

SWITZERLAND-ON-FOOT

Featuring Walking Tours & Day Hikes

13 days

Created on: 24 Apr, 2024

Day 1 Arrival in Zurich

Welcome to Switzerland!

Today we arrive in Zurich and transfer to our hotel.

Dinner if required.

Included Meal(s): Dinner, if required.

Day 2 Zurich: City Walking Tour

This morning we'll have a guided walking tour of Zurich, where we visit the Old Town, the world famous shopping street Bahnhofstrasse, the Augustinergasse, a beautiful medieval, narrow streets with many colourfully painted oriel windows; the Grossmunster, St. Peter Church with the largest clock face of Europe; and the Lindenhof, which provides a glorious view of the Old Town of Zurich.

Tomorrow we enjoy our first rail experience -- most of our longer journeys will be accomplished using Switzerland's extensive and efficient public rail service. While the trip overall is not "strenuous" per se, this is an ambitious trip with lots of moving around and train journeys and connections. You **MUST** be able to manage with your own luggage at rail stations and from station to hotels nearby.

Overnight in Zurich.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Zurich - Train to St. Moritz

Today we travel by train to St. Moritz, one of the world's most famous ski resorts.* Chic, elegant and exclusive with a cosmopolitan ambiance, the town is located at 1,856 metres (6,100 ft) above sea level in the midst of the stunning landscape of the of the Upper Engadine lakes. The dry, sparkling "champagne" climate here is legendary and the celebrated St. Moritz sun shines for an average of 322 days a year.

We have the evening free to unwind and explore this scenic playground of the rich and famous.

* TRAIN TRAVEL: Most of our longer journeys will be accomplished using Switzerland's extensive and efficient public rail service. This is an ambitious trip with lots of moving around and train journeys and connections. You **MUST** be able to manage with your own luggage at rail stations and from station to hotels nearby. Hotels are usually located very near stations, which usually have escalators where applicable.

Overnight in St. Moritz.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Walking in the Engadine Valley

It takes us just a few minutes by funicular to travel up to Muottas Muragl. As well as featuring a panoramic viewpoint platform, the area is hiker's paradise! The 7 km/4.35 mile long panorama trail between Muottas Muragl and Alp Languard is worth a special mention, as it is undulating and features the charming Munt da la Bes-cha mountain restaurant mid-way. We return to St. Moritz in the afternoon. From the terrace of the Restaurant Alp Languard, there are fantastic views over the Bernina area. Our guide will point out interesting species of birds, marmots as well as ibex, all of which can be regularly seen.

Some of us may choose to extend today's walk by descending to the Pontresina cable car station before taking the bus back to St. Moritz.

Today's hike is +/- 7km with slight decline and only one small uphill section towards the end Duration +/- 3 hours with plenty of time for photo stops.

Our hikes: Because some hikes can/may be adjusted at the discretion of your Tour Leader depending on things like weather and group interest, the final distances/durations of our hikes as indicated in our itinerary should be taken as guidance only. In the meantime, however, we can advise that, generally-speaking, our walks are leisurely on well-trodden pathways over undulating terrain (some walks are downhill), 2-5 hours in overall duration with plenty of breaks for refreshment, photos, and taking it all in.

Overnight in St Moritz.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 St Moritz - Glacier Express Train - Zermatt

Today we take the spectacular Glacier Express train ride. Around every corner are mountains and more mountains, small villages, cows with clanking bells, glaciers, lakes and rushing rivers. The fairytale landscape is a magical carpet of flowers in spring and a splendid tapestry of colours in autumn. The full length of the Glacier Express route from St Moritz to Zermatt passes over 291 bridges and through 91 tunnels. For much of its journey, it also passes along and through the World Heritage Site known as the Rhaetian Railway in the Albula / Bernina Landscapes.

The train is not an "express" in the sense of being a high-speed train, but rather in the sense that it provides a one-seat ride for a long duration travel. In fact it has the reputation of being the slowest express train in the world. The entire line is metre gauge, and large portions of it use a rack-and-pinion system both for ascending steep grades and to control the descent of the train on the back side of those grades. We have lunch on board with a view of the magnificent scenery going past the large picture windows (dinner on your own this evening).

We arrive in the car free village of Zermatt and transfer to our hotel at the foot of famous Matterhorn.

Overnight in Zermatt.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 6 Hiking at the foot of Matterhorn

This morning, we take the famous Gornergrat cog railway from Zermatt across stunning bridges, through galleries and tunnels, idyllic forests, past gorges and mountain lakes with the Matterhorn continually in the field of vision (weather-permitting!), to Gornergrat located at a height of 3089 metres. Surrounded by 29 four-thousand metre high peaks, by the highest Swiss mountain (Dufourspitz in Swiss, better known as Monte Rosa) and by the third-largest glacier in the Alps (Gorner Glacier), the location offers a mountain panorama that couldn't be more overwhelming. We have several hours of walking in this setting that has few rivals in the world - this is mountain walking at its best!

This afternoon is free to wander the well signposted trails leading out of Zermatt. We suggest the scenic trail through larch forests and highland villages to Furi at 1865 m (6,119 feet) with cable car ride back to Zermatt. For the more adventurous, a gondola ride takes you to the plateau below Matterhorn where there is a small lake called the Schwarzsee. In this area you can walk a path around the lake drinking in the mountain vistas and savouring the fresh mountain air. There is a beautiful spot for a picnic near an old chapel by the lake. Alternatively, you could spend the afternoon exploring the alpine town of Zermatt and its well known museum on your own.

Hiking time approx 4 hours, mostly downhill (it's not steep but walking sticks are recommended to save your knees!).

Overnight in Zermatt.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Zermatt - Train to Interlaken & Grindelwald

We leave Zermatt and take the scenic train ride down the narrow valley to Visp and then through the Lotschberg to Spiez, Interlaken and finally, Grindelwald.

We take a break from the train journey in Interlaken and soak in the atmosphere of this famous town for short break before continuing our journey to Grindelwald.* Interlaken lies in the Bernese Oberland on an alluvial plain, sandwiched between Lake Thun and Lake Brienz. Famous contemporaries such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Felix Mendelssohn travelled in these mountains.

The small alpine town of Grindelwald lies nestled in unspoilt Alpine landscape at the foot of Eiger's famous north face. The amazing backdrop of the peaks of Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau sets the scene for Grindelwald. Weather and water level permitting, we may be able to walk a short distance to Trummelbach Falls as part of our day.

* Weather-permitting, we may be able to visit the nearby Lauterbrunnen Valley (the journey is covered by your rail pass). Weather you elect to visit Lauterbrunnen or spend your time at leisure in Interlaken, our luggage will be placed in secure storage.

Overnight in Grindelwald.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 8 Walking the Bernese Alps

A cable car takes us from Grindelwald into a breathtaking panorama. A gentle undulating trail leads us to the Bachalpsee lake, where a world-famous view of the Eiger opens up before our eyes.

In the foreground lies the Bachalpsee, while the majestic Bernese Alps with their eternal ice form the backdrop. A footpath leads between the two Bachalpsee lakes and then turns south as it continues through a wetland zone of national importance, where the Muhlebach River flows through areas of wet ground and moss. A vast variety of flora delights people along the entire walk; blue and purple gentians, pulsatilla, alpine anemone, primulas and many others lining the trail. From Bachlager to Waldspitz, a sea of mountain roses lies at our feet, with their brilliant red making a striking contrast to the green meadows of the valley and the white glaciers behind. From Waldspitz mountain restaurant, a short footpath leads through fields of alpine roses, wild blueberries, and flower-strewn meadows to the Muhlebach waterfall and on to Bort. From here, we return to Grindelwald by cable car (alternatively you can walk all the way back to Grindelwald).

Total hiking time +/- 4 hours mostly downhill; add +/- 3 hours to walk to Grindelwald (downhill, rather steep and 700m loss)

Overnight in Grindelwald.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 9 Grindelwald: Mannlichen, Kleine Scheidegg & Jungfrauoch

We travel to Mannlichen at 2222 m/7,300 ft. by cable car and then follow an easy trail in a southerly direction to the east side of the Tschuggen Ridge to reach Honegg. The trail now coils around the slopes of the Lauberhorn and eventually ends at the Rotstocki, from where the Kleine Scheidegg at 2061 m/ 6,760 ft. is within easy reach. The Kleine Scheidegg is the terminus station of the Wengernalp Railway and at the same time, the starting point for ride to Jungfrauoch on the famous Jungfrau Railway.

After a break at Kleine Scheidegg, we board the train for the fantastic ride that takes us to Jungfrauoch or 'Top of Europe', the highest railway station in Europe at 3454m / 11,330 ft. and with views of the Aletsch glacier, the longest in the Alps glacier, also a UNESCO heritage site. All of this adds up to a truly memorable day.

NOTE: In the event of bad weather and poor visibility, we may choose to skip the Jungfrauoch train and spend more in and around Kleine Scheidegg or even in and around Grindelwald. This is not really a hiking day per se, and the difficulty comes mostly from the high elevation.

Hiking time approx. 1.5 hours.

Overnight in Grindelwald.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 Grindewald - Train to Lucerne

This morning we take a panoramic train ride to Lucerne and then have a guided tour of this scenic town. The over 600 year old covered bridge in Lucerne is one of the most recognized symbols of Switzerland, which makes the city a major destination for travellers from all over the world. However, Lucerne and the region around Lake Lucerne are also the heart and soul of this country. It was in this region that in 1291 Switzerland was founded by the oath of the representatives of the first three cantons.

Lucerne is situated on both sides of the Reuss River where it exits Lake Lucerne. The old town is charming with narrow streets and buildings in many styles. Lucerne is particularly famous for its covered wooden bridges. The watertower on the restored Kapellbrücke is a well-known landmark. The intact Spreuerbrücke features painted scenes inside illustrating "The Dance of Death". A further landmark of the town is the Museggmauer, a wall which, with the exception only of one of its towers, has been preserved in its original, well-fortified state.

Overnight in Lucerne.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 11 Lucerne & Bern

A train ride from Lucerne takes us to Bern, Switzerland's capital city with a medieval town centre and a designated a World Heritage Site, dating back to 1191. Bern is the birthplace of Einstein's relativity theory, cradle of Toblerone chocolate and home to the largest Paul Klee collection in the world. The 'old town' is framed by the Aare River and offers spectacular views of the Alps. Not many cities have managed to retain their historic features as successfully as Bern, and the town, with over 6 kms of arcades, (the locals refer to them as 'Lauben'), has one of the longest weather-sheltered shopping promenades in Europe. The elevated Rose Garden above the Bear Pits and the platform of the 101 m high cathedral tower offer the best views of the old town round to the River Aare and beyond. The boutiques, bars and cabaret stages of the old town, many of which are located underground in vaulted cellars, and the small street cafes, attract locals as well as visitors.

A walking tour in Bern will allow us to see some of the town squares and rows of limestone buildings, medieval arcades, the Renaissance period fountains topped with colourful figures, and the beautiful Cathedral surrounded by picturesque rooftops. Bern is truly a gem of medieval architecture.

We travel back to Lucerne by train.

Overnight in Lucerne.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 12 Lucerne & Mt Rigi

A scenic boat ride on Lake Lucerne takes us to Vitznau where we board Europe's first-ever cog mountain railway up to Mount Rigi. Aware of the scenic location of Mt. Rigi, and driven by his pioneering spirit, 21 year old Swiss engineer Niklaus Riggenbach masterminded the construction of the Vitznau-Rigi Railway in the mid-19th century. In his own words, "I want to take everyone up into the mountains, so they can all enjoy the beauty of our glorious country". Riggenbach's invention, which would guide trains across steep climbs by means of cogwheels and toothed racks, was patented in France in 1863.

From the summit we enjoy a breathtaking panoramic view across the Alps, of 13 lakes and over the entire Swiss Mittelland through to Germany and France. After lunch, we hike along the mountain ridge with great panoramic view to Rigi Kaltbad. From here we take the cable car down to Weggis and then the boat back to Lucerne.

Hiking time approx. 2 hours

Overnight in Lucerne.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 13 Lucerne - Train to Zurich & Departure

We travel by train (one hour) back to Zurich and the airport to connect with homeward flights.

PLEASE NOTE: Land only passengers must take into account today's train journey when booking flights from Zurich. Trains begin running at 5 am and can take you right to Zurich Airport. Your Tour Leader can assist all passengers in organizing airport transfers at the appropriate time; this ticket is included in the tour price for all participants. Conservatively your departure time from Zurich should be no earlier than 10 am.

BON VOYAGE!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast