

MT Sobek: Hiking the Haute Route

Day 1 Arrive in Geneva & Head to Chamonix

1.5-hour private van transfer

Arrive at the airport in Geneva, Switzerland and get picked up at 2pm for a group transfer to the famous mountain-ringed resort town of Chamonix, France. Once at the hotel, enjoy time to rest or explore this charming town before meeting the guides and the rest of the group for a welcome dinner and orientation at 6.30pm.

Accommodation: Auberge du Manoir
(D)

Day 2 Warm-Up Hike in Chamonix

Funicular ride

6 hours/7 miles hiking with 2,150' elevation gain & 2,500' elevation loss

From the hotel, take a funicular to Planpraz (6,600'). From this panoramic viewpoint take in your first complete vantage point of the Mont Blanc massif. The hike will lead to the Col Cornu (7,919') and then to the Black Lakes (8,530'). There are a number of options for the descent; the guides will select the one that best suits the group. Dinner tonight is on your own to explore the many fine dining options of Chamonix.

Accommodation: Auberge du Manoir
(B, L)

Day 3 Ascend to Col de Balme

1.5-hour private van transfer

7 hours/11 miles hiking with 3,300' elevation gain & 2,900' elevation loss

Begin the day with a 15-minute vehicle transfer to the village of Tour, at the head of the Chamonix valley. Head up through the alpine pastures to the Col de Balme (6,999'), and hike into Switzerland. After traversing above the tree line with dramatic views of the valley below, descend along the great Trient Glacier to the Col de la Forclaz (5,035'). Transfer by private bus to the little ski resort of Siviez.

Accommodation: Hotel des 4 Vallees & Spa
(B, L, D)

Day 4 Siviez—Grande Dixence

8 hours/13 miles hiking with 3,700' elevation gain & 3,400' elevation loss

Today is a long but beautiful day of hiking. From the village, pass by the dam of Cleuson, then climb 2,700-feet to the lunar landscapes of Le Grand Desert (the "big desert"), a glacial area rich in minerals. Scramble through boulder fields and scree slopes to the Col de Prafleuri (9,785'), where there are very good odds of seeing Edelweiss and ibex. Then descend from the pass to our hotel, located at the foot of Le Grande Dixence: Europe's highest dam, at 7,065 feet.

Accommodation: Hotel du Barrage
(B, L, D)

Day 5 Grande Dixence—Arolla

8 hours/13 miles hiking with 2,720' elevation gain & 2,800' elevation loss

From the hotel, hike above the dam and then continue around the lake, before our start up toward the Pas du Chat (7,800'). The terrain is rocky and we'll cross a glacier moraine before hiking over boulders and large flat rocks to the Pas de la Chevre (9,785' — "pass of the goat"). Then climb two sets of new ladders, before descending to Arolla (6,660'). This stage of the journey is considered true alpine, with rich mineral rock and a backdrop of the legendary summits of Pigne d'Arolla,

Mont-Blanc de Cheilon, and Mont-Collomb. End the day with a short walk through the beautiful Arolla pine forest, and to the typical charming Swiss hamlet of Arolla with its wooden chalets and flower-filled window boxes.

Accommodation: Hotel du Glacier
(B, L, D)

Day 6 Arolla & Hike to Grimentz

7 hours/11 miles hiking with 4,180' elevation gain & 3,468' elevation loss

Start the day with a 30-minute transfer by private bus to Cotter (5,790') where you begin the ascent to Col de Torrent (9,630'), paired with majestic views of Mont Blanc and other peaks of the Dent Blanche range (14,380'). From the pass, weather permitting, take in 360-degree vistas of snowcapped mountains and turquoise glacial lakes. Head down through cow-filled meadows to the picturesque Swiss village of Grimentz (5,300'), possibly seeing marmots and eagles along the way. Have a stroll around this old village with its vanishing way of life.

Accommodation: Hotel Cristal
(B, L, D)

Day 7 Hike from Grimentz Via Zinal Pass to the Hamlet of Gruben

8 hours/13 miles hiking with 4,180' elevation gain & 3,468' elevation loss

Today move from the French-speaking to German-speaking Switzerland; this is the bilingual canton of Valais. After a short transfer by private bus to Zinal (5,500'), the hike begins with a steep climb through a forest of larch trees, heather, and blueberries. Then make a long "balcony" traverse with views of the Matterhorn, before beginning another steep ascent toward the Col de Forcletta (9,480'). Descend through beautiful green hills with large mossy rocks and babbling brooks to the summer hamlet of Gruben (6,012'), home for the night.

Accommodation: Hotel Schwarzhorn
(B, L, D)

Day 8 Gruben & Descend to St. Niklaus

7.5 hours/12 miles hiking with 3,538' elevation gain & 5,900' elevation loss

Today's first challenge is the Augstbordpass (9,550'), the last major pass on the trek, which leads into the Mattervispa valley. From the top, make a long 5,900-foot descent with fairly steep exposure. The views are superb, of the Weishorn, Breithorn, and Mischabel, all topping 14,000 feet, and green hills dotted with slate-roofed wooden houses. Down in St. Niklaus (3,630') board the private bus for the drive to Täsch, the last village in the valley before Zermatt at the foot of the famed Matterhorn.

Accommodation: Hotel Täscherhof
(B, L, D)

Day 9 Täsch to Zermatt

6.5 hours/8 miles hiking with 2,600' elevation gain & 2,100' elevation loss

From our hotel, a path climbs through the forest to Taschalp (6,600'), a hamlet located on the famous Europaweg, a long-distance trail between Grächen and Zermatt considered by many to be the most beautiful hikes in the Alps. From this splendid balcony above the Mattervispa, admire the Matterhorn situated like a crown in this valley. Continuing above the valley, follow the trail to Zermatt. Just as the pioneers of the alpinism did, arrive in Zermatt by foot. Dinner tonight is on your own to explore the many fine dining options of Zermatt.

Accommodation: Hotel Butterfly
(B, L)

Day 10 Zermatt

4 hours/3 miles hiking with 1,000' elevation gain & 1,000' elevation loss

Enjoy a full day in one of the most iconic Alpine resorts in the world. There are many options today — a full day of hiking, a half day of hiking, or no hiking at all. Your guides will offer to lead you on trails above the town for great views of the Matterhorn with charming village visits. In the evening, meet with the group and trip leaders for a farewell dinner.

Accommodation: Hotel Butterfly

(B, D)

Day 11 Depart from Geneva or Zermatt

3.5-hour private bus transfer

After breakfast, transfer 3.5 hours to Geneva airport, or take the train from Zermatt to other destinations in Europe on your own. (Please do not schedule your outgoing flight to depart until after 2pm).

(B)