

## MONT BLANC – GRAND COMBIN HUT-TO-HUT TOUR July 2015

Allan and Lesley Witton, John and Judith Willson, Tim Pattison, Roger Hand, Don and Dot Witton



On Col de Balme with Mont Blanc



Leg stop en route to Fenêtre d'Arpette



Outside the Panossière hut



Martagon lily



Heading up the Trient valley



The ascent to Mont Avril



On col des Otanes with Grand Combin, Combin de Corbassière and the Corbassière glacier



Back-lit by the early morning sun outside the Orny hut with Grand Combin on the skyline

## OUTLINE ITINERARY AND WALKING ROUTE SUMMARY

The idea of this route came from scanning in slides of the 1983 MGS Foreign Trek to incorporate into that year's Trek Log. This year we followed a very similar route from Chamonix as far as the Chanrion hut and Mont Avril, but omitted the final section across the Giétra glacier to Arolla, and we made use of refuges rather than camping.

The first half of the route was a 6-day section from Planpraz to Champex, through the Aiguilles Rouges and the northern part of the Mont Blanc Massif, and culminated in an ascent of one of the Pointe d'Orny peaks. The second 4-day section was a loop at the head of Val de Bagnes using the Pannossière and Chanrion huts and included a whole-day excursion to Mont Avril (3347) as a finalé.

For the first time in ten Old Trekkers' Treks our early flight, quick transfer and a cable car enabled us to reach our first mountain hut on the day we left Manchester, without the need for a hotel stop en route.

			12 days	1½ days travel	1 free day	9½ days walking						
							Height	Distance	Ascent	Descent	Time	Day
							m	km	m	m		
July												
7	Air Alpybus Cable car Trek	Manchester > Geneva Chamonix Planpraz Refuge de la Flégère			1999 1877			5.0	150	270	1-50	1
8	Trek	Chalet Alpin du Tour via Lac Blanc		CAF (86)	1460		2355	10.5	620	1030	4-50	2
9	Cable car Excursion Trek	Col de Balme Refuge Albert Premier Hotel Col de la Forclaz			2185 2702 1526		7.5 7.0 14.5	570 200 770	570 870 1440	3-10 2-20 5-30		3
10	Trek	Relais d'Arpette via Fenêtre d'Arpette	Private (100)		1630		2665	11.0	1140	1040	6-30	4
11	Chair lift Trek Excursion	Grands Plans Cabane d'Orny Pointe d'Orny II		CAS (86)	2188 2811		3220	6.0 4.0 10.0	640 440 1080	150 440 590	2-40 2-10 4-50	5
12	Trek Bus/train	Champex Martigny		Hotel	1486			7.5	100	1420	3-40	6
13	Free Day	Martigny		Hotel								7
14	Train/bus Trek Excursion	Fionnay Cabane de Panossière Corbassière bridge		Private (100)	1490 2641		6.0 1.0	1170 50	20 50	3-10 10		8
		Day's total						7.0	1220	70	3-20	
15	Trek via	Cabane de Chanrion Col des Otanes		CAS (73)	2462		2880	16.0	950	1130	6-30	9
16	Excursion from	Mont Avril Cabane de Chanrion		CAS (73)	2462		3347	15.5	1470	1470	6-10	10
17	Trek Bus/train	Mauvoisin Martigny		Hotel	1841			10.0	240	860	3-10	11
18	Rail/Air	Martigny > Geneva > Manchester										12

Grand Totals:	Distance	Ascent	Descent	Time
(or about:	107 km 67 miles	7,770 m 25,500 ft	9,350 m (30,680 ft)	46h-20
Daily averages:	11.3 km (7.1 miles)	847 m 2780 ft	1010 m 3,310 ft	5h-00

A Trek

is a linear walk from one place to the next with full packs.

An Excursion

is a return walks without full packs.

**Mont Avril**

Summits are in bold, 3000 m points are shaded blue.

CAF/CAS/Private

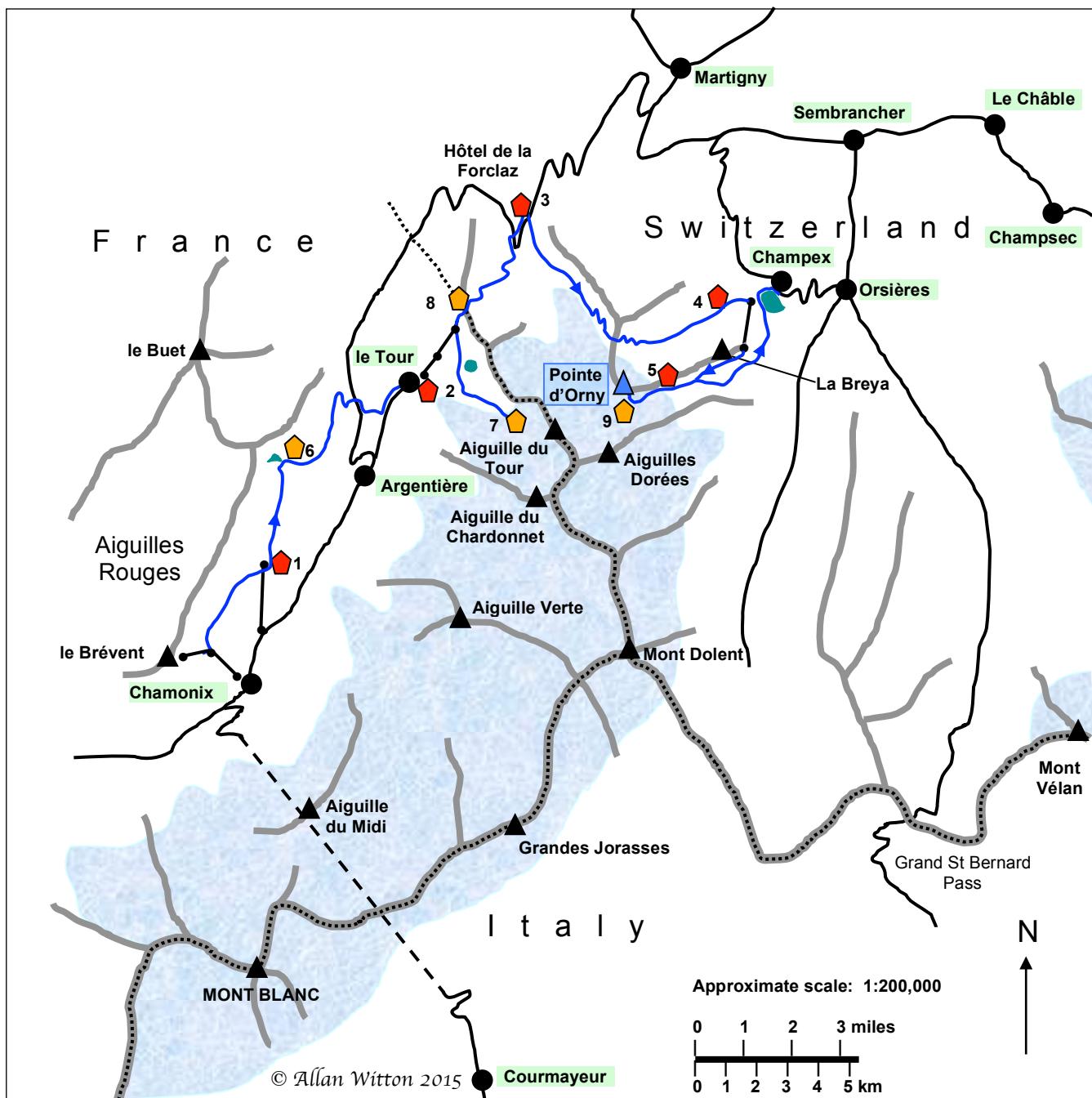
French/Swiss Alpine Club hut, or private accommodation, with number of places.

Refuge de la Flégère

Trekking route accommodation.

Time

These are all walking times, excluding stops.



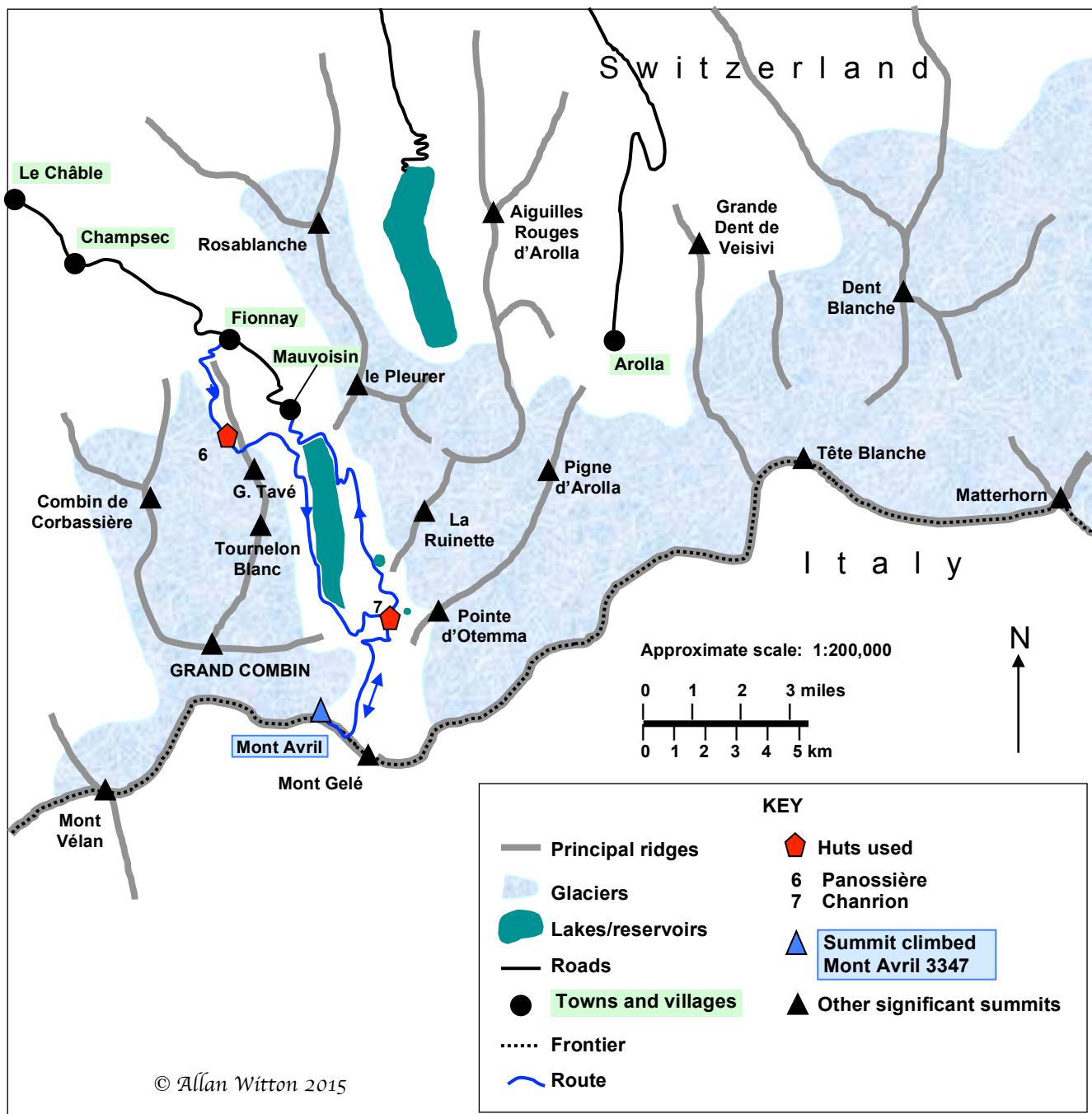
KEY		
Principal ridges	Accommodation used	Other huts
Glacier limits	1 Flégère	6 Lac Blanc
Lakes/reservoirs	2 Alpin du Tour	7 Albert Premier
Roads	3 Hotel de la Forclaz	8 Col de Balme
Towns and villages	4 Relais d'Arpette	9 Trient
Frontier	5 Orny	
Route		
	▲ Summit climbed Pointe d'Orny 3220	
	▲ Other significant summits	

These sketch maps were drawn over a scan of the original pen-and-ink line drawing produced for the 1983 MGS Trek, which was based on maps current at the time.

Some glaciers e.g. the Mer de Glace, the Glacier du Tour, the Glacier du Trient and the Glacier de Corbassière have receded considerably in the last 30 years.

An information board at the Chalet du Glacier charting the annual changes in the Glacier du Trient over the last 130 years shows that it has receded by just over 1000 m since 1983.

**SKETCH MAP**    **Part 2 – Grand Combin Massif**



**MAPS**

		Sheet	
Institut Géographique National	1:25,000	3630 OT	Chamonix
Carte Nationale de la Suisse	1:25,000	1346	Chanrion
		1366	Mont Vélan
	1:50,000	5003	Mont Blanc Grand Combin
	1:100,000	46	Val de Bagnes

3630 OT covers the whole of the first section of the route, and 1346 covers all the second section apart from the Mont Avril excursion, which is covered by 1366.

But by far the best map, which covers the whole route in excellent detail, is the Swiss 1:50,000 sheet 5003. The Val de Bagnes sheet 46 gives an excellent overview of this whole area of the Alps from Mont Blanc to the western part of the Pennine Alps as far as the Matterhorn.

The Cicerone guide *Tour of Mont Blanc* by Kev Reynolds describes the route from Planpraz to Champex.

<b>Tuesday 7th July</b>	<b>Air</b> <b>Alpybus</b> <b>Cable car</b> <b>Trek</b>	<b>Manchester &gt; Geneva</b> <b>Chamonix</b> <b>Planpraz</b> <b>Refuge de la Flégère</b>	<b>1999</b> <b>1877</b>
-------------------------	---	--	----------------------------

The plane was a little late arriving at Geneva, but our booked Alpybus connection was waiting for us, and after a 1h-45 journey we arrived at Chamonix at 1.30. We found a shady square for lunch then took the Brévent cable car to the Planpraz mid-station.



Lunch in Chamonix

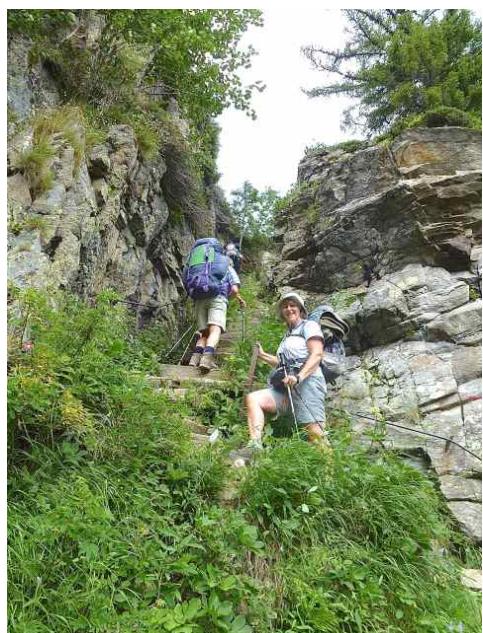
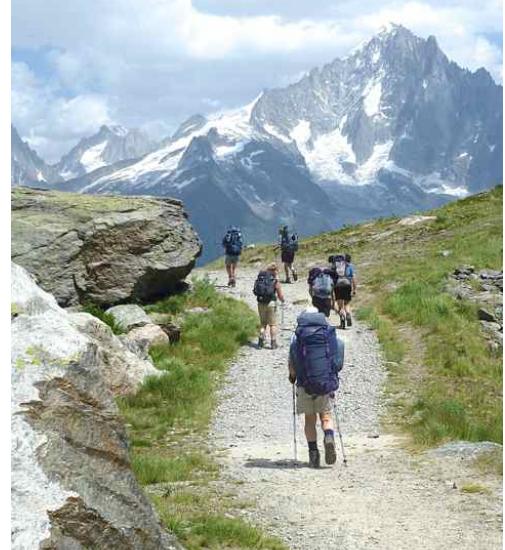


The Brévent cable car



Six hours from Manchester and we're at Planpraz ready to go

We followed the Grand Balcon Sud path to Flégère, easy walking without much ascent and with great views across the valley to the peaks and glaciers of the Mont Blanc Massif, particularly Aiguille Verte.



Arriving at the Flégère hut with Aiguille Verte and Aiguille du Dru



Chamonix, the Chamonix Aiguilles and Mont Blanc from the Flégère hut

Some cloud developed during the afternoon and it became very windy, and after dinner there was a brief but intense shower of rain. It didn't rain again until we were waiting for the bus at Mauvoisin at the end of Trek.

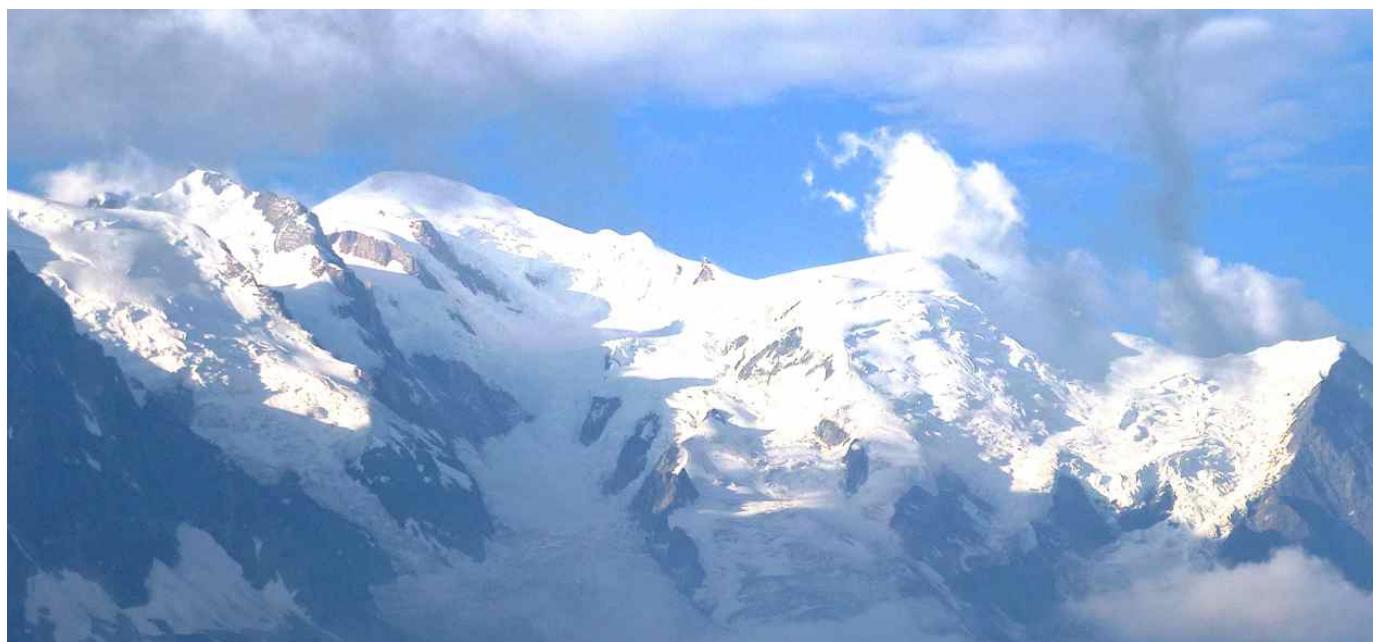


'Arrived safely ...'

Summary	Distance 5.0 km	Ascent 150 m	Descent 270 m	Walking time 1h-50	Total time 2h-30
---------	-----------------	--------------	---------------	--------------------	------------------

<b>Wednesday 8th</b>	<b>Trek via</b>	<b>Chalet Alpin du Tour Lac Blanc</b>	<b>1460 2355</b>
----------------------	---------------------	---	----------------------

Billowing cloud obscured most views as we climbed the path to Lac Blanc, where it then began to clear.



Sun on Mont Blanc at 7 a.m.



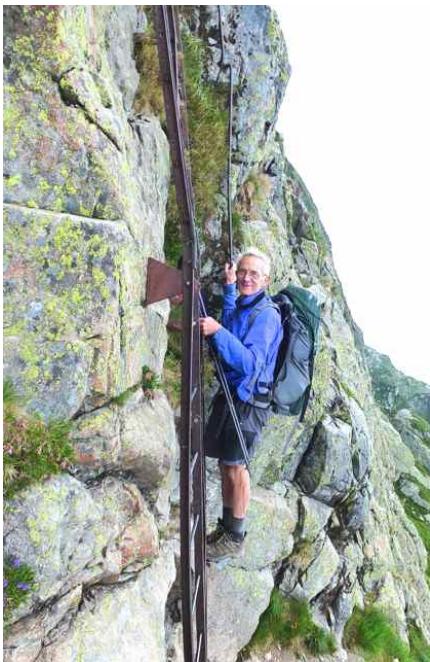
Ready for the off on the 1st full day



Leg stop on the cloudy walk up to Lac Blanc



It turned into a fine afternoon for the easy and enjoyable walk down past Lacs des Chéserys (where we camped in 1983) to re-join Grand Balcon Sud. South of Flégère there is much skiing development, but to the north most of the Aiguilles Rouges area is a nature reserve, and just beyond Lacs des Chéserys we came across a family group of ibex who were totally unconcerned about our presence, and presented us with great photo opportunities.



Roger went down the 'challenge' ladder ...



... the rest of us down the easy one!

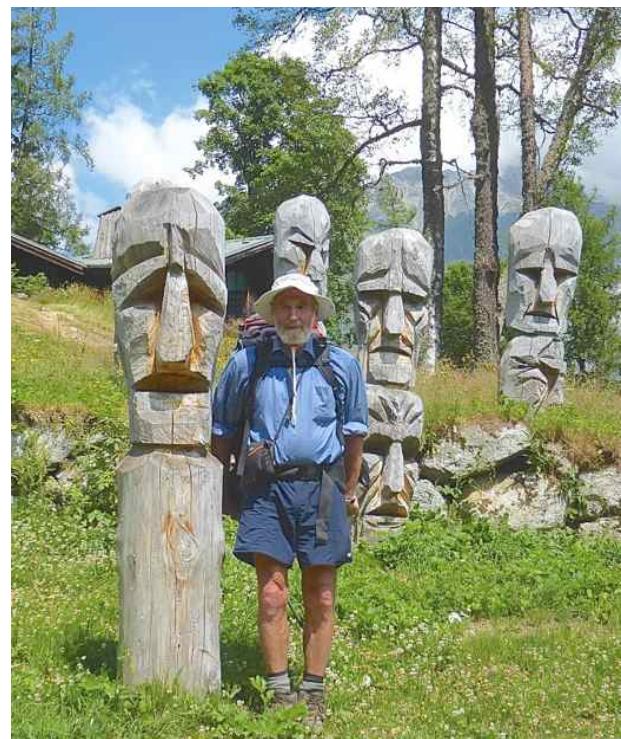


On Grand Balcon Sud, with view of the Mer de Glace

Many tight zig-zags then lead down to the Sentier botanique and the road at Tré-le-Champ. A path over the entrance to the Montroc rail tunnel entrance leads to the short road walk to le Tour, where the comfortably appointed CAF Chalet Alpin du Tour is in a fine position.



Starting down the zig-zags to Tré-le-Champ



The snout of the Glacier du Tour just visible over the Chalet



<b>Summary</b>	Distance 10.5 km	Ascent 620 m	Descent 1030 m	Walking time 4h-50	Total time 8h-00
----------------	------------------	--------------	----------------	--------------------	------------------

<b>Thursday 9th</b>	<b>Cable car</b>	<b>Col de Balme</b>	<b>2185</b>
	<b>Excursion</b>	<b>Refuge Albert Premier</b>	<b>2702</b>
	<b>Trek</b>	<b>Hotel Col de la Forclaz</b>	<b>1526</b>

It was a crystal clear morning, and at 8.30 we took the first two-stage lift to Col de Balme, where we arranged to leave our main rucksacks in the top station cabin while we made our excursion to the Albert Premier hut.



The level path leads past Lac de Charamillon, where we camped and paddled in 1983, but which was completely dry this year, and then rises gradually to gain the lateral moraine of the Glacier du Tour which leads steeply up to the much-renovated hut. In the clear air there were superb views of the glacier, and the peaks all around.



Aiguille du Chardonnet and the Glacier du Tour



Le Brévent and the Aiguilles Rouges

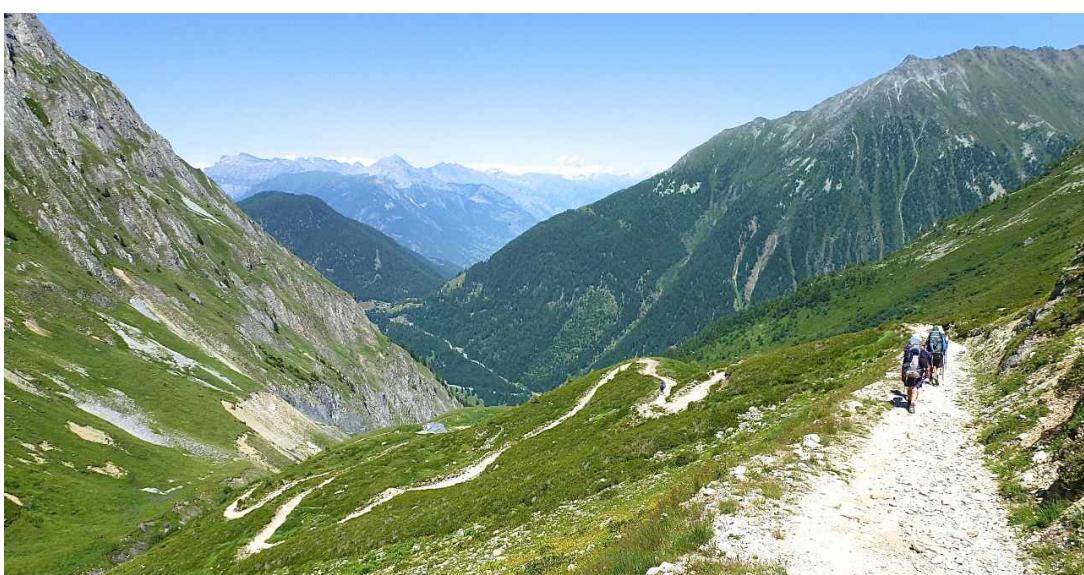


View from the Albert Premier hut over the Glacier du Tour to the whole Aiguilles Rouges and le Buet

We returned to collect rucksacks and have lunch on Col de Balme with our first views down into Switzerland. It is indicative of the passing years and dodgy knees that the excursion took us double the time it took the 1983 party from Lac de Charamillon.



The path back to Col de Balme



Long, looping hairpins lead down into Switzerland, with Col de la Forclaz just left of centre



Camera always at the ready



Purple Gentian (*Gentiana purpurea*)



Refreshing lemonade for all on arriving at the Hotel Col de la Forclaz – at £40 for the round!



#### Summary

Distance	14.5 km
Ascent	770 m
Descent	1440 m
Walking time	5h-30
Total time	8h-20

Friday 10th

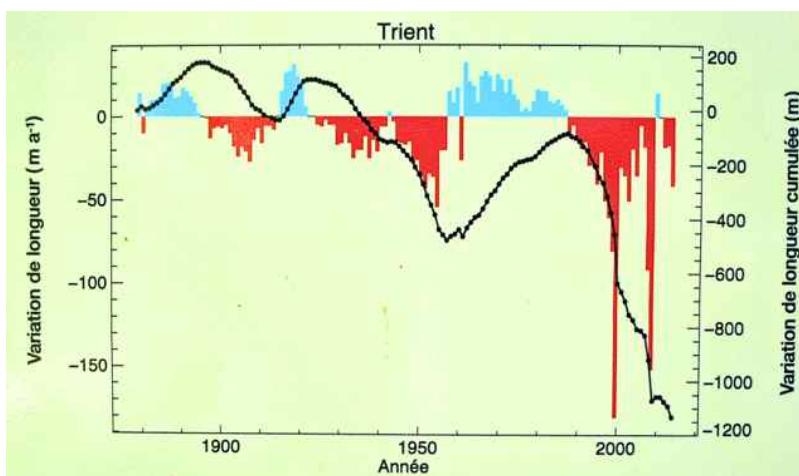
Trek

Relais d'Arpette  
via Fenêtre d'Arpette

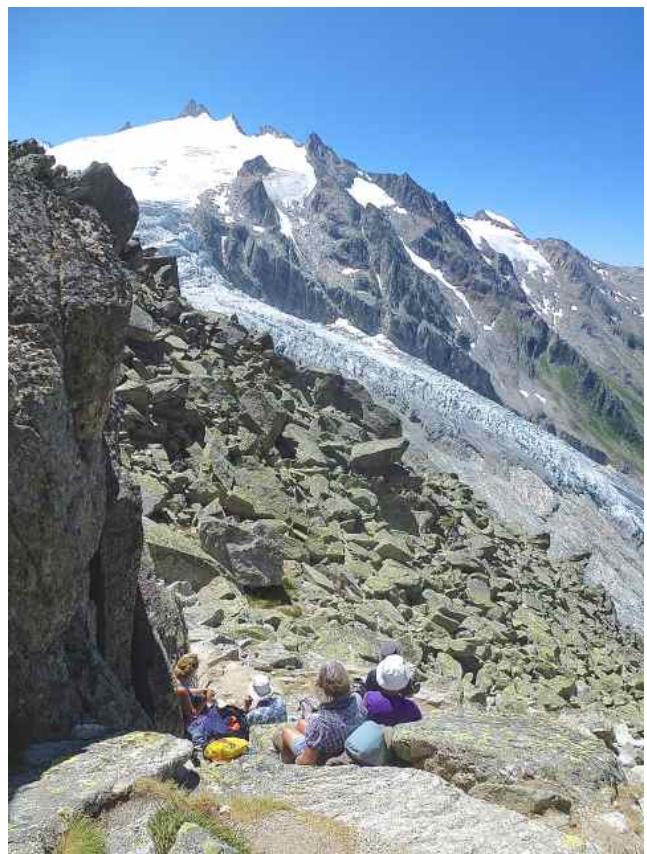
1630

2665

It was an easy first leg in the cool air, along a good, level path beside an irrigation channel to the Chalet du Glacier, with information boards and interactive displays about water supplies. At one point Don's foot slipped off the edge of the path and he grazed his right shin, which required Dot's nursing skills to clean and dress.



From the chalet the relentless 1080 m climb to Fenêtre d'Arpette begins. The path remains good until a rocky section just before the col, and there are increasingly impressive views of the Glacier du Trient and above it the Aiguille du Tour to compensate for the 3 hours of upward plod.



Lunch on Fenêtre d'Arpette

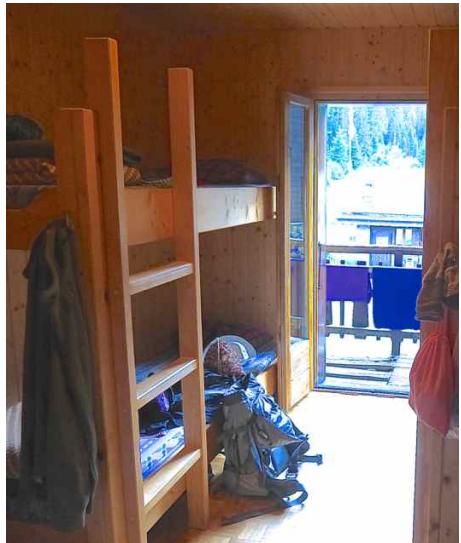
We had lunch on the narrow col then plunged down the steep zig-zags into Val d'Arpette. Whilst the path down the valley is never difficult, most of it is rocky, which required careful steps down and hindered a steady walking rhythm, and the tiring descent took almost as long as the ascent.



Leg stop on the way down Val d'Arpette



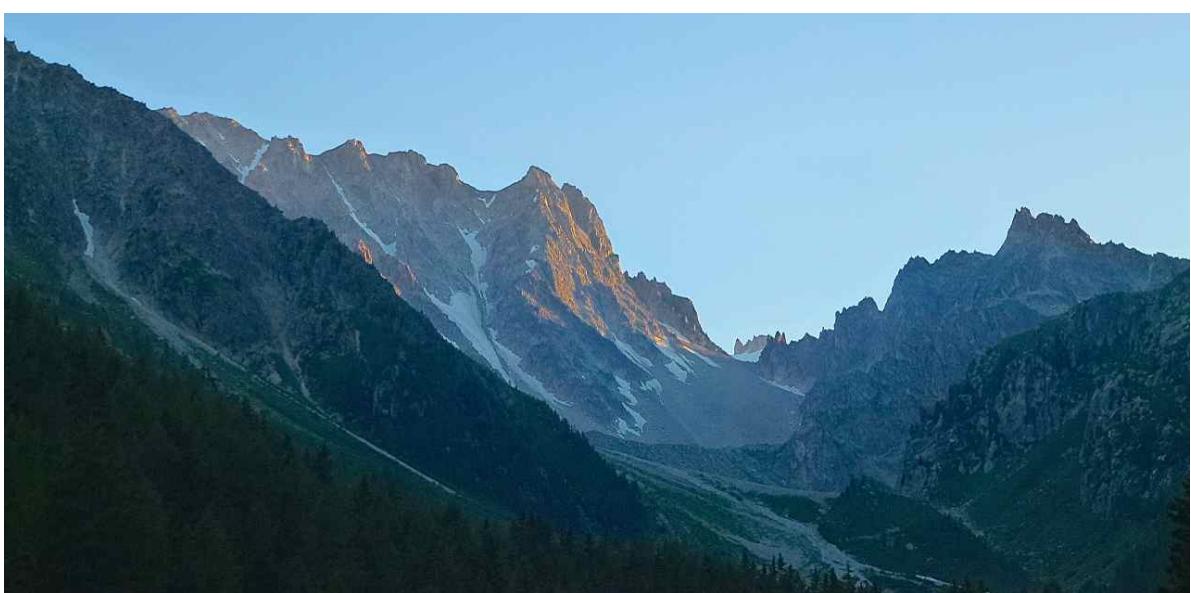
Arriving at Relais d'Arpette



Comfortable bunks ...



... and a hearty meal



The last rays of the sun on the peaks at the head of Val d'Arpette

Summary	Distance 11.0 km	Ascent 1140 m	Descent 1040 m	Walking time 6h-30	Total time 10h-00
---------	------------------	---------------	----------------	--------------------	-------------------

<b>Saturday 11th</b>	<b>Chair lift</b>	<b>Grands Plans</b>	<b>2188</b>
	<b>Trek</b>	<b>Cabane d'Orny</b>	<b>2811</b>
	<b>Excursion</b>	<b>Pointe d'Orny II</b>	<b>3220</b>

Having had such a long and tiring day coming over Fenêtre d'Arpette we decided on the easier option of taking the Grands Plans chairlift from Champex rather than walking up over Col de la Breya. It was a beautiful day again as we began with a 20 minute walk down the road to the chairlift, where we had to wait for an hour while a helicopter went off to collect a spare part to mend the malfunctioning chairlift!



We wait while the helicopter leaves on a mission

We all arrive safely at the top

We set off from the top station at 10.15 and followed the easy, enjoyable path which climbs gradually along the flanks of the La Breya ridge to the path junction in Combe d'Orny. From there the ascent to the Orny hut is a little steeper, and goes past our 1983 campsite beside Lac d'Orny, with no snow at all there this year.



Leaving the top station on the path below La Breya



The wonderful 'balcony' path below the La Breya ridge



Then more steeply up to the Orny hut



The un-named lake below the hut, and the upper Orny Glacier

We arrived at 1.45 and after a half-hour break John, Don and I set off for Pointe d'Orny. There's now a new path to the Trient hut, replacing that used in 1983 which passed below the Orny hut along the edge of the Orny Glacier. The new path, which is well engineered and waymarked all the way, leaves the Orny hut to go round the lake just west of the hut and cross the end of the SE ridge of Aiguille d'Orny, to then climb over rocky ground and the odd snow patch to the Trient hut without difficulty. There is a short, easy peg ascent of a rock band towards the top.



The peg ascent up the rock band

There are a number of peaks on the ridge above the hut: the highest, Pointe d'Orny 3269; Petite Pointe d'Orny 3187; spot height 3234; and the one we chose which is closest to the hut and has a 2014 wooden cross on top. It is un-named on the map but I will refer to it as Pointe d'Orny II at 3220. From the top there were terrific views of the peaks surrounding the vast snowfield of Plateau du Trient, particularly the spiky ridge of Aiguilles Dorées. The ascent took 1h-10, the descent an hour, and we were back at the hut at 5.15.



View south across the Plateau du Trient to Aiguilles Dorées



View west across the Plateau du Trient to Pointe Fourche on the left and Aiguille du Tour in the centre



View down the Orny Glacier with the hut and lake left of centre

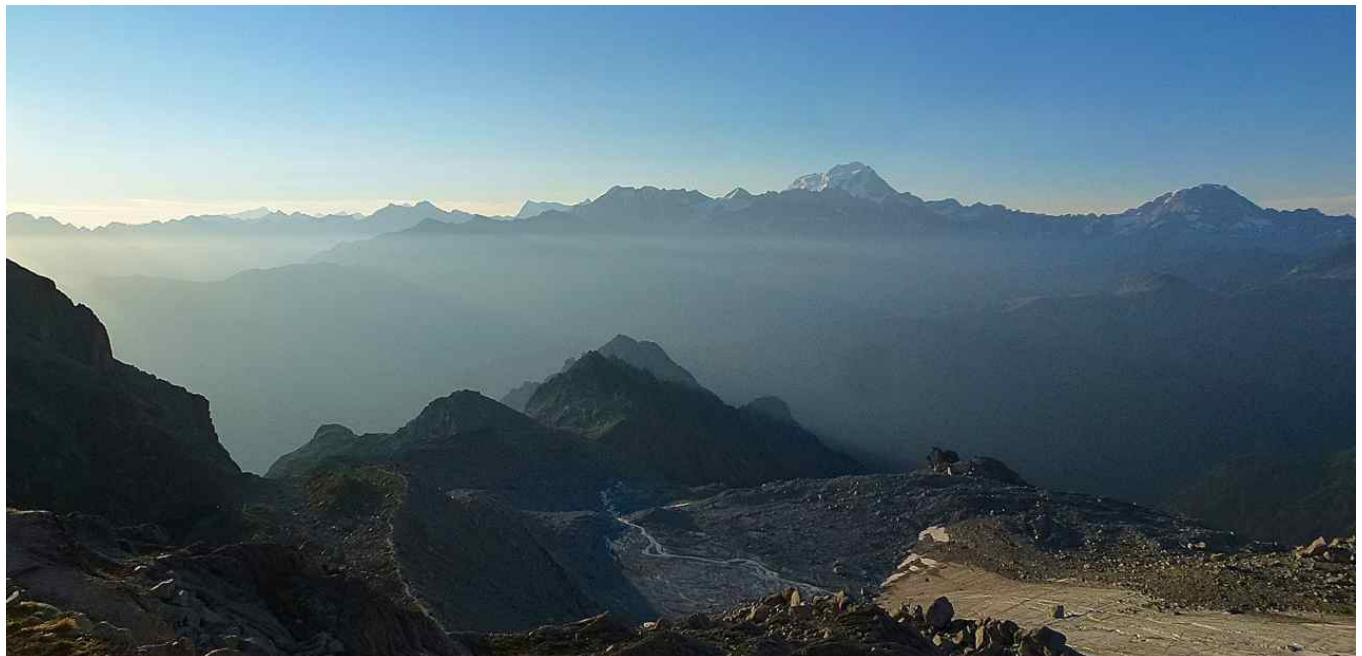


Alpine Stonecrop (*Sedum alpestre*) at 9,000 ft

<b>Summary</b>	Distance 10.0 km	Ascent 1080 m	Descent 590 m	Walking time 4h-50	Total time 9h-00
----------------	------------------	---------------	---------------	--------------------	------------------

Sunday 12th	Trek Bus/train	Champex Martigny	1486
-------------	-------------------	---------------------	------

It was a beautiful, crystal clear morning as we set off at 8.10 to begin the 1900 m descent to Orsières, and then on to Martigny for a free day. During the first leg I had a bright idea that I should have had at the planning stage – we could descend to Champex and get a bus from there instead, saving 500 m of descent. By the wonder of modern technology we found that a bus to Orsières left at 3.15, and we were in plenty of time to catch it.



Dawn at 6.30, with a view of Grand Combin



Back down from the hut on the lateral moraine

Unfortunately, at about 1900 m on the grassy path down Combe d'Orny, Dot's left foot slipped and she landed on her right leg, breaking her lower fibula. We phoned the Orny hut warden who contacted the rescue services and within minutes a helicopter arrived and lowered a paramedic. He assessed the problem and fitted an inflatable splint, and within about 50 minutes of the accident the two of them were whisked off into the sky dangling from a steel cable. The helicopter landed by the top station of the Grands Plans chairlift to take the two onboard, then flew down to land on the roof of the hospital in Martigny.



The helicopter arrives with paramedic suspended



"Leg in a splint and ready to go"



"Winch us up, Scotty!"



Now just a Dot in the sky!

The rest of us continued down Combe d'Orny and then took the undulating balcony path from point 1490 to Lac de Champex. We walked round the lake, which is in a marvellous setting, then checked the times at the bus stop in the village, and as we had time in hand we had a paddle or a swim in the lake.



The path round Lac de Champex with the distant Grand Combin



A crowded bus delivered us to Orsières station where a train was waiting to take us down to Martigny for our two-night stay at the Hotel Forclaz Touring. When we arrived Dot was already there watching the Wimbledon final between Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic, having received prompt and very efficient treatment at the hospital.



Summary	Distance 7.5 km	Ascent 100 m	Descent 1420 m	Walking time 3h-40	Total time 7h-30
---------	-----------------	--------------	----------------	--------------------	------------------

We spent a pleasant morning walking round the town's sights and Roman remains, and the afternoon relaxing at the outdoor swimming pool, whose long water slide was rather too slow to get even pensioners excited!



Dot consulted with her insurers and all was fine, and it was decided that she would remain at the hotel until our return and Don would walk the second half of the route with us.

<b>Tuesday 14th</b>	<b>Train/bus</b>	<b>Fionnay</b>	<b>1490</b>
	<b>Trek</b>	<b>Cabane de Panossière</b>	<b>2641</b>
	<b>Excursion</b>	<b>Corbassière bridge</b>	

At 9.20 we caught the first train to Le Châble which connects with the bus up Val de Bagnes and got off that at Fionnay at 10.20 under another cloudless sky. While we climbed the many steady zig-zags up the steep mountain flank we wondered if the spectacular waterfall across the valley was artificial. The map confirms that the stream higher up the side valley opposite has been diverted to flow over a vertical cliff above Fionnay for dramatic effect.



Once into the Corbassière valley at Vers le Grenier (1959) the main Grand Combin peaks come into view and the terrain becomes less steep and the path less zig-zagged as it follows a well-engineered route (which includes sections of elevated boardwalk and a staircase) along a water course all the way to Plan Goli.





There's even a plastic sheet to prevent walkers being sprayed by a small waterfall!

Just above where the Plan Goli stream plunges into the main valley is a beautiful spot with the clear stream flowing between grassy banks, and with the hut just visible on the lateral moraine sweeping high ahead, and we had a long siesta stop there.

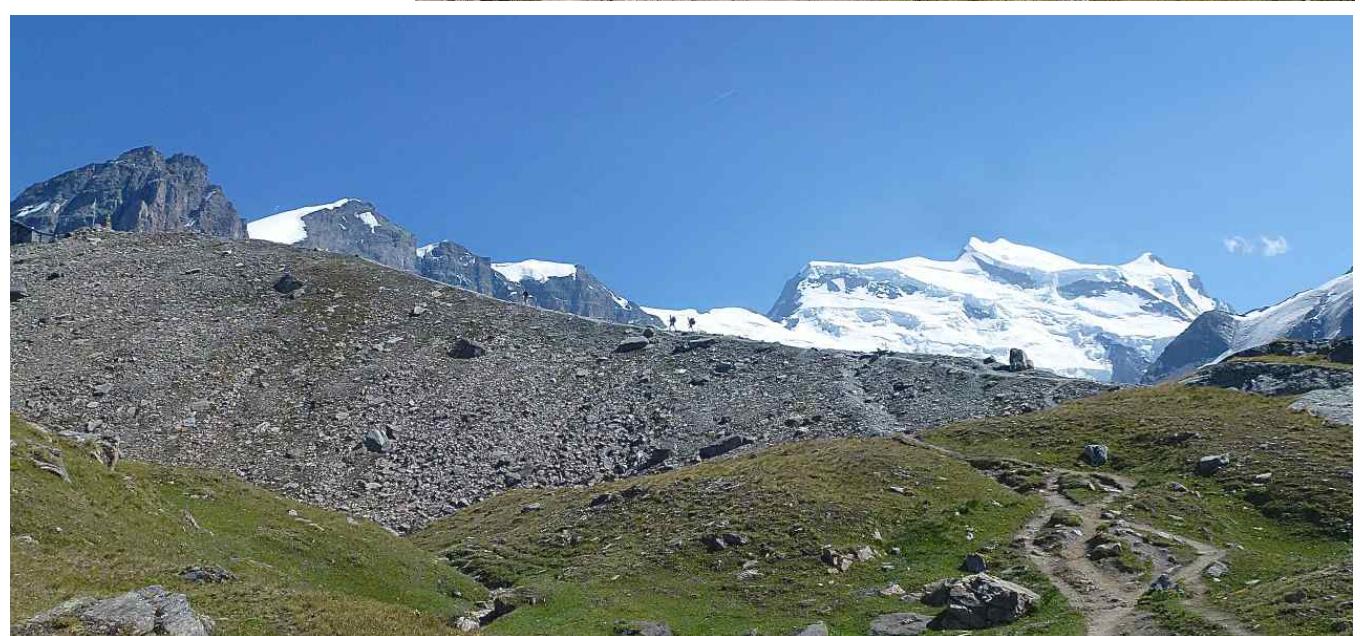


The signed path to the hut no longer goes down the east side of Plan Goli, as shown on all my maps, old and current. Instead it ascends gradually to the crest of the lateral moraine and follows that all the way to the hut.



The path leading down to the Corbassière bridge

At about 2400 m a path branches right down the moraine to cross the Corbassière stream (the glacier no longer extends down to this level) by the longest alpine footbridge I've ever seen, rivalling those Lesley and I crossed in the Himalayas. Opened in July 2014, this is now the recommended route between the Panossière and Brunet huts (part of the Tour des Combins). Tim, Roger and Don went down to have a look and walk over it.



The final section of the lateral moraine leading to the hut (far left)

The Panossière hut has moved! In 1983 it was 500 m further south, where the Col des Otanes path leaves the lateral moraine, but it has been re-built just above the small lake where we had camped. Of all the huts I have ever been to, this one is without doubt in the most stunning location; the views over the Corbassière glacier to Tounelon Blanc, the main peaks of Grand Combin with their multi-layered glaciers, and Combin de Corbassière are magnificent. And there was another treat – there was a free, solar-heated, alfresco hot shower, and what a view! We first assumed the shower would be cold, but there was enough hot water for all of us (not all at once!)



There was the possibility of climbing Grand Tavé, as we did in 1983, but it was such a glorious day in such marvellous surroundings that we just spent the late afternoon around the hut.



The guardian puts the sausages on the BBQ ...



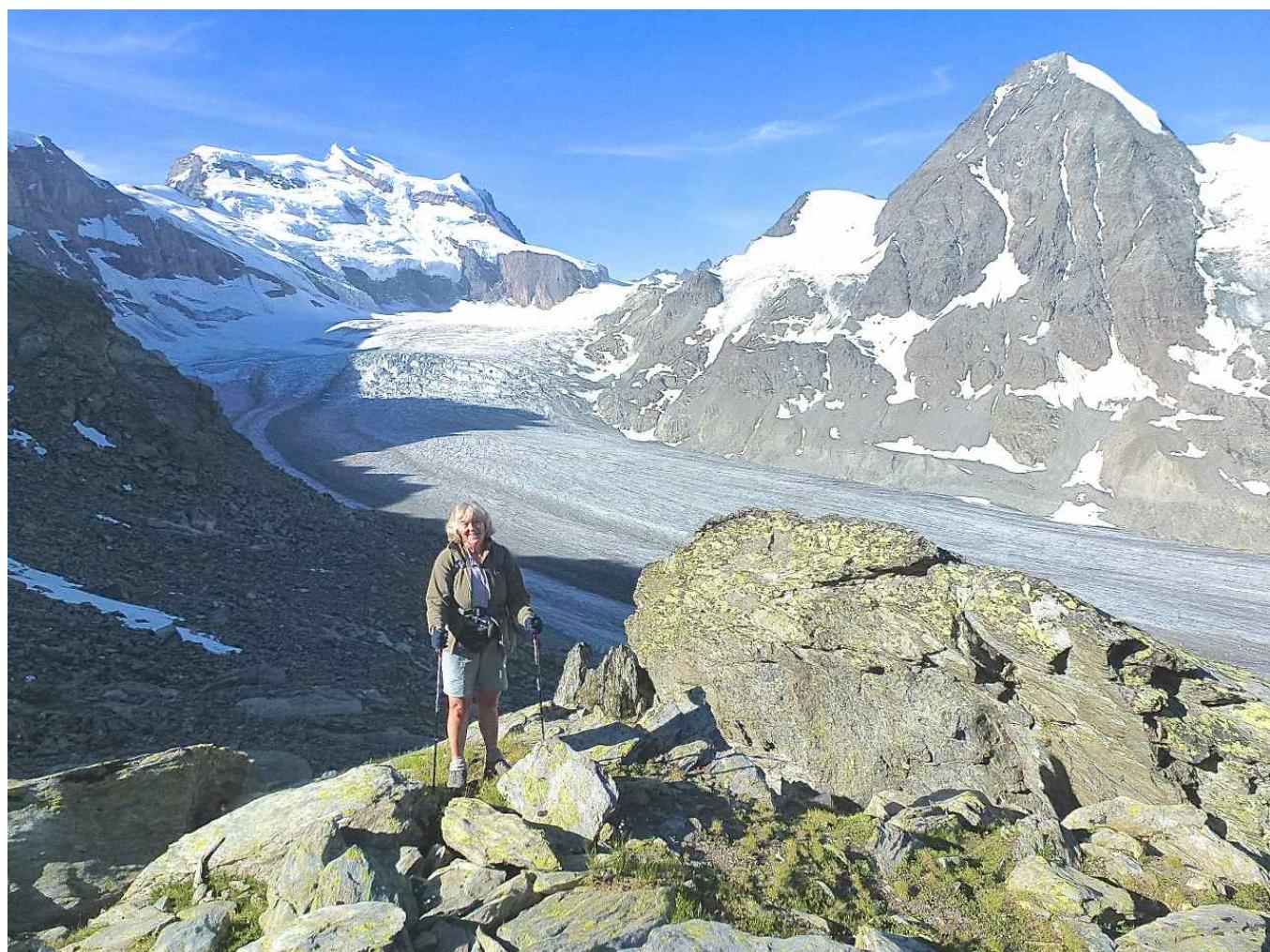
... and they were delicious!



<b>Summary</b>	Distance 7.0 km	Ascent 1200 m	Descent 70 m	Walking time 3h-20	Total time 5h-40
----------------	-----------------	---------------	--------------	--------------------	------------------

<b>Wednesday 15th</b>	<b>Trek</b>	<b>Cabane de Chanrion</b>	<b>2462</b>
	<b>via</b>	<b>Col des Otanes</b>	<b>2880</b>

On paper this looked like a long day, and so it turned out to be, but the effort was offset by the superb high alpine scenery. At 8.00 we set off in the cool shade up the lateral moraine and past the footings of the former hut to ascend the steep zig-zag path to Col des Otanes, an even better viewpoint for the Combin range than the hut.





A long, straightforward, descent, which included a few snow patches and at one point a 'via aluminia' (a domestic aluminium ladder), took us past the path junction at la Tseumette to the Pazagnou stream. There the bridge had been swept away by a huge landslide down the streambed, and work was in progress to repair the path. From that point there was a choice of routes. We decided to take the path over the Pierre à Vire shoulder rather than going down to Mauvoisin to join the lakeside track as this route looked more interesting and involved less ascent. All the way down there were huge banks of flowers on the south facing slopes.



Birdsfoot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) and Alpine Wood Forget-Me-Not (*Myosotis alpestris*)



The village of Mauvoisin and the dam come into view



Lunch stop on the climb to Pierre à Vire

There were fine views from Pierre à Vire to the snout of the Giétro glacier and down the whole length of the reservoir to the peaks at the head of Val de Bagnes. At Écurie de la Lia we went down to the valley track which then gradually descends to just above the high water level and we followed this to the head of the lake, through some tunnels and past huge waterfalls tumbling from the glaciers on the east side of Grand Combin.



Alpine Aster (*Aster alpinus*)



Common Spotted Orchid (*Dactylorhiza alpestris*)



Edelweiss (*Leontopodium alpinum*)



Giant Houseleek (*Sempervivum montanum*)



From the bridge at 2042 the 400 m climb to the hut is partly along the track and partly along a signed zig-zag path cutting off the longer hairpins. We arrived at the hut at 5.20, rather tired after more than 9 hours on the go. As we were staying at the hut 2 nights, the guardian asked what we would be doing the following day. When we told him Mont Avril, he was insistent on breakfast at 6 a.m. to give us time to do the peak and be back for dinner.



Mugs of tea on the patio with a view of Mont Gelé and Mont Avril



Summary	Distance	16.0 km	Ascent	950 m	Descent	1130 m	Walking time	6h-30	Total time	9h-15
---------	----------	---------	--------	-------	---------	--------	--------------	-------	------------	-------

Breakfast at 6.00 it was, and at 7.10 we set off, carrying just our day sacks. The only problem with the excursion from the Chanrion hut to Mont Avril is the initial descent of 280 m to the main valley to cross the bridge at 2182, and then at the end of the day climbing the 280 m back up to the hut.



It's 5.45 – time to get up for breakfast!



In one leg we had crossed the valley and climbed into sunshine at Plan Petit Giétron



From Plan Petit Giétron to Fenêtre de Durand was an enjoyable walk along a good path at an easy gradient

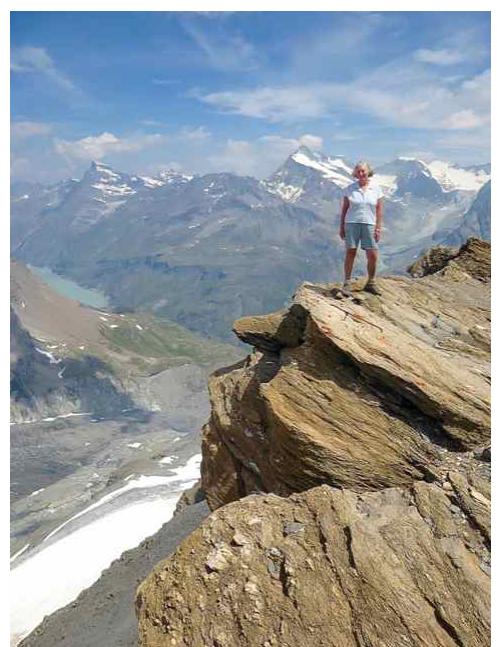


Approaching Fenêtre de Durand, with view of La Ruinette and Pointe d'Otemma

Surprisingly, the route from the col to Mont Avril is not waymarked, but the dusty path is easy to follow as it rises in tight zig-zags directly up the south-east ridge, with just a slight diversion round a rock band about half way up.



The views from the summit are every bit as spectacular as the mountain's isolation and conical shape suggests.

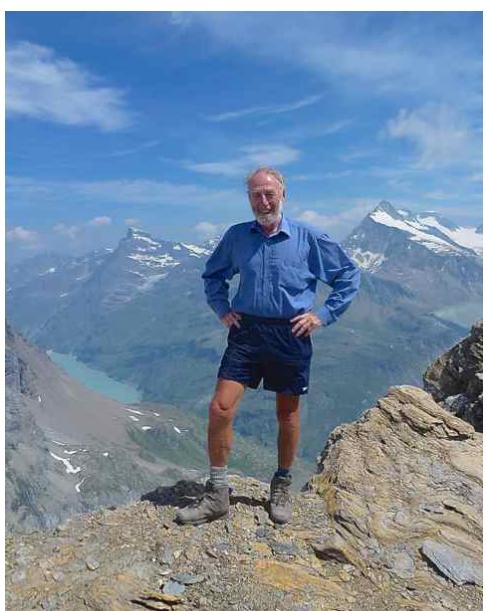




Verticillate Lousewort  
(*Pedicularis verticillata*)



Glacier Mouse-Ear  
(*Cerastium uniflorum*)



The dust on our legs suggested we'd been down a mine rather than up a mountain!

Those of us wary of our knees walked down to the col in 50 minutes; Don skipped down in the lead in just under half that time! The walk down from the col to the bridge was even more enjoyable than the ascent, little effort required, a splendid path, expansive views and a profusion of flowers on the lower slopes. Then there was the trudge back up to the hut, where we arrived at 4.10, in plenty of time for dinner at 6.30.



Blue: Spring Gentian (*Gentiana verna*). Pink: Verticillate Lousewort (*Pedicularis verticillata*). Yellow: Common Kidney-Vetch (*Anthyllis vulneraria*)



Viola



Adenostyles (*Adenostyles alliariae*)



Houseleek (*Sempervivum*)

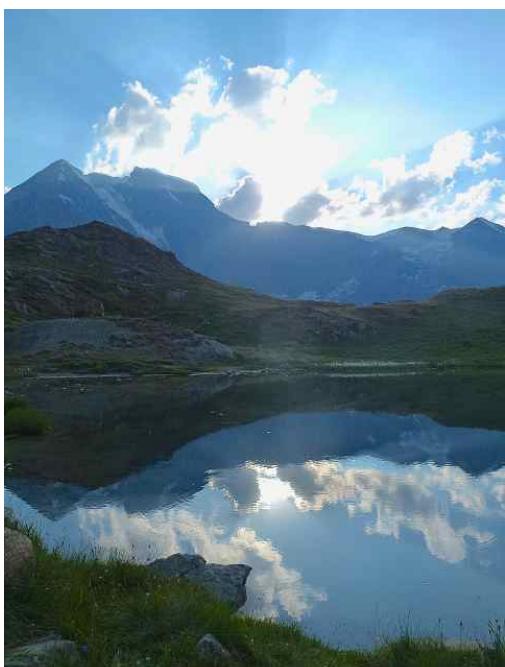
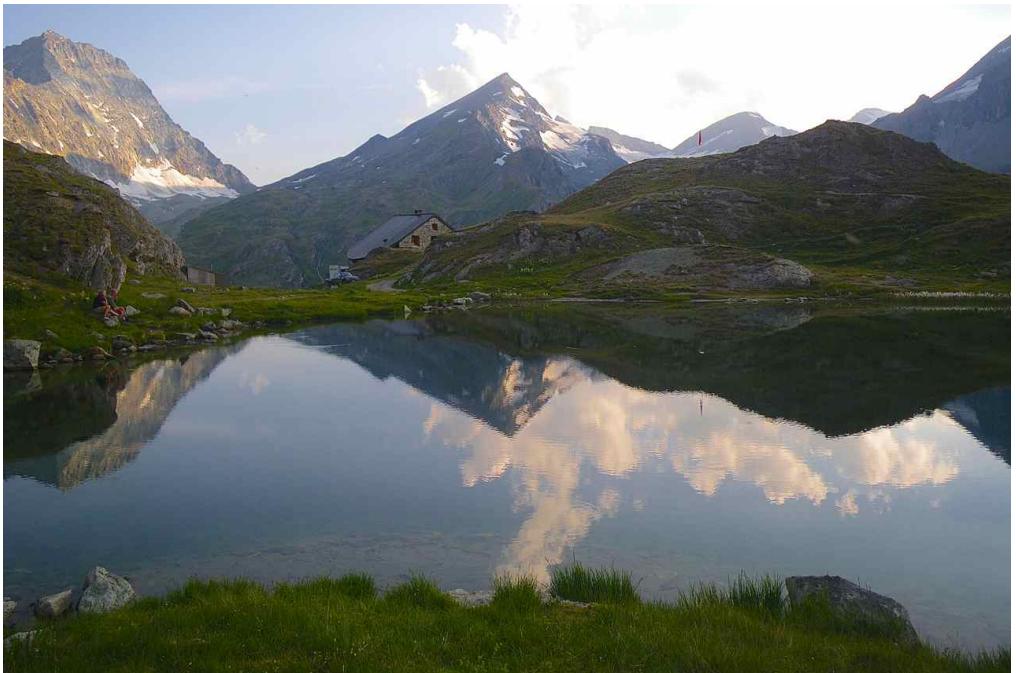
With no showers at the hut some of us went to the small lake just behind the hut and opted for total immersion to remove the day's dust.



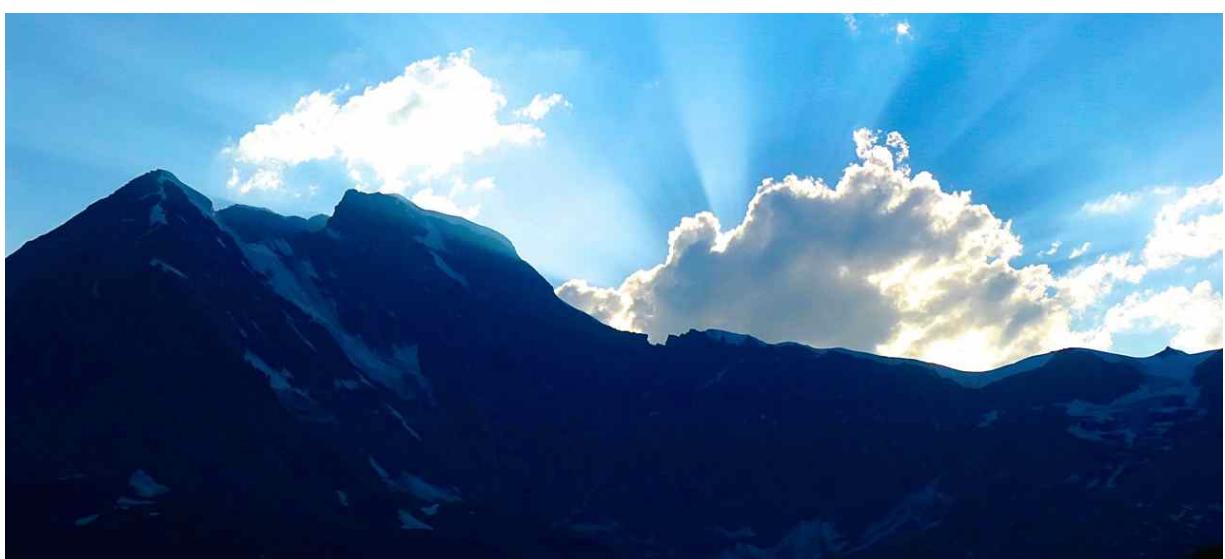
John leads the way!



Captain's log – 16th July ....



There was no ladder to the top bunk in our room!



Summary	Distance 15.5 km	Ascent 1470 m	Descent 1470 m	Walking time 6h-10	Total time 9h-00
---------	------------------	---------------	----------------	--------------------	------------------

**Friday 17th****Trek  
Bus/train****Mauvoisin  
Martigny****1841**

An early breakfast again got us off to an unnecessarily early start at 7.20 for the easy walk down to Mauvoisin. The path rises gradually from the hut to cross the outflow stream of the Brenay glacier by a very modern bridge just above a water intake for the hydro-electric scheme. A well-made path then skirts below a cliff to gain Col de Tsofeiret via a wooden staircase. A small rise west of the col is a superb viewpoint for the Grand Combin Massif.



A good path descends to the idyllically situated Lac de Tsofeiret, where we camped for two nights in 1983 to do the Mont Avril excursion. The 4 km walk down the grassy flanks of Le Giétron was marvellous; the easy path descends gradually, the air was cool and fresh and the sun warm, and there were splendid views of Le Pleureur ahead, Grand Combin to the west, and down to the reservoir and its dam.

Lac de Tsofeiret from Col de Tsofeiret



From the hairpin turn at point 2196, instead of following the track which makes a long loop 600 m south, we followed the signed path to Écuries du Giétra, a collection of old stone buildings being refurbished.

From there a clear, waymarked path not shown on the current map descends west in tight zig-zags and passes through a rock band by a metal staircase to then join the level lakeside track.

By then, for the first time in 9 days, some significant cloud had developed over the higher peaks.



The track passes through numerous interesting tunnels and galleries, including one behind the outflow stream of the Giétra glacier, the Cascade du Giétra, before reaching the eastern end of the dam. We spent much time and took many photos while walking through the tunnels and along the road across the hugely impressive dam.

The tunnel behind the Cascade du Giétra



A tunnel at the western end of the dam leads to the road and path down to Mauvoisin, where we arrived at 12.20. On the way down there are interesting information boards about the construction of the dam in 1951 – 1958, and the large, temporary village constructed at Mauvoisin to accommodate the workers, all now gone.

We had our packed lunches sitting on a large log and then went to the Hotel de Mauvoisin for coffees and apricot tart. By then the cloud had thickened and there was a rumble of distant thunder, and we sat under the large parasols on the patio as the rain began to pour down. This is Trek planning of the highest order!

The 3.10 bus wound its way down the hairpins to Le Châble for the scheduled train connection to Martigny where we arrived at 4.30 to be re-united with Dot who was glad that the tedium and heat of 4 days stuck in the hotel on her own was over.



They think it's all over – it is now, until next year ...



... apart from coffee and apricot tart ...



... and a reunion with Dot.

Summary	Distance 10.0 km	Ascent 240 m	Descent 860 m	Walking time 3h-10	Total time 5h-00
---------	------------------	--------------	---------------	--------------------	------------------

**Saturday 18th****Rail  
Air****Geneva  
Manchester**

It was a grey, drizzly morning as we walked in the rain for the only time this year to catch the 10.20 train which took us along the north shore of Lake Geneva directly to Geneva airport in plenty of time for our 3.20 flight. Don and Dot followed on by taxi, arranged by their insurance, and boarded the plane just before take-off.

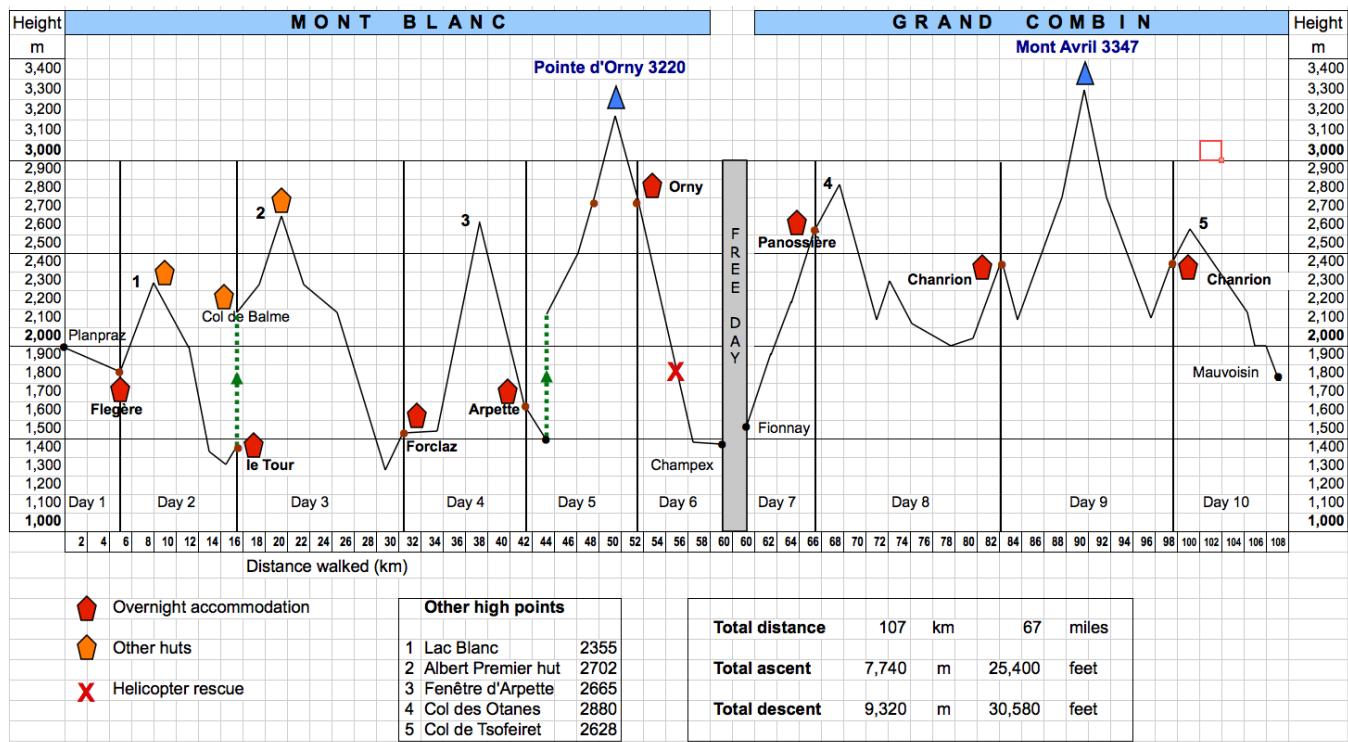


The Trek Slate balance is settled up



We counted them all out and we counted them all back, with nothing to declare but a broken fibula

## ROUTE PROFILE



I produced this log in the autumn of 2015 on an Apple iMac desktop using Word for Mac 2011, with iPhoto and Preview for editing the images. Most of the images were taken by Lesley and me, but thanks to John, Tim, Roger, and Don for the ones of theirs which I have included. To keep the overall file size down, all the images are low resolution but of sufficient quality to display fairly well at A4 page size. The average size of the 218 images used is about 70 kB, compared with typically 2 – 5 MB for the originals, giving a file size of about 18.3 MB, the size of about 5 original images. Thanks to Dave Shaw who identified the flowers which I didn't already know. For some images, e.g. the viola, there isn't enough information in the image to identify the exact species.

© Images copyright members of the party

© Text and map copyright Allan Witton

I haven't acknowledged which images are from whom, apart from Tim's phone panoramas, which appear below. Viewing these low resolution versions at A4 page size doesn't do them justice; the originals viewed across the full width of a 27 inch desktop monitor are really impressive.

Edition 2 with minor formatting changes 2020.

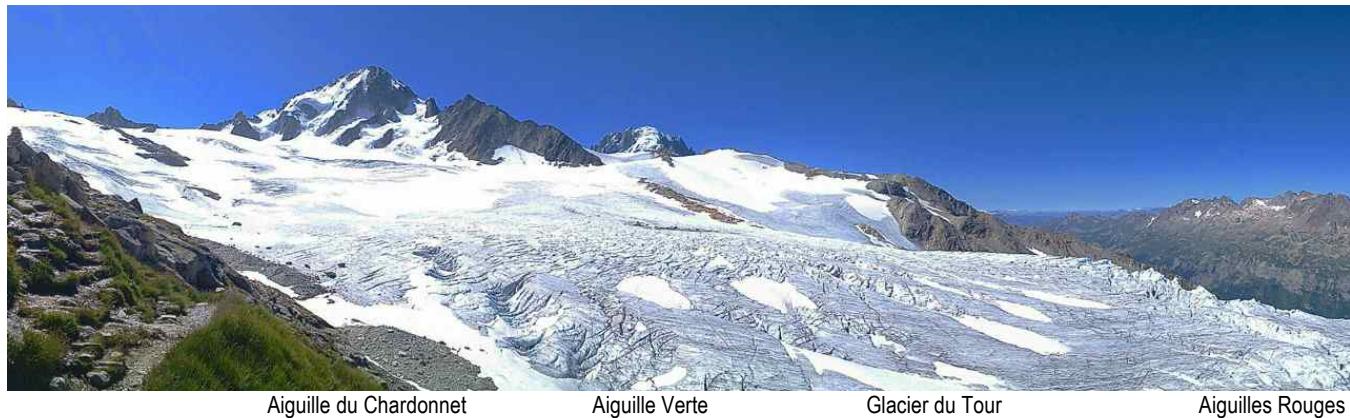
## PANORAMAS

From the approach path to the Albert Premier hut – 130°



Glacier du Tour Aiguille du Chardonnet Aiguille Verte Mont Blanc Chamonix Aiguilles Rouges

From the lateral moraine of the Glacier du Tour – 120°



From Fenêtre d'Arpette – 140°



From the Orny Hut – 170°



From the Panossière Hut – 180°



From the summit of Mont Avril – 200°



## OLD TREKKERS' TREKS 3000 m POINTS

It was in 2011 that I first had the idea of producing the following list of the 3000 m points that the OTT have reached. We were on the summit of Petzek, and I couldn't remember the last two digits of Hohe Riffler's height and hence which of them was higher, making it the second highest peak we had reached at that time. I have updated the list each year since.

All are summits except where marked • for cols and § for high points on a ridge.

No 3000 m point reached that year.

**Total Treks** A&L: 10 J&J: 10 Tim: 8 Roger: 7 Paul: 5 Ian: 2 Nigel: 2  
Mark & Julie: 1 Jane: 1 Elizabeth: 1 Don & Dot: 1

## OLD TREKKERS' TREKS SUMMARY TABLE

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Country	Austria	Austria	Italy	France Spain	Austria	Austria	Italy	Austria	Italy	France Switzerland
Area	Tirol Stubaital	Tirol Zillertal	Dolomites Alta Via 2	Pyrenees Marcadau >Ordesa	Vorarlberg Ratikon/ Silvretta	Hohe Tauern Glockner/ Schober	Gran Paradiso	Tirol Ötztal	Dolomites Fassa/ Brenta	Mont Blanc/ Grand Combin
Trekkers	7	6	5	9	9	7	6	7	6	8
	<b>Walking times</b> Times shown in brackets are for part days (some spent part travelling and part walking), which are excluded from the full day averages.									
Day 1	(1-30)	(1-10)	(1-00)	(2-10)	3-20	4-20	(2-15)	(2-45)	3-30	(1-50)
Day 2	6-00	(0-45)	4-40	4-40	5-30	4-40	5-10	4-00	5-00	4-50
Day 3	4-00	5-15	4-40	6-00	3-30	4-00	4-20	3-30	4-40	5-30
Day 4	5-00	6-00	3-30	5-00	3-20	5-40	3-30	2-50	3-50	6-30
Day 5	6-30	2-30	(2-15)	3-30	3-30	3-30	5-15	5-15	4-00	4-50
Day 6	(2-00)	6-30	(2-10)	5-30	3-30	Free	Free	6-45	3-15	3-40
Day 7	4-00	4-30	3-20	Free	Free)	5-40	5-00	Free	Free	Free
Day 8	4-00	6-00	5-00	4-40	4-30	3-15	4-15	4-40	4-10	3-20
Day 9	4-00		3-30	5-10	5-10	4-00	5-15	4-10	5-15	6-30
Day 10	4-00		3-00	6-00	3-20	4-40	5-40	7-00	4-45	6-10
Day 11	2-30		4-20	Free	5-15	3-20	(2-15)	4-15		3-10
Day 12			(2-40)	5-10				4-45		
Day 13								(2-30)		
	<b>Distances and ascents in black are in miles and feet, those in blue are in km and metres.</b>									
Total Distance	57 91	49 78	68 108	72 115	64 102	64 103	73 117	69 111	63 101	67 107
Total ascent	21,000 6390	17,500 5330	23,900 7270	25,400 7730	22,800 6960	22,000 6690	24,400 7450	29,900 9100	18,500 5640	25,400 7740
Total days walking	11	8	12	10	10	10	10	12	9	10
Full days walking	9	6	8	9	10	10	8	10	9	9
Average time for full days	4h-00	5h-10	4h-00	5h-00	4h-05	4h-20	4h-50	4h-45	4h-15	5h-00
Average distance for full days	5.7 9.1	7.5 12.0	6.9 11.0	7.5 11.9	6.4 10.2	6.4 10.3	7.9 12.7	6.2 9.9	7.0 11.2	7.1 11.3
Average climb for full days	2250 690	2760 840	2380 720	2650 810	2280 700	2200 670	2730 830	2640 810	2060 630	2770 840
Country	Austria	Austria	Italy	France Spain	Austria	Austria	Italy	Austria	Italy	France Switzerland
Area	Tirol Stubaital	Tirol Zillertal	Dolomites Alta Via 2	Pyrenees Marcadau >Ordesa	Vorarlberg Ratikon/ Silvretta	Hohe Tauern Glockner/ Schober	Gran Paradiso	Tirol Ötztal	Dolomites Fassa/ Brenta	Mont Blanc/ Grand Combin