Across the Alps – The GR5

TREK OVERVIEW
The full GR5 starts at the Hook of Holland and finishes in Nice. Definitely by far the most exciting and dramatic section takes you from the shores of Lac Leman, south, over the Alps to Modane and on to the Mediterranean coast. Crossing the Alps may seem like a daunting prospect for the ‘mere’ walker, but rest assured the GR5 has sought out well graded paths across straightforward cols between the high peaks to create a delightful route through stunning scenery.

Starting with a scenic train ride along the shores of the lake, the route soon takes you up into the hills. Over the next few days you will be following valleys, crossing ridges and cols, spending nights in refuges and small hotels as the views just get better and better as you get closer and closer to Mont Blanc. Heading on south the route meanders through the Vanoise National Park, where we follow the easternmost of the many variations possible here.

Our intention is to also offer the southern section down to Nice in 2014, so why not join us for this section in 2013, and continue the adventure next year!

Participation Statement
Adventure Peaks recognises that climbing, hill walking and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement.

Adventure Travel – Accuracy of Itinerary
Although it is our intention to operate this itinerary as printed, it may be necessary to make some changes as a result of flight schedules, climatic conditions, limitations of infrastructure or other operational factors. As a consequence, the order or location of overnight stops and the duration of the day may vary from those outlined. You should be aware that some events are beyond our control and we would ask for your patience.
PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE/FITNESS
Previous walking experience is not essential, but a reasonable degree of fitness is. Most days involve around 5 - 7 hours walking plus plenty of rest stops. If you are used to regular multi day hill-walking in the UK you will have the right level of fitness to fully enjoy your time on this trek.

GROUP AND LEADERS
A fully qualified UK leader will accompany all groups. This trip is exclusive to Adventure Peaks.

WEATHER
The Alps can be quite changeable; cloud and rain is not unusual in summer, but when the sun shines it is very hot, and protection against sunburn is essential. At night it can be cold around huts and in higher valleys.

WHAT TO CARRY
This is a backpacking trek and is unsupported. There are still some regions where this is the only way to (economically) experience the beauty of the remote mountains and this is one of them! Therefore you will need to carry all your belongings with you all of the time. However with careful packing and using modern lightweight clothing, your backpack should not weigh more than 10kg at the most. If you are unsure about your ability to carry this amount we suggest you join one of our Backpacking Training weekends in the Lake District to test yourself out.

CATERING ARRANGEMENTS
Three course evening meals are provided each evening (except on rest days), with a continental breakfast in the morning. Dinner is usually between 7.30 and 8.00pm. We ask that you pay for any drinks the same night. Lunches are also provided on this trip. The group will be involved in the purchase and sharing of lunches which will sometimes be purchased from where we stay and at other times from shops or supermarkets.

ACCOMMODATION
Overnight accommodation is in simple but comfortable hotels, mountain inns, gîte d’étapes and refuges. Twin-bedded rooms are usually available in the inns and hotels, but dormitory accommodation is normal in the refuges and some of the gîtes.

LANGUAGE AND TIME
Language: French
Time: GMT+1 (CET). No daylight saving time at present.

HEALTH
All our UK leaders hold first aid certificates and carry a fully equipped first aid kit for medical emergencies. However you should bring your own supplies of plasters, blister prevention pads (compede), paracetamol etc. and any medication you are taking. There are no compulsory vaccinations for France. Consult your GP or a vaccine specialist for professional advice or refer to this website: www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk. Tap or stream water should never be drunk without first sterilizing with chlorine dioxide tablets or by boiling.

INSURANCE
Insurance which covers mountain rescue, evacuation and medical expenses is essential. We will require a copy of your insurance prior to departure. Your standard travel insurance should be sufficient for this trip as there is no technical climbing and we do not go above 4000m.

ALTITUDE
If you are new to altitude you may have concerns about the effects. Don’t worry because our itineraries allow sufficient time to acclimatise, and altitude rarely causes anyone any problems on this trip. The best way to avoid
such symptoms is to walk at a gentle steady pace and drink plenty of fluid.

**USEFUL TIPS**

Just in case your main luggage goes missing en route, it is a good idea to wear your boots on the plane. Most other things can be replaced but comfortable, well-worn-in boots cannot. Pack important items in strong plastic bags.

**EQUIPMENT**

A detailed equipment list is provided on booking but normal summer walking equipment is all that is required. For equipment purchases Adventure Peaks offers a 15% discount from their shop in Ambleside or online.

**BAGGAGE**

For your own comfort travel light. Normally airlines restrict baggage to 20kg, but you should be carrying far less. On trek you will need to carry ALL your personal equipment, as explained above.

**VISAS AND PERMITS**

Visas for entry into Switzerland and France are not required by nationals of the UK, Ireland, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and most EU countries.

**LOCAL COSTS**

All accommodation and most meals are included; please see the itinerary page for full details. Additional costs would include any drinks or snacks outside of mealtimes and personal spending. Single rooms are not available in advance but may be available on arrival at overnight stops and supplement can be paid locally. We suggest £120 will be enough to cover additional costs (except single rooms and expensive souvenirs!)

**CURRENCY**

The currency in Switzerland is the Swiss Franc and in France it is the Euro. You should take a few Francs and mostly Euros cash with you. ATM’s and change bureaus are available in airport and in main towns.

**TIPPING**

Tipping at meals and in hotels is normal practice. On this trip there are no local staff who will expect to be tipped.

**ADVENTURE PEAKS KIT BAG**

All Adventure Peaks clients who reside in the UK would normally receive a FREE kitbag for any treks outside the UK. However as a kitbag is not required on this trek we will send you some other item of equipment which we stock in our shop which will be useful to you for this trip. This will be posted to you approx. 3 weeks prior to your departure.

**FLIGHTS AND JOINING ARRANGEMENTS**

Flights are NOT included as part of this holiday. Budget and scheduled airlines offer a lot of flights to Geneva from many regional UK airports, and sometimes very cheap deals can be found.

The rendezvous for this trip is GENEVA AIRPORT at 1200 on Day 1.

If you are unable to find an early flight then you should fly to Geneva the day before. Return flights should be booked no earlier than the afternoon of Day 15 to allow time to get back to Geneva airport from Chambery. There is also an airport at Chambery and it may suit you to book your return flight from here.

**PLEASE ENSURE YOU DO NOT PURCHASE YOUR INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL (FLIGHTS OR OTHER) UNTIL WE HAVE GUARANTEED YOUR TRIP IS RUNNING.**
Day 1 Fly to Geneva. Rendezvous with the tour leader at Geneva airport. We take a train to Montreux followed by a boat across the lake to St Gingolph. From here we have a 90 minute walk to the gite in Novel, situated nearly 600m above the lake. 5 km, 90 minutes walking.

Day 2 Continue on up passing small hamlets on a delightful trail through the forest. The path finds an intricate route through cliffs above, and continues up to the Col de Bise (1915m). A second col (1816m) is crossed soon after, and then it is all downhill through forests and pasture to the village. 13km, 6 hours walking.

Day 3 Today we follow a more undulating route through forests, scrubland and open grassy hillsides. We contour under the flanks of Mont de Grange. The highest point of the day is right near the end at the Col de Chesery (1990m) where we cross back into Switzerland. 21km, 8 hours walking.

Day 4 Predominately downhill today (with a few 'ups') following good tracks, crossing back into France at the Col de Coux (1920m). From the second col of the day, the Col de Golese (1660m) it is all downhill to the delightful old village of Samoëns. 25km, 7 hours walking.

Day 5 A free morning to enjoy this delightful village. In the afternoon an easy riverside walk leads to a ladder assisted climb up through the dramatic Gorge de Tines which we leave to deviate slightly to our overnight accommodation. 7km, 2.5 hours walking.

Day 6 A lot of ascent today on good paths, through forests and alpine pastures with great views down to the river valleys below. Magnificent mountain scenery leads up to the Col de Anterne (2257m) where snow can lie until early summer. 15km, 6 hours walking.

Day 7 We descend to 1500m to cross a wooded valley before tackling the toughest challenge so far on the steep ascent to the Brevant (2525m). After taking in the stunning views across the Chamonix valley to Mount Blanc, a steep descent zig zags down to Les Houches. 21km, 7 hours walking.

Day 8 In comparison to the ruggedness of the previous day, this is a relatively easy walk. We follow paths and good tracks, with some steep sections, crossing paths with the 'TMG' at the Col de Voza (1650m). There are two options from here, a high route across the 2120m Col de Tricot, or a lower route through the valley. 17/19km, 5/6 hours walking.

Day 9 A long day following the 'salt route' over the 2330m Col de Bonhomme which is likely to be snow covered. The ascent continues after the col past the Refugie de la Croix and (if the weather is good) along the Crête des Gittes, before finally heading down to the Plan de la Lai. 24km, 8 hours walking.

Day 10 Potentially a muddy start to the day as the route crosses flaky slate that is turned to mud when trampled by humans and cattle. A gentle ascent to the Col de Bresson (2470m) with its immense limestone boulders, followed by a descent to Valezan on the north bank of the Isère River. 22km, 7 hours walking.

Day 11 A short day. Descend to cross the Isère and climb steeply up bypassing Landry, ascending most of the time through small villages to reach Rosuel. 14km, 4 hours walking.

Day 12 A spectacular day through high mountain scenery following the eastern edge of the Vanoise National Park. Enjoy delightful scenery and last views back to Mont Blanc before descending through the high-rise ski development of Tignes and onwards to Val D'Isère. With a wide choice of places to eat here, we leave the choice to you! 25km, 8 hours walking.

Day 13 Steep climbing along the 'old road' to the highest point on the GR5, the Col de l'Iseran (2770m). As this is also one of France's highest roads, it can be quite busy on the top. The descent parallels the road, but stays high above L'Arc River before descending to Bessans. It is possible to shorten the day and stay in Bonneval sur Arc from where a lower alternative leads to Bessans. 25km, 7.5 hours walking.

Day 14 We follow the lower alternative GR5E route along the river to L'Anslevillard, from where we take a bus to Modane and a train to Chambéry. In the evening we can celebrate completing the toughest section of the GR5, and consider returning next year to continue the route all the way to the Mediterranean. 10km, 2.5 hours walking.

Day 15 Fly home from Geneva or Chambéry. Train to Geneva if needed.