

DISCOVERING THE VAL MAIRA ON SNOWSHOES

Snowshoeing in an authentic Piedmont valley



Not far from us, just across the border, lies a very secret valley: the Val Maira.

This Piedmontese region of the Southern Alps has managed to preserve its authenticity, its traditions and above all the extraordinary character of its hilltop villages, made of stone, larch and lauze roofs. This is one of the jewels in the crown that we invite you to discover... Here, there are no ski resorts, no blocks of flats, no major infrastructure, just unspoilt nature where larches, chamois and ptarmigan are king.

Leaving from comfortable accommodation in the valley, we'll set off on a snowshoe hike through the immaculate alpine meadows, contrasting with the deep grey of the alpine sheepfolds and the sheer cliffs that surround this magnificent Val Maira.

In the evening, the smell of antipasti will awaken your taste buds... In these high valleys, they know how to dine. Another valley in the Southern Alps that you really must discover in winter.

🕒 6 Days

👤 Guided / with a guide

🧳 With or without luggage transportation

🏠 Accommodation : Inn

🏔️ Level : **

💰 From : 960€

You will like

- The authentic character of the valley
- A typical cuisine
- A unique architectural and natural heritage
- Comfortable inn with traditional architecture

The route

Day 1

MEETIN AT MONTDAUPHIN-GUILLESTRE AND TRANSFER TO THE FRANCO-ITALIAN BORDER

Meet at Guillestre - Montdauphin SNCF station at 9.30am on Sunday morning.

Your guide will pick you up with a minibus to take you to the upper Ubaye valley, on the border with the Val Maïra, to 'touch' the French side of this small territory (and then it will cut the journey in half!).

From the Col de Larche, we'll head up the Vallon d'Oronaye and its perched lakes (frozen in winter) to reach the border if possible. We'll take the same route down to the col, where we'll catch the bus back to Val Maïra (another 1.5 hours on the road!).

5 hours walk / Elevation: +/- 500m

Day 2

THE VALLON DE CHIAPPERA

Starting from a village nestled deep in the mountains and overlooked by an imposing limestone tower refuge for chamois, eagles and lammergeiers, our route begins in a surprisingly calm and soothing atmosphere on the banks of a languidly meandering river. But soon the slope steepens, the mountains close in and we're in a very Alpine setting. After a final effort to cross a glacier lock, we find the river meandering around white dunes. This desert of snow is home to a few alpine chalets that have fallen asleep for a long winter, but will wake up as soon as the sun comes up. The return journey is made under the sombre but benevolent huge cliff that seems to protect the village.

5.30 hours walk / Elevation: +/-650m

Day 3

THE LAGO NERO

We start this day at the end of the Vallée de Preit, a small valley adjoining the Val Maira. Here too, the sheer number of dwellings, in places as unlikely as these high valleys, leaves you wondering. These villages seem to have remained frozen in another era, another time.

The route takes us gently upwards along a path that winds its way towards the mountain pastures. Then we pass between two cliffs that guard the entrance to the valley that leads to Lago Nero. While the area is very round, the same cannot be said for the Rocca Meja, an imposing dolomitic spur that seems to be pointing out the midday sun. On the other side, Monte Viso sits proudly at 3841m, and we know that no one in the area will steal the title of highest summit from it. The return journey takes us along a different path on a different slope, past more alpine chalets, once again demonstrating the tireless and surprising desire to develop the mountain.

5.30 hours walk / Elevation: +/- 600 m

Day 4

COL OF MONT FESTA

Numerous small hamlets have sprung up on the sun-drenched slopes, where the soil is good and there are plenty of water sources. Human activity flourished in the springtime of this calm and peaceful valley. Even today, while the place seems to have gone to sleep for ever, a few die-hards are still sowing their seeds and perpetuating the agro-pastoral activities of their ancestors. Today's route takes us through a beautiful larch forest inhabited by woodpeckers, roe deer and red deer. The Mont Festa pass gives us an idea of where we stand in the vastness of the Alpine chain. The return journey is just as leisurely as the ascent and takes us to other hamlets built of stone and larch timber, which are as well preserved as ever.

6 hours walk / Elevation: +/- 600m

Day 5

MONTE CIARBONET

From Sarreto, a track takes us up to the campsite, a popular holiday destination for the people of Turin, then we make

rapid progress along a path lined with fir and spruce trees. Here again, the many signs of wildlife indicate that the area is particularly rich in game. As we climb, the larch trees take over and the forest clears, revealing the surrounding landscape of cliffs and peaks topping out at around 3000m.

One more effort and we reach the Col Ciarbonet, where we can enjoy the view of the Aiguilles de Chambeyron, one of the highest peaks in the nearby Haute Ubaye. A peaceful descent into the valley on a very open slope, allowing us to take advantage of the often generous sunshine in the southern Alps and the increasingly low-angled light that enhances the beauty of this small country.

6.30 hours walk / Elevation: +/- 750m

Day 6

MONT CIABERT

From Chialvetta, a very Alpine valley climbs up towards France. Our itinerary for the day quickly leaves this path, which once enabled trade between the two countries, and heads for the more secretive, wooded valleys that once provided good grass for the local herds of sheep and cattle. After a well-earned break at a mountain pasture chalet, we set off again to conquer one of the surrounding peaks, the gradient increasing as we climbed but remaining accessible to all. Arriving at the summit of Mont Ciabert, the reward is, as so often, equal to our effort, with the giant Mont Viso revealing its southern flank. But the view goes much further in the direction of the Piedmontese capital, Turin, and its million inhabitants, which are hard to imagine being so close, as the Val Maira has remained wild and untouched by tourism. Some of the way back is via another, slightly more fun route, with a few slides in store.

5.30 de marche / Dénivelé : +/- 650m

Return to Montdauphin station (3 h 30), at around 7 pm to catch the night train (possibility of an extra night in Montdauphin).

The programme has been prepared on the basis of the latest information available at the time of writing; unforeseen circumstances are always possible and situations beyond our control may alter the programme.

The trip

LEVEL **

Elevation : between 600m to 750m, up to 12km of walk
Walking time : in average 5 to 6.5 hours per day.

This trip is organised in collaboration with our local partners, who are as committed as we are to providing you with an authentic experience.

GUIDING

Group between 5 and 14 people supervised by a qualified mountain leader.

ACCOMMODATION

You'll be staying at the Locanda Ceaglio in the heart of a small village in the upper Val Maira valley. A typical Italian hamlet, transformed into a guest house for you. Fulvia and Alberto will welcome you to this small, comfortable village. All the rooms have been renovated in keeping with the charm of the local architecture (stone, wood, etc.).

You will be accommodated in rooms of 2 with en-suite facilities. Exceptionally in mixed rooms or rooms of 3.

A sauna is available and included in the price of your tour.
A large equipment room for storing and drying your gear.

MEALS

As well as the sumptuous scenery, the Val Maira will surprise you with the quality of its cuisine... Hearty meals, meticulous cooking with the smell of antipasti, all good products from the valley to treat your taste buds and 're-energise' you after a magnificent day's activity.

At breakfast, a varied buffet will give you all the energy you need to make the most of your activities in the snow. Picnics are prepared by your guide, and provisions are provided. He or she will take advantage of your return from the hikes to glean some cheese or local charcuterie.

TRANSFERS

Transfers are by minibus. Few transfers on site, but access to Val Maira requires more than 3 hours' driving.

Important: one of the participants may be asked to drive one of the organisation's vehicles to complete the group's transfers.

Practical information

ACCESS TO DEPARTURE POINT

Meet and greet at 9.30am at Montdauphin-Guillestre SNCF station, where you will be met by your guide and the rest of the group. **Be prepared, in hiking clothes, with your water bottle or thermos full.**

BY CAR

From Grenoble, 2 routes are possible to go to Guillestre :

- Via Gap
- Via the Lautaret mountain pass and Briançon.

To plan your journey, please visit : www.viamichelin.fr or www.mappy.fr

Beware : Izoard, Agnel and Galibier's mountain passes are closed during the winter. Some websites or GPS will guide you this way but this is impossible. Also, do not take the Fréjus' tunnel or Oulx which are much longer and more expensive. Please call 04 92 24 44 44 (answerphone) to know if the mountain pass is open.

BY TRAIN

TGV to Valence or Marseille station, and transfer by TER train to Valence or Marseille then to Montdauphin-Guillestre station.

Consult the [SNCF](http://www.sncf.fr) website to know or check the schedules.

Possibility of arriving the day before by day train and staying overnight by the station:

- Hôtel Lacour (from €60 per room), reservation: <https://hotellacour.com/>
- L'auberge d'Eygliers (from €66 per room), booking: <https://www.aubergeeygliers.com/>
- We will also be delighted to welcome you to our 'base camp' in the Queyras (30km), half-board in a shared room from €60/person). You'll need to take the Zou shuttle bus (less than €3) under the Queyras sign to the Ville Vieille bus station, then call us for a pick-up. The next day you'll leave directly from the Chalet with your guide, who will have come to check the equipment

End of tour on Day 6 at 7pm at Montdauphin-Guillestre.

INSURANCE

In accordance with regulations, we are covered by Professional Liability Insurance. Under no circumstances, we can replace your personal civil liability. The repatriation insurance EUROP ASSISTANCE that we offer is dedicated to French speaking people living in Europe. If it is not your case, we advise you to subscribe to another travel insurance which will cover you in case of injury and repatriation during your trek.

If you chose to take out repatriation insurance with EUROP ASSISTANCE whom we propose, Altitude Mont Blanc will only serve as an intermediary between the client and the insurer. We cannot influence either party. We adhere to strict conditions of sale. You are responsible for compliance with the reporting procedures of any incident.

Before making any decision, contact EUROP ASSISTANCE.

CONTACT US

If you are late please let us know as soon as possible : **+33 (0)4 50 79 09 16** or **+33 (0)6 42 49 76 07**

Dates & prices

Optional extras:

Accommodation in a single room for 5 nights: **€200** per person (subject to availability).

From 29/12/24 To 03/01/25	Open departure	960 €
From 12/01/25 To 17/01/25	Open departure	960 €
From 19/01/25 To 24/01/25	Guaranteed departure	960 €
From 26/01/25 To 31/01/25	Guaranteed departure	960 €
From 02/02/25 To 07/02/25	Guaranteed departure	960 €
From 09/02/25 To 14/02/25	Guaranteed departure	960 €
From 16/02/25 To 21/02/25	Guaranteed departure	960 €
From 23/02/25 To 28/02/25	Guaranteed departure	960 €
From 02/03/25 To 07/03/25	Guaranteed departure	960 €
From 09/03/25 To 14/03/25	Guaranteed departure	960 €

THE PRICE

Includes :

- Luggage transport;
- Organisation and registration fees;
- Supervision by a qualified mountain leader;
- Loan of snowshoes, poles and safety equipment;
- Full-board accommodation, excluding drinks;
- Registration and organisation fees;
- Tourist tax.

Does not include:

- Return journey from your home to the meeting point and back;
- Cancellation assistance insurance (4.2% of the price of the trip);
- Personal expenses: drinks, visits, etc...

The price is all inclusive from departure to end point.

Equipment and luggage

EQUIPMENT LIST

Material for snowshoeing (snowshoes and poles) is provided. However, if you have your own and would like to use them you are free to do so. Avalanche safety equipment including (transceiver, shovel and probe) is also provided.

Clothing

- Warm woollen socks. Avoid tennis socks (cotton), which take a long time to dry and carry a high risk of blisters; prefer Coolmax or wool socks.
- Gaiters ;
- Waterproof hiking boots;
- Shoes for relaxing in the evening (tennis shoes) and after skiing;
- Waterproof mountain or ski trousers or overalls;
- Carline-type thermal tights;
- Warm, breathable T-shirt or underwear. Avoid cotton, which takes a long time to dry, prefer synthetic materials such as nylon (polypropene);
- Warm jumper or fleece;
- Gore-tex jacket;
- Warm hat and balaclava in silk or fleece;
- Pair of silk or fleece mittens and gloves (to be used under the mittens);
- Spare pair of mittens or gloves:
- Indoor clothing;
- Swimming costume.

Other Equipment:

- Effective sun protection (filtering sunglasses and protective cream) must be carried in the rucksack;
- Earplugs to protect against snoring;
- Light toiletries;
- Toilet paper (for hikes) and tissues;
- Bath towel;
- A large plastic bag to protect the inside of your bag in case of rain;
- Insulated water bottle (minimum 1.5 litres);
- Torch;
- Opinel-type folding knife, a 300ml waterproof plastic can such as Tupperware, spoon;
- Camera;
- Personal first-aid kit: A personal first-aid kit to treat muscular fatigue, digestive problems caused by cold and altitude, blisters, your usual medicines, elastic adhesive tape (elastoplast: 5 cm x 2.5 m), sets of adhesive dressings, compresses, etc.

LUGGAGE TRANSPORT

Your bag is returned to you each evening :

1 - The rucksack :

A hiking rucksack with a capacity of around 40 litres that can be used to hang your snowshoes. It will be useful for carrying your personal belongings during the day.

2 - The large, flexible travel bag:

This should hold the rest of your belongings. You'll find it every evening. It will be transported by vehicles

Details

HOW TO REGISTER

- By internet: <http://www.altitude-montblanc.com>

- By telephone: +33 (0)4 50 79 09 16

- By post: Please provide your details

- Surname, First Name, Date of birth
- Address
- Email
- Telephone
- Mobile

If you wish to register by post, please complete the form below and return it to:

Altitude Mont-Blanc
180, route du lac
74110 MONTRIOND
FRANCE

Please specify whether you wish to take out an optional cancellation insurance (4.2% of the tour price).

On receipt of your registration we will email an invoice (per couple) with a request for a deposit of 30% in association with your account details at Altitude Mont-Blanc ('My Account'). Payment can be made by credit card, bank transfer or by cheque. On receipt of your deposit you will receive a registration confirmation.
The balance must be paid one month before departure without a reminder from us.
For self-guided tours, we will then send your tour pack (inc. maps, descriptive book etc.)

Our terms and conditions of sale can be found on our website.

Do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Registration by mail form

Last name:

First name:

Date of birth:

Address:

Phone number:

Mobile phone number:

Email address:

Requested tour:

Number of days:

Insurance:

Price:

x 30% =

Deposit

Locality where signed:

Date

Signature:

Return with your deposit to:
Altitude Mont-Blanc, 62 Passage du Nant Devant, 74110 Montriond, FRANCE