Compagnie des Guides de Chamonix

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BIODIVERSITY - EXCURSION AROUND THE MER DE GLACE GLACIER

Duration: 3 | Fitness: ▲▲▲△△ | Technique: ▲▲△△△ | Price from: 820 €

THE BALCONIES OF THE MER DE GLACE

High above the Mer de Glace, the balcony trails offer an exceptional journey into the heart of the Mont Blanc massif. Over 3 days, you will cross glacier terrain, moraines and steep mountain trails to reach the Charpoua and Couvercle huts. The route includes long sections of ladders and is designed for experienced hikers comfortable on steep mountain trails, but no previous mountaineering experience is required.

OBSERVE A CHANGING MOUNTAIN ENVIRONMENT

This journey is also an opportunity to discover alpine flora and observe how the mountain environment is changing. Accompanied by a mountain guide, you will learn about the effects of glacier retreat and the gradual evolution of vegetation at altitude in an environment particularly affected by climate change.

ITINERARY

Day 1

Ascent to the Charpoua Hut (2,841 m)
We take the cog railway to Montenvers (1,913 m), then the gondola down to the Mer de Glace. After crossing the glacier, the first ladders mark the beginning of our ascent towards the balcony trails. A steep mountain path with further ladder sections leads through the Charpoua cirque to the hut, located at 2,841 m in a wild valley surrounded by the peaks of the Mont Blanc massif.
Vertical ascent: 1,150 m

Day 2

Traverse to the Couvercle Hut (2,679 m)
Before heading towards the Couvercle Hut, we climb above Charpoua in search of Saussure's androsace, a rare alpine flower found in the Western Alps. We then join the Couvercle trail, which traverses the slopes of the Aiguille du Moine. The narrow, steep route combines mountain trails and ladder sections, with extensive views over the Mer de Glace and surrounding peaks. We finish the day at the Couvercle Hut, at 2,679 m.
Vertical ascent: 500 m - Vertical descent: 700 m

Day 3

Return to Montenvers
Depending on conditions and the level of the group, we either return directly to the Mer de Glace or extend the route with a detour towards the Leschaux Hut. This wilder option offers remarkable views of the Grandes Jorasses and explores another part of the Mer de Glace basin. We then return to the glacier before taking the gondola and Montenvers train back to Chamonix.
Vertical descent: 1,000 m

GROUP BOOKING

The group option brings together participants who may not know each other. It allows you to follow a set program on fixed dates while benefiting from an attractive price and the friendly atmosphere of a group.

Dates

See the group booking module below.

Price 2027
€820 per person based on a minimum of 3 participants.
Participants aged 16 and 17 may join only when accompanied by an adult.

This price includes
- IFMGA English-speaking mountain guide
- Two nights in mountain huts with half-board: dinner, breakfast and overnight stay
- Lift tickets

This price does not include
- Picnic lunches and drinks in the huts
- Transportation to the meeting point
- Personal technical equipment

PRIVATE BOOKING

The private option allows you to take this trip with your own group and benefit from a guide dedicated exclusively to you. You can choose your departure date subject to hut availability, and the program can be adjusted according to your level, mountain conditions and expectations.

Prices 2027
2 people: €1375 per person
3 people: €1005 per person
4 people: €820 per person

This price includes
- IFMGA English-speaking mountain guide
- Two nights in mountain huts with half-board: dinner, breakfast and overnight stay
- Lift tickets

This price does not include
- Picnic lunches and drinks in the huts
- Transportation to the meeting point
- Personal technical equipment

FURTHER INFORMATION

To prepare for your trip, read our guides' tips, which provide useful advice and recommendations for our mountaineering trips.

Meeting point
Meet at 8:30am on the first day at the Compagnie des Guides de Chamonix, 190 place de l'Église, Chamonix.

Technical level
This trip requires previous experience hiking on steep mountain trails. No previous mountaineering experience is required.

Fitness level
This program is designed for people who regularly take part in endurance activities. Days may involve up to 6 hours of physical effort. The long ladder sections also require sustained physical effort.

Guiding policy
3 to 4 participants per guide. *Participants aged 16 and 17 may join only when accompanied by an adult.*

Accommodation
Two nights in mountain huts during the trip. Before and after the trip, you can benefit from preferential rates with our hotel partners in Chamonix.

⚠ **Formalities**
Mountain sports insurance with repatriation cover is mandatory. If you are not insured, insurance including repatriation assistance and cancellation cover can be taken out when booking. A valid ID document is also mandatory.

EQUIPMENT

We recommend paying particular attention to your choice of equipment. For this hut-to-hut trip, choose lightweight equipment while maintaining the comfort and protection required for high-mountain conditions.

Equipment
- A backpack of approximately 35 litres
- Sturdy high-cut hiking boots
- Telescopic trekking poles
- A pair of microspikes suitable for your boots with anti-balling plates
- A helmet
- A harness

Clothing
- A warm hat suitable for wearing under a helmet
- A sun hat or cap
- A neck warmer such as a Buff
- A technical long-sleeve base layer
- A fleece
- A waterproof hooded jacket such as Gore-Tex
- A lightweight down jacket
- Thermal leggings
- Sturdy hiking trousers
- Shorts
- Waterproof and breathable overtrousers such as Gore-Tex
- Hiking socks
- Ski gloves
- Lightweight gloves
- A change of clothes

Accessories
- Category 4 sunglasses
- A headtorch
- A sleeping bag liner
- A water bottle of at least 1.5 litres
- A personal first aid kit including at least sunscreen, lip balm, blister treatment, as well as your usual medication for headaches and nausea
- Earplugs
- A waterproof pouch containing your ID and euros
- A power bank, as charging electronic devices is not guaranteed in all mountain huts

Our Rental Partners
You can rent equipment at preferential rates from our partner shops Millet (excluding crampons, ice axes and helmet), Sanglard Sports, Ravanel & Co and Concept Pro Shop.

Our Equipment Partners
Millet, Dynastar, Julbo, Grivel and Monnet.