



Great Walks

OF THE WORLD

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The Tour of the Val d'Anniviers

Introduction

The Val D'Anniviers is the proper name for an area of Switzerland more commonly referred to as the Zinal Valley. Lying to the south of the town of Sierre in the Rhone Valley, it is undoubtedly one of Switzerland's 'undiscovered' gems. Some of the most famous peaks in the Alps can be seen from various vantage points within the valley, including the tremendous Weisshorn (4506m). One of the highlights of this trip is the night we spend at the Grand Mountet hut where we are located in a huge cirque of peaks including the Zinal Rothorn (4221m), the Obergabelhorn (4063m) and the Dent Blanche (4357m) – three of the regions principal peaks.

Trip Outline

We operate the Tour du Val d'Anniviers as a hotel trek. There are no technical difficulties on the route and generally the walking is fairly easy. We will be hiking for up to seven hours each day and can expect to cover an average of about 10 miles per day. We stay in a variety of hotels, gites and mountain refuges. Some of these are fairly rudimentary and some have no star rating at all, but all are homely and sufficiently comfortable for the weary walker to rest after a day in the hills. On most days you will only need to carry a light day pack whilst our personal luggage is transported from hotel to hotel by our support vehicle. However, where our itinerary requires us to spend a night in a high mountain refuge, you will need to carry all overnight belongings. Blankets and bedding are provided in the refuges so we only need to carry essentials.

Itinerary

Day 1

Flight from the UK to Geneva. From the airport there is a rail transfer to Sierre in the Rhone Valley. From Sierre the journey continues by postbus to the pretty village of St. Luc and our hotel. Please note that the transfer from Geneva Airport to St. Luc is included in the trip price, but it is not escorted. You will be met by the guide at the hotel in St. Luc.

Day 2

Today's trek only covers a short horizontal distance so we will commence with an acclimatisation hike up to one of the many fine viewpoints in the area. If conditions are good we may be able to make the long ascent to the summit of the Bella Tola, a superb viewpoint much favoured by the early Victorian travellers who first visited the Alps. From the summit we can then descend to the Hotel Weisshorn. This historic Victorian hotel, which was built in the middle of the nineteenth century, has an elegant dining room with one of the finest views on the trek. There is no vehicle access to the hotel so we will need to carry all essential items in our rucksacks.

Day 3

After a leisurely breakfast we follow a delightful undulating path which contours high above the valley at the 2000 metre level. Above us rise the Weisshorn (4506m) and the Zinal Rothorn (4221m) while at the far reaches of the valley we can see the huge glaciers of Dent Blanche (4357m) and the Ober Gabelhorn (4063m). We remain high up on our path for the whole day until we are directly above the village of Zinal, descending to it via steep series of switch backs. We stay at a comfortable hotel and will be re-united with our baggage.

Day 4

From Zinal we follow a path alongside the Nabisence river to the chalets at Le Vichiesso. Climbing high above the right bank of the Glacier de Zinal we follow a narrow mountain path to the climbers refuge of Grand Mountet (2886m). There is no access to the refuge for vehicles so we will need to pack our rucksacks very carefully, carrying only basic essentials for the one night we spend here. The refuge is situated in a splendid location in a huge glacial amphitheatre surrounded by the Zinal



Rothorn, the huge north face of the Obergabelhorn and the Dent Blanche, and with good weather we can enjoy a spectacular sunset over the peaks.

Day 5

We can spend a leisurely morning admiring the spectacular views from outside the refuge, and we may be able to see climbers returning from their summits. Most will have left the refuge around 2am to make their ascents and should be on the way down by now. After lunch we retrace our route down the valley as far as the snout of the Zinal glacier where we turn off and climb a short distance up to the delightful Petit Mountet hut (2142m). This is a beautiful wooden chalet in the traditional Swiss style set in a delightful alpine pasture with snow capped peaks all around.

Day 6

From the Petit Mountet refuge we follow a path which initially climbs up to 2500 metres before levelling off and traversing a rocky hillside high above the valley. This delightful trail passes the Zinal cable car at Sorebois before heading up and over the Col de Sorebois (2840m) with spectacular views of the mountains to both the west and east. With a fine panorama over the Lac de Moiry we descend to the dam which contains the waters of this huge reservoir and cross the dam to gain an easy trail contouring around to the chalets at Bendolla. From here we can either walk down to the village of Grimentz (1500m) or use the cable car to avoid a steep set of zig-zags. Grimentz is a charming village with narrow cobbled streets and colourful window boxes. We stay at the charming Hotel de Moiry where we are re-united with our baggage from Zinal.

Day 7

On the final day of the trek we leave Grimentz and follow an elevated trail just above the tree line on the western side of the Val D'Anniviers. We eventually reach the Cret du Midi (2332m) where there is a restaurant and cable car station. We can enjoy lunch here with superb mountain view stretching over the valley towards St. Luc where we began our walk, before descending to the town of Vercorin (1322m) and our hotel. We can celebrate our final night in the mountains with a traditional Swiss Fondue meal and plenty of the local 'Fendant' white wine.

Day 8

After an early breakfast we travel by postbus to Sierre in the Rhone Valley and take the train to Geneva Airport for our return flight to the UK.

