

Alpes Maritimes

From the Alps to the Mediterranean



<https://www.onfootholidays.co.uk/routes/alpes-maritimes/>

Route Summary



At a glance

Alpes Maritimes 7-night option (6 days walking). The standard version of the walk. Add extra nights in Menton to celebrate the end. See 'Prices' tab for what's included.

Suggested route pairing: Ligurian Hills

How much walking?

Full days: 12-21km per day, 4-7 hrs walking

Using shortening options: 9-14km per day, 3-5 hrs walking

Max. Grade: >

After a spectacular railway journey from Nice, you reach the medieval village of La Brigue offering the chance to walk its fascinating winding alleyways past old town houses. Explore the villages perchés high above the Roya valley and the town of Saorge, which climbs steeply up the valley side. Visit the ancient towns of Breil and Sospel and admire the views across the Mediterranean from the astonishing mountain-top village of Ste. Agnès. Finally arrive in Menton itself, Belle Epoque faded splendour now restored to its former glory, and a stroll down the promenade before dining well in one of its restaurants. This route can be walked as a medium-hard walk or, using shortening options, as a medium graded one, and the route is well signed.

Walked by On Foot staff: Simon, Mary, Patrick, Debbie, Ellen and Harriet

Self-guiding introduction by Richard Petitjean (subject to his availability) – accompanying you on your first one or two walking days, or guiding services for whole walking route.

Consider pairing this route with [Ligurian Hills](#) (4 hrs transfer by train) – for more details [click here](#).

REVIEWS: For independent walker reviews of this route submitted to the Association of Independent Tour Operators visit [AITO.com](#).

TRAVEL ADVICE: To find the latest travel advice from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office for UK citizens travelling to France, [click here](#). Citizens of other nations will also find it useful, but should always check their appropriate local agency.

Route Highlights

- The “villages perchés” of the Roya valley
- Dramatic alpine scenery
- The flora of the Gorge de Bévéra
- Painted chapels and Renaissance altarpieces
- Chamois, ibex, moufflons, boars, birds of prey
- The Belle Epoque charms of Menton
- Saorge, its winding alleys and underground passages

Things you should know

- Some of the accommodation is very simple (though Sospel and Menton accommodation is stylish).
- Be aware that some days are quite long, though shortening options are available.
- Some paths are quite rocky underfoot, with steep climbs and descents on loose material.

We Recommend

Extra nights in Menton by the sea front, just to relax. Consider pairing this route with our Ligurian Hills route (4 hour transfer by train).

Grading



Full days: 12-21km per day, 4-7 hrs walking

Using shortening options: 9-14km per day, 3-5 hrs walking

Paths mainly marked, with numbered signposts, though careful attention to the route directions required; some steeper paths on days 2 and 5. Highest point on route: 1,050m. Some narrow paths with drops may worry the acrophobic.

Medium-hard/hard: Average cumulative uphill stretches (CUSs) 810m (500m-1220m) per day.

Medium: CUSs 490m (150m-920m) per day using shortening options where available (doing the Notre Dame des Fontaines option on Day 2, and doing the shorter Sospel Circuit).

Acrophobia/vertigo warnings: Potential issues on the Breil to Sospel day for the acrophobic.

GPX file available for handheld GPS or smartphone App for complete route.

Important note: Times given for each day are walking times for an “average” walker and exclude stops. “CUSs” stands for “Cumulative Uphill Stretches” and measures the aggregated ascents in each day, expressed in metres of climb. See [“Walk Grading”](#) for more information.

When to go

The best months to walk: April, May, June, September, October.

Other possible months: July, August (but please note that our hotel in Menton cannot accept one-night stays between mid-July and mid-August).

Enjoy the Alpes Maritimes particularly in late April and May for the spring flowers and in September and to the first part of October for the warm seas. You can also walk throughout the summer as the mountain air is cooling though, as you near the coast, the temperature rises. If you have a real yen to be in the area in the earlier spring or after mid October, we would suggest 2 or 3 nights in Saorge, using the train back to La Brigue to complete some of the walking. Do talk with us!

Wednesday starts are not possible, as our hotel in La Brigue does not accept check-in on Wednesday.

Please note that during the Monaco Grand Prix in late May, the hotels we use in Menton are fully booked, and we cannot therefore offer the route for dates which would end around this time (see calendar).

Itinerary

Day 1 - Arrive in La Brigue

We recommend the railway journey from Nice as a mini-highlight, as much looping inside the mountain as clinging to the side of the valley. Freshen up, wander round the old village and eat well tonight.

Those arriving early at La Brigue will have the opportunity to do one of our circular walks from the village.

Day 2 - Tende Circuit or Notre Dame des Fontaines circuit

Today there is a choice of two circular walks. Either try the Tende Circuit: Over the hill to the old town to get lost in its maze of medieval alleys (**Medium**: 4½ hrs walking (allow 6 hrs), 11¾ km (7½ miles), CUSs 790m), or a shorter stroll to Notre Dame des Fontaines and a splendid chapel with well-restored frescoes (**Easy**: 3 hrs walking (allow 4 hrs), 9 km (5½ miles), CUSs 400m).

Day 3 - La Brigue to Saorge

A steep walk through woodland to the hamlet of Granile (a good stop for a picnic). An afternoon through magical leafy glades far above the Roya to the villages perchés of Berghe, before returning down to the Roya at Fontan and a short climb to Saorge. (**Hard**: 7 hrs walking (allow 9¼ hrs), 21 km (13 miles), CUSs 1220m)

Alternative shorter option: **Medium-hard**: 5½ hrs walking (allow 7¼ hrs), 18¾ km (11½ miles), CUSs 920m.

Both options can be shortened further with use of a bus. (**Shortest option**: 4hrs walking (allow 5¼hrs), 13¾km (8½ miles), CUSs 510m).

Day 4 - Saorge to Breil

Follow the GR52a via a substantial climb on generally good paths before descending again. The route then follows the valley floor before climbing above La Giandola and descending more gently into Breil. (**Longer version**: 6 hrs walking (allow 8 hrs), 12½ km (8 miles), CUSs 1050m; **Alternative shorter version**: 3½ hrs walking (allow 4¾ hrs), 9 km (5½ miles), CUSs 500m)

Day 5 - Breil to Sospel

Up onto the valley sides again and onto a glorious narrow path to the hilltop village of Piène Haute for lunch, then the Sentier Botanique of the Gorge de Bévéra before arriving at the medieval town of Sospel. (**Medium**: 5 hrs (allow 6¾ hrs), 14 km (9 miles), CUSs 500m)

Day 6 - Sospel

A choice of two walks today. Our shorter option gives you ample time to explore the medieval town of Sospel, using your 'Secret Sospel' booklet. This was written around 25 years ago, and while somewhat dated, is still the best guide available. Our longer circuit is for more seasoned walkers and includes a 400m steep climb, which is not for the faint hearted, but allows the walker the opportunity to enjoy some excellent views from the Col du Pérus. Both options include Mont Agaisen, an example of the fortifications built between the two wars as a southerly extension to the Maginot Line. **Longer Circuit** (4¾ hrs walking (allow 6¼ hrs), 15 km (9½ miles), CUSs 730m), **Shorter Circuit** (2½ hrs walking (allow 3 hrs), 9¼ km (6 miles), CUSs 430m)

Day 7 - Sospel to Menton

Your final walking day starts with a taxi ride to Col de Castillon from where a delightful climb through woodland will take you to Baisse du Loup before descending to Ste Agnes. After a stroll through the medieval alleys of St Agnes, follow the old mule track down to Menton. A shorter and easier version is possible following the track from Col de Castillon, joining the long route just before St Agnes (**Medium**: 5¼ hrs (allow 7 hrs), 15½ km (9½ miles), CUSs 550m). (Shorter version: **Easy**: 3¾ hrs (allow 5 hrs), 12 km (7½ miles), CUSs 150m)

Travel Information

ARRIVING BY TRAIN

Nearest railway station:

Start: La Brigue

Finish: Menton

Sample journey by rail:

Via Paris: TGV from Paris Gare de Lyon to Nice and local train from there to La Brigue ~9 hrs.

Menton to Paris: Direct TGV to Paris Gare de Lyon ~8 hrs.

We suggest thetrainline.com for times, ticket booking and other information.

ARRIVING BY CAR

Parking in La Brigue is on the public street but close to the hotel in a quiet village square. You can leave your keys with our host at the Fleur des Alpes. Return by direct bus after your final night in Menton.

ARRIVING BY AIR

The best "local" airport is Nice. Intercontinental flights use Paris – overnight stays advisable. Then either TGV train or domestic flight onwards to Nice.

Land by: Nice 15:00 for public transport connections to La Brigue (~1½ hrs) – later arrivals possible with train/short taxi OR stay a night in Nice if arriving late (see Where you'll stay and Prices)

Return flight earliest: 10:00 for airport bus service from Menton (~1 hr) – limited service, but other bus/train combinations available.

Flight information can change rapidly and not all flights run daily. Please do check directly with the airlines' websites or Skyscanner (see below) before finalising any booking with us. **Do not book your flights** until we have confirmed that we have provisionally reserved accommodation for you.

For up-to-date schedules and flights from all airports check Skyscanner.

See “Getting to start” below for transfer information.

Getting to the start of the walk

The first hotel is in the village of La Brigue, and the last on the coast in Menton. Transfer times and methods are also suggested for Nice airport below.

Transfers from train stations:

Outward: La Brigue (short walk or lift to first hotel)

Return: Menton (20 mins walk or short taxi ride from last hotel to station)

NICE AIRPORT:

Outward: Tram then train: 3½ hrs. Allow 1½ hrs from touchdown at Nice airport to train departure time from Nice-Ville. Flight arrivals after 13:00 may require train to Breil then taxi. For train times (Nice-Ville to La Brigue) on your day of arrival check the website: en.oui.sncf/en OR stay a night at the beginning in Nice for a more relaxed start.

Return: Train Menton/Nice then 2-stop tram to airport (~1 hrs), or airport bus from outside hotel (1-1¼ hrs), OR taxi the whole way from Menton hotel to Nice airport (40 mins) – only bookable direct with your hotel.

Full transfer advice, including timetables, is provided in your Walkers’ Pack. Contact us if you would like additional pre-booking information.

Where You'll Stay

Starting in La Brigue, you’ll stay in a welcoming, family-run hotel right on the village square – and the food receives consistently good reviews too. In Saorge our chambres d’hotes has rooms with beautiful views over the valley. Our pension in Breil has recently been refurbished and the chambres d’hotes we have selected in Sospel are charming, with excellent locally sourced food, friendly hosts and good rooms. Finally, your beachfront hotel in Menton receives great feedback from our clients who enjoy a special treat at the end of their holiday.

For late arrivals a night in Nice may be necessary at the start.



Night 1 & 2

La Brigue – La Fleur des Alpes (dinner, B&B)

Family-run restaurant with simple rooms. Charming welcome and excellent menu.



Night 3

Saorge – Ca'Da Barrera (dinner, B&B)

Simple but comfortable chambre d'hotels with valley views and home-cooked dinner.



Night 4

Breil – La Bonne Auberge (dinner, B&B)

Popular auberge in heart of town with excellent restaurant.



Night 5 & 6

Sospel – Les Iris (dinner, B&B)

A chambre d'hotels with valley views and a pool. Two-night stays only, so alternative accommodation used for shorter options.



Night 7

Menton – Hotel Princess et Richmond (B&B)

Right on the promenade overlooking the sea, a family-run hotel of quality in the best position in town.

Prices

Price: £1135

Total 7 nights in double/twin room, all breakfasts, 4 picnics and 5 evening meals, luggage transfers between all hotels on walking route; full Walkers Pack with route directions, maps, transfer and background information; local telephone support.

All prices are per person unless otherwise indicated, and are based on a standard booking in May. Prices may vary seasonally and a fixed price will be given to you before you commit.

Single Room Supplement (SRS): From £245 **Lone Traveller Additional Supplement (LTAS)** From £270
Large Party Saving (LPS): Groups of more than 2 people (on an identical itinerary, on the same booking and booked at the same time) – discount of at least £40 per person **Maximum party size: 8**

Add Ons

Extra nights possible throughout the route: Contact On Foot for ideas and prices

Further night/s in Menton at end: Prices vary with season and room type. Contact us

Taxi from Breil to La Brigue: From £60

Sending Walkers Packs to addresses outside the UK: £20-£60 (per pack, location dependent)

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