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TRIP DETAILS

7 days

France, Italy & Switzerland

*5 days moderate hiking on
varied terrain (with some
challenging options)*

6 nights hotel

2007 DATES

Jun 17–Jun 23

Jul 15–Jul 21

Aug 5–Aug 11

Sep 9–Sep 15

LAND COST

*\$2350 per person
(5-16 members)*



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MONT BLANC ESCAPE

Day Hikes in the Alps Around Mont Blanc

TRIP LEVEL
MODERATE

HIGHLIGHTS

- *Exclusive, flexible itinerary allows you daily hiking options in one of the Alps' most spectacular locations*
- *Visit three countries—all on one great trip!*
- *6 nights at a comfortable hotel in Chamonix—no need to pack and unpack every night!*
- *Add on a quick visit to one of Europe's elegant cities and still miss only a single work week*

Revised July 17, 2007



MONT BLANC ESCAPE

Day Hikes in the Alps Around Mont Blanc

Here's a way to enjoy the great hiking opportunities of the Mont Blanc region but with the convenience of not having to change hotels every day. Your "base camp" is a comfortable chalet-style hotel in the bustling resort of Chamonix at the foot of Mont Blanc, which features rooms with fabulous views of the icy massif and a huge Jacuzzi where you can relax at the end of each exhilarating day. (Solo travelers will appreciate the availability of guaranteed single accommodations.)

Our itinerary is flexible, with moderate to challenging hiking options that showcase the spectacular beauty of this part of the Alps. And spectacular it is, with fabulous vistas of serrated peaks and glittering glaciers every single day! Best of all, our flexible itinerary allows us to "follow the sun" in this region of micro-climates, so daily hikes are chosen according to where the best weather is. (You can even take a day off to shop if you like.)

This "great escape" is also a great option for those wishing to squeeze in a couple of days in one of the continent's celebrated cities and still miss only a week of work. Your guides, members of the prestigious Compagnie des Guides, have a wealth of knowledge that is simply unsurpassed.



ITINERARY

☞ This trip begins with a rendezvous at Switzerland's Geneva airport on Day 1.

DAY 1 ~ Arrive in Geneva – Chamonix

Arrive at the airport in Geneva, Switzerland. You will be picked up *promptly* at 2:00 p.m. for a group transfer by private car to the mountain-ringed resort town of Chamonix, France. We suggest you arrive early enough (by 1:00 p.m.) to allow time to get through customs and immigration before the scheduled pickup. The transfer takes approximately 1½ hours, and once at the hotel, you'll have time to rest a bit or explore the town before meeting the guides and the rest of the group for a "welcome" dinner and orientation.

D...Hotel Le Prieuré

DAYS 2-6 ~ Selected day hikes

We've chosen several outstanding options for day hikes amid the splendid scenery of the Mont Blanc area. The trails traverse France, Italy, and Switzerland so you'll get a full complement of the fantastic scenery. Breakfast and lunch are included each day. After breakfast, the guides will lay out a variety of fixings for a delectable gourmet picnic lunch, including special regional cheeses and cold cuts, yogurt, fresh breads, plenty of fruits and vegetables, chocolate, and trail snacks. You'll fix your own lunch and carry it in your daypack. Each night you're free to take dinner in a local restaurant of your choice. We'll have a festive farewell group dinner at the end of our final day of hiking (Day 6).

B,L each day (D on Day 6)...Hotel Le Prieuré

Possible excursions include the following:

✓ **Aiguille du Midi–Montenvers (France)**

In 1741, the first tourists to Chamonix were transported to Montenvers on the backs of mules in order to admire the glaciers. Today, most travelers take a bright red cog train up the steep slopes to reach the Mer de Glace (Sea of Ice), the second-largest glacier in the Alps. We begin our hike from the hotel, crossing the town of Chamonix and entering the forest. Ascend a steep trail passing the Blaitiere farm to reach the “Grand Balcon,” from where we have a fabulous view of the Chamonix Aiguilles towering above us. We traverse below these towering peaks toward the Montenvers railway sitting high above the Mer de Glace glacier. We may see alpinists on the glacier. Return to Chamonix by the cog railway. (5 hours hiking.)

✓ **The Lakes of the Aiguilles Rouges (France)**

North of Chamonix the massif of the Aiguilles Rouges offer beautiful views of the Mont Blanc massif. A téléphérique allows us to quickly escape the valley floor to for hikes to luminescent mountain lakes. According to the group’s hiking abilities (and the weather forecast), two hiking options are available: one to Lake Cornu, a five-hour hike with an ascent/descent of 1,500 feet; or a hike to White Lake, an easier three-hour hike that offers a reduced 600-foot ascent and a 1,500-foot descent.

✓ **Courmayeur to Bonatti Refuge (Italy)**

On the Italian side of Mont Blanc is the resort town of Courmayeur (4,014'), spectacularly situated beneath the Grand Jorasses and Brenva Glacier. Here the views of Mont Blanc are Himalayan in scale—the mountain rises in a breathtaking abruptness from the Veny Valley to the summit 10,000 feet above. We’ll hike two hours from the town to the Bertone Refuge, with its views of the entire Aosta Valley of Italy. We can continue to the well-known Bonatti Refuge, which faces the famous peaks and needles of the Grandes Jorasses. From here we descend into the Val Ferret, a beautiful valley connecting Italy and Switzerland, and meet a waiting vehicle that takes us back to Chamonix. (6 hours hiking, 2,100' up, 1,500' down, 35-minute transfer.)

✓ **Emosson Dam (Switzerland)**

Not far from Chamonix in Switzerland is a dam from which there are several splendid hiking options. Starting from the Passet Pass, we follow a trail to a terraced plateau with unobstructed views of the Tour Glacier, neighboring Swiss summits, and a background view of the summit of Mont Blanc. We descend through the wild and narrow Veudale gorge and reach a transfer vehicle for a return to Chamonix. (7 hours hiking, 2,100' up and down, 1 hour total vehicle transfer.)

✓ **The Combe of Fours (France)**

With a little distance from the Mont Blanc massif, we can get a full appreciation of just how magnificent it really is. Just above the village of Sallanches in the Aravis massif is a small valley where reclusive mountain goats called chamois live undisturbed. From this valley, we’ll have views of the Mont Blanc massif in all its majesty. (6 hours hiking, 2,400' up, 2,400' down, 45-minute transfer.)

✓ **The Junction (France)**

This is another challenging hiking option, one of the best the region has to offer. A classic route on the circuit, this trail connecting two glaciers is absolutely spectacular. (8 hours hiking, 3,600' up and down.)

✓**High altitude meadows of the Grands (Switzerland)**

From Trient in Switzerland, we hike a portion of the famous *Tour du Mont Blanc*. Above tree line, a narrow path brings us to the high pastures of the Grands. From here, the views are spectacular. (6 hours, 2,100' up and down.)

DAY 7 ~ Depart

Transfer to the Geneva airport. There will be one group departure for the airport between 7:00-8:00 a.m. Please schedule your flight after 11:00 a.m. for inter-European destinations, after 12:00 p.m. for all transcontinental destinations. If you would like to depart earlier or later, the transfer is on your own.

B...

LAND COST

\$2350 per person (5-16 members)

Rates quoted are per person, based on sharing double accommodations.

Single Supplement—\$400 for “requested” singles; \$200 for “forced” singles. If you prefer single accommodations, you must pay the Single Supplement Fee. If you’re traveling alone and wish to share accommodations, we’ll try our best to find you a roommate. If that’s not possible, we will only charge you half of the single supplement.

What’s Included

- ◆ expert leadership (one guide per 8 persons)
- ◆ accommodations at the Hotel Le Prieuré in Chamonix
- ◆ meals as noted (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- ◆ group airport transfer from Geneva to Chamonix and return
- ◆ sightseeing as noted in the itinerary
- ◆ local group transfers by bus or cable car
- ◆ ground transportation by van
- ◆ basic medical and evacuation insurance

What’s Not

International airfare; meals not noted in itinerary (dinners on Days 2-5; lunches on Days 1 and 7); insurance other than basic medical and evacuation insurance as noted above (we strongly recommend you purchase the supplementary trip insurance offered by Mountain Travel Sobek, which includes trip cancellation insurance); optional tipping to leader, guides and local staff; excess baggage charges; airport taxes; and items of a personal nature (sodas, alcoholic beverages, laundry, etc.).

Air Travel

Airfare is not included in the land cost of our trips. For air reservations, we recommend you contact the airlines directly, either by phone or the Internet. In addition, many travelers elect to use their “frequent flyer” miles when traveling with us. **But please check with our staff before purchasing or obtaining your tickets.** We need to verify your arrival and departure schedule and ensure we have enough participants to operate the trip.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Accommodations

Our accommodation for the entire week is at the comfortable Hotel Le Prieuré in Chamonix. The chalet-style hotel is centrally located and just a few steps to many great local restaurants and shops. Each room features a small balcony that faces the Mont Blanc massif, so the views are incredible! A sauna and huge Jacuzzi on the lower level are great places to relax your weary muscles at the end of each invigorating day; optional massages can be arranged. The hotel also has an excellent restaurant and furnishes a hearty breakfast each day, with a large selection of cereals, breads, eggs, cold cuts, yogurt, fruit, juices, and the like. The staff is quite courteous and friendly.

Expert Leadership

Expert leadership is the key to an exciting, unforgettable experience. Our trips feature gifted leaders for whom leading trips is a true vocation. Besides showing you wonders you'd never find on your own, they make sure everything runs smoothly and safely without a hitch. They are knowledgeable about all aspects of your trip, and take great pleasure in sharing their insights with you. More than just guides, they positively elevate your experience by being teachers, companions, and the best of friends. You'll be in good hands with them every step of the way. The following people regularly lead this trip:

Mike Cooper, 57, first came to Chamonix 27 years ago while on an alpine climbing holiday break from teaching in the UK. After many years of “commuting” to his beloved mountains it was an easy decision to put down roots and live permanently in the Chamonix Valley. As an existing Scottish Winter Leader it was natural for him to integrate into the French system as a hiking guide with a French diploma. He is now a full member of the prestigious Compagnie des Guides de Chamonix—the first, and still the only, British person to do so.

Laurent Langoisseur, 40, arrived in Chamonix nearly 20 years ago after working for the national railroad system. Upon his arrival in the valley, he immediately fell in love with the mountains, and after passing all his qualifying tests to become a hiking guide was awarded the coveted patch of the Compagnie des Guides. An avid sports enthusiast and inexhaustible hiker, Laurent's knowledge of flora, fauna, and geology are a good complement to his guiding skills. During the winter, he's a ski patrol monitor in the mountains above Chamonix.

Jean Marc Vaillant, 45, member of the Compagnie des Guides, began guiding for MTS several years ago. Jean Marc is what the French call *polyvalent* (“able to do many things”). His talents range from being a licensed pyrotechnic specialist, snowboard manufacturer, journalist, musical group crew, and theater worker. If this weren't enough, in addition to his passion for hiking, he also teaches children the skills of mountain biking, skiing, and snowshoeing.

Florence Simond, 44, is a native of Chamonix, the descendant of two old local families. After growing up in the Chamonix Valley, she spent several years in the south of France, then traveled in South America and Asia. She returned to Chamonix, where the mountains now form an integral part of her life. In addition to being an accomplished hiking guide, she is a skier and climber. As a member of the Compagnie des Guides, she follows in the footsteps of her father and grandfathers.

Stéphane Berger, 47, is a true man of the mountains, with a Savoyard father and Swiss mother. He grew up in Chamonix, then left the valley to follow his first love, architecture. But the call of the wild proved too strong: numerous travels in North Africa, Siberia, and the Himalaya opened a new door to him—the profession of hiking guide. Nowadays Stéphane lives in a chalet in Chamonix from where he escapes frequently to travel the mountain areas of the world. “Steph” has been a member of the Compagnie des Guides for many years.

All are certified by the Union of International Mountain Leader Association and members of the prestigious “Compagnie des Guides de Chamonix,” a professional guide association that dates back to the first climb of Mont Blanc over 200 years ago. (They are part of a larger team of experienced guides who have worked consistently with Mountain Travel Sobek.) Other equally accomplished people make up our list of MTS guides. Leader assignments will be confirmed in the Final Bulletin sent to you three weeks prior to departure.

Activity Level

Mountain Travel Sobek trips are designed for flexible, energetic people who like to be active and have a spirit of adventure and a positive attitude. We rate this trip as moderate in nature. On most days you’ll be hiking anywhere from three to eight hours, depending on the selected hike. Trails can be rocky with some steep ascents and descents. You need to be in good health and physical condition to enjoy this trip, with adequate muscular strength, cardiovascular endurance, and good balance.

The level of fitness and endurance needed for this trip requires regular aerobic exercise at least one hour 3-4 times per week, performing moderate intensity hiking, cycling, swimming, or other forms of cardiovascular exercise. You should be able to hike four to six hours a day for at least two consecutive days and be comfortable hiking on rough terrain.

If you are not optimally conditioned, we recommend that you start a training program *at least three months* before departure, gradually increasing the intensity and duration. If your health is questionable or your physical stamina is limited, please discuss other trip options with us.

THE NEXT STEP

Ready to go? Signing up is easy!

Just call us at 1-888-MTSOBK (687-6235) and reserve your spot! You can also book a reservation online at our website (www.mtsobek.com). If you prefer to use a travel agent, he or she can book your trip at no extra cost and provide other helpful assistance.

Then Leave the Rest to Us

Before you go, we provide you with extensive pre-departure information, including clothing recommendations, suggested reading lists, and other details.

Why Mountain Travel Sobek is Your First Choice for Adventure

Mountain Travel Sobek is the pioneer in active adventure travel. No other adventure travel company can lay claim to that title. We were the first to take Americans trekking in Nepal, raft the wild rivers of Africa, and open up many previously inaccessible corners of the world to curious travelers. We set the standard for adventure travel and have a strong reputation for excellence that we do everything we can to maintain. Since we are the leading adventure company, we have a lot to live up to, so we make sure we provide safe, quality trips and the best customer service to our passengers.

With Mountain Travel Sobek, you’ll see this part of the Alps as only an insider can, with friendly, hospitable guides who know the region intimately. They’ll accompany you throughout the day, lending support and insights about where you are and what you see. Their close familiarity with the local geography, history, culture and traditions

(plus their entertaining stories and great jokes) are the key to a superb, informative experience—one you just can't get on your own.

References

Don't take our word for how great our trips are. We'll be happy to provide you with references of satisfied past travelers.

Questions?

Feel free to call us at 1-888-MTSOBEK (687-6235) if you still have any questions or concerns. We're here to help you. You can also check out our website at www.mtsobek.com.

Note on Itinerary

Although we will do our best to adhere to the itinerary schedule as listed, it is subject to change. Please read the Limitation of Liability and Booking Conditions in the four-page Participant Information Form. You can find all this information on our website at www.mtsobek.com/faq and the form itself at www.mtsobek.com/pdf/participant_info.pdf.

Terms & Conditions

Once you have made a deposit for a trip, you agree to be bound by all our terms and conditions including the Limitation of Liability Clause. The full Terms and Conditions can be found at www.mtsobek.com/faq/#liability or call 1-888-MTSOBEK (687-6235) for a copy. These are partial conditions. Your participation is contingent on your signature on the full list of terms specified in the four-page Participant Information Form (www.mtsobek.com/pdf/participant_info.pdf). Any dispute concerning, relating or referring to the Terms and Conditions, to any literature concerning this trip, or the trip itself, shall be resolved exclusively by binding arbitration in San Francisco, California, according to the then existing commercial rules of the American Arbitration Association. Such proceedings will be governed by substantive California law (but not procedural law) without regard to the California Arbitration Act.

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