

11 days

France, Italy, Switzerland - Trip code **WSMB**



Self-Guided Tour du Mont Blanc

The iconic Mont Blanc Circuit offers exhilarating trekking through spectacular alpine landscapes of dramatic snow-capped peaks and lush, idyllic valleys. Hiking through France, Italy and Switzerland, you discover the rich fauna and flora of the Alps and the unique architecture and cuisine of each country. Overnighing in beautifully located mountain huts, hearty meals provide energy for the breathtaking walks.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Mont Blanc** - Discover Europe's highest mountain with spellbinding views over snow-capped peaks and wild open spaces
- ★ **Local life** - A chance to meet the friendly locals and learn about their unique cultural heritage
- ★ **Food** - Rich and tasty mountain cuisine including delicious cheeses, polenta and mushrooms
- ★ **Accommodation** - Stay in warm and cosy family-run mountain huts and small hotels

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Simple

These are often small, family run establishments or campsites which provide a no-frills experience with adequate amenities and service standards. Sleeping arrangements are simple, sometimes with en suite facilities.

WALKING GRADE:

Challenging

You need to have a good level of fitness and previous trekking experience is recommended. Trekking days are generally longer, challenging and at higher altitudes. Terrain may be difficult and ascents and descents are often demanding.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Trip starts in Chamonix

The holiday starts in Chamonix, the famous mountain resort that nestles in the shadow of Mont Blanc and the Agulles du Midi. On arrival you can take a wander through the streets of this lively town, do a little shopping or maybe spoil yourself with a visit to the spa. The hotel tonight has private bedrooms with en suite bathrooms. Details of how to reach the start point of your holiday can be found on our website in the tour specific dates and prices section by clicking on 'Joining Info' and then the 'Show More' button.



Accommodation: Hotel La Vallee Blanche (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Bellevue cable car; trek to Les Contamines

To get to the start of today's trekking you first take a local bus a few kilometres along the valley to Les Houches, followed by the Bellevue cable car, up to 1800m. From here you will follow the edge of the mountain to the Col de Voza before descending to the valley floor. You pass through several small villages where you can admire the typical mountain-style houses with their roofs made of large flat stones. Mont Blanc is visible high above as you follow the trail along the Bon Nant river, to Les Contamines. You then continue along an ancient Roman path and one of Europe's most famous trails, across blooming meadows and striking woodland to your accommodation tonight, a typical mountain refuge. At the Refuge Nant Borrant, walkers are accommodated in small dormitories for between six to nine people and a hearty evening meal is served in the chalet's cosy dining room. Today's 20.5 kilometre walk is expected to take around seven hours and you will ascend a total of 990 metres and descend almost 1100 metres.



Accommodation: Refuge de Nant Borrant (or similar)



Simple Lodge



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 3 - Hike from Les Contamines to Les Chapieux

Today's walk will lead you across the Plan des Dames up to the Col de la Croix du Bonhomme at almost 2500 metres above sea level. You'll see a peculiar combination of stones marking the top of the pass from where you can admire the valleys stretching out for miles around you. From the pass you make a long descent through open meadows, criss-crossing enchanting brooks and passing mountain huts, to reach the tiny village of Les Chapieux. Your accommodation tonight is a simple mountain hotel with private bedroom and en suite bathroom. Today's 15 kilometre walk is expected to take around seven-and-a-half hours and you will ascend and descend approximately 900 metres.



Accommodation: Hotel Les Chambres du Soleil (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 4 - Trek from Les Chapieux to Val Veny or Courmayeur

Today is the longest and most demanding day of the holiday but it is incredibly scenic. After the first two days spent walking in France, you will be entering Italy, through some of the most astonishing landscapes of the whole trip. You climb up through a deep gorge surrounded by vast pastures with a moon-like scene as the backdrop. The Col de la Seigne (2516m) and the Aiguille des Glaciers mountains loom large in the distance on the border between Switzerland and Italy. Eventually you reach the top of the pass then descend into the Val Veny Valley on the opposite side of Mont Blanc, enjoying magnificent views of the snow-capped peaks. Depending on availability, you may be staying either at a refuge in La Lex Blanche or in Courmayeur. If staying in Courmayeur, you will need to walk a further five-and-a-half kilometres to reach the bus stop in La Visaille from where you will take a bus to Courmayeur. If staying at the refuge in La Lex Blanche, your accommodation tonight is owned by the Italian Alpine club where you will have your own bedroom and share bathroom facilities. Depending on your final destination today, you will be walking either 14 or 19 kilometres. The 14 kilometre walk is expected to take around five hours to complete and you will ascend a total of 1250 metres and descend 1180 metres. The 19 kilometre walk is expected to take around seven hours to complete and you will ascend a total of 1500 metres and descend 1380 metres.



Accommodation: Rifugio Monte Bianco (or similar)



Simple Lodge



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 5 - Hike to Val Ferret

Today's walk is divided into two parts. In the morning, if you have stayed in La Lex Blanche, you will walk five-and-a-half kilometres to the bus stop and descend towards the famous city of Courmayeur by bus. Courmayeur is a renowned ski resort where you can have a well-deserved rest before starting off again with a steep ascent followed by a level walk through the meadows and conifer woods to Val Ferret. You'll pass by many small brooks, with the wonderful and awe-inspiring silhouette of the Grand Jorasses standing high above you. Val Ferret sits near the border between Italy and Switzerland. If you feel tired or if you prefer to spend more time in Courmayeur this afternoon, you can take a bus directly from here to your next accommodation in Val Ferret, a simple hotel with private bedroom and shared bathroom facilities. This morning's five-and-a-half kilometre walk is expected to take around two-and-a-half hours and you will ascend 300 metres and descend approximately 800 metres. The afternoon 12 kilometre walk is expected to take around four-and-a-half hours and you will ascend 900 metres and descend approximately 400 metres.



Accommodation: Albergo Lavachey (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 6 - Walk to La Fouly in Switzerland

This morning's walk will take you up a steep ascent and past ruined farmhouses. This marks the start of your journey into Switzerland. You'll walk uphill until the top of the Col du Gran Ferret (2537 metres), where you will enter Switzerland. This side of the mountains often presents glaciers and perennial snow, as it is less exposed to the sun. The descent is through vast open meadows without any traces of human settlement, to the small hamlet of Ferret, where the trail becomes immersed in an idyllic scenery of forests, creeks and picturesque bridges, leading you in a short time to the village of La Fouly where you spend the night. Your simple hotel has a private bedroom with en suite bathroom. Today's 18 kilometre walk is expected to take around six-and-a-

half hours and you will ascend a total of 870 metres and descend approximately 920 metres.



Accommodation: Hotel Edelweiss (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 7 - Trek to Arpette

After the tiring efforts of the last few days, today offers you an easier walk. This section is quite long, but the elevation gains and losses are not so pronounced. Starting off from La Fouly, you'll encounter a succession of woods, interrupted by cliff walls and small streams. You'll walk through meadows to reach Les Arlaches, a beautiful hamlet with many houses made of wood and stone in the traditional style of the area. The last stretch is up a long climb, but it's not too steep, from Orsieres to Champex-Lac, a pretty mountain village situated on a lake. You continue past the lake and up the ski area of Arpette where you spend the night. Your accommodation tonight is a simple hotel with private bedroom and shared bathroom facilities. Today's 18 kilometre walk is expected to take around six hours and you will ascend 700 metres and descend approximately 715 metres.



Accommodation: Relais d'Arpette (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 8 - Hike to Trient

This morning you'll begin your trek from Champex (Arpette) to Trient via Champex-d'en Haut, through cool forests and beautiful alpine meadows across the Col de la Forclaz, an important link between Switzerland and France. This walk enjoys breathtaking panoramas of the Martigny valley and reaches 2050 metres. Your accommodation tonight is a simple hotel with private bedroom and shared bathroom facilities. Today's 16 kilometre walk is expected to take around seven hours and you will ascend 770 metres and descend approximately 1125 metres.



Accommodation: Hotel La Grande Ourse (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 9 - Walk to Montroc/Argentiere

Today's walk takes you to Argentiere. You are above the ski resort of Le Tour from where you hike towards Lake Charamillon (2271 metres). You then continue on to the immense Glacier du Tour and back into France. An exhilarating rocky trail along the mountain crest allows you to enjoy astounding views of the glacier and the surrounding valleys. As you reach the border between Switzerland and France, you can see the magnificence of Mont Blanc, a real highlight of the trip, especially on sunny and bright days. You will start to descend among pastures for the last section of the walk until you arrive at your stop in Montroc or nearby Argentiere. The hotel tonight has private bedrooms with en suite bathrooms. Today's 14.5 kilometre walk is expected to take around four hours and you will ascend 985 metres and descend approximately 906 metres.



Accommodation: Hotel L'Olympique (or similar)

DAY 10 - Final trek to Chamonix

Today's walk today is quite long so make sure you get an early start. You begin walking through the pretty little village of Les Frasserands with its typically Alpine wooden houses. You start climbing uphill, into the Aiguilles Rouges Natural Park. You can decide if you want to continue to climb up to Lac Blanc, (it involves a short climb on an iron ladder which is not recommended if you suffer from vertigo), or start descending to La Flegere. The route is very panoramic with the Mont Blanc massif of the Aiguille Verte, the Drus, the Aiguille du Midi, Mont Blanc du Tacul and Mont Blanc laid out in front of you. Arriving at Planpraz you take the cable car down to Chamonix (the last one is at 17:00 hrs). If you are tired or short of time you can also catch the cable car from La Flegere. You have completed the Tour du Mont Blanc and can enjoy a celebratory drink in one of the bars in town! There are two options for today's walking. Option one is slightly shorter. The 17.5 kilometre walk is expected to take around seven hours to complete and you will ascend a total of 1443 metres and descend 789 metres. Option two is longer. The 19.5 kilometre walk is expected to take around around eight hours to complete and you will ascend a total of 1500 metres and descend 1380 metres.



Accommodation: Hotel La Vallee Blanche (or similar)

DAY 11 - Trip ends in Chamonix

After breakfast, the organised part of your holiday comes to an end.

Walking and Trekking information

DAILY DISTANCES

Day 2	20.5km
Day 3	15km
Day 4	19km
Day 5	17.5km
Day 6	18km
Day 7	18km
Day 8	16km
Day 9	14.5km
Day 10	17.5km

Optional Walks

Walking grade

Challenging

Trek details

On this journey you walk 158 km over 9 days (an average of 17.5 km a day). You follow well-marked hiking trails, with the lettering TMB (Tour du Mont Blanc). The route involves some steep ascents and descents of up to 1000 m in a day and some of the days are very long. There are no technically difficult sections nor scrambling required, but the trip is not suitable if you suffer from vertigo as there are sections where you could feel exposed.

Max walking altitude (m)

2665



What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 10
Dinner: 8



Accommodation

2 nights standard hotel
6 nights simple hotel
2 nights simple lodge

Trip information

Country information

France Holidays & Tours

Climate

Across France, from April - August, weather conditions are generally warm and pleasant with moderate rainfall; Autumn temperatures are a bit lower and the winter months (though colder) remain mild. The summer months on the Mediterranean Coast in the south tend to be warmer than the rest of France and have less rainfall, and also more mild winters; freezing conditions are nearly unheard of. The mountainous areas of the Alps, Juros and Pyrenees can be quite different. During summer the morning and evening temperatures are considerably cooler and it becomes much colder in winter with heavy snowfall. Western France, along the English Channel, there can be very strong winds and frequent rain during the winter months Nov - Apr. Wine harvesting takes place in late August/early September.

Time difference to GMT

+1

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Catholic

Language

French

Italy Holidays & Tours

Climate

April/May and October/November are pleasantly warm. June/September are the hottest months. Showers are common in Autumn.

Time difference to GMT

+1

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Roman Catholic

Language

Italian

Switzerland Holidays & Tours

Climate

Summers are generally warm, or even hot, with a three-month period when rain rarely falls. When it does rain in this season, it is heavy and often accompanied by thunder. There are as much as eleven to twelve hours' sunshine a day in summer, but as with anywhere in mainland Europe it can occasionally be cold and wet. Early and late summer is generally the best times to visit this region.

Time difference to GMT

+1

Plugs

3 Pin Round

Religion

Catholic

Language

German

Budgeting and packing

Clothing

The following are essential: good quality waterproof jacket and trousers, fleece jacket, comfortable walking trousers, shorts, warm hat and gloves, sunhat, sunglasses and high factor sun-cream.

Footwear

We recommend walking boots with proper ankle support and good tread. Make sure that your boots are worn-in and comfortable before the start of the trip. We recommend that you wear/carry your walking boots as hand luggage on the international flight. Should your luggage be delayed, your well broken in boots will be irreplaceable. Trainers or trekking sandals are useful for relaxing in the evening.

Luggage: On tour

You will need one main piece of baggage and a waterproof daypack sufficiently large to take spare layers of clothing, your water bottle, picnic and camera during each days walking (25-40 litres recommended). Please clearly mark all your belongings with your name and the name of the next accommodation in order to indicate where the bags should go to next. Bags should be ready and at the reception or store room by 09:00 on the morning of your departure.

Luggage transfer

A luggage transfer between each accommodation. This is provided by a local taxi supplier.

Equipment

For the night in the dormitory you will need to bring a travel sheet and a towel (blankets and pillows are provided). All bedding is provided on the other nights. Bring a water bottle (preferably 2 litres) and high factor sun cream. Trekking poles are recommended. Tap water is safe to drink as are the fountains found in villages, but water sources along the trail may not always be drinkable. Using tap or purified water rather than bottled water will help avoid creating plastic bottle waste. Energy snacks including chocolate and sweets are recommended whilst on trek. Maps - Along with the destination manual and route notes you will be sent a set of maps that have been created specifically for this trip to help you navigate. The route is marked on each map together with a series of numbered waypoints which correspond with instructions in the route notes. Should you wish to purchase a more detailed commercially produced map we recommend the following:- Topographic maps Carte de Randonées Hiking map 1:50.00 A1 Pays du Mont-Blanc Aravis, Chamonix - Courmayeur ISBN 9782841822065

Country Information

France Holidays & Tours

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price

£11

Dinner price

£16.00 - 18.00

Beer price

£4

Water price

£1.3

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Euro

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Pounds Sterling and US Dollars can only be changed in larger airports with a Bureau de Change. Please change currency into Euros prior to arriving in France.

Where To Exchange

Bureau de Change can only be found in major cities and large airports. Many French banks no longer exchange Foreign currency.

ATM Availability

In cities and most major towns

Credit Card Acceptance

In major restaurants (make sure you have informed your credit card company that you are travelling abroad as some companies will reject payments)

Travellers Cheques

Travellers Cheques are no longer commonly accepted and can only be changed in larger airports with a Bureau de Change.

Italy Holidays & Tours

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Dinner price

£10.00 - 14.00

Beer price

£2.00 - 4.00

Water price

£1.00 - 2.00

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Euro.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

GBP.

Where To Exchange

We recommend that you change any currency into Euros prior to arrival. Bureau de Change are generally only found in

major cities and large airports.

ATM Availability

Major towns.

Credit Card Acceptance

Larger hotels and restaurants.

Travellers Cheques

Only in major towns. Please note, the exchange rate for cash and Travellers Cheques is poor.

Switzerland Holidays & Tours

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price

£16

Dinner price

£23

Beer price

£5.2

Water price

£1.5

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Swiss Franc.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Euros.

Where To Exchange

Most major towns - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival

ATM Availability

Local currency can be obtained using credit cards in ATM's.

Credit Card Acceptance

In major restaurants.

Travellers Cheques

Not recommended.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Accommodation notes

Booking a Single Room

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

Overnight accommodation ranges from simple guest houses and family-run hotels to mountain refuges. All are surrounded by the

beautiful peaks of the Mont Blanc massif. The simple hotels all offer private bedrooms, some with private bathrooms, others have shared bathroom facilities. In one of the mountain refuges you will stay in a dormitory room with between six to nine beds. For the night in the dormitory you will need to bring a travel sheet and a towel (blankets and pillows are provided). Sheets and towels are included when staying in private rooms. Breakfast and a hearty walkers dinner are provided in your accommodation every day other than in Chamonix where there is there are a multitude of dining out choices. Please note that due to high demand we are unable to offer the option of booking a single room on this trip.

Essential information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice click [here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, click [here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa Information

Visas are not required by UK, E.U Nationals, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office. All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station. Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer click [here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities.

Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them here.

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Maximum altitude (m)

2665

France Holidays & Tours

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory. Tetanus recommended. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

Italy Holidays & Tours

Vaccinations

Nothing required. Tetanus recommended. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

Switzerland Holidays & Tours

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory; Tetanus recommended. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.
