

# **SELF GUIDED TOUR DU MONT BLANC EPIC: TURBO 4 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:

### BELLEVUE - CROIX DU BONHOMME

This itinerary takes the Bellevue cable car from Les Houches to the Bellevue Plateau & picks up the path for the Col du Tricot. After the Himalayan suspension bridge the route begins to gently climb until the spectacular Bionnassay glacier comes into full view. 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 far off the Col du Bonhomme. 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. After an initial short climb from the Miage Valley up and over to Auberge du Truc. From here it's a long steady descent through the forest into Les Contamines. From the valley you can choose 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. After reaching Refuge Nant Borrant press for almost a further 3kms before reaching Refuge Le Balme. From here you'll start climbing the Col du Bonhomme and then the Col du Croix du Bonhomme, an ancient route across these mountains. From the top of the Col du Bonhomme the route skirts around for a further hour before reaching your bed for the night at the cavernous Refuge du Croix du Bonhomme.

*25.2km / 2030m up / 1240m down / 8 – 10 hours trekking*

## DAY 2:

### CROIX DU BONHOMME - COURMAYEUR

Today you'll trek from France over the Col de la Seigne into Italy. Ciao! If the weather is fine take the alternative route via the Col des Fours. The trail can be picked up just before Refuge de la Croix du Bonhomme so you'll need to double back on yourself for a couple of minutes to head via this route. The Col des Fours is a spectacular variant leading over a lunar landscape before dropping into the Vallée des Glaciers picking up the traditional route at Ville des Glaciers. Note this route cuts out the hamlet of Les Chapieux. Never attempt this variant route if the weather is nothing short of perfect. 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 via Ville des Glaciers. Note: there is a navette (shuttle bus) from Les Chapieux to Ville des Glaciers which can shave a good hour off your timings. We have included this navette in our timings for this schedule. From Ville des Glaciers it's a steady ascent past the converted dairy farm, Refuge les Mottets (a good place for lunch) up the Col de la Seigne – the frontière between France and Italy. In good weather this is your chance to see Mont Blanc again. The views here are spectacular as the Italian Val Veny lays before you. The descent is easy enough before hitting the U shape valley floor. You'll pass the infamous Refuge Elisabetta reaching the arrow straight roman road to Lac Combal. The trail ascends from the emerald lac climbing steadily up to the highest point on stage 4, 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 Veny, following the rise and fall of the mountain side with jaw dropping views of sawtooth peaks and Monte Bianco opposite. From Refugio Maison Vielle (during peak season Aug & Sept) take the chair lift and connecting cable car down to Dolonne which is a 10 minute saunter into Courmayeur. The descent from Maison Vielle is brutal and so we have included the chairlift / cable car down in this itinerary timings (29.9km 7hr 30) Note: taking the Les Chapieux shuttle AND the From Refugio Maison Vielle chairlift/Dolonne cable car reduces this day to 25.3km / 6.5 – 7 hours. The delightful Italian town of Courmayeur is your home for the night.

*29.9km / 1470m up / 2740m down / 8 – 10 hours trekking*

## **DAY 3:**

### **COURMAYEUR - CHAMPEX**



You'll cover a lot of ground today leaving Italy behind after crossing the Grand Col Ferret into Switzerland before catching a bus between Ferret or La Fouly onto Champex-Lac with a last push onto the next refuge the Relais D'Arpette. The day starts with a steep ascent up to Refuge Bertone and traverses along the gentle southern ridge of the Val Ferret valley today passing Refuge Bonatti before descending to Chalet Val Ferret. From here the trail climbs up past Refuge Elena and up and over the Grand Col Ferret (2537m), the border between Italy and Switzerland. Drink in the rugged peaks and icy glaciers before descending for Switzerland's landscape changes here to gentle pastures and farm land. Passing the working dairy farm, the Gite Alpage de la Peule nestled into the mountain side on the other side of the Col, it's an easy descent to the hamlet of Ferret where you can pick up the bus to Champex-Lac.

*34km / 2210m up, 1730m down / 8 – 10 hours trekking*

## **DAY 4:**

### **CHAMPEX - LE TOUR**

Today is the most technical day of the TMB and can only be done in good weather. Never attempt the Col du Fenêtre in anything less than perfect weather. You will need to return to Champex-Lac and continue on the traditional Bovine route if bad weather is predicted. The terrain on the ascent to the Col du Fenêtre is unlike the trail on the entire rest of the TMB circuit. The trail is not marked well and can easily be lost in bad weather. The boulder field just before the Col requires a lot of attention and trekkers need to be mindful of loose screw and rocks that dislodge easily and can be fatal to trekkers below. Set off super early though and you'll be in for a treat. The descent from the Col du Fenêtre is nothing short of astounding. Hairpin bends wind down the rocky descent with the incredible Trient Glacier trailing down beside the trail. This huge hunk of ice will mesmerise you during your descent and will surely be one of your unforgettable memories of this incredible trek. Reaching the Buvette at the bottom of the descent you'll turn left crossing the bridge and tackle the steep ascent to Refuge Les Grands (a cosy manned un-catered refuge). Watch out for the Tibetan style path cut steeply into the rock. You'll soon see Refuge Col du Balme with its iconic red shutters – a tiny dot on the Col du Balme saddle – another frontiere marking the boundary between Switzerland and France. The gentle balcony walk contours around until you pass the refuge. Re-bonjour! You've come in a complete circle and once again the Chamonix Valley is in sight. Look to the far end of the valley to spot Les Houches where you set off. Our itinerary descends now to the valley floor just past the refuge via the chairlift and gondola to Le Tour. Taking this shortcut is included in today's timings (21.5km / 7.5hrs). However please note that this chairlift and cable car is currently closed for the duration of summer 2022 so you will need to descend to the village of Le Tour on foot adding a further 1 hour to your itinerary. Catch the bus from Le Tour into Chamonix. Well done!

*21km / 1830m up / 1910m down / 8 – 10 hours trekking*