

Secret Switzerland - Tour des Combins

Trip Code: TDC

Version: TDC Secret Switzerland - Tour des Combin



WALK & TREK



GUIDED GROUP



CHALLENGING



HIGHLIGHTS

- Be immersed in a tranquil and unspoilt Swiss Alpine wilderness
- Experience breathtaking scenery, including walking beside the immense Glacier de Corbassiere
- Hut-to-hut trekking, with a night at the famous Grand St Bernard Monastery
- Enjoy a much quieter alternative to walking the Tour du Mont Blanc

AT A GLANCE

- 6 days walking
- Max Altitude 2806 metres
- Join at Bourg-St-Pierre

ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

- 7 Breakfasts
- 7 Dinners
- 5 nights Mountain Hut / Refuge
- 2 nights Hotel

[VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE](#)

Introduction

The Tour des Combins is a relatively new long distance path which describes a complete walking circuit of one of the most famous peaks in the Alps, the Grand Combin (4314m). Over 6 days of walking we travel through high Alpine meadows where edelweiss grows and ascend beside one of the largest glaciers in Europe, the Glacier de Corbassiere. Above this glacier we reach the Col du Grand St Bernard and the monastery which became famous for the dogs who would go out in wild conditions with a barrel of brandy strapped to their collars to find lost mountaineers. A great alternative walking holiday to the Tour du Mont Blanc, the beauty of this circuit around the Combin is that so few people are walking it - at the moment! Be one of the first to complete this new trekking circuit and enjoy sensational mountain scenery without the crowds.

Is this holiday for you?

The Tour des Combins is a new KE Alpine walk which is set to become a classic. This circuit of Switzerland's famous peak does not involve glacial travel but there is a fair amount of ascent and descent as we travel through a quiet wilderness area. It is not practicable to provide vehicle support for this circuit as nights are spent in inaccessible mountain refuges so this is an unsupported trek. You will have to carry all of your own equipment from the start of the trip to the finish. In practice, especially considering that neither sleeping bag nor camping mattress are needed for this trip, you should be able to keep the packed weight of your rucksack to as little as 8 kg. On average, we will walk for approximately 6 - 8 hours each day, with some longer days.

Itinerary

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DAY 1

Meet at the group hotel in the village of Bourg St Pierre (1632m) in the Swiss canton of Valais.

Your holiday starts at the hotel in Bourg-St-Pierre. The group will rendezvous at the group hotel in the Swiss Village of Bourg St Pierre on the Italian border and at the foot of the Grand Combin. At approximately 7.00pm we will have a briefing from our guide about the week ahead and this is the opportunity to ask any questions and to check our equipment. Afterwards we will take dinner in the hotel.

Meals: **D**



Accommodation
Hotel

DAY 2

Walk through Alpine meadows and across a pass to reach the Cabane du Col de Mille (2472m).

Starting at Bourg St Pierre (1632m) we make a gradual ascent initially through wild flower meadows as we climb up to La Coeur (2233m). We cross a col at 2550 metres and traverse green slopes to reach the Cabane du Col de Mille (2472m) where we spend our first night in the mountains. This is a fabulous viewpoint next to Mont Rognieux (3084m). Approximately 5 hours walking. If the weather is good we have the option to continue beyond the cabane to reach the summit of Mt Brule at 2572 metres. This is almost unusual alpine peak having a military barracks built inside it. On a good day the summit offers superb views of the valley. We stay overnight at the Cabane du Col de Mille.

Meals: **B D**



Accommodation
Mountain Hut / Refuge



Ascent
1030M



Descent
190M



Time
4 - 5 hrs walking








Distance
12KM

DAY 3

Walk beneath Mont Rogneux and beside the Corbassiere Glacier to the Cabane de Panossiere (2641m).

We begin with a descent, as we traverse round Mont Rogneux. We can visit the charming Brunet Hut for lunch, before heading up a gorge to the foot of the Corbassiere Glacier, one of the largest glaciers in Europe. This huge tongue of ice carves a route between the Grand Combin and the Combin de Corbassiere and is as impressive as any glacier in the Alps. In 2014 a new 240 metre long suspension bridge was put in place over the moraine enabling walkers to gain dramatic views straight up and down the glacier. We have a steady climb to the recently built Cabane de Panossiere which overlooks the glacier. We spend the night here - a beautiful situation for the evening, with perfect views to the Grand Combin, a good chance of viewing ibex parading on the hillside and an outdoor shower that's not to be missed! ... be sure to try the outdoor shower

Meals: **B D**






	Accommodation Mountain Hut / Refuge		Ascent 950M		Descent 880M		Time 6 - 7 hrs walking
	Distance 16KM						

DAY 4

Cross the Col des Otnes (2806m) and traverse the Lac de Mauvoisin to the Cabane de Chanrion.

A long, but satisfying day which begins with a climb from the hut up to the highest point on the circuit, the rocky Col des Otnes at 2806 metres. From this impressive rocky mountainside, we begin our descent to the Lac de Mauvoisin (1976m) a man-made lake with incredible waterfalls created in the 1950s by the building of a 250 metre-high dam in the upper Val de Bagnes. We can stop for morning coffee at the historic Hotel Mauvoisin, before we climb up through the dam wall tunnels. We make our way up and along the lake's east bank, where there are more chances to see patches of edelweiss and grazing chamois, to reach some ancient farm buildings - an ideal location for a picnic lunch. We continue, climbing steadily, passing the lake and crossing the Col de Tsofeuret (2630m) before reaching our overnight halt at the traditional style Cabane de Chanrion at 2462 metres.

Meals: **B D**






	Accommodation Mountain Hut / Refuge		Ascent 1550M		Descent 1670M		Time 7 - 9 hrs walking
	Distance 16KM						

DAY 5

Cross into Italy via the Fenetre de Durand (2797m). Overnight at the new Cabane de Champillon.

Heading first down-valley we then climb beside the Glacier de Fenetre and ascend gradually to the Fenetre de Durand (2797m) on the border between Switzerland and Italy. We stop on the col to enjoy the view back to the Chanrion hut with the snowy peaks of Mont Blanc de Cheillon behind, before crossing into Italy and descending to lush summer grazing grounds where we have plenty of opportunities to see marmots. Following an ancient irrigation channel we contour around the valley and end the day with a steady climb up to the Cabane de Champillon, also known as the Refuge Letey (2375m).

Meals: **B D**






	Accommodation Mountain Hut / Refuge		Ascent 1170M		Descent 1190M		Time 9 - 11 hrs walking
	Distance 27KM						

DAY 6

Walk to the Col de Champillon (2709m) via St Rhemy and onto the Grand St Bernard Monastery

Walking through Alpine meadows, we first climbing up to the Col de Champillon at 2709 metres, where on a good day it's possible to view not only the Grand Combin but also Mont Blanc and the Gran Paradiso! We then begin our descent to the Italian village of Etroubles in the Aosta valley with its ancient cobbled streets. This valley was crucial to the Roman armies and their control of the trade routes and troops would be stationed on the passes operating from a garrison here in Etroubles. We finish the day's hiking with a short climb through the riverside Italian villages of St Oyen, Cerisey, St Leonard and finally St Rhemy, from St Rhemy we will take a short bus transfer to wind our way up to reach the Col Grand St Bernard, 2469m, and the border back into Switzerland. St. Bernard de Menthon opened the Hospice in the 900's to provide a safe haven for travellers and it is here where the iconic Saint Bernard Dogs earned their legendary reputation as rescuers of travellers lost in snow. The Hospice is still operational and this is where we spend the night. There will be time today to visit the Hospice Museum and Saint Bernard Dog breeding kennels during the summer months.

Meals: **B D**

	Accommodation Mountain Hut / Refuge		Ascent 830M		Descent 1600M		Time 6 - 7 hrs walking
	Distance 17KM						

DAY 7**Cross back into Switzerland via the Col du Grand St Bernard (2477m). Overnight in Bourg St Pierre.**

Having explored this high historic col, 2469m, if the weather allows, we will today choose a variant route to gain further height to take in some spectacular scenery getting right off the beaten track. We first climb to the Fenêtre de Ferret, 2698m, from where we are greeted with a stunning view of the Mont Blanc massif. A short descent takes us to the Lacs de Fenêtre, some of the most beautiful lakes in the area. From here we ascend on an ancient mule track to the Col de Bastillon reaching 2753m - it's a steep short section of path but on a track so should not provide any difficulties. After gaining another stunning view from the Col de Bastillon we descend past more beautiful lakes down the Combe de Drone to rejoin the traditional Tour des Combins route and follow the footsteps of Napoleon down the Roman road to come full circle to reach our starting point a week ago at Bourg-St-Pierre. Distance: 15km. Ascent: 600m. Descent: 1350m. Highest point: 2753m. 6-7hrs.

If the weather is not so good, then we will take the normal Tour des Combins route leading straight down from the col which follows the ancient route made famous for harbouring Napoleons armies. The trail meanders through meadows and along by the Bourg dam to reach the old customs house and the cobbled streets of Bourg St Pierre. Distance: 10km. Ascent: 0m. Descent: 1350m. 6-7hrs. The leader will make the decision on which route will be taken depending on the weather conditions on the day.

Meals: **B D**



Accommodation
Hotel



Ascent
600M



Descent
1350M



Time
6 - 7 hrs walking



Distance
15KM

DAY 8**Departure day.**

Your holiday ends after breakfast. There is a regular bus service towards Martigny for trains to Geneva.

Meals: **B**

Holiday Information

What's Included

- A professional English-speaking guide
- All transfers involved in the itinerary
- All accommodation as described
- Meals as detailed in the meal plan

What's not Included

- Travel Insurance
- Meals as detailed in the meal plan
- Visa fees (if applicable)
- Airport transfers
- Miscellaneous personal expenses

Joining Arrangements & Transfers

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 [Travelling by Train](#).

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 than 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](#).

Bourg St Pierre can be reached from Geneva by a train and bus combination via Martigny.

Tickets covering the whole journey including the bus can be bought online at <http://www.sbb.ch/en/home.html> or at the railway station in the airport in Geneva.

Meal Plan

All meals are included except for lunches. 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

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 [Water-To-Go bottle](#)) 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.

As you might expect, the food available in restaurants, hotels and even in mountain huts in Switzerland and Italy is excellent. Continental breakfasts and evening meals are included everyday. Lunches can be easily purchased from supermarkets, bakeries or your accommodation along the way. Note that the water from taps in the huts is not always drinkable. Bottled mineral water can be purchased (approximately CHF6 for a one and a half litre bottle).

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

We spend 2 nights in comfortable hotels in Bourg St Pierre, 1 at the beginning and 1 end of the trip. Other accommodation during the trip will be in high mountain refuges. For the two nights in hotels accommodation is based on twin or triple share. If you are travelling by yourself you will be paired with another traveller of the same sex. Whilst in the mountains accommodation is normally in non segregated dormitory style rooms.

The refuges themselves tend to be full of character and serve tasty local dishes. Showers are a possibility at most of the huts and cost about 5CHF, please note however that they may not always be available. You can also charge batteries at most of the huts (but this will of course be more weight to carry with your charger and adaptor). They are always situated in stunning locations and the chance to enjoy a beer or glass of wine while watching the sun go down can provide a really special mountain moment. Single rooms are not available.

Group Leader & Support Staff

The holiday is led by an English-speaking International 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 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 and all meals except lunches. You should also make an allowance for snacks, drinks etc Beer, wine and soft drinks are available every night. We estimate that [250 - 300](#) Swiss francs for the six nights in Switzerland and 35 - 45 Euros for the one night in Italy should cover all personal expenses. Please note that the majority of this holiday is in Switzerland where the unit of currency is the Swiss franc. Although Euros will generally be accepted you may not get a favourable exchange rate. There are cash point facilities at the Airport in Geneva (only Swiss Francs can be obtained from the cash machines here) and St Remy.

Baggage Allowance

For this holiday you should take one piece of luggage and a daypack. Since group members will carry all personal equipment during the trek, it is important to keep the overall weight of this equipment to a minimum. Neither a sleeping bag nor a camping mattress is needed and it should be possible to keep the weight of your pack to around 8 kg. At the start of the trip, you will leave your travel clothes and anything you do not need for the trek in your main bag at the hotel. Luggage with wheels is useful for this holiday.

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 [UK Government website](#).

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 walking holiday 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/ 59°F to 25°C/ 77°F. It can be cool in the evenings at our highest overnight stopping places, even falling close to freezing point outside the huts. The weather is usually stable between July and September, 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.

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 [Travel Insurance](#) page for further information and to get a quote.

Equipment Information

Equipment List

The following checklist should help you with your packing. As you will be carrying everything you need it is important to keep the weight of your equipment to a minimum. Since all bedding is provided at the huts you should be able to keep the weight of your pack down to as little as 8kg. Travel clothes can be left at your hotel.

You must bring the following items:

- Hiking boots
- Socks
- Trekking trousers
- Waterproof overtrousers
- Underwear
- Baselayer shirts (1 short sleeve, 1 long sleeve)
- T-shirts and/or casual shirts
- Fleece jacket or warm jumper
- Waterproof jacket
- Warm fleece gloves or mittens

- Sunhat
- Warm hat
- Sunglasses
- Daypack 40 litres
- Headtorch and spare batteries
- 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 (including travel towel)
- Antibacterial hand wash
- Sheet sleeping bag or sleeping bag liner (compulsory in the mountain huts)
- Basic First Aid Kit including: antiseptic cream, throat lozenges, diarrhoea treatment (Imodium), painkillers, plasters and blister treatment.

◆ **The following items are optional:**

- Gaiters
- Spare laces
- Shorts
- Thermal baselayer - leggings
- Trekking poles (recommended)
- Insect repellent

- Camera
- Repair kit – (eg. needle, thread, duct tape)
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping (to avoid plastic bags)

Cotswold Outdoor



Many of the Equipment items listed above are available from [Cotswold Outdoor](#) - 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

The dates above are for the LAND ONLY itinerary, joining at the group hotel in Bourg St Pierre. The nearest airport is Geneva. Please refer to Joining Arrangements and Transfers for further details.

Flights SHOULD NOT be booked until you have received your booking confirmation and the departure is showing 'Guaranteed to Run' or 'Limited'.

If flying from the UK there are a number of low cost airlines offering flights to Geneva. These include Easyjet who have flights from London, Manchester, Liverpool, Bristol, Edinburgh & Glasgow. Other airports may be available.

If you would prefer to book a Flight Inclusive package using scheduled airlines from the UK, please contact our flights department for a quote. Whilst flight prices are likely to be more expensive you will benefit from full financial protection.

Why Choose KE

Why KE

We're one of the few operators to recognise that this lesser-known side of the Alps is an undiscovered marvel. An Alpine trek for the connoisseur, avoid the crowds and enjoy completing a circuit of the Gran Combin in an expertly-guided small group.

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