

Switzerland: Zürich, Lucerne & the Alps

Tour-Only 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.

DAY 1

Your Country Walkers Vacation Begins. Mt. Rigi. Travel to Lucerne

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

Meet your leaders in the lobby of the Opera Hotel, Dufourstrasse 5 in Zürich, at 8:00 a.m. They'll be wearing Country Walkers shirts. Please be dressed for hiking, with proper footwear, a filled water bottle, and a daypack. Ensure your luggage is clearly identified with a luggage tag—it will be delivered to your hotel in Lucerne in advance of the group's arrival this afternoon.

After brief introductions, join your leaders for a short walk to the central train station, where you'll board your train to Mt. Rigi, renowned as the "Queen of the Mountains" in the heart of central Switzerland. This soaring summit is almost entirely surrounded 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 by mid-morning, 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 glorious heights, your first hike begins. As you walk, take in staggering alpine vistas in every direction, as far as the eye can see.

You follow the easygoing Panorama Trail, a former tram route. Throughout your amble, you pass traces of the old railroad—crossing bridges and traversing tunnels—with stunning views toward the peak of

Hinterdossen. After about 75 minutes, you arrive at Unterstetten, where you stop to refuel with a delicious Swiss-style picnic lunch of local cheeses and mountain sausages prepared by our talented friends Peter and Ursula. As you savor lunch, Peter and Ursula introduce you to the art of yodeling, a long-cherished folk tradition rooted in Switzerland's rugged geography: to communicate across wide valleys, locals called to each other from hill to hill. Fabulous views of Lake Lucerne and the Alps serve as your backdrop.

After lunch, continue to the tiny enclave of First via Felsenweg, gazing upon magnificent panoramas of the Schwyz valley basin—perhaps even inspired to try yodeling as you go.

Continue via cog railway down to Vitznau, a charming town nestled between the shore of Lake Lucerne and the steep mountain behind. Here, you embark on 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 was famously praised by 19th-century composer Richard Wagner: "I do not know of a more beautiful spot in this world!" You are likely to agree.

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

Included Meals: 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.

Upon arrival in the resort town of Engelberg—known for its old-school grandeur—you'll take a cable car to the Stand station, then enjoy a ride on the famous Titlis Rotair gondola, the world's first rotating cable car, to the summit of Mount Titlis (9,908 feet) in just a few minutes. From the spectacular summit of one of the Alps' tallest peaks, admire a sweeping panorama that includes the stunning Monte Rosa, as well as the famous trio of Mönch, Eiger, and Jungfrau—mountains you'll see up close in the days ahead.

After time to take it all in, descend by gondola to Trüebsee (5,930 feet), where today's walk begins. Hike along the lake into the Ober Trüebsee alpine pasture (5,633 feet), surrounded by more splendid vistas. After a while, you'll arrive at the Alperseil gondola station. Feel free to hop on for an easy lift down to Untertrüebsee (4,125 feet), or continue hiking down on foot.

At Untertrüebsee, enjoy an independent lunch at a cozy, family-run mountain restaurant. You might opt for a fresh salad, a warm bowl of soup, or a typical *käseschnitte*—a baked version of a grilled cheese sandwich. Pair your meal with an iced tea or a local beer, and soak in the sun on the outdoor terrace as you admire the mountain views and listen to the soft tinkling of cowbells echoing across the fields.

After lunch, hike from Untertrüebsee to the Gerschnialp dairy farm (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 takes you back to Engelberg.

Return by train to Lucerne and walk back to the hotel. This evening is yours to stroll and dine at your leisure, exploring the quaint streets of Lucerne's Old Town. Your leaders will have plenty of restaurant recommendations.

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, also known as the Bernese Highlands. In the early 19th century, wellness seekers flocked to this region to take in its curative alpine air. Surely its tranquil mountain villages, soaring peaks, and deep green valleys will put your body and mind at ease as well. 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. Afterward, set out on a gravel path for a three-hour trek

through bucolic meadows and vibrant 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 looms above the plateau and the Männlichen ridge stretches westward. It's 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 board the gondola for a breathtaking descent into Grindelwald. Disembark for a pleasant walk, passing quaint alpine cottages adorned with bright red geraniums. Your elegant lodging greets you with its lush greenery and warm, traditional alpine charm.

There will be time to relax in this tranquil setting before gathering in the garden for an early evening aperitif—perhaps a golden lager or a crisp white wine—accompanied by a private alphorn concert, a display of traditional long wooden horns. Then you're invited into the hotel's rustic *Fondue-Stübli* for a traditional dinner.

Retire in comfort after a full and unforgettable 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 stunning surroundings. At 7,687 feet, the mountain is an ideal starting point for several hikes around the iconic trio of the Eiger, Mönch, and Jungfrau.

You depart the hotel on foot and board the local train to Grindelwald Terminal. From there, enjoy another spectacularly scenic gondola ride to Männlichen. Your hike along the Romantic Trail is sure to take your breath away—though more likely from the magnificent vistas than from exertion. You'll traverse a

mesmerizing landscape of meadows and pastures dotted with wild anemones, buttercups, gentians, alpine roses, and cotton grass. Pause in the shade of gnarled stone pines for a snack or a rest, then leave the plateau to hike toward the Teufenschlucht gorge and Alp Gummi. Skirt past Alp Bustiglen before passing Arvengarten and finishing your hike in the tiny mountain hamlet of Alpiglen, at 5,329 feet.

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

This afternoon is yours to enjoy as you like. Relax in the garden with a refreshing drink, treat yourself to a soothing massage in the spa, or take a dip in the indoor pool. Dinner this evening is on your own—either in town at one of the many local eateries 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 along the way. 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—this is 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 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 will be time for some last-minute shopping or simply to soak in the views of this incomparable setting before meeting your fellow travelers for dinner. This evening's meal is a lively affair—a traditional feast paired with a glass (or two!) of local wine or beer. Afterward, perhaps venture outside for a stroll under the stars, the perfect close to a rewarding day.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 6

Departure from Grindelwald. Golden Pass Train from Interlaken to Montreux. Your Country Walkers Vacation Ends

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. Sit back and enjoy the sweeping alpine scenery as you glide past mountain peaks, lakes, and charming villages. The tour concludes upon the train's arrival in Montreux at approximately 12:20 p.m. (schedule subject to change).

Included Meals: Breakfast

What's Included

Tour Only

Air Package

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-class, 3-day)	✓	✓
Golden Pass Express ticket and seat reservation (2nd-class) from Interlaken Ost to Montreux	✓	✓
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		✓