

# Itinerary

- What do you want to get out of the trip?
  - Anything in particular you want to see or do?
- Meet up with European Scouts?
- Fly into Geneva or Paris?
  - Going into Paris lets us see things in that city.
  - Night train w/couchette from Paris to Chamonix.
- Wear uniform? Custom shirt?
- Your questions?

# Itinerary

## 18 Days

- 1 day to fly into Paris
- 1 ½ days in Paris
- Night train to Chamonix
- 2 ½ days in Chamonix
- 10 days hiking
- 1 day in Courmayeur
- 1 day in Chamonix
- Bus from Chamonix to Geneva
- 1 day to fly back from Geneva

# Budget

Flight: \$1,000 - \$1,200

Refuges: \$65/night including 1/2 board -> \$1,200

Other meals: \$300

Total: \$2,500 - \$2,700 for 18 days (\$140/day)

+ any extra activities + pocket money

Reconciliation upon our return.

# Optional Activity Ideas

## Paris

- Eiffel Tower (everybody for sure)
- Catacombs
- Bus tour
- Arc de Triomphe
- Museum of National Resistance
- Museum of World War II
- Bicycle tour (kids asked for this)
- Picnic
- Canal boat ride
- Chateau de Vincennes
- Champs Elysees

## Chamonix & Courmayeur

- Aiguille du Midi (highest cable car in the world; 12,600') (everybody for sure)
- Rock climbing
- Canyoning
- Mountain biking
- Kayaking
- Climbing gym in Les Houches
- Hot springs in Courmayeur
- Via ferrata
- Montenvers rack & pinion train in Chamonix

Not everybody has to do the same stuff in Chamonix or Courmayeur. People can also just walk around and relax.

# Equipment List

## For Hike

Rucksack  
Waterproof liner for rucksack  
Stuff sacks to manage gear in rucksack  
Trousers, 1 pair  
Shorts, 1-2 pairs  
Fleece, light  
Fleece, heavy  
Sweatshirt or hoodie  
Rain jacket  
Rain pants  
Tee shirt, 2-3  
Long sleeved shirt, 1  
Hiking boots  
Toque  
Gloves  
Water bottle (1 litre) or Camelback  
Sleeping bag liner  
Wash kit (tooth brush, tooth paste, soap, shampoo, brush)  
Headlamp or torch w/spare batteries  
Pack Towel  
Hiking Socks, 2 pairs  
Underwear, 3 pairs  
Passport  
Pocket money  
Medical insurance details  
Evening wear (refuge wear)?  
Pyjamas  
Sports bra

## Before & After Hike

Suitcase  
Extra shirt(s)  
Extra trouser(s)  
Extra shoes?

## Optional

Swim suit  
Ear plugs  
Penknife  
Sunglasses  
Sun hat  
Pack cover  
Waterproof pack liner  
Sneakers  
Flip flops  
Camera (w/lots of memory & batteries)  
Lip balm  
Walking sticks  
Notepad, pen  
Book  
Long underwear  
Kleenex  
Money belt  
Shaver or razor  
Watch  
Toilet paper  
Bag for wet or dirty clothes  
ATM card  
Slippers  
Sweat/fleece pants  
Sock liners

Crests on rucksack?

Maximum Weight  
15-25 lbs

# Personal Equipment

- **Rucksack**
  - 38-54 litres (2,300-3,500 cubic inches)
  - Waterproof cover or pack gear in garbage bag or dry sacks.
  - Maximum 15-25 lbs total weight.
- **Hiking boots**
  - Provide ankle support, water resistance, and cushioning.
  - Gore-Tex preferred over leather; no break-in period and lighter.
  - Vibram sole recommended.
  - Negotiating group discount with Asolo, but participation not required.
- **Sleeping bag liner**
  - Mandatory in some of the refuges.
  - Blankets, pillows, and mattresses provided, but the blankets only get washed once per year.
  - Old sheet, \$35 silk from MEC, \$19 silk from Ebay, or \$14 fake silk from Ebay.
- **Laundry**
  - Laundry is done in a bucket or sink, and hung to dry.
  - Plan for laundry every 2-3 days.
  - Group will bring laundry soap.
- **Clothing**
  - Quick dry preferred, especially for drying after doing laundry.
  - Weather can be everything for sweltering hot to a blizzard.
  - Think layering.
  - One set of clothing for hiking, one set for the refuge.
- **Rain Gear**
  - Rain jack and rain pants an absolute necessity.
  - Gore-Tex recommended, but not a necessity.
- **Light weight pack towel**
  - Extras available for anybody without.
- Extra clothing can be left in your suitcase at the hotel in Chamonix.



# Group Equipment

First aid kit  
Compass  
GPS  
Mobile telephone (pre-paid)  
Spot  
Guide book  
Topographic map  
Refuges contact list  
Laundry soap  
Thermometer  
Anemometer  
Altimeter  
Sunscreen  
Toilet paper  
Whistle  
Sewing kit  
Repair kit  
Money  
Playing cards  
Mexican train  
Copies of passports  
Paracord clothes line  
Lunch food  
Snacks  
Ziploc bags

## **Repair Kit**

Spare laces  
Spare rucksack belt buckle

# First Aid Kit



# Financial (General)

- The currency of France and Italy is the Euro (€). The French Franc and the Lire are no longer legal tender. The currency of Switzerland is the Swiss Franc (CHF), but the Euro is generally accepted. However, the Euro exchange rate at a store in Switzerland may not be ideal.
- Exchange rates
  - €1 = C\$1.30
  - CHF1 = C\$1.07
  - C\$1 = €0.77 = CHF0.97
- Canadian ATM cards are accepted in Europe.
- Stores in the towns will sometimes accept debit cards, but cash is king during the tour.
- Daily ATM withdrawal limit is €250 in Italy and €300(?) in France.
- Withdrawing cash from an ATM will be less expensive than a store debit transaction.
- ATMs are located in Chamonix, Les Houches, Les Contamines, Courmayeur, La Fouly, and Champex.
- ATM cards must be configured with a four digit PIN. Six digit PINs are not always accepted in Europe.
- Some type of service fee (~1% of transaction or a flat rate) will be charged by the foreign ATM. Your ATM card limit must be equal to or greater than this fee plus the withdrawal amount. A card limit of at least \$40 is needed, however it is typically less expensive to withdraw a larger amount fewer times, than withdrawing many small amounts.
- Canadian banks must be notified that your ATM card will be used outside of the country, otherwise the transactions may trigger a fraud alert resulting in the card being locked. Give the bank a list of the countries and trip dates. This information can generally be submitted through the bank's website.

# Foreign Scouts

- Group in Paris offering to guide us, etc. for that day and take us on a picnic.
- Looking for contacts in Chamonix and/or Courmayeur.

# Financial (Personal)

- To start the trip, Euros can be purchased from your bank in Canada, alternatively Euros can be obtained at the first ATM found in France.
- Due to the shorter time in Switzerland, we may have some group Swiss Francs that could be sold if needed to individuals before a Swiss ATM is found.
- Plan on carrying enough cash to last at least three days.
- Individuals are only responsible for money for their personal use. i.e. junk food, snacks, extra drinks, presents for themselves or folk back home, etc.
- Travelers cheques are very rarely used these days, they can only be cashed at banks, and incur high service fees. Not recommended.
- A money belt is a good option for carrying your cash and your passport.

# Financial (Group)

- The group will be paying for all travel, meals, accommodation, and group activities.
- As many of the refugees take only cash, we will need to leave each town with ~ €2,000.
  - €50/person (half board at a refuge) \* 10 = €500.
  - €5/person (lunch) \* 10 = €50
  - Three days before the next ATM: (€500 + €50) \* 3 = €1,650
- At a minimum five people (four necessary + one spare) will need to withdraw €250 in each town for group usage.
- As not everybody will necessarily do the same activities, and kids often have less expensive tickets than adults, all expenses will be recorded and we will reconcile upon our return.

# Communications

- Personal mobile devices (and other electronics) are strongly discouraged.
  - Beware that international roaming charges (especially data) can be excruciatingly expensive. Bills in excess of \$10,000 are not uncommon.
  - Most of the time we will not have mobile coverage and most of the accommodations do not have Wi-Fi.
  - The intention of the trip is not to spend the time texting friends back home or watching YouTube.
  - If you bring them, I don't want to see them. Otherwise there are a lot of very deep crevices...
- A SPOT satellite messenger, as used on our canoe trips, will be brought for location updates for the folk back home, and for emergency signaling.
- A pre-paid mobile for the group will be brought for emergency use and for making accommodation changes if our schedule changes.
- Everybody will be sending post cards home as we enter each country.
  - Address labels will be brought so you don't even have to remember your address.
- There may be the odd internet café for sending an email home, but don't depend on it.

# Language

- The language of the Tour du Mont Blanc is French. While other languages are spoken in Italy and Switzerland, most people in those countries also speak French.
- Some people we encounter may speak English, but it is not guaranteed. People from across Europe, and beyond, hike this route.
- Always attempt to converse with a person in their local language before switching into English. Even if your French is worse than their English, your attempt will be appreciated (you will get better service), and it is good practice for you!
- Know at least 'bonjour' and 'merci'.
- If all else fails, ask Laura, Heather, or Nick to translate for you.

# Accommodation

- Accommodation will be a mix of hotels and mountain huts.
- Hotels may have shared bathrooms.
- Mountain hut sleeping may be in rooms with bunk beds, a dormitory, or even a converted cow shed. All sleeping is unisex (i.e. boys and girls in the same room); no false modesty in Europe. If both rooms and dormitories are offered, the rooms will be more expensive; kids will be in dormitories for sure.
- Accommodation will generally be picked to give the best cultural experiences.
- There may be showers in the huts, but the water may not be heated, or they may not be very much of it. Sometimes the showers will only open starting at a certain time in the afternoon.
- **Etiquette**
  - When entering mountain hut, hiking boots must be removed at the door. Sometimes indoor slippers are provided, alternatively sneakers or flip flops may be used.
  - In the dormitories, silence is golden at night. Some people may be getting up very early to start a climb and your noise would not be appreciated.
- Many public toilets in Europe require payment.
- Some toilets are squat only!

# Travel

- Carry on baggage is restricted in size and weight. Knapsack is good.
- Only minute amounts of liquids and gels may be carried through airport security. 100mL maximum size each, all in a single 1 quart clear plastic bag.
- No bomb or terrorist jokes in an aeroport or on an aeroplane; its even more verboten than at a US border crossing.
- You lose five hours during the flight to Europe. You must sleep as much as possible during the flight as we will have a full day upon our arrival. Travelling over is harder than coming back.
- Your rucksack must be placed in a suitcase/duffel bag/etc when checked onto the aeroplane, it is too easy for the straps to catch in the machinery and it to be destroyed otherwise. Spare suitcases are available to borrow for anybody without one.
- Weight, size, and quantity limit to checked baggage as well. Recommend single checked item.
- Airplane etiquette
  - If reclining your seat, do it slowly so as to not upset any drinks on the table attached to the back of your seat.
  - If not in an aisle seat, do not get up and down every few minutes. Don't get up while your seat mate is eating. If they get up, it's a good time for you to get up too.



# Meals

- In the hotels, breakfast is often included with the room. If not, we may find a café.
- In the mountain huts, we will have half board; this includes both breakfast and supper.
- Lunches can be any of:
  - Packed lunch purchased from the mountain hut where we stayed the night.
    - Recommended: Sausage, cheese, and bread
  - Food purchased at a grocery store in a town and brought along.
  - Purchased at a mountain hut during the day.
- For suppers when not at a mountain hut, we will eat in restaurants.
  - 'Prix Fixe' is less expensive than ordering 'a la carte'.
- We always want to make the most of sampling local cuisine. This would include:
  - European drinks.
  - Italian pizza.
  - Italian ice cream & gelato.
  - French baguettes.
  - Tartiflette (creamy potato, bacon, and cheese dish).
  - Raclette (cheese melted onto potatoes).
  - Fondue Savoyarde (breaded dipped into melted cheese).
  - Tartes aux Myrtilles (blueberry pie).
  - Hot chocolate in a bowl.
  - Swiss chocolate.

# Safety & Security

- Pickpockets can be prevalent in Europe, especially in airports and train stations.
  - Keep your wallet and passport where it cannot be stolen.
- Luggage theft can be an issue in airports, in train stations, and on trains.
  - Keep your luggage with you at all times in the airport and in the train station.
  - Keep in contact with your luggage; hand or foot on/through strap.
  - In train's keep an eye on the luggage (especially when stopped at a station), or use a cable lock (usually more trouble than its worth though).
- We can split up.
  - In Chamonix.
  - In Courmayeur.
- We will keep together.
  - In Paris.
  - While hiking.
- The weather in the mountains can change drastically very quickly. Be prepared to close up the group and change into rain suits at a moments notice.
- A light weight first aid kit, with some over the counter medicines, will be carried by the group.

# Documents & Insurance

- A valid passport is required for everybody.
  - Everybody responsible for carrying their own passport.
  - In general, your passport should be with you at all times to prevent theft.
  - Passports must expire no earlier than three months after our planned return date.
- A photocopy of every passport will be made before departure in the event any are lost or stolen.
- Everybody is required to have out of country health insurance. Policy holder names and numbers will be collected before departure.
- We will have mountain rescue insurance through the SPOT satellite messenger.