

# Ultimate Tour du Mont Blanc

Trip Code: UTM

Version: UTM The Ultimate Tour Du Mont Blanc





#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Challenge yourself on our ultimate version of the Tour du Mont Blanc
- Trek hut-to-hut, staying in amazing mountain refuges inaccessible by road
- Travel through Alpine wildflower meadows and stay in the Cabane d'Orny
- Excellent IML guide and baggage transfers are included

#### AT A GLANCE

- 10 days trekking
- Max. altitude 2831 metres
- Join at Chamonix

#### **ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS**

- 11 Breakfasts
- 9 Dinners
- 2 nights Hostel
- 2 nights Hotel
- 7 nights Mountain Hut / Refuge

VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE

# Introduction

Situated at the junction of France, Italy and Switzerland, the glaciated massif of Mont Blanc is circled by one of the world's greatest and most popular long distance walks - the Tour du Mont Blanc. Using our unrivalled experience, we have devised a walking holiday that provides the 'ultimate' version of this historic route, incorporating several exciting variants.

Taking the high-level option wherever possible, we traverse passes like the Col des Fours (2665m) and the stunning Monte de la Saxe Ridge. En route, we stay in incredible mountain huts and hostels including the dramatically located mountain hut - the Cabane d'Orny. We offer baggage support where we can and there are just 4 nights where you do not have access to your main luggage. This superb adventure presents the best of the Mont Blanc region, with a blend of breathtaking views, Alpine meadow trails, picturesque hamlets and an abundance of wildflowers... the Ultimate Tour of Mont Blanc.

# Is this holiday for you?

This is a classic Alpine walking holiday on good trails. The average distance covered each day is around 20 kilometres (13 miles) and there is a fair amount of ascent and descent. Although this trip is more challenging and with longer days than our Classic Tour du Mont Blanc Hotel trek, regular and fit hill walkers will find this trek to be within their capabilities. Additionally, we will transfer your baggage to each of our overnight stops that can be accessed by road, which means that you usually need to carry no more than a small daysack. There are 4 nights in refuges which are inaccessible by vehicle and this means that you will need to carry just a few extra overnight items. If you are looking for a version of the Tour Du Mont Blanc, with all the high cols and spectacularly situated refuges, then this is the one for you.

# **Itinerary**

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### Meet at the group hotel in the Chamonix Valley(1240m).

Rendezvous at the group hotel in Chamonix (1240m). Lying beneath the stunning north face of Mont Blanc, the views are awesome from the start! KE Land Only package services begin with the overnight at the hotel.



Accommodation

Hotel

DAY 2

## Walk via the Bionassay Glacier to the rural chalets of Miage.

Our leader will meet us at 8am when we can have an informal chat about the week ahead. Following this, we take public transport to Les Houches - from here it's uphill from the start as we wind our way up through the forest to Belelvue station (1780m). From here we can already begin to admire the impressive peaks high above us. We take a beautiful traverse path to the Bionassay Glacier with the Aiguille de Bionassay towering above, and cross the magnificent alpine meadows that lead us to the Col de Tricot (2120m). We may want to pause here for a moment to fully take in the views over the Contamines-Montjoie valley. The last descent today is steep yet picturesque, down to the rural chalets of Miage (1559m).

Meals: BD



Accommodation

Mountain Hut / Refuge



Ascent 1250M



Descent 700M



**Time** 7 hrs walking



Distance

DAY 3

#### Walk to the Tre-la Tete hut via Les Contamines and on to the La Balme hut.

From our hut, we follow a stunning trail through the alpine pastures of Le Truc (1800m) and wind through the beautiful forests of Les Contamines-Montjoie. From here we climb up through the woods until we come out onto a wonderful plateau with the idyllically situated Tre-la-Tete hut. There might be time here for a quick break - and maybe a slice of tarte de jour. We descend to the magical Combe Noire waterfall

and our final climb today takes us past the Nant-Borrant refuge (1460m) and on to our home for the night - the Balme refuge.

No access to main luggage.

Meals: BD



Accommodation
Mountain Hut / Refuge



Ascent 1600M



Descent 1000M



**Time** 8 hrs walking



**Distance** 16KM

#### DAY 4

# Walk to the Col de Bonhomme, Col des Fours (2665m) and Col de la Grande Ecaille (2751m). Descend to the Robert Blanc refuge.

The gradual ascent to the famous Col du Bonhomme (2329m), then the magnificent panorama at the Tête nord des Fours (2756m), heralds a superb passage to the south of the massif. Hikers become rarer as we switch to the other side for a long traverse to the "alpine" Grande-Ecaille pass, before finally reaching the Robert-Blanc refuge (2750 m). An incredible "high mountain" hut.

No access to main luggage.

Meals: BD



**Accommodation**Mountain Hut / Refuge



Ascent 1680M



Descent 650M



Time

8 - 9 hrs walking



Distance 21KM

#### DAY 5

# Robert Blanc hut to the Col de La Seigne and La Visaille. Overnight in Courmayeur.

Early morning departure for a great stage. An aerial descent to the Col de la Seigne (2516 m) via the slopes of Les Cabottes. The Franco-Italian border takes us to the Col de Chavannes (2603 m) and Mont Fortin. From here, admire the jagged, steep side of the Mt. Blanc Range; the views are simply breathtaking! Legendary summits like Mt. Blanc de Courmayeur, Noire de Peuterey Spire, and the Grandes Jorasses appear close enough to touch. The descent is via Val Veny to the foot of the Miage glacier, with its peaceful lake and unique alpine flora.

Short bus transfer to Courmayeur for night.

Meals: B



**Accommodation** Hostel



Ascent 1000M



Descent 1750M



**Time** 7 - 8 hrs walking



Distance 17KM

#### DAY 6

# Walk the Monte de la Saxe Ridge and cross the Col Deux Sauts (2521m) to the Bonatti hut or Elena hut.

From our hotel, we walk up to Pont Pelerin and then up to Leuchey before climbing onto the Monte Saxe Ridge. We spend the next hour or so strolling along this superb grassy ridge and enjoying a marvellous panorama that extends from the Brenva Face of Mont Blanc to the rocky wall of the Jorasses. This is a trip highlight and the end of the ridge comes all too quickly, with an airy traverse onto the Tete de la Tronche (2584m) before dropping to the Col Sapin. Beyond this penultimate col of the day, our UTM variant ascends again to the Col Deux Sauts (2521m). A high valley descent then winds down, and we make our way to the Refugio Bonatti.

Depending on availability, the group can also stay at the Elena hut. In this case, once in Bonatti, the group will descend into the valley (Bivio), take a short bus transfer to Arnuva and finish the day with a lovely 1-hour hike to the Elena hut.

Which ever hut is booked for your holiday - a beer or hot chocolate on the terrace, is a must.

No access to main luggage.

Meals: **B D** 



**Accommodation**Mountain Hut / Refuge



Ascent 1450M



Descent 660M



**Time** 8 hrs walking



**Distance** 17KM

#### DAY 7

# Ascend to the Col du Grand Ferret (2530m) for great views. Descend to La Fouly in Switzerland.

From the refugio, the path traverses at mid height above the Italian Val Ferret, before dropping to the head of the valley. At around 11-o-clock we pass the Elena Rifugio which is renowned for its cappuccino and hot chocolate (hard to resist a stop here). From the Elena Rifugio, we begin a long but spectacular climb up to the Grand Col Ferret (2537m) which will take us from Italy into Switzerland. From the col, there are new views to savour, in particular of the Aiguille de Triolet, the pyramid of Mont Dolent and the Gran Combin in the distance. Our descent into Switzerland takes us via the Peule Refuge and onwards via alternative, narrow balcony trails, before dropping down to the river which we follow to reach our simple hotel in the chocolate box village of La Fouly.

#### Meals: **B D**



Accommodation

Mountain Hut / Refuge



Ascent 900M



Descent 1300M



**Time** 8 hrs walking



Distance 20KM

#### DAY 8

### Hike via Praz de Fort and make the long ascent to the Cabane d'Orny (2831m).

Not too long a day, but probably the most physically demanding of the tour so far. After a valley stroll to the village of Praz de Fort, we take a sharp left turn into the Val Saleina for the biggest of the UTM variants. In front lies the Glacier d'Orny and high above to the right lies our destination, the steep-roofed and spectacularly situated Cabane d'Orny (2831m). To reach this refuge, we are faced with some 1700 metres of ascent, but the trail uses well engineered switchbacks which take out most of the climb's sting. This leads to a spectacular path on the lateral moraine above the glacier with the Cabane d'Orny now in sight. After settling in at the hut, we can enjoy the remainder of the afternoon taking in the splendor of our situation.

No access to main baggage.

Meals: BD



**Accommodation**Mountain Hut / Refuge



Ascent 1730M



Descent 500M



**Time** 7 hrs walking



**Distance** 16KM

#### DAY 9

# Follow a spectacular balcony trail, cross the Fenetre d'Arpette (2665m) and descend to Trient.

Today is technically the hardest section of the entire tour and begins with a descent of the moraine, followed by a continuation of the splendid balcony path to the top of the Breya cable car. From the Brenva station, a rough jeep road leads down into the beautiful Val d'Arpette where we climb once more through rocky canyons and over boulder fields to the spectacular Fenetre d'Arpette. At 2665 metres, this notch of a col is situated astride a soaring rock arete offering magnificent views of the Trient Glacier to our left. From the col we make a long descent to reach the Chalets de Glacier and a well deserved recuperative drink. We now enjoy a level and relaxing path for a short while before descending once more through woods to reach our overnight stop at Trient.

Meals: **B D** 



**Accommodation** Hostel



Ascent 1020M



Descent 2500M



**Time** 9 - 10 hrs walking



**Distance** 21KM

#### **DAY 10**

# Walk up to the Col du Balme (2190m) and descend via the Aguillette des Possettes to Argentiere, Le Tour or Tre-le-Champ.

There are a few route options this morning and our leader will choose the best one on the day. We take a quiet trail up through Tseppes towards the Col de Balme, our entrance to the Chamonix Valley, with Mont Blanc as the centrepiece. A quick descent to the Col des Posettes is followed by an easy ascent of the Aiguillette des Posettes, a small ridge, with sweeping views of the Mont Blanc range and the Aiguille Rouge. Descent to the hut for tonight at Tré-le-Champ or Le Tour and transfer to Chamonix.

Meals: BD



Accommodation Mountain Hut / Refuge



Ascent 1300M



Descent 1350M



Time 8 hrs walking



**Distance** 19KM

#### **DAY 11**

## Walk to picturesque Lac Blanc, with its Mont Blanc views. Night at Chamonix.

From Le Tour or Tré-le-Champ, our path meanders up to the Col des Montets before heading off towards the cliffs of Le Chesery, where our route takes a seemingly impossible line, helped on the more difficult sections by cables and ladders. This is very easy and not something to be worried about! Leaving the cliffs behind, easier ground takes us to Lac Blanc where we take lunch. This is arguably one of the Chamonix Valley's best viewpoints. We descend to La Flegere and use the valley transport system for the short journey back to our accommodation in Chamonix.

Meals: BD



Accommodation



Ascent 1000M



Descent 550M



**Time** 7 hrs walking



Distance 14KM

#### **DAY 12**

# Departure day.

KE Land Only package services ends after breakfast.

Meals: B

# **Holiday Information**

#### What's Included

- A professional English-speaking guide
- All transfers and cable cars involved in the itinerary
- All accommodation as described
- Meals as detailed in the Meal Plan
- Baggage transfer to accommodation which can be accessed by road

#### What's not Included

- Travel Insurance
- Meals as detailed in the Meal Plan
- Visa fees (if applicable)
- Airport transfers
- Miscellaneous expenses

# **Joining Arrangements & Transfers**

The group will rendezvous at the hotel in the Chamonix Valley on the evening of day 1 of the trip itinerary.

#### Arriving by air:

Fly to Geneva Airport and make use of an airport transfer service. We recommend Mountaindropoffs (mountaindropoffs.com/en).

#### Arriving by rail:

Train tickets can be booked from London through to Chamonix (with two changes) with trainline.com.

#### Arriving by road:

If you are driving to Chamonix we will provide route details and directions to the group hotel in the Chamonix Valley.

Hotel contact details and an emergency number will be provided with your booking confirmation.

#### TRAVEL TO YOUR DESTINATION

In some cases you may choose to take a ferry and/or train to your holiday start and end destination. Please see further information on <u>Travelling by Train</u>.

If flying from the UK there are low cost airlines available to the start and from the end of your holiday.

To benefit from full financial protection, ease your holiday planning, and avoid dealing with airlines, we can book scheduled flights from the UK as part of a flight inclusive package. Scheduled flights are usually more expensive that low cost alternatives, however potentially less stressful if your flight is cancelled or delayed. If you book flights through KE Adventure Travel we will offset the carbon of your flight.

## Meal Plan

All meals are included except for lunches and dinner on day 1 and day 5. Lunches can be easily purchased from supermarkets, bakeries or your accommodation along the way.

We do recommend you bring a few additional trail bars and snacks with you (not chocolate as it can melt) - these can of course also be purchased along the way, but it is sometimes nice to have your favourite hill food with you.

#### Food & Water

As to be expected, the food available in restaurants and hotels in France, Italy and Switzerland is excellent. In huts, the food is simple and wholesome with usually a limited choice which will include a vegetarian option. Continental breakfasts and evening meals are provided by our accommodation. Lunches can be purchased from the huts, hotels or supermarkets along the way.

When in the towns and villages all tap water is drinkable. In mountain huts there is usually not a sustainable drinking water supply. Water in plastic bottles is brought in to the hut. All huts have a recycling point. If you have to purchase water in plastic bottles please buy the largest bottle you can so as to use less plastic. Please take purification tablets or a filter bottle (such as a <a href="Water-To-Go bottle">Water-To-Go bottle</a>) to treat your water if you can fill from a local stream. Bottled water is not provided. We do not encourage the purchasing of single use plastic bottles. Local authorities are working to find solutions to using plastic water bottles in huts. We monitor the situation carefully for updates.

# **Special Diets**

Whilst we can cater for vegetarians, albeit sometimes with a more limited choice, we cannot always provide special diets. Due to the nature of some of the trips that we operate and the countries in which we operate them, it can be very hard (and sometimes impossible) to cater for a wide range of dietary choices and you may have to supplement your diet with food/snacks from home. If you have specific dietary requirements please do speak to our sales team and they will be able to advise you whether or not we will be able to offer your specific choice. Please note that we are unable to provide separate menus and cannot accept liability for any problems arising from special dietary requirements or intolerances.

#### **Accommodation**

During this trip, the group start and finish the trek at a hotel in the Chamonix Valley. Whilst on our circuit of Mont Blanc, we have a mix of accommodation for 9 nights; a mixture of amazing mountain huts (where we can get away from the crouds) and hostels.

Specifically the Cabane d'Orny is a recognised highlight, with the most awesome views of the alps all around, and the Bonatti Refuge or Elena Refuge where a beer (or hot chocolate) on the terrace at sunset is highly recommended - keep your camera handy! Washing facilities at these huts (especially the Caban d'Orny) are very basic.

In the Chamonix Valley the hotels will be on a twin rooms basis. In the mountain huts and hostels accommodation may be in a non-segregated, dormitory. This type of shared accommodation is all part of the Alpine mountain experience.

Single rooms are not available.

# **Group Leader & Support Staff**

The group will be led by an experienced mountain leader.

#### **Altitude**

This holiday involves going to moderately high altitude. During the course of your trip you will reach altitudes in excess of 2500 metres. Most people will have no difficulty with this level of altitude but before coming on the holiday, we recommend you read the advice on trekking at altitude on our website which can be viewed via the link below. You can also talk to one of our trekking experts if you have any concerns about altitude. www.keadventure.com/page/altitude.html

This holiday involves going to moderately high altitude. During the course of your trip you will reach altitudes in excess of 2500 metres. Most people will have no difficulty with this level of altitude but before coming on the holiday, we recommend you read the advice on trekking at high altitude. You can also talk to one of our trekking experts if you have any concerns about altitude.

# **Spending Money**

The package price includes all accommodation, guiding and all meals except lunches and two dinners. You should make an allowance for additional snacks, drinks etc. Note that bottled water bought in huts is quite expensive. Beer, wine and soft drinks are available every night. We estimate that approximately 350 - 400 Euros should adequately cover typical personal spending requirements. Please note that a part of the route is in Switzerland (3 nights) and you should consider taking some of your spending money in Swiss francs. Alternatively it is possible to withdraw Swiss francs from cash machines in La Fouly. Euros are accepted in most places we stay in Switzerland although the exchange rate may not be favourable.

# **Baggage Allowance**

For this holiday you should take one piece of luggage (maximum weight on arrival at the group hotel is dependent on your international flight restrictions) and a daypack (of around 30 - 40 litres).

Our baggage transfer company who transport your main bag from guesthouse to guesthouse throughout the trek have requested that everyone uses a duffle type bag. They will not take hard suitcases. Please note that there is a strict weight limit of 15kgs maximum for bags to be transferred and no fresh produce should be left in these bags.

You can of course travel to the group hotel with any type of baggage, and store it at our group accommodation with any items you do not need on trek and pick these up when you return.

Your main bag will be transferred between overnight stops and you should have this ready for collection by 8.00 each morning. The bag will normally be delivered to your hotel by 17.30.

# **Group Size & Holiday Status**

For each holiday there is a minimum number of participants required to enable it to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from 'Available' to 'Guaranteed to run'. You can check the trip status for each departure in 'Dates and Prices' table. Other than in exceptional circumstances, we will not cancel a trip once it has achieved this guaranteed to run status and so you are free to proceed with your international flight booking and other travel arrangements.

# **General Information**

### **Passport & Visas**

#### Europe

Your passport must meet 2 requirements. It must be:

- less than 10 years old on the day you enter (check the 'date of issue')
- valid for at least 3 months after the day you plan to leave (check the 'expiry date')

For the latest details on visiting countries within the EU or the European Economic Area (EEA), please check the UK Government website

The information that we provide is for UK passport holders. A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required, and you should have at least 2 blank pages for each country that you visit.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents and visas for your holiday. Please ensure that you check for the latest advice before travel. For the most up to date information on entry requirements, please visit the <u>UK Government website</u>.

#### **Health & Vaccinations**

If you have a severe allergy please inform the KE office before you travel. We will do all we can to help, but we cannot guarantee an allergy free environment on KE trips. You will need to carry your own treatment for the allergy with you, as 'adrenaline auto-injectors' are not carried as standard by KE leaders and staff. You should inform your leader on arrival of your allergy, and let them know where you keep your adrenaline pen.

#### **Vaccinations**

You should contact your doctor or travel clinic to check whether you require any specific vaccinations.

#### GHIC / Medical cover

UK residents should carry a free Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC). This entitles you to state provided medical treatment when you're visiting an EU country or Switzerland. This is not a substitute for medical travel insurance which is vital when travelling overseas.

## Currency

The currency for part or all of this holiday is the Euro.

The unit of currency in Switzerland is the Swiss Franc.

# Preparing for your Holiday

It makes a lot of sense to spend some time before coming on a trekking or climbing trip getting some additional exercise. The fitter you are, after all, the more enjoyable you will find the experience. We would suggest that you adopt a weekly exercise regime leading up to your trip. Jogging, squash and swimming are good for developing better stamina. Before departure, we suggest that you try to fit in a number of long walks in hilly country.

#### Climate

The temperatures that we can expect to encounter during the day will be reasonably warm, ranging from 15°C to 25°C. It can be cool in the evenings at our highest overnight stopping places, falling close to freezing point at night. The weather is usually stable during July and August, but mountainous areas do generate their own weather systems and occasional rain and even stormy weather cannot be ruled out. You should be prepared for all eventualities!

#### **Travel Aware**

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's 'Travel Aware' campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas. The 'Travel Aware' website provides a single, authoritative source of advice for all kinds of travellers and we recommend that prior to travel, all KE clients visit the official UK Government website at travelaware.campaign.gov.uk and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. North Americans can also check out the U.S. Department of State website: www.travel.state.gov for essential travel advice and tips.

KE treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCDO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates direct from the FCDO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office.

# Single Use Plastic

KE do not encourage the use of single use plastic items. We are ensuring that our agents all over the world are working together to reduce the problem and educate those around them. We are leading by example in our KE office by reducing our plastic use.

#### **Books**

- Tour of Mont Blanc. Trekking Guide. Kev Reynolds
- Walking Guide to the Tour du Mont Blanc. Andrew Harper Tour du Mont Blanc Topo Guide, Publisher:

  Fdration Franaise de la Randone

### Maps

#### IGN (Institut Geographique National) 1:50,000 scale.

The IGN also produce a 1:25,000 series covering the route but these are not very practical as you would require several sheets. The 1:50,000 'Carte de Randonees' series of walking maps provides a detailed topographic map with a useful contour interval of 20m. This is still a good scale for following the route on the ground and means you only need one map: Pays Du Mont-Blanc - Aravis - Chamonix - Courmayeur A1

#### **Travel Insurance**

It is an essential condition of joining a holiday with KE Adventure Travel that you have a valid travel insurance policy to cover the cost of medical treatment and to protect the value of your holiday in the event of cancellation. When taking out insurance please ensure the policy you choose covers you for the activities and altitude included in your itinerary.

For appropriate insurance cover we recommend Campbell Irvine Direct. Please go to our <u>Travel Insurance</u> page for further information and to get a quote.

# **Equipment Information**

# **Equipment List**

The following checklist should help you with your packing. As a general rule, you should always try to keep the weight of your equipment to a minimum.

# You must bring the following items:

- Hiking boots
- Socks
- Underwear

■ Trekking trousers ■ Waterproof overtrousers ■ Waterproof jacket ■ Baselayer shirts (1 short sleeve, 1 long sleeve) - quick dry, not cotton ■ Fleece jacket or warm jumper Warm and waterproof gloves or mittens ■ Thermal gloves ■ Sunhat ■ Warm hat Sunglasses ■ Daypack 30 - 40 litres should be sufficient Dry bags for rucksack contents ■ Sun protection (including total bloc for lips, nose etc.) ■ Water bottles 1 litre (x2) (we encourage re-filling water bottles rather than single use plastic) ■ Water purification tablets Washbag and toiletries Antibacterial handwash ■ Sheet sleeping bag (for use in huts)

■ Small towel (for use in huts)

Basic First Aid Kit including: Antiseptic cream, throat lozenges, diarrhoea treatment (Imodium), painkillers, plasters and blister treatment.

## The following items are optional:

- Trekking poles (highly recommended)
- Gaiters
- Headtorch and spare batteries
- Spare laces
- Shorts
- T-shirts and/or casual shirts
- Insect repellant
- Camera
- Travel clothes
- Ear plugs (for mountain hut dormitories)
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping (to avoid plastic bags)

#### Notes:

- We request that you keep the weight of your main baggage to less than 15kgs for the baggage transfers.
  - There are a total of two nights spent in mountain huts where there is no access to your main bag.
- Otherwise group members will have access to their main luggage on each evening. Sleeping bags are not required, as bedding is provided. However you do need to bring a sheet sleeping bag for use in the mountain huts.

#### **Cotswold Outdoor**



Many of the Equipment items listed above are available from <u>Cotswold Outdoor</u> - our 'Official Recommended Outdoor Retailer'. When you book a holiday with KE you will receive 12.5% discount voucher from Cotswold Outdoor and other retailers.

#### >> Find out more

# **Land Only Information**

We sell this holiday on a Land Only basis allowing you the flexibility to choose the travel method which best suits you. The holiday starts at the hotel the Chamonix Valley. Geneva has the nearest airport.

# Why Choose KE

# Why KE

This is a unique-to-KE trek, where you'll trek high trails, see spectacular views and stay in lofty mountain huts few travellers get to experience.

Please Note This document was downloaded on 18/05/2024 and the trip is subject to change