

VAL D'AOSTA AND GRAN PARADISO NATIONAL PARK – 8 DAYS

Small group guided walk through Alpine meadows with views to the Mont Blanc Massif



Explore alpine meadows filled with flowers and enjoy spectacular views of Europe's highest mountain - Mont Blanc - and the majestic peaks of the Italian Alps. Following in the footsteps of Visit ancient castles and follow the routes of the Romans, medieval pilgrims and Napoleon Bonaparte discover alpine fauna in their natural habitat and enjoy the fabulous hospitality and delicious cuisine of this the smallest region of Italy.

Departs: 4th – 11th July 2010

Cost: \$4495 per person Single supplement \$615

What is included?

- Luxurious accommodation for 7-nights in **4-star hotels** each with spa facilities
- **Experienced and knowledgeable guides**
- **All meals** including dinner in a variety of **superb restaurants** delicious local wines and **gourmet picnic lunches** each day and snacks en route
- **Support vehicle**, enabling you to walk as little or as much of the trail as you please
- **Transport to / from Turin** in air-conditioned minibus

Suggested itinerary:

The tour starts and ends in Turin (the nearest international airport is Milan and we can help you to arrange transfers from there if required). We base ourselves in two towns in the Aosta Valley, Bard at 350m and Cogne at 1550m. Most of the walking is at an altitude of between 1500m and 2500m. Nevertheless it is a walking holiday and not a climbing expedition so no technical skills whatsoever are required. Where possible we make use of chairlifts and cable cars to take us to the best areas for walking.

Sunday

Meet Turin Train Station at 11.30pm or Turin Airport 12.30pm. 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. We stay in a delightful hotel with spa facilities for the next 4 nights. Welcome drink and dinner in the hotel restaurant. (6km)

Monday

We drive up the valley towards Cervinia and take a cable car and chair lift high up above the tree line. We walk down through flower-filled pastures, stopping en route to enjoy a delicious picnic lunch, to the small village of Chamois. Later in the day we visit the dramatic fortress at Bard, which played a crucial part in Napoleon's advance into Italy in 1800, overlooking our hotel. (5km)

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations

Tuesday

Today we explore the remote Gressoney valley with its fascinating Walser heritage. We 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 visit the fairytale castle of Queen Margherita of Savoy, Queen of Italy in the early 20th century. (6km)

Wednesday

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 past beautiful lakes encircled by snow-covered peaks and enjoy stunning views down into the valley as we descend. (7km)

Thursday

Today we leave Bard. In the morning we visit a small producer of the famous Lardo d'Arnad to learn about the intricate process involved in making this renowned delicacy. After a tasty lunch of local specialties we continue up the valley to the regional capital of Aosta. Time to visit the town and see many of the important Roman monuments. In the afternoon we drive to Cogne, the gateway to the Grand Paradiso National Park where we stay in a historic family-run hotel set amongst lush pastures in the heart of the village.

Friday

This morning we take a cable car above the village to 2081m. A small trail leads around Mont Seuc offering spectacular views of the village, the peak of the Gran Paradiso at 4061m and the Mont Blanc Massif in the distance. We return to the valley by cable car and are welcomed at a characteristic *Baita* for a barbecue lunch. Opportunity to walk along the pretty Valnontey valley in the afternoon. (3km + 4km)

Saturday

We start our walk at the pretty village of Gimillan (1788m). We follow the river valley, passing shepherds' huts and tiny hamlets – accessible only by foot. The peace is only disturbed by the chimes of the cowbells as they savour the lush grass of the hills. Picnic by a pristine mountain lake before descending once again to Gimillan. Final dinner at the hotel's Michelin-starred restaurant. (6.5km)

Sunday

Return to Turin Airport for 11 o'clock.

Walking

Shortest day: 6km Longest day: 7km

There are 6 days of walking on the trip. We walk on well-graded mountain paths, woodland tracks and quiet tarmac roads. Although the distances are short there is more ascent and descent than on our other tours. The Val d'Aosta is a mountainous region and on several days we hike at an altitude of 2000m or more. Nevertheless, it is mountain walking not climbing. Where possible we make use of chairlifts and cable cars to take us to the best areas for walking. 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 recommended, especially on steeper sections. These can be purchased locally – although not on the first day of the tour.

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.

Temperature: Min. 14°C - Max. 28°C

Monthly Rainfall: 50mm

Contact **Outdoor Travel** for more details and reservations:

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