



OCF MT BLANC TREKKING CHALLENGE

Trip notes

Welcome to RAW Travel... we hope that you enjoy exploring the world as much as we do. The European Alps offer some of the most spectacular and enjoyable walking in the world and this adventure offers the chance to combine three countries into one trip as we cross the rugged Alps from Switzerland to France and Italy. The trek around Mt. Blanc is one of Europe's best mountain walks and you'll get a chance to appreciate the different cultures, foods and peoples whilst you hike through glorious Alpine scenery



Introduction

The European Alps offer some of the most spectacular and enjoyable walking in the world and this adventure offers the chance to combine three countries into one trip as we cross the rugged Alps from Switzerland to France and Italy. The trek around Mt. Blanc. is one of Europe's best mountain walks and you'll get a chance to appreciate the different cultures, foods and peoples whilst you hike through glorious Alpine scenery.

The trip begins in Milan from where we transfer to Chamonix in France and begin our hiking challenge: the spectacular circuit around Mont-Blanc, one of the world's classic hikes demands some respect. From the massif of Mont Blanc (4801m- the highest mountain in western Europe), seven valleys extend into France, Italy and Switzerland and each retains its own unique culture, architecture and landscape and it's over these valleys that we'll cross. Each day we hike up to the ridges and descend into valleys below, with time to enjoy views of glaciers, green mountain meadows and snow capped peaks. This is a mountain trip where we cross passes above 2700m walking an average of 5 to 7 hours a day so you need to be in good physical condition (steep ascents and descents averaging 1000m to 1200 m up and 700 to 1000m down each day).

You'll be glad to hear that this is a supported trek where you carry just your daypack and stay in comfortable accommodation where your main luggage will be waiting at the end of each day. At the end of our hike we transfer back to Chamonix and have time to enjoy the town and it's glorious surroundings. Take a trip up the thrilling Aiguille de Midi cable car and enjoy lunch in Europe's highest restaurant at 3842m with breathtaking views over Mt. Blanc. From Chamonix we depart to Italy and make our way to Milan, we have a chance to explore the city and it's wonderful museums and cafes before departing the next day.

Itinerary

Day 1 - Milan to Chamonix

Today we depart Milan in the morning to head northwards into the Italian Alps changing transport in Aosta and the alpine town of Courmayeur, surrounded by spectacular Mountain scenery. We cross through the famed Mt. Blanc tunnel to Chamonix arriving in the afternoon. (D)
Overnight Chamonix accommodation (Twin share).

Day 2 - Chamonix at leisure

A day to relax and enjoy this most famous of mountain towns, the birthplace of modern mountaineering. The Mont Blanc mountain range is one of the most spectacular regions in the Alps. Marked trails on the circuit straddle three countries (France, Italy and Switzerland) and cross over mountain passes allowing hikers to enjoy the magnificent scenery on this long loop. The majesty of Mont Blanc with the summer flora of wildflowers, shrubbery and trees has inspired generations of alpine visitors, and this region has been attracting mountaineers and hikers from around the world for over two hundred years. Late spring to summer is the best time for hiking in this area.

The town of Chamonix is an authentic French mountain town, located at the foot of Mont Blanc. It lies in one of the most picturesque valleys of the French Alps, with innumerable alpine peaks towering around you, pine forests, alpine valleys to explore, and beautiful glaciers spilling from the high massif. The town is home to 10 000 inhabitants, swelling to 100 000 during peak season. Today is at leisure to explore and we will meet up with our guides in the evening for a pre-trek

briefing. (B)

Overnight Chamonix accommodation (Twin share)

Day 3 - Les Houches to Les Contamines

We have a short transfer before going up with the cable car to Bellevue (1676m) where we'll enjoy panoramic views of the Mont-Blanc range. Begin hiking down below the tumbling Bionnassay glacier, and up to the Col de Tricot (2281m'). A steep descent brings us to the Chalets de Miage (1680m). After lunch, a short climb takes us up to Le Truc (1811m), then down through the thickly wooded hillside to the charming small town of Les Contamines (1256m). Hiking time is about six hours.

(B,L,D).Hotel: Hôtel Le Grizzli

Day 4 - Les Contamines to Les Chapieux

After a short drive, we hike up an old Roman road to the Plan des Dames, then make a long ascent to the Col du Bonhomme (2468m) and Croix du Bonhomme (2328m) for lunch. In afternoon we hike downhill on a grassy trail to les Chapieux (1676m). Approximately six and half hours hiking.

(B,L,D). Inn: Auberge de La Nova

Day 5 - Les Chapieux to Lavachey

We transfer to the end of the « Vallée des Glaciers », then enjoy a relatively easy hike over the Col de la Seigne (2513m) and down into Italy to Lac Combal and Visaille. Transfert in Val Veni to Courmayeur where you spend the end of the afternoon to explore this resort town spectacularly situated beneath the Grand Jorassas and Brenva Glacier. Here the views of the Mont-Blanc are Himalayan in scale - the mountain rises in a breathtaking abruptness from the Veny Valley to the summit 10000 feet above. Transfert to Lavachey in the Val Ferret, where we'll spend the night in small and comfortable inn. Hiking time is four hours.

(B,L,D). Inn: Auberge de Lavachey

Day 6 - Lavachey to Champex

After a short transfer, we walk up a nice trail past the spectacular Glacier de Pré de Bar . Cross the Grand Col Ferret (2573m) to enter Switzerland, and descend to the scenic village of la Fouly (1609m), located beneath the Glacier de l'A Neuve. An easy trail continues down into the Swiss Val Ferret to Praz-de-fort. Transfer to the small Lake resort of Champex. Hiking time is seven hours.

(B,L,D). Hotel: Hôtel Glacier & Sporting

Day 7 - Champex to La Forclaz

We start hiking down to Champex d'en Bas, and then up a steep winding path heading towards the north across alpine pastures (great views of Martigny, the Rhone Valley and the Valais).

Weather permitting, an alternate trail by the « Fenetre d'Arpette » (2670m), a rocky « window » across a mountain ridge, can be taken. Six or seven hours hiking.

(B,L,D). Inn: Hôtel du Col

Day 8 - La Forclaz to Chamonix

Hike over the Col de Balme (2190m) through forest, high pastures and dairies, and back into the Chamonix Valley. Majestic views of Mont-Blanc reappear as we hike over the Col. We descend gradually into the forest to Trelechamp, hamlet above Argentiere. Hiking time is six hours. Transfer back to Chamonix. End of the trip. (B,L)

Overnight Chamonix accommodation (Twin share)



Day 9 – Chamonix to Milan
Return to Milan arriving late afternoon. (B)

Arrival Complications

We don't expect any problems (and nor should you!) but if for any reason you are unable to commence your group trip as scheduled, please contact your starting point hotel, requesting that you speak to or leave a message for your trip leader. No refund is available on missed transfers or portions of your trip owing to a different flight arrival or delayed flight arrival. Any additional cost incurred in order to meet up with your group is at your own expense.

Joining Point

Hotel in Chamonix (TBA) or pick up in Milan.

Joining Point Instructions

TBA - will be advised closer to the time.

Group Size

Minimum of 8 and maximum of 16 travellers per group

All RAW trips are accompanied by an experienced trek leader(s) who are trained in first aid and knowledgeable about the activity undertaken and area you are visiting. If the group size is above 10 then your group leader is also accompanied by a second guide as well as a driver in a support vehicle.

The aim of the group leader is to direct you through the walk safely and to help you have the best time possible. They all have a sound knowledge of our local area focusing on its history, geology and the natural environment.

Accommodation

Hotels (3 nts), simple mountain inns and hotels (5 nts)

Meal Inclusions

8 Breakfasts, 6 Lunches, 6 Dinners

Where special Dietary Conditions are requested this will be catered for where appropriate and supply exists. It may require a trekker supplying some items.

Transport

Air-conditioned coach, local bus, cable car, walking

Physical Rating

Have a look at the pre trekking guide for tips and advice on fitness levels. You will be walking on steep mountain terrain for between 5 & 7 hours a day carrying only a daypack.

<http://rawchallenges.com/guide-to-trekking.php>

We expect people to have a reasonably good level of fitness where they are taking regular physical exercise in the lead up to the event. This can be from walking, cycling or going to the gym. You will



also need to practice hiking in a mountain environment with your equipment that you'll be taking to Mt. Blanc. You should prepare for walking several hours a day with steep ascents and descents.

Important Notes

1. Please note this RAW trip is operated by our experienced local partners accompanied by a RAW leader(s) (depending on eventual group numbers).
2. Passengers with special meal requirements must ensure they or their travel agent inform RAW of this at the time of booking.
3. There is limited space available in the vehicle for luggage storage so please only bring essential items on the trip. See 'What to Take'.

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory for all our trips. We require that, at a minimum, you are covered for medical expenses including emergency repatriation. We strongly recommend that the policy also covers personal liability, cancellation, curtailment and loss of luggage and personal effects.

When travelling on a group trip, you will not be permitted to join the group until evidence of travel insurance and the insurance company's 24 hour emergency contact number has been seen by your leader. If you have credit card insurance your tour leader will require proof of purchase of the trip (a receipt of credit card statement) with a credit card in your name. Contact your bank for details of their participating insurer, the level of coverage and emergency contact telephone number.

Health

All RAW travellers need to be in good physical health in order to participate fully in the group travel experience. If, in the opinion of our group leader, any traveller is unable to complete the itinerary without undue risk to themselves and/or the rest of the group, RAW reserves the right to exclude them from all or part of a trip without refund. Although there are no specific health requirements for this trip please be aware you need to be in good health to undertake this trip due to the sometimes demanding conditions that exist in these areas. You should consult your doctor if you have any medical conditions to assess your suitability before departure.

We recommend that you carry a First Aid kit as well as any personal medical requirements . Please be aware that we are in remote areas and away from medical facilities for some time during this trip, and for legal reasons our leaders are prohibited from administering any type of drug including headache tablets, antibiotics, etc.

Your first aid kit should include:

- *headache tablets*
- *diarrhoea treatment (both a blocker to bring relief from the symptoms and an antibiotic)*
- *band-aids (blister pads)*
- *antiseptic for cuts & scrapes*
- *lip balm*
- *insect repellent- high factor sunscreen.*



Spending Money

Every traveller is different and therefore spending money requirements will vary. Most of your meals are included but you will have to pay for the odd meal, any snacks & drinks en route or evening drinks. Allow 30€ per day. Some travellers may drink more than others while other travellers like to purchase more souvenirs than most. Please consider your own spending habits when it comes to allowing for drinks, shopping and tipping. Any tip that you wish to give your local guides or leader in recognition of excellent service is always appreciated.

Currency

France and Italy use the Euro and Switzerland the Swiss Franc but the Euro is widely accepted in Switzerland as well at most shops serving tourists. The exchange rate at the time of writing is: \$1= €0.62

Emergency Funds

Please also make sure you have access to an additional €300, to be used when unforeseen incidents or circumstances outside our control (e.g. a natural disaster, or an outbreak of bird flu) necessitate a change to our planned route. This is a rare occurrence but it is well worth being prepared!

Emergency Contact

In the case of a genuine crisis or emergency, our Melbourne HQ can be reached on:
Tel: +61 3 9597 0210 Outside of office hours please call: 0413 703 632

Your fellow walkers

We ask you to be understanding of the various needs and preferences of your group - patience with your fellow travellers is sometimes required for the benefit of everyone's travel experience. Remember too that you have responsibilities to the group. If you are requested to be at a place at a certain time, ensure that you don't keep the rest of the group waiting. We have found time and time again that the very best trips we operate are those where the dynamics within the group work well - this takes just a little effort on your part.

Responsible travel

We believe strongly in low impact or rather positive impact tourism. Broadly speaking this means that we try to minimise the negative aspects of tourism on the local cultures and environments that we visit and highlight the positive aspects. Please see our online policy for more details on our social and environmental approach and commitment:

<http://rawtravel.com/resptravel/responsibletravel.pdf>

What To Take

Generally speaking though, you should pack as lightly as possible and we recommend keeping the weight under 12kg. There is limited space available in the vehicle for luggage storage so please only bring essential items on the trip. Your main luggage is transported for you on the trip, so you carry only a daypack.

Suitcases are not recommended. Most travellers carry their luggage in a backpack, although an overnight/sports bag with a shoulder strap would suffice. You will also need a day pack when out

walking to carry a jacket and personal effects.

Visas

Australian citizens visiting Schengen countries (of which Switzerland, France and Italy are part of) do not need to apply for visas if staying for not more than 90 out of 180 days.

Recommended list of what to take:

Travel documents:

- Travel insurance, air ticket
- Credit card & spending money

Personal items

- Blister kit, rehydration salts and any personal medication you use
- Alarm clock and head torch/flashlight
- Water bottles or Camel Bak system (Min 3 litres total recommended)
- Sunscreen, hat and sunglasses
- Comfortable daypack
- Waterproof bags for rain protection while walking (*garbage bags are fine*)

Clothing

- Well worn in boots with ankle support
- 3 T-shirts (lightweight quick drying fabric) or long sleeved Trekking shirt
- 2 pairs of shorts / lightweight trousers (for walking in)
- Warm fleece, sweater, hat (cold evenings)
- Waterproof jacket & overtrousers

Optional

- walking poles. good for balance & taking weight off your knees on descents.

Expect 20-30 C at lower altitudes and at night temperature can fall below 10c. Being in high mountains you should prepare for all eventualities with weather. High altitudes will always be cool and if cloud sets in it can be cold & damp.

Other Suggestions:

- Camera
- Spare batteries for camera
- Reading & writing material
- Walking poles

RAW travel newsletter

We have a free email newsletter full of traveller's stories and experiences as well as news on new trips that we are running. Please send us an extract from your travel journal at the end of the trip.

The information in these trip notes has been compiled with care and is provided in good faith. However it is subject to change, and does not form part of the contract between the passenger and RAW Travel.