



Pre-Departure Information

TOUR DU MONT BLANC



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WELCOME!

We're delighted to welcome you on this adventure! This booklet is designed to guide you in the practical details for preparing for your trip. As you read, if any questions come to mind, feel free to give us a call or send us an email—we're here to help.

PLEASE SEND US

- Trip Application:** Complete, sign, and return your Trip Application form as soon as possible if you have not already done so.
- Medical Form:** Complete, sign, and return your Medical Form as soon as possible if you have not already done so.
- Air Schedule:** Please forward a copy of your email confirmation, which shows your exact flight arrival and departure times. Refer to the Arrival & Departure section of the Detailed Itinerary for instructions. Please feel free to review your proposed schedule with Wilderness Travel before purchasing your tickets if you have any questions about the timing of your arrival and departure flights or would like to confirm we have the required minimum number of participants to operate the trip.

PLEASE CAREFULLY REVIEW

- Travel Documents & Medical Information:** Carefully review the Travel Documents and Medical Information sections of this booklet to familiarize yourself with Passport and Visa entry requirements for your destination, as well as any recommended inoculations.
- Optional Travel Insurance:** Review the Trip Cancellation & Transfer Fee Schedule included in the Detailed Itinerary. We recommend that all trip members purchase Travel Insurance.
- Extra Services:** Request any Extra Services (hotel nights, transfers, extensions) with your WT office contact using the Extra Services Request Form sent with your confirmation packet.
- Final Documents:** Approximately three weeks before your trip, we will send you final departure documents, including hotel and local contact information and rendezvous instructions.

QUESTIONS?

Call: 1-800-368-2794, go to our **website** (www.wildernesstravel.com) or e-mail us at: info@wildernesstravel.com.

Travel Information

PASSPORT

A valid passport is required for your trip. Be sure to check the expiration date. Your passport must be valid for six months after your date of exit from Europe. In addition, we recommend your passport has at least two completely blank visa pages for every country you will be visiting. It is very important that the blank pages say “Visas” at the top. The last few pages of your passport, which say “Amendments and Endorsements,” and the final page of your passport, which may not have a page number, are not considered to be legitimate visa pages. You can request a new passport through **US Passport Services Office**(http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html) (the service of adding pages for visas was discontinued as of January 1, 2016) or use a visa service agency, which can take care of your passport renewal and expedite the process, if needed. We recommend **Passport Visas Express**(<http://www.passportvisaexpress.com/?affId=2120>). Be sure to allow sufficient time to acquire this before your trip.

It is a good idea to carry photocopies of your passport’s photo page and any acquired visa pages for your trip (if applicable) in case your passport is lost or as an additional piece of identification, as well as two extra passport photos.

VISAS

US citizens do not need a visa for countries visited on this trip. If you are a citizen of any country other than the US, check with a local consulate for entry requirements.

MONEY

Euros are easily obtained on arrival in Chamonix from a local ATM or Bureau de Change. In Switzerland, the currency is the Swiss franc (CHF). In many large towns and cities in Switzerland, and often in smaller villages close to an international border, businesses accept Euros, giving you your change in CHF.

The most convenient way to obtain Euros is to use your debit card at ATMs. If you plan to get cash this way, it’s wise to get a list of ATM locations in advance online or from your bank.

Traveler's checks are not recommended as they can be difficult and time-consuming to cash. If you choose to carry traveler's checks, however, be sure to change enough money in the banks in the larger towns as many small villages and alpine huts do not have exchange facilities. Your Trip Leaders will advise you where and when money can be changed. Major credit cards are accepted in most shops in cities and larger towns, but only for larger purchases—a cup of coffee and a sandwich is still best paid for in cash! To use an ATM internationally, you must have a four-digit PIN. If you plan to use your credit cards, inform your credit card company before your departure that you will be using the card abroad.

TIPPING

Tipping is completely discretionary, but over the years, clients have asked us for tipping guidelines to reward guides for outstanding service. A range of reference would be \$75-95 USD per trip member for each Trip Leader, which can be given in USD or local currency. The Trip Leader takes care of gratuities for luggage handling, waiters at restaurants, and local guides or drivers who are with the group for only a short time.

SPECIAL DIETS

We will do our best to accommodate special dietary needs, however, please keep in mind that certain cultural differences or limitations due to logistics can make it extremely difficult and at times impossible to accommodate dietary restrictions. Please inform us at least eight weeks before your trip if you have a restricted diet. It is important to bring a flexible attitude and supplemental snacks.

COMMUNICATIONS

Telephone

The international dialing code for France is 33, for Italy is 39, and for Switzerland is 41. Please contact your cell phone company for specific instructions for international use.

Email & Internet Access

Internet access is available at most of our hotels and lodges, but service can be spotty and unreliable.

ELECTRICITY

France, Italy, and Switzerland have 220-volt current. Plugs usually have two or three prongs. You will need to bring a voltage converter and plug adapter for appliance use in hotels.

Medical Information

The following recommendations should be used as a guideline only; consult your physician for medical advice. It is vital that you let Wilderness Travel know of any medical problems, allergies, or physical limitations you may have. Please fill out and return the personal medical questionnaire, and feel free to consult us if you have any questions about your ability to undertake this particular trip.

Wilderness Travel is not a medical facility and has no expertise or responsibility regarding what medications or inoculations you and your physician decide are necessary for your safe participation in the trip.

Traveler's health information is available from the **Centers for Disease Control**. (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm>)
Medical travel products are available from **Travel Health Medicine** (<http://www.travmed.com>) and from **Magellan's Travel Supplies**. (<http://www.magellans.com>)

INOCULATIONS

No inoculations are required. However, it is easy to get a small cut, so a tetanus booster is strongly recommended (good for 10 years). If you take prescription medicines, be sure to bring enough for the duration of your trip.

STAYING HEALTHY

You can reduce your risk of getting a cold on the trip by washing your hands often and not touching your face with unwashed hands. If you arrive on the trip with a cold or feel the symptoms of a cold, avoid close contact with others and move away from people before coughing or sneezing. The CDC recommends coughing or sneezing into a tissue or into the crook of your elbow or upper sleeve, not your hands.

GETTING IN SHAPE

For maximum enjoyment of the trip, you must be in good shape and ready to hike. We urge you to train for the trip with regular hiking, especially over hills or mountain terrain. Running, swimming, bicycling or stair-climbing are all great options as well. Your feet should be fully prepared and accustomed to long days in well broken-in hiking boots or sturdy walking shoes.

Helpful Information

PHOTOGRAPHY

Camera Recommendations

With the many advances in digital technology, a simple compact digital camera or even your smartphone is capable of taking pictures suitable for the needs of most people. For higher quality images and the ability to use long lenses for closer wildlife pictures, a DSLR camera is well worthwhile, though heavier. Most digital cameras and phones have good video options, but you may want to consider a GoPro for a lightweight, waterproof option. Always practice ahead of time with new equipment and bring your manual with you. Camera equipment is available for rent from **Borrow Lenses** (<https://www.borrowlenses.com/discount/wildernesstravel>), with a 10% discount offered to Wilderness Travel clients. This is an especially good idea for renting large zoom lenses that you may need for just one trip.

Camera Accessories

We recommend bringing at least two large capacity memory cards or a small digital storage unit (or tablet) to back up your photos, freeing space on your memory cards. Don't forget to bring a battery charger and a backup battery so one is always charged and ready to use. For trips where you may be away from power sources for multiple days, consider looking into a solar-powered battery charger or buying additional backup batteries, and check that you have the appropriate adapter for the electrical outlets in your destination.

Sharing Your Images

We would love for you to share photos from your trip, and with your permission, may even use your photos in our marketing materials or on our photo blog. We request that you send us a small sample of your best images. Please email your photos to wtphotoblog@gmail.com or tag us **@WildernessTravel** on social media.

Photography Etiquette

When taking pictures of local people, be aware of cultural considerations. Approaching people with a warm smile and using polite gestures or simple phrases to ask permission to photograph them usually works well. It is always recommended to engage people in conversation before asking to photograph them, but if people do not wish to have their photo taken, please honor their requests. We urge travelers to avoid giving money in exchange for photo opportunities, which makes it harder for future travelers to have a meaningful personal interaction with local people. Please always heed your Trip Leader's guidelines for what is appropriate.

BEING A CONSIDERATE TRAVELER

Please show respect for the cultures we are visiting by observing local customs concerning appropriate dress, particularly in sacred places. Your Trip Leader is always available to answer any questions that you may have regarding this. If it is necessary to use a cell phone during the trip, please do so privately. Smoking is rarely an issue these days, but if you do smoke, please do so only away from the group.

Packing List

THE ESSENTIALS

- Air tickets (or E-tickets)
- Passport
- One other picture ID, such as a driver's license
- Expense money

WT GEAR STORE

To help you prepare for your next WT adventure, we've put together a great collection of top brands including Patagonia, Outdoor Research, Eagle Creek, and more at our **WT Gear Store** (<http://wildernesstravel.newheadings.com>).

LUGGAGE

We use many forms of transportation on the trip, so we ask that you restrict your luggage to one piece plus your daypack/rucksack. Additional luggage can be checked at the airport if you plan to return to the same airport for departure. A bag can also be left at the Grand Hotel des Alpes for the duration of your trip.

- Soft-sided suitcase, with a small padlock (must be unlocked for air travel).
- Medium-sized daypack or backpack, large enough for a fleece jacket, rain gear, water bottle, camera, and other items you want on the trail. A padded hip belt and padded shoulder straps add greatly to the comfort. Our luggage is brought to our lodging in the evening, and during the day, we carry just our daypack or backpack.
- (Optional) Small roll-up bag to carry home purchases.

NOTES ON CLOTHING

Warmth and comfort are the main priorities. Weather conditions will vary greatly. On a hot and sunny day, you might want to hike in shorts and a t-shirt, but remember that in the Alps, rain and cold weather can occur at any time. Dressing in layers is the best way to stay comfortable. The single two most important and essential items for this trip are waterproof, breathable, good quality rain jacket with a hood, and medium to heavyweight, broken in, good quality hiking boots. We are likely to experience a full range of weather conditions. Be prepared!

LAYERS

An insulating base layer (top and bottom) beneath your hiking clothes will keep you warm and comfortable. Capilene, fleece, and other synthetic fabrics are excellent, as are lightweight wool insulating layers by Patagonia, Icebreakers, and SmartWool. Cotton is not a good insulator, especially as a first layer next to the skin. Once it gets wet from perspiration, it stays wet and keeps you cold. (Cotton is fine for city wear and touring.) As your insulating layer, we suggest a fleece jacket and pants, which are lightweight, warm, and breathable, or wool, which also keeps you warm even when wet. Finally, a good outer layer is necessary to block the wind and keep you dry in case of rain. Gore-Tex and equivalent fabrics are waterproof and breathable and are a practical choice. Your outer layer should be roomy enough to fit over other layers of clothing.

CLOTHING

The clothing list below is provided as a guideline only.

- Gore-Tex rain/wind shell jacket with hood, and Gore-Tex rain/wind pants (preferably with leg zippers so that they can be taken off without removing your boots). Important: Whether you choose Gore-Tex, Supplex, or a similar fabric, make sure your jacket has a hood and sealed seams to prevent leaking.
- Waterproof rain pants. Pants with leg zippers are practical because you can take them off without removing your boots.
- Thick fleece jacket or heavy wool sweater
- Fleece vest. Optional, but great for layering
- Fleece sweater or sweatshirt
- Polypropylene, Capilene, or wool long underwear (bottoms and tops)
- Long-sleeved shirt. Wool, fleece, or quick-drying "travel" fabrics like nylon.
- T-shirts
- Hiking pants, one or two pairs. Jeans are not suitable because they are made of dense cotton, and once wet, will stay wet. Fleece pants or synthetic hiking pants are a practical choice.
- Hiking shorts, two pairs. Quick-drying nylon shorts are great.
- Shade hat with a wide brim
- Fleece hat for warmth
- Fleece mittens or gloves
- Medium to heavyweight hiking boots with Vibram-type rubber lug soles and good ankle support.
- Comfortable walking shoes.
- Hiking socks. Thick pairs (Thorlo-type) as well as synthetic liner socks.
- Underwear- Synthetics dry faster.
- Bathing suit (for hotel pools)
- Sleepwear (long underwear can double)
- Casual city/hotel attire (for certain evenings when we dine in some quite fine restaurants, you might feel more comfortable wearing dressier, non-hiking clothes. Khakis and a nice shirt will suffice for men; coat and tie not necessary).

HIKING BOOTS

Your boots must be waterproof, warm, comfortable, and broken in, with an excellent tread! If you are uncertain about the tread quality of your boots, buy a new pair rather than risk slipping on rocky trails and scree. Please choose your boots carefully. It is a sensible precaution to wear or hand-carry your hiking boots on the plane. Nearly everything else can be replaced in case of baggage loss, but not a pair of well-fitted, fully broken-in hiking boots.

For this trip, you need medium- to heavyweight hiking boots designed for on- and off-trail hiking with multi-day hikes in mind. Lightweight boots don't offer the high degree of ankle support and foot protection you need. Full-grain leather is extremely water-resistant and durable and is preferable to split-grain leather or nylon. Remember that full-grain leather boots tend to be stiffer and will need a break-in period. If you are shopping for new boots, ask your store about boots with built-in Gore-Tex-type waterproof barriers that enhance water-resistance. If you have old full-grain leather boots, coat them with silicon waterproofing material to increase their water resistance. Waterproofing materials wear off over time and need to be re-applied. Gore-Tex boots are considered waterproof for one year unless the membrane is punctured.

If you're buying a new pair of boots, make sure a qualified salesperson gives you proper guidance in determining fit. Don't buy any boots that you are not permitted to return after wearing for several hours around the house. Blisters caused by improperly fitted or insufficiently broken-in boots are the most common and painful problem normally encountered on hiking trips. Before you depart, you should be able to wear your boots for a full, active day with no discomfort. Even boots you have owned for years can sometimes produce blisters when you are doing this amount of hiking. Limber up feet and boots before departure, and bring a good supply of Second Skin.

Running shoes are not sufficient for the hiking conditions you'll encounter, although they are comfortable to change into at night.

EQUIPMENT

- Hiking poles. Hiking with a collapsible hiking pole, such as those by Leki and REI, helps to distribute your body weight, takes pressure off your knees, and improves your balance. Some hikers like using one pole and others prefer hiking with two poles.
- Two reusable water bottles, 1 qt. capacity
- Good quality sunglasses with case. A spare pair of sunglasses is a good idea should your first pair be broken or lost.
- Small amount of laundry detergent to hand-wash clothes during the trip
- Stuff sacks or plastic bags to compartmentalize items in your duffel
- Money belt or neck pouch. Always carry your passport, credit cards, and cash with you in a money belt or neck pouch tucked down inside your shirt or blouse.

PERSONAL FIRST AID SUPPLIES

Every trip member should bring a small kit for personal use. Your own experience will influence your choices.

- Sunscreen SPF 30 or higher and lip balm with sunscreen. We recommend mineral-based sunscreens with zinc oxide or titanium dioxide because they do not contain harsh chemicals that are harmful to the environment. Brands such as Honest Company, Badger, and Alba Botanica are found in most sporting goods stores and drugstores.
- Aspirin, ibuprofen, or Tylenol for muscle pain or headaches, Tylenol PM for sleep
- Blister kit. Look for the long-lasting gel-type bandages that you can apply directly on blisters, such as Band-Aid Advanced Healing Bandages or Curad Gel Multi-Day Bandages. “Liquid band-aids,” such as New-Skin, are useful because they dry rapidly to form a tough protective cover over a blister.
- Prescription medications properly labeled
- Spare contact lenses or spare prescription glasses

OPTIONAL ITEMS

- Earplugs
- Voltage converter and plug adapter for appliance use in hotels. Europe has 220-volt current. Plugs usually have two or three prongs.
- Fleece neck gaiter
- Camera, spare batteries
- Reading/writing material
- Bandanas (many uses)
- Small umbrella
- Binoculars
- Washcloth, if you like to use one (most European hotels do not provide them)

Reading List

ESSENTIAL READING

Killing Dragons, The Conquest of the Alps

Fergus Fleming

2001, 398 PAGES

Fleming spins lively tales of man against nature in this entertaining history of the eccentrics, adventurers and publicity-hounds who sought to conquer the Alps, including Whymper and his first ascent of the Matterhorn 150 years ago.

Solo Faces

James Salter

1998, 218 PAGES

The story of an American climber who, dissatisfied with his everyday life, travels to the Alps of southern France to tackle mountain peaks. The prose is glorious and the mountain-climbing scenes are as vivid as they get. Much of the action takes place in and around Chamonix.

Alps Map

Freytag & Berndt

2010

This regional map (1:500,000), centered on the Alps, includes portions of Austria, Slovenia, Italy, Switzerland, Germany and France.

Tour of Mont Blanc, Complete Trekking Guide

Kev Reynolds

2015, 240 PAGES

A compact guide to the classic Mont Blanc circuit, which includes a detailed guide to each section of the tour, as well as the author's own personable, encouraging remarks.

ALSO RECOMMENDED

Birds of Europe

Lars Svensson

2010, 416 PAGES

Featuring 3,500 glorious paintings by Killian Mullarney and Dan Zetterstrom, the second edition of this exquisite guide features updated text and maps.

Eiger Dreams, Ventures Among Men and Mountains

Jon Krakauer

2009, 192 PAGES

A collection of some of Krakauer's (Into Thin Air) best journalism, these stories and essays focus on the mindset and determination of world-class mountaineers, including Alpine and Himalayan climbers.

Why Switzerland?

Jonathan Steinberg

2015, 400 PAGES

A masterly overview of the idiosyncrasies of Switzerland, its history, language, politics and identity as a naysayer at the center of Europe.

Hotel du Lac

Anita Brookner

1995, 184 PAGES

Funny, stylish and spellbinding, Brookner's novel tracks the story of a romance novelist seeking evasive peace and quiet at the luxurious Hotel du Lac in Switzerland.

Cuisines of the Alps

Kay Shaw Nelson

2004, 197 PAGES

Subtitled "Recipes, Drinks, and Lore from France, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Italy, Germany, Austria, and Slovenia," this colorful tour of the region's rustic cuisine offers more than 140 recipes, a section on regional wines and historical information.

Scrambles Amongst the Alps: In the Years 1860-69

Edward Whymper

2002, 320 PAGES

Edward Wymper's classic account of Victorian-era mountaineering captures the geography, beauty and allure of the Alps.

Wild Flowers of Britain & Northern Europe

Andrew Cleave

2015, 160 PAGES

A colorful field guide featuring commonly encountered species of the fields and gardens of Europe.

A Tramp Abroad

Kerry Driscoll

2003, 400 PAGES

Written 11 years after *Innocents Abroad*, this is Twain's second foray into European travel. Filled with his characteristic wit and humorous observations, it documents his journeys through Germany, Switzerland, France and Italy. Now with an introduction by Dave Eggers.

Mont Blanc Touring Map

Edition MPA

2015

Portraying the great mountain in panoramic detail, this Swiss-produced map depicts hiking trails with walking times.

The Alps, A Cultural History

Andrew Beattie

2006, 256 PAGES

Beattie explores the turbulent past and vibrant present of the Alps, where early pioneers of tourism, mountaineering and scientific research have each left their mark.

The Walk

Susan Bernofsky

2012, 96 PAGES

In this classic novella by the Swiss modernist, freshly translated, Walser writes that "it is on walks that the lore of nature and the lore of the country are revealed, charming and graceful, to the sense and eyes of the observant walker."

Wildflower Wonders

Bob Gibbons

2011, 192 PAGES

A naturalist and tour leader, Gibbons covers when and where to witness impressive displays of wildflowers in this beautifully illustrated, oversized survey of 50 sites. His vote for the most flowery place in the world: the kaleidoscopic grasslands of Mount Rainier.

Annecy Thonon-les-Bains Map

IGN

2010

An excellent, detailed map of the Haute-Savoie, covering not only Geneva and Annecy but also Chamonix, Mont Blanc, Champéry, and Courmayeur at a scale of 1:100,000.

Gran Paradiso

Gillian Price

2013, 220 PAGES

Part of the authoritative Cicerone series on walking, this guidebook describes 28 day walks through the stunning Gran Paradiso National Park.

The Night Manager

John Le Carre

2016, 480 PAGES

This best-selling, post-Cold War thriller about ruthless arms dealers in Geneva is a gripping read. Carrying on the great Le Carre tradition of espionage, a man who essentially gave up living after a tremendous failure is given a costly shot at redemption.

Revised: January 23, 2020

**Alpine Cooking: Recipes and Stories from Europe's
Grand Mountaintops**

Meredith Erickson

2019, 352 PAGES

Beautifully photographed cookbook and travelogue showcasing the regional cuisine of the Alps.