



TOUR DU MONT BLANC, SWITZERLAND: INN-TO-INN HIKING TOUR

DEPART: Chamonix
LENGTH: 10 days, 9 nights in 3-star village hotels and mountain inns
HIKE RATING: Strenuous, 5–8 hours/day, 2500'–4500' elevation gain/loss

The Tour du Mont Blanc is one of the classic inn-to-inn tours in the World. It's truly an epic trek—and a great opportunity to meet hikers from around the world and enjoy an rich variety of cultures, cuisines and views. In keeping with the adventurous nature of the tour, we've designed a fairly rustic itinerary, and five of our nights will be spent in traditional gites with shared sleeping rooms, lively atmospheres, and a healthy sense of accomplishment. Hike through three countries and unforgettable landscapes. Actual hikes vary from trip to trip, but our itinerary will go something like this:

DAY ONE

Arrive in Geneva, and transfer to les Houches, a small, typically Savoyarde town 6 kilometers south of Chamonix in the shadow of Mont Blanc. Here our group will meet, enjoy our first impressive views of Mont Blanc, and talk about the tour to come. Stay in a small village hotel. (Hotel du Bois)

DAY TWO

We'll begin our Mont Blanc tour with a cablecar ride high above les Houches, hiking through the Bionnassay valley and over the Tricot pass on one of the prettiest corners of the TMB. Descend to a tiny hamlet of stone houses where cows and horses graze peacefully surrounded by hanging glaciers. We'll stay in the Miage refuge, a small, family-run inn with dormitory accommodation, showers, and great food. (Chalet de Miage)

DAY THREE

Passing through the village of les Contamines, we'll hike through pine and larch forest beneath the Tre-la-Tete mountain, on a relatively moderate day that brings us to the delightful Nant Borrant refuge. Our luggage will meet us at the inn. Nant Borrant has small dorms, and showers, and promises a quiet and relaxing evening. (refuge Nant Borrant)

DAY FOUR

We continue the TMB tour with a long, steady ascent across two lofty passes, Col du Bonhomme and Col de la Croix du Bonhomme. After lunch at an alpine club hut near the pass, we'll descend to the hamlet of les Chapieux, to a small inn with private rooms (no singles). Quiet farms dot the valley, and rugged mountain scenery greets us in every direction. (auberge de la Nova)

DAY FIVE

Today, the Tour du Mont Blanc leads us from France into Italy, with a crossing of the Col de la Seigne pass, where we're greeted by a jaw-dropping view down into the Veny valley and up along the length of the Mont Blanc range. The Aiguille Noire de Peuterey is particularly impressive from this vantage point, as is Mont Blanc itself. We'll continue on through stunning landscapes to the medieval village of Courmayeur, with narrow, cobblestoned alleyways and a lively, pedestrian-only core. Our luggage will be waiting for us at our 3-star village hotel. (Hotel Walser)

DAY SIX

One of the highlights of the TMB is stunning walk along the crest of the Mont de la Saxe ridge, with the vertical cliffs of Mont Blanc and the Grande Jorasses towering above us to the west. While the ridge itself is a strenuous



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hike, a more moderate option follows a mid-level traverse of the ridge accompanied by incredible views throughout the day. Overnight at the comfortable rifugio Bonatti, a beautiful inn perched high in the mountains with small dorm rooms. (rifugio Bonatti)

DAY SEVEN

Continuing through the Italian Val Ferret, we'll cross the Grand Col Ferret and into Switzerland. We'll descend through tidy green fields with high cliffs and glaciers draped along the route. After crossing the pass, we'll finish at a small inn and working dairy farm at la Peule, where you can see the labor-intensive process of cheese-making up close. Our inn has dorm rooms and hot showers. (Gite d'alpage de la Peule)

DAY EIGHT

An undulating trail leads through alpine pastures and pine forests, on one of the easier hikes on our Mont Blanc tour. We'll stay in the pretty lakeside village of Champex, one of Switzerland's hidden gems, and a beautiful place to spend an afternoon. Our luggage be waiting at our 3-star village hotel. (Hotel Glacier)

DAY NINE

Our final hike on the TMB takes us through woods and farms, with sweeping views of the Rhone valley. Weather permitting, a more rigorous possibility leads to the Fenetre d'Arpette with view to the Trient glacier, a popular variant on the traditional TMB route. We'll finish the hike at a lively hiker's inn at Forclaz, with a taxi waiting to take us back to Chamonix. We'll stay in les Praz du Chamonix, just outside the main village and will finish the tour with a delicious farewell dinner. (Hotel Eden)

DAY TEN

Today we say *au revoir*, and depart for our post-Mont Blanc destinations.