

PREPARING FOR YOUR ADVENTURE

# SELF GUIDED GRAND TOUR DES COMBINS: FAQ'S



# SELF GUIDED GRAND TOUR DES COMBINS: FAQ'S

Thanks for choosing Adventure Base for YOUR adventure. In this page you will find everything you need in order to better understand your trip. We hope this is the start of a wonderful experience in the mountains.

The Adventure Base Team.

## WHAT NOW?

We're thrilled you've chosen Adventure Base for your Grand Tour des Combins trek! From now until you set foot in the Alps, we're here to help you prepare so you can make the most of this incredible experience.

Your full trip itinerary will be sent via our mobile app closer to your departure date. It will include all the essential details to navigate the route smoothly. In the meantime, here are some key points to get you started.

## WHAT IS THE TOUR DES COMBINS?

The Tour des Combins is a breathtaking multi-day trek that encircles the spectacular Combins Massif along the Swiss-Italian border. Its highest peak stands at 4,314m (14,153ft), competing with its more famous neighbor, Mont Blanc (4,808m / 15,774ft). The trail spans three distinct regions: Valle d'Aosta in Italy, Val d'Entremont, and Val de Bagnes in Switzerland.

## HOW LONG IS THE TOUR DES COMBINS?

The trek now extends to **140km (87mi)** following a 2023 update by the Association du Grand Tour des Combins. Older guidebooks may still reference the previous **100km (62mi)** route.

## WHAT GEAR DO I NEED?

The best advice: pack light! You'll need less than you think. Trail shoes are suitable for the GTDC; heavy hiking boots aren't necessary unless preferred. Lightweight, waterproof layers are essential, and trekking poles are highly recommended to help with steep ascents and descents. You'll find our full kit list [here](#). If you'd like further advice on how to choose the right backpack for your trek please see [here](#).

## **NAVIGATION**

### ***INTRODUCING OUR ITINERARY APP. . .***

We've done some collaborating to make your Grand Tour des Combins trek a breeze. It's like having your own personal travel guide, offering easy access to everything you need, from itineraries and track details to water/food stops and useful information. All your trip essentials are just a tap away, so you can focus on making the most of your time away and having an awesome adventure.

### ***HOW WILL I NAVIGATE ON MY OWN?***

- It's important you study the route before you set off, preferably the evening before each day of hiking, so that you have an idea of what your next day will entail. Take into consideration distance, elevation gain and loss, and exposure to elements (will you be up high in terrain exposed to the elements, or lower down in perhaps more sheltered terrain) when studying these.
- Phone signal is not always available on the trails and battery life on your mobile device can quickly be drained when using the itinerary app, as well as by colder temperatures (such as in cold winds). It is a good idea to carry an external battery charger as a backup so that you can charge on the go if necessary. Putting your phone in airplane mode will help preserve its battery life.
- Trails are well sign posted but they often present various options. Often there are variation routes that get you to the same place. For example, there might be a high pass or a low pass. Deciding which one to take will depend on weather conditions and/or your preference on the day. Each sign will also provide a rough estimate of the time it takes to get to the next stop.
- Our advice is to check your device whenever you get to a junction to ensure that you are taking the correct trail to lead you to your destination. Taking these few minutes to confirm you're going in the right direction will save you time in the long run, as a wrong turn can be costly time-wise but also energy-wise.

### **HOW DO I GET TO THE STARTING POINT OF THE TREK?**

We've chosen **Mauvoisin** as the starting point for our itineraries, though there are several other options including:

- **La Fouly**
- **Bourg-Saint-Pierre**

- **Great St. Bernard Pass**
- **Saint-Rhémy-en-Bosses.**

The nearest major airport to the starting point is Geneva Airport, from which you can take a transfer, bus, or rental car to reach the starting point. See our logistics and shortcuts page [here](#).

## **COMMUNICATION FOR URGENT ISSUES:**

**Phone:** +33 7497 767 71 (French Office)

## **FOR NON URGENT ISSUES:**

**Phone:** +44 20 3813 4779 (UK Office)

**Email:** [hello@adventurebase.com](mailto:hello@adventurebase.com) (we aim to respond rapidly).

## **WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY? IF CRITICAL, DIAL 112 [THE EUROPEAN EMERGENCY NUMBER].**

Whilst we have done our utmost to ensure that your trip will go according to plan, there are certain elements that are beyond our control. We recommend that you carefully read and understand the following section in case you find yourself in need of assistance.

The mountains, if not treated with complete respect, can be a dangerous place. Weather can change quickly, and terrain can quickly become treacherous. Making good safe decisions based on the weather forecast and your energy levels when on a self-guided trip is paramount to making sure you have a successful trip.

We have two numbers you can call if there is an emergency but if the situation is critical and requires immediate support then please call 112. This is a European emergency number and will connect you to the appropriate mountain rescue services who can then redirect you to the local service you need. You can also find your exact location using the SOS function on the itinerary app whilst you're offline.

## **LUGGAGE TRANSFERS**

There are two options for handling your luggage on the trek:

- **Self-sufficient:** Carry everything yourself.
- **Luggage transfers:** Have your overnight bag delivered to your refuge each night (before 18:00).

### ***Important Notes:***

- Not all refuges have vehicle access, so there may be nights when your luggage isn't delivered until the next accessible location.
- If you're staying in an Airbnb, luggage transfers are unavailable.

Feel free to reach out to us at [hello@adventurebase.com](mailto:hello@adventurebase.com) if you'd like to add luggage transfers to your booking.

## **INSURANCE**

Let's face it, these types of trips don't come risk free. We're putting ourselves in amazing environments but these also carry an element of risk with them. In order to protect yourself adequately you will need a specialist travel insurance that caters for the types of activities you will be undertaking. It is a condition of our agreement that you are covered by adequate travel insurance for your arrangements. See more information on insurance [here](#).

## **MONEY**

On the trip, you'll use two currencies: Euros (€) and Swiss Francs (CHF). Most Swiss refuges along the GTDC accept Euros (€1 = 1CHF), so carrying Euros is usually sufficient.

- You'll likely spend €15-50 per day depending on what you buy.
- Not all places accept credit cards, especially in remote refuges, so bring cash for small purchases.
- Some refuges may have limited wifi, which can affect the ability to process card payments. In these cases, it's always a good idea to have cash on hand as a backup.

## **CULTURE**

You will experience the Italian and Swiss cultures on this trip. Think pizza and pasta in Italy, and cheese and chocolate in Switzerland. Although separated only by mountain peaks, you can see the different distinct nuances of each country.

You are also likely to encounter many different nationalities enjoying the GTDC alongside you, which is also what makes this trip so special.

The Italians speak Italian and the Swiss speak... errr, everything but mainly French in this region! While we encourage you to try to speak the language of the country if you can, don't worry most places you come across will also speak English.

## ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation on the trip includes a mix of hotels and mountain refuges, each with its own unique charm. The refuges are basic but comfortable, offering shared dormitory rooms (up to 6-8 people per room) with the option to request private rooms, though availability is limited. While the huts provide breakfast and dinner (half board included in your package), you can also purchase snacks and packed lunches for the day ahead, or stop for lunch at a refuge along the route.

These refuges are in remote, breathtaking locations, offering a truly unique experience in the heart of the mountains. However, keep in mind that these aren't 5-star hotels—services vary, and some of the staff may have been working without a break all summer. Embrace the charm of the places and the hard work of those who make your stay possible.

In contrast, the towns along the route provide more comfortable hotel and guesthouse options if you prefer a bit more luxury. ***Interested in what staying in a refuge is really like?*** Take a look at **Mountain Refuges: Simple Shelters, Big Adventures** or see ***how refuges differ from hotels*** in **A True Mountain Experience vs. Hotel Comforts**.

## HOW TO CHECK INTO YOUR ACCOMMODATION?

To check in, simply provide your name along with the name of the company, Adventure Base. All bookings are made on your behalf by Adventure Base. Please also take a moment to reconfirm your dietary requirements at check-in.

Any drinks, snacks, or packed lunches are not included and must be paid for separately.

## FOOD & WATER

The food on the Grand Tour des Combins trek offers a delightful variety, reflecting the unique cultures of Italy and Switzerland. Each country brings its own specialties, and accommodations along the way offer a mix of traditional dishes.

In the mountain huts, you'll be treated to a hearty three-course meal, often shared with other guests. The meal typically includes a starter like soup, a main course of meat and pasta, and a dessert. If you have dietary preferences, please inform us in advance so we can notify the huts. While vegetarian options are readily available, we can't guarantee that other specific dietary needs will be met. Curious about how to navigate **dietary requirements** during your stay? Read our tips on managing your meals in refuges with **Dietary Requirements in Refuges**.

Refuges along the route serve lunch (usually 11:30 am – 2:30 pm), offering snacks and baked goods outside these hours. We recommend checking your route and stopping for lunch at one of the many refuges along the way, marked as Points of Interest on the itinerary app. If you're planning ahead, you can also order a packed lunch from the refuge the night before, typically consisting of a sandwich, fruit, and snacks.

While there are some options along the way to refill your water bottle or grab a snack, it's a good idea to carry enough food and water for the day. We suggest bringing at least 2 liters of water and extra snacks in case lunch isn't available along the trail.

Additionally, you'll be able to enjoy the local wines and beers along the way. A chocolate bar or bag of nuts is always handy for an energy boost, especially on the tougher climbs!

## WIFI / SERVICE

During the Grand Tour des Combins trek, internet and cell service can be limited, especially in remote areas. Some of the refuges will have Wifi for you to use, but not all of them and it can be temperamental. You'll generally have phone service for most of the trip, but be prepared for occasional gaps in coverage.

## ITINERARY CHANGES

***All accommodation has been booked in advance and we don't have the ability to change it***

***unfortunately.*** Refuges are nearly always fully booked so you will need to stick to your itinerary.

In the unlikely event that you're not able to continue to your next accommodation due to injury or weather then you will need to arrange for alternative transportation. That might include a bus or a taxi to get you to where you need to be. Any changes to your itinerary while out on the trip are at your own expense.

Please ensure you arrive at the accommodation ***NO later than 18:00***. If you anticipate being late, it is essential to inform the refuge in advance. You can find their contact numbers in your itinerary app, or feel free to contact us, and we will notify them on your behalf. Please note, if you do not arrive on time, the refuge may release your beds to other trekkers.

## WEATHER

The weather on the Grand Tour des Combins trek can be quite varied. During the peak trekking season (July to September), temperatures typically range in the mid- late 20s°C. However, in the mountains, conditions can change quickly, and you might experience temperatures dropping to freezing or rising into the low 30s°C. It's important to be prepared for these fluctuations, so bring plenty of layers, sun protection (like sunscreen, a hat, and sunglasses), and be ready for any weather.

If the weather turns bad, the plan will depend on the severity of the conditions. You may continue the trek if it's raining or snowing, as long as it's safe. Always prioritise safety and mountain conditions when deciding whether to continue or adjust your plans.

## FITNESS

The Grand Tour des Combins trek is a wonderful but challenging adventure. It features significant *ascents and descents*, so it's important not to underestimate the fitness required to complete and truly enjoy it. While you don't need to be an elite athlete, we strongly recommend doing some training to ensure you arrive in good physical shape for this type of trek.

This is considered a moderate to challenging trek, involving varied terrains, altitude changes, and long days of walking. The most demanding aspect for many is the elevation, so it's helpful to train with elevation gain and descent prior to the trek.

You don't need previous trekking experience, but having some hill-walking experience will make the journey much easier. You should be comfortable walking for long periods on mixed ground with plenty of ascents and descents, while carrying a backpack. Being prepared will ensure you have a fantastic time on the trek!

[See here for trekking training tips.](#)

## TOP TIPS



It is mostly common sense but there are a few things that are good to bear in mind. It's often more exerting travelling uphill so when you're traveling downhill it is a nice courtesy to step aside to let uphill travellers pass (if the trail is too narrow to accommodate two people side-by-side). Follow the "*Leave No Trace*" principle: don't leave any rubbish behind on the trails, including organic waste (such as egg shells or orange peels), and try not to disturb the natural habitat (this includes not wandering off the trail).

- Set off as early as you can in the mornings in order to give yourself enough time to get to your destination. It is easy to underestimate how long the journey can take and it is better to have 'too much' time than arrive late and miss dinner (dinner is served at a set time, usually around 18:00 or 18:30).
- Make sure you've got plenty of blister plasters. Although your boots might be worn-in and comfortable, multiple consecutive days of trekking can still give you blisters and these can ruin a trip.
- Bring enough cash. Credit cards are accepted in most places but not everywhere so having some cash on hand is important. We recommend budgeting around €15-50 per day for snacks, drinks, and other items you may need. Better to have slightly over what you may need, to make sure you can treat yourself to a hot chocolate or a fresh beer after a long day of hiking.