



# mont blanc family walk - france to italy

## explore europe your way

A UTracks holiday is all about exploring Europe - your way. It's about U + the walking tracks and cycling trails you want to discover. Since we began in 2006, UTracks has quickly become known as the leaders in active European holidays. Our itineraries are creative - and very affordable. Set your own pace on a flexible self guided trip or enjoy the benefits of an experienced local guide on a guided tour. Together with our sister company Sherpa Expeditions, we offer over 400 active tours across the continent and it's many exotic islands. There's an active holiday idea everyone including families, culinary enthusiasts, history buffs, experienced alpine walkers or those that just want to see Europe differently. The physical demands range from introductory to challenging - with all offering unique opportunities to discover the 'untrodden' Europe, spanning postcard landscapes, centuries-old cultures, rural lifestyles and tempting culinary delights. Compare the price and you will see that we offer exceptional value active programs that are virtually all-inclusive, giving you more time to enjoy the natural and cultural wonders you've come to experience. Whether you prefer cycling or walking, 2-star or 4-star, small groups or self guided, land, river or sea - UTracks can help you to explore Europe exactly the way you want.

### TRIP COST

Joining Les Houches from: **\$1190**

All prices are per person

### OPTIONS & SUPPLEMENTS

→ double room supplement - 3 nights dorm / 1 nights quad / 2 nights double - adult: \$220

→ double room supplement - 3 nights dorm / 1 nights quad / 2 nights double - child: \$350

→ child (aged 7-14 years): \$910

<b>TRIP NAME:</b>	MONT BLANC FAMILY WALK - FRANCE TO ITALY
<b>TRIP CODE:</b>	MFA
<b>TRIP DURATION:</b>	7 DAYS
<b>GRADE:</b>	MODERATE - 3 
<b>ACTIVITY:</b>	GUIDED WALK
<b>ACCOMMODATION:</b>	6 NIGHTS MOUNTAIN REFUGES / GÎTE HOSTELS
<b>DATE DETAILS:</b>	SUNDAYS FROM 2 JUL TO 20 AUG



### highlights

- Trek through stunning alpine scenery around the highest peak in Western Europe
- Experience the exhilaration of trekking through two countries in the European Alps
- Enjoying the culinary specialties
- Sharing your walking day with other families and the donkeys which enrich your alpine experience

### the trip

There are few walks in the world which offer the incredible views and high alpine vistas found on the Tour du Mont Blanc (TMB). To combine this walk with a family holiday ensures that all members of the family experience the spectacular trails and wonderful alpine spirit of the French and Italian Alps. Guided along mountain trails this relaxed itinerary starting in the Chamonix Valley provides awesome views of Mont Blanc with overnight stays in high mountain huts. Carrying only a day pack, our donkeys transport our bags and supplies. Staying in local refuges and gîtes we feast on French and Italian cuisine. This itinerary, suitable for active children from age 7 and up, provides an exhilarating alpine walk with unforgettable vistas around every bend.





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## itinerary at a glance

<b>Day 1</b>	Join Les Houches and walk to Bionnassay or (5 hrs/600m)
<b>Day 2</b>	Descend to the grand Val Montjoie and continue to refuge (5-5½ hrs/200m)
<b>Day 3</b>	Cross the Col du Bonhomme to refuge du Bonhomme (5hrs/1080m)
<b>Day 4</b>	Walk via Les Chapieux to Refuge des Mottets (5hrs/350m)
<b>Day 5</b>	Enter Italy via the Col de la Seigne (5hrs/600m)
<b>Day 6</b>	Through the Val Veni and past the Miage Glacier to Rifugio Maison Vieille (4hrs/400m)
<b>Day 7</b>	Descend to Courmayeur (3hrs/0m), trip concludes

## detailed itinerary

**Note:** The heading for each day's description below shows the approximate time it will take to complete the walk for someone of average to good fitness and the ascent in metres. The planned itinerary can be affected by mountain weather and trail conditions.

<b>DAY 1</b>	Join Les Houches and walk to Bionnassay or (5 hrs/600m) Today begins by meeting the rest of the group and your guide in the Chamonix Valley town of Les Houches. You will be advised of the meeting point with your tour confirmation. There will be a short briefing where you will pack gear in the kit bags provided (to be loaded onto the donkeys) and begin walking. The route follows the classic anti clockwise direction. The first climb of the trip takes you to the Col de Voza (1653m) before crossing the tracks of the Tramway du Mont Blanc to reach Bionnassay. The evening will be spent at either Bionnassay or Le Champel in a refuge with shower. <b>meals: L,D</b>
<b>DAY 2</b>	Descend to the grand Val Montjoie and continue to refuge (5-5½ hrs/200m) The walk today begins with the backdrop of the Domes de Miage and an exceptional view of Mont Joly and the Montjoie Valley. Continue to the pretty Notre Dame de la Gorge church and ascend an ancient Roman road towards the Col du Bonhomme. A steep narrow track takes you through the forest following a narrow gorge to Refuge de Nant Borant and the accommodation for the night (or alternatively you will continue a further 30 minutes to Refuge de la Balme). Overnight refuge with shower. <b>meals: B,L,D</b>
<b>DAY 3</b>	Cross the Col du Bonhomme to refuge du Bonhomme (5hrs/1080m) The walk today is one long ascent to the Col du Bonhomme (2329m) and a short time later to the Col de la Croix du Bonhomme (2483m). Enroute there is ample opportunity to take in the stunning views and appreciate the historic nature of this route from France to Italy. First encounters with Marmots are likely, although being quite shy they disappear quickly. Along the route you are likely to encounter snow, particularly earlier in the season, so boots are essential. The refuge de la Croix du Bonhomme is the highest we stay at on this section of the trail and one of the few where vehicle access is not possible. In early season departures where donkey's are unable to cross the Col du Bonhomme, you may need to carry your overnight requirements. From the refuge the views are expansive and impressive and there is also the opportunity to view wildlife such as Ibex and Marmot. There are a number of board games to occupy the kids whilst you relax in the company of your fellow hikers. Overnight refuge with shower. <b>meals: B,L,D</b>





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## DAY 4 Walk via Les Chapieux to Refuge des Mottets (5hrs/350m)

Descend steeply through alpine pastures brimming with wildflowers to the small hamlet of Chapieux. Today there will be opportunities to visit cheese farmers and purchase Beaufort Cheese. Continue to the Refuge des Mottets (1870m) at the base of the Col de la Seigne. Overnight refuge with shower.

**meals: B,L,D**

## DAY 5 Enter Italy via the Col de la Seigne (5hrs/600m)

Today's walk takes you across the border into Italy. The ascent to the Col de la Seigne (2516m) is via a series of steep switchbacks which open out to a wide trail when you reach the pass. The view across to the Glacier des Glaciers is superb from this pass. On a cold and windy day, the new information centre is a welcome respite in addition to offering a wealth of facts about the region. Continue to Rifugio Elisabetta which has a prime location, excellent view of the glacier and surrounding peaks and superb Italian mountain cuisine. Overnight refuge with shower.

**meals: B,L,D**

## DAY 6 Through the Val Veni and past the Miage Glacier to Rifugio Maison Vieille (4hrs/400m)

On a good weather day there are extraordinary views on this section of the trail – many believe this is the best walking day on the TMB! Like walking on a balcony with the lofty heights of the south face of Mont Blanc, the dramatic spire of the Aiguille Noire de Peuterey and the tumbling Miage glacier with you throughout the walk which coupled with the profusion of alpine blooms and glacial streams will certainly take your breath away. A picnic stop anywhere along this balcony trail is essential to absorb this view before continuing to the Rifugio Maison Vieille. Overnight refuge with shower.

**meals: B,L,D**

## DAY 7 Descend to Courmayeur (3hrs/0m), trip concludes

On our last days walk we descend steeply via a series of switchbacks and ski runs to Courmayeur where you can reward the family with a gelato to mark the end of the hike. After a final picnic we say goodbye to our donkeys, Gepato, Barnabas and Socrates.

**meals: B,L**

## inclusions

- 6 breakfasts, 7 lunches, 6 dinners (does not include drinks) – continental breakfasts are served and usually consist of breads, jams, coffee, tea and juices. Lunch is picnic style including salad, bread, cheese, meat, fruit and something sweet. Dinner will consist of 3 courses which usually include regional specialties.
- 6 nights accommodation in mountain refuges / gîte hostels on a dormitory share basis. It may be possible to pay a supplement to the hosts of the accommodation and receive a private room. This is not guaranteed and is subject to availability.
- Luggage transfer by donkey – max 7kgs (excesses are refused so please test the weight of your luggage before meeting the group, allowing 200g for the kit bag). It is possible early or late in the season that you may need to carry your overnight requirements for one or two days if the snow conditions on the trail are not suitable for donkeys.
- Experienced mountain guide

## items not included

- Travel to and from the trail head
- Drinks and items of a personal nature
- Storage of luggage
- Transfers
- Travel Insurance





## getting there

### BY CAR

Driving routes can be accessed via the following websites: [www.viamichelin.com](http://www.viamichelin.com)

### BY TRAIN

It is possible to arrive in Les Houches by train from Paris. At the end of the trip you can take a bus or a transfer service from Courmayeur through the tunnel back to the Chamonix Valley (where Les Houches is located). For information contact France Rail, [www.voyages-sncf.com](http://www.voyages-sncf.com).

FROM MILAN - From Milan take a train to Aosta (70km from Courmayeur), then a bus to Courmayeur. See the Italian Train website [www.trenitalia.com/en/index.html](http://www.trenitalia.com/en/index.html) From Courmayeur, take a bus to Chamonix and change there for bus to Les Houches.

### BY AIR

Your closest airport is Geneva, Milan or Torino Airport which are around 1.5-2 hours from Courmayeur and Les Houches. It is cheaper to arrange a transfer from Geneva than from Milan or Torino. Details for transfers from the Italian airports can be found at ATS (Airport Transfer Services) or see above for the Mountain Drop offs service from Geneva.

### TRANSFER SERVICE

Transfers from Geneva Airport to the Chamonix Valley and Courmayeur can be arranged through Mountain Drop offs. Please use the following link:- [www.mountaindropoffs.com/advertlink=anlegu\\_tra](http://www.mountaindropoffs.com/advertlink=anlegu_tra)

## trip grading - moderate

### MODERATE- GRADE 3

The walking is moderate (3) grade with daily guided walks of around 3-6 hours. There are some more demanding stages during the walk with steep uphill, descents, and many sections of the trail which require care. The accent is on keeping a steady pace with time to stop and take photos (subject to weather conditions). You will need a good level of fitness to participate fully in this adventure. It is considered suitable for active children from 7 years of age. Early in the season (June) you will encounter snow on the passes which may be quite deep and alter the grading of the trip to challenging. At any time during summer, weather conditions may be variable and you should be prepared for all conditions including snow, ice, strong sun and extreme winds. The planned itinerary may be altered in the event of adverse weather conditions.

## dietary requirements

Provided we are advised in advance of your departure we are able to cater for vegetarian diets and can assist with medically recommended diets (allergies and intolerances). Please ensure you discuss your requirements with us well in advance (at least 1 month prior to your trip) to determine whether we can cater to such dietary requirements on your chosen adventure. Please note that options are likely to be limited in very remote locations or alternatives may be more expensive or unavailable. There may be times when those with special requirements may need to provide their own food. We are unable to guarantee a peanut-free or allergen-free trip, and therefore, we strongly encourage that travellers with life-threatening or severe allergies take all necessary medical precautions to prepare for the possibility of exposure. Passengers must travel with all necessary medications for food allergies and be capable of self-administering these medications.

## about your group

You will be joining a group with a mix of participants from different countries, speaking different languages usually primarily French and English. Your tour leader is likely to be guiding in more French and English to cater to all participants. This is not an English only speaking tour.





## accommodation



### PRE TOUR

Pre tour we recommend you stay in Chamonix or Les Houches and on the last day return to your pre hotel to collect your excess luggage. There are good bus connections between Courmayeur and Chamonix. We do not offer a left luggage service.

A handy website for hotels in Courmayeur is <http://www.courmayeur.com/>

For Chamonix Hotel Le Chamonix (2 star - <http://www.hotel-le-chamonix.com/>) in Central Chamonix or very handy to the meeting point of the tour is Hotel Slalom in Les Houches - <http://www.hotelslalom.net/> where many UTracks staff have stayed. There are numerous other options which you can view at [www.chamonix.com](http://www.chamonix.com)

### DURING TOUR

Accommodation is dormitory style in mountain refuges or Gîte hostels. There can be up to 40 people in one room in some refuges but less on most nights (around 10-12). Beds are often bunks but can also be one long platform with separate mattresses. Bathrooms and toilets are shared. You need to bring a sleeping sheet and towel. Blankets are provided. It is possible to upgrade to 3 nights dorm, 1 night quad, 2 nights double room - supplement applies

## the region

### TMB ULTRA MARATHON

Each year at the end of August a series of races are held on sections of the TMB route over a 7 day period - not all sections will have runners during this time. This lends an exciting atmosphere to the trail with endurance athletes running through the night, to cover the route in up to 46 hours with winning times usually around 20 hours. An amazing feat covering 168km! During this week there will be minimal impact on your arrangements except that the area will be busy and accommodation in Chamonix will be in demand. Making your bookings well in advance is advisable. For more details see [http://www.ultratrailmb.com/page/1/The\\_event.html](http://www.ultratrailmb.com/page/1/The_event.html)

## fast facts

### COUNTRIES VISITED

France & Italy

### VISAS

Visas not required for citizens of Australia, Canada, USA and New Zealand for up to 90 days in a period of 180 days for all Schengen countries (see [www.schengenvisa.info.com/schengen-visa-countries-list/](http://www.schengenvisa.info.com/schengen-visa-countries-list/) for countries part of the Schengen). Please ensure your passport is stamped on arrival in the Schengen area. For all other nationalities and for longer stays in countries covered by the Schengen Agreement (Australian New Zealand, Canadian and US passport holders), please contact the relevant embassy. Stays of longer than 90 days in the Schengen area require a long stay visa for the country you are spending most time in. However long stay visas are unlikely to be issued unless there is a valid reason (eg. studying in country). Unfortunately we cannot assist in obtaining visas for long stays due to individual country visa requirements.





## CLIMATE

The walking season in the European Alps is short – from mid June to mid September and many of the mountain refuges are closed outside this time. In winter parts of the trail are transformed into world class ski runs, evidenced by the comprehensive network of cablecars or télésièges. Bearing in mind that much of the route is at altitudes of over 1000m and up to around 2500m, the temperatures can vary significantly. Please note at the beginning of the season you may experience snow and therefore the walking can be harder and slippery underfoot. Temperatures in summer range from around 6 degrees Celsius to 20 degrees Celsius during the day. Afternoon thunderstorms are quite common. At the higher elevations it is important to dress with layers as cold winds and possible snow falls can happen even in summer.

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<b>MIN GROUP SIZE</b>	8
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<b>MAX GROUP SIZE</b>	15
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**SPECIALIST GEAR REQUIRED** Wet weather gear, sunscreen, walking boots, warm clothes, minimum 30 litre day pack and sun hat – walking sticks are recommended. Sleeping sheet & towel required for accommodation. (A comprehensive gear list is provided in the pre-departure information provided on booking).

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## special notes

### TRIP ORGANISATION

Our groups consist of a maximum of 14 people. The donkeys spare you the worry of carrying your own belongings and we provide you with special bags to allow this transportation process to run as smoothly and as efficiently as possible. There is a 7 kg maximum for the bags that are to be carried by the donkeys and any excess will be refused so make sure you weigh it beforehand. The trip begins in Les Houches we will confirm the meeting place and time with you on booking or at least 2 months before the departure date. It is advisable to have a pre and post tour night in Les Houches or Chamonix and return to your joining hotel at the end of the trip. There is a bus service between Courmayeur and Chamonix with connections to Geneva Airport. Excess luggage should be stored at your pre tour hotel.

### CONFIRMATION OF DEPARTURE

The operation of this trip requires a minimum number of participants. Departures can be cancelled up to 3 weeks prior to the trip start date. While the vast majority of departures operate during the season, if there are too few people the trip will be cancelled and we will do all possible to offer you an alternative trip or an alternative departure date. Should the alternatives offered not be suitable we will provide a refund of the trip price only. No further compensation shall be payable. For further details please review our conditions of contract in our brochure.

## how to book

To book a UTRACKS trip, complete our booking form which is found at the back of our brochure or can be downloaded from our website [www.utracks.com](http://www.utracks.com). On completion, fax or post the form to your nearest UTRACKS or World Expeditions office along with full payment by cheque or credit card (note: surcharges apply for credit card payments). World Expeditions/UTRACKS has access to competitive airfares to Europe. Call your nearest UTRACKS/World Expeditions office or travel agent for assistance with your travel arrangements including flights, travel insurance & additional accommodation.

## follow us

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[https://twitter.com/UTracks\\_Travel](https://twitter.com/UTracks_Travel)

There's even more tips and ideas on our blog at <http://www.utracks.com/discover>





### slide shows

UTracks invites you to attend our inspiring adventure travel slide shows. These special evenings are designed to inform and entertain and are hosted by our most experienced and passionate adventure travellers. Ask our staff for a slide show schedule or register on our website – [www.utracks.com](http://www.utracks.com). Shows can fill early so it is important to register your attendance so we know to save a seat, or two!

### e-newsletter

To keep up to date with our new and exciting adventure opportunities, special promotions and adventure news, subscribe to our monthly e-newsletter! You can do this on line through our website, [www.utracks.com](http://www.utracks.com) or contact our office.

### IMPORTANT NOTE

THESE TRIP NOTES REPRESENT THE MOST CURRENT INFORMATION AVAILABLE FOR THIS ITINERARY, AND SUPERSEDE ANY INFORMATION DETAILED IN THE CURRENT BROCHURE, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO THE ITINERARY AND PRICE.

### talk to us

If you require any further assistance regarding this trip or any other adventure, please contact your nearest UTRACKS or World Expeditions office.



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## AUSTRALIA

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Feel free to visit our World Expeditions offices in:-

- Melbourne
- Perth
- Brisbane
- Adelaide (Thor Travel)

Our staff will be happy to assist with your enquiries. For address and office phone numbers see our website at [www.worldexpeditions.com](http://www.worldexpeditions.com)

## NEW ZEALAND

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