



TOUR DU MONT BLANC EXPRESS

Detailed itinerary, 9-day trip:

(B=Breakfast, D=Dinner, LG=Luggage)

Day 1: Arrival Day

Welcome, Trip Briefing and dinner in Chamonix.

Meet your guide at 6:30pm in the lobby of the hotel.

(D, LG)

Day 2: Aiguille du Midi - Montenvers

One of the highlights of the trip is the cable-car ride to the top of the Aiguille du Midi.

Inaugurated in 1955, the cable-car is still the longest single-spanning cable in the world, bringing climbers, hikers and tourists to one of the most stunning vistas in the Alps. Enough time will be allowed to take photographs and enjoy the views before taking the cable-car down to the mid-station, where we begin our traverse to the Montenvers cog railway. An easy 4-hour hike with little elevation gain, under the towering Chamonix needles brings us to the Montenvers hotel and train station.

(B, D, LG)

Day 3: Chamonix - Les Contamines - Les Chapieux

A quick transfer to Les Contamines, followed by a one of the longest and more difficult hikes of the trip, as we cross two mountain passes, Col du Bonhomme and the Col de la Croix du Bonhomme and its refuge of the same name for a picnic lunch, or a hot soup/salad combo.

Freshly energized, the descent to the little hamlet of Les Chapieux awaits us, in the heart of the famous cheese-making region of the Beaufort, the Queen of the Gruyère cheeses.

(B, D, LG)

Day 4: Les Chapieux - Courmayeur

After a visit to a Beaufort cheese-making cooperative on the way, and the purchase of some cheese for our lunch picnic, we say good-bye to France, and hello to Italy. Over the Col de la Seigne leads our way to the Rifugio Elisabetta for a well deserved Italian coffee! A moderate walk to Lac Combal follows, and from there it's a quick transfer to Courmayeur, the mountaineering capital of the Italian Alps.

Gourmet pizza dinner in an authentic restaurant awaits us, followed by Italian gelato!

(B, D, LG)

Day 5: Courmayeur - Rifugio Bonatti

After a hearty breakfast, we begin along the cobble stone streets of the old town before heading steeply up to the Mont de la Saxe ridge and the first refuge, the Bertone, gaining nearly 900m (2,700ft). A further 5-6 hours is required to reach the Walter Bonatti refuge, perched high on the lateral moraine, looking out towards the South Face of the Mont Blanc Range and the towering Grandes Jorasses.

(B, D)

Day 6: Rifugio Bonatti - Champex-Lac

Continuing along the Mont de la Saxe ridge for a short time, we descend to the Val Ferret, only to climb again to the Rifugio Elena and possibly the best hot chocolate in the world!

Today's climb is short and sweet with the last views of this side of the range.

Once at the Grand Col Ferret, we say ciao to Italy and bonjour to Switzerland as we make our way to Champex-Lac.

(B, D, LG)

Day 7: Champex-Lac - Argentière

Today's hike takes us along a forested path of the TMB up a steep trail to the Bovine hut for lunch, where Nathalie, the owner, produces amazing home-cooked meals on a wood stove. She's also the owner of a large herd of 'fighting cows', a breed from the Val d'Hérens called 'Reines' (Queens). They are known for their aggressive behaviour towards each other and are the centre of elaborate events at the beginning and the end of each summer season. Two more hours of hiking bring us to the Col de Forclaz, before being taken to Argentière in France for the night.

(B, D, LG)

Day 8: Argentière - Lac Blanc - Chamonix

A hike from the valley bottom takes us steeply up nearly 800m (2,400ft) to the Lac Blanc refuge, famous with photographers the world over for its outstanding views of the Mont Blanc Range.

Lunch at the Lac Blanc refuge, followed by fresh fruit tart and coffee. A rugged descent takes us to the Flégère cable car and then down along the Arve river to Chamonix.

(B, D, LG)

Day 9: Departure Day

Depart at your own leisure from Chamonix.

(B)