



9-DAY ADVENTURE

## BEST OF THE HAUTE ROUTE – LITE

France

Discover Alpine Switzerland in all its magnificent glory, from the morning calls of resident marmots to crystal clear glacial rivers and the jagged, rocky peaks of the Alpine summits. A route at the foot of the high peaks of Mont Blanc de Cheillon, the Pigne d'Arola and the Weisshorn, blanketed with their majestic glaciers. Embark on an awe-inspiring trek from Chamonix to Zermatt, passing ice-capped peaks and alpine meadows, take in the breath taking views at the top of the Dixence and Moiry dams. Spend your evenings in the quaint villages and experience the warm welcome of traditional, chalet style accommodation. Before culminating the trip in the shadow of the iconic Matterhorn at 4478m, which flaunts its remarkable geometry: an almost perfect pyramid. On our 'Kandoo Lite' trips your service will end once you leave the group at the end of your trek, providing with you with more flexibility in your travels.

## TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

- Embark on a world famous trekking route.
- Experience amazing views of the iconic Matterhorn.
- Trek through outstanding alpine scenery as you pass from France into Switzerland.
- Comfortable hotel and lodge accommodation.



# ITINERARY

## DAY 1

### WELCOME TO CHAMONIX

Arrive into Chamonix and meet your group in time for the pre-trek briefing. This will be held in the evening at your hotel.

Accommodation: **Hotel**

## DAY 2

### GRAND BALCON SUD

Today will be your first day on the Haute Route, starting off with a short transfer to Les Praz village. From here, you'll be flying high as you ride the cable car up to La Flegere, sitting at 1813m. Not only does this provide unbeatable views of the Mer de Glace glacier and the glorious surrounding landscapes, but also cuts out a difficult and tiring climb. The trek then begins on a stunning path which climbs gently towards the glacial blue hues of the Lac Blanc. On a calm day, the glass-like water mirrors the unparalleled views of the surrounding peaks. Like razor-sharp needles the skyline of the Aiguille du Dru, Aiguille Verte, Aiguille du Midi and Mont Blanc can all be admired from this incredible vantage point. Stop for a picnic lunch and enjoy the view before heading down through one of the region's most beautiful trails bordering Lacs des Cheserys. Tonight will be spent in a peaceful hotel in the Argentiere valley – the perfect spot to rest up for another exciting day tomorrow.

Hiking time: **6 hours**

Ascent: **475 m**

Descent: **1150 m**

Accommodation: **Hotel**

Meals included:

**Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner**

## DAY 3

### COL DE BALME TO SWITZERLAND

After a scenic train ride up the valley to Les Frasserands, we begin by climbing steeply to the Aiguillette de Posettes, the 'bébé' of the Chamonix skyline, where a panoramic 360° view includes a picturesque Mont Blanc. We will then descend a little before heading along the delightful high alpine paths, weaving their way through alluring green flora and fauna, towards the Col de Balme. Here we cross the border from France to Switzerland. After a hearty lunch, we will descend to the small hamlet of Trient for the night, taking in the amazing views of the Aiguille d'Argentière and the Aiguille du Tour. Keep an eye out for Trient's unique pink church!

Hiking time: **7 - 8 hours**

Ascent: **1100 m**

Descent: **1200 m**

Accommodation: **Hotel**

Meals included:

**Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner**



#### DAY 4

### TRIENT TO LAC DES DIX

An hour long train journey through glorious, alpine arenas brings us to one of the sunniest places in Switzerland, the Sion valley. Here we can marvel at the web of vineyards and discover the heart of Valais area, famous for its stunning natural landscapes. Our trek today starts in the quaint mountain village of Thyon by a balcony path overlooking the beautiful Val d'Hérémence. Across the valley you may catch a glimpse of wave like rock formations that were carved out by the Ice-Age and have boulders are precariously balanced on their ridges. We make our way up the valley to reach the Grande Dixence Dam. 'Grande' being very apt, this is the world's highest gravity dam. On the shores of its mountain lake sits our accommodation. For those who have some energy left, a continuation of the hike is possible to explore the lake further.

Hiking time: **5 - 6 hours**

Ascent: **650 m**

Descent: **500 m**

Accommodation: **Hotel**

Meals included:

**Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner**

#### DAY 5

### GRANDE DIXENCE DAM - AROLLA - LES HAUDÈRES

This morning we will depart along the lake shore above the awe inspiring Grande Dixence Dam, a wall 285m high and 700m long, weighing 15 million tons and retaining 400 million m<sup>3</sup> of water. It is a true engineering masterpiece. We then climb steadily along rocky terrain to the Col de Riedmatten (2919m). From there, we overlook the glorious views of the Glacier de Cheilon, and stop to have a picturesque picnic before descending to the Swiss village of Arolla. Here we will transfer to Les Haudères by bus where we spend the night at the foot of the Dents de Vesivi in a delightfully cosy lodge, nestled in the heart of the Valais Alps.

Hiking time: **7 - 8 hours**

Ascent: **750 m**

Descent: **900 m**

Accommodation: **Lodge**

Meals included:

**Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner**

#### DAY 6

### COL DE TORRENT AND LAC MOIRY

A short bus ride will take us up to the small hamlet of La Sage. From here, we follow a zigzagging path through the stunning, mountain pastures to the Col de Torrent sitting at 2916m, where an exceptional view over the peaks of the Val d'Evolène will greet us. On one side, the formidable, snow-capped peaks of the Dent d'Herens, the Tête Blanche and the Dents Moiry. On the other, a breath taking view along the Bishorn ridgeline leading up to the mighty Weisshorn, a look-a-like little brother to it's larger Matterhorn sibling and equally as beautiful. An enchanting descent of emerald green will then lead us between the glistening, alpine waters of Lac des Autannes and Lac de Moiry. Once in the valley, local bus transportation will take us to the small town of Zinal, a cluster of rustic chalets set amidst a blanket of lush green meadow. Here you will spend a peaceful night in the heart of Valais.

Hiking time: **7 - 8 hours**

Ascent: **1215 m**

Descent: **700 m**

Accommodation: **Hotel**

Meals included:

**Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner**

#### DAY 7

### FORCLETTA PASS

Beginning the day amidst the dense, alpine forests and mountain pastures we move along a steady incline towards the rugged Col de Forcletta, where a splendid view stretches from the pyramidal peak of the Dent Blanche all the way to the expansive glaciers of Mont-Blanc. From here, we take a panoramic path which allows us to gradually descend from exposed alpine ridge to lush meadow and the quaint village of Gruben.

Hiking time: **7 - 8 hours**

Ascent: **1235 m**

Descent: **1050 m**

Accommodation: **Lodge**

Meals included:

**Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner**

#### DAY 8

### AUGSTBORDPASS TO ST NIKLAUS

Augstbordpass will be our last high altitude pass in the heart of the Alps, and what a way to finish! After crossing an alpine larch forest in the base of the valley, we climb to the wild, rocky outcrops of Augstbordpass, traversing the Turmanntal mountain pastures to reach it. An incredible panoramic view of Oberland and Valais will greet us here before we make the descent down into the Mattertal valley to St Niklaus, a bustling town nestled between the mountains and the majestic glaciers of the Mont Rosa Alps.

Hiking time: **7 - 8 hours**

Ascent: **1100 m**

Descent: **950 m**

Accommodation: **Hotel**

Meals included:

**Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner**

#### DAY 9

### ZERMATT

Breathtaking views of the majestic Monte Rosa "4000s" will be the backdrop for our final trekking day, epitomising in the awe inspiring pyramid of the Matterhorn. A superb alpine path traversing the length of the valley will offer multiple photo opportunities as we embark on an easy final day. We will be given chance to appreciate the grandeur of the Matterhorn, and the fabulous glaciers of Zermatt that blanket its lower slopes before making a gradual descent to the village of Zermatt. Leave the group here to proceed with our onwards travel however we choose fit.

Hiking time: **4 hours**

Ascent: **400 m**

Descent: **400 m**

Meals included: **Breakfast / Lunch**

# TRIP INFORMATION

## DIFFICULTY

The Haute Route is given the name "the high route" for good reason; there is a lot of steep ascent and descent on this trek, so your legs will be getting a good workout. Yet, whilst a high level of fitness will make the days a lot easier it by no means requires super human fitness. A solid training plan will allow you to better prepare for the hikes and enjoy yourself when you're on the trail. You will need to reach particular points on the trail each night so you may find the pace of walking to be a little faster than on Kilimanjaro, for example. This is by no means a sprint, however a good level of fitness will ensure you have a positive experience.

Trekking poles are also a lifesaver, especially on the steep Alpine passes! If you are comfortable walking for 6-7 hours with an ascent of 1000m over consecutive days then you are certainly fit enough to succeed on the route. Think of it as climbing Snowdon or Ben Nevis every day for a week! If you can do this then there is no reason why you can't complete the entire Haute Route. We find that all successful hikers share a real *Kandoo* attitude and that means high levels of grit and determination.

## FOOD & DRINK

This trip is on a full board basis except for meals on Day 1 and an evening meal on Day 9. If you have a dietary requirement or are a vegetarian then just let us know when you book so that we can plan a suitable menu.

The hotels provide hearty, traditional and generous meals. Drinks are not included with dinner, so please make sure you have some Euros and Swiss Francs with you.

Packed lunches will be produced by your guide and include local meats and cheeses, crusty bread and fresh seasonal vegetables. The lunch items will be shared between all of the group for carrying each day. Remember to bring your favourite snacks (cereal or energy bars, dried fruits, chocolate) with you to keep you going through the day.

Tap water is typically safe to drink in France and Switzerland so you can fill up your water bottle each morning at the hotel. On the trek itself, you will be passing many refuges where you will also be able to top up your water if needed.

## ACCOMMODATION

You will spend the 8 nights on the trek in 3-star hotels or lodges in twin rooms, with an evening meal (except on Day 1) included.

**Hotels** will be comfortable twin or double rooms with en-suite bathrooms.

**Lodges** are simple hotels with shared toilets and bathrooms - twin rooms will be booked where possible, however, please be aware that due to the interest in this route, this may not always be possible and on these nights shared dormitory accommodation may be used.

## YOUR GUIDE

Your guide will be an English speaking, experienced International Mountain Guide.

## TRANSPORT

During your trek, you will use public trains and buses as well as cable cars and private transfer buses. All transport on the itinerary is included in the cost.

On our "Lite" Trips, airport transfer are not included, so you will need to make your own arrangements to Chamonix and onwards from Zermatt.

## LUGGAGE

You will need two bags for this trip. One travel bag for your replacement clothes which will be transferred between locations by vehicle (max 10kg). Please note: Do not leave computers, tablets, cameras and valuable objects in your travel bag. One 30-40L rucksack with a large chest strap that you will carry during the day. You will carry your own personal equipment (spare warm clothes, waterproofs, water bottle, camera and sun screen) and valuables, as well as your packed lunch in your rucksack.

## HOW DO I GET THERE?

For travellers based in the UK or the US, it is best to fly to Geneva International Airport (GVA). Lots of airlines fly to Geneva from all of the major UK airports, and many of the larger US international airports as well. There are lots of companies offering transfers from Geneva to Chamonix. The cheapest options tend to be with [Alpybus](#) or [Chamexpress](#) who provide regular shared bus transfers allocated by arrival time. These are usually around 40 Euros each way for a shared transfer. Another option is to book through [Mountain Dropoffs](#), they offer smaller minibus style shared transfers for around 50 Euros each way. With Mountain Dropoffs, it is also possible to pay an additional fee for a private transfer.

You will meet the group at the pre-trek hotel in Chamonix.

At the end of the trip you will need to arrange your own onwards transport from Zermatt. Please be aware that Zermatt is a car-free town.

### Travelling Responsibly

Alternatively if you wish to travel more responsibly, then there are other ways to reach Chamonix. [Flixbus](#) and [BlablaCar](#) offer routes from London to Chamonix with a change in Paris. These take around 22 hours and tend to cost between £75-120 each way. The other option is to travel by train. This is a much quicker option taking between 10-12hrs London - Chamonix, with changes at Paris and Chambéry, however this does come at an increased cost. Expect to pay around £250-300 each way on an advance ticket. Tickets can be found at [Rail Europe](#).

If you choose to travel via train or bus, get in touch and let us know because we like to reward our responsible travellers!

## BUDGET & CHANGE

The currency in France and Italy is the Euro (EUR) and in Switzerland the Swiss Franc (CHF). For the latest exchange rates please see [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com).

Euros are accepted in Switzerland although the exchange rate will not be very good. However, if you are only likely to be buying the odd drink or snack while you are in Switzerland, this would probably be easier than exchanging money into Francs. Foreign money can be exchanged at the Global Exchange in Geneva airport on arrival or you can bring money already exchanged with you, as both these are open currencies. We would recommend the latter as it is no longer possible to exchange foreign currency notes in banks in France, so you may find it difficult to exchange your money after leaving the airport. The only places that exchange foreign banknotes are bureau-de-change which can be found in large cities. You will, however, be able to withdraw money from ATMs in Chamonix on Day 1 of your trip.

The simplest way to pay for things in the Alps is to use an international credit card or debit card. Visa and Mastercard are accepted everywhere alongside standard travel cards such as Monzo and Revolut. You may wish to have some Euros to hand, to pay for smaller items or souvenirs in case the trader does not accept cards. Credit and debit cards are also not accepted at the mountain refuges so you will need to carry enough cash for snacks, drinks and any personal expenses.

The average cost of a meal for 2 in Chamonix is around €50 (\$55). It's not a cheap place to eat out, however it makes up for this by offering free public transport all around the town. If you are wanting to buy some souvenirs to take home then these generally cost anywhere between €5 (\$6) for small items to €500 (\$550) for larger more bespoke gifts. Don't forget you will also need to budget for drinks whilst in the refuges too. Therefore, our recommended guidance for spending budget in the Alps would be roughly €220 on top of any tips, to give you ample souvenir spending money.

## TIPS

Tipping customs vary all over the world and can be very confusing when travelling to a new country. There is not a strong culture for tipping in France, but that said, anything you wish to give your guide in appreciation of his services will be welcome. You may wish to buy him a drink in the refuge or hotel.

Tips are not a substitute for good wages: our guides are all well paid and well looked after. Tipping is completely voluntary, and at your discretion. If you are unsure of how much to tip, a general guide of €10 per person for the entire trip should suffice. On the other hand, if you receive bad service or have not been treated well, you would not be expected to tip at all.



# FORMALITIES & HEALTH

## PASSPORT

Most travellers will require a passport valid for at least 6 months after your return date. It is your responsibility to confirm your specific requirements and please be aware that proof of onward travel may be required.

## VISA

Travelling to France is visa free for up to 90 days, for UK and US citizens

## VACCINATIONS

There are no specific health risks in the Mont Blanc region. However, you should ensure that your routine vaccinations and boosters are up to date, such as tetanus and MMR.

## INSURANCE

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are fully and adequately insured for the duration of your trip. Please ensure that all activities, excursions and destinations in your itinerary are included in your travel insurance policy, in addition to your regular cover for cancellation and medical expenses. Many insurance policies will have a maximum altitude limit, if you are climbing Gran Paradiso you should ensure you are covered for climbing up to 4100m.

We ask that you keep a copy of your policy summary (containing policy number and the emergency contact number for your insurer) in your day sack at all times, so that we can access this information should we need to contact the insurer on your behalf.

## MEDICATION

Remember to bring any personal medication with you and inform your guide of this (if necessary) during your pre-trek briefing.

In addition, your guide will have a first aid kit containing:

- Painkillers.
- An anti-inflammatory (tablets and gel).
- An anti-diarrheal
- A disinfectant, dressings (various sizes) and "double skin"
- A survival blanket

# EQUIPMENT & CLOTHING

## CLOTHING TO BRING

- A pair of waterproof hiking boots with ankle support
- A warm hat and a cap
- Sunglasses
- Breathable T-shirts
- A light fleece
- A warm jacket
- A waterproof and breathable jacket
- A pair of gloves
- Shorts
- Mountain pants
- Waterproof trousers
- A change of clothes
- A change of shoes

## EQUIPMENT TO BRING

- 1 hiking backpack of around 30L to carry your day's belongings
- 1 flexible travel bag weighing 15kg maximum for your spare belongings
- Telescopic walking sticks (strongly recommended)
- Sun protection (cream and stick)
- A water bottle of at least 2L
- Your personal medication
- Toilet paper
- A pocket knife, a spoon and a plastic box for lunches
- A sheet-sack for the night (only necessary in refuges and certain lodges)
- A torch
- A toiletries bag and a towel
- Recommended extras: ear plugs.

# HOW TO BOOK THIS TRIP

1

## **CHOOSE YOUR DATE AND CHECK AVAILABILITY**

A full list of available dates can be found on our website.

2

## **CONTACT US**

Contact us by phone, email or through our website. We will answer any questions you may have and send you a personalized itinerary and quote.

3

## **COMPLETE BOOKING AND PAYMENT**

When you are ready to book, we will send you a link to our online booking forms and participation agreements. We accept all major credit and debit cards and require a low 20% deposit to secure your place.

