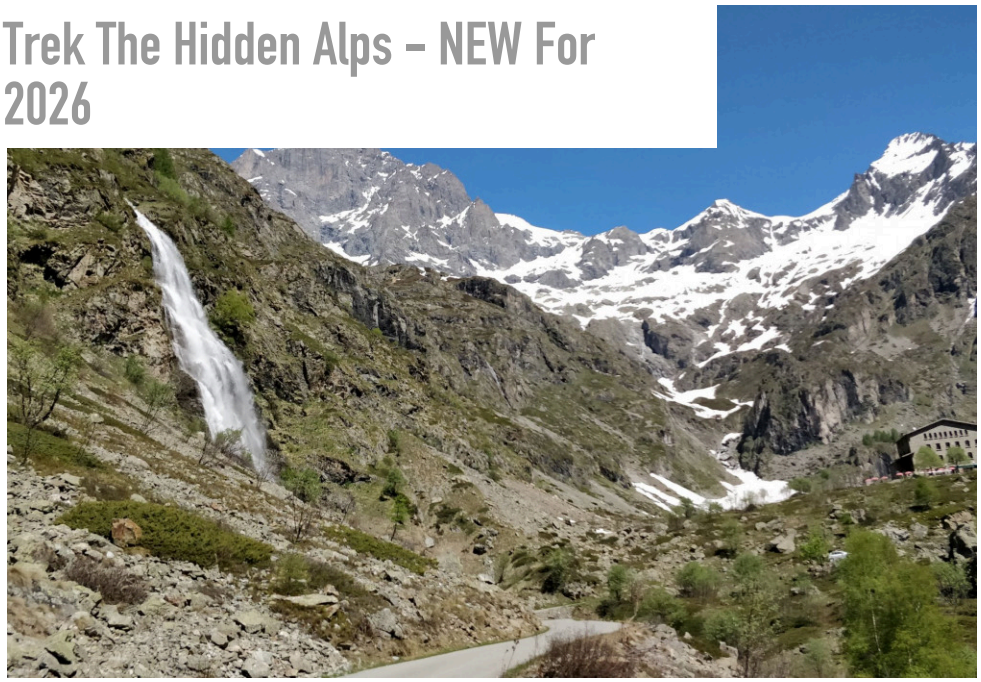
FRANCE

Trek The Hidden Alps – NEW For 2026







ACTIVITY	ACCOMMODATION	CHALLENGE FACTORS	DURATION:	GRADE
Trek	Communal	Terrain	6 days	

The French Alps boast rugged, adventurous trekking and some of the most awe-inspiring wild scenery imaginable - all within a short hop from the UK! This challenging trek takes us to Écrins National Park, a high mountain zone in the southern Alps. This beautiful region is known for its quiet hamlets where traditions still thrive, and is quieter than many popular trekking areas, allowing you to fully immerse yourself in the natural alpine beauty without the crowds.

We trek a challenging route through three contrasting valleys in the southern French Alps, surrounded by spectacular vistas of towering jagged peaks, tumbling waterfalls, and fertile green valleys. We stay in refuges each night, carrying our own kit as there's no road access. We finish at a hotel with neighbouring spa – a great reward for testing your stamina and determination on this physically demanding but unforgettable trek!

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1: Fly London to Lyon; transfer to refuge

We fly to Lyon and transfer to our refuge at the end of the dramatic Valgaudemar Valley. There are fantastic views of the snow-capped mountains of the Écrins National Park, most of them towering over 3000m, and the beautiful *Cascade du Voile de la Mariée* (bride's veil waterfall) falling roughly 120m in multiple stages down the mountainside. You can relax and enjoy these views from the sun terrace, or if there's time, have a wander in the surrounding area. We'll gather for a trip briefing and dinner before preparing our kit for tomorrow's big adventure. Night refuge (1642m).

Drive approx. 2.5-3 hours

(Lunch not included)

Day 2: Refuge du Gioberney – Refuge du Vallonpierre

The Valgaudemar Valley is 22-km long and lined with rugged, pristine peaks towering over 3000m. Its rugged, wild scenery has earned it the nickname of 'the Himalayas of Europe,' and today's walk will immerse us in landscapes of glaciers and snow-capped mountains, colourful alpine meadows and fast-flowing rivers. A relatively gentle start to our mountain trek takes us below the grand cirque and hanging glaciers, before a steep climb brings us to a high mountain plateau with a small lake. Night refuge (2271m).

Trek approx. 4-5 hours; 10km (total ascent 780m / descent 104m)

Day 3: Refuge du Vallonpierre – Pré de la Chaumette

Today the challenge ramps up, as we cross three mountain passes, including the Col de Vallonpierre, the highest point on our trek at 2655m. We descend from this high pass into the Champoleon Valley. While it's a strenuous day with steep gradients at times, this is one of the wildest parts of our hiking route and will be a highlight of the trek for many of us. There is no civilisation close by, and this wide valley is much more tranquil than many alpine valleys, so keep your binoculars handy for spotting some of the local wildlife, such as chamois, ibex and marmots. Our third climb, the Col de la Valette, brings us to our refuge. Night refuge (1810m)

Trek approx. 5-7 hours; 11.5km (total ascent 652m / descent 1134m)

Day 4: Pré de la Chaumette – Refuge du Tourond

A less taxing day today, which gives us the opportunity to further discover this beautiful valley. A gentle climb takes us up, before we can drop down out of the high mountains and back into another area of the large Champoleon Valley, where a very pretty walk amidst lovely scenery awaits. This lower-level walk is very pretty and more relaxing than the high, more remote elevations we've come from, and adds even more variety. After a warm welcome at the refuge, we should have some time free to relax or take a refreshing dip in one of the streams – and there are more walking options if you aren't tired! Night refuge (1712m).

Trek approx. 5-6 hours; 13.5km (total ascent 374m / descent 486m)

Day 5: Refuge du Tourond – Chaillol

Another challenging day awaits, but we will hopefully be feeling refreshed after a gentler day yesterday! Our trail takes us past the beautiful La Pisse waterfall, working our way up through woods and open mountainside to the Col de la Venasque (2478m). It's steep and strenuous at times, but the views from the top are just rewards! We can enjoy fantastic views over the fertile Champsaur Valley, and the high peak of Vieux Chaillol (3163m), as well as the village of Chaillol, where we're heading. We then drop down into the valley, home to rolling hills, ancient villages, and cultivated fields criss-crossed with hedgerows. Our auberge tonight has a neighbouring spa (optional) – a great way to celebrate the end of this unforgettable week! Night hotel.

Trek approx. 6-8 hours; 13.5km (total ascent 845m / descent 951m)

Day 6: Depart Lyon

After breakfast, we say our farewells to the mountains, and transfer to Lyon Airport for our homebound flight.

Drive approx. 2.5-3 hours

(Lunch not included)

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Return flights from London to Lyon
- All known airline taxes
- All transfers as part of itinerary
- All accommodation in hotel (twinshare) and mountain refuges
- All meals except where specified
- Discover Adventure crew (number dependent on group size)
- Local mountain guide(s)
- In country support and back-up equipment
- Entry to any sites included in itinerary
- **We offset 100% of the carbon emissions from your trip, including flights booked with us**

WHAT'S EXCLUDED

- Travel insurance
- Any meals specified 'not included' in the itinerary
- Personal spending money, souvenirs & drink, and tips for the local support crew
- Fees for any optional sites, attractions or activities (eg spa)
- Any applicable surcharges as per Terms and Conditions

GRADE | ORANGE

All our trips are designed to provide a challenge. Trips are graded Yellow, Orange or Red, in increasing level of challenge. This trip lies within the **ORANGE** range.



The grade is determined by factors such as terrain, distance, climate, altitude, etc. Each colour grade has a **spectrum** which reflects the difficulty of these factors. Trip duration, accommodation and living conditions are also taken into account. Some sections will feel more challenging than others, but the grade reflects the overall trip. Unusual weather conditions can also have a significant impact.

The Accommodation icon indicates the living conditions while trekking/cycling. While there are usually several factors that present a challenge, the Challenge icon indicates the trip's most challenging element, for most people.

Trip grading explained

CHALLENGE INFORMATION

DETAILED INFORMATION

Leaders & Trip Support

Your trip will be led by experienced Discover Adventure leaders. Our leaders are selected for their experience in harsh wilderness environments, knowledge of travel in remote areas, friendliness and approachability, sense of humour and ability to safely and effectively deal with any situation that arises. They are also trained in expedition first aid. You are in very safe hands with a Discover Adventure leader. Usually leaders are based in the UK or other English-speaking countries and lead for us regularly throughout the year in many different countries. In some instances, trips are led by in-country guides with a wealth of knowledge about the region; they have been trained by us to provide the level of support expected on a Discover Adventure trip.

Trip Doctor

An expedition doctor or medic accompanies the group (dependent on group size.) Their role is to look after the well-being of the whole group and deal with any medical incidents. They help the crew to ensure the trip runs smoothly, and encourage you when things get tough. The total number of crew looking after you will depend on the final size of your group.

Local Support Crew

Our local support crew is made up of local guides, assisted by drivers, porters, cooks and other support staff, depending on the type of trip. Local guides know the area well, and are a great source of knowledge about local lifestyles. The Discover Adventure crew work closely with the local crew to ensure your trip runs smoothly and safely. In some destinations we work together as a team with local guides to help set up or break camp, or prepare meals. Your leader will arrange a collection of tips for the local support crew at the end of your trek, and you will be provided with a guideline amount in advance. Tipping is not obligatory, but once you see how hard they work on your behalf you will be happy to donate something!

Trip Safety

Your safety, and that of the rest of the group, is our highest priority. Our trips are designed and planned with safety in mind. Your crew will be equipped with appropriate communication devices (eg phones, radios), medical kit and other safety apparatus appropriate to the destination. Our leaders always have access to our 24-hour emergency UK back-up. They are responsible for safety on the trip, and will make any changes to the itinerary they deem necessary, should local conditions dictate. Pre-trip administration - such as medical questionnaires and travel insurance as appropriate - is all done with your safety in mind.

Flight Information

Group flights usually leave from London Heathrow or Gatwick but may also depart from regional airports, and are booked through Discover Adventure Ltd under ATOL licence 5636. You will usually receive confirmed flight details several months before departure. We do not always use the same airline for each destination and low cost airlines may be used for short haul flights. If you wish to know the probable carrier and flight times, please call for details.

By travelling with Discover Adventure you are protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). Our itineraries are always based on current flight schedules and are therefore subject to change by the airline. If you prefer to book your own flights please ask us for a land-only cost.

Accommodation

Accommodation is in mountain refuges and an auberge (small hotel). Mountain refuges are situated among beautiful, dramatic scenery; some have a sun terrace to enjoy the views. They are clean, comfortable and friendly, but be prepared for some basic conditions due to their remote locations. Sleeping arrangements are dormitory-style. We endeavour to use smaller rooms and keep them single-sex, but please be aware this may not always be possible, especially at busy times.

Roomshare Arrangements

Our trips are sold on a shared accommodation basis. Some nights are usually twin-share. On some nights we are likely to sleep in more communal rooms such as dormitories, huts, local homestays, etc., depending on the trip, and you may be sharing with a larger number of participants or the whole group; this type of accommodation cannot always be single-sex.
You can tell us if you are travelling with someone else on the trip when you book or within your passenger portal, and we will do all we can to accommodate this request. It is important that each person completes the room share request on their bookings. For customers booking and travelling together, including same-sex couples, a double bed can be requested if available.
If you're not familiar with anyone in the group, rest assured, we always pair you with someone of the same gender (as per the information you provided when booking, or passport markers), and a similar age where possible. We're actively working to improve our system's gender restrictions to be more inclusive, and we've recently made significant strides in this area. If you identify differently from the gender marker on your passport and would like to discuss this before booking, please feel free to reach out to us.

Single Supplements

In most standard hotels, we can usually offer a limited number of single rooms. This is upon request, on a first-come, first-served basis, and additional charges apply. In more communal accommodation, single rooms are rarely an option. We do not charge a single supplement if you are a solo traveller in a shared room.

Food & Dietary Requirements

The food provided is plentiful, often local in style and freshly-cooked, and will give you plenty of energy. Sometimes we enjoy a buffet-style lunch-stop, other times we might have packed lunches. On some trips we stop at small local restaurants. Dinners are generally eaten at our accommodation each evening. In some regions there may be less variety than you are used to, and in others fresh meat or produce can be harder to come by. Any meals not included are listed in the itinerary and are generally on travel / free days, giving you the opportunity to explore and try other culinary experiences! There is always something to suit different budgets.

Being vegetarian or having other dietary requirements is not usually a problem provided you let us know well in advance. Please do not expect as much variety as you would have access to at home – we may be in very rural or remote areas, or among people of a different culture who may not understand your requirements, however willing they are to help. If you know there are plenty of foods you cannot eat we strongly recommend you bring extra snacks from home so you can top up your energy supply. Please feel free to ask us for advice.

Luggage

There is no road access once we start trekking, so, in addition to what you would expect to carry during a full day of trekking, you will also need to carry a few overnight items - but bedding is provided in the refuges, so this is quite manageable. Your main luggage will be transported by road to meet you at the auberge on the last night. You will receive plenty of packing advice in your Kitlist, and during the trip briefing at the start of the trip.

PREPARING FOR THE CHALLENGE

Challenge Grading

GRADE | ORANGE

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Trip grading explained

Fitness Levels

This is designed to be a challenge, and it is vital that you train sufficiently for it. We will supply you with a thorough training guide once you have registered. We expect all participants to train hard in advance, but we respect everyone's limits and do not expect everyone to maintain the same pace. Inadequate training is likely to have an impact not just on your chances of completing the challenge, but enjoying it too - and we want you to have the time of your life!

Our challenges attract people of all levels of experience, fitness and ability as well as all ages and backgrounds. We design our challenges so that everyone can go at their own pace: this is not a race. If you have concerns about your fitness or if you have reduced mobility please do contact us for a confidential chat about whether this challenge is appropriate for you.

For logistical and safety reasons we sometimes need to re-group, so the front-runners may find themselves waiting for the slower ones. Please relax, and remember that this is a team effort that enables people to achieve their personal goals and earn sponsorship.

Terrain

Terrain varies from wide valley paths to narrow, rocky ridges exposed to the wind and weather. The trek traverses valleys so is very hilly, with some demanding sections. Distances are relatively short, but you'll be carrying all kit between refuges, which adds to the challenge. This is remote alpine country which should not be under-estimated. There is no road access, so we strongly recommend you are well-prepared with a good level of fitness, and gain experience walking in rough terrain before your trip.

Clothing & Kit

We plan our trips around the optimal weather conditions, but could still be exposed to bad weather at any time. It is vital you are prepared for all conditions. We provide you with a detailed packing kit-list on registration, with plenty of information, and we are always available if you need advice.

Passport & Visa / Vaccinations

Entry requirements vary depending on your destination and nationality. It is your responsibility to ensure your passport is valid, and any visas are obtained in good time. Check the FCO's advice on entry requirements for your destination to be sure. Please ensure you allow plenty of time to apply for your visa; we will provide you will all necessary information 6 weeks prior to depature to assist with your application.

Your routine UK schedule of vaccinations should be up-to-date (especially tetanus). We recommend you check the NaTHNaC Travel Health Pro website for further details. You should always check with a GP or travel clinic for up-to-date travel health advice as it does change.

Foreign Travel Advice

For the latest travel advice from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office including security and local laws, plus passport and visa information, check www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice.

Travel Insurance

Travel Insurance is compulsory on all of our challenges outside of the UK; we strongly suggest that you arrange insurance cover as soon as your booking with us is confirmed, or as soon as you're able to purchase some, and at least 8 months prior to travel. Should you need to cancel prior to departure, you will need insurance to cover the costs involved (registration fee and any trip costs depending on cancellation date).

We all hope never to need it, and thankfully most of the time we don't, but on those rare occasions when you do, you want it to cover you as best it can. Whilst it's a fairly boring admin task relating to your trip of a lifetime, it is really important you ensure that you have adequate cover for the type of challenge you are taking part in as well as medical emergencies, evacuation and repatriation, so make sure you're happy with the level of cover. There are lots of suppliers out there, with a wide range in levels of cover; generally speaking, you get what you pay for! Get and pay for the right level of cover and then you can go on your adventure not having to worry about the what-if's. For more details click here.

Once your travel insurance is arranged, just remember to let us know the policy number and 24-hr medical emergency phone number provided by your insurers.

Cancelling your booking

In the unfortunate circumstance that you need to cancel your booking, we would ask that you notify us in writing either by email or post. Your cancellation will be considered effective from the date the notice is received. Registration, administration and amendment fees are non refundable and, depending on your payment option and how close it is to your challenge departure date, you may be liable for a cancellation charge.

Full details of all cancellation charges may be found in the Terms and Conditions of booking.

Group Size

Your booking is part of a group challenge, and the tour costs and fundraising targets listed on our website are based on a minimum number of participants which is shown on the challenge Our typical groups run with approximately 15-25 participants; however you may find your group is smaller or larger than this.

We will confirm at least 12 weeks prior to departure that your challenge is guaranteed to run. Occasionally it may be possible to still run the challenge with less than the minimum numbers, subject to a small group supplement. If we think a small group supplement may be necessary, we will discuss this with you as soon as possible, usually 5 months before your departure date.

Minimum numbers and groups sizes may vary on Bespoke Charity challenges. If you are booked onto a bespoke challenge please contact your charity for full details.

Passenger Portal

We have a Passenger Portal which will give you more details of the challenge itself. It also enables you to see any

outstanding information we need, the countdown to your challenge departure, see your outstanding balance, make payments and update your contact details. You can access this via the following link - Passenger Portal Log in.

Independent Reviews 96%

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Discover Adventure reserves the right to change the route or itinerary for safety reasons should local conditions dictate.

Please note: This document was downloaded on 3 Nov 2026, and the challenge is subject to change.