

PYGMY ELEPHANT

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Tour du Mont Blanc Packing Guide



Packing Guide for the Tour Du Mont Blanc



The Tour du Mont Blanc (TMB) is a demanding trek that passes through the Alps of three countries. To walk beside towers of granite formed some 15 million years ago and to gaze down on valleys strewn with

houses so small they seem to be plucked from a monopoly board, is to venture into another world. Preparing for this hike correctly will allow you to absorb the experience with minimal stress and worry.



DOCUMENTS AND PRE-TRAVEL PLANNING

- *Travel insurance with coverage for repatriation, emergency evacuation and medical expenses. Check to make sure that there is no restriction based on the activities and characteristics of the Tour Du Mont Blanc. Some insurances have restrictions based on altitude (have coverage up to 9,000 feet) and if you use equipment like crampons or ropes.*
- *Euros and Swiss Francs. Your accommodation will be prepaid, however for alcohol and extras some mountain huts, you will need cash. Hotels will accept credit cards. **Please note, there are no ATMs between Les Contamines and Courmayeur.***
- *Call you bank. Alert them that you will be traveling in Europe and that they should allow transactions. Check with the bank about ATM restrictions as well.*
- *Passport and any visas needed.*

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PACK FOR FOUR SEASONS

The Tour du Mont Blanc ranges in elevation from 2,200 feet in the valleys to 8,800 feet on the passes. Even in the summer, you will have to deal with alpine conditions and it is not unusual to find snow on some of the passes. In the valleys, you may be comfortable hiking in shorts and a t-shirt. When the weather is bad, you will want to be able to quickly add layers. Layering is thus important so that you can adjust to the temperature, wind and precipitation. You should avoid cotton as it tends not to dry quickly. Choose a base layer that is made of synthetic material. A mid-layer should also be kept handy, especially when hiking over passes like Col de la Seigne and Grand Col Ferret.

CLOTHING

- *Technical hiking pants*
- *Shorts*
- *Moisture wicking base layer shirts and underwear – should be non-cotton (synthetics are best when it's warmer, merino wool or silk for when it's colder)*
- *Long sleeve shirt made of synthetic material*
- *Mid-layer Fleece*
- *Waterproof and breathable jacket ([what's "waterproof and breathable"?](#))*
- *Waterproof gloves*
- *Synthetic hiking socks*
- *T-shirts and hoody / sweatshirt for mountain huts*
- *Long underwear tops and bottoms (optional, but if you sleep cold, the huts do not have central heating)*
- *Hiking socks*
- *Hiking boots that are worn in (important) - Early in the season, you may need "mountaineering boots" that will give you better traction. Otherwise, Trail Boots or Rough Trail Boots should suffice. [Choosing the right boots](#)*

ACCESSORIES

- *Hiking poles, especially early in the season which can help with stability on snow.*
- *Flip-flops – for the shower.*
- *Hats (wool and with sun-bill)*
- *Gloves (waterproof recommended)*
- *Head lamp – for the mountain huts at night, it will help you to navigate in the dark.*
- *Backpack (30 - 50 liters for day bag)*
- *1 Duffle Bag per person - if you have booked luggage transfers only. – Included in the price of your tour is luggage transport. The duffle bag can be used for your non-essential and overnight belongings. It should not weigh more than 15kg. If you have extra luggage in excess of this weight, please let us know and we can arrange to have an additional bag transported or to store your luggage until the end of your trek.*
- *Towel (quick dry) – Hotels will have towels, however the huts will not.*
- *Sunglasses*
- *Guide book and Maps (will be provided by Pygmy Elephant)*

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- *Dirty clothes bag*
- *Knife or multi-tool*
- *Camelback or water bottle (= > 2 liters recommended)*
- *Compass*
- *Sleeping bag liner – For the mountain huts, most will have blankets and a pillow, however bringing your own sleeping liner is recommended for hygienic reasons.*

BRING SOME CHANGE

Most Mountain huts will provide you with showers, however a few will charge you for hot water like Rifugio Elisabetta and Rifugio Bonatti in Italy. The showers are generally of good quality, but don't expect luxury. If you plan on staying in some communal dorms or dortoirs, it is imperative to have earplugs, lest you suffer a night of chainsaw snoring from fellow hikers. You will also need to leave your hiking boots in a mud room, so make sure you have either a lightweight pair of shoes or slippers for the evenings.

HYGIENE

- *Sunscreen*
- *Toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, etc*
- *Shampoo, soap, hand sanitizer*
- *Insect repellent*
- *Blister plaster or moleskin*
- *Earplugs and eye mask*
- *Slippers or light weight shoes.*

TIP: Stuffing some newspaper inside of your hiking boots during the night can help soak up moisture from your hiking boots.

IF ICE AND HARD PACKED SNOW CONDITIONS EXIST

Depending on the severity of winter and the temperature during spring, there may be sections of hard-packed snow or ice. If snow is hard and your boots are not gaining traction, then MICROSPIKES are recommended, and possibly an ice axe for self-arrest (this is more likely in June and sometimes July, again depending on the winter). If there are icy conditions on the route, you can rent equipment in Chamonix before your trek. It is important to check the status of the weather regularly before your hike and make adjustments as needed.

Furthermore, early in the season there is sometimes a risk for avalanche on the trail. Make sure to consult with your refuge warden, hotel or with us for possible avalanche danger before setting out on your tour.

More information on conditions can be found here: [Chamoniarde Mountain Conditions](#)

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In many locations, there are options to bypass snowy and icy conditions with either alternate trails, public transport or private transport. More information on transport will be provided in your handbook. If you are hiking in June or early to mid-July, please make sure to consult Pygmy Elephant on current conditions before departure.

- *Microspikes*
- *Ice Axe*
- *Gaiters*
- *Hand warmers*
- *Sleeping bag and bivy sack in case of being caught in storm - optional, however good for peace of mind.*
- *In extreme conditions, crampons, ice axe and safety line for crossing snow bridges of rivers, streams or gulleys. If you plan on doing some of the high route variants early in the year, please consider taking extra precautions.*

EMERGENCY GEAR

- **A Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) or Satellite Messenger** can be used to alert authorities if you become lost or injured. For solo hikers it can bring an extra peace of mind! ACR Res Q Link (PLB) and Spot Gen 3 (Satellite Messenger) are popular devices. Cell service is good, however there are a few dead-spots.
- **Whistle:** to call for help if you are lost or injured. Three blasts are the international distress signal, two blasts are a call back signal and one blast is “where are you” or a call back signal if you hear anything like Morse Code. Whistle blasts should last three seconds.
- **First Aid Kit:** disinfectant (alcohol wipes, anti-biotic cream), bandages, scissors, triage tarp (if space allows),
- **absorbent cotton, band aids** (regular and butterfly closure), disinfectant wipes, absorbent gauze bandages, protective gloves
- **Thermal tarp or space blanket:** to cover injured or as a cover, as needed
Medicine: pain-relief tablets, fever-reducing and anti-inflammatory pills, ointment for scrapes, anti-histamines (for allergies), mineral salts, diarrhea medicine, insect bite cream, ointment for treating burns
- **Survival kit:** Sewing needle (floss for thread), safety pins, fire starter (or lighter), duct tape, emergency contact info, zip-lock bags (to hold water), tincture of iodine to disinfect water, orange flagging tape to mark position, magnifying glass, parachute cord, emergency food (energy bars).

WHAT ABOUT FOOD?

When staying in Courmayeur and Chamonix, you are booked on a bed and breakfast basis. There are plenty of fabulous restaurants in the towns, so we do not want to limit you to only one choice. At most other locations, you are booked on a half board basis, with your breakfast and dinner accounted for. The dinner is usually quite good and a three-course affair. The breakfast, on the other hand, is nothing special. Just something to provide you calories for the day's hike. Lunch will be on your own, however there are several options. You can get a picnic or sack lunch from your accommodation, go to a local grocer and create your own lunch or stop at a restaurant or mountain hut for a hot meal along the way.

POPULAR SNACKS

- *Chocolate (especially dark chocolate as it contains more calories per ounce)*
- *Trail mix*
- *Sausage / cheese from the region (charcuterie)*
- *Fresh fruit (you can pick some up almost daily)*
- *Granola*
- *Energy bars*
- *Blueberries found along the path*