



Advanced Wilderness Life Support

Wilderness Medicine Utah/AWLS hut to hut adventure

July 17-22, 2016

Scenic trekking adventure in the Heart of the Alps

FAQ - Frequently Asked Questions

What equipment will I need?

See the attached gear list.

Do I need walking poles?

The use of walking poles is obviously a personal choice but we strongly recommend their use for the trekking. There is a lot of altitude gain (and loss) over the route and poles can make all the difference. If you do not already own a set of poles, try and get some which will 'fold' down into 3 so that they can be attached to a backpack when not in use. It is also a good idea to have used them a few times before using them for your adventure.

What is the best footwear to use?

Good quality, well broken-in hiking boots with good ankle support are strongly recommended purely for ankle stability on the rocky track sections and for walking through snowy areas on the higher passes. Whilst you could wear walking shoes / outdoor trainers in the valleys they are not recommended for the passes.

Will I be able to use my mobile phone?

For most of the route there is mobile network coverage. Occasionally, in some of the valleys, coverage is lost for a short time. There is WiFi available in all of the huts (except on the first night of the trekking).

Do I need insurance?

Yes! There are many forms of travel insurance, but please make sure you have a policy that will cover you to be flown off the mountains in France, Italy and Switzerland should the worst happen, as well as for any subsequent medical treatment required.

What's the weather like?

Even in summer, the weather in the mountains can be notoriously changeable. Temperatures may drop to freezing or go up to 35°C in the day. We may experience high winds, sleet or even snow at some of the cols, we may have days of cloud, or uninterrupted blue skies. So please be prepared with sunscreen, thermals and waterproofs.

Is there the possibility to skip a stage or certain parts of the tour?

There is some transport available in some valley sections, but they may not take you from valley to valley so it is best to physically prepare for being able to complete the full trek. There is also a cable car at Col de Balme (day 5) which can be used to skip the descent towards Chamonix.

Do I require a Visa for Europe?

Visa requirements for Europe depend on where you are from and where you are going. As a general rule Americans won't require a visa (90 within 180 days in the Schengen area) but may need at least 6 months validity on their passport. Rules do change though and it is therefore important that you check for yourself with your local embassy or travel agent prior to travelling.

What is the food like in the refuges, mountain huts and guest houses?

You will probably find that you will be eating the majority of your breakfasts and dinners in the refuges while you have your lunches while out trekking. Breakfast in the refuges will usually consist of coffee, tea, cereal, fruits, bread, and conserves. Evening meals generally consist of a first course of soup, salad or charcuterie, a main course of meat with one or two vegetables or rice or pasta, and a dessert course.

Standards do vary from place to place. In most you'll enjoy a hearty evening meal that will satisfy all but the fussiest hiker. Lunches offerings also tend to be quite good and adequate enough nutrition. Breakfasts provided by refuges however often leave something to be desired, so a good idea to bring along some energy bars, trail mix, etc.

What is the accommodation like in the refuges when walking?

Refuges vary in their standards and facilities, some are modern some are older and more basic – but generally are in excellent locations in the mountains. If you are used to hiking and staying in walkers huts then you'll be pleasantly surprised and find Refuges quite comfortable and more than adequate. If this is the first time you've tried anything like this and your idea of roughing it is a 2* hotel then you'll need to adjust your expectations!

Some refuges are wonderful rustic ex- 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. You may find some refuges have private rooms of triple/ quad share but these will generally need advance bookings. You will mostly find shared dormitories that provide mattresses, pillows and blankets with shared indoor toilet and shower facilities.

Do I need to worry about altitude sickness?

No, altitude sickness generally can occur at heights over 3000 metres and all the passes along the Mont Blanc circuit are below this, therefore it would be very unlikely that you would suffer from altitude sickness. You may however experience some affects of being at high altitude while walking, such as slight shortness of breath.

What is the track like?

Underfoot you will experience a variety of tracks and trails. Typically the mountainous sections of the Hut to Hut adventure run on single-track paths that can be rocky in places, sometimes with steps but mostly just the bare earth. Tracks are also common – perhaps gravel forest roads, ski pistes, or rough tracks for vehicles over agricultural land. There are some short sections of country lanes. Depending on spring weather in Europe there may be snow on the passes.