

Switzerland: Around Meiringen – Panoramas of the Swiss Alps

Tour code: HSM

Revised: Nov 09

This is a 'centre based' self guided walking holiday. Getting around in Switzerland is so easy that based in a good centre like Meiringen you can fill a week with excellent day walks at any time of the year. This Alpine town is a natural transport hub situated at the convergence of three of Switzerland's major passes. Meiringen is on the main railway line from Luzern to Interlaken and trains run to and from those towns on an hourly timetable. Interlaken is a 30-minute journey and Luzern is 1 hour 10 mins. Transfers from Zürich airport are a pleasure with the last leg of the journey into the mountains on the spectacular narrow gauge Brünig line. Meiringen is also the centre for Post Bus routes in the Eastern Oberland.

From the town it is possible to set out each day in a different direction using the incredible network of cablecars, postbuses and mountain railways. You can reach the high places quickly and easily without the necessity of long uphill climbs out of the valley. Meiringen is the perfect centre for walking holidays for all grades.

There are over 300km of well-marked footpaths, which range from gentle strolls to high ridges and even glacier exploring. In spring you can follow the melting snows into meadows of glorious Alpine flowers. In summer the high ridges and rugged glacial scenery become accessible. In autumn the landscape is painted with a riot of colour as the first frosts come.

The potential for walking is limitless. We are still finding wonderful new walks here! Meiringen has none of the trappings of mass tourism. It is a small market town with excellent shops, banks and facilities. Thankfully, it remains unspoiled and very Swiss. The local people are welcoming, kind and hospitable.



Season

Recommended 01 May to 31 October.

Level of Difficulty

Fitness: We grade the tour as 'Moderate', but in practice any day can be as easy or (up to a point) as hard as you care to make it.

Day Stages: Anything from 2 to 8 hours or more - depending on your preference.

Waymarks: Footpaths in Switzerland are classified into 2 categories: Wanderweg (footpaths) and Bergweg (mountain paths). Bergwege may include rough, rocky and narrow sections where more care and effort may be needed. Each category is distinctively waymarked. Signposts at path junctions show the estimated time to specific destinations which are usually also named on the maps. Time estimates may be shorter on a Bergweg than on a similar length of Wanderweg as you are expected to be in better shape!

Meals & Accommodation

This is a centre-based holiday with the whole week spent in the same hotel. We use 3-star accommodation close to the center of town. All rooms are en-suite, many with baths as well as showers.

Your booking is half-board (3 course evening meal, bed and breakfast). Lunches are not included in the tour cost. There are supermarkets and other food shops in Meiringen where picnic materials can be bought (closed Sundays). In winter you can usually stop for lunch at a friendly mountain restaurant.

Itinerary

☐ **Day: 1 Flight to Zürich / Basel / Geneva.** Train from Zurich airport or Basel to Meiringen (change trains at Luzern). Or train from Geneva airport to Meiringen (change trains at Bern and Interlaken Ost). Evening meal at your hotel.

❑ Day 2 - 7: Walks from Meiringen

❑ **Day 8. Departure** by train from Meiringen to Zürich or Basel via Luzern and flights back to the UK. You can stop en route, there are left luggage lockers in all stations, so that you can spend some time in Luzern or Zürich.

Typical Walking Programme

This is just a sample of the possible walks; your exact programme will vary according to weather conditions, and your own preference. You will receive a set of route notes detailing numerous walks in the area. The following is a selection of popular routes. The excellent local transport system enables you to shorten or lengthen your walks if you wish.

- **Hasliberg (Panorama Way).** 12km. You start with a 10-minute train ride. Take the train from Meiringen (600m) up to Brünig Pass (1100m) where the walk starts through forest before traversing the open alpine meadows above Meiringen. Views stretch to the Bernese Oberland peaks and glaciers. This is an ideal introduction to the area in almost any weather. There is no need to carry a picnic for lunch if you want to try the "Rosti House" at Wasserwendi. Choose from the many Rosti specialities. After lunch, continue on the Panorama way to Reuti (1045m) and either take the cablecar or walk down to Meiringen through the forest.

- **Reichenbach Valley Circular Walk.** Take the bus up to the little hamlet of Gschwantenmad. There is no rush to cover the first 5 km along the Reichenbach River to Schwarzwaldalp where you can have lunch in the cosy mountain restaurant. The standard fare is a cauldron of delicious goulash soup served with fresh crusty bread or a vegetarian alternative. Thus fortified, walk the circular winter route via Rosenlauri finishing at Kaltenbrunnen from where you take a bus or taxi back to Meiringen. (There may be time for another Glüwien if we get there early!) This is a fabulous walk right in the heart of the mountains. The Wetterhorn north face dominates the skyline and the beautiful blue Rosenlauri Glacier towers above you.

- **Hasliberg Heights.** To gain initial height take the cable car to Käserstatt (5000 feet above Meiringen). Set out on the magnificent high-level walk across the Hasliberg. There is an option for lunch at Bidmi before completing the walk across the alpine meadows and descending through the forest to Meiringen.

- **Across the Brünig Pass.** Once more by train but this time over the Brünig Pass to the village of Lungern with its beautiful lake. The route takes you up a steady gradual incline to the pass where there is the option of a restaurant lunch. There is a little more ascent through the forest after lunch before descending to Meiringen.

- **Wengen to Kleine Scheidegg.** Travel to the chic resort of Wengen by train and then walk up through the forest and pastures to the pass at Kleiene Scheidegg. Return by trains either to Wengen or Grindelwald. You can always opt to walk down rather than up or for a longer day walk up and down. There are great views towards the Eiger and Jungfrau from the Kleiene Scheidegg.

- **Take an easy day.** Take a short local walk of travel further afield. Visit the city of Luzern or Bern by train or head up to the Jungfrauoch, or to the Piz Gloria of James Bond fame. Other possibilities near Meiringen include The Ballenberg open-air museum at Brienzwilser where you can

see a variety of traditional farm buildings from all over Switzerland and the beautiful old lakeshore town of Brienz, where you can sit at a waterside cafe and admire the view across the lake to the mountains of the Oberland.

- **The Romantic Way.** Take the postbus from Meiringen to climb on spectacular twisting roads to Grosse Scheidegg (2000m) at the heart of the mountains with the 12,000' peak of the Wetterhorn towering above and views of the north-face of the Eiger. During the walk there are spectacular views of the Rosenlauri Glacier. This is a gentle contouring walk, not at all strenuous. A visit to the Reichenbach Falls can be incorporated into the itinerary during the afternoon.

- **Paradise Way.** Head northeast on the bus to the picturesque mountain lake of Engstlenalp beneath the pass. From here walk all day through meadows of wonderful flowers and beneath rugged limestone crags where eagles nest. The grand panorama ahead is the Bernese Oberland Massif with literally hundreds of peaks and glaciers in view. The walk ends at the cablecar station above Meiringen for a ride back to town.

- **Faulhorn.** Travel by train along beautiful Lake Brienz then by mountain railway to Schynigge Platte. From there walk to Faulhorn it is a long but steady climb followed by a descent via Bachalpsee to the First gondolas above Grindelwald. You can take a lunch break at the Weber Hut. The views during the walk are quite breathtaking with arguably the best from the plateau between Weber Hut and Faulhorn. If you are feeling energetic you can take a slight detour to the Faulhorn summit. Once you can tear yourself away from the view, return via the gondola at First and catch the train back to Meiringen. Or if you have made good time, you can opt to walk from First to Grosse Scheidegg and take the bus down to Meiringen via Schwarzwaldalp.

- **Take an easy day.** The Aare Gorge, a popular tourist attraction with a walkway through the gorge, which is only open in summer.

Travel options from the UK

By air to Zürich or Basel: Direct scheduled services with BA or Swiss from UK.

Flights are also available via Geneva at no extra cost, but this involves a longer train journey.

Transfers from Airport: From Zürich or Basel. Trains are fast and efficient and run every hour. Zürich airport has a direct rail link. Basel airport is linked to the station by a shuttle bus. The rail journey up into the Alps is a spectacular part of your holiday. Swiss railways are a joy to travel on; reliable, clean and punctual.

Self Drive: If you wish to travel down in your own car, simply consult the "Land Only" price column on our brochure. All our hotels have excellent parking facilities.

Swiss Card

This is not included in your holiday package. A "Swiss Card" travel pass, which covers your return rail journey from any Swiss Airport or border crossing to Meiringen and entitles you to HALF-FARE travel on almost all transport used during your holiday in Switzerland. The card costs approx £100 and is valid for one month. Cards can be purchased from the Swiss Travel Centre at www.stc.co.uk/swisscard.html.

If you drive to Switzerland and want to qualify for half price travel for almost all transport used during your holiday in Switzerland you can buy a Swiss Half Fare Card

for approx £60. This is worthwhile if you intend to travel somewhere every day. These cards can be purchased from the Swiss Travel Centre at

www.stc.co.uk/swisshalffarecard.html.

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