

Ultimate Haute Route

FROM CHAMONIX TO ZERMATT, WITH TWO ALPINE HIKE-IN LODGES



Wilderness Travel



Ultimate Haute Route

TRIP DATES

2024

August 22-September 2, 2024
September 5-16, 2024

2025

July 2-13, 2025
July 18-29, 2025
August 7-18, 2025
August 21-September 1, 2025
September 4-15, 2025

A legendary trail traces the highest French and Swiss mountains between Chamonix and Zermatt by way of glaciers, cool mountain tarns, and meadows full of wildflowers. It's the Haute Route, pioneered in the mid-19th century by the British Alpine Club and today one of Europe's favorite long-distance hikes. Our classic version, with 10 hiking days, features two overnights in remote hike-in lodges so we can savor alpenglow on the high peaks and enjoy alpine camaraderie with fellow hikers. At the start and finish, we explore two of the great mountaineering centers in the world—Chamonix, above which towers the highest massif in Western Europe, and Zermatt, dominated by the crooked spire of the Matterhorn.

Itinerary

DAY 1

CHAMONIX / WARM-UP HIKE

Chamonix, a charming old mountain town, sits right at the foot of Mont Blanc (15,770'), the highest mountain in western Europe. A climbing and skiing center for over a hundred years and the mountaineering "capital" of Europe, Chamonix has a wonderful atmosphere and a well preserved Old Town with cobbled streets full of lively sidewalk cafes. From near the center of town, the famous Aiguille du Midi cable car whisks visitors to 12,000 feet for stunning views of the Mont Blanc range. We meet early at the hotel in Chamonix for a trip orientation, then head out for a 5-hour round-trip "warm-up" hike up to the Aiguilles Rouges ("Red Peaks") across the valley from Mont Blanc. Spectacular views on today's hike include the Aiguille Verte, all the "needles" (spire-like peaks) of the Chamonix Valley, and the incredible Mer de Glace, a curving glacier almost four miles long. We return by cable car from La Flegere, or have an option to continue hiking along the Grand Balcon to the cable car station at Planpraz. Overnight in Chamonix...LD

Hiking Details: 6 miles, 4-5 hours, 1,700 feet ascent/descent

Note: We suggest you arrive in Chamonix at least one day in advance of the trip start. We will be happy to book this hotel night for you. Most people fly to Geneva, Switzerland, and then transfer to Chamonix. We offer a complimentary van transfer from the Geneva airport directly to our hotel in the center of Chamonix; a booking form is enclosed with your confirmation packet.

DAY 2

ARGENTIERE / COL DE BALME / COL DE LA FORCLAZ

Driving past Argentiere, with superb views of Mont Blanc, the Aiguille Verte, and the Chamonix granite needles, we continue to our trailhead to begin the Haute Route hike. We ascend through meadows where dairy cows graze and hike up through woodlands to cross the Col de Balme (7,230'), which marks the French-Swiss frontier. With wonderful vistas of Mont Blanc along the way, we descend into Col de la Forclaz, located right on the mountain pass where the road leads west to France or east to Switzerland. Overnight at a hotel in the Trient/Martigny region...BLD

Hiking Details: 9 miles, 6-7 hours, 3,000 feet ascent, 3,050 feet descent

The Haute Route: The magnificent high traverse from Chamonix, France, to Zermatt, Switzerland, explores the terrain where alpinism and the sport of mountaineering were born in the 19th century. The original High Level Route was developed more than 100 years ago, primarily for ski-mountaineering expeditions. Over the years, another Haute Route evolved, a walking route that has become the quintessential walking experience across the European Alps—it ascends to nearly 10,000 feet yet requires no technical mountaineering skills, and rewards the walker with some of the most spectacular high mountain views in the Alps. There are constantly changing panoramas of high peaks, alpine meadows alive with wildflowers, picturesque old farms, and beautiful lakes.



TRIP DETAILS AT-A-GLANCE

- Length:** 12 days
Arrive: Chamonix, France
Depart: Zermatt, Switzerland
Lodging: 9 nights hotels or country inns, 2 nights small hike-in lodges
Meals: All meals included except 1 dinner and 2 lunches (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
Activity: Hiking / Trekking
Trip Level: 1 2 3 4 5+ 6
11 hiking days on moderate to steep trails, 5-8 hours a day, altitudes between 6,000-9,600 feet, van support (for luggage or if you wish to skip a day's hike). This is a strenuous hiking trip, read "What the Trip is Like" for more details.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Experience one of the planet's great mountain hikes—with 10 amazing hiking days
- Enjoy two overnights in classic hike-in lodges for alpenglow over the high peaks and mountain camaraderie
- A team of experienced and knowledgeable Trip Leaders who know the Alps as home
- Explore Chamonix and Zermatt, two of the most famous mountain towns in the world



“Flawlessly operated and run.
This trip is obviously very well
thought out.”

Roger W., San Francisco, CA

DAY 3

ALPINE HIKE / CHAMPEX

We have two hiking options today depending on weather and trail conditions. The first hike is at lower elevation. From Col de la Forclaz (5,026'), a wonderful forested trail used by shepherds for centuries to bring their cattle to mountain pastures leads up the mountain and opens to an alpine meadow at 6,690 feet. We'll stop at a charming refuge and farm that's still in use today. From here, we'll descend through a forest and take in sweeping views of the Rhone Valley with the river slicing through valley pastures and villages and distant views of the peaks of the Bernese Oberland. The trail then descends steeply into the Swiss hamlets of Champex-d'en Haut and Champex-d'en Bas. A five-minute drive brings us to Champex (or you can walk the additional distance).

The second option (if weather allows) is one of the most strenuous of the Haute Route as we ascend a steep footpath alongside the magnificent Trient Glacier to the rocky Fenêtre d'Arpette (8,750') before descending into the narrow glacial Val d'Arpette. The ascent begins gradually, but as we approach the top, the trail is quite steep and then disappears into a jumble of huge boulders. We'll scramble over and between the boulders to reach the summit, with its panoramic views of peaks and the glacier. This is not technically difficult, but it is strenuous as it comes at the end of a long ascent. The descent to the valley is also quite steep and challenging, yet rewards us with an abundance of wildflowers, sparkling streams, and marmots with their shrill calls. Overnight at a hotel at the charming lakeside resort of Champex (private rooms with attached bath)...BLD

Hiking Details: (Option 1) 7 miles, 6-7 hours, 1,700 feet ascent, and 2,300 feet descent

(Option 2): 8.5 miles, 7-8 hours, 4,300 feet ascent, 3,300 feet descent

DAY 4

VERBIER / REFUGE DE MONT FORT

We hike from Champex to Sembrancher through lovely hamlets, enjoy a picnic lunch, then drive to the village of Verbier. In this famous ski resort, we restock with lunch foods for the next couple of days when the vehicle cannot reach us. Another cable car takes us to Les Ruinettes and then to our trail to Mont Fort Refuge (shared rooms and baths). This refuge at 8,060 feet has good views of the complete Mont Blanc Massif...BLD

Hiking Details: 5.5 miles, 4 hours, 1,600 feet ascent, 1,500 feet descent

DAY 5

GRAND DESERT / REFUGE PRAFLEURI

Today is a wild, rugged cross-country hike in one of the most remote areas of the Alps, following a little-used trail that stays high in the mountains above 8,000 feet and crosses three alpine passes and the “grand desert,” an alpine valley left behind by a retreating glacier. Along the way we skirt the glaciers and lakes of the Mont Fort and the beautiful Rosablanche mountains. Ibex and chamois are often seen near the remote Prafleuri Refuge (8,660'), where we spend the



night (shared rooms and baths). Today's hike may be modified depending on snow cover...BLD

Hiking Details: 10 miles, 9-10 hours, 3,050 feet ascent, 2,400 feet descent

Note: Today and tomorrow are our other really tough hiking days, due to the length of the hikes, the multiple steep ascents and descents, and the rough terrain. On most days of the trip, we hike up and over one mountain pass, but on these two days we cross over two mountain passes on each day. On this part of the Haute Route, we will encounter more sections of glacial snow, loose scree, boulder fields, and trail exposure than we see on most other days of the trip. We will also occasionally need to use our hands to scramble over and between a jumble of boulders. Though these are some of the toughest hiking days, they are also often a highlight for trip members. After finishing these two days, we are rewarded with a well-deserved rest day in Arolla!

DAYS 6-7

COL DES ROUX / COL DE RIEDMATTEN / AROLLA

From the Präfleuri Refuge, we attack the short but steep Col des Roux (9,197'), where ibex may be seen. Below the pass, we descend to the still waters of Lac des Dix, near which is a labyrinth of marmot dens. We hike along the lakeshore before ascending the Col de Riedmatten (9,577'), which may provide a brief glimpse of the Matterhorn. We also have stunning views across the Arolla Valley to Pigne D'Arolla, Mont Collon, and Mont Blanc de Cheilon, three mountains with remarkable glaciers dominating our route. Descend to Arolla, a tiny village in the Val d'Arolla at the foot of several glaciers. The next day is free in Arolla, with a chance to rest after the first week of hiking, or venture out on one of many optional day hikes. Overnights at hotel (private rooms with attached baths)...BLD on Day 6; BD on Day 7

Hiking Details on Day 6: 10 miles, 7-8 hours, 2,500 feet ascent, 4,300 feet descent



“Everything clicked smoothly to make this the best vacation I've ever had. This was my first trip of this kind and I could tell early on that WT is a well-oiled wheel—a very smooth operation.”

Anne W., Boulder, CO





“I love the hiking and the scenery, but I particularly appreciate the feeling on WT trips that I am traveling with friends—both the Trip Leaders whom I have now known for years in some cases, and the new friends I’ve made along the way.”

Maryann M., Los Angeles, CA

DAY 8

COL DU TORRENT / LAC DE MOIRY / GRIMENTZ OR ST. LUC

Driving to the villages of Les Hauderes and Villa, we pass through a very traditional region of the Valais Canton, where some locals still wear traditional Valais dress while working in the hay meadows. Our hike brings us up to the Col de Torrent (9,570') with stunning views up the Moiry Glacier to the peaks of Grand Cornier and Dent Blanche (14,290')—one of the most outstanding vistas in the Alps. We meet up with our waiting vehicle and head to our hotel in the charming Valais village of Grimentz or St. Luc...BLD

Hiking Details: 6 miles, 4-5 hours, 2,800 feet ascent, 2,200 feet descent

Driving Time: 1.5 hours

DAY 9

MEIDPASS / GRUBEN

From the nearby village of St. Luc, we have a choice of routes on which to cross the Meidpass (9,154'), with superb views of the Schwartzhorn, Gletschorn, and Weisshorn peaks. This brings us to the German-speaking area of the Canton of Valais, and after lunch by the Meidsee Lake, we make our descent to the remote hamlet of Gruben and our comfortable inn (private rooms, shared baths)...BLD

Hiking Details: 7 miles, 4-5 hours, 2,050 feet ascent, 3,200 feet descent

DAY 10

AUGSTBORDPASS / ST. NIKLAUS / ZERMATT

A long and gradual climb to the Augstbordpass (9,495') offers superb views eastward over the Mischabel Range—a 14,000-foot-high mountain range between Saas Fee and Zermatt. We descend on a contouring trail to the charming hamlet of Jungu, where a cable car takes us down to St. Niklaus. We then connect with the private cog railway to Zermatt and our hotel...BL

Hiking Details: 8 miles, 6-7 hours, 3,500 feet ascent, 3,000 feet descent

DAY 11

ZERMATT

We have the day free to explore the most famous of all alpine centers, Zermatt, the terminus for the Haute Route from Chamonix. This unique mountain village, surrounded by glaciers and a dozen 13,000-foot peaks, is steeped in the lore of alpinism and dominated by the crooked pyramid of the Matterhorn.

Automobiles are not allowed in town; access is only by train and on foot. For those feeling energetic, one of the Trip Leaders will be available to lead a local hike or help you with the many options that Zermatt offers, including a hike up to the Hornli Hut, starting point for ascents of the Matterhorn (14,684'), or an exciting cable car ride to the top of the Klein Matterhorn (12,533'). We gather for a Farewell Dinner in the evening. Overnight in hotel...BD

Hiking Details: 5 miles, 4 hours, 2,350 feet ascent/descent

DAY 12

ZERMATT / DEPART

Our trip ends after breakfast in our Zermatt hotel. Most trip members transfer to Geneva on their own by train, or depart for other destinations in Europe...B

Trip Cost, Payment & Insurance

TRIP COST

Prices are per person, valid through 2024

\$6995 (11-14 members)

\$7595 (4-10 members)

Single supplement: \$860

Single and double rooms are offered when possible, but both couples and those who pay the Single Supplement will have to share dormitory style accommodations for the two nights at the alpine lodges, and singles may have to share a room for up to two additional nights.

2025 Trip Cost: Please call for details

To offer the lowest possible cost, our trips are priced according to the number of participants on the trip. All costs are per person, based on double occupancy. If you wish to have a single room, you must pay the single supplement fee. Please note that Wilderness Travel staff, or guests of Wilderness Travel such as travel writers, photographers, or leaders-in-training, are not included in the tier pricing count.

CURRENCY EXCHANGE RATE

Because the prices published for our program are set so far in advance of the trip dates, we are occasionally faced with exceptional cost increases and/or currency fluctuations that affect the actual cost of running the trip. In most years, no price changes are necessary. However, we do reserve the right to raise or lower the trip price if there is a significant change in costs or exchange rates. If this is the case, your final invoice will reflect the difference in trip cost.

TRIP COST INCLUDES

- Expert leadership of at least two Wilderness Travel Trip Leaders (and sometimes three, depending on group size)
- Accommodations in hotels, inns, and refuges
- All meals included except 1 dinner and 2 lunches as indicated in the Detailed Itinerary (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- A glass of wine or beer with dinner
- Van support and luggage transfer
- Land transportation, transfers between overnight stops
- Cable cars, funiculars, and cog rails to and from trailheads for scheduled hikes

TRIP COST DOES NOT INCLUDE

International airfare, airport transfers, any meals not specified after each itinerary day, airport departure taxes, optional tipping or gratuities to leaders or staff, additional hotel nights made necessary by airline schedule changes or other factors, pre-trip expenses such as immunizations (if any), travel insurance, or passports and visas; and other expenses of a personal nature (alcoholic beverages, laundry, etc.).

PAYMENT SCHEDULE

At time of reservation: \$600

90 days prior to departure: Balance

CANCELLATION AND TRANSFER FEE SCHEDULE

Up to 91 days prior to departure: No charge!

61-90 days prior to departure: 25% of trip cost

46-60 days prior to departure: 50% of trip cost

45 days or less: 100% of trip cost

TRAVEL INSURANCE

We highly recommend you purchase travel insurance. You can take advantage of a comprehensive Travel Protection Plan designed for Wilderness Travel by Travelex, or purchase other insurance on your own. See our website for details: www.wildernesstravel.com/insurance

Arrival & Departure

Upon confirming your trip reservation, we will send you a Welcome Packet that includes a list of documents (passport, visas, etc.) required for your trip. Please feel free to call if you would like this information before making your air arrangements.

If you have booked extra services before or after the trip, an Extra Services Confirmation will be sent with your Final Documents.

ARRIVAL & MEETING PLACE

Chamonix, France

Suggested Airport: Geneva Airport (GVA)

Suggested Date & Time: Anytime prior to Day 1

Meeting Place: You will meet your Trip Leader in the lobby of Grand Hotel des Alpes in Chamonix at 8:30 am on Day 1.

The transfer from Geneva Airport to our hotel in Chamonix is included in the cost of the trip. It is a van service that will meet you at your requested flight—even if you arrive a few days ahead of the actual trip start date. Please note this is a public van transfer service and it is likely that other passengers may join the same transfer. The journey from the Geneva Airport to Chamonix is roughly 1.5 hours with this service. Please let us know if you would like to reserve this transfer by filling out our Extra Services Request Form.

DEPARTURE

Zermatt, Switzerland

Suggested Airport: Geneva Airport (GVA)

Suggested Date & Time: Day 12, after 12:00 pm

The trip ends in Zermatt after breakfast on Day 12. If you are returning to the Geneva Airport, this requires a 4-hour train ride. Your Trip Leaders will assist you with information on return transportation to Geneva. Zermatt has excellent transportation services to Geneva City and Geneva Airport by train, with one connection in Visp. The first train to depart Zermatt arrives in Geneva at approximately 9:45 am. Reservations are not needed and tickets can be purchased on the day of departure. You can check online at www.sbb.ch/en or www.raileurope.com for the most current information on fares and train schedules.

INTERNATIONAL AIR TRAVEL

You are responsible for making your own arrangements for flights to and from Europe.

There are many online consolidators for booking travel, but for more personal help arranging air transport, you can contact Exito Travel at 1-800-655-4053 in the US or 1-800-670-2605 in Canada. They are very adept at putting flight itineraries together, to even the most far-flung places. More information can be found on Exito's website at www.exitotravel.com.

Depending on your routing, it is necessary to depart from the US one or possibly two days prior to Day 1 of the trip itinerary. The name on your airline ticket must match the name on your passport exactly, and your passport must be valid for at least six months after your date of return to the US.

Please do not purchase your tickets until you are confirmed on the trip. Once your tickets have been purchased, please send us a copy of your airline schedule so we can reserve your airport transfers. It is your responsibility to ensure your flight times coordinate with the arrival and departure logistics for this trip.

Accommodations

HOTELS IN CHAMONIX

Chamonix, France

Day 1 (1 night)

In Chamonix, we stay at one of the following properties:



GRAND HOTEL DES ALPES

A truly wonderful hotel that WT groups have enjoyed for years, the elegant Grand Hotel des Alpes is right in the center of Chamonix, set back on a lovely plaza facing a pedestrians-only street. A historic property newly rebuilt from stem to stern, it is Italian-owned and run with superb taste and great service. The quiet garden terrace along the river is a great place for a drink in the evening or a breakfast buffet in the morning. There's also a pool, steam room, and Jacuzzi. Without a doubt, this is the best place to stay in Chamonix!



LE HAMEAU ALBERT 1ER

Set in the heart of Chamonix, the world capital of mountaineering, this 21-room hotel is a tranquil oasis with views of the imposing face of Mont Blanc. Constructed in 1903, the hotel started out as a simple, family-run guesthouse and still offers a cozy ambiance and the friendly welcome of the Carrier family. In addition to the main building, there are chalet accommodations—all nestled in a rustic garden. Amenities include an indoor/outdoor pool, sauna, and fitness room.

Accommodations (cont'd)

HOTELS IN TRIENT AND MARTIGNY

Trient/Martigny, Switzerland

Day 2 (1 night)

In Trient or Martigny, we stay at one of the following properties:



HOTEL DU COL DE LA FORCLAZ

Sitting right on the mountain pass where the road leads west to France or east to Switzerland, this is a mountain accommodation with simple rooms and shared toilets/showers. The food is hearty and home-cooked and there's a nice patio where we can relax and enjoy the views. Depending on availability, trip members may have to share rooms on this night.



MARTIGNY BOUTIQUE HOTEL

Situated in the small town of Martigny in the Lower Valais, this uniquely artistic hotel has 52 guest rooms and suites—each named after an artist and decorated with pieces from one of Switzerland's prestigious cultural foundations. The locally renowned restaurant serves regional specialties and Peruvian cuisine, available in the dining room or outside on the terrace. The hotel also has a good wine bar, and is part of an innovative project that gives employment to people with disabilities, adding to the friendly, welcoming atmosphere.



HOTEL DU GLACIER

Champex, Switzerland

Day 3 (1 night)

The comfortable Hotel du Glacier sits on the main and only street of the pretty little village of Champex. The same lovely couple has owned it for many years and they also run the restaurant, which has great food and a relaxed atmosphere. The hotel is steps away from a picturesque mountain lake.



CABANE MONT FORT

Verbier, Switzerland

Day 4 (1 night)

Sensational views are all around us at Cabane Mont Fort, a superbly located mountain refuge at 8,000 feet owned by the Swiss Alpine Club. The old stone building sits at the top of a plateau above the famed Swiss ski resort of Verbier. It has simple multi-bedded dorm rooms with shared toilets/showers. The whole of the Mont Blanc massif is in view here—the setting is truly dramatic and it's a treat to savor the views from the beautiful sun deck.



PRÄFLEURI HUT

Swiss Alps, Switzerland

Day 5 (1 night)

Set in an isolated spot at 8,600 feet between Verbier and Arolla, the Präfleuri Hut (or Cabane de Präfleuri in French) allows us to sleep high on the Haute Route rather than descending to the valley floor for the night. We sleep in multi-bedded dorm-style rooms with shared toilets/showers. Local ski guides Babeth and Paul are our welcoming hosts here.



GRAND HOTEL KURHAUS

Arolla, Switzerland

Days 6 to 7 (2 nights)

This historic Victorian stone hotel at 6,000 feet on the Haute Route trail sits apart from the little village of Arolla in a forest clearing. Built in 1896 and loaded with charm and character, it has been beautifully renovated with all the modern comforts. There's a great downstairs bar with a crackling fireplace, an ancient wood-paneled salon, antique skis on the wall, and a wonderful terrace garden in front for enjoying a beer and views of Mont-Collon, Pigne d'Arolla, and other peaks we've been viewing from the trail.

Accommodations (cont'd)

HOTELS IN GRIMENTZ AND ST. LUC

Grimentz/St. Luc, Switzerland

Day 8 (1 night)

In Grimentz or St. Luc, we stay at one of the following properties:



HOTEL ALPINA

The Alpina is a modern chalet-style hotel with wonderful flower-box-filled balconies attached to all the guest rooms. The hotel blends in well with its surroundings on the edge of the historic part of Grimentz, an ancient and undiscovered Swiss hamlet of tiny cobbled streets and classic wooden chalets. The dining/breakfast room has great mountain views.



GRAND CHALET FAVRE

This historic chalet-style hotel dates from the 1930s and is set right in the heart of the village of St. Luc. Guest rooms are cozy but comfortable and tastefully decorated in alpine style. Spectacular views include the Val d'Anniviers and the mighty 4,000-meter peaks looming just above the end of the valley.



HOTEL SCHWARZHORN

Gruben, Switzerland

Day 9 (1 night)

In Gruben, a classic stop on the hikers' Haute Route, the stone-built Hotel Schwarzhorn is the only accommodation in this tiny mountain hamlet. Nestled in the remote Turtmanntal Valley, it has basic rooms with in-room sinks and shared toilets/showers across the hall. We hike the Haute Route trail right to this hotel in the afternoon, and hike out the next morning, no van transfer required!



BEAUSITE ZERMATT

Zermatt, Switzerland

Days 10 to 11 (2 nights)

We enjoy famous Swiss hospitality at this traditional century-old hotel, with its understated Old World elegance and wonderful views of the Matterhorn. Cozy guest rooms are modern, clean, and spacious. The large pool area has fantastic windows looking out to the Matterhorn, and there are also Jacuzzis, saunas, steam room, and massage treatments available. The hotel is just a 5-minute walk from the main shopping area.

Trip Leaders

Wilderness Travel Trip Leaders have a passion and a joy for creating an unforgettable journey. We are extremely proud of them and the incredible travel experiences they make possible. For more information about our Trip Leaders, including client comments about them and which specific trips they will be leading, please visit our webpage and click on “Trip Leaders”: www.wildernesstravel.com/trip/ultimate-haute-route-hiking-trek/



KILLIAN BUCKLEY

Killian Buckley grew up in Killarney, Ireland. His parents, a harpist and a poet, instilled in him a great appreciation for the beautiful things in life, and once he found the mountains, it didn't take long for him to become addicted to the wild beauty he found there. He began hiking and climbing regularly, and what began as a hobby soon became a way of life that led him on extraordinary adventures, including climbing some of the Alps' famous north faces and an ascent, with fellow WT guide Naoise O Muirheartaigh, of Yosemite's El Capitan. In 2021, on his birthday, Killian and his partner Maggie welcomed their first daughter Henia into the world. The three of them live in Chamonix, France. Currently, he is adjusting to fatherhood and figuring out how much risk he is willing to take in the high mountains, but still enormously passionate about sharing his love and knowledge of the Earth's wildest reaches.



HEATHER FLORENCE

Heather Florence was raised in the north of England and developed her love of the mountains early while on family hiking trips in North Wales and the Lake District. The lure of the mountains eventually led her to Chamonix, France, where she has lived for the last 10 years. When not leading trips, Heather travels around the world visiting the most spectacular places to go rock climbing. She's climbed El Capitan in Yosemite, the Totem pole in Tasmania, and desert towers in Jordan. Closer to home she has climbed many local mountains and is currently pursuing an undergraduate degree in psychology.



JONNY KAYE

From the peaks of the French Alps to Italy's Lake District and the Yorkshire Dales in England, Jonny Kaye has crossed countless mountain ranges, guiding groups of intrepid hikers along the way with his wealth of experience as a mountaineer and his easygoing way. His climbing adventures have taken him from Scotland to the Caucasus Mountains and the Arctic. Originally from Yorkshire in England, he lives in France's Tarentaise Valley with his wife and two children. When not leading trips, Jonny enjoys time with his family, cycling and birding, and in winter, he runs a ski chalet near his home.



KATIE L'HERPINIERE

Katie-Jane L'Herpinier, from Devon, England, has been an adventurer for 18 years, completing her own human-powered expeditions from the Sahara to the Himalayas, the Andes, and places in between. She holds an International Mountain Leader guiding qualification as well as a Master's Degree in Rural Tourism. When not guiding, Katie is an avid cyclist, competing around the world in Unsupported Ultra-Distance bike races, both on-road and off-road. She's a strong advocate for getting outdoors to watch the sunrise, breathe the mountain air, and notice the natural wonders around us. Katie says “It's a tremendous privilege to be able to lead guests through some of the world's most beautiful places.”



MARK TENNENT

A native of Bath, England, Mark Tennent quickly learned his calling was in the mountains. He completed a specialist Outdoor Education degree at Bangor Normal College in North Wales, subsequently instructed at various outdoor centers in the UK, then graduated from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst and was commissioned into the British Army, which he left as a Captain. A recipient of several mountaineering and leadership certificates, Mark has worked in various parts of the world including Afghanistan, Macedonia, Kosovo, Kenya, Sudan, and India. Since 2005, he has lived in the Savoie department of the French Alps, near Albertville, where he shares his passion for the outdoors, French food, and the local culture. He's a member of the French Syndicat Interprofessionnel de la Montagne, bringing together mountain guides, climbing instructors, and mountain leaders. When not guiding, he can be found ski-mountaineering, rock climbing, and cycling.



PETER HALLEWELL

Peter Hallewell loves to explore the great outdoors: walking, hiking, climbing mountains on skis or on foot, and snowshoeing. His passion for the outdoors first developed on family holidays to the English Lake District, and he has lived part-time for the last 30 years in Les Gets in the French Alps, progressively scaling almost all the peaks in the area. Qualified as an International Mountain Leader, he knows the mountains of Europe well and loves to introduce fellow hikers to the joys of the trail.



ANNA WOODWARD

Anna Woodward has always loved the mountain environment. Her childhood holidays were spent hiking in the Alps, and learning to ski and mountain bike later in life cemented her love of being in the wilderness, surrounded by nature and the peaceful beauty of the mountains. After traveling the world for a year post-university, she began a career as a specialist travel agent, building tailor-made itineraries to meet clients' desires for their "trip of a lifetime." Her journey to become a mountain leader began in 2012 as she planned and guided hikes for groups in the Austrian Lake District, sharing her knowledge of the history and flora and fauna of the region—one of her favorite parts of this role. Since then, Anna has been based in the Tarentaise Valley of France, and for a time owned a mountain bike company. In her free time, she loves to hike, run, bike, and ski as she explores the nearby valleys and mountain peaks.

Trip Details

WHAT THE TRIP IS LIKE

This trip is rated a Level 5+ (Strenuous) according to our trip grading system. You will need to be comfortable hiking 10 miles a day for several days in a row, being on your feet for up to 8 hours a day, and hiking on uneven surfaces with long descents that can be hard on the knees. While no climbing or mountaineering experience is necessary, all trip members should have ample hiking experience and be able to keep up with the group as there are no alternative hiking options available. Trail conditions, weather, and the group's level of fitness can affect hiking times and pacing.

Average Hiking Day

- 7-8 miles
- 5-6 hours
- 2,500-3,000 feet gain/loss
- Altitudes range from 6,000-9,000 feet

Challenge Days

- Day 5: 10 miles, 8 hours, 3,050 feet gain, and 2,400 feet loss; includes sections scrambling over large boulders and three passes
- Day 6: 10 miles, 8 hours, 2,500 feet gain, and 4,300 feet loss; includes ladders needed to get over a pass

TERRAIN

At lower elevations, the trails are usually packed dirt, but at higher elevations they are often much rockier, with occasional sections of glacial snow, loose scree, and large boulders. On some days, you will encounter sections of narrow, exposed trails. You will also occasionally need to

use your hands to scramble over and between a jumble of boulders. Your experienced mountain guides are there to assist you if needed.

GETTING IN SHAPE

We strongly urge you to train for your trip, as your enjoyment will be highly dependent on your level of fitness. The best training for a hike is to hike, especially over hills or rough terrain. Next best are running, swimming, bicycling, or other cardiovascular exercises. Stair-climbing machines are excellent preparation for hiking uphill. Your feet should also be well prepared—make sure your hiking boots are sturdy, comfortable, and thoroughly broken-in. Altitude is generally not a problem on this trip. However, some people still experience a few problems when they first reach high altitude. Slight headache and sleeplessness are the most common symptoms. Most accommodations are between 3,500-6,000 feet, with two nights between 8,000-8,700 feet. Each day, we hike over passes located between 7,000-9,600 feet.

WEATHER

The months we visit the Alps are the optimal ones, but mountain weather can be fickle. Temperatures are likely to reach the 60s°F and 70s°F during the day, with cool breezes and occasional rain. At night, the temperature will drop quite a bit, depending on the altitude. The early-season departure could encounter snow on the trails. We are likely to experience a full range of weather conditions, making rain gear and warm garments necessary items to carry with you on every hike.

HIKING DETAILS BY DAY				DRIVING DETAILS
DAY	HOURS	MILES	ELEV. GAIN/LOSS	HOURS
1	4-5 hours	6 miles	+/- 1700'	30 mins
2	6-7 hours	9 miles	+3000'/-3050'	30 mins
3	a) 6-7 hours b) 7-8 hours	a) 7 miles b) 8.5 miles	a) +1700'/-2300' b) +4300'/-3300'	10 mins
4	4 hours	5.5 miles	+1600'/-1500'	30 mins
5	9-10 hours	10 miles	+3050'/-2400'	
6	7-8 hours	10 miles	+2500'/-4300'	
7	optional rest day hikes			
8	4-5 hours	6 miles	+2800'/-2200'	1.5 hours
9	4-5 hours	7 miles	+2050'/-3200'	25 min
10	6-7 hours	8 miles	+3500'/-3000'	40 min train
11	4 hours	5 miles	+/- 2350'	

AVERAGE DAILY MAX/MIN °F												
	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Chamonix	38/22	42/25	52/32	60/38	68/45	71/50	78/50	75/50	70/45	58/37	45/30	38/28
Zermatt	29/17	34/19	40/24	47/32	55/41	63/48	66/51	65/47	60/42	51/35	40/27	31/20
RAINFALL - INCHES												
Chamonix	1.9	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.6	1.8	1.8	2.4	1.8	1.8	2.0	2.3
Zermatt	1.6	1.7	2.1	2.1	2.7	2.3	2.2	2.7	2.3	2.5	1.9	1.9

ACCOMMODATIONS

Accommodations are in small, comfortable hotels and inns that can be busy during the summer hiking season. While not luxurious, they are clean and well located. Please note these are hikers' hotels, not five-star resorts. The rooms are clean and comfortable, but are not always of uniform size or amenities. Our leaders do their best to assign rooms in a fair way so that all participants experience an equal advantage throughout the trip as a whole. In a few of the hotels, there are shared bathrooms. During two trip nights, we stay in huts where only dormitory-style shared bedrooms are available. Single rooms are offered when possible, but those who pay the Single Supplement may have to share a room for up to four nights during the trip.

CUISINE

Lunch will usually be either in a mountain lodge or at a picnic spot amidst the beauty of the surrounding mountains. Most evening meals will be taken at our hotels and will be hearty, nourishing mountain fare, often with the cuisine the region is noted for. Please note that in Europe, the dinner hour is considerably later than what it is in the US. We do our best to secure early reservations for our groups, but most often the evening meal will be at 7:30 pm.

TRANSPORTATION

Our van will transport the group's luggage, so you only need to carry a daypack for items you need during the day (rain gear, sweater, camera, water bottle, etc.). Trip members are always free to skip a day's hike and travel to the next destination in the support vehicle (or remain at the hotel if we are not transferring that day). There is an exception on two nights of the trip where we stay in a mountain refuge with no road access. During this three-day, two-night

stretch, it is impossible for our support vehicle to reach our mountain refuges at night. For this period, you must carry a daypack with the clothing and toiletries you will need for those three days. Most medium-sized daypacks have enough room for extra belongings (a toothbrush, soap, small towel, and a fresh t-shirt will suffice for most people).

CHOOSING THE RIGHT TRIP

Adventure travel often involves exotic destinations, unusual levels of physical exertion, or activities you may not have participated in previously. We work hard to help you choose the right trip for you, paying attention to your individual interests, abilities, and needs. If you have questions about the level of comfort or any of the activities described in this itinerary, please call Wilderness Travel at 1-800-368-2794 and ask for the Europe Manager or email us at europe@wildernesstravel.com.

REFERENCES

We'd be happy to put you in touch with a past client that has traveled with us on this or a similar trip.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE

At www.wildernesstravel.com, you can book your trip online or find out about added departures, last-minute deals, and one-time Limited Edition adventures that aren't listed in our catalog. You can also access our complete library of detailed itineraries filled with enticing photos and videos, read bios of our Trip Leaders, find descriptions of trip accommodations, and check real-time availability of any trips that interest you.

Toucan Club Rewards & Discounts



MEN'S T-SHIRT



WOMEN'S T-SHIRT



PATAGONIA SYNCHILLA FLEECE VEST
PLUS INSULATED CAMELBAK WATER BOTTLE



PATAGONIA R1 PULLOVER

We are very proud to have one of the highest rates of repeat travelers in the business, and have established the Wilderness Travel Toucan Club to reward you for your loyalty. For more information, please visit the Toucan Club page of our website at www.wildernesstravel.com/toucan.

Here's how it works:

YOUR FIRST TRIP

As a first-time traveler, you receive a lightweight Wilderness Travel T-shirt and set of durable WT Luggage Tags. On subsequent trips, we're happy to send you a new WT T-shirt and set of Luggage Tags by request.

YOUR SECOND TRIP

A top quality Wilderness Travel insulated stainless steel water bottle by CamelBak and a cozy Wilderness Travel fleece vest by Patagonia (\$130 value).

YOUR THIRD TRIP

A versatile Wilderness Travel R-1 pullover by Patagonia (\$140 value).

YOUR FOURTH TRIP

Discounts on the cost of your trip begin! You receive a 4% discount on the tour cost.

FIVE AND MORE TRIPS

You receive a 5% discount on the base trip cost. On your sixth trip, you receive a 6% discount, and so on up to your 10th trip. The maximum discount is 10%, with a ceiling of \$500.

Note: Due to special pricing considerations, Toucan Club discounts do not apply to our Private Journeys or Special Events. However, your participation on these trips does count toward your Toucan discount on future departures of Wilderness Travel's regular adventures.

TERMS & CONDITIONS

Toucan Club travel discounts cannot be used in conjunction with any other discount, unless otherwise specified. Discounts are deducted from the base trip cost and shown on the final invoice. The base trip cost is the main land/tier cost and does not include single supplement fees, extensions, internal airfare, or other additional charges. Bonus gifts (T-shirts, luggage tags, vests, water bottles, and pullovers) will be mailed approximately three weeks prior to trip departure. Terms and conditions of Toucan Club bonuses are subject to change or cancellation at the discretion of Wilderness Travel, Inc.

Travel Notes



WILDERNESS TRAVEL HAS BEEN AWARDED:

Best Travel Specialists in the World: *Condé Nast Traveler*, 2024, 4-time winner

World's Best Tour Operators: *Travel + Leisure*, 11-time winner

Best Wildlife, Hiking & Walking Trips: *AFAR Magazine*, 3 years in a row

Best Adventure Travel Companies: *USA Today*

Trip of the Year: *Outside Magazine*, 9-time winner

50 Tours of a Lifetime: *National Geographic Traveler*, 9 years in a row

Best Adventure Travel Companies: *National Geographic Adventure*, 3-time winner

Please be advised that California has established a Travel Consumer Restitution Fund under the California Seller of Travel Law that took effect January 1, 1996. This fund is designed to protect consumers from unscrupulous practices by discount airfare ticket sellers or air charter operators. Unfortunately, this law does not cover non-California residents and, even in the case of California residents, it does not cover any foreign travel where the foreign "providers of transportation or travel services" are not in compliance with the Sellers of Travel Law (compliance being defined as registered as a Seller of Travel in California and a participant in the Travel Consumer Restitution Fund). Thus none of Wilderness Travel's tours qualify and we are required by law to advise each client that they are not covered by the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires sellers of travel to maintain a trust account or bond. This business has a trust account. California Seller of Travel #100769640

While as accurate as possible at the time of printing, this itinerary should be considered an approximate indication of the schedule and scope of activities and trip routing, rather than an inflexible schedule of events; it is subject to change due to circumstances beyond our control. This trip is subject to the Limitation of Liability and all the terms and conditions as detailed in the General Information section of the Wilderness Travel Catalog.

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