

Switzerland: Zurich, Wengen & Zermatt

Tour-Only Itinerary

European mountain trekkers of the 19th century had it right: The high peaks of Switzerland provide the most soothing and inspiring setting when you want to take your walking to grand and glorious heights. Amid this alpine splendor, trails through deep green valleys laden with wildflowers were made for idyllic walks into storybook mountain villages. In the Bernese Oberland, or Highlands, follow footpaths into the mist-laden Valley of 72 Waterfalls, passing emerald-green echoing with the clang of cowbells. Trace the contours of a breathtaking plateau along the mountain-ringed Schynige Platte. Under the watchful gaze of the Matterhorn, hike above Zermatt's tree line past shimmering lakes that reflect mirror images of snow-capped peaks. Historic cog railways and thrilling cable cars enhance your adventure as you ascend to chalet-dotted hamlets, where you settle in to historic lodges serving hearty Swiss mountain fare.



Highlights

- Explore the arts and culture center of Zürich, hugging the Limmat River and Lake Zürich and surrounded by alpine peaks.
- Walk the length of Lauterbrunnen Valley, boasting numerous waterfalls plunging down cliffsides, emerald-green pastures grazed by cows, and wildflower meadows.
- Follow a breathtaking loop trail along the Schynige Platte, a wide plateau atop a stunning mountain ridge.
- Hear the call of resident marmots in the Matternal Valley and sit in silence as you wait for them to emerge from their underground hovels.

- Enjoy ambles through quintessentially Swiss landscapes, from deep-cut valleys where cow bells echo to high mountain slopes watched over by the Matterhorn.
- Ride historic 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. Optional Zürich Old Town walk

3.3 miles, easy, 150-ft elevation gain and loss

Make your own way to Zürich, Switzerland's graceful center of culture and commerce straddling 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 lots to explore in this history-rich city, the nation's largest and wealthiest. Romans founded it as Turicum in the year 15 BC 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 are provided 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.

Accommodation: Hotel Glärnischhof Zürich, Zürich

DAY 2

Transfer to Bernese Oberland. Lauterbrunnen Valley: Stechelberg to Lauterbrunnen

4.6 miles, easy, 250-ft elevation gain and 600-ft elevation loss. Optional 40-minute climb to Staubbach Falls

After breakfast, 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 two-and-a-half-hour transfer. 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 grab 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 its homemade cheese and sausage 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, mostly level and paved, past gorgeous cascades of water, flanked by steep slopes and lovely fields grazed by brown and white cows. Occasionally, you follow the banks of the Lutschine River; its blue-green hue is from the fine granules of rock that the waters have shorn from 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, there'll be benches and picnic tables where you can pause to take it all in and enjoy the lunch you packed. And the Horner Pub at the 4.4-mile mark offers a lovely outside terrace where you might relax a spell with a beer or a bite.

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 Heritage site, the

falls start at a height of 459 feet and nearly 5,300 gallons of meltwater tumble 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 and sheer cliff with a light mist. The trail to the falls starts at the 4.3-mile mark. You climb 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 you'll enjoy as you come upon the falls from behind. Though the trail can be slippery from the falls, it is well-maintained and has handrails. 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 ten minutes to this historic house along the river.

At Lauterbrunnen, board a cog-wheel train to the car-free resort village of Wengen. This is the Wengernalp Railway. 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 main summits. After a walk to your hotel, settle in and enjoy a four-course dinner, perhaps on the outdoor terrace.

Accommodation: Hotel Schöneegg, Wengen

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 3

Männlichen to Kleine Scheidegg Panorama Trail

3 miles, easy to moderate, 550-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 before savoring sweeping views of the Eiger, Mönch, Jungfrau, 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 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, where World Cup skiers compete in the legendary Lauberhorn Downhill each January. You follow the Via Alpina, a beautiful wide paved trail that first parallels the Eiger, Mönch, and Jungfrau peaks. As you stroll, the deep Lauterbrunnen Valley unfolds before you, vast swathes of emerald-green pastures grazed by cows and dotted with patches of evergreen. At Wengernalp, cross the rail line and enter a dreamy alpine meadow, where a stunning 19th-century hotel and yet another restaurant option 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!

Accommodation: Hotel Schöneegg, Wengen

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 4

Schnynige Platte Panorama Trail

3.5 miles, easy to moderate, 650-ft elevation gain and 650-ft elevation loss (shorter and longer and easier options available)

Scenic rail journeys deliver you to your next spectacular walking trail today. To make the most of your day, catch the 9:00 train from Wengen to Lauterbrunnen, then the 9:30 to Wilderswil. Here, board the historic funicular, operating since 1893, for the hour-long ride to Schnynige Platte, a stunning plateau atop a mountain ridge. This vintage car, 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 Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau peaks, we recommend sitting on the right 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 alpine 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 alpine 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 hand rails 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 ½-mile circuit leads you to a spectacular walking garden of more than 700 species of alpine plants.

We recommend planning ahead and bringing a picnic lunch today 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 point of your loop walk. Choose from table service here 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! The 3:00 departure from Schynige Platte will deliver you back around 5:00. After a rewarding day, relax over an included dinner at your hotel's restaurant. Your exquisite dining experience might include lamb carrée with herb crust and watercress soup, with ingredients from local farms.

Accommodation: Hotel Schöneegg, Wengen

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 5

Transfer to Valais. Zermatt–Zmutt–Furi–Gorner Gorge–Findelbach

6.4 miles, easy to moderate, 1,600-ft elevation gain and 1,050-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 transfer to Täsch in the Mattertal Valley, home to the highest peaks of the Alps, including the majestic Matterhorn, inspiration to mountaineers for generations. You arrive in Täsch around mid-day, 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 cluster of chalet-style buildings 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 summited the famous peak, inspiring 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 or two—the beloved chocolate treat created in Bern, Switzerland—will be essential to your journey; its prism shapes were inspired by the peak of the Matterhorn!

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, emerald-green 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 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 hovels.

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 fine old barns, romantic wooden chalets, and two mountain restaurants before crossing the Zmuttbach River and continuing along a country road gently downhill to Furi mountain station. If you like, break for a refreshment here at one of several outdoor terraces before boarding a gondola for a thrilling ascent to the Riffelberg—a plateau perched on a mountain ridge at 8,200 feet—or down to the village of Zermatt (depending on which hotel you call home). 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—up to the Riffelberg or down to the village of Zermatt.

Accommodation: Hotel Riffelhaus 1853, Zermatt

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 6

Gornergrat to Riffelberg

2.9 miles, easy to moderate, 1,650-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 from the top of the world, gazing upon 29 peaks above 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 back to your hotel (via a final train ride if staying in Zermatt Village), so it will be largely downhill. Outstanding views of the Matterhorn accompany your every step on a 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 magically shift in the sun. Much of your walk is above the tree line, with low growth appearing as you approach Riffelberg.

Enjoy an included dinner this evening at the hotel, perhaps trying a veal steak, cheese toast, or tarte flambee, a type of flat-bread pizza.

Accommodation: Hotel Riffelhaus 1853, Zermatt

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 7

The 5-Seenweg (Five Lakes Walk): Blauherd to Sunnegga

5.7 miles, easy to moderate, 550-ft elevation gain and 1,520-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 the Riffelhaus, take the Gornergrat Bahn back down to Zermatt, then board the funicular for a quick lift to Sunnegga. If staying in Zermatt village, simply board the funicular to Sunnegga to begin your walk. 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 walking path loops you back down to Sunnegga.

Among avid alpine walkers, today's route is a classic. 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 for the opportunities you'll have to pause at a bench to take in your magnificent surroundings, to break at a mountain lodge for lunch, and to 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 24 years and is always eager for a chat. Then continue your scenic stroll via a forest path and, later, 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 included dinner at your hotel.

Accommodation: Hotel Riffelhaus 1853, Zermatt

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 8

Departure at leisure from Zermatt

Your self-guided walking tour ends after breakfast. If staying at Riffelhaus, make your way back to Zermatt this morning and 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	✓
12 meals: 7 breakfasts and 5 dinners	✓
Detailed water- and tear-resistant Route Notes, maps, and access to CW walking routes and downloadable maps on the Switzerland Mobility App (smartphone required)	✓
Orientation meeting with a Country Walkers representative	✓
Local representative available 24/7	✓
Scheduled taxi and luggage transfers (Please note: If unable to walk, it is possible to transfer with your luggage from one accommodation to the next at no additional charge.)	✓
Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary: A 4-day Jungfrau Travel Pass (205 CHF value) and a 4-day Peak Pass (221–245 CHF value), providing full, prepaid access to all cable car, train, funicular, and public transport in Wengen and Zermatt.	✓
Emergency travel assistance hotline available 24/7	✓
Access to Self-Guided Flight Concierge—Ask our knowledgeable team to find flights that sync perfectly with your planned trip.	✓