



Great Walks

OF THE WORLD

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The Alpine Pass Route

Day 1

We meet at our hotel in the pretty village of Gstaad. In winter this is one of Switzerland's most fashionable and chic ski resorts and there are many exclusive shops and hotels located here. This area is picture-postcard Switzerland with green rolling alps, jangling cow bells and pretty wooden chalets. To the south of the village the glistening snows of the Wildhorn (3247m) complete a truly idyllic Swiss landscape. We stay in a delightful chalet style hotel where the traditional meal of fondue washed down with the local Fendant wine is a regional speciality.

Day 2

We set out from our hotel after a hearty breakfast, and to ease us into the first day of walking we begin by using a cable car which takes from Gstaad up to the Durrischilt (1936m). This small peak is at one end of the fabulous Wasserngrat, a superb broad high level ridge line which we can follow southwards at over 2000 metres in altitude. We get fantastic views of the glaciers of the Wildhorn to the south, and we can also gaze towards the snowfields of Les Diableret (3209m) and the Wildstrubel (3243m). We follow a path which is literally on the crest of the Wasserngrat and then continues onto the Brueschegrat before descending slightly towards the obvious saddle at the head of the Turnels valley. From here we can either make the ascent of the Lauenerhorn (2477m) or traverse across its lower slopes to reach the col above the Turbach valley. A small shoulder is then crossed to reach the grassy saddle of the Truttlisberg Pass (2038m). On the east side of the pass we descend down a gentle path into the Wellbach valley and drop over a 1000 metres in altitude to the pretty village of Lenk (1068m) and our hotel for the night. We are re-united with our luggage which will have been transported around from Gstaad by vehicle, a process repeated most days throughout this trek.

Day 3

Leaving Lenk behind we climb through delightful alpine pastures towards the Hahnenmoos, an ascent of some 900 metres via the hamlet of Buelberg. This takes around three hours but the effort is more than compensated for by the ever present backdrop of the Wildstrubel whose glaciers rise above the head of the Simmental Valley. At the crest of the pass there is a small refuge where provisions including cooked meals may be available. A telepherique (cable car) comes up to the pass from Geilsbuel but rather than use this or descend beneath the pylons we traverse southwards to reach the little-frequented Pommern Pass at the head of the remote Butschiglen. If we are feeling up to it, we may be able to climb the Regensboldshorn (2192m) for a tremendous 360 degree panorama. From either of these points we follow a wild path which takes us down to the meadows below Enstligenalp and by continuing via the ridgeline which descends to the Hochsthorn (1912m) we can follow a wonderfully varied and scenic route down to the valley town of Adelboden.

Day 4

Although not a difficult trek, the crossing of the Bunderchrinde Pass (2385m) will be the toughest day yet. We follow a narrow track up to Bonderalp and this continues beyond, across the meadows which flank the west side of the pass. The Bunderchrinde itself is a small notch in a jagged and rocky ridge which rises up to the Bunderspitze (2546m). From the narrow cleft of the pass we get our first proper views eastwards towards the Blumisalp (3664m), whilst the Jungfrau, Monch and Eiger appear in the distance. Looking back to the west we get good views of Adelboden from where we have climbed this morning. We can also look south-east down the Gasterental valley towards the Balmhorn (3699m). Descent on the east side of the pass is initially across rough terrain with much loose shale and scree. But the path steadily improves as we drop down into the Alpbach valley and the final section into Kandersteg follows a good jeep trail. Our comfortable hotel awaits us.

Day 5

After three high passes it's time for a rest day in the attractive resort of Kandersteg. A main rail line passes through the town and it is quite feasible to make a day excursion down to the lake of Thuner See where there are several beach areas for swimming. It is also possible to visit the pretty town of Interlaken situated between Thuner See and Brienzner See.



Day 6

We begin the day with a cable car ride up towards the lake at Oeschinensee. Emerging from this we commence a mountain path which climbs high above the lake, heading for the Hohturli Pass (2704m). This is the highest pass on our trek and the climb to the crest of this pass is probably the toughest day of the trip. But in clear weather our rewards are some of the finest views on the whole route. Above Oeschinensee we follow a steep ascent with the Blumisalp Glaciers right in front of us. A final scramble across scree brings us to the rocky pass. A short distance above us lies the Blumisalphutte (2837m) which provides a spectacular place at which to spend the night.

Day 7

After breakfast we begin the long descent down from the Hohturli Pass. This is initially quite steep and loose, and in places metal chains have been fixed to provide some aid, although these are not strictly necessary. The path improves and continues in a more straight forward manner, and eventually we are able to join a high level route which contours around to the superb Gspaltenhorn Hut at 2458m. This traverse enables us to stay high and avoids the long descent down to Griesalp, and the correspondingly long climb back up again.

Day 8

One last big pass awaits us today, and although not the highest on our trek it certainly has the toughest reputation. The Sefinenfurke (2612m) is not a pass to be tackled in anything other than perfect weather conditions so we will need to assess the weather forecast and local conditions before we leave. If we have come across the Hohturli successfully we should have no difficulty continuing over the Sefinenfurke which takes us down to the charming resort town of Murren. On the descent we come eyeball to eyeball with some of the biggest mountains in the Oberland including the Mittaghorn (3895m), the Ebnefluh (3962m), the Gletscherhorn (3962m) and the Jungfrau (4158m). Murren is a delightful village, and although it is generally better known for winter skiing activities, it is a walkers paradise.

Day 9

Murren is reached by a small mountain railway and we can use this to help ease the journey today. Taking the train down into the Lauterbrunnen valley and then back up to Wengen saves a considerable amount of steep descent and re-ascent and at this stage in the trek will be a most welcome option. We then have several choices for the remainder of the day's walking but most likely we will use the cable car from Wengen up to the Mannlichen (2342m), a superb view point which affords an outstanding panorama of the Jungfrau, Monch and Eiger. This can be followed with an excellent high level walk across to the Kleine Scheidegg, situated directly beneath the menacing north face of the Eiger. This is the classic viewpoint for observing climbers on the North Face and it makes an excellent lunch stop. In the afternoon we can amble down to our hotel in Grindelwald amid some of the finest scenery in the Swiss Alps.

Day 10

After breakfast we say goodbye to our guides and depart from Gstaad. Most members will be flying back to the UK and will be transferring by rail to Geneva Airport.

