



tour du mont blanc

active europe for you

GRADE:



Founded in 1973, Sherpa Expeditions is specialised in self-guided and escorted holidays throughout Europe and across the globe. We offer a wide range of self-guided inn-to-inn walking and cycling tours, escorted walks, as well as Walker's Britain, a pioneering collection of over 20 British walking tours which include the Coast-to-Coast Trail and Hadrian's Wall. We have refined self-guided holidays to an art. Over many years, our leaders, local representatives and clients have all contributed to the detailed trail notes provided to walkers, making them the definitive guide to the areas we visit, which includes 16 iconic European walking destinations across France, Spain, Italy, Cyprus and much more. Sherpa Expeditions has now joined forces with UTracks <<http://www.worldexpeditions.com>> and the World Expeditions Travel Group <<http://www.utracks.com>> to bring you the most exciting and extensive range of active European holidays available, all at great value. This means you have access to over 300 active itineraries covering more than 25 European countries, from Iceland to Greece, and from Ireland to Cyprus. UTracks offers affordable, self-guided and small group-guided active holidays across Europe. Choose from a wide variety of quintessential European outdoor experiences from trekking the French Alps, cycling through Tuscany, exploring the islands of Greece, Croatia or Turkey by bike and ship, making a pilgrimage along the Compostela Trail, or discovering the lesser known trails in Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovenia. UTracks offers many family-friendly itineraries and can also tailor make tours for private groups. Cycling or walking, 2-star or 4-star, small groups or self-guided, land or sea, introductory level or more challenging - Sherpa Expeditions and UTracks can help you explore Europe exactly the way you want.

TRIP COST

Joining Les Houches :
\$2990

Trip Concludes: Les Houches

All prices are per person

OPTIONS & SUPPLEMENTS

→ single supplement: \$640

As the trip price is based on twinshare, a single supplement is payable if a single room is required - or a single traveller supplement if you are travelling solo*. Please refer to the price options for costs or ask our office for details.

Note regarding single rooms - The single supplement guarantees the privacy of your own room, however, rooms can at times be small and in some places may not enjoy the same facilities as double/twin rooms. **The single traveller surcharge is only available on trips deemed suitable for solo travellers. It is usually more expensive than the single supplement due to the extra cost for luggage transfers and organisation.

TRIP NAME:	TOUR DU MONT BLANC
TRIP CODE:	JMB
TRIP DURATION:	14 DAYS
GRADE TEXT:	MODERATE TO CHALLENGING - 4
ACTIVITY:	SELF-GUIDED WALKING
ACCOMMODATION:	13 NIGHTS HOTELS/ GUESTHOUSE/AUBERGE
DATE DETAILS:	→ 2016 25 JUN - 08 JUL, 01 JUL - 14 JUL, 02 JUL - 15 JUL, 15 JUL - 28 JUL, 16 JUL - 29 JUL, 23 JUL - 05 AUG, 29 JUL - 11 AUG, 13 AUG - 26 AUG, 19 AUG - 01 SEP, 20 AUG - 02 SEP, 27 AUG - 09 SEP, 02 SEP - 15 SEP



highlights

- Classic Mountain Walking
- Hiking in France, Italy and Switzerland
- Snow Clad Alpine Peaks
- Walking from Meadows to Mountain Passes

the trip

This classic alpine walk, the famous 'TMB' or 'Le Tour du Mont Blanc', circumnavigates Western Europe's highest mountain over passes and through the valleys of three contrasting countries. Walkers can savour the food and wine of France, Italy and Switzerland and enjoy some of the finest scenery in the world. Note: Unlike most of our hotel treks, this tour operates on fixed dates in order to accommodate the logistics of baggage movement. There will be up to 15 Sherpa customers doing the walk on any date though you do not have to walk together. Single travellers can sometimes be paired up with others, if they are prepared to share a room, and thus save single supplement charges. We will normally have 2 staff in the area to carry out the baggage transfers. They will also act as a local contact in case of any problems that may arise.





itinerary at a glance

Day 1	Arrive Les Houches
Day 2	Les Houches to Les Contamines 19 km /11.8 miles, 7 h
Day 3	Les Contamines to Les Chapieux 20 km /12.8 miles, 8-9 h
Day 4	Les Chapieux to La Palud 30 km /18.6 miles, 9 h
Day 5	Explore La Palud
Day 6	La Palud to La Fouly 28 km /17.3 miles, 7 h
Day 7	La Fouly to Champex 13.5 km /8.3 miles, 4.5 h
Day 8	Rest day in Champex
Day 9	Champex to Trient 15 km/9.3 miles, 5.5 h
Day 10	Trient to Argentiere 20 km /12.8 miles, 6 h
Day 11	Argentiere to Chamonix 12 km /7.5 miles, 5 h
Day 12	Explore Chamonix
Day 13	Chamonix to Les Houches 14 km /8.6 miles, 6 h
Day 14	Arrangements end after breakfast

detailed itinerary

Note: Early in the season you may encounter snow on the passes which may be quite deep and alter the grading of the trip to advanced. 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. If the weather conditions do change, you are able to hire guides locally.

DAY 1	<p>Arrive Les Houches</p> <p>Make your own way to Les Houches, a resort located 6 km from Chamonix with 360 degree views of Mont Blanc. This evening a trip briefing is held by our Ground Support representatives before enjoying your evening meal.</p> <p>Accommodation: Stay in a very comfortable 2 star chalet-style hotel facing the Mont Blanc range. All rooms have bath/shower, WC and telephone. The hotel has a shaded garden and a games room.</p> <p>meals: D</p>
DAY 2	<p>Les Houches to Les Contamines 19 km /11.8 miles, 7 h</p> <p>Today will certainly get the legs and heart working. A steady climb from Les Houches (950m) via Col de Voza (1653 m) and below the tip of the Bionassay glacier to the Col de Tricot (2120 m). There is a very steep descent from the col to the Chalets de Miage (1550m) followed by a short climb over Truc before descending through forest to Les Contamines (1170m). Les Contamines is a ski resort in winter, and has several restaurants and bars, also a well-stocked supermarket.</p> <p>Many walkers start by taking the cable car up from Les Houches to Bellevue; this avoids the long trek and makes for a more enjoyable start to the tour.</p> <p>Accommodation: A comfortable 3-star hotel with a swimming pool.</p> <p>meals: B</p>



tour du mont blanc

DAY 3 Les Contamines to Les Chapieux 20 km /12.8 miles, 8-9 h

Today you will need to pack what you need for one night / two days as your bags are transferred La Palud, tomorrow nights stop. Ascend to the Col du Bonhomme (2329m) and then traverse to the slightly higher Col de la Croix de Bonhomme (2479m) before descending to Les Chapieux. Les Chapieux is a tiny and remote settlement, 15 km /9 miles from the nearest village of Bourg St Maurice. There is a little shop in the hamlet where you may wish to purchase some Beaufort cheese for your lunch tomorrow.

Accommodation: We stay at a small but very welcoming guesthouse. All rooms have shared bathroom facilities. This lovely guesthouse also has a small library and garden. The evening meal is included and offers local specialities and packed lunches are available.

meals: B,D

DAY 4 Les Chapieux to La Palud 30 km /18.6 miles, 9 h

The walk can be shortened to around 20 km/12.8 miles by using local buses along the Val Veni (Italy) – the bus service does not normally operate before 1 July. After a steady ascent past Ville de Glaciers, cross the Col de la Seigne (2516m) into Italy. The Elisabetta refuge is a popular lunch stop. In summer there is a local bus service along the Val Veni from Cantine de la Visaille to La Saxe and Courmayeur, but purists can follow the strict TMB route high up on the south side of Val Veni, or follow delightful low-level paths along the Val Veni itself. From La Saxe or Courmayeur you can walk or catch the bus up to La Palud 1370m).

Accommodation: For your two nights in Italy you stay at a modern 3-star hotel which is situated close to the station for the cable car to Mont Blanc (Helbronner peak). All rooms have private facilities. There is a large terrace, a bar, and a TV lounge. It is a short bus ride to the historic town and modern shopping centre of Courmayeur. It is also possible to walk to Courmayeur via La Saxe.

meals: B

DAY 5 Explore La Palud

A chance for a well-deserved rest. On a clear day you may like to take the cable car from La Palud to Pointe Heilbronner (3462m) on the crest of the Mont Blanc massif with views across the Glacier du Geant. Alternatively you can try one of the TMB variations, for instance from Courmayeur over Mont de la Saxe or Col Sapin, returning by bus from La Vachey or Pra Sec along Val Ferret to La Palud. This bus may not run before July 1. Additional map will be required if you intend to do any of these TMB variations on the south side of the Italian Val Ferret. The 1:50,000 map 'Pays du Mont Blanc' published by Didier Richard covers this part of the route.

meals: B

DAY 6 La Palud to La Fouly 28 km /17.3 miles, 7 h

The walk can be shortened by taking the bus to La Vachey or Arnouva. Today you pass close by Mont Dolent, and cross the Grand Col Ferret (2537m) to re-enter Switzerland. From Grand Col Ferret descend through alpine meadows past the summer pastures and barns of La Peula (refreshments available) and the tiny village of Ferret to our hotel in La Fouly (1595m).

Accommodation: Stay at a small, unclassified but very comfortable hotel (we would describe it as 2/3* standard). Each room has a bath or shower.

meals: B



tour du mont blanc

DAY 7 La Fouly to Champex 13.5 km /8.3 miles, 4.5 h

Follow the beautiful Swiss Val Ferret and pass through some pretty villages before leaving the valley to climb through woods to Champex in its picturesque lakeside setting. An easy day – in warm weather there is time to cool off in the open-air swimming pool. Champex-Lac is a little resort town at the northeastern end of the Mont Blanc range.

Accommodation: 3-star hotel, all rooms have ensuite facilities.

meals: **B,D**

DAY 8 Rest day in Champex

A chance to stroll around the lake and visit the botanic gardens. There is an abundance of day walks from Champex, of which one of the most challenging is from La Brea (upper cable car station at 2198m) to the mountain hut at Cabane d'Orny (2811m). Good weather and a head for heights are needed for this walk. Another good walk from Champex-Lac is to follow the Val d'Arpette up towards the Fenetre d'Arpette. For art lovers it is possible to use this day for an excursion by bus and narrow gauge train to the neighbouring town of Martigny, where the renowned Pierre Gianadda Gallery hosts summer exhibitions. In 2015, Matisse was on show and in 2014 Renoir took centre stage. In Champex, there is a good choice of restaurants with specialities such as raclette, lake trout, and local fruit from the Valais. There is a small shop in the town for picnic items.

meals: **B**

DAY 9 Champex to Trient 15 km/9.3 miles, 5.5 h

Ascend through woods to reach the barns of Bovine (1987m); food and drinks usually available and then descend to the Col de la Forclaz (1526m); in season, try the local tarte aux myrtilles (blueberry pie). There is then the option of a walk to the Chalet du Glacier and a bit beyond for fine views of the Trient Glacier before descending to the village of Trient. There is a strenuous and challenging variation to today's route, over the Fenetre d'Arpette (2665m), although we consider that the 'Bovine' route is so scenic that it should not be missed. Trient is a tiny village in the Val Trient.

Accommodation: Stay at a simple 'relais' or 'auberge' (inn). Accommodation is fairly basic in two-bedded rooms without private facilities. Packed lunches available, and there is a good small grocery shop where picnic materials can be obtained.

meals: **B,D**

DAY 10 Trient to Argentiere 20 km /12.8 miles, 6 h

Cross into France via the Col de Balme (2191m) revealing the Chamonix Valley below and the Mont Blanc massif. On the way up to the col there is a longer but very scenic and satisfying alternative via Les Grands (head for heights is an advantage). The best way on from Col de Balme is via the spectacular but easy Posettes ridge, from the end of which there is a steep descent on good paths through forest to Tre le Champ and our hotel at Argentiere. For those who want a more leisurely day, a shorter and still scenic) descent from Col de Balme to Argentiere is possible via Le Tour.

Accommodation: Stay in a comfortable and welcoming 3 star hotel, one of the first hotels to be built in the valley. All the rooms are ensuite.

meals: **B**



tour du mont blanc

DAY 11 Argentiere to Chamonix 12 km /7.5 miles, 5 h

Climb via Tre le Champ (1417m) and Les Cheserys, and make a detour to the scenic Lac Blanc (2352m) before rejoining the Grand Balcon route, which looks across the Chamonix valley towards Mont Blanc. From La Flegere (1877) you can either descend to the valley at Les Praz de Chamonix on foot or by gondola & cable car. From Les Praz, you make your way to the hotel either by bus or by walking through the pleasant environs; or continue along the Grand Balcon for another 2 hours to Plan Praz, from where there is another cable car (or gondola) and another footpath down to Chamonix. Accommodation: Spend two nights in a 3-star hotel, all the rooms are fully en suite, and include satellite TV.

meals: B

DAY 12 Explore Chamonix

We recommend taking the cable car up to the Aiguille du Midi (3842m). You can also catch the train to Montanvers and the Mer de Glace glacier or explore Chamonix and its surroundings. For those who might prefer something totally different from walking Chamonix boasts an Olympic standard pool and aquatic centre, a summer luge course, paragliding, golf etc. There is also the very interesting Alpine Museum and art gallery.

Accommodation: Overnight at the 3-star hotel in Chamonix.

meals: B

DAY 13 Chamonix to Les Houches 14 km /8.6 miles, 6 h

Rejoin the trail either at La Flegere, using the cable car from Les Praz de Chamonix, and continue along the Grand Balcon to Plan Praz or at Plan Praz via the Brevent cable car from Chamonix. From Plan Praz ascend to Col de Brevent and on up to the peak of Le Brevent (2525m), one of the highest points of the tour. This day offers some of the finest views of the route. From Brevent you descend to Les Houches (1010m) and make your way to the hotel where we spend the last night. In case of bad weather or low cloud there are good low/medium level walks leading to Les Houches along the flanks of the Chamonix valley such as the 'Petit Balcon' and the 'Rive d'Arve'. These named walks are well marked and signposted.

meals: B

DAY 14 Arrangements end after breakfast

Depart Les Houches for your onward journey.

meals: B

additional supplements

At the time of booking we aim to offer our usual choice of accommodation, however if these are not available then alternatives are used (and on occasion a small supplement may apply). If these are of a different standard and / or a supplement applies you will be informed on confirmation of your booking.

inclusions

- 13 breakfasts, 4 dinners
- 11 nights twin share accommodation in 2-3 star hotels with ensuite facilities, 1 night guesthouse, 1 night auberge
- Luggage transfer except to Les Chapieux
- Information pack including route notes & maps
- Emergency hotline

items not included

- 9 dinners, lunch & beverages
- Entrance fees
- Travel insurance
- Travel to the start and from the end point of the trip



- Personal expenses such as laundry and phone calls
- Unscheduled transfers required during the trip

trip grading - moderate to challenging

We grade this tour as moderate to challenging (grade 4); anyone used to hill walking/mountain hiking with a daily height gain/loss of 3,300 feet (1000 metres) per day should find the tour within their capability walking an average of 6 to 7 hours per day. There are no vertigo-inducing sections on this walk provided you stick to the itinerary as described in the route notes and defined on the maps; and avoid the 'variations'. We make it clear in the notes which alternate routes in our opinion do require a 'head for heights'. Some of the walks can be shortened if desired by the use of cable cars or (in Italy) a local bus service.

way marking

This is a well-trodden trail and the waymarking and signposting is mostly good, particularly where the route coincides with the GR5 French long distance trail. There are however differences between the styles and thoroughness of waymarking in the 3 countries. These differences are explained in the route notes. It is advisable to have with you and be familiar with the use of a small pocket compass as the cloud may occasionally be down on the high passes. On the self guided tours (but not escorted) we provide you with detailed route descriptions (exclusive to Sherpa Expeditions) and excellent 1:25,000 scale maps, which show the whole of our TMB route (ie including the Italian and Swiss sectors).

route notes

Please note that one set of route notes per room booked is included in the cost of the holiday. If you require more sets of notes then there is a charge of £30 per set ordered. For bookings received four weeks or less prior to the tour departure, courier fees may be applicable to ensure you receive your final documentation in time. As rates are variable, please contact your consultant for details. Sherpa will try to avoid these costs where possible.

extending your trip

As this tour operates to fixed schedules it is not practicable to add in extra nights. Except at the beginning and end.

meal inclusions

Where dinner is not included there is a choice of places to eat nearby. Lunches can be provided by most hotels if requested the evening before. There are places to shop for picnic lunches in local towns and villages or you can eat en route in refuges and cafes (although please note that some may not be open early in the season). These are described in our route notes. In France, Italy and Switzerland breakfast varies from coffee and toast/bread/croissant, to buffet style, please don't offend your hosts by making up a picnic lunch from the breakfast buffet unless it has been specifically organised for you. If you want more for breakfast we suggest you buy extra food or bring some supplies from home. Special Dietary Requirements: It is important for you to tell us if you have any dietary requirements when you book your holiday so that we can inform everyone that you are staying with.

dietary requirements

Provided we are advised in advance 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 to determine whether we can cater on your chosen adventure. Please note that options are likely to be limited in 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. Passengers must travel with all necessary medications for food allergies and be capable of self-administering these medications.



accommodation

DURING TOUR

Of the total of 13 nights, 10 nights are spent in 3*hotels, 1 night in a very comfortable unclassified Swiss hotel (we would describe it as 2/3* standard), 1 night in a guesthouse and 1 night in a simple auberge more akin to mountain refuge. Of these 13 nights, 4 are 'half-board' (dinner, bed and breakfast) and the remainder bed and breakfast only. The hotels described are our usual choice of accommodation, however if these are not available then alternatives are used and if these are of a different standard you will be informed at the time of booking. Baths/showers: Many rooms with ensuite/private facilities have a shower rather than a bath, usually because of limited space. Some hotels/guesthouses may however have a separate room in the house where a bath is available to guests. We will try to accommodate double room requests however the majority of rooms booked will be twin share.

check in/out

It is generally normal practice when staying in hotels that you check-in on or after 2pm or 3pm and checkout by 10am the following morning. Guesthouses/bed & breakfast establishments are normally check-in on or after 4pm and checkout by 10am.

luggage

We do not offer porter service on our holidays. You must be able to move your own luggage to and from your rooms. This more than likely involve stairs as many of the properties we stay in do not have lifts. Sometimes your luggage will have been taken to your room awaiting your arrival however do not be surprised if it is waiting for you to take up to your room and you are asked to bring it down again the next morning.

language

When travelling in less frequented areas you will not necessarily come across people speaking English. Remember you are experiencing a different culture, buy a phrase book or three and try to learn a little of the local languages!

getting there

BY TRAIN

Two different train routes from Geneva to Chamonix and Les Houches: (a) on Swiss railways from Geneva Airport via Geneva Cornavin (central station), changing trains at Martigny and Le Chatelard, from Le Chatelard onwards on French railways; (b) on French Railways (SNCF) from Geneva Eaux Vives, changing trains at Le Fayet. Although trains stop at Les Houches the station is some distance from the village and there is no phone or taxi rank at the station, so if you are arriving by train with baggage it is better to travel to Le Fayet and take a taxi from there to your hotel in Les Houches.

BY AIR

Nearest international airport: Geneva

TRANSFER SERVICE

Chamexpress, operates a shuttle bus 8 times a day between Geneva Airport and villages of the Chamonix valley including Les Houches. Sherpa Expeditions can book these transfers for you at a fee of GBP 36 per person, per transfer.

insurance

All clients must have appropriate cover for the activities included for the duration of our trip.

fast facts

COUNTRIES VISITED

France, Italy & Switzerland



tour du mont blanc

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.schengenvisainfo.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.

MIN GROUP SIZE	1
MAX GROUP SIZE	15

how to book

To book this trip go to our website to make a booking online or download our booking form. A booking form can also be found at the back of our Active Europe brochure. If you complete a paper booking form, email, fax or post the form to our office – contact details can be found on our website.

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.sherpa-walking-holidays.co.uk or contact our office.

social networks

You can make sure you are up to date with all our latest information by liking, following or pinning us on the following social networks:

[facebook.com/Sherpa-Expeditions](https://www.facebook.com/Sherpa-Expeditions) <<http://www.facebook.com/Sherpa-Expeditions>>

http://twitter.com/Sherpa_Exp or @Sherpa_Exp <http://twitter.com/Sherpa_Exp>

www.pinterest.com/sherpaexp <<http://www.pinterest.com/sherpaexp>>

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.

