

Switzerland: The Haute Route

Tour code: JHR

Revised: October 08

The scenic Swiss canton of Valais is one of the most magnificent mountain regions in Europe. It is an alpine network of valleys that lead off into beautiful and little-visited areas, some of which rarely see a tourist. Our Swiss Valais trek, following part of the well-known Haute Route, visits these remote districts, where the walking is of true alpine character and where charming villages lie in lush, green meadows, dominated by rugged and dramatic mountain scenery. Most of the paths are little trodden, giving rise to an excellent variety of alpine flowers and frequent sightings of alpine animals. As you cross the linguistic frontier from French-speaking to German-speaking Switzerland you have a chance to practice both languages.

Grade

This trip is 'Challenging', and is a trek, which involves much daily uphill and downhill walking. It is only suitable for fit walkers who can readily manage days with more than 1000m/3300 feet ascent and descent in a day. Those in good physical condition, who take regular exercise and who have recent hill-walking experience, will find this a trip whose exciting challenges are equally matched by its rewards. **You will not be with your main luggage on Nights 5 and Night 6 you will therefore need to carry enough clothing for these nights.** On other days only a daypack need be carried. The highest point on this tour is the Col de Torrent (2918m) on Day 4. Almost as high is the Augstbordpass (2894m) on Day 7. General mountain walking skills are required; the route is not generally vertiginous, although there is a slightly exposed section on Day 7.

IMPORTANT NOTE

Luggage sent between Grimintz and Zermatt takes 48 hours minimum by train/postbus. This service no longer operates on a Saturday or Sunday, so you cannot start this tour on a Wednesday or Thursday. Keep this in mind when organising extra nights. Transfer of luggage between Grimintz and Zermatt is in excess of SFR300 by road.

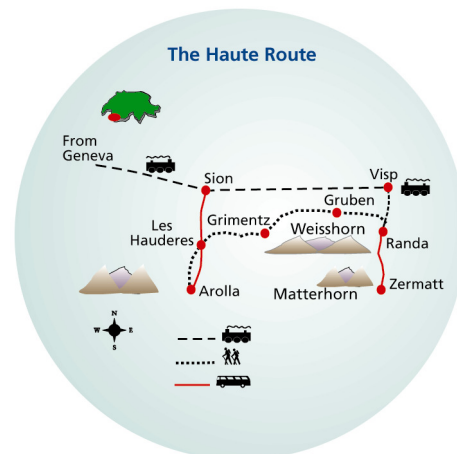
Climate

Our treks in the Alps operate during the European summer. In recent years, temperatures have ranged from 15 C - 30 C during the day, with nights from 15 C to below freezing. Although rain and snow is possible at any time in the season, there are fortunately very few prolonged periods of bad weather. Clear skies and spectacular sunsets are frequent. New snowfall is possible in September.

Swiss Card

Includes free travel from the airport to your first hotel and back from the last hotel to the airport. Inbetween you enjoy half price travel on trains, postbuses and many cable cars. This is probably a good investment even if you are only doing this walk in Switzerland. Consult your nearest Swiss tourist office for full details. The Swiss Transfer Ticket is similar, but

only includes travel between the airport and your first and last hotels.



General Information

Baths: it is not normal for your room to have a bath, the main reason being that it takes up a lot of space, some hotels/guesthouses may have a separate room in the house where a bath is available to guests, but in the main it is showers.

Breakfast: in countries such as Switzerland/Norway/Germany/Austria they are usually buffet style, please don't offend your hosts by making up a picnic lunch from the breakfast buffet unless it has been specifically organised for you. It is important for you to tell us if you have any dietary requirements when you book your holiday so that we can inform everyone that you are staying with.

Single Supplements: are payable on most of our tours. 1) The single supplement guarantees the privacy of your own room, however, rooms can at times be small and in some places may not enjoy the same facilities as double/twin rooms.

Luggage: When staying in hotels, sometimes your luggage will have been taken to your room awaiting your arrival. However don't be surprised if your luggage is waiting for you to take it up to your room.

Outline Itinerary

The following itinerary is intended as a working guide only and may be subject to variation as a result of weather, local factors and group progress. We reserve the right to alter (lengthen or shorten) any trek at any time if necessary.

1000m = 3.281ft. 1km = 0.62 miles.

All timings are approximate and will vary.

Walk timings include lunch break.

□ **Day 1:** Arrive Arolla. Fly to Geneva, then by train to Sion in the Rhone valley (hourly service, journey time 2 hrs). From Sion, you travel by bus high into the mountains to the famous climbing village of Arolla (1998m).

□ **Day 2:** Arolla (1998m) to Les Haudères (1452m). 8km (4-5 hours). Height gain 150m, height loss 690m. Maximum height 2090m. The famous peaks of Pigne d'Arolla, Mont Colon and Aiguille de la Tsa dominate the morning views as we begin our walk from Arolla along the Val d'Arolla. We follow a contouring path just above the tree line to the beautiful Lac Bleu (2090m). From here we descend through meadows and farmsteads to Les Haudères and our hotel.

□ **Day 3:** Les Haudères (1452m) to Grimentz (1572m). 13km (7-8 hours). Height gain 1475m, height loss 1357m. Maximum height 2918m. A longer, but rewarding, day takes us over the Col de Torrent (2918m). We lunch near the Lac des Autannes and descend with views south of the Moiry glacier. From the dam you descend to the picture-postcard village of Grimentz below the Lac de Moiry.

□ **Day 4:** In Grimentz (1572m). Free day. Grimentz is an excellent base from which to explore the upper reaches of the Moiry valley. The tumbling iceblocks of the Moiry glacier present a stunning spectacle from the terrace of the Cabane Moiry (2825m). Another equally impressive walk crosses the Col de Sorebois (2896m) to Zinal, with fine views of the Weisshorn and Zinal Rothorn. Return from Zinal to Grimentz by bus or walk along forest track. **PLEASE NOTE YOUR BAGGAGE WILL BE SENT DIRECTLY TO ZERMATT TOMORROW MORNING.**

□ **Day 5:** Grimentz (1572m) to Hotel Weisshorn (2337m). 15km (6.5-7.5 hours). Height gains 850 m, height loss 100m. Maximum height 2337m. We contour through pleasant forest to Mottec (1556m) in the Zinal valley and then begin our ascent to the Hotel Weisshorn (2,337m). This Victorian hotel has a wonderful view from its restaurant and was upgraded a few years ago - it now has hot showers! Its basic services and austere Victorian atmosphere are redeemed by superb views, excellent cuisine, and acceptable accommodation. With its rugged charm it maintains an air of faded grandeur.

□ **Day 6:** Hotel Weisshorn (2337m) to Gruben (1822m). 9km (5-6 hours). Height gains 589m, height loss 1104m. Maximum height 2790m. We walk over the Meidpass (2,790m), enjoying marvellous views of the Schwarzhorn, Gletschhorn and the Weisshorn. At the col, we enter German-speaking Switzerland. The shore of the lovely alpine Meidsee Lake makes an excellent lunch spot. A long descent brings us to Gruben (1,822m), in the peaceful, unspoilt Turtmanntal. Here we overnight at the Hotel Schwarzhorn in Gruben.

□ **Day 7:** Gruben (1822m) to St Niklaus (1127m). 15km (7-8 hours). Height gain 1072 m, height loss 1767m. Maximum height 2894m. Then train or bus from St Niklaus to Zermatt (1606m). We take the track beside the hotel up to the Augstbordpass (2894m). It is a long path to the last col of the trek. The path from the pass contours along a rocky track and emerges above the Mattertal. The pleasant descent offers excellent views of Mischabel (4,545m). There is a slightly exposed section before Jungu, where the path turns the corner into the Mattertal valley. From Jungu (1955m) you can either walk or (optional) take the cable car down to St Niklaus (1,116m). It is too far to walk on from St Niklaus to Zermatt today, so we will opt for the hourly train service or bus!

□ **Day 8:** A free day in Zermatt. Zermatt is traffic-free and is dominated by the imposing, distinctive shape of the Matterhorn. All around Zermatt there is a wonderful panorama of mountain peaks and there are many excellent day walks. Trift offers a fine high-level traverse. Perhaps a visit to the Hörnli hut (1,609m) above Zermatt at the base of the Matterhorn (4,478m), from where climbers scale the

summit. The Gornergrat railway, one of the highest in Europe at 3090m, offers a spectacular panorama and the walk down beside the glacier to Riffelalp is stunning. For a less energetic day one can take the exciting cable car ride to the top of the Kleine Matterhorn (3,820m). This is one of the highest cable cars in the Alps.

□ **Day 9:** By train from Zermatt to Geneva airport (change trains at Visp or Brig) for the flight to London.

Equipment & Clothing

If you are a hiker or backpacker you will probably already have much of the clothing and equipment required. A sleeping bag sheet liner is required. A detailed list of personal equipment and clothing will be sent with confirmation of reservation. All you need to bring is your sleeping bag sheet liner plus your other personal equipment and clothing.

Food & Accommodation

Accommodation is in double/twin rooms, except possibly when light backpacking, when we stay in mountain inns (Hotel Weisshorn and Schwarzhorn). These have shared dormitory-style accommodation and basic toilet and washing facilities only. Mattresses, blankets and pillows are provided but you must have a sleeping bag liner. However, basic twin-bedded rooms are sometimes available and we will book these for you if possible. Single rooms are not available in these inns. Breakfast is provided throughout the trek. An evening meal is provided on five evenings. On other evenings we leave you free to sample the local cuisine.

How the trekking is organised

You will not be with your main luggage on Night 5 and Night 6; you will therefore need to carry enough clothing for these nights. Somelight backpacking is involved, see above. A pack between 40 and 50 litres is probably most suitable to carry some clothing, washing kit and sleeping bag liner. Average walking time is about six hours per day, although this will obviously vary according to the terrain, conditions, group progress and weather. In the unlikely event of extreme bad weather necessitating a change to the itinerary, clients are expected to bear the cost of transport to the next night's stop.

What's Included

All accommodation (6 nights hotels, 2 nights inns); all breakfasts from day 2 onwards, 5 dinners; services of leader (escorted tour only); baggage movements where specified.

Not Included

Train and bus transfers (see Swiss Card), allow approx \$200 for these. Passport, insurance, personal clothing and equipment, breakfast on the first day, lunches, 3 dinners, gratuities, drinks and souvenirs. We suggest you budget a minimum of \$210 for these.

Escorted Departures 2009

EJHR25 Sat 25 July – Sun 1 Aug

EJHR12 Sat 12 Sept – Sun 20 Sept