

A dramatic mountain landscape featuring a large glacier flowing down a steep, rocky slope. In the foreground, two hikers with large blue backpacks and trekking poles stand on a grassy ridge, looking out over the valley. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds. The overall scene is majestic and adventurous.

GUIDEBOOK

THE FAMOUS TOUR DU MONT BLANC

COMPLETE INFORMATION FOR A
SELF-GUIDED HIKE

THE 'MOUNTAINPEOPLE' PROJECT

P R E S E N T S



Hey! I'm Natlie and I'm in love with mountains for more than 15 years now.

They stole my heart back in 2008 and ever since they've been in my dreams. During these years, I have hiked not only in the Alps, but also in the Pyrenees, in the Caucasus and in some other interesting desinations.

The idea of creating such a project has occured to me back in 2013, but it is being realized only now. I know how difficult it is to get all the necessary information on some interesting and not extremely popular routes, that's why I'm going to share with you the ones I've hiked myself and find cool enough to recommend others in the form of small guidebooks.

The one that you hold currently open will tell you about one of the most beautiful hikes in the world: the famous Tour du Mont Blanc circle hike.

I'm sure that it will be usefull for you and will open the door to a new awesome adventure!

See you on the trail,

Natalie, the Mountaigirl.

CONTENTS

...or what are these pages about

Description of the hike day by day

with possible route variations, daily mileage, altitude difference (ascent/descent), basic useful information

Trek of the trail on the map

overall and day-by-day, with variations and important points.

You can use it online or you can download it for the offline use. Easy and simple.

Useful information

about mountain huts, about the peculiarities of hiking in the Alps and the rules of courtesy.

Checklist of interesting places

What to do before or after the hike:

- what to see
- where to go

Gear checklist

Do I need to carry a supply of water with me? Should I use the trekking poles? Are mountain boots required?

General information

When to go, with whom to go, from where to go. How to get to the starting point, is it possible to shorten the route and other questions.

GENERAL INFORMATION

more than

170 KM

of astonishing landscape

3 countries

FRANCE, ITALY, SWITZERLAND

with their own unique ambience

8

DAYS ON THE TRAIL

that you will, without doubt, remember all your life

more than

10 000 METRES

is the overall elevation gain



HIKING THE TOUR DU MONT BLANC

Tour du Mont Blanc is the everlasting **hiking 'classics'**. Being one of the most famous multiday hikes in Europe, it is usually included in the '**TOP-10**' most beautiful hikes in the world ratings. And such a high rating, without doubt, is well-deserved. High alpine passes, clear lakes, glaciers and, of course, the panoramas of the Mont Blanc ridge - what could be more impressive?

It usually takes **8 days** to close the loop, but you can hike it even in 5 or 11 days: it all depends not only on your physical abilities but also on the pace you'll choose for this adventure.

When to hike: from the middle of July until the middle of September.

Why is the Tour du Mont Blanc such a gorgeous hike? It is convenient for all ages: you can meet both groups of school students and elderly people on the trail!

The majority of hikers prefer to start the hike **from Chamonix**, but, as this is a circular trail, you can start from any other point, for example, from the cosy Italian town of Courmayeur.

You can also hike it either **clockwise** or **counter-clockwise** (classical route).

The overall price of overnight stays in huts along the entire route is about **650 euros** (including breakfasts and dinners).

If you're planning to hike the TMB **with a tent**, please keep in mind a few particular nuances:

- 1. Wild camping in inappropriate places is strictly prohibited in Italy, Switzerland and France. Fine: 560 euros.**
- 2. You can set up a tent in Italy and France at an altitude of more than 2,500 meters and only 'after dusk';** you need to assemble your camp 'before dawn'. In Switzerland you can use a tent above the forest zone.
- 3. Litting a fire is also prohibited.**
- 4. 'Leave no trace':** please collect all the garbage you've generated with you: you can throw it away in a hut. Please use a pocket trowel for toilet purposes: the more we care for the nature the more it gives back.

START OF THE ROUTE

CHAMONIX

The easiest way to get here is an arrival from **Geneva airport**, where a lot of international airlines have flights.

The distance between Geneva and Chamonix is around 88 km, thus, you can come there in several different ways:

- **rent a car** (but you'll have to park it somewhere for 7-8 days);
- **order a transfer** (for example: <https://www.mountaindropoffs.com>), one way ticket is around 33.50 eurs per person);
- **Flixbus**. There're direct rides from Geneva airport to Chamonix (20 eur/person/1 way). There also are rides from Geneva (city) to Aosta (through Chamonix and Courmayeur). The price is 8 eurs per person (one way);
- **Bla bla car**.

COURMAYEUR

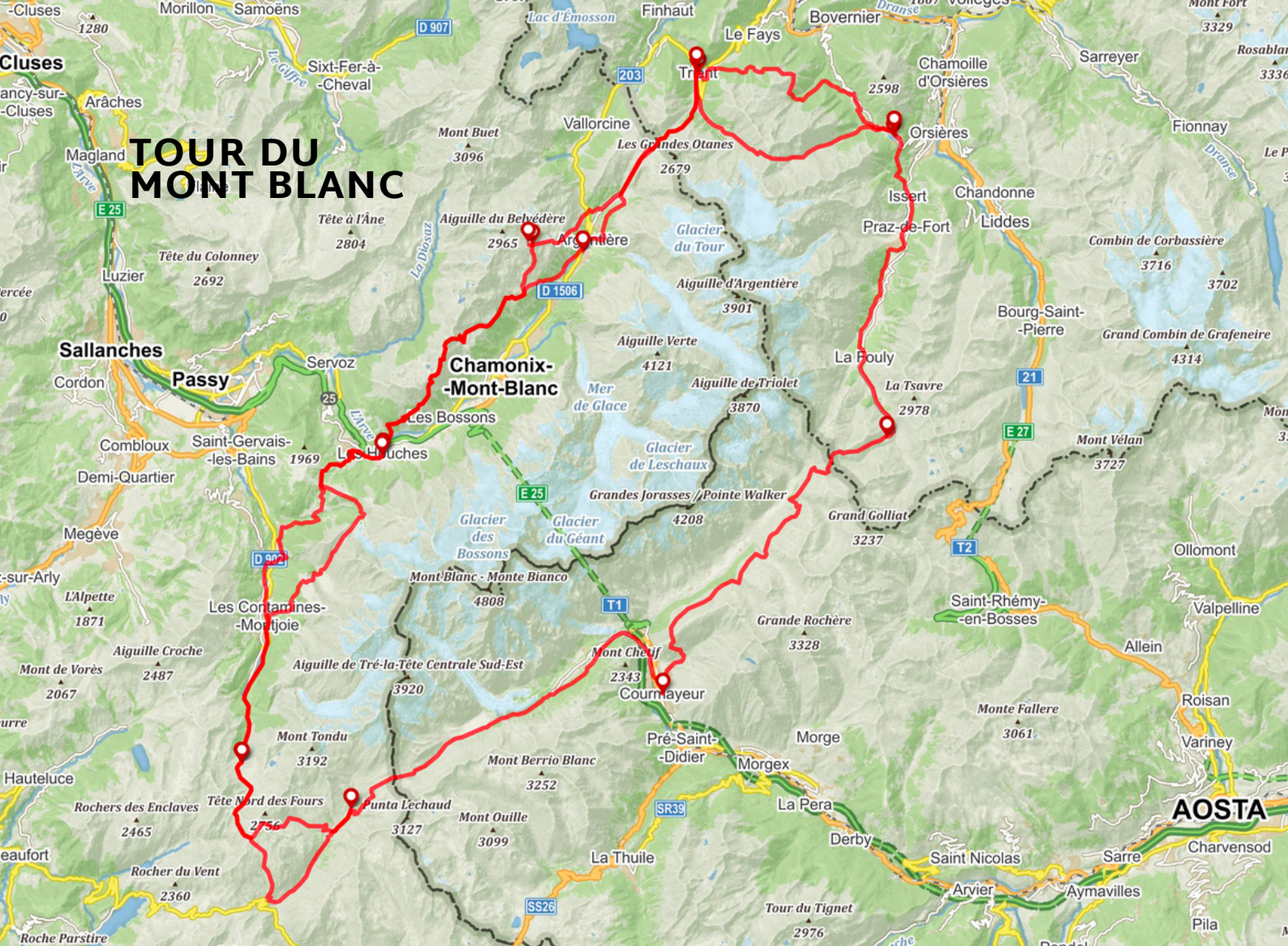
You can get to Courmayeur not only from Geneva, but also from **Milan**.

- **Flixbus** goes from **Geneva to Courmayeur** for 8 EURs per person (one way);
- **Flixbus** from **Milan** is 20 eurs/one way;
- **rent a car**: if you have some spare time before or after the TMB, renting a car might be a good idea, as it gives more freedom to travel around the area. For example, explore the beautiful **Aosta Valley** and the stunning **Gran Paradiso National Park**.

INSURANCE

I would also advise on making a special outdoor insurance for your journey. It is usually offered by insurance companies for mountain sports above 2500 m.





**DAY 1. Start from Courmayeur (1223 m) – La Peule (2071 m);
Length: 26 km;
Ascent: 2106 m;
Descent: 1279 m.**

Yes, it's quite a difficult first day. And, if you follow the recommendations in the guidebooks, the overnight stay should not be in Switzerland, but in Italy, in Rifugio Elena.

We decided to go further, to Gîte Alpage de La Peule: the last push to the Grand Col Ferret pass and then the descent to the sweet swiss Val Ferret valley.

Gîte Alpage de La Peule is one of the sweetest mountain huts I've ever been to, the food is simple and tasty.

Cost: 67.-CHF (half board, i.e. an overnight stay in a common room + dinner + breakfast).

DAY 2. Start from La Peule (2071 m) – Lac Champex (1470 m);

Length: 20 km;

Ascent: 647 m;

Descent: 1232 m.

Perhaps this is the easiest and most peaceful day of the whole hike, allowing you to fully enjoy the green meadows, the ideal beauty of Switzerland and eat plenty of forest raspberries!

Lake Champex is a pearl of the region unknown to mass tourists. It is a very special and calm place with charming atmosphere. A must-do if you come there early enough is to go to a local store to buy some local cheese and meat! A tasty and simple lunch is ready!

I've been there 2 times and during the first stay we spent a night in a hotel, for the second time we rented an apartment for 4 people. Both times the price was about 50 eur per person.



DAY 3. Variation 1.

Lac Champex (1470 m) – Trient (1300 m) via Fenêtre d'Arpette;

Length: 15 km;

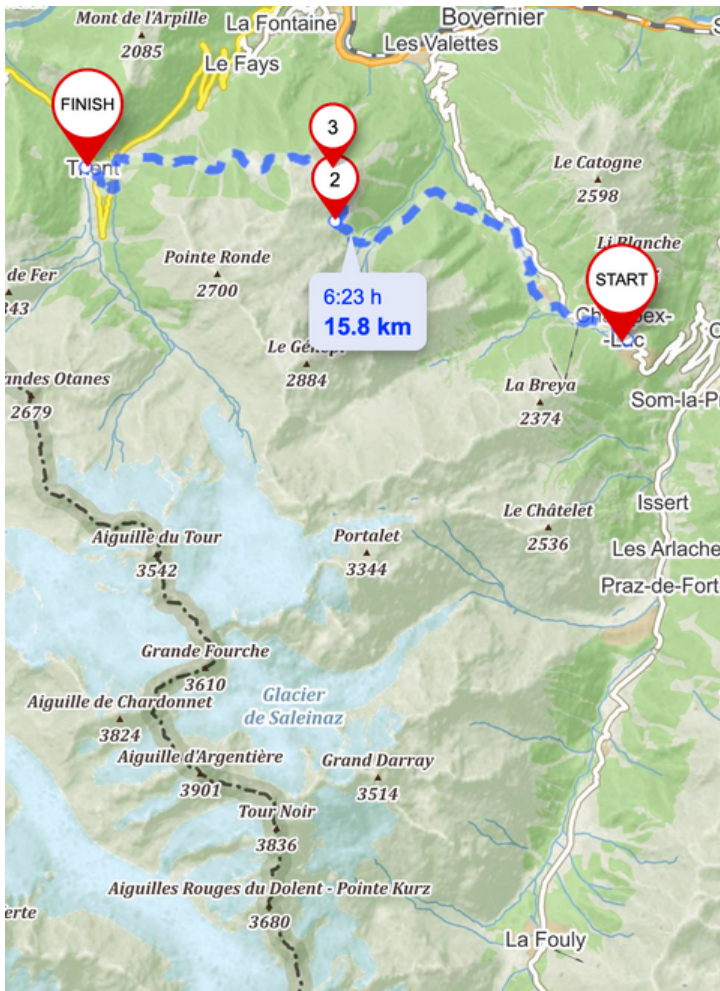
Ascent: 1179 m;

Descent: 1381 m.

There are 2 route options from Lac Champex to Trient. One of the toughest parts of the TMB is the Fenêtre d'Arpette pass, located at an altitude of 2665 m.

The descent is accompanied by a beautiful view on the Glacier du Trient. However, this part is quite tricky and requires special awareness and vigilance, because you have to hike through an old rockfall.

Please do not choose this variation if you set on the trail in bad weather (thunderstorm etc).



DAY 3. Variation 2. Lac Champex (1470 m) – Trient (1300 m);
Length: 16 km;
Ascent: 869 m;
Descent: 1043 m.

This is, in fact, the main route variation from Lac Champex to Trient: through Bovine and Col de la Forclaz (1527 m). However, if you're interested in a more challenging route (and the weather is favourable) you can choose to hike through the Fenêtre d'Arpette pass. It will definitely both give you more emotions and impressions and require more stamina and strength.

There are several mountain huts in Trient, such as the Auberge du Mont Blanc. Half board costs about 50 eur per night. When we stayed there the dinner included local soup, main dish and some dessert (we had homemade ice cream in the colours of the Swiss flag).

DAY 4. Start from Trient (1300 m) - Argentière/Chamonix (1252 m);
Length: 15-17 km;
Ascent: 1041 m;
Descent: 1084 m.

New morning, new mountain pass. Col de Balm is located on the border between Switzerland and France: here you can see the whole Mont Blanc massif in all its glory.

Here you can also choose one of the route variations:

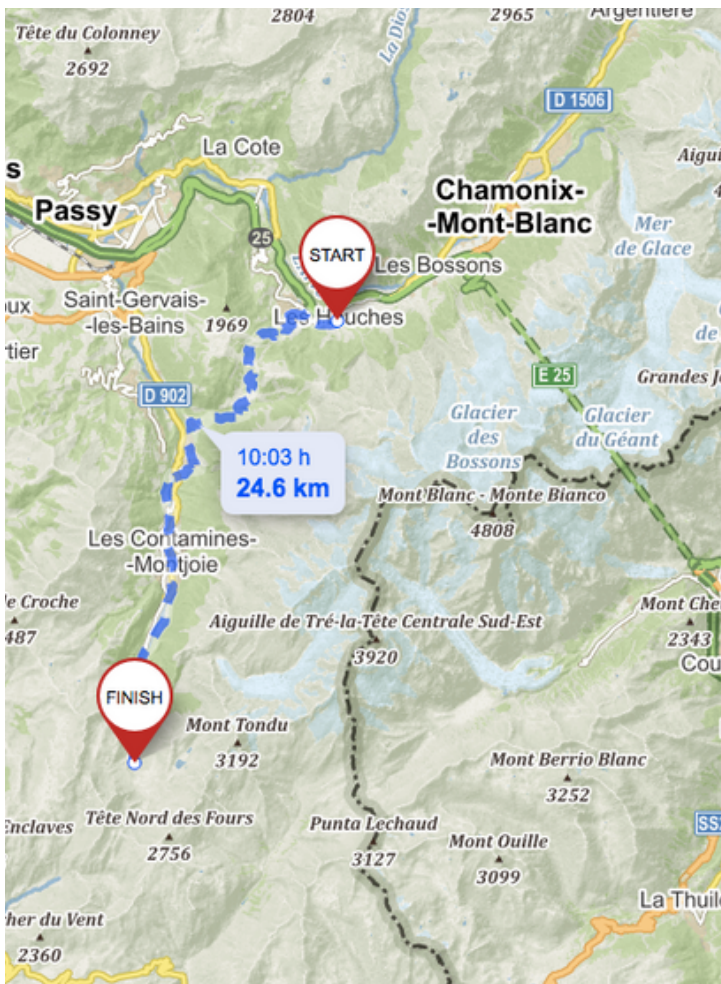
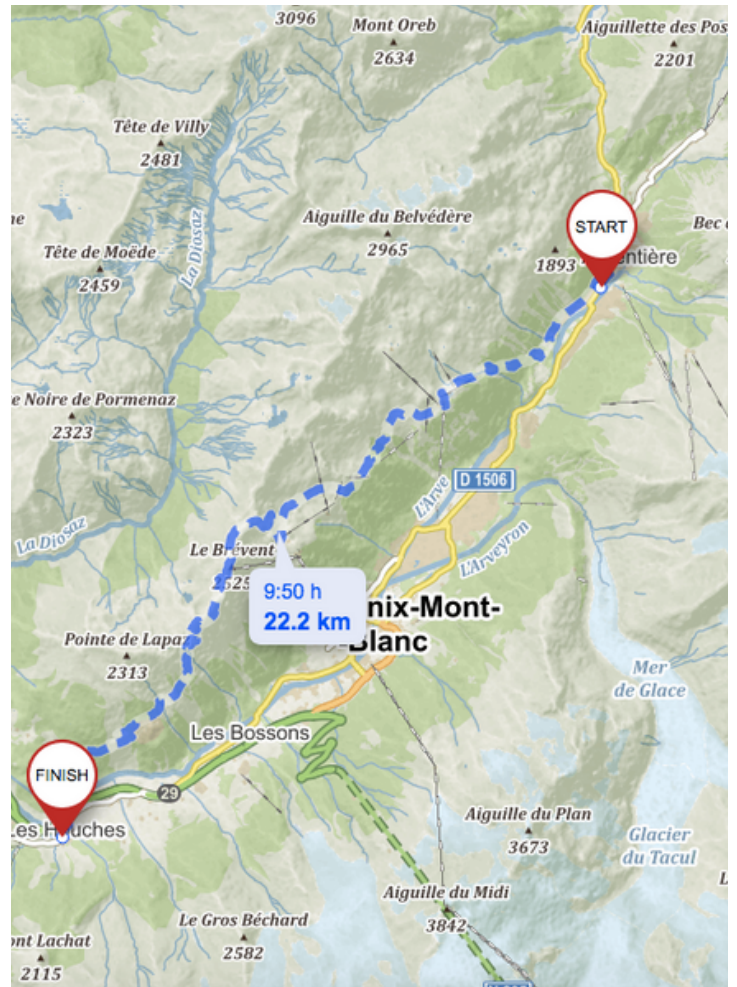
- either go straight down to the cozy town of Argentière and buy a warm crispy baguette and plunge your teeth into it;
- head towards Lac Blanc (and spend a night in a hut, then your overall elevation gain this day will be 1954 m);
- hike up to Lac Blanc and then descend to Argentière.



DAY 5. Chamonix or Argentière (1252 m) – Les Houches (1008 m);
Length: 22 km;
Ascent: 1557 m;
Descent: 1766 m.

If you've spent the night down in the valley, then the 5th day will begin for you with an ascent to one of the most popular peaks in the vicinity of Chamonix, the famous Le Brévent mountain, which offers panoramic views of the Mont Blanc massif and the nearby cities.

Chamonix looks like a toy town from above, especially with the mighty glaciers in the background.



DAY 6. Les Houches (1008 m) – Refuge de la Balme (1706 m);
Length: 25-26 km;
Ascent: 1619 m;
Descent: 937 m.

For this section of the route, there are 2 variations available: an ascent to the glacier tongue of the Glacier de Bionnassay or a calm route through cozy French villages with delicious (100% yummy) onion soup.

Despite the fact that guidebooks unanimously recommend spending a night at the Refuge de Nant Borrant, I personally preferred the Refuge de la Balme. Yes, this hut is 2.5km further and 248m higher than Nant Boran, but...it's absolutely calm and quiet, uncrowded, very picturesque + you can set off the next morning in a pleasant coolness and be the first on the Col du Bonhomme pass.



DAY 7. Start from Refuge de la Balme (1706 m) – Refuge des Mottets (1864 m);
Length: 13.4-17 km;
Ascent: 1131 m
Descent 945 m.

After breakfast the route leads to the Col du Bonhomme pass, from where you can either go down to the small town of Les Chapieux or climb the Col de Fours pass (2667 m). Here you can enjoy a stunning view on the Vallée des Glaciers valley.

It is most convenient to spend the night at Refuge des Mottets hut: it is located in a very picturesque place and they also serve an amazing blueberry pie 🍷!

DAY 8. Start from Refuge des Mottets (1864 m) – Courmayeur (1223 m);
Length: 23 km;
Ascent: 839 m;
Descent: 1482 m.

As always, the morning begins with an ascent to the Col de la Seigne pass (2516 m), continues with a descent into the river valley, crossing the border of France and Italy, and leads through a beautiful path along the mighty peaks and glaciers.

As this is the final day of the TMB circuit, you can stay for the night in a cozy Italian town of Courmayeur, enjoy amazing pizza and pasta or take the cable car called Skyway Monte Bianco to admire the beautiful Alps.



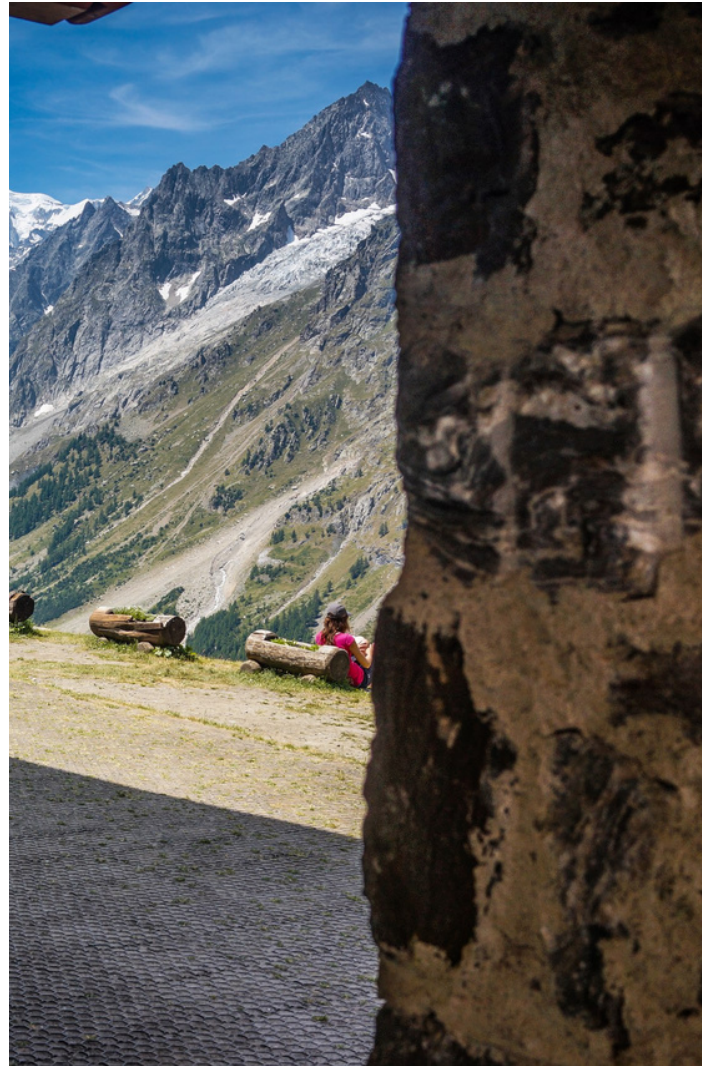


TREKKING THE TOUR DU MONT BLANC

GEAR CHECKLIST

- Sunscreen SPF50
- Sunglasses
- Hat
- Buff
- Raincoat
- Trekking poles
- Head torch
- Thermal socks
- Hiking socks (2 pairs)
- Quick drying t-shirts, 2-3 pcs
- Hiking pants
- Thermal shirt/pants
- Gloves
- Gaiters
- Fleece jacket
- Membrane jacket
- Membrane pants
- Sleeping bag (liner)
- Crocs
- Trekking boots
- Hydration system
- Medical kit
- Small jar of detergent/soap

NOTES:



MOUNTAIN HUTS

Mountain huts (rifugio/refuge) play a crucial role during the Tour du Mont Blanc hike.

An average cost for 7 nights along the way is approximately 650 eurs. This amount includes not only overnight stay, but also half-pension (dinner & breakfast). Many huts lack hot water, some of them do have it, but at an additional cost of 1-2 eurs. If you're reluctant to spend all your nights in the huts, you can book a hotel in the small towns, through which the trail takes you (for example, Chamonix, Courmayeur, Argentière).

I really enjoy the atmosphere of mountain huts: at first everyone arrives so tired and dusty, then check-in and take a quick refreshing shower, afterwards - gather in the dining room, lay out paper maps, admire the photos on the walls, discuss routes, mountains and glaciers, share plans and stories...

170 km of the route hold 51 mountain hut along the way. You can get to know each of them on this [website](http://autourdumontblanc.com) (autourdumontblanc.com). You can also find all the contacts and relevant prices there. I would advise on booking your stays as early as you make the decision to complete this hike, as in the high season there could remain no free places when you arrive on the scene.



OTHER IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE YOU HIKE

DRINKING WATER

There's nearly no way you're going to face water supply problems along the way as there're a lot of wooden tubs installed near the path, where you can pour water. You can, in fact, drink it without filtering, but if you're nervous about the consequences feel free to use your regular filter (my personal choice is the Aquamira filter). You can also always restock water supplies in mountain huts.

I would also advise on using isotonic water during the Tour du Mont Blanc. This will help your organism to gain lost minerals and other components. Personally, I use isotonic powder that should be added to your drinking water. It gives a slight flavour to your water (in my case, citrus).

LUNCHES

Many hikers order in the huts 'lunch-to-go', consisting of cookies, sandwiches, juice and other small things.

However, in all villages and huts along the way you can order hot local soup or any other dish you might like. If you're not feeling too hungry, it might be a good idea to buy food in local supermarkets or take sublimates with you (but this will still make your backpack heavier).



WAYS TO MAKE YOUR LONG-DISTANCE HIKE MORE COMFORTABLE

SHOULD I TAKE TREKKING POLES FOR THE TMB?

For your health and comfort - yes, you should. They effectively relieve the effort on your lower back, knees, spreading part of the weight to arms and shoulders. During a descent (especially on such surfaces as bulk stones) you will feel more comfortable as they serve as 2 additional points of support.

CAN I HIKE IN TRAINING SHOES?

If you're a skilled trail runner - it's up to you, as you already know and acknowledge all the risks.

But if you're a beginner or just a hiker - better not. Your feet are your health, your ankle should be well fixed in order to minimize traumas, You should feel confident and comfortable in your shoes, they should be an instrument of help, not of suffering.

SHOULD I TAKE A MEDICAL KIT WITH ME?

Yes, no doubts. For all really serious cases you should have a hiking insurance and SOS-numbers (**118 or 112 for Italy, 112 for France and 144 for Switzerland**). Nevertheless, it's always better to have at hand a medical kit with at least the most necessary medicamentations.

SUNSCREEN

The sun in the mountains can be very aggressive for your skin. To prevent unnecessary problems I would advise to constantly use sunscreen (and lip balm) with SPF50 even in cloudy weather: uv rays are very tricky. Please do not forget to renew it on your skin according to recommendations on the tube. This will save you a lot of unpleasant moments of burnt skin.

SUNGLASSES

If you have sunglasses with the 4th degree of protection - it is ideal. Otherwise, the 3rd degree of protection will be better than nothing.

CASH

Some mountain huts (the big ones) do accept card payments, but the small ones accept cash only. If you book in advance, you might also need to pre-pay your stay. In Switzerland you can pay in euros, but the exchange rate will be 1 eur = 1 franc.

TENTS

As was mentioned earlier, hiking with a tent throughout the Alps can be very tricky due to strict rules of wild camping. This is why the majority of hikers on the Tour du Mont Blanc circuit prefer to stay in huts: it doesn't decrease the level of interaction with the nature, but adds to the overall comfort.



PLACES TO EXPLORE NOT FAR AWAY FROM THE ITINERARY

The Alps are a great place for any kind of mountain activities throughout the year. They're full of harmony and beauty, thus, any trip in the area will already be an adventure.

That's why I've decided to add a couple of interesting places that might attract you before or after the TMB.

Courmayeur. Cable car 'Skyway Monte Bianco'. It climbs up to the height of 3 466 m. On the intermediate station P. Helbronner you can change to the french cable car leading to the Aiguille du Midi, from where you can then descend to Chamonix. For more information please feel free to browse the [official website](#).



*'Follow the wind, follow the light,
follow your dream...'*



Courmayeur. Ristorante Pizzeria La Palud, address: Strada la Palud, 17, 11013 Courmayeur. They have an [Official website](#).

The prices are surprisingly low (compared to some other restaurants in Courmayeur).

Both pizza and pasta are above any compliments, with a generous amount of cheese, meat and a very thin dough. Yummi!

GRAN PARADISO NATIONAL PARK

Gran Paradiso is an ideal destination not only for acclimatization hikes, but for trekking in general. The pearl of the Park is the Gran Paradiso mountain (4061 m). The ascent usually takes 2 days (with an overnight stay in a mountain hut). There're some ascent routes for beginners, but if you have no mountaineering experience please make an appointment with a mountain guide: nothing's worth the risk.

If you come across the tiny town of Valnontey it is worth going for lunch to the local restaurant Valnontey and enjoy your polenta with meat.



Moreover, there start a trail to the Col du Lauson pass (3299 m), which can lead you to the neighbouring gorge. The distance to the pass is 9.7 km with the total elevation gain of 1623 m, the descent to the town of Valsavarenche - 12.6 km with 1793 m loss and 165 m gain.

You can also head towards Gran Paradiso and reach Bivacco Martinotti. Overall elevation gain is 919 m on 7.6 km.

COGNE

This small Italian town in the Valle D'Aosta region is situated at an altitude of 1543 m above sea level. Its popularity is very justified: a perfect view on the Gran Paradiso is gorgeous.

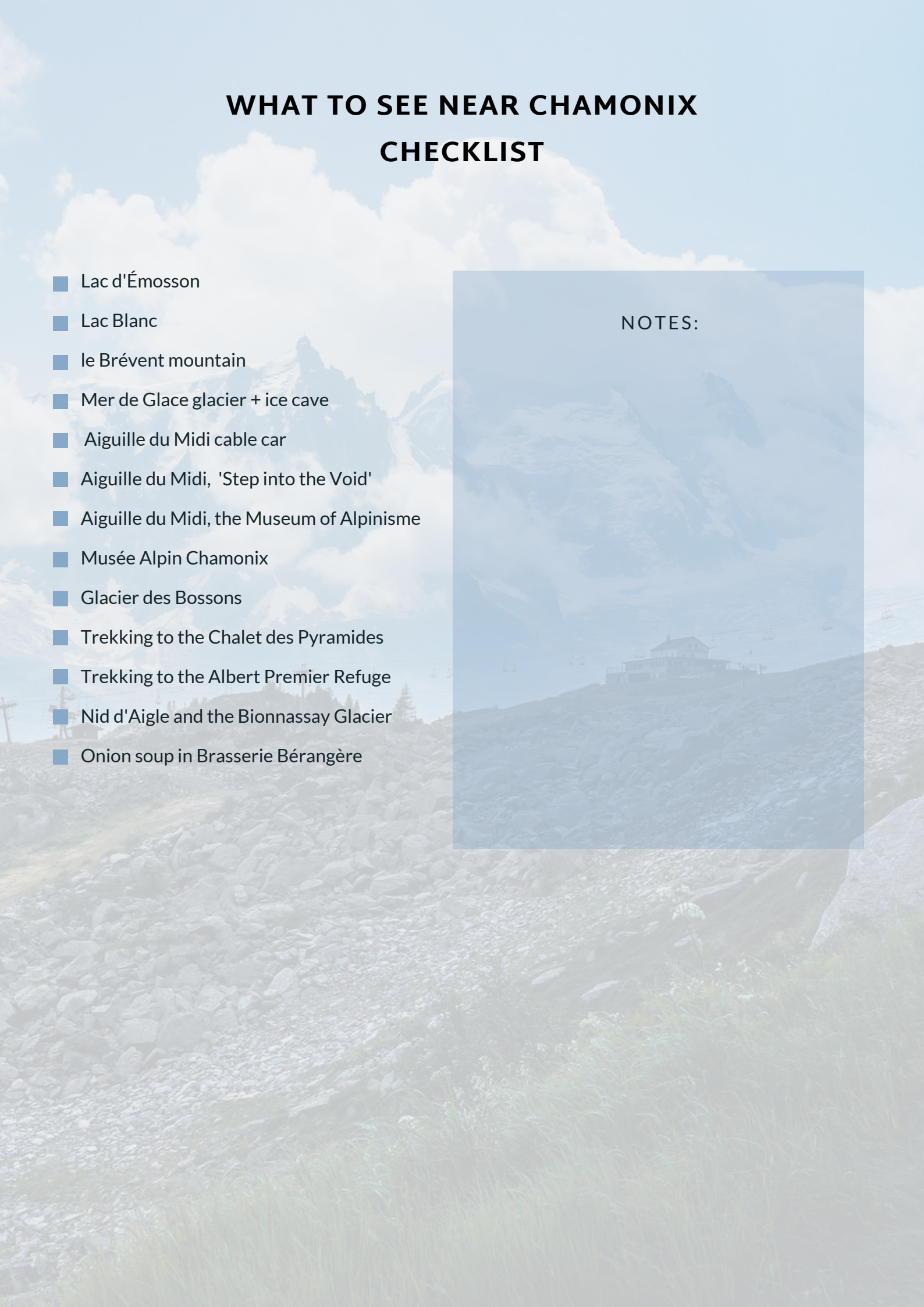
Nevertheless, hiking is not the only activity there: many people come for a small picnic with stunning views, to relax and enjoy delicious food on the green lawns.



WHAT TO SEE NEAR CHAMONIX CHECKLIST

- Lac d'Émosson
- Lac Blanc
- le Brévent mountain
- Mer de Glace glacier + ice cave
- Aiguille du Midi cable car
- Aiguille du Midi, 'Step into the Void'
- Aiguille du Midi, the Museum of Alpinisme
- Musée Alpin Chamonix
- Glacier des Bossons
- Trekking to the Chalet des Pyramides
- Trekking to the Albert Premier Refuge
- Nid d'Aigle and the Bionnassay Glacier
- Onion soup in Brasserie Bérangère

NOTES:





AND, FINALLY, ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS:

DOWNLOAD FULL ITINERARY

MAPY.CZ



**Now that our little
adventure is over,**



I hope that this small guide was useful to you and that it will lead you to a new big adventure!

I will also be happy to get any feedback 😊

You can do this via [Instagram](#) (@natalie_pronin).