



*Le Grand Balcon du Sud*

## 2024 Tour du Mont Blanc in Comfort

### More Time, More Comfort, More Enjoyment

#### Tour Highlights

- ☞ All the sites of this legendary tour.
- ☞ Stay in comfort, walk at a more relaxed pace.
- ☞ Convenient access from France, Italy or Switzerland
- ☞ Avoid the crowds by starting in Courmayeur, Italy.
- ☞ Seven 3-star hotels and two 2-star; plus two auberges and one mountain refuge with private rooms (12-night version only)
- ☞ Walk anti-clockwise for an enhanced experience.
- ☞ Options to suit your preferences on two days.
- ☞ Visit Chamonix, Lac Blanc, Lac Champex and 'Balcon du Sud.'
- ☞ **See the videos for each day's walking on our website tour page.**



#### Fact File

- ✓ Self-guided, challenging, 11- or 12-night tour through France, Italy & Switzerland.
- ✓ Average 5½ hours and 9½ miles-15½ kms a day.
- ✓ Start and finish in Courmayeur, Italy [just 45 mins. bus-ride from Chamonix through the Mont Blanc tunnel].
- ✓ Departures any day from 22nd June to 5th September.
- ✓ Luggage transfers throughout <sup>1</sup> - up to 15 kgs per person.



#### Theme

**Tour du Mont Blanc in Comfort** is our 11 or 12-night hiking tour of the entire and legendary Mont Blanc Massif. *If you want to walk the TMB in one single trip, and under the best possible conditions, then this is the tour for you.*

**Tour du Mont Blanc in Comfort** helps you achieve this life-time ambition by dissecting the TMB route into walkable segments based on the twin objectives of comfortable accommodation in private rooms and daily manageable challenges that allow you time to enjoy the scenery and recover for the next day.

You experience the finest sights available along the trail, whilst hiking for five days in France, three in Italy and three in Switzerland. To get you up to speed, you average five hours of moderate-to-moderately-challenging walking per day during the first half of your trip, followed by six to six-and-a-half hours of moderately-challenging-to-challenging walking per day for the next three days.

Whilst you can opt to start in France, we recommend avoiding the crowds and commencing the tour in Courmayeur, Italy - 40 minutes from Chamonix by bus via Mont Blanc Tunnel. The final two days, from Les Chapieux to Courmayeur, are then 'relatively leisurely' at five hours each and allow you ample time to get the walking done quite early and enjoy your fine overnight destinations to the full. You can, however, merge these two days into a six-and-a-half-hour final day, avoid the over-nighter in the refuge Elizabetta and take a free shuttle bus onto Courmayeur - the choice is yours!



Champex -  
"little Canada"



Some of the TMB variants are verging on the 'Are you nuts?' end of the novice-to-expert continuum. Fear not! We are delighted to bring you just two days when you can choose which route you take. The first gives vertigo sufferers the chance to avoid the ladders section of the main TMB en route to the Balcon du Sud; whilst the second allows you to treat the Les Houches to Les Contamines stage as a rest day or another challenge. Both 'tougher' options should be avoided in inclement weather.

If you would prefer to break yourself in gently on the first walking day, why not reduce the challenge by 90 minutes/4½ kms and stay overnight in fabulous Bonatti refuge? Considered the best refuge in the Mont Blanc Massif, your second day's walking to La Fouly would, as a consequence, be increased by 90 minutes/4½ kms. The choice is yours and it is subject to availability!

**Tour du Mont Blanc in Comfort** includes luggage transfers and requires no guide. You will meet many willing companions en route, but rest assured that our industry standard-setting walking notes will empower you to hike this extraordinary trail alone or in the company of your own choosing. Snow clears from the higher passes from mid-June and returns at any time after mid-October. Book early, get the best accommodation reserved and look forward to one of life's memorable experiences.

## 12-night Itinerary<sup>1</sup>

[Times and ascents/descents are an approximation.]

- Day 1** **Courmayeur.** Arrive in Courmayeur [Italy] and hotel check-in.
- Day 2** **Courmayeur to Arnuva**  
[10 miles/16 kms, + 1110 ms, - 320 ms, approx. 6 hrs walking]  
Enjoy the morning's climb followed by the gentle, sub-alpine pastures of the picturesque Val Ferret.
- Day 3** **Arnuva to La Fouly**  
[9 miles/14½ kms, + 890 ms, - 960 ms, approx. 6 hrs]  
Climb up past Refuge Elena and enjoy the fine descent into Switzerland from the Grand Col.
- Day 4** **La Fouly to Champex**  
[8½ miles/13½ kms, + 472 ms, - 557 ms, approx. 4.30 hrs]  
The morning river-hugging trail is a delight to behold and the afternoon climb to the banks of "Little Canada" a real gem.
- Day 5** **Champex to Col de la Forclaz**  
[10 miles/16 kms, + 664 ms, - 672 ms, approx. 5.30 hrs]  
The views down the Upper Rhone Valley from Bovine are a treat and the descent to the Franco-Swiss border is absorbing.





**Day 6 Col de la Forclaz to Argentiere**

[11 miles/18 kms, + 920 ms, - 1185 ms, approx. 6 hrs]  
The climb to the Col de Balme is breathtaking and the views as you descend into France are as exceptional as they are expansive.

**Day 7 Argentiere to Les Praz de Chamonix via La Flegere**

[7 miles/11 kms, + 1120 ms, - 505 ms, approx. 6 hrs]  
Two options for the climb up to Lac Blanc: the GRP and the 'Grand Balcon du Sud' or the gentler climb via the TMB proper assisted by the 'ladders'. Imagine you're the only one there before descending the rocky steps to La Flegere and the cable-car.



**Day 8 Les Praz de Chamonix to Les Houches**

[10 miles-16 kms, +650ms/-1525ms, approx. 8 hrs, with option to cut out the descent via the Brevent cable car]  
Leave the hotel, take the cable car to La Flegere and get straight into the TMB action: le Balcon du Sud, the splendid Col du Brevent, the magnificent panorama from Brevent itself and the fine descent to Les Houches.



**Day 9 Les Houches to Les Contamines**

Low or all-weather Route via Bionnassay  
[10 miles/16 kms, +90 ms - 640 ms, approx.4 hrs]  
or, High Route via Refuge de Miage  
[11 miles/18 kms, +840 ms - 580 ms, approx.5¾ hrs]  
Avoid the knee-crunching and monotonous climb, take the cable car to Bellevue and, depending on you and the weather, opt for the trail that suits you to Les Contamines.

**Day 10 Les Contamines to Les Chapieux**

[11 miles/18 kms, +1320 ms - 930 ms, approx.7 hrs]  
Follow the Bon Nant Torr past Notre Dames de la Gorge and two refuges en route to the Col du Bonhomme and Col de la Croix. Lunch in the refuge du Bonhomme is followed by the descent to Les Chapieux and your welcoming auberge.

**Day 11 Les Chapieux to Ref Elizabetta**

[9½ miles 15 kms, +1000 ms - 260 ms, approx.5 hrs]  
The Vallee des Glaciers is a joy to behold. Enjoy a quick drink at Les Mottets before climbing up to the Col de la Seigne and into Italy. The views are delightful as too is the descent into Lex Blanche.



**Day 12 Ref Elizabetta to Courmayer**

[11 miles/18 kms, +460 ms - 1580 ms, approx.5.00 hrs]  
Your final day takes you further down the Lex Blanche before you climb up past abandoned farmsteads overlooking the remains of the Miage Glacier. The balcony trail to the Col Checrouit makes for a fine end to this superb hiking trip.

**Note:** option to merge Days 11 and 12 [approx.6½ hrs] via a shuttle bus to Courmayeur, thus avoiding the over-nighter in Elizabetta. Please ask us for details.

**Day 13 End of Tour**

Buffet breakfast, au revoir et bonne route - [back] through the Mont Blanc tunnel to Chamonix or by bus to Milan or Turin? Bon retour et à bientôt!



## What's Included

- ✓ 11 or 12 nights in carefully-selected hotels averaging 3 star/superior 2-star-standard, with en suite facilities the norm - see below
- ✓ 11 or 12 breakfasts and 8 or 9 evening meals
- ✓ Industry-leading hiking notes, 1:25,000 maps and themed dossier
- ✓ Luggage transfers throughout - one suitcase up to 15 kgs per person<sup>2</sup>
- ✓ Telephone help-line service with 7/7 and 8 to 7 pm Native-English and French-based support.



## Not included

- ⊗ Remaining meals and all drinks and extras - lunch and dinner options are listed in your dossier and walking notes
- ⊗ Cable cars and any use of shuttle buses.
- ⊗ Entrances into any optional cultural visits and venues
- ⊗ Hiking, personal and travel insurances & personal expenses
- ⊗ Single rooms - unless booked at the single-person rate
- ⊗ Travel to and from the tour start and finish points.



## Auberges & Hotels

**“Carefully-selected accommodation based on knowing our partners well.”**

As always, and subject to availability, our commitment to our customers is to offer the best accommodation in every stage along the trail, up to 3-star hotel standard. You stay in comfortable hotels and auberges that have been carefully selected on the basis of superior facilities, location, service and welcome. Early booking is highly advisable and late-comers may need to be flexible based on what availability remains. All hotels have en-suite facilities, but this is not the case in the two auberges, nor the one refuge we use, where facilities are in the corridor.

### Your accommodation is:

- Courmayeur: 3-star hotel
- Arnuva: 2-star chalet hotel
- La Fouly: 3-star hotel
- Champex: 3-star hotel
- Praz de Chamonix: 3-star hotel
- Les Houches: 3-star hotel
- Les Contamines: superior 2-star hotel
- Chapieux: Auberge with shared WC & showers
- Col de la Forclaz/Trient: welcoming walkers' inn or auberge with shared WC & showers
- Val Veni: Refuge Elisabetta - private room, with shared WC & showers. On the 12-night version only.
- Argentiere: 3-star hotel







## Access & Departure

### How to get to Courmayeur - introduction...

It goes without saying [but we'll say it all the same] that best access to Courmayeur will depend on where you are approaching it from - i.e., whether you are flying long-haul into Europe, whether you are travelling from the UK or another European location, or whether you will be approaching from France or maybe Italy itself.

Each of these scenarios will provide you with different options but, unless you are definitely coming from northern Italy, we suggest you check out approaching from Chamonix, France, which is just a short [45-minute] coach-ride through the Mont Blanc tunnel from Courmayeur. The service is run by a company called SAT and the ticket office is just outside Chamonix train station - **see our website tour page for details and links along with how to approach from Geneva in Switzerland.**

The nearest airport to Chamonix [France] is Geneva in Switzerland, from where you can take a shuttle bus or the train to Martigny [1 hour 40 minutes] and change for the Chamonix Valley Train to Chamonix [a further 1 hour 40 minutes]. Then it's just that short coach-ride through the Mont Blanc tunnel to Courmayeur.

**The specifics of arrival in Courmayeur are:**

#### By Road

- Courmayeur is easily reached through the Mont Blanc tunnel from Chamonix in France, from where the regular bus service [above-mentioned, eight per day in summer] takes around 45 minutes.
- **Access is also popular from Geneva airport by a regular direct bus or shuttle services** (90 minutes) or the main cities of northern Italy Turin (an hour's drive), Milan or Genoa.
- Courmayeur can also be reached by bus via daily services from the main cities of northern Italy (Turin, Milan, Genoa). See the website page.

#### By Train

- Courmayeur does not have a train connection. However, travelling by train from Italy is recommended as far as Aosta, from where a bus connection will take you to Courmayeur. See also the new train connection by the Léman Express between Geneva Airport and the Saint Gervais Le Fayet train station in France, with short onward train travel to Chamonix and bus to Courmayeur.

#### By Air

The nearest airports are Geneva, Turin's Caselle and Milan's Malpensa and Linate.





*Lunch on the banks of Lac Blanc*

## How to get to Chamonix

Due to the popularity of Chamonix, the options for getting to the resort are plentiful.

You spend your first night in Les Praz de Chamonix, one stop [5 minutes] on the train from Chamonix, so that you wake up right next to the cable car for the start of your hiking the next day. Spend your arrival day in Chamonix and sleep with the peace of mind that you are exactly where you want to be on the morning you commence walking.

### By Air

Getting to Chamonix is relatively straightforward from the following major airports:

1. Geneva International Airport, with onward connections by train [hourly via Martigny] or bus [via the SAT bus company] or via airport transfer.
2. Lyon International Airport, with onward connections by train [via Annecy].
3. Charles de Gaulle with onward connections by train.

### By Rail

Our customers recommend RailEurope.com for research and ticketing.

The Mont Blanc Express: This SNCF railway line serves all villages from St Gervais-le Fayet to Martigny (Switzerland) via Servoz, Les Houches, Chamonix, Chamonix Les Praz, Argentière and Vallorcine.

See website tour page for further details and relevant links.

You might also find this site useful: <https://www.rome2rio.com/>





*France is just an hour away*

## Ten reasons to book with The Enlightened Traveller®



- ❶ Best accommodation, better service
- ❷ Benefit from French-based expertise and our total focus on France
- ❸ **Buy direct from us, the tour provider, and get excellent value for money**
- ❹ Personalise your tour to meet your own requirements
- ❺ Industry-leading walking notes make orientation easy
- ❻ 1:25 000 full scale maps & insightful dossier
- ❼ 7/7 telephone support from 8 till 7 in native English
- ❽ We transport your luggage from hotel to hotel.  
Option to travel along with your luggage if you need a rest day: at extra cost, subject to availability, places are limited<sup>2</sup>
- ❾ **Peace of mind:** your money is safe when booking with us - all passengers are fully insured for the initial deposit and balance, irrespective of the means of payment, in the unlikely event of our insolvency. See end of flyer for details or visit **Your Money is Safe** on our website
- ❿ Anglo-French family business that tries harder: join the family!





*The climb from Courmayeur*

## 2024 prices:

### Per person in double/twin-bedded room:

11-night price:  
£1865.00 GBP Sterling or €2225.00 Euros

12-night price:  
£1920.00 GBP Sterling or €2295.00 Euros



## Booking

Email, phone or Skype us and we will email you everything you need to reserve your tour

### Our Guarantee

In accordance with "The Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992" all passengers booking with The Enlightened Traveller® are fully protected for the initial deposit and subsequently the balance of all monies paid to us, including repatriation if required, arising from cancellation or curtailment of your travel arrangements due to the insolvency of The Enlightened Traveller®.

Consumer aware: This insurance is only valid for passengers who book and pay directly with/to The Enlightened Traveller® and not via intermediaries. Please see our website for full details.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> We reserve the right to alter parts of the above programme for the benefit of safety and the quality of the overall experience.

Luggage cannot be delivered to the one refuge we use, so you take your overnight things in your backpack for one night.

<sup>2</sup> This service is delivered by an independent company and covers one piece of luggage per person up to 15 kgs in weight. No 'hard-shell' suitcases are allowed. Supplements apply for overweight luggage and we accept no responsibility for lost valuables. We advise you not to bring computers and business-related equipment.

Travelling with your luggage if unable to walk must be booked the night before, is subject to availability and costs 50.00 Euros per person in 2023.

Extra luggage can be left at your first hotel and collected upon your return.

## The Enlightened Traveller®

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