



Icicle Mountaineering Ltd | 11a Church Street
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Tel +44 (0)1539 44 22 17 | info@icicle.co.uk

Website: www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk
Online: shop.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk



2020 trip dossier | **Express TMB £899**

Website link | <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/tmb+express.html>

Key features

- Complete the TMB in a week tackling all the high passes but with fewer kilometres to walk.
- 7 days guiding. You are based in comfortable gites and lodges instead of more basic huts.
- You pass through France, Italy and Switzerland enjoying the different local cultures.
- Led by top qualified guides (UIMLA), to give advice on the many route options available.
- A maximum of 6 clients per guide.
- 2020 dates; 1 - 9 Aug, 29 Aug - 6 Sep.



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20 years
established in 2000





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Course overview

- This version of the legendary Tour du Mont Blanc trek is a perfect option for those who want to complete the tour in a week, and to tackle all the high passes, but with fewer kilometres to walk each day than our tough Fast Packing TMB trek, as on this trip we use public transport on some of the easy valley sections.
- On the way around, your leader will discuss any variations of the route that you could undertake each day, to make it easier or even more challenging for you. That's one of the delights of the TMB, in that it has so many options and variations for you to trek along each day.
- There is so much history and information about the local area that our leaders have to share with you, as well as showing you the amazing scenery, and you have the added experience of staying in traditional mountain huts for two or three nights set high in the mountains, away from the valley villages
- Key features of this trip are that you are based in more comfortable Gites and lodges, rather than more basic high mountain huts. Also there is a mid trip baggage transfer included for your night in Courmayeur, and extra bag transfers are available (for a fee) on almost every single night of the trek.
- During the week you pass through France, Italy and Switzerland, so can enjoy the different cultures, architecture, and the food of each country over the week. The treks are guaranteed to be led by a qualified International Mountain Leader, to ensure your safety and the highest levels of mountain leadership



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Sample itinerary

The itinerary below is designed to give you a flavour of exactly where you will trek to each day, but one of the great things about the Tour du Mont Blanc, is that there are many variations on certain sections, so you can select more challenging routes or even some summits. These options could even affect where you stay each night, but do mean that you can tailor the route a little on most days to suit how you are feeling, the weather and conditions. Your guide will have a massive local knowledge and experience, and will discuss the options with you en-route.

Saturday

Travel to Chamonix to arrive for the 17:00 check-in followed by a course safety and itinerary briefing. These are really useful, as you discuss the exact current weather and conditions, and get tips on what to carry in your pack. You will meet your guide, and be able to ask them any queries, and are shown the route on a map, to talk through the plans for the week. There is time for kit checks and to pick up any last minute supplies. Briefings are over by 18:00 and the Chamonix hosts accompany you for a drink to answer any last minute questions. The group usually goes out for dinner and drinks. Night in Chamonix on B&B basis.

Sunday

Les Houches to Les Contamines, 16km, 5.5 hrs, 650m+, 650m-

After a short transfer / train to Les Houches you take the cable car up to Bellevue, where there is a great view of the Bionassay Glacier and back into Chamonix valley. The Tour du Mont Blanc trek leads through forest to the exhilarating river crossing of the Bionassay suspension bridge, then up to the Col du Tricot (2119m). You descend to the huts of Chalets de Miage, where you usually stop for lunch, then trek up to the Chalets du Truc, and descend through the woods to Les Contamines. In this area you stop for the night, staying in a Gite / lodge in the Contamines valley. You stay the night here on a half board basis.

Monday

Les Contamines to Les Chapieux, 17km, 6.5 hrs, 1325m+, 950m-

The route starts near the baroque church of Notre Dame de La Gorge, and ascends up the old Roman road over hewn rock. It winds slowly upwards through woods and alpages with stunning mountain views, past the Refuges Nant Borrant and La Balme, and up to the high Col du Bonhomme. Here you traverse across rocky ground to reach the Col de la Croix du Bonhomme, with it's hut just below. After a quick break, you

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descend to the valley floor in the wild Les Chapieux and Ville des Glaciers valley. This long descent is long, but the prospect of a shower and a drink beckons you onwards. Stay the night in a Gite / lodge in the area on half board basis.

Tuesday

Les Chapieux to Courmayeur, 16km, 5.5 hrs, 850m+, 1000m-

You start the day ascending the valley past Les Mottets, you ascend steeply at first, before the trail eases its gradient to lead upwards to the Col de la Seigne (2513m), and into Italy. This is the Val Veni, a beautiful region, with great views of the huge Brenva face of Mont Blanc. There is a short descent to the Elizabetta Soldini hut, which is famous for its cakes. After passing Lac Combal, you continue along the valley floor to La Visaille, where you catch the bus down the Val Veni to reach Courmayeur. Here you can explore the old cobbled streets of Courmayeur with its labyrinth streets and shops. Night in a Gite / lodge Courmayeur.

Wednesday

Courmayeur to Champex, 16km, 5 hrs, 1050m+, 1400m-

From Courmayeur you take the bus up the Val Ferret to the road head at Arnouva. After leaving Arnouva, you start the long climb to towards the Elena hut, and then ascend onwards to reach the Grand Col Ferret (2537m), where you pass into Switzerland. Here the view is stunning, where on a clear day you can see the summit of Mont Blanc, and look all the way across Italy to the French border at Col de la Seigne, which you crossed yesterday. Descend past La Peule, then once on the river track, you reach the village of Ferret or La Fouly. Here you take the bus along the Swiss Val Ferret and up to the village of Champex. Night in a Gite / lodge on half board basis.

Thursday

Champex to Le Trient, 16km, 6.5 hrs, 1500m+, 1750m-

As you leave Champex behind you, the trail descends gently down the valley, before starting to ascend once more towards the Bovine alpage and farm. The path crosses some meltwater streams then as it breaches the treeline, you traverse around the hillside to the Bovine farm, and onwards with a stupendous view down to Martigny and the Rhone valley below you. At the end of the alpage, you re-enter the forest again to descend over Col du Forclaz and down into the sleepy Swiss village of Le Trient. You stay in a Gite / lodge in the village of Le Trient on a half board basis, on your last night in Switzerland.

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Friday

Le Trient to Chamonix, 16km, 5.5 hrs, 1150m, 1400m-

The route heads up the valley, before ascending more steeply up through the woods, on its way towards the Col de Balme and the Swiss-French border. As you hike above the treeline, the views ahead are magnificent, and finally the pass is reached. You can stop for a rest at the hut on the col, before setting off down the French side. On the far side of the pass you traverse over the Aiguillette des Posettes to descend to Tre-le-Champ, then to Montroc / Le Tour. This section of the route follows the highest section of the Marathon du Mont Blanc! Once you reach the valley again, you reach the Gite / lodge where you stay for the night on a half board basis.

Saturday

Aiguilles Rouges and Le Brevent, 13km, 5.5 hrs, 750m+, 1550m-,

Take the bus down the valley to Le Praz, and take the cable car to La Flegere. Here you trek across the balcony trail to reach Planpraz, where you ascent to Col du Brevent, and then over a beautiful remote rocky trail to reach the summit of Le Brevent. Here you start to descend, to reach the Refuge du Bellachat, and from here there is a choice of trails, either down to Les Houches or directly to Chamonix. The descent is long, but the views across to Mont Blanc and its tumbling icefalls more than recompense your efforts. If you trek to Les Houches, you catch the bus back to Chamonix. Once in town, you stay the night in a B&B basis in Chamonix for the last night.

Sunday

B Breakfast in Chamonix, then the accommodation check out is by 10:00. You are free to depart at any time, but note that airport transfers leave the resort approximately three hours before your flight takes off. Most people aim for flights leaving in the early afternoon, so they have a little time in Chamonix before leaving for the airport, to allow a little time for buying any last minute souvenirs or presents..

ITINERARY NOTES: Where possible we follow itineraries. Mountain adventures are weather and conditions dependant, so occasionally we are forced to alter the plans. If this is the case, suitable alternatives are offered. Please use this outline itinerary as a guide to the types of route / activity that you will attempt.

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Course Inclusions

1) UIMLA guide for seven days, 2) Chamonix course hosts for logistics, bag storage, support and briefings, 3) Pre course detailed kit list and information booklet, 4) Equipment discount voucher for UK shop, 5) 2 nights B&B accommodation in Chamonix (inc. bedding, linen & towels), 6) 6 nights Gite / lodge on a half board basis whilst on the trek (breakfast and dinner each day), 7) Baggage transfer included for the night in Courmayeur, 8) Client VIP discounts for reductions in local shops and restaurants in Chamonix.

Course Exclusions

1) Travel to and from Chamonix, 2) Personal laundry, kit hire, telephone calls, lunches, evening meals in Chamonix, & any purchases in lodges / mountain huts / hotels / restaurants, 3) Cable cars (none are included in this itinerary, as the aim is to walk every step of the trek), 4) Saturday pre-dinner drinks & final evening celebratory meal & drinks, 5) Activities insurance, & excess baggage charges.

Notes

Group sizes are a minimum 6, to maximum 12 clients, with 1 leader. For the baggage transfer included to Courmayeur, this is a shared drop / swop of a few essential items per trekker (i.e. clean base layers, socks, etc), at a volumetric capacity of c.8 litres each.

Flexibility

To provide the greatest freedom to elect how much (or little) you wish to use public transport in the valley sections, we leave it to each group to discuss with their guide on a daily basis. The budgets above are a typical maximum per person, including their share of the guides ticket. Likewise, groups can elect where to take lunches each day, on the same basis, so you can decide whether to have picnics or cooked lunches.

Fitness & stamina

The ideal fitness levels are detailed at; <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/trainingpreparation.html>, and there are links to general training advice and planners that you can adapt to suit and follow.

This trip is graded: **Level 2** - We suggest that people on courses of this grade can run 10km without a problem, but we stress that for courses of this level you do not need to be any fitter than this minimum level, though it is there to ensure a good basic level of aerobic fitness and training.

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How to book

- All bookings are made securely online, and deposit of £250 is payable (with secure payments handled via WorldPay). Ensure that when completing the form, you fill in all the required fields, in order for the 'SUBMIT' button to appear.
- All payments are protected by our Tour Operator travel bonding with ATOL and TTA, and your monies are held in trust until after you have travelled home. You are fully financially protected, in accordance with UK and EU laws.
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/booking.html>

Before your trip

- As soon as you book online, you are sent confirmation of this, and attachments including joining instructions, course specific kit lists, and a separate WorldPay receipt. If you haven't received these two e-mails within half an hour of booking online, check your junk / spam folder.
- At the office, we manually check all bookings, and you'll also receive a personalised e-mail from us formally confirming your course space. Once you have this office confirmation, it's fine to go ahead and book your travel arrangements, and to arrange your activities insurance.
- Activities insurance is a requirement for all trip participants. Organise it as soon as you are booked, and ensure that it covers you for cancellation or curtailment, in case you injure yourself or get ill before your trip. This ensures you'd be fully reimbursed for the trip, and all travel costs.
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/insurance.html>

Travel to the Alps

- The closest international airport to Chamonix, is Geneva (airport code GVA). There are many direct flights from the UK every day, and it's well served by the budget airlines e.g. EasyJet.
- Geneva is a small but busy airport, and it's only a very short walk from baggage reclaim into the arrivals area, where all the airport transfer companies meet. In the Course Information Booklet is a code for preferential rates from our reliable transfer partner Mountain Dropoffs.
- Chamonix is also very easy to travel to by rail, from the UK to Paris via Eurostar, then from Paris Gare du Lyon (or Austerlitz) to Saint Gervais by high speed TGV, then the local train up the valley to the Chamonix Aiguille du Midi (or Chamonix central) stop.

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- Driving can work out cheaper, if you're with others, and there's free parking close to the accommodation, on a first come first served basis. Generally a couple of laps, and a space will be freed up for you. See the Course Information Booklet map for the locations of this free parking.
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/travel.html>

Meeting point

- Once you've booked, you'll receive the Course Information Booklet, which details the meeting point for Chamonix course clients.
- If you want an address for your airport transfer, provide the Aiguille du Midi cable car, on Rue Lyret, 74400 Chamonix. The accommodation is situated in a pedestrianized area, so you cannot be dropped off at the door, and the cable car station, or Chamonix Sud bus station are the closest access points. If arriving on EasyBus, Ouibus, or Flixbus, these all arrive at the bus station.

Course accommodation

- Most course clients stay in Chamonix in en-suite rooms, in a purpose built ski village in Chamonix Sud. These have a small kitchenette, for those wishing to self-cater.
- Check in time is from 16:00 (4pm) on the Sunday, and the meeting point to be shown into your accommodation is detailed in your Course Information Booklet, that is sent upon booking.
- The flats are normally twin rooms for two people sharing. If you are travelling as a couple (or named friends), you will share. If travelling on your own, you will be matched with another course client of the same sex.
- This accommodation is small and basic, to provide you low cost accommodation in Chamonix, but it is functional and really well located. If you wish to upgrade to higher quality accommodation, there is a £100 discount available for sourcing your own accommodation, which is applied to your invoice.
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/chamflat.html>

Course briefing

- The course briefing for this trip is at 17:00 on the Sunday evening. The Course Information Booklet will confirm the exact location for this briefing. When you attend the briefing, take your passport and activities insurance details, for these to be noted.
- The briefing takes about 45 minutes, and it aims to answer all your queries about the course.

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- Attendance at the course briefing is obligatory, and you are asked to sign a copy of the Terms & Conditions. These are the same as those you accepted online when you booked, but it's for us to have a signed paper copy on record.

Equipment checks

- Take any equipment to the briefing that you would like one of our guiding team to advise you about. For some people that may be very little, whilst others want to double-check a few bits of kit. It's always a good idea to take your boots and crampons, so we can check the fit for you.
- If you've your own safety equipment, it's worth having one of the team check this over for you.
- Note that if you require any hire equipment, or any kit that is loaned on a course, you need to attend the course briefing, as it's straight after this that is when it is allocated.
- Website link; <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/hire.html>

Late arrivals

- If they are pre-booked days ahead, we can accommodate late arrivals. We will organise for you to be able to check into your course accommodation at any time that you arrive. We do however ask you to assess how necessary a late arrival is, and for you to consider the disruption to your flatmate.
- You will require a separate Course Briefing, which involves an early start for our team, to fit this in before your guiding. It's not an ideal start to schedule a late arrival, followed by an early start, and sets you on the back foot. If an early Course Briefing is required, this is billed at £20 for time involved.

Cable cars

- For the days you are climbing in Chamonix, the most cost effective cable car pass is called the Mont Blanc multi-pass. For this course you require a 3 day pass, from Monday to Wednesday (plus extra days if you arrive earlier). The 3 day pass costs 89.50€ (*2020 prices).
- Website link: <https://www.montblancnaturalresort.com/en/montblanc-multipass>

Breakfasts

- When you are in town and accommodation is included on a B&B basis, a starter pack of continental breakfast supplies is provided; fruit juice, milk, cornflakes, muesli, marg, jam, biscuit toasts. Tea and coffee is also provided. In a mountain hut, you get a similar type of light breakfast.

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- As the room is self-catering, it's yours for the week, so no need to check out when you are away in mountain huts. Should you use up any items from your breakfast or room supplies, there's a supermarket located just across the pedestrian square from the course accommodation.
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/chamflat.html>

Lunches & drinks

- Everyone has their own idea of what they would like for lunch whilst in the mountains, varying from a stack of Mars bars to a large ham sandwich. For this reason we let you choose your own lunches, which may be easily purchased locally from shops and supermarkets.
- You will be advised in the briefings as to how many days lunches you should plan ahead and purchase. There is never time to cook hot lunches while on a course, but you could take a thermos.
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/chamflat.html>

Evening meals

- In town clients normally take advantage of the excellent variety of local restaurants, and also the town's bars to celebrate week's achievements. We are also happy to book places in restaurants for you, should you wish an evening on your own.
- Some clients want an early night or to budget, so opt to cook for themselves in the self-catering flats. In guardianned huts, the cooked evening meal is normally three courses.
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/chamonix.html>

Mountain huts

- Mountain Huts are run by a 'Guardian' who cooks, cleans and is on hand for your assistance. On most courses, the itineraries detail a specific number of nights in mountain huts.
- Clients share rooms, which often are on tiered bunks. Each person is allocated a mattress with its own pillow and blankets, but you should take a sleeping bag liner for comfort.
- There are normally storage / drying rooms. Meals are on a half board basis, with a basic continental breakfast and a three course cooked evening meal. Any extras you order, such as bottled water, beer or wine, packed lunch, or chocolate, must be paid for by you.
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/chamflat.html>

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Weather & conditions

- It's natural for you to be avidly checking the weather on the weeks and days preceding your course, and we try and keep our social media channels updated daily, so you can see what's going on, and how the conditions are evolving. The website links below give you trustworthy weather forecasts.
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/webcams.html> and http://chamonix-meteo.com/chamonix-mont-blanc/weather/forecast/morning/5_days_weather_forecast.php

Maps & guidebooks

- You don't need to take any maps and guidebooks for your trip, as you are being guided, but it's always a good idea from a safety perspective to have a map with you. Here are the key links;
- Chamonix map; <https://shop.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/79/BooksMaps/Maps/Alpinemaps/IGNChamonix36300Tmap.html>
- Tour du Mont Blanc: <https://shop.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/302/BooksMaps/Maps/Alpinemaps/TourMontBlanc1:50kmap.html>
- Instructional book; <https://shop.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/165/BooksMaps/Books/Instructional/AlpineClimbing:TechniquetoTakeYouHigher.html>

Equipment lists

- You will be sent a precise course specific kit list upon booking, but we have a huge amount of kit advice on our website; <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/boots.html>
- Website link: <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/icicleshop%2BKIT%2BMTR.html>

Any questions?

Even if you've read all the detail here and in your Course Information Booklet, and on the website, you may still have some queries about your trip, so don't hesitate to get in touch.

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- Facebook message <http://m.me/iciclemountaineering>
- Here's our office hours, and online chat <http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/contact.html>
- When you're on a trip, you'll also be provided an in resort WhatsApp number for our team, so if you haven't already, please ensure that you download this free app to your phone.



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