

## Mt Blanc Trek

The European Alps offer some of the most spectacular and enjoyable walking in the world and this adventure offers the chance to combine three countries into one trip as we cross the rugged Alps from Switzerland to France and Italy. The trek around Mt. Blanc is one of Europe's best mountain walks and you'll get a chance to appreciate the different cultures, foods and peoples whilst you hike through glorious Alpine scenery.

The spectacular circuit around Mont-Blanc, one of the world's classic hikes, demands some respect. From the massif of Mont Blanc (4801m- the highest mountain in western Europe), seven valleys extend into France, Italy and Switzerland. Each valley retains its own unique culture, architecture and landscape and it's through these valleys we will hike. Each day we hike up to the ridges and descend into valleys below, with time to enjoy views of glaciers, green mountain meadows and snow capped peaks.

## Itinerary

### Day 1: ARRIVE CHAMONIX

Arrive today in the Mountain town of Chamonix. After meeting with your trek leader the afternoon is free for you to explore the town and it's amazing mountain surroundings. Take a cable car up the famous Aiguille de Midi for spectacular views over the Alps or relax in the many street cafes offering excellent cuisine.(D)

### DAY 2 : CHAMONIX - LES HOUCHES

Up : 525 m / Down : 1100 m / Time to hike : 5 hours

To start the tour what better viewpoint than the Brevent. We get there via the Col du Brevent having taken the cable car to Planpraz. From the summit (2525 m), the view of the Mont Blanc is incomparable. However we have to descend and we go via Bel Lachat and Merlet. A short transfer brings us down to the valley to spend the night in Les Houches.

### DAY 3 : LES HOUCHES - LES CONTAMINES

Up : 1090 m / Down : 1050 m / Time to hike : 6 hours

Starting by the Col de Bellevue, from where there are great views of the Aiguille du Gouter. Then, a charming traverse passes right at the foot of the Bionnassay glacier. A rope bridge across a river and up to the col du Tricot (2120 m). On our way down to Contamines we will no doubt stop in at the chalets de Miage before getting to the val Montjoie. Night in Contamines.

### DAY 4 : LES CONTAMINES – LES CHAPIEUX

Up : 1290 m / Down : 850 m / Time to hike : 7 hours

From the village of les contamines, we will walk up to the col du bonhomme. We leave the Val Montjoie to go to the Beaufortin

valley. We arrive at les Chapieux via the petit Mont Blanc pasture.

#### DAY 5 : LES CHAPIEUX – REFUGE ELISABETTA

Up : 900 m / Down : 520 m / Time to hike : 6 hours

A short transfer brings us to Ville des Glaciers (1789 m). A cheese making visit is required : here Beaufort is king ! We reach the val d'Aoste via the col de Seigne (2516 m) and from there we see a most imposing view of the south face of the Mont Blanc. A path leads us around the Limestone Pyramids to reach the moraine of the Estelette glacier. Below this is the Elisabetta refuge where we spend the night.

#### DAY 6 : REFUGE ELISABETTA – COURMAYEUR

Up : 470 m / Down : 1600 m / Time to hike : 5 hours

Today is without doubt the most spectacular. It begins with a small descent to get to lake Combal. The way up to the Arp Vieille (2420 m) is easy and takes us onto a magnificent balcony. Mont Blanc sits enthroned above the Brouillard and Freney glaciers and summits such as the Innominata and the Aiguilles de Peuterey – all epic names in alpinism. Descent to the col Checroui then to Courmayeur.

#### DAY 7 : COURMAYEUR - LAVACHEY

Up : 900 m / Down : 890 m / Time to hike : 5 hours 30

Leaving from the hamlet of Villair (1340m) is a charming forested ascent to the Bertonne refuge, then over a crest dominating the Val Ferret we get to Tete Bernada (2534m), we are at the summit of one of the most beautiful lookouts on the whole TMB. There is no lift access here, no 4x4s, just the mountain and us. The view is exquisite. Descent to Lavachey (1640 m), a friendly family-run auberge for the night.

#### DAY 8 : LAVACHEY – CHAMPEX

Up : 850 m / Down : 1100 m / Time to hike : 6 hours

Leaving the auberge towards Malatra we walk along a pretty traverse bringing us to Arnuva. The ascent to the col Ferret (2537 m) is steep but enjoyable. On the col we cross the Swiss Italian border. Lovely downhill through valaisan pastures to the charming village of Fouly (1595 m). Transfert to Champex.

#### DAY 9 : CHAMPEX – TRIENT

Up : 720 m / Down : 900 m / Time to hike : 5 hours 30

The classic TMB takes the Bovine route. An hour and a half of easy walking followed by a rapid ascent in the forest and we are hanging over the Rhone valley and the town of Martigny. You will not be disappointed with this fabulous balcony. Easy descent to the col de Forclaz.

There is a possible variation via the Fenêtre d'Arpette d'Arpette (2671 m), (Up : 1050 m / Down : 1420 m / Time to hike : 6 heures 30), a rocky area between the Pointe des Ecardies and Pointe du Genepy, a famous passage into the Trient valley across from its magnificent glacier (only for good walkers and in good weather conditions) We spend the night in Trient (1271 m).

#### DAY 10 : TRIENT– TRELECHAMP

Up : 1080 m / Down : 800 m / Time to hike : 5 hours

The walk up to the Col de Balme (2131 m) via las Herbageres brings us back into France. From this col the view of the Chamonix valley is unique and stays with us along the Posettes ridge all the way to Trelechamp (1417 m) in the upper Chamonix valley. Possible variation on the Tseppes path. Night in Trelechamps or nearby.

#### DAY 11 : TRELECHAMP - CHAMONIX

Up : 780 m / Down : 300 m / Time to hike : 4 hours 30

From Trelechamp we climb up to Cheserys, a balcony offering grandiose views ; the glaciers of le Tour, Argentiere, the Mer de Glace, the Aiguille verte, the Drus , the Aiguilles de Chamonix and of course the Mont Blanc dominating all these marvels. We expect to add a slice of wildlife to this day as a reward for our efforts, ibex are common here. The tour ends at Flegere, where we return to Chamonix by cable car in the afternoon.NB. The guide or mountain leader may modify the itinerary if conditons necessitate.

### Day 12 Depart Chamonix

The trip finishes today and you are free to stay on or we can help arrange a transfer by private vehicle this morning from Chamonix to Geneva airport.

IMPORTANT NOTE: THE TMB is a very popular walk and refuges sometimes get overbooked. This is just a guide to route & details may change and the actual refuges booked may vary from what is written here, dependent on client numbers, wishes and availability. This adjustment with refuges may alter the exact distance walked in a day so the above itinerary should be used as an indication to overnight stops/ distances.

### Meeting point hotel & arrival info

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You will need to make your way to the meeting point in Chamonix, the Chaumiere.

#### Access to Chamonix from Airports

The nearest Int'l airport is Geneva, which is approximately 1.5 hours from the town. We can help book your international flights from Australia to Switzerland if you are an Australian resident.

Other possible entry points include Grenoble in France, Zurich in Switzerland or Milan in Italy. But Geneva is easily the most convenient place to fly into for access to Chamonix.

#### Chamonix - Hotel Chaumiere

Tél: +33 (0)4 50 53 13 25

<http://www.hotelchaumierechamonix.com/>

### If staying in Geneva

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The airport is located at nearly 4 km from Geneva city centre. It is easily reachable by train or by bus using the united network of public transport Unireso. It takes only 6 minutes from/to Geneva city centre by train (every 12 minutes at rush hours). The airport railway station has direct access to the airport Check-in and Arrival levels. All trains stop at Geneva-Cornavin station (city centre). you can pick up a free ticket for public transport from the machine in the baggage collection area at the Arrival level. This Unireso ticket, offered by Geneva International Airport, allows you to use public transport in Geneva free for a period of 80 minutes. If you are staying at a hotel, the establishment will offer you the "Geneva Transport Card" that allows you to use public transport in Geneva free of charge during your stay.

Fares between airport and city range from about CHF 30.00 to CHF 35.00 and depend on traffic conditions, time of day and number of passengers. Presently, the fare within Geneva, including airport, is the amount shown on the taximeter. The driver will request a small extra charge for luggage.

### Transport

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Walking & cable car

### Physical Rating

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MODERATE - DEMANDING

Have a look at the pre trekking guide for tips and advice on fitness levels. You will be walking on steep mountain terrain for

between 5 & 7 hours a day carrying only a daypack.

<http://rawtravel.com/trekking>

We expect people to have a good level of fitness where they are taking regular physical exercise in the lead up to the event. This can be from walking ,cycling or going to the gym.You will also need to practice hiking in a mountain environment with your equipment that you'll be taking to Mt. Blanc. You should prepare for walking several hours a day with steep ascents and descents. We will average almost 800-1000m a day in ascents so your training should reflect this in the lead up to the event. Choose hills with steep ascents to train on and push yourself to do long days to prepare yourself adequately.

## Meals

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All meals are included whilst trekking and in total: 11 Breakfasts, 9 lunches, 9 dinners

We have not scheduled meals other than breakfast when you have free time in Chamonix.

Breakfasts are served each morning at the hotels and refuges. Lunches are picnic style on the trail. Dinners are served at the refuges.

Breakfast: Will usually consist of coffee, tea, cereal, yoghurt, fresh fruit, bread, and preserves.

Lunches: Picnic of Breads, cheese, meats etc - there is usually a variety available.

Evening meal: Generally consists of a first course of soup, salad or charcuterie, a main course of meat with one or two vegetables or rice or pasta, a dessert course. (Drinks are not included in the price of evening meals).

## Accommodation

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Chamonix (2 nights ) we will be staying at a small hotel with twin share, en suite facilities.

Chamonix - Hotel Chaumiere

Tél: +33 (0)4 50 53 13 25

<http://www.hotelchaumierechamonix.com/>

## Refuges

Once we get into the Mountains we stay at Refuges - wonderful rustic farms that have been converted to accommodate hikers - where the accommodation is much more basic and communal. The atmosphere is friendly and jovial as hikers from many countries gather to spend the night. Staying in the refuges and small hotels offers a wonderful opportunity to meet hikers from other parts of the world, experience something new and take part in the tradition of European style of hiking hut-to-hut. Where possible we have requested more private rooms of triple/ quad share but sometimes you will be in shared, dormitories that provide mattresses, pillows and blankets. We have shared indoor toilet and shower facilities.

Throughout the trek we use small family run hotels, pensions and refuges and on most trek nights we will probably be in shared dormitory accommodation (It is usual in Europe that dormitory accommodation is mixed sex.) Please be aware that room sizes in both hotels and dormitories and their facilities will vary from one place to the next and sometimes from room to room within one hotel. Some have washbasins in the rooms. You may wish to bring a compact travel towel, as those provided are sometimes small.

## What's it like underfoot?

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Underfoot you will experience a variety of tracks and trails on the TMB. Typically the mountainous sections of the Tour du Mont Blanc run on single-track paths that can be rocky in places, sometimes with steps but mostly just the bare earth. Mud is not a

problem in the same way as on Mountain paths in Victoria, for example! Tracks are also common - perhaps gravel forest roads, ski pistes, or rough tracks for vehicles over agricultural land. There are some sections of country lanes, of which much the longest is one 4.5km stretch near les Chapieux.

## Visas

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### Europe

Australian citizens visiting Schengen countries ( of which Switzerland, France and Italy are part of) do not need to apply for visas if staying for not more than 90 out of 180 days.

## Important Notes

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1. Please note this RAW trip is led by an experienced local guide, who is fully qualified as a Chamonix Accompantuer through the Company De Guides Chamonix. They are first aid trained and fully versed in the local environment and evacuation procedures. You may possibly accompanied by a RAW leader(s) ( depending on eventual group numbers).
2. Passengers with special meal requirements must ensure they or their travel agent inform RAW of this at the time of booking.
3. We will have a vehicle to carry your main luggage from refuge to refuge. There is limited space available in the vehicle for luggage storage so please only bring essential items on the trip. See 'What to Take'.
4. Make sure that your Insurance covers you for emergency rescue. Phone your insurer directly if you are not certain.

## What to take?

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Generally speaking though, you should pack as lightly as possible and we recommend keeping the weight under 12kg. Because of limited space available in the vehicle for luggage storage you will only bring essential items on the trip. If you need to then bring a bag for extra items / clothing which can be left back in Chamonix. Your main luggage is transported for you on the trip, so you carry only a daypack.

Suitcases are NOT recommended for this trip. Most travellers carry their luggage in a backpack, although a sports type / carry all bag with a shoulder strap would suffice. You will also need a good day pack when out walking to carry a jacket and personal effects such as Camera, sunscreen, water, snacks, blister kit.

## Checklist (suggested list):

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### Travel Documents

- Travel insurance, air ticket
- Credit card & spending money

### Personal Items

- Blister kit, rehydration salts and any personal medication you use
- Alarm clock and LED head torch/flashlight
- Water bottles or Camel Bak system ( 2-3 litres recommended)
- Sunscreen, hat and high UV sunglasses
- Comfortable daypack
- Waterproof bags for pack rain protection while walking (garbage bags are fine)

### Clothing

- Well worn in boots with ankle support
- 3 pairs of walking socks
- 3 T-shirts (lightweight quick drying tec fabric) or long sleeved Trekking shirts
- 2 pairs of shorts and at least one lightweight trousers (for walking in - avoid wearing Jeans! )
- Thermals for sleeping
- Warm fleece, sweater, hat, gloves (cold evenings)
- Waterproof jacket & overtrousers
- Sunhat

### Optional but highly recommended

-walking poles. Good for balance & taking weight off your knees on descents. Can also be hired in Chamonix at 5e a day.

Expect 20-30 C at lower altitudes and at night temperature can fall below10c. Being in high mountains you should prepare for all eventualities with weather. High altitudes will always be cool and if cloud sets in it can be cold & damp.

### Other Suggestions

- Silk sleeping liner - good for extra comfort with blankets
- Camera
- Spare batteries for camera
- Reading & writing material
- Spare pair of flip flops / trainers for inside refuges
- Knee brace - not essential but useful for injury
- hand sanitiser - optional
- Miniatures of your usual toiletries
- Snacks - though these can be purchased locally
- Book
- Swiss army knife
- Mobile & charger

### Electrical outlets

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Generally two pin round , 230V in France and also in Italy, but some variations there & Switzerland. We are not guaranteed access to electric points in every refuge as power points are shared so you should take adequate batteries for your cameras.

### Other Sightseeing & Activites

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The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants.

#### Excursion Prices

Aiguille du Midi - Panoramic views of Alps €39 Mountain biking - Full day's hire €25 Rock climbing - Half day €40  
Rafting - 1.5 hours / €40-60 per person (depends on number of people taking part) Public swimming pool - (3 pools, jacuzzi, death slide) €6 Paragliding - 1000m vertical descent €100 / 2550m vertical descent €220

## Travel Insurance

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Clients must have insurance to cover themselves for helicopter search & rescue for this trip.

Travel insurance is compulsory for all our trips. We require that, at a minimum, you are covered for medical expenses including emergency repatriation. We strongly recommend that the policy also covers personal liability, cancellation, curtailment and loss of luggage and personal effects.

When travelling on a group trip, you will not be permitted to join the group until evidence of travel insurance and the insurance company's 24 hour emergency contact number has been seen by your leader. If you have credit card insurance your tour leader will require proof of purchase of the trip (a receipt of credit card statement) with a credit card in your name. Contact your bank for details of their participating insurer, the level of coverage and emergency contact telephone number.

Our preferred insurance company is CoverMore as they provide an excellent service. You can apply on line directly by clicking on this link:

<https://b2c.covermore.com.au/index.jsp?alpha=AAV0231>

## Health

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No Vaccinations compulsory. Tetanus recommended.

All RAW travellers need to be in good physical health in order to participate fully in the group travel experience. If, in the opinion of our group leader, any traveller is unable to complete the itinerary without undue risk to themselves and/or the rest of the group, RAW reserves the right to exclude them from all or part of a trip without refund. Although there are no specific health requirements for this trip please be aware you need to be in good health to undertake this trip due to the sometimes demanding conditions that exist in these areas. You should consult your doctor if you have any medical conditions to assess your suitability before departure.

Although your leaders will have a first aid kit for emergencies we recommend that you carry First Aid supplies for common ailments as well as any personal medical requirements. Please be aware that we are in remote areas and away from medical facilities for some time during this trip, and for legal reasons our leaders are prohibited from administering any type of drug including headache tablets, antibiotics, etc.

Your first aid supplies should include:

- headache tablets
- diarrhoea treatment (both a blocker to bring relief from the symptoms and an antibiotic)
- band-aids
- blister pads for your feet and zinc tape
- antiseptic for cuts & scrapes
- lip balm
- high factor sunscreen.

We recommend using zinc oxide tape / moleskin to cover 'hot spots' on your feet to stop potential blisters developing.

## Money Exchange

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France and Italy use the Euro and Switzerland the Swiss Franc but the Euro is widely accepted in Switzerland as well at most shops serving tourists. The exchange rate at the time of writing is:

\$1= e0.72

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Euros are needed in France and Italy. Take some in cash to avoid having to change money at the beginning of the trip.

Where to Exchange: In Chamonix. Please note that Geneva airport is in Switzerland, which is not part of the Eurozone – wait until Chamonix to change money.

ATM Availability: There are a large number of ATM cashpoints that accept Visa and Mastercards in Chamonix.

Credit Card Acceptance: In major restaurants and shops.

## Spending Money

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Every traveller is different and therefore spending money requirements will vary. Most of your meals are included but you will have to pay for the odd meal, any snacks & drinks en route or evening drinks. Allow 30e per day. Some travellers may drink more than others while other travellers like to purchase more souvenirs than most. Please consider your own spending habits when it comes to allowing for drinks, shopping and tipping. Any tip that you wish to give your local guides or leader in recognition of excellent service is always appreciated.

## Tipping

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Local Staff: Service is included in French restaurants, although it is polite to tip 10% if the service has been very good. Bar staff and café waiters expect a small tip or loose change.

Local Trek Leader: At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Trek Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive about e30 per person is recommended.

## Emergency Funds

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Please also make sure you have access to an additional e300, to be used when unforeseen incidents or circumstances outside our control (e.g. a natural disaster, or an outbreak of bird flu) necessitate a change to our planned route. This is a rare occurrence but it is well worth being prepared!

## Communications

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You will be out of contact for a large part of this trek but when we are in the towns there will be phone and e-mail access. Mobile coverage is intermittent and cannot be relied upon. Global roaming charges are very expensive and pre-paid cards such as Travel Sim are a good idea : [www.travelsim.net.au](http://www.travelsim.net.au)

## Emergency Contact

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In the case of a genuine crisis or emergency, our Melbourne HQ can be reached on:  
Tel: +61 3 9787 4366 Outside of office hours please call: 0413 703 632 ( Dave)

## Your Fellow Trekkers

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We ask you to be understanding of the various needs and preferences of your group - patience with your fellow travellers is sometimes required for the benefit of everyone's travel experience. Remember too that you have responsibilities to the group. If you are requested to be at a place at a certain time, ensure that you don't keep the rest of the group waiting. We have found time and time again that the very best trips we operate are those where the dynamics within the group work well - this takes just

a little effort on your part.

## Responsible Travel

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We believe strongly in low impact or rather positive impact tourism. Broadly speaking this means that we try to minimise the negative aspects of tourism on the local cultures and environments that we visit and highlight the positive aspects. Please see our online policy for more details on our social and environmental approach and commitment:

<http://rawtravel.com/resptravel/responsibletravel.pdf>

## RAW Newsletter

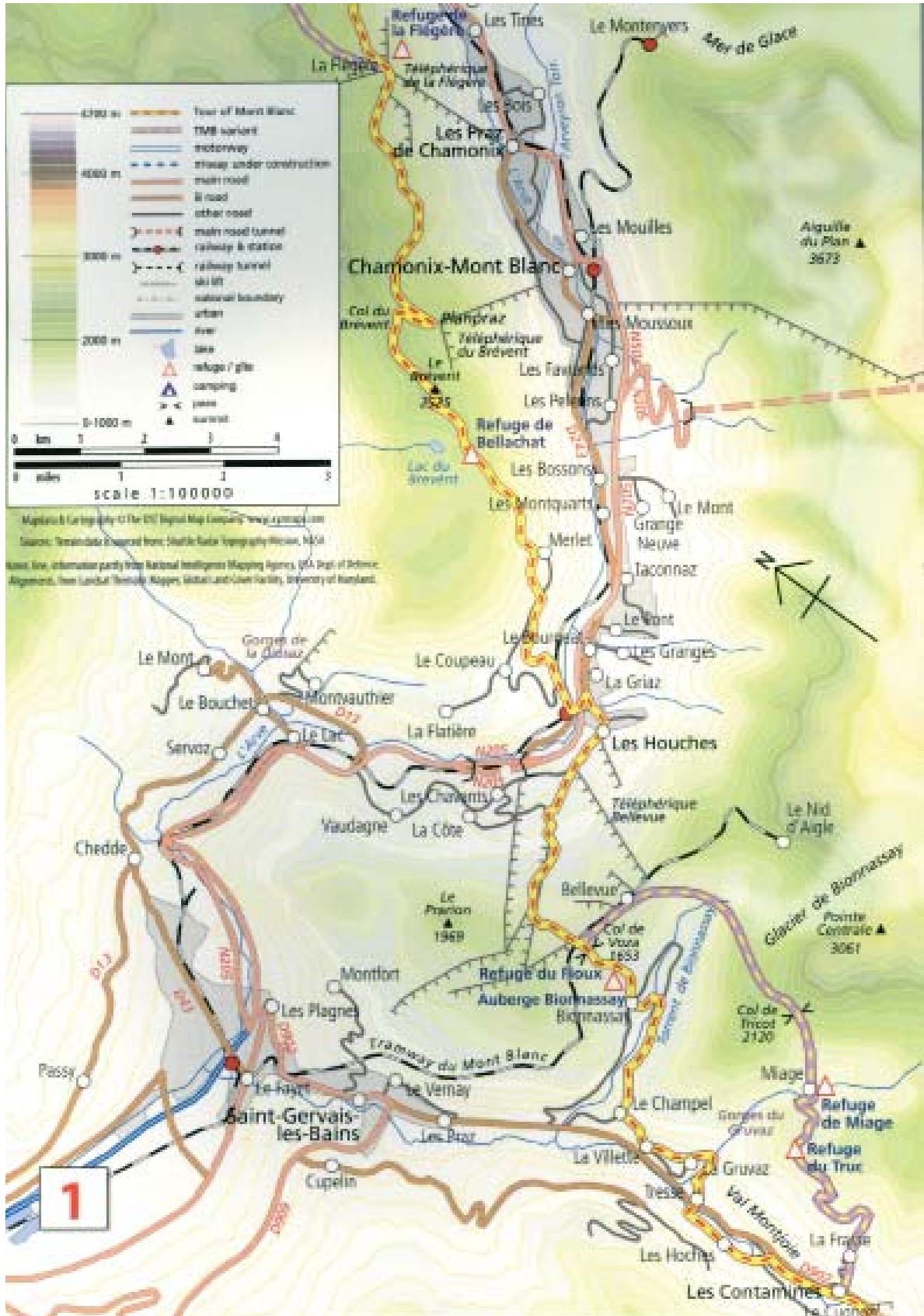
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We have a free email newsletter full of traveller's stories and experiences as well as news on new trips that we are running. Please send us an extract from your travel journal at the end of the trip.

The information in these trip notes has been compiled with care and is provided in good faith. However it is subject to change, and does not form part of the contract between the passenger and RAW Travel.

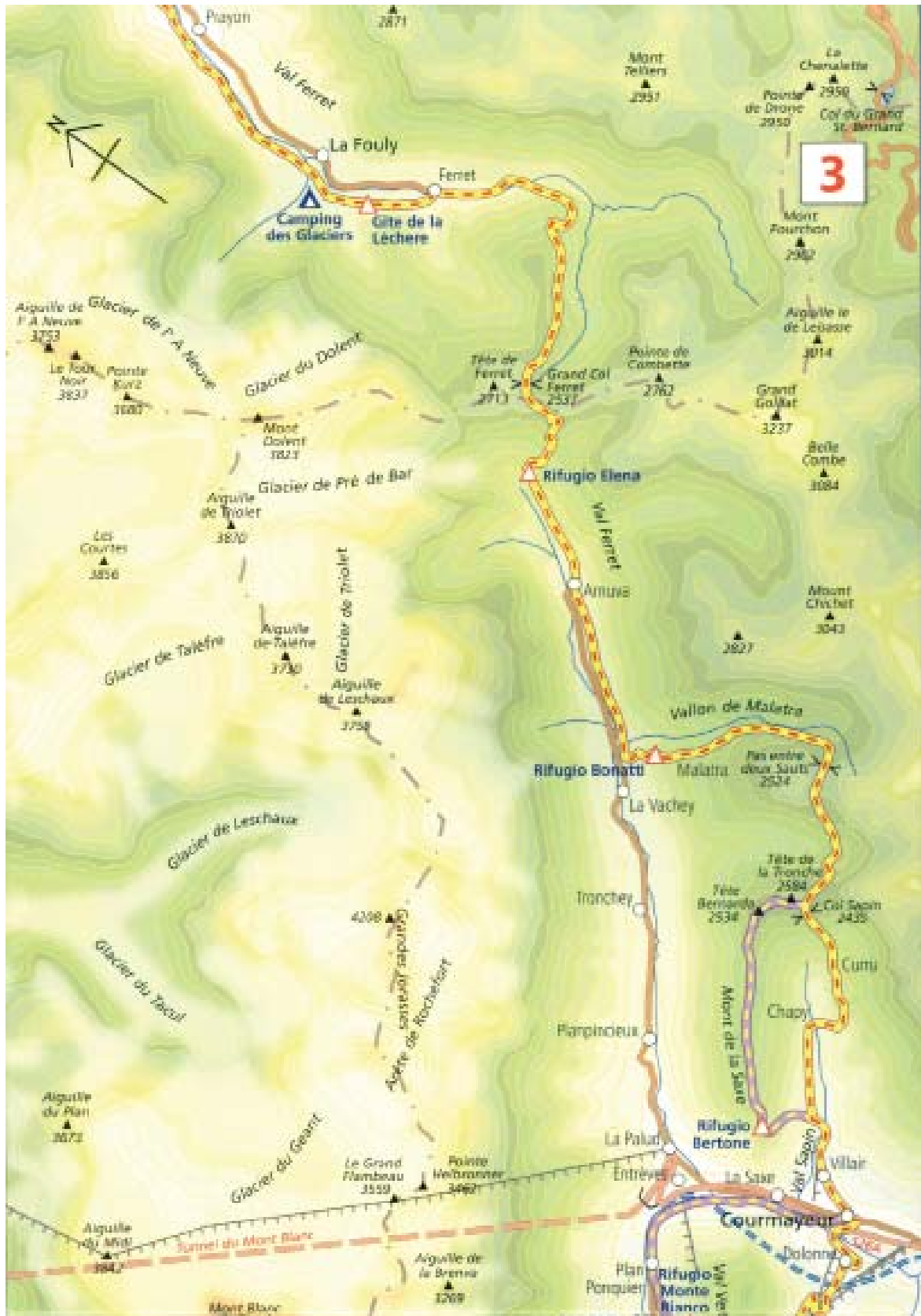
Treks maps on following pages, we travel in an anti -clockwise circuit from Chamonix, taken from the excellent Rucksack Readers Mt. Blanc trekking guide.

Chamonix and trek day 1 from Les Houches to Chalets De Miage  
 Trek day 11 Trek from Lac Blanc to Chamonix





Day 5 Trek La Maison Vielle - Refuge Bonatti  
 Day 6 Trek Col De Grand Ferret to La Fouly  
 Day 7 Trek to Champex



Day 8 Trek to Trient  
 Day 9 Trek to L'auberge de la Boerne  
 Day 10 Trek to Lac Blanc

