



Le Grand Balcon du Sud

Walking tour Mont Blanc [mini-TMB] 2024

Comfort, Half the effort and most of the Highlights of the Tour du Mont Blanc

Tour Highlights

- ☞ Moderately-challenging, 7-night, TMB mini-tour.
- ☞ Enjoy two days in France, Italy & Switzerland.
- ☞ Let us carry your luggage onto the next hotel.
- ☞ Start in idyllic Courmayeur, Italy - a 45-min. bus-ride through Mt. Blanc tunnel from Chamonix.
- ☞ Walk anti-clockwise for an enhanced experience.
- ☞ **See the videos for each day's walking on our website tour page.**
- ☞ Visit Lac Blanc and Lac Champex.



Fact File

- ✓ Self-guided, inn-to-inn tour round the top half of the Mont Blanc Massif.
- ✓ Average 5½ hours and 9 miles/14½ kms a day.
- ✓ Convenient access from France, Italy or Switzerland.
- ✓ Departures any day from 23rd June to 10th September.
- ✓ Luggage transfers throughout - up to 15 kgs per person.
- ✓ Comfortable hotels: five 3-star standard hotels, supplemented by a 2-star hotel and an auberge/walkers' in - no dormitories!



Theme

Walking tour Mont Blanc [mini-TMB] helps you fulfil a lifetime goal: walking some of the mythical Tour du Mont Blanc route; in this case, half of it. Our mini-tour is for those who don't wish to walk the whole circuit, at least not in one go, or simply cannot hike for 11 days due to physical or time constraints.

Walking tour Mont Blanc [mini-TMB] brings you most of the highlights of one of Europe's most scenic walks. Moreover, we've dissected it into tasty, bite-size chunks making it within the capabilities of most healthy and relatively-fit mortals. The half you walk is undoubtedly the better of the two based on the key criteria of scenic trails, comfortable accommodation and moderately-challenging hikes.

You experience the finest sights of the TMB and enjoy the perfect harmony of two days walking in France, Italy and Switzerland; you average five-and-a-half hours of walking per day, with options to reduce these further according to your interests and requirements, subject to accommodation availability and bus schedules.

The tour commences in peaceful Courmayeur, Italy, the perfect alpine ambiance to get you in the mood. Located just the other side of the Mont Blanc tunnel from Chamonix (the tunnel is only 14 kms long), easy access is assured via a regular shuttle coach service that takes approximately 30 minutes. Alternatively, approach from Milan or Turin. Furthermore, avoid the main rush of hikers who follow the pack and commence Le Tour in Les Houches. Your finish is twenty minutes' walk [or one stop on the train] from the cradle of popular alpinism, Chamonix, so you can choose whether to go there or not. Either way, it's convenient for your departure.





Walking tour Mont Blanc [mini-TMB] includes luggage transfers and requires no guide. You will meet many willing companions en route, but our 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- September. Book early, get the best accommodation reserved, consider your travel options and look forward to one of life's rites of passage - irrespective of your age!



Champex - "little Canada"

7-night Itinerary¹

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 picture-postcard Ferret Valley.

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 down to your celebratory meal.

Day 8 **End of Tour.** Buffet breakfast and departure. Bon retour et à bientôt!



What's Included

- ✓ 7 nights in comfortable 3-star hotels complemented by a 2-star hotel and an auberge: no dormitories!
- ✓ 7 breakfasts and 4 evening meals
- ✓ Industry-leading hiking notes, 1:25,000 maps and themed dossier
- ✓ Luggage transfers throughout - one suitcase up to 15 kgs per person²
- ✓ Telephone help-line service with 7/7 and 8 till 7 native English and France-based support.



Not included

- ⊗ Remaining meals and all drinks and extras - lunch and dinner options are listed in your dossier and walking notes
- ⊗ Personal expenses
- ⊗ Entrances into any optional cultural visits and venues
- ⊗ Hiking, personal and travel insurances
- ⊗ 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 providers intimately and matching them with your preferences.”

As always, and subject to availability, our commitment to our customers is to offer the best accommodation in every stage along the trail. You stay in comfortable accommodation of a high standard, with private rooms throughout [no 'dortoirs'/dormitories] that has been carefully selected on the basis of superior facilities, location, service and welcome. Early booking is advised and en suite facilities the norm and our aim. However, this is arguably the world's most popular hiking trip and such facilities may not always be available and so cannot be a precondition for your booking. One auberge has facilities in the corridor.



We aim to bring you: Courmayeur, 3-star hotel; Arnuva, 2-star hotel; La Fouly, 3-star hotel; Champex, 3-star hotel; Col de la Forclaz/Trient, welcoming walkers' inn /auberge; Argentiere, 3-star hotel; and Praz de Chamonix, 3-star hotel. Awarding a star rating across three different countries is difficult, but we would argue that the general standard is superior two-star to three-star for the whole tour, with one exception that lies somewhere between a one and a two-star stay.



All French hotel star ratings underwent a major review by the relevant authorities in 2012/2013, as ratings had lost touch with reality. Such reviews are expensive and individual hotels are expected to pay. Many cannot see the benefit and simply choose to remain starless out of choice. This does not mean that these hotels have suddenly become bad. However, knowing one's accommodation suppliers intimately is now important than ever!



If you particularly wish to experience a middle-mountain refuge, we know the best ones and are happy to build in such an overnight experience [comprising as many 'mod-cons' as possible, incl. private bedroom] that keeps you high up on the trail and guarantees the finest views for dinner and at breakfast. Please ask us for details.



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 [40-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 website tour page for details.

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 40 minutes.
- Access is also possible from Geneva airport by bus or shuttle transfer. SAT run a service to Chamonix, which connects with their Chamonix-to-Courmayeur line.
- Alternatively, most people prefer a shared shuttle from either Geneva airport (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 followed by the bus to Courmayeur.

By Air

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



Courmayeur to Arnua



La Fouly to Champex

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 better value for money
- ❹ Personalise your trip to suit your needs
- ❺ Industry-leading walking notes make orientation easy
- ❻ 1:25 000 full scale maps & insightful dossier
- ❼ 7/7 telephone support in native English from 8 till 8
- 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 limited²
- 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*



France is just an hour away

**2024
prices:**

**Per person in double or
twin-bedded room:
£1195.00 GBP or €1470.00 Euros**

Booking

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



Lunch on the banks of Lac Blanc

Notes

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

² This service is delivered by an independent company and covers one piece of luggage per person up to 15 kgs in weight. 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 must be booked the night before, is subject to availability and cost 50.00 Euros per person in 2023.

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®.

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