DATA SHEET - RP97

The Bauges Massif : the hidden Alps
A multi-day hike in one of the wildest mountain ranges in the Alps!

6 days, 5 nights, 6 days hiking, A tailor-made itinerary by La Rébenne

Level: 4/5



Far from the iconic mountain ranges of the French Alps, nestled between Lake Bourget and Lake Annecy, the Bauges massif offers walkers the chance to immerse themselves in a vibrant, authentic and wild mountain landscape. Vibrant, first and foremost, because pastoral activity remains well established here, creating lush mountain pastures in the heart of deep forests of fir, spruce and beech. Authentic, secondly, because the region is opening up to tourism gradually, without major disruptions to the delicate balance characteristic of mountain areas. Untamed, without a doubt! A few villages and hamlets dot the landscape, but they give centre stage to unspoilt nature. The presence of chamois, mouflon, golden eagles and black grouse, in particular, bears witness to this.
Nevertheless, you can cross this mountain range entirely without using a car, no matter where you're coming from in France, thanks to the two main gateway towns: Annecy and Chambéry.
Why not let yourself be surprised?

Strengths

- A little-known mountain range with incredible charm!
- The alternation of sections through woodland and alpine pastures
- The many panoramic views of the peaks of the Northern Alps

- Easy to get to from Geneva or Lyon

SCHEDULE

undefined : Annecy - Semnoz : 7 km - 3h45 - Elevation: + 625 m - 20 m

The capital of Haute-Savoie welcomes us to mark the start of this trek across the Bauges massif. Annecy's reputation is well established: the crystal-clear waters of the lake reflecting the imposing Tournette, the River Thiou winding its way between the colourful, Italian-inspired façades… In short, a town we recommend you visit before setting off on your hike. 'Tackle' is the word… unless it's the Bauges that are tackling us! After a short drive (20 minutes), we set off to climb the Semnoz, a veritable citadel overlooking Lake Annecy. Upon reaching the summit, where we'll be spending the night, we'll open up an atlas of the Alps, on a scale of 1:1! Vanoise, Chartreuse, Beaufortain, Aravis, Belledonne… a host of mountain ranges reveal themselves. But the one that's sure to catch your eye is the one whose white ridge cuts sharply against the azure sky: smile, you're looking at Mont Blanc!

undefined : Semnoz - Bellecombe en Bauges : 16 km - 5h30 - Elevation: + 585 m - 1215 m

We wake up on the bare ridge of the Semnoz, where we once again take in the view as soon as we take our first steps of the morning. From these mountain pastures, we head down towards the heart of the Bauges. There are two possible routes, depending on your preference and how you're feeling that day. The easiest route takes us through a beautiful, wild valley, whilst the more 'challenging' one allows us to discover the Tours Saint Jacques – slender, monolithic rock formations overlooking the Chéran valley – and the Pont du Diable, one of the oldest structures in the massif.
First night in the heart of the Bauges massif, at the foot of the Roc des Bœufs. For this one night on the tour, we'll be staying in a mountain lodge (shared rooms – 3 to 7 beds per room).

undefined : Bellecombe en Bauges - Le Châtelard : 16 km - 5h - Elevation: + 555 m - 850 m

The cows on the Bornette mountain pastures will see us passing by early in the morning. Whether they are Tarines, Abondances or Montbéliardes, they are busy grazing on the lush, rich grass. In a few months' time, their milk will be used to make distinctive cheeses such as the famous Tome des Bauges and Margeriaz. Beneath the majestic Trélod (2,181 m), and once we've passed the Doucy gorge, we'll descend a small valley before reaching our hotel. We'll pass through the village of La Compôte and its famous grangettes (haylofts), a striking example of the rural heritage of the 'Bauges devant', the most mountainous part of the massif.

undefined : Le Châtelard - Aillon le Jeune : 17 km - 6h30 - Elevation: + 820 m - 660 m

Today's route takes us back up to higher ground beneath the Colombier, one of the '2000s' in the Bauges, with a passage over the Col de la Cochette, from where the view is splendid, particularly over the Belledonne range and the Combe de Savoie. A truly soothing mountain atmosphere. As an optional extra for the more enthusiastic, a round trip to the summit of Le Colombier is possible – precisely to cross that symbolic 2,000-metre mark! (+325m elevation gain, 1½ hours' walk in total). Descent to the little village of Aillon-le-Jeune for a well-deserved night's rest. If time permits, a short round trip to visit the Chartreuse d'Aillon, which has watched over the Baujus for 800 years! (+115m elevation gain, 2 hours' walk in total).
For this day's walk, a more accessible alternative route is available, which avoids the climb up to the Col de la Cochette and takes you past the Chartreuse d'Aillon (+2 km but -200m elevation gain).

undefined : Aillon le Jeune - Les Déserts : 14.5 km - 6h - Elevation: + 980 m - 960 m

An early morning climb up the Margériaz ridges, following a route that will allow us to discover the unique geology of the Bauges (designated a Geopark): a karst massif par excellence, it is a veritable Swiss cheese landscape. Numerous sinkholes ('tannes') and lapiaz form a rugged and utterly beautiful landscape. From the top of the ridge, the view is 360 degrees: from the foothills of the Jura mountains to the peaks of the Chartreuse, the Combe de Chambéry, the Belledonne range and the Maurienne and Tarentaise valleys – it's all there!

Descend from Margériaz towards the Combe des Déserts, either via a signposted route through the woodland or a slightly more secluded – and slightly more technical – path, where you'll need to get a bit hands-on.

undefined : Les Déserts - Chambéry : 15 km - 5h - Elevation: + 500 m - 1100 m

The final day of our complete traverse of the Bauges massif. There are three alternative routes from the little village of Les Déserts to the capital of Savoie. The first, and most challenging, takes us across the La Féclaz plateau, in the heart of the 'Bauges derrière', before climbing to the Croix du Nivolet (1,547 m), a veritable beacon for the people of Chambéry! The other two routes bypass the summit but still allow us to enjoy the coolness of the Combe de la Doriaz, and above all its two impressive waterfalls. These beautiful waterfalls will feel like a final gift from the Bauges massif, as we descend its final slopes to return to civilisation… Return by train (to Annecy in under an hour, or directly to your departure station), or by private shuttle to Annecy (subject to a quote).
Easy route: 12 km / 300 m elevation gain / 3½ hours' walk.
Intermediate route: 15 km / 500 m elevation gain / 5 hours' walk.
Challenging route: 20.5 km / 700 m elevation gain / 7 hours' walk.

TRAVEL CONDITIONS

Luggage :

Travel light – we'll take care of the rest!
Drop off your luggage before setting off in the morning; it will be waiting for you at your next stop. You'll only need to carry what you need for the day and your picnic. Luggage is transported by vehicle. Please allow one bag per person, weighing no more than 15 kg. One important detail: each bag must be labelled.

Formalities :

Identity documents: Bring a valid national identity card or passport, depending on your nationality. A visa may also be required.
Supporting documents: Please bring proof of medical insurance. If you are a citizen of a European country, remember to bring your European Health Insurance Card.
Travel insurance: We recommend taking out travel insurance covering medical expenses, assistance, repatriation and cancellation.

Departure and meeting point :

Departure from Annecy (74). The exact location will be provided in your invitation.
How to get there:
By car: Annecy is accessible via the motorway from anywhere in France. We can arrange a Chambéry–Annecy shuttle for you at the start or end of your trip. Please let us know your preference when you book.
By train: Annecy SNCF station. You can travel directly from Chambéry station at the end of your trip.
By plane: Geneva, Lyon St Exupéry or Chambéry Airports

Accommodation :

5 nights on half-board.
- One night in a "gîte d'étape": rooms contain between 3 and 7 beds, including double and single beds. The communal nature of this gîte does not mean it is any less comfortable; it allows you to sleep at altitude and enjoy a friendly atmosphere with other walkers. Sheets and towels are not provided (but blankets are). Please bring a sleeping bag liner.
- Four nights in 2- and 3-star hotels, based on two people per room (double room or twin room), with en-suite bathroom and toilet. Sheets and towels are provided.

Accompanying :

Self-guided:
You set off on your own, as a couple, with family or with friends. We take care of accommodation, meals and luggage transfers.
You have good hiking experience and know how to find your way using a map and a compass. From one stage to the next, you follow the GPS tracks, and where necessary the maps and guidebook that we have carefully prepared.
Travelling independently means hiking light, at your own pace, and fully enjoying the pleasures of nature without worrying about the logistics of your trip. It also means being free to interpret and imagine the stories told by the region you're passing through.
With a guide:
Discovering a region or a country, learning about its natural environment, its history, the lives of its inhabitants, and the relationship between humans and nature… mountain guides specialising in these regions are there to shed light on the world around you and bring the mountains to life.
The guides at LaRébenne are here to share their passion for the mountains with you.

Food :

Dinners and breakfasts are served at your accommodation. We take particular care to recommend stopover gîtes, guesthouse restaurants and local eateries that specialise in simple cuisine made with local produce.
Self guided version : lunch is not included. You can either order it from your accommodation provider or stock up at the few grocery shops along the route (we will indicate these in your travel documents).
Guided version : lunch is included and carefully prepared by your guide (or, in some cases, by the previous night's accommodation). Generally, the packed lunch consists of a cold salad with starchy foods and fresh vegetables, some cold meats, cheese, bread and a piece of fruit.

Advised equipment (non-exhaustive list) :

RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT TO BRING
As good preparation is often key to a successful trip, here are a few tips on what to pack to ensure your journey goes as smoothly as possible (non-exhaustive list):

YOUR LUGGAGE
One piece of luggage per person, weighing no more than 13kg: a soft sports bag of around 55 litres. This luggage will be transported by vehicle.
We will provide you with address labels to attach to your luggage.

THE BACKPACK
1 medium-sized backpack for your day's essentials

ESSENTIALS
Compass and altimeter for independent hikes
- Rainwear.
- Two water bottles, each holding at least 1 litre of water.
- A first-aid kit: double-layer plasters, antiseptic wipes, bandages, gauze, water purification tablets, aspirin, personal medication and a survival blanket.
  (To be put together in consultation with your doctor.)
- Your personal items: camera, hats, binoculars, etc.

FOOTWEAR
Good hiking boots that come up above the ankle. Above all, they must be comfortable, waterproof and breathable. Good ankle support is essential. If you need to buy a new pair, we advise you to try your boots on before your trip begins. Do not choose a size that is too small, as your feet will tend to swell.

CLOTHING
- A waterproof windproof jacket (Gore-Tex, poncho, etc.)
- A thick jumper or fleece jacket
- Comfortable trousers for walking
- Shorts, t-shirts, as well as breathable underwear
- A change of clothes and personal toiletries
- A hat and a pair of gloves.
- A swimsuit (for certain trips).

FOR THE PICNIC
- Cutlery (fork, folding knife, spoon).
- Snacks (energy bars, dried fruit, etc.).

SMALL ITEMS
- Lightweight, breathable shoes for the evening (trainers or sandals)

- A pair of telescopic walking poles or ‘shepherd’s crook’
- Sunglasses and sun cream
- Lip balm
- Hat, cap or sun hat
- Camera, binoculars, etc.
- A small toiletries bag, with a towel
- A torch or headlamp + spare batteries.
- Toilet paper.

RATES

The price includes :

Self-guided option :

- Accommodation on a half-board basis: from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 6,
- The transfer between Annecy and the starting point of the circuit,
- Luggage transport,
- Our self-guided app,
- GPX tracks if requested.

Guided version :

- Full qualified English Speaking hiking guide,
- The transfer between Annecy and the starting point of the circuit,
- Accommodation on a half-board basis: from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 6,
- 6 packed lunches,
- Luggage transport.

The price does not include :

Self-guided version :

- Drinks,
- Insurance,
- Personal expenses,
- Picnics,
- Entrance fees to monuments.

Guided tour version:

- Drinks,
- Insurance,
- Personal expenses,
- Entrance fees to monuments.

GENERAL INFORMATION