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Dossier: Matterhorn&Eiger/Guided/Hotels/9days/2017

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Matterhorn to the Eiger / Guided: 9 days

Trip starts: Day 1 at Geneva Airport

Trip ends: Day 9 at Geneva Airport

This 9-day trip visits two of the most beautiful regions in the Swiss Alps - the Matternal and the Bernese Oberland. Both regions offer the most impressive mountain views in Switzerland, chocolate-box villages and high alpine pastures full of flowers and wild animals.

You will see the Matterhorn and many of the other 4000m snowy peaks in the Zermatt area, walk the spectacular trail under the north face of the Matterhorn, see the high Alpine lake of Ocheninsee and trek through wild, high and remote countryside en-route to Lauterbrunnen. While trekking to Lauterbrunnen you will see the famous north face of the Eiger, the sister peaks of the Jungfrau and Mönch and the truly outstanding Lauterbrunnen Valley – a UNESCO World Heritage site. This trip will appeal to hikers who like big mountain scenery, challenging trekking and plenty of variety.

The walking is challenging and similar to the Tour du Mont Blanc. Some of the ascents are long, particularly the high-level traverse under the north face of the Matterhorn and crossing the two big passes deep within the Bernese Oberland. You can expect to walk for around 7-9 hours each day and some of the ascents and descents are over 1000m.

During the trek, we stay at hotels for six nights, one night at a village inn and one night at a high alpine mountain refuge. The hotels are simple, family run places and we choose them for their character. The village inn is deep within the Bernese Oberland and offers a fabulous hidden location in a classic rural setting. The mountain refuge is above Zermatt and is one of the best in the Alps – there are twin rooms, but the facilities are communal and there is one hot shower.



The walking will be mostly on well-maintained trails, though it is likely that we will encounter some rougher ground – particularly in the Bernese Oberland. Some ascents will be tough and you should be confident of climbing and then descending over 1000m in a day. The walk should appeal to people who regularly take walking weekends and are happy covering 16-22km (10-14 miles) each day, with a number of ascents and descents. This is a challenging trek and you should be confident of your fitness. The last two days are the toughest, but you will be fitter by this time and have had a short day prior to setting off.

The trip will be led by an experienced and fully qualified International Mountain Leader (IML).



ITINERARY

Day 1 Arrive Geneva Airport; transfer to Zermatt

Meet at Geneva International Airport at 1pm (13.00hrs). We will then transfer you to our hotel in Zermatt - the trip takes 3 hours. Zermatt is at an altitude of 1600m and is a lovely Alpine town with pretty shops, a relaxed atmosphere and is surrounded by Switzerland's highest mountains. The Matterhorn looms above Zermatt and is magnificent from all angles. You can explore the car-free town at your leisure: visit the Alpine museum, the Alpine graveyard or one of the many bars and restaurants. Rooms are normally available from 3pm. There will be a short briefing by our Trek Leader about the week ahead, followed by dinner at a local restaurant.

(Hotel. Meals included: none)

Day 2 Warm-up walk to Sunegga and Findeln

After breakfast we take a leisurely, albeit steep walk to the village of Winkelmaten located above Zermatt. The views of the Matterhorn are increasingly better and other mountains come in to view. We then head through the forest to Findeln, a tiny hamlet with a small church and a smattering of chalets. We continue higher towards Sunegga and on to FluAlp (2620m) where there is a lovely Alpine refuge serving food and drinks. Our descent back to Zermatt may take a different route. Approx distance 16km. Ascent 1000m, Descent 1000m.

(Hotel. Meals included: breakfast, lunch)

Day 3 Trek to Trift mountain refuge

We take a stiff walk out of Zermatt through Alpine pastures and then follow a crashing river as we gain altitude. We pass through thick larch forests and on to a steep-sided valley where the Alpine flowers are varied and bright. We take our time as we ascend to admire the views and enjoy this spectacular and varied walk. We reach our destination - Trift Hut (2337m) - in time for lunch. Famed for its iced tea and generous hospitality, it is a wonderful place to spend the night. There are twin rooms and bedding is provided. There is cold water in the communal bathrooms and a flush toilet. They also have one hot shower that costs 5CHF per person. In the afternoon, there is an optional walk to climb a peak for 360° views of the huge mountains in this region. You will need to carry overnight gear such as toiletries, a small towel and spare underwear and socks for tomorrow.

Approx distance 6km with 740m of ascent. 10km with 1150m if you take the afternoon hike as well.

(Mountain refuge. Meals included: breakfast, lunch & dinner)

Day 4 Hike under the North face of the Matterhorn

From Trift, we have a small climb to Hohbalmen (2700m) where we are rewarded with the finest up-close views of the Matterhorn. The North Face and all the main ridges can be closely observed as we continue along the path. This is wild country with high cliffs inhabited only by mountain sheep and marmots. We regard this as one of the finest walks in the Alps. Our descent route takes past a waterfall and then along a wide valley back to the hotel for a well-deserved shower. Approx distance 16km with 450m of ascent, and 1200m of descent.

(Hotel. Meals included: breakfast, lunch)



Day 5 Transfer to Zermatt to Kandersteg and optional afternoon walk

Drive for two hours to Kandersteg (1176m), nestled deep in the Bernese Oberland. The journey takes us through the famous Lötschberg Tunnel. On arrival at Kandersteg we are greeted by a totally different mountain scenery with sheer-sided limestone cliffs and hanging valleys. Kandersteg is a quaint Alpine town dotted with Swiss chalets and cut by a rushing river. We take a gentle afternoon walk above the village and head to Höh (1300m), offering fabulous views of the Kandertal (*tal* = valley) and the route we will follow tomorrow. Approx distance 6-8km, Ascent 300m, Descent 300m. 3-4hrs.

(Hotel. Meals included: breakfast, lunch)

Day 6 In the Bernese Oberland

The final two days of walking, though longer and more strenuous, are probably the most spectacular parts of the entire trek. From Kandersteg, a short ski lift ride brings us to the small lake 'Oeschinensee' at 1578m – a glacial lake trapped beneath sheer rock-walls and great snow-clad peaks. We continue on a strenuous ascent crossing beneath the snout of the 'Blumisalp' glacier and on to the Hohturli pass at 2778m. The views are outstanding in all directions. We descend very steeply – sometimes with the aid of chains hammered into the rocks beside the trail – to the hamlet of Gorneren (1471m) where the inn is adjacent to fields of cows and alpacas. The inn has small dormitories for sleeping. The day is quite long but the walking is excellent. About 7-8 hours walk (13km). Note: Your luggage will be taken from Kandersteg to Lauterbrunnen. Therefore you need to carry what you need for tonight and during your walk today and tomorrow (toiletries, a change of clothing and perhaps a sleeping sheet for your personal comfort). Overnight inn with dormitory-style accommodation. Approx distance 14km. Ascent 1200m, Descent 1300m .

(Village inn; dormitory-style accommodation. Meals included: breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 7 On to the Lauterbrunnen Valley

A long, steep climb brings us to yet another pass: the 'Sefinen Furgge' (2612m), from where we should have good views of the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau and down into the Lauterbrunnen Valley – a UNESCO World Heritage Site famous for its classic glaciated steep sides. The descent begins steeply but soon levels off as we approach the village of Gimmelwald (1363m). From here we descend through the forest to Stechelberg and then take a bus to Lauterbrunnen (790m). The views from the valley bottom are incredible with sheer cliffs over 600m high and spectacular waterfalls. About 7-8 hours walk. *Please note that the full descent from the pass is 1800m, but this can be significantly reduced if you take the cable car down from Murren or Gimmelwald.* Approx distance 18km. Ascent 1140m, Full descent 1800m .

(Hotel. Meals included: breakfast, lunch)

Day 8 In Lauterbrunnen

Possibly one of the best known of all the Swiss mountain trains is that which runs from Lauterbrunnen to Kleine Scheidegg, inside the Eiger to the Jungfraujoch (3573m) from where there are unsurpassed views of the Mönch, the Jungfrau (4158m) and the Aletsch glacier. At this altitude, signs warn people to move slowly and there is a noticeable lack of oxygen! Although this trip is optional, it is highly recommended. Alternatively, we can take a walk behind Stechelberg and then up



towards Trachsellaenen and on to the magnificent waterfalls of Holdrifall and Talbachfal. The walk takes us through the forest and on to meadows. Approx distance 13km with 800m of ascent and 800m)of descent.

(Hotel. Meals included: breakfast)

Day 9 Departure day, Lauterbrunnen – Geneva Airport

The transfer takes approximately 3 hours and we aim to be at Geneva Airport by 12.00hrs.

(Meals included: breakfast)

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day route as printed above, a degree of flexibility is built into the itinerary. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested. Occasionally, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned. This may be for a variety of reasons – climatic, political, physical or other. In these circumstances we will make the best alternative arrangements possible that maintains the integrity of the original itinerary.



PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Is it for me?

This trip should appeal to you if you regularly take walking weekends and are happy covering 16-22km (10-14 miles) each day, with a number of ascents and descents. We normally walk for between 6 and 9 hours each day and be outdoors for 8 or 9 hours. We generally follow good, well-maintained paths and the highest altitude we walk to is 2778 metres, so you should not feel the altitude apart from a little shortness of breath. In late June and early July we may encounter patches of snow, particularly at the cols, and may have to kick steps to make the path secure. We aim to have twin-bedded rooms throughout, though at Gorneren we will be in small dormitories.

Group size

- Minimum 6, maximum 14.

Price and what it includes

- Accommodation on a twin-share basis. At Gorneren you will be in a small dormitory and there will be more than two people in a room.
- Transfers to and from the airport (specified times only – see Airport transfers below).
- All transfers and cable cars throughout when part of the organised trek.
- 8 breakfasts, 6 picnic lunches and 2 dinners.
- Luggage transfers so that you have your main luggage for 6 of the 8 nights (it is not available at Trift and Gorneren).
- The trek is led by a qualified International Mountain Leader (IML).

What is not included

- Dinners in Zermatt, Kandersteg and Lauterbrunnen. Lunch on day 1, 8 and 9.

Accommodation and meals

We stay in hotels for 6 nights, an inn / homestay for one night and a mountain refuge for one night. Rooms are on a twin-share basis in the hotels and we aim to have twin rooms at the mountain refuge at Trift.

Trift has simple communal bathrooms, cold running water and one hot shower that costs 5chf per person. The inn at Gorneren has small dormitories and communal bathrooms: they have hot water in the basin / sink, but do not have showers.

Bedding is provided at each night stop, so there is no need to carry sleeping bags, though you may like to take a sheet sleeping bag for the nights at Trift and Gorneren. Towels are provided except at Trift and Gorneren.

Meals included are normally 3 courses. Tea and coffee at dinner and all other drinks are not included.

Typical meals on trek

Breakfast: tea, coffee, juice, cereals, bread, butter, jam.

Picnic lunch: bread, mayonnaise, cheeses, cold meats, salad, fruit.

Dinner: starter, main course, dessert or cheese.

The hotels, inn and mountain refuge also sell soft drinks, beer, wine, mineral water, cakes and a variety of chocolate bars.



The hotels offer meals for vegetarian diets. Not all of the hotels cater to other diets, such as vegan and gluten-free, and so we are regretfully not able to offer this. If you chose not to take or eat any of the meals provided throughout this trip, there is no refund.

Luggage transfers

You will have access to your main luggage for 6 of the 8 nights. This will be at Zermatt, Kandersteg and Lauterbrunnen. On the days you do not have access to your luggage (2 nights in total) you will need to carry your over-night gear, which will most likely include spare socks, underwear, T-shirt and basic toiletries. This is light back-packing and we recommend you have a 40 litre rucksack. Please restrict the weight of your main luggage to 20kg. This helps us with the luggage transfers.

We strongly recommend that you do not leave any valuables or any object of high value in your main luggage. When your luggage is transferred and then delivered to the next hotel, it is likely that it will be left in the reception area or in an unattended back-room. We recommend that you lock your luggage.

Airport transfers

We arrange an airport pick-up from Geneva International Airport on Day 1. We normally meet in the Arrivals Hall at 1pm (13:00hrs) where a representative will be waiting for you. Our minibus will leave Geneva Airport at 1.30pm (13:30hrs) so that we arrive at the hotel in the Zermatt at 4.30pm (16:30hrs).

We are unable to offer transfers at other times. If you are much earlier or later, you may prefer to take the train to Zermatt, but at your own expense. It takes around 4 hours and goes from Geneva Airport train station.

If you miss pre-arranged transfer with us you should call us for information on how to get to the Zermatt: any costs incurred will be your responsibility.

For the 'drop-off' at the end of the tour (Day 9), we ensure that you are at Geneva International Airport by 12:00hrs.

Transport during the tour

All transfers to the walks are included in the price of the tour: we use a mix of private and public transport. The transfer to and from the airport is in a private minibus. Occasionally we may use cars – it depends on the size of the group. We intend to use cable cars to gain or lose altitude on some days. These are included in the price.

Staff

Throughout the trip, you will be accompanied by a qualified International Mountain Leader who has a First Aid certificate and carries a First Aid Kit.

Weather

In the summer, daytime temperatures can vary from 15-25°C in the valleys to 0-20°C at higher altitudes (at the cols it can be cold and windy). It all depends on whether the sun is out and it can often feel very hot: occasionally it reaches 30°C in the valley



and can feel quite muggy in the late afternoon. At night the temperature is 5-12°C in the valley and can drop close to 5°C at some of the night stops. As with all mountain ranges it can rain – either as frontal weather or as thunder storms after a hot day – and you should come prepared for this. It can be cold and windy at higher elevations and snow is not unknown. We pay special attention to the local weather forecasts and will adjust the day-to-day itinerary if we feel it is necessary to get the best from your tour.

Clothing and equipment

- Good walking boots: leather or fabric and should be worn-in before you arrive. Walking shoes are not adequate for this trek.
- Full set of good-quality waterproofs. Gore-Tex or e-Vent recommended: a 'pac-a-mac' is not good enough.
- Trousers or skirts, short trousers.
- T-shirts and tops that includes a jumper or fleece jacket.
- Rucsac that will give you enough room to carry a few clothes plus other items for the periods when you do not have access to your main luggage: 40 litres is recommended.
- Sun hat, sun cream, sunglasses, water bottle, warm woolly hat and gloves.
- Torch, blister kit, any personal medicine.
- Sheet sleeping bag for comfort at Trift and Gorneren.

For the night stops when you will not have access to your main luggage we recommend you carry a change of underwear, socks and T-shirt, basic toiletries and a torch – please remember that you will have to carry it all. You will need to carry your picnic and will probably have your camera and blister kit with you. You may like to take a small towel or easi-dry towel for the night at Trift and Gorneren.

Although it may be cold outside at night, it will be warm inside and so down jackets are not needed, however, some people like to take a light down gillet.

Extra expenses & money

There are ATMs in Zermatt, Kandersteg and Lauterbrunnen where you can get your Swiss Francs (chf). Geneva Airport has plenty of ATMs.

You will need extra money for drinks, a couple of lunches and evening meals not included. In addition, postcards, souvenirs, snacks you might buy at mountain refuges or cafés and any optional activities. Zermatt and Lauterbrunnen have cafés, map shops and outdoor stores with a huge range of equipment – though they are relatively expensive.

Typical costs

These are approximate costs: you can spend more or less than indicated.

Dinners Allow 30-40chf per meal for 6 nights: Zermatt, Kandersteg and Lauterbrunnen

There are many restaurants in Zermatt. Dinner at the hotel in Kandersteg is 30chf for a 3-course set menu or 40chf for 4-course set



menu. Dinner at the hotel in Lauterbrunnen is 30chf for a 4-course set menu.
Misc House wine (20-30chf), beer (5chf), soft drinks (4chf), cakes & snacks, coffee.

Passports, visas and insurance

It is essential that you are in possession of an up to date and valid passport. You must check the visa and entry requirements of your chosen destination and any countries that you may be stopping off at en-route. Whilst we are able to offer general advice to British citizens, personal circumstances such as criminal records, may affect your eligibility to enter certain countries. It is therefore your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct documentation to gain entry into your chosen destination(s). For any further information, please consult the relevant embassy or for British residents visit: www.fco.gov.uk

Adequate and valid travel insurance is compulsory when you travel with us and it is a condition of accepting your booking that you agree you will have obtained adequate and valid travel insurance for your booking by the date of departure. We recommend that you take out insurance as soon as your booking is confirmed.

We recommend that your travel insurance includes repatriation, that you are covered for trekking in the Swiss Alps up to an altitude of 2800 metres, helicopter rescue, all the activities mentioned in this dossier and any optional activities you may take part in. Please note that if you choose to go on the train to the Jungfrauoch, the final stop is at 3500m. You must check with your insurer that you have adequate and valid cover for your tour. Anyone who does not have insurance will not be allowed to take part in the tour until cover is arranged. This is part of our booking conditions.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of this dossier immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from clients. You will be informed of any major changes to your trip but small changes may just be added to this dossier.

