



HEDONISTIC HIKING

France and the Maritime Alps - 9 days Over the Alps from Provence to Piedmont

This fabulous itinerary takes us from the South of France to the North of Italy. The tour explores the stunning **Mercantour National Park**, a short distance from Nice on the Cote d'Azur, before we cross the border between France and Italy to hike in the **Maritime Alps**. We stay in the small ski resort of Limone Piemonte at 1,000 metres and finish in the elegant Piedmontese city of Cuneo, where we learn to cook local specialities. The mountain hiking has dramatic and spectacular views of snow-capped peaks, lakes and streams, and carpets of wild flowers in spring. We discover the rich history of this region on foot, with its nineteenth century forts built along the border, attractive historic villages and a delightful remote church with 15th century frescoes.

What's Included?

- **8 nights accommodation** in three different hotels
- **2 experienced and knowledgeable guides** who will look after your every need and bring this stunning area to life
- **All meals** with wines, with the exception of dinner of Night 7 which is at your leisure
- **Gourmet picnics** each day with snacks en route
- **Support vehicle**, so you can walk as much or as little of the trail as you please
- **Transport** in two air conditioned minibuses
- Comprehensive **pre-trip information**
- **Museum visits and tastings** as per the itinerary

Tour Highlights

Fascinating cross-border culture

Visit Vicoforte, one of Piedmont's architectural masterpieces

Fun cooking class in Cuneo

Accommodation

La Bonne Auberge: A simple, cosy, family-run hotel in the Mercantour National Park

Grand Hotel Principe: A four-star hotel nestled high in the ski resort of Limone, with an outdoor pool

Palazzo Lovera: A four-star Renaissance palazzo in the historic centre of Cuneo

Itinerary

DAY 1

We meet in the centre of **Nice** at **11.30am** or at **Nice Airport** at **12.00pm (Terminal 1)** and drive about one hour north into the Mercantour National Park, stopping en route for a light lunch. We stay in the charming [Hotel La Bonne Auberge](#) in the centre of the lively town of **Saint Martin Vesubie**, which will be our base for the next three nights.



Please note that our pick-up hotel in the centre of Nice is the [Best Western Hôtel Masséna](#) Nice at 58 rue Gioffredo.

DAY 2



A short drive from the hotel takes us to **Le Boreon** in the Mercantour National Park. A lovely circular walk takes us on good paths climbing up through beautiful forest alongside a cascading river. We emerge above the tree line beside a pretty lake before following an easy gradient across boulders to lunch at Refuge de la Courgourde. After lunch we descend by a different route which affords spectacular views of a waterfall. (520m of ascent/descent.) We return to the hotel by van. Dinner in a wonderful local restaurant this evening. **(11.5km/7.3 miles)**

DAY 3

We drive to 1800m near the Refuge and Sanctuary of the **Madone de la Fenetre** where our hike starts. A spectacular and challenging hike climbs up to a ridge with a peak of 2500m. As we hike along the ridge we enjoy breathtaking views of the Mercantour in all directions. We picnic by a group of mountain lakes before descending back to the Madone de la Fenetre. There is no vehicle access at lunch on this day, so the guides will hike the lunch in for you. Dinner in the popular hotel restaurant. **(16 km/9.8 miles)**



DAY 4



We depart Saint Martin Vesubie after breakfast. A stunning drive, following the Route des Grandes Alpes, takes us over a pass at 1607m before descending along a gorge to the historic town of **Sospel**, an important stopping point on the Salt Route in the Middle Ages. Time to explore the town before we continue our journey, driving along the Roya valley to the village of La Brigue. An easy hike takes us on a pretty trail to the remote church of Notre Dame des Fontaines. Enjoy a picnic

before visiting this lovely church with wonderful 15th century frescoes. In the afternoon we drive through the Tende Tunnel into Italy where we stay in **Limone Piemonte**, a popular ski resort in winter. We stay for 3 nights at the **Grand Hotel Principe**: a four-star hotel with an outdoor pool. Dinner is in the hotel restaurant this evening. **(5 km/3 miles)**

DAY 5

We hike in one of the less visited areas of the Maritime Alps National Park, starting out from a quaint village with pretty stone houses. Our trail touches on the **Grande Traversata delle Alpi**, a high mountain trail that unites the whole Alpine arc of Piemonte. On this day there is no vehicle access at lunch so your guides will hike the picnic in for you. Dinner in a popular local restaurant specialising in mountain cuisine. **(13 km/8 miles)**



DAY 6



A short drive takes us from our hotel to the Tende pass at 1800m. A stunning hike criss-crosses the once hostile border between France and Italy, passing a series of formidable 19th century forts. Enjoy views across the mountain peaks of the Mercantour and Maritime Alps. Hike through a patchwork of meadows of wild flowers and pastures grazed by herds of sheep. Dinner in a wonderful restaurant in the heart of Limone. **(12 km/7.6 miles)**

DAY 7

We depart Limone after breakfast and drive to **Cuneo**, one of the most important regional cities in Piedmont. Enjoy a cooking class of local specialities followed by a relaxed lunch where we dine on the fruits of our labour matched to some excellent local wines. After lunch we check in to our hotel, the [Palazzo Lovera](#), in the centre of the city. Later in the day we follow the local tradition of an apéritif in a popular bar with a selection of local bar snacks. The rest of the evening is at leisure.



DAY 8



Our final hike explores the pretty **Val di Pesio**, which is a short drive from Cuneo, and we pass the former Charterhouse en route to our hike. This short hike takes us past waterfalls and up through woods to alpine meadows. We enjoy a picnic at the end of the hike. In the afternoon we visit the impressive **Santuario di Vicoforte**, built by Duke Carlo Emanuele of Savoy in the 16th century, which boasts the largest elliptical dome in the world. Time to explore Cuneo before dinner in a fabulous local restaurant. **(6 km/3.8 miles)**

DAY 9

We return to central **Turin** for 11am. The drop-off point is Hotel Concord, Via Lagrange, near Porta Nuova train station, and then on Turin airport for 12 pm.

Walking

Shortest day: 5km/3miles

Longest day: 16km/9.8miles

There are 6 days of hiking on this tour and although many of the distances are short there is a significant amount of ascent and descent, so a good level of fitness is required. These are mountainous regions and on most days we hike at altitudes between 1000m and 2500m. Therefore, it is essential to be prepared for adverse and changeable weather conditions. 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. We recommend that you arrive with all your equipment as opportunities to buy items along the route are limited. To see how we grade the walking we have a [simple comparison](#) of all our tours, taking into account ascents/descents, distances and terrain.

Weather

Although the weather in late spring is generally mild with average temperatures in the low 20s we hike at altitudes between 1000m and 2,500m so it is important to be prepared for sudden changes in temperature and weather conditions.

Useful links to our website

[Nice](#) City Page

[Turin](#) City Page

[Cooking Cuneo](#) Blog Post

[Salt Route](#) Blog Post

See all our [Tour Dates](#) for this and other tours

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