



HEDONISTIC HIKING

The Best of the Italian Alps

Hiking in the shadow of Europe's highest mountains

Experience the Italian Alps in their best season. As the snow melts stunning flower-filled alpine meadows emerge. Enjoy fabulous hiking surrounded by spectacular views of the Gran Paradiso, Monte Rosa and Mont Blanc mountain ranges. Stay three nights in exquisite Courmayeur and take a cable car to the "rooftop of Europe" at 3466m for unbeatable views of Mont Blanc PLUS hike a section of the Tour of Mont Blanc. Visit ancient castles and follow the routes of the Roman armies, medieval pilgrims and Napoleon Bonaparte. See alpine fauna in their natural habitat and enjoy the fabulous hospitality and delicious cuisine of the smallest region of Italy.

What is included?

- 8 nights' accommodation in **three luxurious 4-star hotels all with fabulous spa facilities**
- **Two experienced and knowledgeable guides** who will look after your every need and bring this stunning area to life
- **All meals** including delicious local wines
- **Gourmet picnic lunches** each day and snacks en route
- Dinner in a variety of **superb restaurants**
- **Support vehicle**
- **Transport to/from Turin** in air-conditioned minibus
- Comprehensive **pre-trip information**

Tour Highlights

The Eighth Wonder of the World - a cable car journey to the heart of the Mont Blanc Massif at 3466m
Abundant alpine flowers
Breathtaking views

Accommodation

Ad Gallias: Delightful four star hotel in the medieval town of Bard. Excellent restaurant and spa

Cresta del Duc: Four star hotel in wonderful alpine village of Courmayeur. Spa facilities

Hotel Bellevue: Luxurious hotel in the heart of the Gran Paradiso National Park in Cogne. Michelin starred restaurant and outstanding spa and indoor pool



Itinerary

The tour starts and ends in the elegant city of [Turin](#), the first capital of Italy in 1861 and host city for the 2006 Winter Olympics. There are daily flights from the UK to Turin and good train connections from within Italy and from France and Switzerland. The nearest intercontinental airport is Milan. We stay in three towns in the Aosta Valley, Bard at 350m, Courmayeur at 1200m and Cogne at 1550m. Most of the hiking is at an altitude of between 1500m and 2500m. We travel by cable car to 3466m. Nevertheless it is a **hiking holiday and not a climbing expedition so no technical skills whatsoever are required.**

Day 1

Meet at the Hotel Concord on Via Lagrange close to the Porta Nuova train station at 10.30am or Turin Airport (Arrivals) at 11.30am. Drive 1 hour to Pont St Martin, the gateway to the Aosta Valley. Starting at the Roman bridge in the village we follow, on foot, the ancient route of the Roman armies past vineyards clinging to the hillsides to pick up the paved Roman road which brings us to the town of Bard. On arrival we visit the dramatic fortress at Bard, which played a crucial part in Napoleon's advance into Italy in 1800, overlooking our hotel. **Since there is the opportunity for a short walk before we check into the hotel please ensure you are in your hiking gear with boots to hand (ie not in your main luggage).** We stay in a delightful hotel with spa facilities for the next 3 nights. Welcome drink and dinner in the hotel restaurant. **(6km/3.8miles)**



Day 2



Today we explore the remote Gressoney valley at the foot of the Monte Rosa mountain chain with its fascinating Walser heritage. We climb up to and follow a trail overlooking the valley, past tiny hamlets with characteristic stone and wood houses, to a mountain refuge where we have lunch. In the afternoon we descend to the valley and on to Gressoney St Jean where we visit the fairytale castle of Queen Margherite of Savoy, Queen of Italy at the end of the 19th century. **(11km/6.8miles)** This evening we drive high into the mountains to a small restaurant where we are warmly welcomed for a dinner of local specialities.

Day 3

A beautiful drive takes us to the Champorcher valley, carved out by glaciers millions of years ago. Our hike starts along the route used by Victor Emmanuel II, the first King of Italy, in the 19th century when escaping the court to go hunting in the mountains. We follow small trails climbing past beautiful lakes encircled by snow-covered peaks and enjoy stunning views down into the valley as we descend. Opportunity to soothe your muscles in the hotel spa before a well-deserved dinner on the hotel terrace this evening. **(11km/6.8miles)**



Day 4



Today we leave Bard and a short drive takes us to the delightful regional capital of Aosta. Private tour of the town to see many of the important monuments including the Romanesque church of Sant Orso, the Roman walls and the Roman amphitheatre. Time to enjoy the

sights and shops before lunch in a local trattoria. In the afternoon we continue up the valley to the stunning town of Courmayeur which lies at the foot of mighty Mont Blanc (*Monte Bianco* in Italian). We stay the next three nights in a hotel in the town centre. Dinner in town this evening.

Day 5



Today we experience a remarkable cable car ride, sometimes referred to as The Eighth Wonder of the World, which takes us from Courmayeur to the Torino refuge at 3466m. From the viewing platform you feel you can almost touch the peak of Mont Blanc which stands before us at 4810m. There is the opportunity to walk out into the snow on well-groomed easy trails for a truly breathtaking alpine experience. Absorb the views over lunch in a mountain restaurant.

In the afternoon join an optional hike on the Tour Mont Blanc, climbing up 600m to a height of 2000m before a long descent to Courmayeur. Alternatively, enjoying a relaxing afternoon in Courmayeur and explore the elegant shops and cafés before dinner in a local restaurant. **(10.5km/6.6miles)**

Day 6

A magnificent full day's hike takes us around the stunning Val Veny near Courmayeur. We follow a popular mountain trail, part of the famous Tour of Mont Blanc which circumnavigates the eponymous mountain. Pass mountain lakes and streams and see the glaciers which carved out the valley millions of years ago. Your tour guides hike in the picnic for you today and you can enjoy it whilst absorbing the glorious views. Dinner in a local restaurant. **(14.5km/9miles)**



Day 7



We depart Courmayeur after breakfast and drive to Cogne, the gateway to the Grand Paradiso National Park. En route we visit a magnificent Roman aqueduct before a leisurely walk takes us along the pretty Valnontey valley to a mountain hut or *Baita* where we have our picnic with views to the Gran Paradiso. We stay the next two nights in the superb Hotel Bellevue, a historic family-run hotel set amongst lush pastures in the heart of the village. Afternoon tea is served daily, there is a wonderful terrace with views to the Gran Paradiso and the hotel boasts outstanding spa facilities. Dinner in a local restaurant. **(6km/3.8miles)**

Day 8

We start our final hike at the pretty village of Gimillan (1788m). We follow the river valley, climbing up past shepherds' huts and tiny hamlets – accessible only by foot. The peace is only disturbed by the chimes of the cow bells as they savour the lush grass of the hills. Picnic by a pristine mountain stream before descending once again to Gimillan. Final dinner at the hotel's outstanding restaurant. **(12.5km/7.7miles)**



Day 9

Return to Turin Airport for 12 o'clock and Hotel Concord near Turin Porta Nuova train station at 12.30. This is the same hotel where we meet on Day 1.

Walking

Shortest day: 6km/3.8miles

Longest day: 14.5km/9miles

There are 7 days of hiking on the trip plus the short hike from the Mont Blanc cable car. Most of the time we are hiking on well-graded mountain paths. We also walk on woodland tracks and quiet tarmac roads. Although many of the distances are short there is a significant amount of ascent and descent, notably on days 3, 6 and 8. The Val d'Aosta is a mountainous region and on several days we hike at an altitude of 2000m or more. Therefore, it is essential to be prepared for adverse weather conditions. Nevertheless, it is mountain walking not climbing and the tour is suitable for any keen hiker. A few sections of the walk could be considered vertiginous, please contact us if you have any concerns about this. On occasion, where there is no van access en route, both members of staff will accompany the group to provide extra support and to carry the lunch for you. Sturdy walking boots, with good ankle support, are essential. Walking poles are highly recommended, especially on steeper sections. These can be purchased in Courmayeur and Cogne, but not in Bard. There are also outdoor stores in Turin.

Weather:

In July you can expect typical spring weather, warm and sunny days but with sudden changes in temperature in the mountains and cool evenings. Several of the hikes are weather dependent and it is at the discretion of the guides to adapt the itinerary if required.

Temperature: Min. 14° Max. 28°

Monthly Rainfall: 50mm

Useful links to our website:

[Turin](#) City Page

[Turin Cafe Culture](#) Blog Post

[Gran Paradiso](#) Blog Post



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