

A man with dark hair and a beard, wearing sunglasses and a black long-sleeved shirt, is shown from the chest up. He is holding a yellow trekking pole in his right hand. He is wearing a backpack with a blue hydration tube. The background is a vast mountain landscape with a large, snow-capped mountain peak (Mont Blanc) in the distance under a cloudy sky. The foreground shows a grassy mountain slope.

SELF GUIDED TOUR DU MONT BLANC EPIC: FAMILY 6 DAY ITINERARY

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While we try and stick to the tried and tested itinerary below, the mountain, the accommodation availability and the weather sometimes has other ideas. We will always remain as flexible as possible to make sure we can change any plans if required.

This is a proposed itinerary and where you stay is subject to change based on how far in advance you book your trip. There is limited availability on this trek so we highly recommend booking in advance.

DAY 1:

LES HOUCHES - REFUGE MIAGE

Take the Bellevue cable car in Les Houches up to the Bellevue Plateau. It's then just a 15 minute walk (very well signposted) to the Col du Voza. Cross the railway tracks and follow the path for Col du Tricot. Crossing the Himalayan suspension bridge is fun for all but especially for kids. After the bridge the route begins to gently climb until the spectacular Bionnassay glacier comes into full view. This is a great spot to have lunch – if you look carefully you'll see wild bilberry bushes everywhere. From here you can see the top of the Col du Tricot and it's a steady climb up to the grassy saddle. Spend some time here to admire the views over the Miage Valley and over to the Col du Bonhomme. You can also spot your bed for the night at Refuge Miage far down in the valley. If you look carefully to your left, you'll see a stone archway on the 'smugglers route' to Refuge Plan Glacier (see our adventure itinerary). Don't allow your children to explore it as the cliff down is sheer and a fall could well be fatal. The descent down is STEEP! Take it easy and use your poles. Reaching the valley floor follow the signs to reach Refuge Miage in just 5 minutes. This cluster of farm buildings is set in an idyllic rural setting and is charmingly French. Refuge Miage is a good place to stay as a family as children receive a discounted price (not the case in high mountain refuges).

7.2km / 540m up / 650m down / 4 – 6 hours trekking

DAY 2:

REFUGE MIAGE - REFUGE NANT BORRANT

Departing the refuge you'll have an initial short climb from the Miage Valley up and over to Auberge du Truc. Just before here on the left is a 'pointe du navigation' which shows the names of each of the peaks you can see. From Auberge du Truc it's a long steady descent through the forest into Les Contamines. Have a leisurely lunch in this small French town before either choosing to walk along the river to Notre Dame de la Gorge or pick up the free shuttle bus (navette) outside the Tourist Office to Notre Dame de la Gorge where the trail heads out into the wild once more. Take a moment to visit the beautiful Notre Dame de la Gorge chapel next to the gushing water before setting out on the well marked path. Warning – the trail is VERY steep here along an ancient slabbed Roman road to Refuge Nant Borrant but pleasantly flanks the bubbling racing gorge for much of the ascent. Be sure to look out for the pont naturel sign leading to a natural arch on the river, just a minute from the trail. Cross the roman bridge to take in the rushing gorge below. Expect to hike for around just over an hour from the church to reach the refuge.

10.2km / 500m up / 590m down / 4 – 6 hours trekking

DAY 3:

REFUGE NANT BORRANT - REFUGE DE LA CROIX DU BONHOMME

Today you'll make the climb over two mountain passes, Col du Bonhomme (2329m) and Col de la Croix du Bonhomme (2483m) where early in the season (late June – end of July) you can expect to cross snow patches. You'll stay in the cavernous Refuge de la Croix du Bonhomme (2433m), a high mountain refuge with epic views. The dorms and private rooms have been renovated to a good standard and we love that dinner is fantastically atmospheric being served in candlelight to save electricity. The food, admittedly, is not the best on the Tour, (especially the soup) but if you soak up the exceptional location, breathe in the grandeur of the mountains, and accept that this is the most adventurous refuge you'll stay in during this 6 day family TMB trek, you'll embrace it warts and all.

7.5km / 990m up / 50 down / 4 – 5 hours trekking

DAY 4:

REFUGE DE LA CROIX DU BONHOMME - REFUGE LES MOTTETS

From Refuge de la Croix du Bonhomme it's pretty much all down hill today. If the weather is fine, and your kids are in good shape after the previous day, consider taking the alternative route from the refuge via the Col des Fours. Experience lunar landscape & rushing waterfalls on this variant route as well as the option of detouring to the Tête Nord des Fours summit – only a further 20 minutes (follow the cairns) which gives one of the best views of the Tour du Mont Blanc – highly recommended. Note: Never attempt this variant route if the weather is nothing short of perfect. The Col des Fours variant bypasses the hamlet of Les Chapieux completely and does take a little longer – you cannot catch the Les Chapieux shuttle bus to ease tired legs if needed. If you're continuing along the normal TMB route the well marked trail will descend all the way to the valley of to Les Chapieux, where you can stop for a welcome refreshment at the friendly Auberge de la Nova and carry on a further hour up the trail to Refuge Les Mottets. This would be the full 11.8km. Or as we would suggest catch the navette (shuttle bus) from Les Chapieux which ferries you in 30 minutes to the parking area of Refuge Les Mottets (you'll then have to walk down the hillside to the refuge in the valley bottom).

7km / 340m up / 950m down / 5 – 7 hours trekking

DAY 5:

REFUGE MOTTETS - ELISABETTA / CABANE COMBAL

Today you'll say 'au revoir' to France and trek over the Col de la Seigne into Italy. Ciao! From Refuge Les Mottets roll out of bed fresh to tackle the immediate 646m steady climb up the Col de la Seigne up to the French – Italian frontiere. From here Mont Blanc comes fabulously back into view with her surrounding peaks dropping off dramatically into an astonishing deep trough like valley. So spectacular are these jagged peaks that over the next two days you will find it hard to tear your eyes away from the incredible vistas to your left. Passing Refugio Elisabetta (where you might stay), tucked in on a spur between Glacier d'Estellette and Glacier de la Lée Blanche, you'll continue a further hour along the arrow straight roman road to the incredibly comfortable, highly instagrammable A frame refuge Cabane Combal. For those keen for an evening stroll, take the trail behind the refuge to scramble up to Lac Miage, nestled in the moraine of the Miage Glacier.

12km / 650m up / 540m down / 5 – 7 hours trekking

DAY 6:

ELISABETTA / CABANE COMBAL - COURMAYEUR

Your final day trekking takes you up out of the valley floor climbing steadily up to the highest point of the day, a spur from Mont Favre. Looking back you can see the monstrous moraine of Glacier Miage dwarfing Cabane Combal and on a clear day all the way back to Col de la Seigne. From here you'll trace the contours of the south flank of the Val Veni, following the rise and fall of the mountain side with jaw dropping views of sawtooth peaks and Monte Bianco opposite. It's a challenging day and so we highly recommend you to take the chair lift and connecting cable car from Refuge Maison Vielle down to Dolonne, Courmayeur. Our timing has reflected this welcome short cut plus know that the descent is painfully jarring. We would not recommend finishing your day by attempting this with tired children.

8km / 490m up / 250m down / 5 – 6 hours trekking