

Mont Blanc

France | 4,810m



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EXPEDITIONS

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Mont Blanc, at 4,810m is the highest mountain in the **Alps**. Reach its summit, and you'll be standing on the top of **Europe**. The mountain's iconic domed peak is impossible not to notice when arriving in the **Chamonix Valley**, but its beauty belies the considerable physical challenges of achieving the summit.

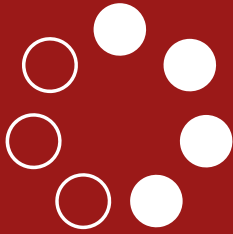
Closely entwined with the traditions of **Alpine climbing**, Mont Blanc has been a sought-after prize by climbers for centuries. We strive to enhance your chance of personal triumph by providing a state-of-the-art ascent program. Under the dedicated tuition of professional, experienced mountain guides you'll first learn the skills needed to climb a mountain of this calibre. To aid acclimatisation and introduce you to the magical world of Alpine climbing you will ascend a 4,000m peak prior to tackling the big one. The climb itself starts

below the **Gouter Refuge** and serious alpine terrain needs to be negotiated to reach this starting point. Summit day combines all the best elements of climbing in the European Alps and many consider scaling Mont Blanc a highlight of their climbing careers.

Previous mountaineering experience is desirable but it's not essential. We provide the best training, the best acclimatisation programme, fully qualified Mountain Guides and luxurious down time lodging and meals. The rest is up to you.

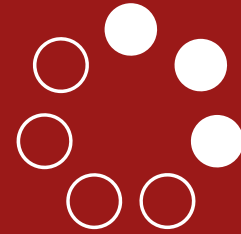
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Physical - P4

Sustained physical effort calls for a state of high conditioning. You should already have experience of tough challenges (P3) and be regularly training as part of your normal routine. Expect days of up to 8 hours and longer while carrying a pack up to 8-14kg in weight. Summit night could be easily in excess of 12 hours.



Technical - T3

May involve harder scrambling or some trekking and climbing with ropes. If snow is encountered then glacier travel with ropes, ice axes and crampons will be necessary. Basic climbing skills are ideal, but these will also be taught (and certainly practiced) during the expedition and pre-summit phase.

Please note that the grading system used is a rough guide only.



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ITINERARY

DAY 1 : Depart UK

We'll meet at the hotel in the evening, usually 18:30. Hire equipment will then be distributed as required. Over dinner there will be a discussion about the week to come and the equipment and clothing that will be needed.

DAY 2 : Acclimatisation: Rifugio Torino (3,400m)

We will meet again at the hotel at 08:30 for a kit check, and if anyone needs additional gear or needs to hire boots we'll depart for a local store to collect.

After that we'll head to a bakery to pick up lunch, before driving through the Mont Blanc tunnel to Courmayeur. From there we take the Skyway lift to the Rifugio Torino (3,400m). One of the many advantages of this refuge is the easy access (direct with the lift) – so if you wish you can take a bag of luxuries with you including extra clothing, food, water, books etc. Once there we'll take a lunch break and then spend the afternoon on the glacier learning how to use our crampons and ice axes.

DAY 3 : Acclimatisation: Rifugio Torino (3,400m)

Usually we use this day to get some mileage in our legs with a glacial hike. Depending on weather and conditions this may be across the Vallee Blanche, or we climb one of the local peaks, generally reaching an altitude of around 3,500m. Both are great preparation for Mont Blanc. We will then head back to the refuge where we'll relax for the evening.

DAY 4 : Descent back to Chamonix

Today we'll aim for some more technical climbing with an ascent of a peak such as the Aiguille Marbree. We climb this on a ratio of 1:2 for maximum safety. After that we take the lift back down to the valley.

DAY 5-7 : Summit Bid

Depending on the weather and conditions we may spend either one or two nights in mountain huts to maximise our chances of success. Most often we use two for optimal flexibility. Usually our first night is in the Refuge Tete Rousse (3167m), and our second night is at the Refuge Gouter (3817m). Ideally we climb to the summit from the Tete Rousse and then sleep at the Gouter on the way down. That minimises risk crossing the Grand Couloir.

Summit day: Expect to have breakfast very early morning (1.30 am is quite standard), before setting off using head-torches. After a few of hours it is usually light enough to see clearly. The pace on summit day is not fast, but should be steady and constant. Approximate timings for each route are in the FAQs section. Once back in the valley we will drive back to the chalet/hotel where you can enjoy a hot shower and a soak.

DAY 8 : Depart to UK

The day is yours, to relax and pack up your things before departure. You will likely have to vacate your room by 10am, however the hotel is able to store your belongings if you are not departing until later in the day.

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KIT LIST

Bags & Packs

Daysack

30-40L maximum. Mammut "Granite 30/40", and Osprey "Mutant" and Talon 33 recommended

Sleeping Gear

Sleeping bag liner

A liner is mandatory for hygiene reasons. The huts do provide blankets

Headwear

Sunglasses

Category 4 glacier glasses by Julbo, Cebe, Vuarnet and Adidas recommended

Wide brimmed hat

Keeps the sun off exposed areas like ears and the nape of the neck

Warm headgear

This can be a warm hat, beanie, balaclava, anything to reduce the heat loss from your head

Goggles

Low light lenses recommended as goggles most likely used in poor weather

Sunblock

SPF >30

Lip salve

Upper Body

Thermal shirt/T shirt

Merino wool (e.g. Icebreaker) recommended as they don't smell

Thin gloves

Fleece or leather gloves recommended

Light insulated jacket

A lighter jacket such as a Primoloft or lightweight down which can be worn at lower to mid altitudes is a great addition to your kit

Mid layer

A slightly heavier weight for greater warmth that can be worn over a base layer. Fleece for merino wool are ideal

Waterproof jacket

Gore Tex. Arc'Teryx Beta AR recommended

Duvet jacket (available to hire in Chamonix)

Synthetic jackets recommended as they stay warm if wet. Arc'teryx recommended. Please see FAQ's for kit hire

Warm gloves

Black Diamond "Patrol" gloves recommended

Mitts

Dachstein wool mitts recommended, or fleece with Gore Tex shell

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KIT LIST

Lower Body

Mountain trousers

Mammut "Base Jump" (Schoeller fabric) or similar recommended

Waterproof trousers

Gore-Tex, Arc'Teryx Beta AR recommended

Feet

Thick socks

Smartwool or Teko recommended

Mountaineering boots (B3) (available to hire in Chamonix)

La Sportiva Nepal Extreme or Scarpa Mont Blanc recommended. Boots must have a fully rigid sole. Scarpa Manta and Sportiva Trango might not be warm enough in cold conditions but by all means bring them if you already have them. Please see FAQ's for kit hire

Gaiters

Technical Equipment

Harness (available to hire in Chamonix)

We recommend Petzl harnesses and the Black Diamond "Alpine Bod" Please see FAQ's for kit hire

Helmet (available to hire in Chamonix)

Petzl "Ecrin Roc" and Black Diamond "Half Dome" recommended. Please see FAQ's for kit hire

Ice axe (available to hire in Chamonix)

Grivel "Air Tech" recommended. The bottom of your axe should reach your shin when held in your hand standing upright. Please see FAQ's for kit hire

Crampons (available to hire in Chamonix)

Petzl Vasak and Grivel G12 highly recommended. Please see FAQ's for kit hire

Trekking poles

These can be handy when crossing glaciers, and on paths for reducing shock on your knees. Leki and Komperdell recommended. Snow baskets essential

Hydration

Water bottles / bladder

2L capacity either in a combination of bladder and Nalgene bottle or just Nalgene bottles

Toiletries

Wash kit

Keep it simple on the mountain. Essentials are handsoap, toothbrush, toothpaste and deodorant. Moisturiser is advisable, everything else is a luxury!

Alcohol gel

Most huts do not have running water to wash with

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KIT LIST

Medications

Personal first aid kit

Painkillers (Paracetamol or Ibuprofen), blister plasters (Compeed recommended) etc

Personal medication

Keep this in your daysack

Miscellaneous

Head torch

Bring spare batteries. Petzl "Tika Plus" or similar recommended

Ear plugs

For protection against the inevitable snorers!

Camera

Bring spare batteries and memory cards

Documentation

Passport

Don't forget this! Your passport should have at least 6 months validity. With your passport expiry date at least six months after the final day of travel.

Copy of passport

Just in case

Travel insurance

Copy of own travel insurance details. And relevant contact numbers. We have a partnership with True Traveller and would recommend that you contact them when looking for travel insurance for your trip with 360. However, it is vital that you ensure that the insurance cover they offer is suitable for you, taking your personal circumstances (items to be insured, cancellation cover, medical history) into account. Many other insurance providers are available and we do recommend that you shop around to get the best cover for you on the expedition you are undertaking. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the appropriate insurance for your intended trip. To include medical evacuation and coverage up to the maximum altitude of this trip.

EH1C (formerly E111)

While you do have travel insurance, this can save you paperwork and reduce upfront costs should you have a minor ailment or need to see a local GP if you already have one

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FAQ'S

Food and Water

How much water should I carry each day?

As a general rule 1-2 litres is the right amount. Carrying more gives additional weight to your pack. We would advise against using Camelbak style systems with drinking straws as they can leak, the tubes freeze, and they often let you down when you need them most. We find that Nalgene-style plastic bottles are the best.

What type of food should I carry?

Everyone is different, however it is essential to eat well in the mountains. Sandwiches are hard to beat, supplemented by fruit and chocolate bars. Don't carry too much food, and remember that some foods will freeze solid unless kept in jacket pockets.

Where can I get a packed lunch for each day?

We have the opportunity to get our packed lunches from a local bakery – these aren't included, as everyone tends to want something different, and there is a lot of variety!

Packed lunches are available from the refuges, request it the night before and budget €10-15.

Accommodation

What are the mountain huts like?

Mountain huts are mostly owned by the Alpine Clubs. They are there to provide accommodation and food for mountaineers. They often cater for large numbers (>100), and hence can be quite busy. Meals are usually simple but plentiful, and anyone with special dietary requirements must let us know in advance so we can inform the hut guardian. Please note that while huts will usually try and accommodate vegetarians etc they do sometimes struggle with more specialised requirements such as gluten free. Showers and running water are not usually available. Meals, drinks, and snacks can be purchased for cash. As an indicative cost, a 1.5 litre bottle of mineral water typically costs 6-9 Euros and a bar of chocolate 2 Euros. The rooms are usually dormitory style, with large alpine bunks (up to 15 people in a row).

If there is no water in the huts for washing, what should we do?

Take some wet wipes to give yourself a clean in the evening. A toothbrush, some wet wipes, and a small tube of toothpaste (shared between several people) is plenty. Some alcohol hand gel is also handy.

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FAQ'S

Why do some people use different huts to us?

All huts have their advantages and disadvantages. The approach route for the Tete Rouse (2-3 hrs) and Gouter Hut is the same, with the Gouter being 400m higher (an extra 2hrs climbing) on the same route. While the Gouter is higher (and thus a shorter summits day) it is not quite as comfortable as the Tete Rouse. The Cosmiques Refuge is comfortable, and has a very short approach (<30mins), however the route from there to the summit is longer and more technical than the Gouter Route. Choice of hut depends on group fitness, technical ability, conditions on the mountain and availability of spaces. Approx timings for routes are as follows:

- Cosmique to Summit 6-9 hrs
- Tete Rouse to Summit 5-8 hrs
- Gouter to Summit 3-5 hrs

Once descent times are added (approx 4-5 hrs) it becomes a long summit day! If climbing from the Cosmique Hut you will traverse Mont Blanc du Tacul and Mont Maudit before reaching the summit. If climbing from the Tete Rouse you will initially cross the "Grand Couloir" before scrambling up a rocky buttress to the Gouter Hut. This couloir is not difficult to cross, but can be prone to rock fall in warm temperatures. From the Gouter Hut the route is relatively straightforward to the summit although the summit ridge is exposed and can be icy.

How do hut bookings work?

Please note that there are now new regulations for Mont Blanc and we cannot make hut bookings until we have your full name and your deposit has been received. We will also ask for a copy of your photographic ID, as the huts require this for your booking.

In the event that the huts are unavailable, we will suggest alternative dates or alternatively refund your deposit in full.

Health and Safety

Is it really necessary to spend so long acclimatising?

Yes. Acclimatisation is absolutely vital for Mont Blanc. Many people spend insufficient time at higher altitudes before attempting the summit, and often fail as a result. Our tried and tested itinerary allows good time to acclimatise, and gives you the best chance at summit success.

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FAQ'S

Am I likely to suffer from altitude sickness on this expedition?

There are different types of altitude sickness. Although our acclimatisation regime ensures that everybody enjoys the best possible chance of getting high on the mountain, altitude related problems can happen. The most common of this is high altitude sickness, (AMS – acute mountain sickness).

Symptoms for this generally include headaches, nausea and vomiting, which can sound quite dramatic but generally this is just the process your body naturally goes through to adjust to the higher altitudes and the reduced partial pressure of the atmosphere. For some people the acclimatisation process is a little longer and harder than others.

For our guides this is all part and parcel of trekking at relatively high altitude and although we assess each client's personal situation carefully we also further consider the compounding affects of dehydration brought on by excessive vomiting and lack of appetite.

AMS might sound frightening but our guides are fully trained (and experienced) in helping relieve your symptoms and providing advice on how to best proceed.

Please note that we don't recommend using Diamox as a prophylactic and if you have been prescribed it by your GP, please raise this with your expedition leader.

Should I bring Diamox on the expedition with me?

Although you may wish come armed with a course of Diamox or other high-altitude drug on this expedition, we do not recommend that take you these as a prophylactic during the trek or climb. We view Diamox as a treatment drug rather than a preventative medicine. Most adventure medics give similar advice, however we do appreciate this can be confusing, as many GPs (who aren't necessarily mountaineers) do suggest taking it as a prophylactic.

We pride ourselves on designing all our itineraries with acclimatisation very much front and centre and this expedition itinerary has been carefully designed to allow for your body to adjust to the altitude gradually, safely and comfortably. However, if you find that you are still having problems adjusting to the altitude (see our FAQ on Altitude Sickness) then your expedition leader or expedition medic will recommend the correct course of action regarding taking Diamox.

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FAQ'S

Should I take Diamox?

It is far preferable to take Diamox if and when needed during the course of the expedition. If you are already taking it and then start having altitude related problems you are left with few options but to descend to a more comfortable altitude which sadly often means that the summit is not attainable.

Furthermore, Diamox is a diuretic, meaning you will have to drink a lot of fluid to prevent dehydration. Of course, the upshot of this is you'll have to pee more which means you'll probably be having to get up more in the night and take cover behind rocks during the day. Another quite common side-effect is that it can cause your extremities to "buzz and tingle" including your fingers, toes and lips which can feel quite unsettling. Other side-effects can include dizziness and light headedness with loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea. Although all these side-effects are manageable when you have symptoms of altitude sickness, we personally believe it is counter-intuitive to take it unless necessary.

Of course, it is totally up to you, this is just our recommendation and we're not doctors. If you do decide to take Diamox on the advice of your doctor then please do let your leader know in situ so they are aware of this. We also suggest you take the drug for a couple of days a few weeks before travelling so you can experience the symptoms before taking them during the trek.

What sun cream do you recommend?

Any brand will be fine. The most important thing is the SPF – we would recommend at least SPF 30. Creams with UVA and UVB protection are best, and don't forget lip salve!

Kit

What kit should I bring?

Please refer to the [kit list](#) for this climb.

Can I hire equipment in Chamonix?

Anyone wishing to hire equipment in Chamonix rather than buy it can do so. We use a local shop for boot hire (allow €50 for the week), and other items are available as follows, payable in cash in situ:

- Ice Axe €22
- Harness €16
- Helmet €16
- Crampons €33
- Duvet Jacket €28
- Down mitts €11
- Full Package: Duvet Jacket, Mitts, Axe, Harness, Crampons, Helmet – €99

The costs above are current at the time of writing, but they may change – please check with us for the current info!

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FAQ'S

The Climb

How long are the days?

The length of days vary when Alpine climbing. Training days will usually start between 06:00 and 08:00, and last for 6-8 hours. Mont Blanc summit day will usually start very early (around 03:00), and can easily last 12 hours.

How fit do I need to be to climb Mont Blanc? Do I need to have experience on similar mountains?

No previous experience is required, and if you have not used crampons / ice axe before then we will teach / refresh these skills in situ, and you will have the opportunity to practice on the acclimatisation peaks before the main summit.

However, many people struggle with the physical demands of a Mont Blanc ascent. It is a challenging climb, and you do need to be in good physical condition. If you have not undertaken a previous mountaineering trip and are unsure, chat to us about training plans or an expedition such as Monte Rosa or Gran Paradiso – both are excellent introductory climbs.

We often get asked how fit one should be to climb Mont Blanc. You should be capable of a 12 hour day in the high mountains. Of course, this can be difficult to judge at sea-level, but as a rough guide you should be capable of running a half marathon in 2hrs10. As an example, if you have previously climbed Kilimanjaro, you should have found it easy, not challenging. Though of course every body is different, and you will know your own limitations, as a guideline we would suggest a 'healthy' BMI (20-25), as often people carrying excess body weight can struggle getting to the summit.

We would suggest that if you are comfortable with month 4, going into month 5 of our training plan (found at the back of the brochure [here](#)), this should suffice. Several excellent training plans can also be found online to prepare you for Mont Blanc. We also recommend the thorough advice offered by [UpHill Athlete](#) too.

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FAQ'S

How does every company claim to use the best mountain guides?

360 always use the very best mountain guides possible. But then every company says that, don't they? To ensure we genuinely do use the best guides, we pay our guides more than any other guiding company operating on Mont Blanc. That way we always have the pick of the very best.

Are all mountain guides certified?

All guides operating in the European Alps must be internationally certified. Training and assessment takes a minimum of three years and anyone caught operating without a license will be prosecuted.

Occasionally we employ trainee guides (known as Aspirants). They are in the final stages of qualifying as guides and are allowed to operate under the tutorage of a fully qualified Guide.

What if we summit early?

If you summit early you may have a spare day in Chamonix. If so, there are numerous options for rock climbing, via ferrata, or alpine climbing for the day. The group would not all have to do the same activity as we would still have 1 guide per every 2 team members. There are also plenty of less physically demanding options in or near the Chamonix Valley.

What if the conditions are too bad to attempt the summit?

If conditions are really bad we will find an alternative plan. This would usually involve climbing in either Italy or Switzerland. If possible we would still try and climb a major peak >4,000m high.

Can you tell me more about the risks with regards to avalanches and rockfall in the summer months?

Increasing temperatures have caused higher levels of rockfall in the Grand Couloir of Mont Blanc. To minimise the risk of this we only guide Mont Blanc in June and September when temperatures are lower. We also use a "two refuge" strategy for the summit attempt, which allows us to stay in one refuge on the way up and another on the way down, thus allowing us to cross the Grand Couloir in the morning when temperatures are lower.

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FAQ'S

Travel

**How do I get from Geneva Airport to Chamonix?
How much does it cost?**

Please contact the 360 office for full advice on transfers, as there are many options available. However, the main company we use is [Mountain Dropoffs](#) as they are able to drop you directly to your hotel in Chamonix on arrival. On booking we will send you a discount code for use with them.

With Mountain Dropoffs, you have the option of a flexi fare, currently €50 (€5 with discount) each way, which gives you options to cancel and change times and dates of your transfer. They also have a super-save fare, currently €40 (€35 with discount), but this doesn't allow changes.

Insurance

Do I need special travel insurance for the expedition?

You must carry individual travel insurance to take part in the expedition. We cannot take you on the mountain without proof of insurance.

Our team are insured through [True Traveller](#), and we are part of their affiliate programme. Other recommendations can be found on [our links page](#).

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the appropriate insurance for your intended trip, to include (at a minimum) medical evacuation and coverage up to the maximum altitude of this trip.

Your insurance details are requested on the booking form; however this can be arranged at a later date if you wish, though we would always suggest having at least insurance to cover you for cancellation in place at the time of booking. 360 Expeditions will be requesting your insurance details 8 weeks before your departure if we have not received them prior to this.

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FAQ'S

What happens if I need to change the date of my expedition?

With advance notice, we can often roll your expedition to a new set of dates, though please do note that there could be a 360 admin fee of up to £150. If your huts have been reserved there will be an additional fee of £15, as we have to put a deposit down for the huts on booking and these unfortunately are non-refundable.

We always do our best to be as flexible as possible, and will be on hand to help if this situation arises. As ever, we would recommend that you get travel insurance at the time of booking to cover you for these eventualities.

Electronics

What camera should I take?

We would suggest you avoid carrying bulky SLR style cameras, they can be heavy on the mountain, and slow to use. Compact cameras that fit into a pocket are best. Remember, cameras in rucksacks never take photographs! Digital cameras must be kept warm in a pocket or they will freeze and cease to function.

Can I charge my electronics during the climb?

Some of the mountain huts have charging facilities, but there's no guarantee, we would recommend a power bank – though remember the weight, as you will have to carry it. We use [PowerTraveller](#) for our power packs and solar charges and would highly recommend them!

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TRAINING PROGRAM

To begin 6 months prior to the expedition where possible.

1. CVS: Cardiovascular exercise which is low impact such as swimming, cycling, cross trainer, rowing.

2. Weekend walk should be done over undulating terrain. Only a light rucksack needs to be carried.

3. For specific exercises it is worth doing static squats and heel raises on a regular basis to improve leg muscles prior to the trip. Static squats are especially useful to help protect the knees. Please remember that it is still important to have a well balanced workout using a variety of muscle groups.

4. It is worth winding down and resting in the week leading up to the trip, doing several light walks to keep things going.

5. When walking going at a pace of a brisk walk with a light sweat and enough to feel breathless is recommended

6. During the program, rather than step up suddenly each month (example, going for 3 one hour walks each week during the weekdays in April to 3 one and half hour walks suddenly in May) it is better to build up gradually each week so there isn't a large transition (example, going for 3 one hour walks during week 1 in April, going for 3 one hour and ten minute walks during week 2 in April, going for 3 one hour and fifteen minute walks during week 3 in April, going for 3 one hour and twenty minute walks during week 4 in April)

6. It is important you seek medical advice prior to starting any training program, especially if you are not used to regular physical exertion

All the best with your training!

MONTH 1

OPT 1

2 x 30 mins weekday walk
1 x 1 hour weekend walk
1 x 10 mins CVS

OPT 2

1 x 30 mins weekday walk
2 x 1 hour weekend walk
1 x 10 mins CVS

MONTH 2

OPT 1

2 x 45 mins weekday walk
1 x 2 hours weekend walk
2 x 10 mins CVS

OPT 2

1 x 45 mins weekday walk
2 x 2 hours weekend walk
2 x 10 mins CVS

MONTH 3

OPT 1

2 x 45 mins weekday walk
1 x 2 hours weekend walk
2 x 10 mins CVS

OPT 2

1 x 45 mins weekday walk
2 x 2 hours weekend walk
2 x 10 mins CVS

MONTH 4

OPT 1

3 x 1 hour weekday walk
1 x 4 hours weekend walk
3 x 15 mins CVS

OPT 2

2 x 1 hour weekday walk
2 x 4 hours weekend walk
3 x 15 mins CVS

MONTH 5

OPT 1

3 x 1.5 hours weekday walk
1 x 5 hours weekend walk
3 x 20 - 25 mins CVS

OPT 2

2 x 1.5 hours weekday walk
2 x 5 hours weekend walk
3 x 20 - 25 mins CVS

MONTH 6

OPT 1

3 x 2 hours weekday walk
1 x 6 hours weekend walk
3 x 30 mins CVS

OPT 2

2 x 3 hours weekday walk
2 x 6 hours weekend walk
3 x 30 mins CVS

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"Life should not be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty & well preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside in a cloud of smoke, thoroughly used up, totally worn out & loudly proclaiming 'Wow! What a Ride!' "

Dream it. Plan it. Live it.