

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 | Full TMB, bag transfers £1899

Website link | http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/tmb+full+bags.html

## **Key features**

- Complete the full classic anti clockwise Tour de Mont Blanc.
- 10 days guiding. Travel light as your bag in transferred every day.
- 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 8 clients per guide.
- 2020 dates; 26 Jul 6 Aug, 2 13 Aug.



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## **Course overview**

- This is the complete full classic Tour du Mont Blanc (TMB), trekking the route in the classic anticlockwise direction. You complete the whole TMB, staying in a selection of popular gites, lodges and mountain huts. You can travel light as you get your bag transported every night. This trip will appeal to those who want the trekking experience, but to take it a bit easier, and with a bit more comfort.
- The treks are led by an English speaking qualified UIMLA International Mountain Leader. The trekking guides will ensure your safety and provide the highest levels of mountain leadership throughout your holiday, and are trained to teach you about the history, flora and fauna of each region.
- 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 with summits 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.
- Our scheduled dates are guaranteed to run, once just 4 people have booked, for your peace of mind. We cap numbers at 8 people in a group, so you have great access to your leader. This is a high standard, as other operators have up to 16 clients per leader. Extra dates can be run on demand for groups of four or more people for exactly the same price as our scheduled dates.
- 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. The guide is also there to help and lead you over any tricky ridges so you need no previous multi-day trekking experience to join and enjoy this trip.
- During the week you pass through France, Italy and Switzerland, so can enjoy the different cultures, language, architecture, and the food of each country cooked and prepared for you on the trek.
- This trek has daily vehicle support for baggage collections and drops, and it tackles all the key passes on TMB route; Cols de Voza, Tricot, Bonhomme, Seigne, Ferret, Forclaz, Balme and Brevent.



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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.

#### Sunday

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 to allow you time to get any last minute supplies before the shops close at 19:00. The group usually goes out for dinner and drinks. Night in Chamonix on B&B basis.

#### Monday

#### Les Houches - Col du Tricot - Les Contamines

From Les Houches, you trek up the rocky track to the Col du Voza (1652m), or ascend using the Bellevue cable car. A short wooded descent brings you to the spectacular suspension bridge over the river with fantastic views of the Bionassay glacier. From there you take the steep zig-zag path up to the Col de Tricot (2119m), where there are great views of the snowy Domes du Miages and Aiguille du Bionassay. The route descends past the peaceful huts at Chalets de Miage (1560m) and Chalets du Truc, then down to Les Contamines village. Night in Les Contamines.

#### Tuesday

#### Les Contamines - Col du Bonhomme - Les Chapieux

After breakfast you trek along the river to pass the Baroque church of 'Notre Dame de la Gorge' with its famous carved wooden pillars, before following the Roman road over the ancient Roman bridge and steep sided river gorge. The route winds slowly upwards through woods and alpages with stunning mountain views up to the high Col de la Croix du Bonhomme (2483m), the high point of today. There are plenty of options

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for drink and rest stops along the route. A steep descent brings you to the sleepy village of Les Chapieux (1553m). Night in Les Chapieux / Les Mottets.

#### Wednesday

## Les Chapieux - Col de la Seigne - Courmayeur

A short trek takes you to Ville des Glaciers where you can look round the Beaufortain cheese dairy and even buy some. Then a steady ascent takes you up past the mountain hut of Le Mottets, then up 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 take the bus to reach Courmayeur, and discover it's labyrinth of cobbled streets and shops. Night in Courmayeur / Palud

#### Thursday

#### Courmayeur - Mont de la Saxe - Arnouva

After a short ascent along wooded trails past the Bertone hut you continue the track up the ridge then the summit of Mont de la Saxe (2346m). There are a few steeper sections on the ascent, but your guide is there to help, and the views of the Italian side of Mont Blanc and the Grand Jorasses are amazing. Once over the summit, you traverse round past the Bonatti hut - famous for its fantastic food and home made biscuits. For the photographers amongst you, this day is an absolute treat! An easy trek to finish in Anouva beside a river. Night in Arnouva / Courmayeur / Palud.

#### Friday

#### Arnouva - Col du Grand Ferret - La Fouly

A short trek up to the Refugio Elena, then a steady climb up to reach the Grand Col Ferret (2530m), where you pass into Switzerland. You stop for a lunch break at the top to enjoy the view and take some well earned photos. There are great views of the summit of Mont Dolant which is the only peak in the Alps to have the border of three countries at its summit (France, Italy and Switzerland). Over the pass, the route winds through peaceful alpages and wooded glades to reach La Fouly which is a picture postcard village and 'chocolate box' chalets. Night in La Fouly.

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#### Saturday

#### La Fouly - Sentier des Champignons - Champex

Today is a little easier as you trek along the beautiful Swiss Val Ferret, then the track winds up the 'Sentier des Champignons' or route of mushrooms where there are many carvings and wooden sculptures. Champex is beautiful, and is nestled alongside the lake that gives the village its name. The village cafes enable you to try local specialities, and there is a shop so you can stock up on supplies. This slightly easier day is a welcome break, and lets you get your energy back in time for the route choices of the next day, as you make your way towards Trient. Night in Champex.

#### Sunday

#### Champex - Fenetre d'Arpette - Trient

Today there are two choices of route depending on the weather and how the group is feeling. The first option is the steep and rocky challenge of the famous 'Fenetre d'Arpette' (2670m). This option involves nearly 1200m of ascent, but gains fantastic views of the towering seracs of the Trient Glacier. A poor weather or easier alternative is the peaceful Bovine trail through meadows above the treeline, overlooking Martigny and the Rhone valley with its vineyards covering the lower slopes. You descend to the peaceful Swiss village of Trient. Night in Trient.

#### Monday

#### Trient - Col du Balme - Argentiere

From the village of Trient (1296m) you gain a little height on a wooded trail to reach the Col du Balme (1526m), where you cross from Switzerland into France. At the col to your right are striking views of the Glacier de Tour and the surrounding peaks of the snowy Aiguille Verte and Mont Blanc. From here we can also see the long stretch of the Chamonix valley, the end of the trek. Descending the steep ridge of the Aiguillette des Posettes, there are a few short sections of steps before gaining the easy track through the beautiful hamlet of Tre le Champ. Night in Argentiere / Montroc.

#### Tuesday

#### Argentiere - Col du Montets - La Flegere - Chamonix valley

From Argentiere, you trek up to the Col du Montets (1461m), then a take a steep track to the Lac Blanc via the Aiguillette d'Argentiere. There are a series of easy short ladders and some cables, but there are handrails

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and chains to help, and don't worry, your guide will help if you are unsure. You trek the Grand Balcon across to reach Lac Blanc (2352m), which is a shimmering glacial lake and provides stunning views across to the Mont Blanc massif. After time for a break and photos there is a track down through the woods to return to the valley. Night in Chamonix.

#### Wednesday

#### La Flegere - Brevent - Les Houches - Chamonix

A short bus or train ride to start the trek up (or you can opt to catch the cable car up) to La Flégère (1900m). You trek across first to Planpraz (2000m) and can watch the paragliders take off, then up to the summit of Brevent (2525m). The views are amazing of glaciers, Mont Blanc and the long Chamonix valley. After time for photos and lunch you descend the rocky track to Les Houches and the Chamonix valley. You have now completed the full circuit of the TMB! The group usually meets in the evening for celebratory drinks and a social, maybe with dinner. Night in Chamonix.

#### Thursday

Breakfast from 08:00, then accommodation check out by 10:00. You are free to depart at any time, but airport transfers leave the resort approximately three hours before your flight takes off.

ITINERARY NOTES: Where possible we follow itineraries. Mountain adventures are weather and conditions dependant, so occasionaly 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 English speaking guide for ten 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, one at either end of the trek (inc. bedding, linen & towels), 6) 9 nights hut / gite / lodge on a half board basis whilst on the trek (breakfast and dinner each day), 7) Free 36 page technical Course Instruction Booklet, 8) Road / rail transport as per itinerary, 9) Services of a support vehicle for baggage transfers, 10) Icicle discounts privilege card 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 / gites / restaurants, 3) Cable cars (as suggested by guide, if required, budget up to c.£20pp), 4) Sunday pre-dinner drinks & final evening celebratory meal & drinks, 5) Activities insurance, & excess baggage charges.

## Notes

Group sizes 4 - 8 people per UIMLA mountain guide. For group sizes of over 8 people, there are multiple guides, and the teams travel independently of each other.

## Fitness & stamina

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

This trip is graded: **Level 1** - This is the lowest level for any of our courses, and we would suggest that a 5km run would not pose you any issues. Obviously, even though this is the lowest grade, you should be capable of long days out on the hills, and not get to tired from this, as well as recovering quickly.

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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: <u>http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/insurance.html</u>

## 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: <u>http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/travel.html</u>

# 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: <u>http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/chamflat.html</u>

# 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: <u>http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/chamflat.html</u>

## 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: <u>http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/chamflat.html</u>

# **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: <u>http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/chamonix.html</u>

# 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: <u>http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/chamflat.html</u>

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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: <u>http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/webcams.html</u> and <u>http://chamonix-</u> 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; <a href="https://shop.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/79/BooksMaps/Maps/Alpinemaps/IGNChamonix36300Tmap.html">https://shop.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/79/BooksMaps/Maps/Alpinemaps/IGNChamonix36300Tmap.html</a>
- Tour du Mont Blanc: <a href="https://shop.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/302/BooksMaps/Maps/Alpinemaps/TourMontBlanc1:50kmap.html">https://shop.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/302/BooksMaps/Maps/Alpinemaps/TourMontBlanc1:50kmap.html</a>
- Instructional book; <a href="https://shop.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/165/BooksMaps/Books/Instructional/AlpineClimbing;TechniquestoTakeYouHigher.html">https://shop.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/165/BooksMaps/Books/Instructional/AlpineClimbing;TechniquestoTakeYouHigher.html</a>

## **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; <a href="http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/boots.html">http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/boots.html</a>
- Website link: <u>http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/icicleshop%2BKIT%2BMTR.html</u>

## 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 <u>http://m.me/iciclemountaineering</u>
- Here's our office hours, and online chat <u>http://www.icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk/contact.html</u>
- 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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