

Switzerland: Zürich, Lucerne & the Alps

Air Package Itinerary

If you're looking for a scenic walking tour of Switzerland that includes Zürich, Lake Lucerne, and the best of the Swiss Alps, look no further! From the moment you meet your expert leaders in Zürich, you'll be immersed in the alpine spirit—enjoying an enchanting boat ride on Lake Lucerne, then traveling by train, gondola, and cog rail past the famous peaks of Jungfrau, Mönch, and Eiger. Hike along rugged mountain ridges, stopping to appreciate sparkling waterfalls and fields of edelweiss and gentian—and perhaps spotting the hardy alpine chamois and whistling marmots that forage among these rocky slopes. Discover the tradition of Swiss alpine cheese-making as you hike the famous “Cheese Trail” and stop for a tasting at a local farm. In the evenings, relax and enjoy warm Swiss hospitality in traditional settings—where mouth-watering farm-to-table fare, luxurious spas and saunas, and the cheerful chorus of alphorns form the capstone of this epic walking adventure.



Highlights

- Ease into the luxuries of a plush resort in Grindelwald, where local culinary specialties and a spa and sauna immerse you in the alpine culture.
- Lose yourself to the lilting strains of the alphorn, the alps' traditional long wooden horn, during an exclusive concert in your hotel's garden.
- Take in staggering vistas of soaring massifs during invigorating hikes, including the most famous trio in Bernese Oberland: the Jungfrau, Mönch, and Eiger.
- Feast on farm-to-table alpine fare, from warm fondues and perfectly aged cheeses to locally

produced wines and brews.

- Arrive in charming Lucerne by boat, then stroll to your hotel, after a breathtakingly scenic cruise across the mountain-ringed namesake lake.
- Learn about the long-cherished art and tradition of yodeling from a pair of longtime callers.

On all Fully-Guided Adventures you can count on ...



Expert local guides to introduce you to the best of your destination.



Gracious accommodations that are a clean, comfortable home away from home.



Off-the-beaten-path places you'd never find on your own.



Experts to handle all the details.



A maximum of 18 fun-loving fellow travelers to share the journey.



Air Packages include plane tickets, airport car service, and pre- and post-tour accommodations.



Delicious, authentic multi-course meals—virtually all are included.

Activity Level

This tour is one of our Guided Walking Adventures. It is rated easy to moderate, with most walks on the moderate side due to the alpine nature of the destination, an average of 4 to 6 alpine miles per day, with options on some days. There are daily ascents and descents, with climbing time ranging from about 15

minutes to an hour, maximum elevation gain of 600 feet, and maximum loss of approximately 2,000 feet. The highest altitude at which you will be on this tour is 9,908 feet, reached via the Titlis Rotair gondola, and from where you will have wonderful photo opportunities. The highest altitude at which you will be hiking is approximately 7,900 feet. The terrain varies from paved and cobblestone streets (during city and village explorations) to packed gravel to uneven, single-track trails with loose stones or gravel, springy turf and cobbled paths. Weather, such as head wind, rain, or excessive heat, can increase the difficulty of this tour, as most of the walks are fully exposed to the elements and weather conditions can change quickly in the mountains.

Flight Day

Depart from the United States or Canada

Your vacation is about to begin! Spend your first night aloft and arrive ready for an unforgettable trip.

Arrival Day

Arrive in Zürich, Switzerland

Upon arrival at the Zürich Airport, a representative holding a Country Walkers sign meets you as you exit the baggage claim area. Complimentary transportation is provided to your Zürich hotel, approximately 30 minutes away.

The rest of the day is yours to enjoy at your leisure—perhaps explore the city, rest up in the hotel, or select a local restaurant for lunch and dinner. We provide detailed city information to help you plan your day.

The city straddles the Limmat River, where it flows into the northwestern tip of Lake Zürich. When you're not mesmerized by a soaring backdrop of alpine vistas, you'll find plenty to explore in this history-rich city, the nation's largest and wealthiest. Romans founded it as Turicum in the year 15 BCE, and it eventually gained enough status that the Roman Emperor himself saw fit to oversee city affairs directly, stripping away power from local nobility. In the 16th century, Zürich became an important center of the Protestant

Reformation when the magistrates of the Grossmünster church, the princess abbess of Fraumünster Church, and the people of Zürich embraced the principles of Martin Luther.

Today, the city retains its free-thinking spirit, most notably in a rich arts scene. Not only do its churches lean into a tradition of creativity (with stained-glass windows by Augusto Giacometti and Marc Chagall in the Grossmünster and the Fraumünster, respectively); the Kunsthaus contemporary art museum and numerous galleries showcase the best of international and local artists. As you orient yourself, be sure to warm up for your walking adventure with an optional stroll through Zürich's Old Town. Directions for this self-guided walk begin from your centrally located hotel. Perhaps you'll have dinner at a trendy restaurant in the recently restored district of Zuri-West, where an old train viaduct adds to the atmosphere.

DAY 1

Join your *Switzerland: Zürich, Lucerne, & the Alps* tour. Mt. Rigi and travel to Lucerne

4.5 miles, easy to moderate, 350-ft. elevation gain and 750-ft. elevation loss

After an included breakfast at your hotel, meet your leaders in the lobby at 8:00 a.m. They'll be wearing Country Walkers shirts. Please be dressed for hiking.

After brief introductions, join your leaders for a short walk to the central train station, where you board your train to Mt. Rigi, renowned as the "queen of the mountains" in the heart of central Switzerland. This soaring summit is surrounded almost completely by three of the country's most stunning lakes – Lucerne, Zug and Lauerz – making for a breathtakingly scenic tableau.

You arrive at the Arth-Goldau railway station, then continue to Kräbel via the thrilling Rigi cog railway, part of Europe's oldest system of such trains. At Kräbel, you change to a gondola that lifts you to Rigi Scheidegg (at 5,465 feet) in just six minutes. At these stupendous heights, your first hike begins. As you walk, take in staggering alpine vistas all around you as far as your eye can see.

You follow the easygoing Panorama Trail, a former tram route. Throughout your amble, you pass traces of the former railroad, crossing bridges and traversing tunnels, with stunning views to the peak of Hinterdossen. After about 75 minutes, you arrive at Unterstetten, at 4,792 feet, where you stop to refuel

over a delicious Swiss-style lunch on the garden terrace of a family-run restaurant. Fabulous views of Lake Lucerne and the Alps serve as your dining room.

After lunch, continue to the tiny enclave of First via Felsenweg, gazing upon magnificent cliffside panoramas of the Schwyz valley basin. A wide scenic gravel path delivers you to Rigi Kaltbad, at 4,729 feet, where you meet some talented locals who introduce you to the art of yodeling, a long-cherished folk tradition whose origins lie in Switzerland's rugged geography: To communicate over wide valleys, locals called to each other from hill to hill.

Continue via cog railway down to Vitznau, a charming town squeezed between the shore of Lake Lucerne and the steep mountain behind. Here, you embark a scenic boat ride to Lucerne, where you disembark and continue on foot to your nearby hotel, your home base for the next two nights. Beloved as Switzerland's lakeside medieval gem, Lucerne has been praised by 19th-century composer Richard Wagner. "I do not know of a more beautiful spot in this world!" he raved. You are likely to agree.

Settle in, refresh, and gather for a refreshing welcome cocktail and the first of several meals that feature the bounty of the region.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 2

Engelberg and Mt. Titlis: Trüebsee, Untertrüebsee and Gerschni

4 miles, easy to moderate, 200-ft. elevation gain and 530-ft. elevation loss or 5.5 miles, moderate to challenging, 200-ft. elevation gain and 1,950-ft. elevation loss

Energize for the day with a hearty alpine breakfast and coffee, then hop the train from Lucerne to Engelberg for an exhilarating day of discoveries.

On arrival to the resort town of Engelberg, known for its old-school grandeur, you take the cable car to Stand station, then enjoy a ride on the famous Titlis Rotair gondola—the world's first rotating cable car—to the top of Titlis (at 9,908 feet) in a matter of minutes. From the spectacular summit of one of the Alps' tallest peaks, admire a splendid panorama of mountains including the stunning Monte Rosa, as well as some that you'll be seeing up close over the next few days—the famous trio of Mönch, Eiger, and

Jungfrau.

After time to take it all in, descend by gondola to Trübsee (5,930 feet), from where today's walk begins. Hike along the lake into the Ober Trübsee alpine pasture (at 5,633 feet), with more splendid vistas around you. After a while, you arrive at the Alperseil gondola station. Feel free to hop on for an easy lift down to Untertrübsee, at 4,125 feet, or continue to hike down. At Untertrübsee, enjoy lunch at a cozy family-run, mountain-style restaurant. Choose from salad or soup or a typical *käseschnitte*, a baked version of a grilled cheese sandwich. Pair it with an iced tea or a local beer and soak in the sun on the outdoor terrace, admiring the mountain views and listening to the tinkling of cowbells echoing across the fields.

After lunch, hike from Untertrübsee to Gerschnialp dairy farm (at 4,181 feet) for a tour and tasting of their fresh and flavorful alpine cheeses. Then continue a short distance on foot to the Gerschni funicular, which delivers you back to Engelberg.

Return by train to Lucerne and walk back to the hotel. This evening is yours for strolling and dining as you wish, exploring the quaint streets of Lucerne's Old Town. Your leaders will have ample restaurant suggestions.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3

Travel to Bernese Oberland. Grosse Scheidegg to Grindelwald

4.5 miles, moderate, 580-ft. elevation gain and 135-ft. elevation loss

After a delicious breakfast of fresh fruit, homemade bread, cheese, and yogurt, you bid *auf wiedersehen* to Lucerne and set off for the Bernese Oberland, known to some as the Bernese Highlands. In the early 19th century, wellness seekers flocked to the region to take in its curative alpine air. Surely its tranquil mountain villages, soaring peaks, and deep green valleys will do their part to put your body and mind at ease, too. You board a train from Lucerne to Meiringen, followed by two scenic mountain buses to Grosse Scheidegg, (at 6,472 feet).

You pause for a lunch of hearty alpine cuisine on an outdoor terrace—weather permitting—surrounded by

the dramatic massifs of the Bernese Oberland. After, set out on a gravel path for a three-hour trek among bucolic meadows and gorgeous fields as massive peaks and glistening glaciers mark your progress. Waterfalls, wildflowers, and the echoes of cowbells serenade you as the Grindelwald Valley unfolds beneath you.

The Mettenberg, Mönch, and Eiger pierce the sky to your southwest while the Wetterhorn dwarfs the plateau and the Männlichen ridge stretches to the west. It's all a staggering setting for the storybook village of Grindelwald, cradled below in the embrace of an emerald-green basin. Your trail continues down to Schreckfeld (at 6,435 feet).

Here, you climb onto the gondola for a breathtaking descent to Grindelwald. Disembark for a pleasant walk, passing quaint alpine cottages adorned with bright red geraniums. Your elegant lodging greets you with its fine greenery and warm, traditional alpine culture.

There'll be time to relax in this tranquil setting before gathering in the garden for an early evening aperitif of golden lager or crisp white wine, accompanied by a private alphorn concert, a regalia of traditional long, wooden horns. Then you're invited to a nearby restaurant for a dinner of delicious seasonal local fare. Retire in comfort after a full day.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 4

Männlichen to Alpiglen

5 miles, moderate, 2,020-ft. elevation loss

After breakfast in your hotel's panoramic dining room, you set out to explore Männlichen and its surroundings. At 7,687 feet, the mountain is an ideal starting point for several hikes around Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau.

You depart the hotel on foot and board the local train to Grindelwald Terminal. Here, enjoy another spectacularly panoramic gondola ride to Männlichen. Your hike along the Romantic Trail is sure to take your breath away, though more likely because of the magnificent vistas than your effort. You traverse a mesmerizing terrain of meadows and pastures strewn with wild anemones, buttercups, gentians, alpine

roses and cotton grass. Pause in the shade of gnarled stone pine for a snack or a rest, then leave the plateau to hike toward Teufenschlucht gorge and Alp Gummi. Skirt Alp Bustiglen before passing Arvengarten and finishing your hike at the tiny mountain hamlet of Alpiglen, at 5,329 feet.

Savor your well-earned lunch here—traditional alpine specialties amid lush alpine meadows and fragrant forests—directly below the north face of the Eiger, one of the great vertical massifs of the Alps. A local train delivers you back to Grindelwald, or you can get in another hike by making the descent on foot.

You have free time this afternoon to relax in the garden with a refreshing drink, or treat yourself to a soothing massage in the spa or a dip in the indoor pool. Dinner this evening is on your own, at one of the many eateries in town or at the hotel's exceptional restaurant.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 5

Bachalpsee

6 miles, moderate, 325-ft. elevation gain and 1,200-ft. elevation loss

After breakfast, walk to the gondola station in First, stopping to pick up some picnic supplies en route. Your gondola whisks you up to the First station, at 7,151 feet. From here, you set out on a moderate hike to the stunning alpine lake of Bachalpsee, at 7,474 feet. Gorgeous mountain views beg to be savored here; it's the perfect spot for your picnic lunch. After giving yourself ample time to take it all in, hike down to Waldspitz, at 6,300 feet, where you might want to enjoy a post-hike refreshment on the outdoor terrace of the café as you wait for the bus to transport you back down to Grindelwald.

Return to the hotel on foot by mid-afternoon. There'll be time for some last-minute shopping, or to soak in the views of this incomparable setting before meeting your fellow travelers for dinner. This evening's meal is a special affair – a traditional feast featuring cheese and meat fondue, paired with a glass (or two!) of local wine or beer. After, perhaps venture outside for a stroll under the stars, providing perfect closure to this rewarding day.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 6

Departure from Grindelwald. Travel to Montreux via the Golden Pass train from Interlaken

After an included breakfast, you bid farewell to Grindelwald and board the train to Interlaken, where you begin your panoramic Golden Pass train journey to fashionable Montreux, Switzerland's cultural gem on the shores of Lake Geneva. Upon arrival, check into your luxury hotel. (Your luggage will be delivered ahead to the Montreux hotel.)

Included Meals: Breakfast

Departure Day

Departure

After an included breakfast this morning, complimentary transportation is provided to Geneva Airport based on your departure time.

Included Meals: Breakfast

What's Included

Tour Only

Air Package

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| Exceptional boutique accommodations | ✓ | ✓ |
| 11 on-tour meals: 5 breakfasts, 3 lunches, and 3 dinners | ✓ | ✓ |
| Local leaders with you throughout tour | ✓ | ✓ |
| Local wine and/or beer with dinner | ✓ | ✓ |
| Entrance fees and special events as noted in itinerary | ✓ | ✓ |
| Bernese Oberland Pass (2nd, 3-day) | ✓ | ✓ |
| Golden Pass Express ticket and seat reservation (2nd) from Interlaken Ost to Montreaux | ✓ | ✓ |
| Telescopic walking sticks provided on tour | ✓ | ✓ |
| Roundtrip international airfare | | ✓ |
| One extra night in Zürich | | ✓ |
| One extra night in Montreux | | ✓ |
| Detailed information for your independent travel to/from arrival and departure airports | | ✓ |
| Pre- and post-trip breakfasts | | ✓ |
| Business-class upgrades available | | ✓ |