

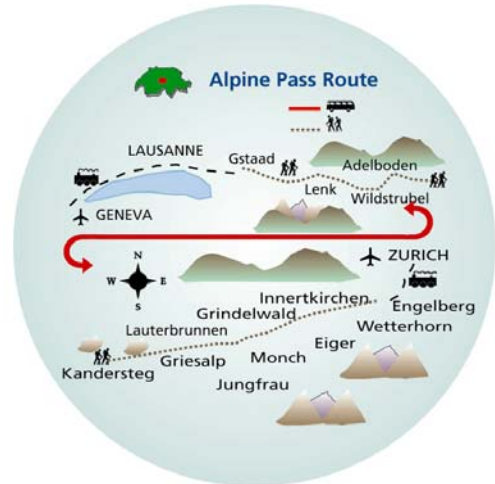
Switzerland: The Alpine Pass Route

Tour code: JAP

Revised: November 07

This walk follows the most impressive two-week section of a classic alpine walk, which embraces much of the best mountain scenery Switzerland has to offer. It is a route which takes us over many alpine passes, some a leisurely stroll, others a tougher proposition, but all offering their own spectacular visual rewards. A marvellous complement to the high land of peaks and passes are the park-like valleys with their thickly wooded hillsides, the unspoilt farming villages, deep-blue lakes and picturesque flower-decked chalets. As well as crossing the Grosse Scheidegg and the Hohturli, there is also the incomparable Bernese Oberland region with its impressive peaks, the Jungfrau, Monch and Eiger. There are some long days but lifts and cable cars can be used to shorten some of the walks and overnight locations can all be reached by public transport in case of bad weather. On three separate occasions, you have 'free' days where you can pursue optional walks, or take in other attractions such as the Jungfrauoch.

This is a mountain journey full of attractions and ranks in quality with the Tour de Mont Blanc and the Haute Route, you won't be disappointed!



Travel Information

Arrival: Hourly train service from Zurich airport (2hrs 40mins; change at Luzern) and Geneva airport (about 4 hours 45mins; change at Bern (usually) and at Luzern).

First Hotel: Engelberg.

Nearest airport to first hotel: Zurich

Alternative airport (and nearest to last hotel): Geneva

Travel options from the UK: Our 'Air Travel' package includes flights on British Airways from London Heathrow (Swiss flights available at a small supplement) outwards to Zurich and back from Geneva.

Flights are also available from Manchester with a supplement.

For UK-based 'Land-only' customers there are also low cost flights by Easyjet from London Luton to Zurich. Easyjet also operates flights to Geneva from Liverpool and from London Gatwick.

Also other low cost flights with BMIbaby, Globespan, Flybe, Jet2 and Air Berlin.

End of Tour: On day 14 at Saanen.

Season: Start any day, mid-July to mid-September.

Swiss Travel Cards

Allow 'free' travel from the airport of arrival to your 1st hotel and from the last hotel back to the airport. In between you enjoy half price travel on trains (including the Jungfrau railway), post buses, lake steamers and many cable cars as well. They are probably a good investment even if you are just doing this walk and have no other travel plans within

Switzerland. Consult your nearest Swiss tourist office for full details.

They cost approx \$220. www.switzerlandtravelcentre.com Swiss Transfer Cards are similar but only cover journeys between the airports and the first and last hotels.

Grade

Challenging. This 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 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. The longest day (Lauterbrunnen to Griesalp) can be shortened by using a mountain railway for the first part of the route. The highest point on the Alpine pass Route is 2778m (Hohturli on Day 9

of this tour); but many walkers also visit the Blumlisalp Hut, which lies a little way above the Hohturli at 2837m.

Waymarking

The route is well waymarked and signposted. It is necessary to carry and be able to use a map & compass in case of mist.

Bad Weather / Adverse conditions

We strongly recommend that each morning you consult your hotelier and/or call the local tourist office and/or phone ahead to mountain huts on or near the day's route for the weather forecast. In case of anticipated bad weather or adverse snow conditions which may impede walking at high level we describe in the route notes alternative ways of reaching your destination each day by staying as far as

possible in the valleys and using public transport. We provide relevant bus, train and cable car timetables. Public transport fares are not included in the tour price, but tickets can be obtained at a 50% discount with a Swiss Travel Card.

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 frequently experienced. New snowfall is possible in September.

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.

Accommodation & Meals

Accommodation on this trek is in a mixture of hotels, ranging from 1 to 3 star and two mountain inns. The mountain inns normally provide dormitory-style accommodation. However they also have some fairly basic twin-bedded rooms, which we will reserve for you when available. Bed and breakfast and 8 evening meals are included in the tour price. The other 5 evening meals can be obtained at each night's stop without pre-booking. **Please note: there may be variations regarding where the evening meals are included; but the standard arrangement is as detailed below for each night. If there are any variations this will be made clear in your accommodation schedule, which you will receive with your route notes and maps package.** Lunches are not included, but picnic materials or packed lunches can be obtained locally. We suggest you budget £100 per person for dinners not included.

- **Night 1: Engelberg.** A comfortable hotel close to this Alpine village with its 12th century Benedictine monastery. Half board.
- **Night 2: Engstlenalp.** Mountain inn. Basic accommodation in twin-bedded rooms. No baggage transfer to or from Engstlenalp. Evening meal available at the inn.
- **Night 3: Meiringen.** Our 3* hotel is centrally located near shops and the station and has modern facilities and has received praise from previous customers. Half board.
- **Nights 4 & 5: Grindelwald.** Here we stay at a cosy chalet-hotel with a spectacular view of the Eiger and the surrounding peaks. All rooms facing south have balcony, shower and WC. The hotel is a short walk from train stations and the Firstbahn gondola station. bed and breakfast only.

□ **Nights 6 & 7: Lauterbrunnen.** Our recently modernised 3-star hotel, only two minutes' walk from the train station, provides views of the famous Jungfrau Mountain and of the waterfalls on both sides of the valley. The en suite rooms are tastefully furnished and decorated. First night half board, second night bed and breakfast only. Evening meal on the second night can be obtained either at the hotel or elsewhere in the village.

□ **Night 8: Griesalp/Golderli.** Mountain inn. Basic accommodation in twin-bedded rooms. No baggage transfer to or from Griesalp. Half board.

□ **Nights 9 & 10: Kandersteg.** A 3-star hotel centrally located with convenient access to the hiking trails, cable cars and lifts, shops and the railway station (5 minutes on foot). All rooms have a balcony, bath/shower, WC, hair-dryer, cable-TV, radio and direct-dial telephone. First night half board, second night bed & breakfast. Evening meal on the second night can be obtained either at the hotel or elsewhere in the village.

□ **Night 11: Adelboden.** A friendly welcome awaits you at this chalet style hotel. Pine furniture is much in evidence. Buffet style breakfast including Swiss cheeses. Sauna, gymnasium and whirlpool. Half board.

□ **Night 12: Lenk.** Here we stay in a 3-star chalet style hotel with 22 rooms close to the centre of the village. All rooms have bath/shower and WC and many have own balcony. The hotel has a lawn and sun terrace with alpine views. There is a nearby sulphur spa and public pool. Friendly and well-informed management. Half board.

□ **Night 13: Saanen.** On the site of the former town hall, this hotel was built in 1907 and renovated in 1982. The comfortable guest rooms are in the traditional style of the region. Half board.

Baggage Transfers

On most days your baggage is transported from hotel to hotel, so it will not be necessary to carry more than a light pack containing items you will need during the day. For the overnight stays at Engstlenalp (night 2) and Griesalp (night 8) you will also need to carry spare clothes and washing kit as you are not reunited with your baggage on those occasions.

Outline Itinerary

1,000m=3,281ft. 1km = 0.62miles.

□ **Day 1:** Arrive in Engelberg. There is an hourly train service from Zurich airport (nearer) and from Geneva airport to Engelberg, changing trains in Luzern. Journey time from Zurich airport is 2 hrs 40 mins and from Geneva airport 4 hours 45mins. Engelberg is a beautifully situated mountain resort with a 12th century Benedictine monastery. .

□ **Day 2:** Engelberg (1002m) to Engstlenalp (1834m) Highest point Jochpass (2207m). 14km/ 4hrs 50mins. Our route takes us up past the Trubsee (1764m). From the lake we climb to the Jochpass (2,207m). We overnight in the delightful old Engstlenalp Hotel (a mountain inn).

Bad weather alternative: weather and snow are unlikely to impede this day during our season, but in emergency take the train from Engelberg to Hergiswil (hourly, duration 50 mins), change there for the train to Meiringen (hourly, duration 1 hour 10 mins) and post bus to Engstlenalp (about every 2 hours, journey time 1 hour). The last bus from Meiringen leaves at 15.45.

□ **Day 3:** Engstlenalp (1834m) to Meiringen (595m). 17 km/4hrs 40 mins. Highest point Engstlenalp (1834m). We follow a little-used path, descending through forest and along the enchanting Gental valley to Reuti before a final steep descent to Meiringen. Near Meiringen are the Reichenbach Falls, scene of Sherlock Holmes' final struggle with Moriarty, and the Aareschlucht gorge.

Bad weather alternative: either take the post bus to Meiringen (about every 2 hours, journey time 1 hour), or, in the very unlikely event that the weather is too bad for the bus to run, the only alternatives are to walk down the road (15km) or stay another night at Engstlenalp.

□ **Day 4:** Meiringen (595m) to Grindelwald (1034m). 21km/7hrs 30 mins. Highest point Grosse Scheidegg (1962m). Along hard ascent which can be eased by taking the bus for part of the way up to Schwarzwaldalp (1454m). Towering above on your left is the massive peak of the Wetterhorn (3704m). You descend to Grindelwald, the "village of Glaciers" nestling below an amphitheatre of peaks, the Wetterhorn, Schreckhorn, Eiger, Monch and Jungfrau.

Bad weather alternative: there is a post bus which runs parallel to the walking route from Meiringen via Schwarzwaldalp and Grosse Scheidegg to Grindelwald. If conditions are too bad for this to run, take the train from Meiringen to Interlaken Ost and change there for Grindelwald. Frequency hourly; journey time 1 hour 20 minutes.

□ **Day 5:** Rest day in Grindelwald, a resort town overlooked by the towering Eigerwand (North Face of the Eiger), scene of many dramatic climbing exploits. A trip on the Jungfrau railway (highest in Europe and 3rd highest in the world) is well worthwhile even though somewhat expensive at approximately £50. A magnificent view from the Jungfraujoch station (3454m) if it is clear - so check the weather forecast. You change trains at Kleine Scheidegg. A gondola (mini-cable car) (approx £25) trip up to first gives access to a delightful walk to the Faulhorn peak (2681m), a tremendous viewpoint in clear weather. There are numerous other fine day walks at all altitudes around Grindelwald.

□ **Day 6:** Grindelwald (1034m) to Lauterbrunnen (797m). 19km/6hrs 30mins. Highest point Kleine Scheidegg (2061m). A short descent to Grund (943m) and then a steady ascent along a steep forest track to the day's high point at the famous pass of Kleine Scheidegg, and then down via the beautifully located village of Wengen to Lauterbrunnen deep down in the Loetschinen valley.

Bad weather alternative: the BOB railway runs parallel to the walking route from Grindelwald up to Kleine Scheidegg and down via Wengen to Lauterbrunnen. Hourly service, change trains at Kleine Scheidegg. Otherwise take the valley rail route from Grindelwald and change at Zweilutschinen for Lauterbrunnen. Hourly service.

□ **Day 7:** In Lauterbrunnen. Lauterbrunnen lies in a spectacular narrow valley and is one of the major attractions of the Bernese Oberland. One possibility is to anticipate tomorrow's long climb by walking the first part up to Murren today. From Murren you can walk back by a scenic route via Gimmelwald down to Stechelberg, from where there is an hourly bus back along the valley to Lauterbrunnen. Another possibility is to take the cable car up from Stechelberg or Murren to the Schilthorn.

□ **Day 8:** Lauterbrunnen (797m) or Murren (1665m) to Griesalp/Golderli (1408m). 21km/9 hrs 30 mins (15km/7 hours from Murren). High point Sefinenfurke (2612m). It is a very long climb up from Lauterbrunnen (795m) to the Sefinenfurke Pass (2,612m), but if you have followed our suggestion of walking up to Murren on Day 7, it is possible to shorten this without missing out any of the walk by taking the rack and pinion railway up to Murren (1665m). The climb on from Murren via Brunli (2,127m) is straightforward. Our exertions are rewarded by stunning views of the Eiger (3,970m), Monch (4,099m) and Jungfrau (4,158m). From the Sefinenfurke Pass it is a steep and impressive descent into the Durenberg valley and down to Griesalp, for our night's accommodation in fairly basic twin-bedded rooms in a mountain inn.

Bad weather alternative: train from Lauterbrunnen to Interlaken Ost; change there for train to Spiez; change there again for train to Reichenbach-in-Kandertal; then bus to Griesalp. The train journey operates hourly and the journey time from Lauterbrunnen to Reichenbach-in-Kandertal takes 1 hour 15 minutes. The bus runs 7 times per day (approx every 2 hours) and the bus journey takes 45 minutes. The last bus departure in summer is at about 17.30pm.

□ **Day 9:** Griesalp-Golderli (1408m) to Kandersteg (1176m). 15km/7hrs 30mins. High point Hohturli (2778m). Today is probably the hardest day of the trip. There are rewards in some of the finest scenery of the trip. The last section of the ascent from Griesalp to Hohturli is steep and aided by chains. The hut near the Hohturli, Blumlisalphutte (2,837m), is just a few minutes' climb away and offers welcome refreshments. Then a beautiful descent past the large Oeschinensee alpine lake to Kandersteg.

Bad weather alternative: take the bus from Griesalp down to Reichenbach-in-Kandertal (service approx every 2 hours - journey time 45 minutes), then hourly train to Kandersteg (40 to 55 mins; in some cases change trains at Frutigen).

□ **Day 10:** In Kandersteg. We can recommend taking the Sunnegga cable car and trekking up to the famous Gemmi Pass with great views down to Leukerbad in Valais.

□ **Day 11:** Kandersteg (1176m) to Adelboden (1356m). 16km/6hrs 45mins. High point Bundechrinde pass (2380m). A long ascent with beautiful views back to the Blumlisalp massif and the Oeschinensee. After traversing the Bundechrinde pass (2380m; some awkward scree slopes here), a long descent to Adelboden.

Bad weather alternative: train from Kandersteg to Frutigen (hourly; takes 17 minutes); then bus to Adelboden (hourly service; takes 30 minutes).

□ **Day 12:** Adelboden (1356m) to Lenk (1068m). 18km/7hrs. High point Hahnenmoospass (1956m). Overall a fairly gentle day. From Adelboden you climb through a mixture of woods and meadows to the Hahnenmoospass. After a level section there is a final steep descent to the village of Lenk, which lies below the Simmenfalle (waterfalls).

Bad weather alternative: bus from Adelboden to Frutigen (hourly service; takes 30 minutes); then train to Lenk (change trains at Spiez and Zweisimmen; hourly service; train journey time 2 hours).

□ **Day 13:** Lenk (1068m) to Lauenen (1241m). 14km/5hrs. High point Truttlisberg Pass (2038m). A long easy climb from Lenk to the Truttlisberg Pass. From the pass there are outstanding views of the Wildstrubel peak (3,243m) and surrounding snowy peaks and glaciers. A short ascent brings us to a delightful picnic spot amongst mountain gentians. You then descend to the Turbach valley and take the bus (approx. hourly service) from Lauenen down to Gstaad and walk/short train ride to Saanen.

Bad weather alternative: train from Lenk to Zweisimmen; change there for train to Saanen.

□ **Day 14:** Departure. Train from Saanen to Geneva airport (approx hourly service, journey time 3 hrs, change trains at Montreux) or to Zurich airport (approx. hourly service, journey time 3 hrs 45 mins, change trains at Zweisimmen, Spiez and Bern).

We provide you with . . .

Maps & book (Kev Reynolds), route notes.

Escorted departures 2008

EJAP05 Sat 5 July - Fri 18 July

EJAP16 Sat 16 Aug - Fri 29 Aug