

Tour des Combins

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From: £1145
Demanding

A fabulous Alpine trekking experience on this week long trip in the Swiss and Italian Alps. We will be exploring an area less frequented by walkers, as we walk round one of the most famous 4000m peaks in the Alps, the Grand Combin. We travel through high alpine meadows where the edelweiss grow, and climb to the Col du Grand St Bernard to the monastery which is home to the famous St Bernard dog. The terrain is remote, varied and offers spectacular of the French, Swiss and Italian Alps. [Join us on the Tour des Combins](#)

- Glorious high mountain views
- Walk beside the Glacier de Corbassiere
- Stay at the famous Grand St Bernard Monastery
- Swiss and Italian mountain refuges & hospitality
- Less hikers than many other routes
- Views of Mont Blanc and the Gran Paradiso
- Exceptional final day visiting the Lacs de Fenêtre
- All meals included

[Departures](#) [Tour des Combins](#) Itinerary

We always aim to complete the itinerary as outlined below, however, the following itinerary will be followed only when conditions and weather make it appropriate, both in terms of safety and enjoyment. Your guide will make a decision on your route based on those conditions.

Day 1 Arrival in Bourg-St-Pierre

On the evening before we start our walk your guide will meet you at your hotel in the Swiss village of Bourg-St-Pierre, in the Canton of the Valais. They will brief you on the trip ahead and answer any questions. The village of Bourg St Pierre is small but steeped in Napoleonic history and worth visiting if you arrive early. Our hotel has a spa available and is free to guests. Two small shops are close by for any last minute: snacks, St Bernard dogs or currency exchange that might be needed before heading into the mountains.

Day 2 Bourg-St-Pierre to Col de Mille

Starting at Bourg St Pierre, the heart of the Swiss Pennine Alps, we make a gradual ascent through wild flower meadows to the alpage of La Coeur at 2,233m. We pass over a col and traverse the mountainside following a balcony trail offering superb views the length of the valley overlooking Orsières. We then reach the newly built Cabane du Col de Mille (completed in summer 2015) at 2472m where we spend the first night. This is a fabulous viewpoint next to peak of Mont Rogneux, an area where wolves have been know to inhabit and are being monitored by a Swiss conservation project. We are likely to arrive early afternoon so there is then time to ascend the little neighbouring peak of Mont Brûlée (2572m) to explore the abandoned Swiss military bunkers and for fine views of the valley. Distance: 12.8km. Ascent: 1220m. Descent: 375m.

Highest point: 2572m.

Day 3 Col de Mille to Cabane de Panossiere

We begin today with a descent traversing round Mont Rogneux. We can visit the charming Brunet hut for lunch before heading up a gorge to the toe of the impressive Corbassière glacier, one of the largest glaciers in Europe. In 2014 a new 240m long suspension bridge was put in place over the moraine enabling walkers to cross with dramatic views straight up and down the glacier. We then make a short but steady climb up to the recently built

Cabane de Panossiere where we spend the night. A beautiful situation for the evening, with views of the

Grand Combin and good chance of viewing ibex parading on the hillside! Distance: 16km. Ascent: 1160m. Descent: 1000m. Highest point: 2640m. 5-6hrs.

Day 4 Cabane de Panossiere to Cabane de Chanrion

A long, but satisfying day climbing over the highest col on the trip, the rocky Col des Otanes at 2806m. From here the views of the surrounding glaciated Swiss peaks are incredible with the Grand Combin now in full view. First climbed in 1857 by three local hunters the peak looks very imposing. Looking towards Geneva we also have a 'window' view of the seven spires of the Dents du Midi. We descend this impressive rocky mountainside to the Lac de Mauvoisin at 1976m, a dammed lake with incredible waterfalls. We can stop for refreshments at the historic Hotel Mauvoisin before we climb through the dam wall tunnels and begin our traverse along the lakeside meadows via ancient farm dwellings. A good day for spotting the iconic edelweiss flower and chamois! A final short climb takes us over the Col de Tsofeurent, 2630m, before reaching the Cabane de Chanrion a traditional stone built mountain refuge. Distance: 15km. Ascent: 1100m. Descent: 1150m. Highest point: 2633m. 6-7hrs.

Day 5 Cabane de Chanrion to Cabane de Champillon

We leave the cabane and head down into the valley to what seems like a cross roads of glaciers and cross the river to ascend gradually beside the Glacier de Fenêtre to the Fenêtre du Durand at 2797m. We are now on the border of Switzerland and Italy. We stop and enjoy the view back to the Chanrion hut with the snowy peaks of Mont Blanc de Cheilon behind we then cross the border into Italy and descend to lush summer grazing grounds where we have plenty of opportunity to see marmots at work. Following an ancient irrigation channel a 'bisse' we contour around the valley and end the day with a steady climb up to the newly built (in 2004) Cabane de Champillon, also known as the Refuge Letey (2375m).

Distance: 26km. Ascent: 1485m. Descent: 1500m. Highest point: 2806m. 6-7hrs.

Day 6 Cabane de Champillon to the Gd St Bernard Monastery

An easier day as we make our way through Alpine meadows to easily access the Col de Champillon at 2709m where on a good day it's possible to view not only the Grand Combin but also Mont Blanc and the Gran Paradiso! We then begin our descent through meadows along the river bank towards the Italian villages of Etroubles & St Oyen. Etroubles is believed to be the Roman winter garrison for the troops on the pass. This valley was crucial to both Roman and Napoleonic armies and their control of the trade routes. Our trail stays high and contours around with a final short descent to reach the cobbled streets of St Rhemy a village offering final stopping point to Pilgrims before reaching the famous Grand Saint Bernard Monastery. From St Rhemy we will take a short bus transfer to wind our way up to reach the Col Grand St Bernard, 2469m, and the border back into Switzerland. The pass has been used for over 3,000 years to cross the Alps. St. Bernard in the 900's first provided a safe haven for travellers and it is here where the iconic Saint Bernard Dogs earned their legendary reputation as rescuers of travellers lost in snow. The Hospice is still operational and this is where we sleep the night. There will be time ~~and being in the Hospice Museum~~ [Saint Bernard Dog](#) during the summer months. Distance: 17km. Ascent: 830m. Descent: 1600m. Highest point: 2714m. 6-7hrs.

Day 7 Gd St Bernard Monastery to Bourg-St-Pierre

Having explored this high historic col, 2469m, if the weather allows, we will today choose a variant route to gain further height to take in some spectacular scenery getting right off the beaten track. We first climb to the Fenêtre de Ferret, 2698m, from where we are greeted with a stunning view of the Mont Blanc massif. A short descent takes us to the Lacs de Fenêtre, some of the most beautiful lakes in the area. From here we ascend on an ancient mule track to the Col de Bastillon reaching 2753m - it's a steep short section of path but on a track so should not provide any difficulties. After gaining another stunning view from the Col de Bastillon we descend past more beautiful lakes down the Combe de Drone to rejoin the traditional Tour des Combins route and follow the footsteps of Napoleon down the Roman road to come full circle to reach our starting point a week ago at Bourg-St-Pierre. Time for a celebratory meal and to enjoy the hotel spa. Distance: 15km. Ascent: 600m. Descent: 1350m. Highest point: 2753m. 6-7hrs.

If the weather is not so good, then we will take the normal Tour des Combins route leading straight down from the col which follows the ancient route made famous for harbouring Napoleans armies. The trail meanders through meadows and along by the Bourg dam to reach the old customs house and the cobbled streets of Bourg St Pierre. Distance: 10km. Ascent: 0m. Descent: 1350m. 6-7hrs. The leader will make the decision on which route will be taken depending on the weather conditions on the day.

Day 8 Departure

Today is departure day.

Price

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Included: The services of a fully qualified International Mountain Leader. Half-board accommodation in a 2* hotel, or similar, in Bourg-Saint-Pierre. Half-board accommodation in the mountain refuges and Gd St Bernard Monastery. Picnic lunch each day on the trek and transfer from St Rhemy to the Col Grand St Bernard.

Not included: Flights, insurance and transfers from Geneva (but we can advise on the best options), extra snacks, drinks and bottled water at the Cabane de Chanrion.

Accommodation

When at Bourg St Pierre and at the Gd St Bernard Monastery accommodation is based on two people sharing. Other accommodation during the trip will be in high mountain refuges. It's normal in the Alps to share accommodation whilst in the mountains. The refuges on this tour are remote and in some cases only offer non-segregated dormitory style rooms. Many good friends have been made this way! The refuges themselves tend to be full of character and serve tasty local dishes. They are always situated in stunning locations and the chance to enjoy a beer or glass of wine while watching the sun go down and the ibex playing on the mountain-side can provide a really special mountain moment. Please also note that in the Cabane de Chanrion running water is not available so you should budget for bottled water on this night. But in all of the other refuges fresh drinking water is available and also hot shower. For many of our guests the refuges literally prove to be a high point of the trip. Due to the nature of the accommodation on this trip; small hotels, in often tiny villages, we cannot offer a single supplement.

Weather

In mountainous terrain the weather can vary considerably. Temperatures can reach over 30°C in the height of the summer (July/August), but can be as low as 5°C on the passes. It is often sunny with good clear days, but it can rain and snow (even in July or August) so you should be prepared for any eventuality. The average temperatures range from 15-25°C in the valleys and 5-15°C on the passes.

Insurance

Please note that you must have the appropriate insurance for your chosen activity. You must be covered for helicopter rescue, repatriation and medical costs. With regard to this please be sure you have read the Insurance section in our Terms and Conditions.

Luggage

This trip involves carrying a few basic extra items of clothing and comforts for your overnight stays. Please do not be put off by the fact this trip does not include the daily transfer of luggage, as in reality it is simply a case of spare trousers, top, small wash kit, some antibacterial hand gel, headtorch, sheet sleeping bag, small towel, hut slippers if preferred, and clean socks and underwear! Walking poles are highly recommended due to the length of the days, possible old snow patches and steeper paths. It is a very satisfying experience to complete a trip 'pure' like this, carrying everything you need. Any extra luggage/spare clothes can be left at the starting hotel in Bourg.

Minimum numbers

This trip will run once a minimum number of 5 clients have booked. We will take a maximum of 10 clients. We advise you not to make your travel arrangements until the trip is guaranteed to run.

Further Information

This trip hikes through Switzerland and Italy. We grade this trip as Demanding not due to technical difficulty but simply due to some of the days being fairly long in distance. If you have any questions about the trip level please do contact us. The Alps are easily reached from other European and worldwide destinations by road, rail, coach or plane. Bourg-St-Pierre is in Switzerland and easily reached by train, bus or private car from Geneva. More information at: www.st-bernard.ch For suggested travel links please refer to our [Booking & Information pages](#) for further details. Please contact us if you need further advise on your specific travel requirements.

Our Partners

As our niche trips such as the Tour des Combins are of a specialised nature we work with our partner companies to attract sufficient clients to reach the minimum number of participants to allow these trips to go ahead, meaning you are more likely to have your chosen holiday 'guaranteed'. Tracks and Trails in these instances may, in collaborating with our associates, make use of their guiding services. If you have any queries with regard to this please contact us.

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Sunset from
Panossiere
Refuge