

THE GR5: THE GRAND TRAVERSE OF THE ALPS



28 DAYS

11/08 - 07/09, 2024

590 KMS

32,700 METERS ELEVATION GAIN

EXPEDITION REPORT



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1. Summary

On August 11th 2024, we started walking the French section of the GR5 - The Grand Traverse of the Alps - from Lake Geneva to the Mediterranean Sea. Our path, which lasted 28 days, covered a total of 590 kilometers and 32,700 meters of elevation gain. Ultimately, this journey proved that a local and slow-travel experience could still very much offer a real adventure.

2. The GR5: The “Grand Traverse of the Alps”

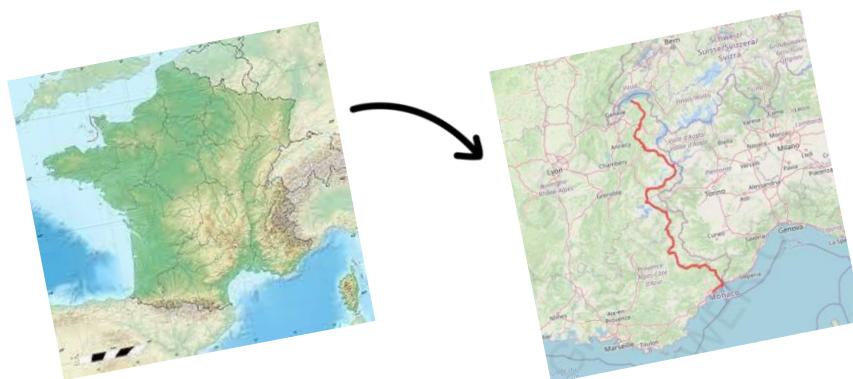


1.1 Introduction

The **GR5** is a GR (“Grande Randonnée” standing for Great hiking path) that starts in the Netherlands, runs through Belgium and Luxembourg before crossing France from North to South. The alpine portion, also known as a **Grande Traverse of the Alps** runs from Lake Geneva to the Mediterranean Sea. It is a spectacular route to hike with France showing off some of its best landscapes.

1.2 Itinerary Overview

On August 11th 2024, we started our first day of walking **from St Gingolph by Lake Geneva towards the Mediterranean**. We covered the entire length of this major Alpine crossing at a pace of **22km/day on average**, bearing in mind the significant daily elevation gain that accompanied this distance. That is, **28 days** of walking in total.





Leaving from lake Geneva - 8am on August 11th !

1.3 Objectives

DISCONNECT TO CONNECT



PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Though we had previous experience with adventures in the Alps, this particular hiking itinerary was **our most extensive yet**. Our objective was to maintain a consistent rhythm, aiming to complete the journey in less than a month.



REALITY CHECK

Through our studies, we are aware of the environmental challenges of our century. This adventure allowed us to **reconnect with the reality on the ground** by taking the time to observe such a natural environment and by meeting people key to the local environment of the Alps.



BIODIVERSITY

Our goal was also to gain exposure to and a better **understanding of the existing biodiversity and geology of the Alps** as well as ongoing efforts and projects to safeguard it.

1.4 Why Did We Choose a Local Adventure?

Both of us were fortunate enough to have the opportunity to regularly travel abroad, allowing us to explore diverse landscapes and cultures. Following an extensive conversation about our dream destinations, we both realized that our knowledge of the treasures in our own home country, France, was surprisingly limited. While Maëna could provide in-depth insights into Patagonia's diverse hikes, and Alice could effortlessly recommend a captivating cycling journey across Laos, we both realized the significant footprint of our previous travel and wanted to show that **a local and slow-travel experience could still very much be adventurous!** We found ourselves questioning why we had not delved into the beauty of France before. The conclusion was clear: **it would be a missed opportunity to postpone appreciating the wonders of our country until retirement !**



Dinner shared with Lucas, Marc, and their father on our third day at Lake Chesery. It was their first experience wild camping and they were so curious about how we could hike autonomously for an entire month across the Alps!

3. Expedition Members & Experience



*Alice Inbona, 23, French
Social & Sustainable Project Lead*

Academic & Professional Experience:

- MSc Climate Change, Management & Finance - Imperial College, 2023-24
- Region Lead, Ecosystem Restoration Standard, Latin America, 2021-22
- BCommerce, Finance and Sustainability, McGill University, 2019-22

Outdoor Experience:

- Ironman 70.3 Aix-en-Provence, 2024
- 6,000 kms charity cycling across South-East Asia, 2023
- Toronto Marathon Finisher - 2nd in Age category, 2022
- Multiple Treks and solo hikes in Colombia, 2022

Alice has been an adventurer and sportswoman since childhood. You can be assured that she will take on any challenge involving adventure and the outdoors. From conquering high mountain treks in Colombia to navigating challenging high-altitude routes in the Alps on her trusty bike, she thrives on pushing her limits.

From January to June 2023, she cycled 6,000 kms across South-East Asia with a friend to raise €5,000 for the Sulubaaï Foundation—an organization dedicated to Marine Ecosystem restoration in the Philippines. She thoroughly enjoyed combining her love for exploration with a passion for environmental causes and therefore looked forward to this new adventure, uniting both elements.

In the future, Alice aspires to specialize in Biodiversity and Conservation. She plans to leverage technology and available financing tools to scale existing efforts. Her journey is not just about personal accomplishment but also about contributing to the greater good, leaving a positive impact on the environment she holds dear.



Maëna Raoux, 25, French & American
Expedition Lead

Academic & Professional Experience:

- MSc Climate Change, Management & Finance - Imperial College, 2023-24
- Sustainability Analyst, Ecovadis, Paris, 2021-23
- BA Political Science (Honours) & Economics, McGill University, 2018-21

Outdoor Experience:

- Torres del Paine O-trek (autonomously) in Chile, 2023
- Solo traveling throughout South America , 2017, 2023

Maëna is fueled by a passion for adventure and a deep appreciation for nature, where she feels most connected. This love for the outdoors has grown into a love for any activity that will keep her outside including snowboarding, trekking, and even sometimes paragliding in Chamonix where her family is based during the summer.

At 18 years old, Maëna embarked on her first gap year where she immersed herself in the diverse landscapes of South America and Asia. Wanting to explore more, she left on a second gap semester in February 2023 for a backpacking journey from Ushuaia, Argentina to Quito, Ecuador where she completed several multi-day treks, unveiling the breathtaking beauty of the continents.

Following these experiences, and her reflection on her impact on our planet and its environment, Maëna wanted to now prioritize leaving a positive impact on the planet and society in her adventures, opting for slow and local travel experiences. Through a focus on education and storytelling, she now seeks to shed light on crucial social and environmental issues, showcasing projects and solutions she encounters during her travels, fostering awareness and change. By doing so, she hopes that her spirit for adventure will be purposeful and encourage others to favor sustainable explorations.

3. Details & Logistics

3.1 Itinerary Details & Breakdown

Departure: St Gingolph, France

Arrival: Menton, France

Length: 590 kilometers

Elevation Gain: 32,700 meters

Type of adventure: Hiking

Season: French peak-holidays are from mid July to mid August. We wanted to avoid the Alps' "highway effect" witnessed in some segments of GRs in the summer in France. We also wanted to avoid the possibility of peaks being still covered in snow earlier in the season. This ended up being a great decision because we never suffered from the heat, as we arrived in the southern region of the Alps early September.

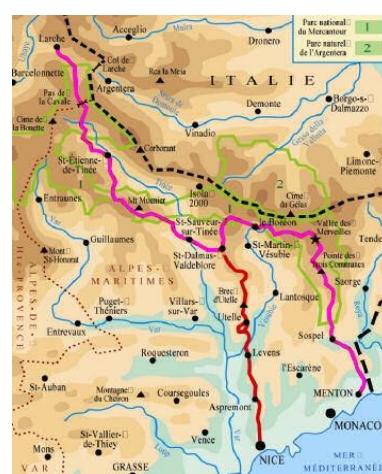
Difficulty: Despite its length, and despite crossing the Alps, the GR5's paths were well-graded.

We followed the guidebook *The GR5 Trail* by Paddy Dillon from Cicerone Guides, which became our essential reference throughout our hike. Without access to the internet, the Kindle version quickly turned into our "hike bible", helping us break down each day effectively. We adjusted the route slightly towards the end of our journey, as three weeks of hiking had improved our pace.

The GR5 route offers alternative trails that connect with other GR (Grande Randonnée, or Great Route) paths. For example, instead of sticking to the GR5 near the Parc naturel de la Vanoise, we switched to the GR55 route (from Tignes to Modane) to immerse ourselves in the stunning Vallon de la Leisse and witness the renowned glaciers of the Vanoise, which left a lasting impression on us. (In the map below, the GR5 is marked in bright pink, and the GR55 is shown as a dotted line.)



We also took a similar detour in the final days of our traverse. Facing the prospect of ending in developed urban areas around Nice, we decided to extend our adventure with the GR52, which led us through the higher-altitude Vallée des Merveilles, where we were rewarded with sightings of ibex and chamois. Below shows in pink the route we ended up taking.



Below, is an expected vs actual breakdown of our itinerary. We had organized it around the book *The GR5 Trail* by Paddy Dillon from Cicerone Guides, stated above, whose rhythm suited us quite well.

EXPECTED

GR 5 - THE GRAND TRAVERSE OF THE ALPS								
J SEMAINE	DATE	DAY	TO	KMS	UP	DOWN	TIME	SLEEPING
Sunday	11/08	1	Chapelle d'abondance	18	1870	1 225	7:30:00	Wild camp
Monday	12/08	2	Chésery	21	1 495	545	8:00:00	Wild camp
Tuesday	13/08	3	Samoens	25	670	194	6:45:00	Wild camp
Wednesday	14/08	4	Moëde Anterne	23	1 800	505	8:00:00	Wild camp
Thursday	15/08	5	Les Houches [1]	21	1 000	1 990	7:00:00	Family
Friday	16/08	6						Family
Saturday	17/08	7	Contamines [2]	17	1 050 [3]	895	5:15:00	Family
Sunday	18/08	8	Plan de la Lai	24	1 535	825	8:00:00	Wild camp
Monday	19/08	9	Montchavin (alternative laundry) [4]	29	1 075	2 120	9:00:00	Wild camp
Tuesday	20/08	10	d'Entre-le-Lac	21	1 970	205	6:45:00	Refuge
Wednesday	21/08	11	GR 55 - d'Entre Deux Eaux	27	1 205	1 240	8:30:00	Campsite
Thursday	22/08	12	GR 55 - Roc de la Peche	24	950	1 250	6:30:00	Wild camp
Friday	23/08	13	GR 55 - Modane	21	950	1 750	7:00:00	Campsite
Saturday	24/08	14	Mont Thabor	13	1 500	50	5:45:00	Wild camp
Sunday	25/08	15	Névache [5]	21	525	860	6:30:00	Wild camp
Monday	26/08	16	Briancon [6]	27	1 350	1 410	8:45:00	Couchsurfing
Tuesday	27/08	17						Couchsurfing
Wednesday	28/08	18	Brunissard [7]	22	1 425	865	5:30:00	Campsite
Thursday	29/08	19	Ceillac	25	1 305	1 410	7:45:00	Wild camp
Friday	30/08	20	La Barge	16	1 100	865	6:45:00	Wild camp
Saturday	31/08	21	Larche	27	1 170	1 395	8:15:00	Wild camp
Sunday	01/09	22	Bousieyas	21	1 240	1 035	7:00:00	Campsite
Monday	02/09	23	Auron [8]	26	1 265	1 535	7:00:00	Wild camp
Tuesday	03/09	24	de Longon	31	1 795	1 460	9:15:00	Refuge
Wednesday	04/09	25	St Dalmas	27	1 050	1 675	7:45:00	Campsite
Thursday	05/09	26	Uttelle	29	1 055	1 525	8:00:00	Wild camp
Friday	06/09	27	Aspremont	25	900	1 220	6:45:00	Wild camp
Saturday	07/09	28	Nice	14	210	720	4:15:00	Family
				595	31 460	28 769	187:30:00	
			AVERAGE	23	1270	1025		

ACTUAL

GR 5 - THE GRAND TRAVERSE OF THE ALPS								
J SEMAINE	DATE	DAY	TO	KMS	UP	DOWN	TIME	SLEEPING
Sunday	11/08	1	Chapelle d'abondance	20.77	1 859	1 215	7:30:00	Family
Monday	12/08	2	Chésery	19.76	1 469	521	8:00:00	Wild camp
Tuesday	13/08	3	Samoens	22.89	685	1 793	6:45:00	Campsite
Wednesday	14/08	4	Refuge Moëde Anterne	24.78	1 848	556	8:00:00	Refuge
Thursday	15/08	5	Merlet (pick up papa Maëna) [1]	16.31	986	1 484	7:00:00	Family
Friday	16/08	6	REST DAY					Family
Saturday	17/08	7	Contamines [2]	15.14	794 [3]	892	5:15:00	Family
Sunday	18/08	8	Refuge de Mya	20.19	1 504	868	8:00:00	Refuge
Monday	19/08	9	Landry [4]	28.02	1 062	2 177	9:00:00	Wild camp
Tuesday	20/08	10	d'Entre-le-Lac	12.84	921	79	6:45:00	Refuge
Wednesday	21/08	11	GR 55 - d'Entre Deux Eaux	28.05	1 273	1 293	8:30:00	Campsite
Thursday	22/08	12	GR 55 - Roc de la Peche	20.60	660	1 225	6:30:00	Campsite
Friday	23/08	13	GR 55 - Modane	21.00	1 376	1 792	7:00:00	Family
Saturday	24/08	14	Mont Thabor	11.07	1 011	63	5:45:00	Wild camp
Sunday	25/08	15	Névache [5]	21.23	557	1 471	6:30:00	Campsite
Monday	26/08	16	Briancon [6]	26.74	1 422	1 794	8:45:00	Couchsurfing
Tuesday	27/08	17	Brunissard	19.75	1 318	665	8:45:00	Couchsurfing
Wednesday	28/08	18	Ceillac	26.54	1 375	1 427	5:30:00	Campsite
Thursday	29/08	19	La Barge	20.12	1 181	1 111	7:45:00	Wild camp
Friday	30/08	20	Larche	26.67	1 285	1 429	6:45:00	Wild camp
Saturday	31/08	21	St Etienne de Tinée	39.20	2 046	2 577	8:15:00	Campsite
Sunday	01/09	22	Roya	14.76	1 027	681	8:15:00	Campsite
Monday	02/09	23	St Sauveur de Tinée	31.06	1 491	2 074	7:00:00	Refuge
Tuesday	03/09	24	Le Boréon	25.23	1 237	775	9:15:00	Refuge
Wednesday	04/09	25	Refuge de Nice	17.00	1 602	907	7:45:00	Campsite
Thursday	05/09	26	Refuge des Merveilles	10.54	680	810	8:00:00	Wild camp
Friday	06/09	27	Sospel	32.00	1 068	2 665	6:45:00	Wild camp
Saturday	07/09	28	Menton	18.31	988	1 523	4:15:00	Family
				590.57	32 725	33 867	197:30:00	
			AVERAGE	21	1273	1200		

As you can see above, we surprisingly respected quite well our initial itinerary breakdown and daily average km hiked.

3.2 Transport

Alice arrived by car with her parents, while Maëna traveled directly from London by train (London > Paris > Geneva). We reunited near Thonon-les-Bains, at a charming campsite where her grandparents warmly welcomed us. Thonon-les-Bains, a small town by Lake Geneva, is the sub prefecture of Haute-Savoie in the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region. Instead of starting here, though, we chose the more traditional starting point for the GR5: St. Gingolph, right on the Swiss border.

Upon arrival in Menton, 28 days later, we were greeted by Maëna's father and friends. We spent the next few days with Maëna's family in a village near Cannes before returning to London.

3.3 Equipment

CLOTHING & FOOTWEAR

Starting our journey in late summer, we anticipated a mix of weather conditions—from intense heat waves to chilly nights. To handle this range, we chose a layered clothing approach to maximize versatility and adapt to changing temperatures. This setup proved successful, keeping us comfortable even during near-0°C nights. However, while mountain weather can be unpredictable, our waterproof gear didn't quite meet our expectations, rarely keeping us dry for more than 30 minutes in the rain.

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TENTS

&

SLEEPING

For our shelter, we relied on Alice's trusted [Forclaz Trekking 900](#) two-person tent, a companion she acquired for her South East Asia cycling journey last year. This tent demonstrated remarkable resistance and versatility once again in this adventure, earning the well-deserved title of our second home.

To tackle challenges, such as very cold nights, we had survival blankets (which we luckily never had to use!) and our amazing ground insulation mattresses. Our

expedition-grade down sleeping bags (0°C) were essential for the level of exposure we had in the mountains. It provided extra warmth to cope with low night-time temperatures and ensured comfort during unexpected circumstances like storms, which we went through 3 times .

COMMUNICATIONS

Feeling the constant buzz of our phones in our daily lives, we decided to spice up our adventure: **going offline for the whole journey!** No smartphones, but rather a **paper map** and the **classic Nokia "brick phone."** We were only in contact with our close ones ("we are ok!" texts when we had some data) and the locals behind the initiatives we wanted to discover along the way (to keep them aware of any potential delays in our arrival).

EQUIPMENT RECAP

The Essentials

- Clothing suitable for hiking in all weathers (rain and cold)
- Hiking boots
- Trekking rucksack sheet
- 2x Duvet (-6°C - 0°C)
 - Alice: [Trekking Sleeping Bag MT900 0°C Down - Forclaz](#)
 - Maëna: [Hyperion Sleeping Bag -6°C- Therm-a-Rest](#)
- 2 x Sleeping pads
- Water bottles (1.5 litres)
- First-aid kit and lighter
- 2x Headlamp
- 2x Rain cover for rucksack
- Orientation tools: paper map
- Sunglasses, sun cream, hat, cap, gloves
- Toilet paper and toiletries
- Survival blanket

The Extras

- Hiking poles (absolutely necessary in the end!)
- E-reader
- Cards
- Notebook
- Nokia brick phone

We ended up not needing any material supply from the board as we decided the adventure didn't need a satellite instrument for security. We rarely were without any data for more than 36h, and our close ones were aware of the routes we were taking.

3.4 Food Supplies & Water

We structured our 28-day itinerary into **strategically planned stages**, knowing which village or town represented refueling stops. Our plan was to carry sufficient food supply for approximately 4 days, and always have dehydrated “safety” food in our bag. Our calculation, based on an estimated regular hiking food portion of 1.5 pounds per day, amounted to **6 pounds per person per stage**.

Our menu consisted of a blend of dry foods such as nuts, seeds, and energy bars, alongside carefully selected food packs and the delightful local specialties we uncovered along our route, including regional cheeses.

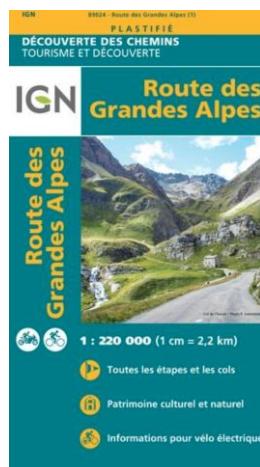
To ensure we made the most of the water sources we encountered, we also carried **filtered water bottles**. This allowed us to relish the pristine water from the high mountain rivers that source our journey.

For cooking, we also used two **gas canisters** from Decathlon, capable of providing over 5 hours of low heat. Since heated meals were only reserved for dinners, this supply was sufficient for the entire journey..

3.5 Maps & Navigation

We used 2 paper versions of this official GTA map to help us navigate:

89024 - ROUTE DES GRANDES ALPES CARTES DE TOURISME FRANCE - IGN



However, we rarely relied on paper/map navigation as the trail was consistently well marked.

3.6 Weather Conditions

In the months of August and September in the French Alps, we anticipated encountering hot temperatures, possibly reaching up to 35°C. But on average, the temperatures were usually in the mid twenties and therefore very manageable.

Our main weather-related challenge was actually the rain and thunder. Overall, we had three major rain days and got caught in one thunderstorm. Thankfully, we had researched how to deal with thunder in altitude which taught us to seek the lowest available point and take a seat on our rucksacks with our knees drawn up to our bodies. We had to use this technique once and while this was perhaps the most intense and stressful moment of our adventure, we managed to stay calm and get through these tough conditions.

3.7 Insurance

We both have French nationality, allowing us to benefit from French Medical Care for free if we had needed it (luckily we didn't!). Mountain rescue is also free in France and we were both covered by traditional travel insurance.

4. Environmental & Social Impact

One of our priorities throughout this trip was to ensure that our environmental impact was minimal. This has truly guided our choice of destination as well as our means of transportation (taking the train and hiking). During our trek, we followed a “leave no trace” policy and disposed of our trash only at the end of each stage. We also only selected and used eco-friendly cleaning products and soaps to minimize our impact on the nature around us.

Another key aspect of our trip was to explore climate-related challenges in the context of the Alps. Specifically, we wanted to learn more about:

- **Biodiversity shifts**
 - Climate change can lead to shifts in the distribution and behavior of plant and animal species in mountain ecosystems. Studying **biodiversity changes, identifying vulnerable species, and implementing conservation measures** are essential for preserving the unique and often fragile ecosystems found in mountain regions.
- **Water resources**
 - Mountains are often the source of major rivers, and **changes in**

precipitation patterns can affect water availability downstream. Managing water resources sustainably and adapting to variations in water supply are vital for both mountain communities and those in lower elevations that depend on mountain waters.

- **Land use change & local agriculture**

- Climate change has influenced land use patterns, including **shifts in vegetation zones** and **alterations in traditional agricultural practices**

- **Glacier retreat**

- Melting glaciers have significant implications for downstream water supply, biodiversity, and local communities. Studying the **rate of glacier retreat, understanding its causes**, and developing strategies to **adapt to changes in water availability** are critical components of climate-related research in mountain areas.

- **Temperature Changes**

- Mountains are highly sensitive to temperature fluctuations. Warmer temperatures can impact everything from the **duration of snow cover to the range of plant and animal species**. Monitoring and understanding temperature changes are crucial for assessing the broader impacts on mountain ecosystems.

- **Socio-Economic Impacts**

- Local communities in mountain regions often depend on agriculture, tourism, and other climate-sensitive activities. Climate change can disrupt these livelihoods, leading to economic challenges and social upheaval. Implementing **strategies for sustainable development and providing support for vulnerable communities** are essential components of climate adaptation.

During our rest day on day 6 in Chamonix-Mont-Blanc, we had the opportunity to meet Ludovic Ravanel, a geomorphologist at the CNRS (French National Center for Scientific Research). He is renowned in the region for his research and work as a mid-mountain guide, playing a key role in raising awareness about the dramatic and visual impacts of the retreat of La Mer de Glace (where we interviewed him) and glaciers in the Alps more broadly.

As he explains, erosion is a natural phenomenon in the Alps, with the landscape evolving due to weather events, earthquakes, and other factors. However, under current glacial and permafrost conditions, there has been a significant increase in both the frequency and volume of destabilizations. The retreat of glaciers, combined with permafrost degradation, is leading to erosion rates far higher than previously considered normal. This has created not only a climate and biodiversity crisis but also an erosive crisis at high altitudes.

The 2003 heatwave marked the beginning of this crisis, but over the past 20 years,

the situation has accelerated, particularly due to recurring heat episodes since 2015. Temperature sensors installed in boreholes on the northwest, east, and south faces of the Aiguille du Midi (3842 m) confirm this trend, showing a temperature increase of 1 to 1.5°C in the rock mass over a decade, outpacing the rise in air temperature.

The impact of this erosive crisis is visible in the landscape around La Mer de Glace, as shown in the pictures below. It was powerful to gain his scientific perspective on a phenomenon that is, for once, undeniable due to its shocking visual evidence of climate disruption.



On the left: Ludovic Ravanel explaining the recent changes that have occurred. On the right: what remains of “La Mer de Glace” in August 2024, from le Belvédère du Montenvers (see below for a picture contrasting the ice lost in just under two centuries..).



5. Preparation

In preparation for the trip we:

- Identified key stakeholders we wanted to meet and reached out to them including Ludovic Ravanel
- Trained physically with regular physical activity including running, cycling, and hiking
- Researched packing, emergency and itinerary best practices and recommendations
- Attended a 1 day Outdoor Emergency First Aid course in Bristol, funded by Imperial's Exploration Board

6. Budget

THE GRAND TRAVERSE OF THE ALPS - BUDGET				
CATEGORY	ITEM	UNIT COST (£)	QUANTITY	TOTAL COST (£)
Transport	Train tickets : London to Geneva	231	1	231
	Train tickets: Nice to London	224	1	224
Sleeping	Campsites nights	20	8	160
	Refuge	35	5	175
Food	Groceries recharge	60	6	360
	Refuge recharge	15	12	180
Equipment	Rain and thermal gear	120	1	120
	Hiking boots	139	1	139
	Gas canisters	4	2	8
	First aid kit & medicine	87	1	87
Others	First aid course	195	2	390
	Insurance	35	2	70
TOTAL BUDGET				2 144

7. Risk Management & Mountain Natural Hazard

Spending a month trekking in the Alps, it was important for us to understand the inherent risks involved with high-alpine mountain adventures. It was also our responsibility to educate ourselves on the many meteorological factors that could create unsafe conditions, which includes: weather patterns, storms, exposure and temperature fluctuations.

By starting our journey on August 11th, we prevented a major threat faced by early

season hikers: the remaining snow from the winter which easily becomes a major hazard and can create route blockage.

Mikoš Matjaž's 2013 paper "Risk Management and Mountain Natural Hazards", defines risk as the "Conventionally expressed by the multiplicative equation Risk = Hazard x Vulnerability". **Hazard** involves more objective risk presented by the mountains. While we can never fully control these factors, we can control how we interact with them. Some considerations were the below:

- Weather patterns: Keeping a vigilant eye on evolving weather patterns allowed us to adapt our plans accordingly, avoiding potential dangers posed by sudden shifts in climate.
- Terrain: Understanding the diverse landscapes we encountered was crucial. Different terrains present varying challenges, and our approach was informed by the specific characteristics of the environment.
- Accessibility to rescue: Ensuring accessibility to rescue services is always pivotal. We knew the available means of rescue to enhance our safety net in case of emergencies.
 - **French emergency number**: 112
 - **PGHM (Mountain Rescue)** : +33 (0)4 50 53 16 89
 - We also had a **whistle**
- Altitude: Acknowledging the impact of altitude on our bodies is essential. Gradual acclimatization contributed to a safer and more enjoyable trek.
- Wildlife: Respecting the wildlife inhabiting the region was paramount to us.

On the other hand, **Vulnerability** represents the human element of risk, which involves our risk tolerance as well as the below:

- Area knowledge: Thorough knowledge of the trekking area is indispensable. Being aware of potential challenges and alternate routes enhanced our ability to make informed decisions. We both are french speakers and did not hesitate to ask locals for advice before taking a route.
- Route selection: Flexibility in altering our route based on real-time information was also a valuable skill. Thousands of adventurers before us took this route and it is well traced and indicated !
- Experience: Our past trekking experience allowed us to act according to the situation and not the plan
- Gear choices: We ensured our equipment was well tested ahead of our adventure and adapted to the given conditions of the GTA

To better manage and prepare for various risks, prior to the trip, we listed out eventual risks, their consequences and how to prevent them, as well as an assessment of their likelihood, seriousness and risk.

RISK MANAGEMENT & MOUNTAIN NATURAL HAZARD						
	Risk	Consequences	Prevention	Likelihood	Seriousness	Factor
Equipment	Stove breakage	Inability to boil water and heat up food	Bring spare parts	2	4	4
	Fuel loss/ Leakage	Unable to heat up water and food	Use gas for this journey: easy to find in France. Always carry dry food in case.	3	5	5
	Tent fire	Potential burn and loss of tent	Never cook inside the tent	1	5	5
	Tent loss / Breakage	Have to sew/repair broken pieces	Appropriate spares and repair kit will be carried. Possibility to bivouac with sleeping bags if weather allows.	2	3	3
Outdoor related risks	Disorientation and loss of Direction on the mountain	Exposing ourselves to new risks, harder to get help	Use our compass regularly, share navigation between us	3	3	6
	Dehydration	Headaches, stumbling	Regularly take in liquid. Drink at least 3L of fluid per day	2	3	6
	Sun burn and blindness	Soreness, blistered, blindness	Wear sun screen, even during cloudy days. Wear sunglasses and sunhat. Regularly check for each other	3	3	6
	Exhaustion, fatigue	Irritable and irrational behaviour. Possible stumbling and falls	Frequent rests. Adapt to the slowest's pace. Eat regularly to remain fueled	3	5	6
	Bad weather	Difficult navigation. May need to change day objective	Refer to compass frequently. Be flexible on day itinerary.	4	4	4
	Larger injuries (eg. fracture, bleeding)	Could result in serious and permanent injury. May cause journey to stop.	Be cautious of terrain, be observant of your surroundings	2	5	8
	Small injuries (eg. cuts, sprains)	Inability to use affected body part	Know how to apply first aid technique to prevent infections or sustained injuries	2	3	4
	Injury sustained by lifting heavy packs	Strain or muscular damage. May be unable to complete daily tasks	Distribute load between each other based on abilities of each member. Proper training ahead.	2	3	8
	Period pain	Forced resting	Basil Essential Oil / Ibuprofen before pain is too strong	4	2	3

8. Post Expedition & Contact Details

Throughout our experience, we took plenty of pictures and journaled about our progress and the landscape, geology, and biodiversity we encountered. We are also hoping to publish an article in partnership with the Grantham Institute at Imperial College to shed light on the inspiring work led by Ludovic Ravanel.

For any further information on our adventure, please feel free to contact us:

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9. Conclusions and Recommendations

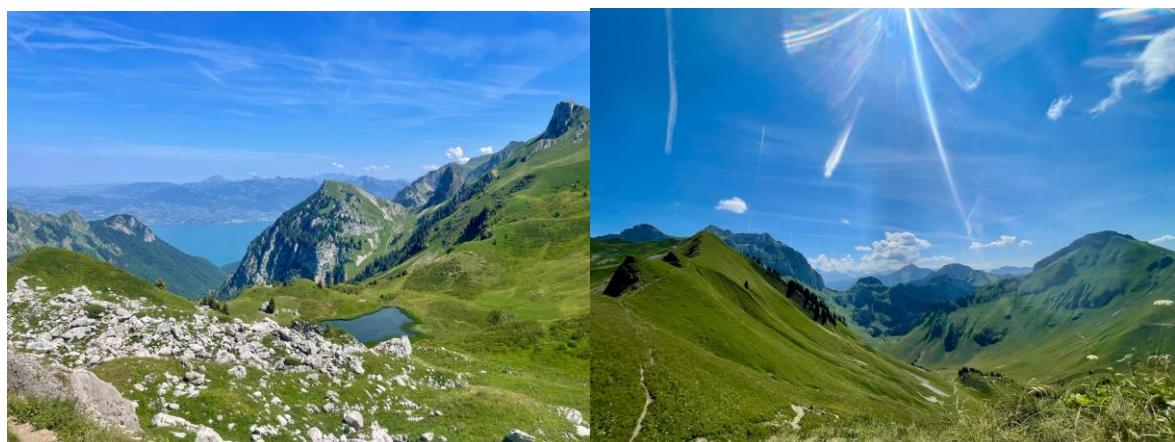
Ultimately, while we are often pushed to consider 'exploration' as having to happen in an extreme and foreign landscape, this adventure demonstrated to us both that **true adventure can be found locally and achieved with a minimal environmental impact**. If anything, our journey through the French Alps have left us both with the impression that there is still so much of our own local mountains that we could and hopefully will explore in the future. Our adventure has also taught us that while preparation is crucial for such adventures, **the strength of the bond and communication of the expedition members is perhaps the most important element for a successful expedition**. This journey was without a doubt the highlight of our time at Imperial and we highly encourage every student to dare to embark on such adventures in the future!

10. Acknowledgment of Advisers, Sponsors and Funders

We would like to thank the **Imperial Exploration Board** for their help in funding this adventure and particularly Lorraine Craig and Christopher Green for their availability, patience, and advice. We truly appreciate initiatives that seek to support student-led projects, particularly related to exploring nature and the natural environment. We would also like to thank the **Lord Mayor's 800th Anniversary Awards Trust** for its additional support and help funding this project.

Appendix - Photos

After finishing this adventure, we compiled all the pictures on Polarsteps for our loved ones. You can access it [here](#). In the meantime, below is a little preview of the beautiful landscapes we traversed:



Day 1 First (and last) viewpoint of the lake at our first col (*Col de Bise*)



One of our favorite valleys (Refuge d'Anterne)



Our first (of many) encounter with a herd of sheep (Lac d'Anterne)



Day 4: Our first view of Mont Blanc! (Col d'Anterne)



Not every day was sunny—our resilience was tested on days 6 and 7 near Les Contamines and Lac de Roseland, where we faced constant rain and no visibility.



The sunshine finally returns in the Vanoise National Park.



Day 11: On the GR55, we had to book our camping spot in advance near a refuge. This is a required measure in the highly protected Vanoise National Park. The bright peak in the photo marks the end of the stunning Vallon de la Leisse.



Beyond being our expedition leader, Maëna naturally put her tortilla-making skills to use, preparing delicious treats with Philadelphia, tomatoes, and avocados—which never tasted better than after those long days of walking!



Day 17: Alice tested her ability to overcome her fear of heights on the Crête de Peyrolle, 10 km before reaching the small town of Briançon.



We were lucky to treat ourselves to tasty food, especially a LOT of cheese! Supporting local cheese makers and trying all the regional specialties was essential—what can we say!



Gorgeous Lac Ste Anne, a beautiful surprise in the Southern Alps.



Spotted in Parc National du Mercantour

A chamois, which we were lucky to see regularly on the final section of the GR52 in
Mercantour National Park!



Sharing great moments (and breakfasts) with friends met on the trail!



Day 28: Our final day of hiking, arriving in Mention—and finally, the sea!

So many emotions that day. What an incredible duo and adventure! 😊