



NOLS ALUMNI TRIP TOUR MONTE ROSA – PENNINE ALPS AUGUST 15-23, 2017

Features of This Trip

- 7 nights in the field at “rifugi” or small hotels
- Eating and sleeping indoors keeps pack weight down
- 8 moving days
- One night (paired lodging) on each end of the trip in a Turin hotel
- Approx. ~60-mile, trailed route crisscrossing the Italian/Swiss border
- Stunning scenery in the Italian & Swiss Alps – and a glacier crossing day.
- Hiking at elevations of 6,000-12,000 feet
- Optional pre-trip day activities in historic Turin
- Cultural interaction
- Group size: up to 12 participants and 2 instructors

Cost: \$2,575

Minimum Age: 21

Trip Description:

This trip is a custom adventure for people who are comfortable and practices with steep hikes, high peaks and airy trails. We’ve found that our Italy crews are often interested in returning to the Alps, so we’ve crafted this route for **folks who are experienced** with the ups and downs of northern Italy’s sometimes challenging backcountry travel.

Join a small group of experienced mountain hiking NOLS grads and instructors for a 9-day adventure of challenging and spectacular hiking in the western Alps as we trek between “rifugi” (small, hostel-style lodgings) and rural hotels in the Italian/Swiss Alps. This new route, the “Tour Monte Rosa,” starts below Monte Rosa in the Gressoney Valley in Italy, continues over to the Valtourneche Valley and Cervinia, crosses into Switzerland above Zermatt and circles around Switzerland’s/ Italy’s glaciated Monte Rosa peak (15,203’), and returns to Italy’s Aosta Valley.

This trip will re-acquaint you with NOLS backpacking techniques in a convivial, relaxing and visually stunning location. Instruction is geared to your interests, with optional walk-up peaks, Italian “word(s) of the day,” time for journal writing and photography and more.

The route offers a challenging level of hiking— the average hiking day is about 7-miles with some challenging changes in elevation—averaging about 2,000’ per move. We’ll also have a roped crossing day of the low-angle Matterhorn Glacier. For those that want more, there will be options to do additional day hiking with an instructor.

Connecting our untried string of rifugi gives us the chance to savor European cuisine and culture while mixing with other, mostly European travelers in a dorm-style setting. Sleeping and dining (dinner and breakfasts) in the rifugi or hotels allows us to considerably lighten our packs for our daily mountain hikes among the stunning spires, valleys, ridges and peaks the western Alps.

The trip spends 7-nights in the “field” at rifugi and 8 hiking moves. Unlike standard NOLS expeditions, we won’t carry cook gear, or heavy rations—even pads and sleeping bags are not needed at the rifugi, but we’ll do “real” trail hiking over varied terrain with our lightened packs.

The Environment:

The Pennine Alps offer a variety of mountain terrain— grassy meadows, stands of conifers, large boulders and wide expanses of exposed bedrock. The majority of our trek follows established trails with limited signage and some steep, exposed sections. In addition, weather at this time of year can vary widely—including hot, sunny days, or rain mixed with even heavy snow at higher elevations. Temps are likely to be 60-65 F. during the days and near 40 at night. Most hiking will be in the 8,000-12,000' elevation range with nearby peaks reaching over 15,000'.

The Rifugi:

Rifugi are mountain hotels ranging from extremely posh to very basic. Our rifugio lodging (untested on this new route) will supply hostel-like accommodations in either large, common, mixed-gender bunkrooms or a series of smaller rooms. We will also tap small, local hotels. Showers are available for an extra cost (~€4- bring your own towel). The rifugi supply a bed and heavy blankets, but no sheets. Lightweight sleeping bag liners serve as sheets and are required. Earplugs may also come in handy. Some participants have appreciated switching from trail gear to warm and comfortable evening lounge clothes.

Well-made dinner and breakfasts are part of the lodging package (“mezza-pensione”), but alcohol is not. Wine and beer are available at the rifugi for €4-9. We'll eat in a dining room with a common table for our group. Breakfasts include fresh coffee, tea and pastries/ cereal/ yogurt. Dinners are likely to be pastas, chicken, soups and salad.

In the late summer the trails and rifugi attract people from all over Europe, providing a true cross-cultural experience. From Milan to Turin to the rifugi, there is not a lot of English spoken. Italian, French and German are predominant— you might enjoy an Italian phrase book- the *Lonely Planet* series is good for tourist ideas and basic country facts.

Curriculum:

This trip focuses on many traditional NOLS activities, including map reading, hiking and group travel. The instructors will present information necessary for the group to comfortably travel and can present optional topics desired by the participants— including natural history, NOLS' leadership topics and relevant local human history. Formal “classes” are few and mostly optional. Anticipate a required base level of group management and cohesion— this is a mountain expedition.

This trip is traversing a well-known and well-traveled route that NOLS has not yet completed. **Practically, this means that the trails, passes, lodging and logistics may take an extra measure of tolerance, persistence and “Expedition Behavior.”** Anticipate working flexibly as a team to overcome challenges.

Alumni trips, though more relaxed than a typical NOLS course, are not full-on vacations or guided trips. They are self-reliant trips through remote areas where evacuation to modern medical facilities can take several days. Throughout the trip, you will travel outdoors and care for yourself. The expedition format emphasizes hands-on learning and application of skills in a variety of situations.

Trip Logistics:

The trip starts and ends in the ancient city of Turin (Italy's 4th largest city and original capital—population ~2.2M), which is easily reached by train from Milan, Zurich or Munich. Turin, Italy's automobile manufacturing center, is sometimes called "the Capital of the Alps." Participants should plan on arriving in Turin on August 14 to allow for jet lag recovery, possible airline delays, and for optional group day-touring before our official trip organizing meeting on August 15 at 6:00 p.m. at our group hotel.

NOLS has secured lodging for our group (we'll pair couples and single-gender rooms) at Turin's Starhotels Majestic on the nights of August 15 and 23. The hotel is a five-minute walk from the train station. If you want extra lodging in Turin before or after the trip, we suggest you try booking.com.

From Turin, our group will take a series of train, bus and shuttle rides to and from our "road-heads" in the mountains.

Turin Map:



Our lodging, the Starhotels Majestic, is map lower middle, across from the train station.

Currency:

You'll need cash Euros for miscellaneous purchases and transportation throughout the trip. You'll receive the best exchange at your local bank, but money change kiosks are handy in most airports. U.S. credit cards will work in most locations, including train stations, but it's often a good idea to give your credit card company a heads up that you're traveling internationally. About 100 Euros will be plenty of cash for the field portion of the trip for incidental purchases. It is difficult to predict if our rifugi will take credit cards.

Air Travel:

Our trip starts and ends in Turin, which is served by Lufthansa regional flights out of Munich or Rome. Depending on where you first touch down in Europe, you may either clear customs in that city or in Turin. You don't need a visa, but customs will stamp your passport.

Travel in Italy – getting to Turin:

Check Lufthansa regional commuter airlines for connections to Turin (airport code: TRN) via Munich, Frankfurt or Rome. It's also possible to train from Munich, Zurich, Milan or Verona.

Accommodations:

The trip tuition includes lodging at hotel Starhotels Majestic in Turin (located near the main train station: Corso Vittorio Emanuele II, 54, 10123) on August 15 and 23. Similar to NOLS' tent groups in the field; we'll pair you in single gender hotel rooms— if you're traveling with a partner, please let us know.

Starhotels Majestic, with well-lit rooms and an included breakfast, is located across from the Porta Nuova train station about two kilometers from the historic city center.

Personal baggage that doesn't go into the mountains with you can be stored at our Turin hotel. This is reasonably secure storage, but highly expensive items (e.g. computers or other electronics) should not be left in your in-town bags. NOLS assumes no responsibility for your stored baggage.

Suggested Readings (summaries available online):

Helprin, Mark. *A Soldier of the Great War*. Mariner Books, 2005. Paperback: 880 pages.

Lussu, Emilio. *Sardinian Brigade*. Trafalgar Square Publishing, 200. Paperback: 286 pages.

Steininger, Rolf. *South Tyrol: A Minority Conflict of the Twentieth Century*. Transaction Publishers, 2003. Paperback: 175 pages.

Thompson, Mark. *The White War*. Basic Books, 2010. Paperback: 488 pages.

Fun facts about Turin:

- Italy's capital of chocolate-gianduiotti and pasta gianduja, the precursor to Nutella
- Birthplace of the Aperitif
- The Turin area is the birthplace of the Slow Food Movement— see its unique selection of slow food restaurants.
- The birthplace of Eataly- two locations, one near our hotel
- Headquarters for Fiat Chrysler Automotive
- Home of the 2006 Winter Olympics
- Piedmont is a UNESCO World Heritage site.
- Turin's historic cafes birthed the unique coffee drink- Bicerin (espresso, chocolate and whole milk served layered in a small rounded glass).
- Museo Egizio- top Egyptian museum outside of Egypt.
- Royal Palace of Turin and Piazza Castello and the Shroud of Turin.

Tour Monte Rosa Itinerary 2017:

Aug. 13	Depending connections and possible pre-trip plans, many participants will depart the US on this day.	
Aug. 14	Most participants arrive in Europe on this day. Depending on your arrival city, you may wish to stay in Turin this night to allow for possible late bags and jet lag. NOLS will host an optional wine/cheese tasting. This is a great option to meet the team and sample the region's best. Let us know if you can attend the 6 p.m. event at the Starhotel Majestic.	Lodging: on your own
Aug. 15	Optional, loosely organized exploration of Turin. Orientation 6 p.m. in the hotel lobby.	Lodging: Starhotels Majestic – paired lodging provided by NOLS.
Aug. 16	Pack and leave the hotel early to catch the 8:25 train to Pont St Martin. Bus to Gressoney La Trinite. Hike to rifugio.~2 miles gain 1000'	Rifugio Setton
Aug. 17	Hike ~6 mile, gain: 1,500'	Lodging: Rifugio Ferraro
Aug. 18	Hike ~9 miles, gain: ~4,500' Rifugio is at the base of the Matterhorn. We'll tap local guides for gear and route details to rope across the glacier the next day.	Lodging: Rifugio Teodulo
Aug. 19	Hike ~4 miles, gain: 300'. Cross the low-angle glacier Zermatt	Lodging: Hotel Kristall Saphir Resort Saas Almagell
Aug. 20	Hike ~9 miles, gain 2,700. From Saas Almagell, crossing back into Italy to the mountain village Macugnana	Lodging: Rifugio Oberto
Aug. 21	Hike ~13 miles, gain: 4500' to Alagna	Lodging: Rifugio Pastore
Aug. 22	Hike ~9 miles 5100' above Gressoney	Lodging: Rifugio Orestes Hutte
Aug. 23	Hike ~5 miles to Gressoney La Trinite to bus and train back to Turin.	Lodging provided by NOLS at the Starhotels Majestic in Turin. No host dinner.
Aug. 24	Depart Turin/fly home.	Breakfast at hotel included

Contact Information:

The NOLS alumni office is located at the NOLS Headquarters in Lander, Wyoming. We can be reached at (800) 332-4280. Email is also an option: alumni@nols.edu. If you have any **problems on arrival day**, please leave a message for us at 800-332-4280.

Registration and Payment:

To reserve a space on this trip, please submit a non-refundable deposit of \$200 per person to the NOLS Alumni Department. Mastercard or Visa works via phone (800.332.4280), or mail a check to: NOLS Alumni Department, 284 Lincoln St., Lander, WY 82520 **by April 5**. The remainder of the tuition and all application forms are **due by June 30, 2017**.

Equipment:

Basically, you'll need a t-shirt, 3 insulating layers, plus a wind proof and a rain proof layer— all must fit comfortably over each other so they can be worn at the same time. If you tend to get cold easily, add a fleece vest, or second pile jacket. On your legs plan 1-2 insulating layers that fit under your wind/rain pants. See the gear list below and call us (800.332.4280) with questions.

Equipment List

NOLS provides:	Maps, First Aid Kits, Emergency Communications, Water Treatment, Emergency Shelter, Trail Food
Bring these items with you:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 set of light or medium synthetic long underwear • comfortable medium or lightweight hiking boots – sized to fit with a liner/ wool, or 2 pairs of wool socks system (contact us for additional boot fitting information). • hiking socks (2-4 pair) • water bottles (two liters or a camelback) • flashlight/headlamp and batteries • sunglasses • sleeping bag liner–silk is available–we’re using rifugio bunk beds with a basic sheet, pillow and quilt. Consider a bag liner with a built-in pillow holder. A liner is a required. • medium-sized backpack- large enough to fit your personal gear, but no food/cooking items or tents. • long sleeve shirt for sun protection (1) • underwear (1-2 pairs) • sneakers or similar non-hiking shoes • warm hat • toiletries • gaiters • hiking shorts • sunscreen/lip balm • rain jacket & wind pants • t-shirt • wool or fleece gloves • sun hat/ball cap
Nice touches:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • camera with waterproof bag • small towel for optional rifugio showers • extra pair of prescription glasses or contact lenses • personal reading book • hiking poles (collapsible) - takes hiking stress off the knees • casual shirt/slacks – lightweight options for dinner or shower room treks at the rifugios. • Pack cover, heavy weight can-sized and smaller plastic bags— all for waterproofing your pack & contents.
Notes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your US cell phone may or may not work in Europe. Check with your carrier for details. • Depending on the exact items you bring, packs are likely to be in the 18-25 pound range. You should be able to use a pack that is 3-4,000 cubic inches. • Boot fit is key. You can use fairly light boots because of the light packs and trail travel. Contact us w/ questions.