

## Switzerland: Zürich, Wengen & Zermatt

### Tour-Only Itinerary

Three days starting at the majestic sweep of the Matterhorn haven't dampened your enthusiasm. On yesterday's walk you were admiring its chiseled beauty reflected in the Riffelsee. Today, it's the dream backdrop for a lunch of beer and *rösti* on a sunny terrace in the meadows above Zermatt. Of course, Switzerland's other mountains aren't too bad either. Earlier this week on your Swiss Alps hiking tour, Jungfrau's snowy summit had you equally hooked, as you rose high above the clouds on the cog railway to Jungfraujoch, and watched it towering above the waterfalls of Lauterbrunnen's deep green valley. It's hard to say which peak wins the beauty prize. For now, all you know is that there's nowhere else you'd rather be.



### Highlights

- Enjoy ambles through quintessential Swiss landscapes, from deep-cut valleys where cowbells echo to high mountain slopes watched over by the Matterhorn.
- Walk the length of Lauterbrunnen Valley, which boasts numerous waterfalls plunging down cliffsides, emerald-green pastures with grazing cows, and wildflower meadows.
- Hear the call of resident marmots in the Matteredal Valley, and sit in silence as you wait for them to emerge from their underground homes.
- Ride historical cog-wheel trains through gently sloping valleys and up steep mountainsides, taking in magnificent vistas as you go.
- Indulge in the Swiss-style amenities—soothing spas, astonishing views, and meals of fondue, local dried meats, and *rösti*—at rustic-chic lodges.



## On all Self-Guided Adventures you can count on ...



A local representative available 24/7.



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



Detailed maps & route notes featuring turn-by-turn directions and places of interest.



Experts to handle all the details, including moving your luggage between hotels while you're out exploring.



Scheduled taxi transfers to bring you to and from each day's walks.



Access to a Self-Guided Flight Concierge—ask our knowledgeable team to find flights that sync with your planned trip.



Delicious meals—many are included.

## Activity Level

This tour is one of our Self-Guided Walking Adventures, rated easy to moderate with an average of 3 to 6 miles per day and occasional options. There are daily ascents and descents, with a maximum elevation gain of 650 feet (daily trains and cable cars transport you to higher elevations) and maximum elevation loss of 2,550 feet. Most of the hills are gradual as opposed to short and steep. The highest walking altitude on tour is 10,100 feet. The footing in this alpine region is uneven, with most hikes on single-track trails with



loose rocks, gravel, and roots that can be slippery when wet; surefootedness is essential. Weather 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; be prepared for sun, rain, and even snow. Sun protection and sturdy, waterproof hiking boots are essential on this tour, as are warm layers and breathable waterproof clothing. And remember: Preparation is the key to ensuring your tour readiness; the more you walk or participate in aerobic exercise prior to your trip, the more you will enjoy your experience!

## **DAY 1**

### **Your Switzerland: Zürich, Wengen & Zermatt tour begins. Travel to Bernese Oberland. Lauterbrunnen Valley: Stechelberg to Lauterbrunnen**

*4.6 miles, easy, 200-ft. elevation gain and 600-ft. elevation loss*

This morning, an orientation meeting with our local representative previews the breathtaking walks ahead of you and gives you tips that will help ensure a seamless journey. Then you head into the countryside on a beautiful drive. Gently rolling valleys unfurl amid towering peaks throughout your 2.5-hour journey. You ascend to cross over Burnigg Pass, where you can enjoy views of Lungerner See Lake and then descend into Interlaken and the Bernese Oberland. At the far end of the Lauterbrunnen Valley, you arrive in the village of Stechelberg. If you wish, you may eat lunch on your own here before setting off on the trail. Perhaps try a plate of *rösti*, a Swiss specialty similar to a potato fritter, at the small restaurant here. Or wait until the end of your walk, where you find a beautiful chalet and farm that sells homemade cheese and sausage along with refreshing, cold drinks.

Lauterbrunnen Valley boasts 72 waterfalls and is said to have inspired J.R.R. Tolkien when he imagined the elfin paradise of Rivendell in *The Lord of the Rings*. Your trail traces the valley's length, the path mostly level and paved, past gorgeous cascades of water flanked by steep slopes and lovely fields where brown and white cows graze. Occasionally, you follow the banks of the Lutschine River; its blue-green hue is from the fine granules of rock the waters have shorn from upstream glaciers. Green pastures unfolding from working farms, ice-capped peaks, wooden chalets in tiny villages, and the soft tinkle of cow and sheep bells evoke an idyllic canvas that is pure Swiss. As you walk, you can pause at benches and picnic tables to take in the view and enjoy the lunch you packed. The Horner Pub at the 4.4-mile mark offers a lovely outdoor terrace where you can relax with a beer or a bite to eat.



A couple of short excursions off the main trail enhance the day's walk. Begin with a scenic detour to Trümmelbachfälle (Trümmelbach Falls), a series of 10 waterfalls hidden inside a mountain, with underground access by lift, galleries, tunnels, paths, and platforms. A natural UNESCO World Heritage site, the falls start at a height of 459 feet, with nearly 5,300 gallons of meltwater tumbling down it per second. You'll want to take another scenic detour to view the tallest of the valley's waterfalls—Staubbach Falls, plunging some 1,000 feet as it blankets its surroundings with a light mist. The trail to the falls starts at the 4.3-mile mark. You ascend a short but steep path, then enter a tunnel before climbing a series of steps through a cave. It's a little strenuous, but well worth the workout for the spectacular view as you come upon the falls from behind. Though the trail from the falls is well-maintained and has handrails, it can be slippery. Back on the main trail at the 4.8-mile mark, just past the Hotel Schutzen, follow the footpath on the right to the Tal Museum. You descend about 10 minutes to this historic house along the river.

At Lauterbrunnen, board a cog-wheel train to the car-free resort village of Wengen. This train line is the Wengernalp Railway, and though only 12 miles long, it is the longest continuous rack-and-pinion railway in the world. The air up in Wengen is pure and clean, and the streets extraordinarily hushed. In this charming mountainside village, you'll have splendid panoramic views of the Bernese Alps and the famed Jungfrau, one of its main summits. After a walk to your hotel, settle in and enjoy a four-course dinner.

**Included Meals:** Dinner

## **DAY 2**

### **Männlichen to Kleine Scheidegg Panorama Trail. Afternoon option: Via Alpina: Kleine Scheidegg to Wengen. Stay Put Day**

*2.9 miles, easy to moderate, 550-ft. elevation loss. Afternoon option: 4.3 miles, moderate, 2,500-ft. elevation loss*

After a leisurely breakfast at your hotel, take an amazing 10-minute aerial cable car ride from Wengen up to the Männlichen summit station. For a few extra francs opt for the "Royal Ride," where you ride *atop* the cable car in an open-air rooftop balcony. At the summit, linger over coffee or a snack at the Berghaus Männlichen restaurant. Then admire sweeping views of the Eiger, Mönch, and Jungfrau peaks, and the valley down to Grindelwald as you hike one of the most iconic trails in Switzerland.

Upon reaching Kleine Scheidegg, a famed mountain pass between the soaring peaks of Eiger and Lauberhorn, you have numerous options. Enjoy lunch at one of several eateries, or, if you'd like, you can



purchase a ticket for the Jungfrau railway and make the thrilling ascent to Jungfraujoch, “The Top of Europe.” At 11,332 feet above sea level, take in staggering views of France’s Vosges mountains and the Aletsch Glacier surrounded by 13,000-foot peaks. You may, of course, indulge in the tourist-oriented exhibits here, but we’d guess you’d rather follow the walking trails onto a glacier. Trace the snow-packed path for about 25 minutes before arriving at a mountain hut that serves lunch. (Your included Jungfrau Travel Pass can be applied to your Jungfraujoch ticket, saving you almost 50%.)

After—or instead if you decide against The Top of Europe—board the Wengernalp Railway for the 28-minute journey down to Wengen. Alternatively, set off from Kleine Scheidegg on a moderate downhill walk back to Wengen that partly follows the slopes of the Lauberhorn. In this valley, World Cup skiers compete in the legendary Lauberhorn Downhill each January. You follow the Via Alpina, a beautiful, wide, paved trail that parallels the Eiger, Mönch, and Jungfrau peaks. As you stroll, the deep Lauterbrunnen Valley unfolds before you—a vast swath of emerald-green pastures with grazing cows and dotted with patches of evergreens. At Wengernalp, cross the rail line and enter a dreamy alpine meadow, where a stunning 19th-century hotel and restaurant awaits.

Back in Wengen, enjoy dinner on your own and a stroll through the charming village. As you roam, keep your ears open for the musical calls of the *pfeifende lurch*, or the whistling amphibian, a mythical creature central to the mountain village’s folklore!

**Included Meals:** Breakfast

## **DAY 3**

### **Schynige Platte Panorama Trail. Stay Put Day**

*3.6 miles, easy to moderate, 650-ft. elevation gain and 750-ft. elevation loss (shorter and longer and easier options available)*

Scenic rail journeys deliver you to your next spectacular walking trail today. From Wengen, make your way by train down to Lauterbrunnen and then on to Wilderswil. Here, board the historic funicular, operating since 1893, for the hour-long ride to Schynige Platte, a stunning plateau atop a mountain ridge. This vintage funicular, outfitted with original wooden benches, winds up the mountainside, ducking in and out of tunnels as it ascends past dense forests, sweeping pastures, and pristine Thun and Brienz lakes. For the best views of the Eiger, Mönch, and Jungfrau peaks, we recommend sitting on the right-hand side. A real treat!





Big mountain views, rocky peaks, soaring cliffs, and green meadows teeming with wildflowers dominate the day's loop walk. You follow a dirt mountain trail along a ridge, skirting some towering rock spires as you go. Pass the Tuba lookout point as you continue toward Loucherhorn. Turn right at the Grätli sign; the path passes the Oberberg huts before ending where it started. Along the way, high-altitude vistas of snow-covered peaks and wide glaciers completely surround you. Enjoy jaw-dropping panoramas of Interlaken, shimmering lakes, and the Lauterbrunnen Valley. You'll find handrails to help you along a flight of stairs and a few narrow segments that traverse some drop-offs. If you're uncomfortable with heights, you have the option to turn around, and your walking companion can meet you after completing the loop. If you wish, you can detour during your walk to the Alpine Botanical Garden; admission is included as part of your train fare. This half-mile circuit leads you through a beautiful walking garden of more than 700 species of alpine plants.

Today, we recommend you bring a picnic lunch that you can enjoy along the trail. There are several benches along the route, strategically placed in scenic spots. Or just bring a snack and look forward to a traditional Swiss lunch at the Berghotel's Panorama Restaurant, the start and end of your loop walk. Here, choose from table service or help yourself to the cafeteria-style offerings and dine on the outdoor terrace.

Return to Wengen the way you came—on three breathtaking train journeys! After a rewarding day, relax over dinner at your hotel or at one of Wengen's many dining establishments.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast

## **DAY 4**

### **Travel to Valais. Zermatt–Zmutt–Furi–Gorner Gorge–Findelbach. Move on Day**

*6.4 miles, easy to moderate, 1,550-ft. elevation gain and 1,000-ft. elevation loss (3.7-, 4.7-, and 5.4-mile options also available)*

After breakfast, walk to Wengen station to catch the morning train down to Lauterbrunnen. There, you meet your driver for a morning transport to Täsch in the Mattertal Valley. The valley is home to the highest peaks of the Alps, including the majestic Matterhorn, an inspiration to mountaineers for generations. Around midday, you arrive in Täsch, where you board the local rail line—the narrow-gauge Matterhorn Gotthard Bahn—for the 12-minute journey to the mountain village of Zermatt. An enchanting storybook village of chalet-style buildings, Zermatt is watched over by the monolithic Matterhorn. The tiny hamlet has



enjoyed its resort status since the 19th century, when, in 1865, British climber Edward Whymper reached the summit of the famous peak. This accomplishment inspired a parade of adventurers—including Theodore Roosevelt—to follow suit. You may grab lunch at a village restaurant or duck into the local co-op to pick up supplies for a picnic that you can enjoy later on the trail. A Toblerone bar—the beloved chocolate treat created in Bern, Switzerland—will be essential to your journey; the peak of the Matterhorn inspired Toblerone’s prism shape!

To begin your walk, head south on Zermatt’s main street—Bahnhofstrasse—to reach the west bank of the Matter Vispa, the frothy glacial river flowing through the center of town. From here, continue along a broad walkway as it gently climbs through sylvan forests, lush pastures, and rolling meadows brimming with wildflowers—all the while surrounded by epic, snow-covered peaks. Depending on the season, alpine columbine and various other blooms—including some rare species—blanket fields with vibrant colors. This stretch of the valley is home to a large colony of marmots, large squirrel-like creatures that burrow underground. You might hear them whistling as you approach, a shrill signal to alert each other of intruders. If you take a break and sit quietly, they might reappear from their underground homes.

Step into the past as you arrive in Zmutt, a photogenic, 500-year-old hamlet with a whitewashed chapel. Your route winds through a cluster of old barns, romantic wooden chalets, and two mountain restaurants before crossing the Zmuttbach River. You continue along a country road sloping gently downhill to Furi mountain station. If you like, break for a refreshment here at one of several outdoor terraces before boarding a gondola back down to the village of Zermatt. Alternatively, continue walking to the dramatic Gorner Gorge, where wooden walkways weave between towering cliffs. Afterward, loop back to Furi or continue further on to Findelbach mountain station to board Europe’s highest open-air cog railway—the Gornergrat Bahn—down to the village of Zermatt.

From family-friendly and rustic mountain restaurants to Michelin-starred dining experiences, choose from a wide variety of eateries for dinner on your own this evening.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast

## **DAY 5**

### **Gornergrat to Riffelberg. Afternoon option: Riffelberg to Riffelalp. Stay Put Day**

*2.9 miles, easy to moderate, 1,650-ft. elevation loss. Afternoon option: 2 miles, easy to moderate,*



### *1100-ft. elevation loss*

Following a leisurely breakfast, board the Gornergrat Bahn on an upward rail journey to the final stop—Gornergrat, perched 10,285 feet above sea level. Linger here a while to marvel at jaw-dropping views, gazing upon 29 peaks higher than 13,000 feet. The Monte Rosa massif features Switzerland's tallest summit, the Dufourspitze at 15,200 feet; the Gorner Glacier laid out before the massif is the second-largest icefield in the Alps. If you're lucky, you'll spot a wild ibex or two roaming the range. Before you get underway with your walk into this mountain paradise, you might grab a bite for the trail at the restaurant or stop by the astronomical observatory and learn about its infrared telescope.

Your walk today leads mostly downhill to the midway Riffelberg station, home to a mountain-top hotel and the panoramic Riffelberg Restaurant & Bar. Outstanding views of the Matterhorn accompany your every step on the trail of dirt, rock, and low alpine grass. You pass the deep-blue Riffelsee lake partway down. On a clear day, it reflects the mountain's peak like a mirror. At times, you traverse steep slopes and walk along monolithic walls whose contours seem to shift magically in the sun. Much of your walk is above the tree line, with low growth appearing as you approach Riffelberg.

If you're up for more walking after lunch, you can continue downhill to Riffelalp. Follow the Mark Twain Trail from Hotel Riffelhaus 1853, Zermatt's oldest mountain hostelry built in 1855, retracing the steps of the famous author's 1878 journey. Mark Twain's hike, documented in "Climbing the Riffelberg," offers insights into the challenges and humor of mountain climbing in his time. The trail offers stunning views of the Matterhorn and opportunities to encounter grazing Wallis black-nosed sheep.

A final trip aboard the Gornergrat Bahn delivers you from either Riffelberg or Riffelalp back down to your hotel from where you may walk to dinner at a restaurant of your choosing.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast

## **DAY 6**

### **The 5-Seenweg (Five Lakes Walk): Blauherd to Sunnegga. Stay Put Day**

*5.7 miles, easy to moderate, 550-ft. elevation gain and 1,500-ft. elevation loss*

Today's walk unfolds among more stunning alpine vistas, passing five of the region's most pristine and





beautiful lakes along the way. You'll want to bring your swimsuit in case the spirit moves you to go for a swim! To get to your starting point from your hotel in Zermatt village, simply board the funicular to Sunnegga to begin your hike. From the Sunnegga platform, you may wish to take a short walk to a marmot-viewing station before continuing to Blauherd via cable car. From Blauherd, your path loops back down to Sunnegga.

Today's route is a classic among avid alpine walkers. You roam among rare high-altitude plants and crystalline lakes as soaring peaks rise all around you, the Matterhorn always a dominant and powerful presence. Though it is one of your longer days of hiking, you might find it to be one of the most relaxed. You'll have opportunities to pause at a bench to take in your magnificent surroundings, break at a mountain lodge for lunch, and linger a while at one of the tranquil lakes you'll come upon.

Pass the Stellisee and Grindjisee before pausing for a dip in the Grünsee. This "green lake" is fed by the Findel Glacier in the Monte Rosa massif. Stop by the small mountain lodge Ze Seewjenu for lunch or a snack; your host Kurt has been running the inn and eatery for 26 years and is always eager for a chat. Then continue your scenic stroll via a forest path and, later, past the sparkling waters of Mosjesee. You might take another swim at Liesee before ending your walk at Sunnegga and making your way back to Zermatt, where you have time to explore its many charms before enjoying a final dinner on your own.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast

## **DAY 7**

### ***Your Switzerland: Zürich, Wengen & Zermatt tour concludes***

Your self-guided walking tour ends after breakfast. From Zermatt, board a train to the city of your choice, where you can make connections for onward travel.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast

## What's Included

### Tour Only

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Boutique accommodations   | ✓ |
| 7 on-tour meals: 6 breakfasts and 1 dinner  | ✓ |
| Ride with GPS (custom downloadable GPS route notes and turn-by-turn voice navigation; smartphone required)  | ✓ |
| Orientation meeting with a County Walkers representative  | ✓ |
| Local representative available 24/7   | ✓ |
| Scheduled on-tour taxi and luggage transportation (Please note: If unable to walk, it is possible to travel with your luggage from one accommodation to the next at no additional charge)                         | ✓ |
| Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary: A Jungfrau Travel Pass and a Peak Pass, providing full, prepaid access to all cable car, train, funicular, and public transport in Wengen and Zermatt | ✓ |