

TOUR OF THE JUNGFRAU REGION

About the Author

Kev Reynolds, who created the Tour of the Jungfrau Region, first visited the Alps in 1960s, and has returned there almost every year since to walk, trek or climb, to lead mountain holidays, devise multi-day routes or to research a series of guidebooks covering the whole range. A freelance travel writer and lecturer, he has a long association with Cicerone Press, which began with his first guidebook *Walks and Climbs in the Pyrenees*. Published in 1978, it has grown through many editions and is still in print. He has also written more than a dozen books on Europe's premier mountain range, including *100 Hut Walks in the Alps*, *Walking in the Alps*, *The Swiss Alps* and *Trekking in the Alps*, a series of trekking guides to Nepal, a memoir covering some of his Himalayan journeys (*Abode of the Gods*) and a collection of 75 autobiographical short stories and anecdotes harvested from 50 years of mountain activity (*A Walk in the Clouds*). Kev is a member of the Alpine Club, the Outdoor Writers' & Photographers' Guild, an honorary member of SELVA (Société d'Études de la Littérature de Voyage Anglophone), and the British Association of International Mountain Leaders (BAIML). After a lifetime's activity, his enthusiasm for the countryside in general and mountains in particular remains undiminished, and during the winter months he regularly travels throughout Britain and abroad to share that enthusiasm through his lectures. Check him out at www.kevreynolds.co.uk.

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TOUR OF THE JUNGFRAU REGION

by Kev Reynolds

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Third edition 2018
ISBN: 978 1 85284 864 4
Second edition 2009
First edition 2006

Printed by KHL Printing, Singapore

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

All photographs are by the author unless otherwise stated.

Acknowledgements

Trekking the Tour of the Jungfrau Region is an enriching experience, and daily highlights are numerous. Not least of these will be found in the huts, inns and berghotels in which your nights will be spent. Wherever my wife and I have stayed on the TJR we have received much kindness and warm hospitality, especially from Marc and Diane at The Alpenhof in Stachelberg, who make every visit a special occasion. Thanks, too, to Silvia Linder, whose friendship is an added bonus, and to Alan and Morna Whitlock, who trekked with us on our most recent tour. Once again their company added much to the experience.

My thanks to the many readers who shared their memories and recorded their appreciation of the route via email and letter, to the various office staff who supplied information and accommodation details, to the good folk at Switzerland Travel in London for generous assistance with travel, and once again I am grateful to Jonathan Williams, my friend and publisher, for channelling my enthusiasm for the route into this guide, to the rest of the Cicerone team for allowing me to benefit from their skills and talents – and, as ever, to Min for being with me every step of the way.

Front cover: With the Eiger and Kleine Scheidegg ahead, trekkers descend into Grindelwald's valley (Photo credit: Joe Williams)

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Updates to this Guide

While every effort is made by our authors to ensure the accuracy of guidebooks as they go to print, changes can occur during the lifetime of an edition. Any updates that we know of for this guide will be on the Cicerone website (www.cicerone.co.uk/864/updates), so please check before planning your trip. We also advise that you check information about such things as transport, accommodation and shops locally. Even rights of way can be altered over time. We are always grateful for information about any discrepancies between a guidebook and the facts on the ground, sent by email to updates@cicerone.co.uk or by post to Cicerone, Juniper House, Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 7RL.

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Map/profile key

	road
	route
	alternative route
	ridge
	river
	railway/station
	cable car
	town
	summit
	direction arrow
	habitation
	col
	lake
	glacier
	accommodation: hotel, gasthof, mountain hut
	refreshment: food and/or drink
	bus service
	railway station/funicular
	cableway: cable car, gondola

Mountain safety

Mountain walking can be a dangerous activity carrying a risk of personal injury or death. It should be undertaken only by those with a full understanding of the risks and with the training and experience to evaluate them. While every care and effort has been taken in the preparation of this guide, the user should be aware that conditions can be highly variable and can change quickly, materially affecting the seriousness of a mountain walk. Therefore, except for any liability that cannot be excluded by law, neither Cicerone nor the author accept liability for damage of any nature (including damage to property, personal injury or death) arising directly or indirectly from the information in this book.

International Distress Signal

(To be used in emergency only)

Six blasts on a whistle (or flashes with a torch after dark) spaced evenly for one minute, followed by a minute's pause. Repeat until located by a rescuer. The response is three signals per minute followed by a minute's pause.

Helicopter Rescue

The following signals are used to communicate with a helicopter:

Help needed:
raise both arms
above head to
form a 'Y'



Help not needed:
raise one arm
above head, extend
other arm downward

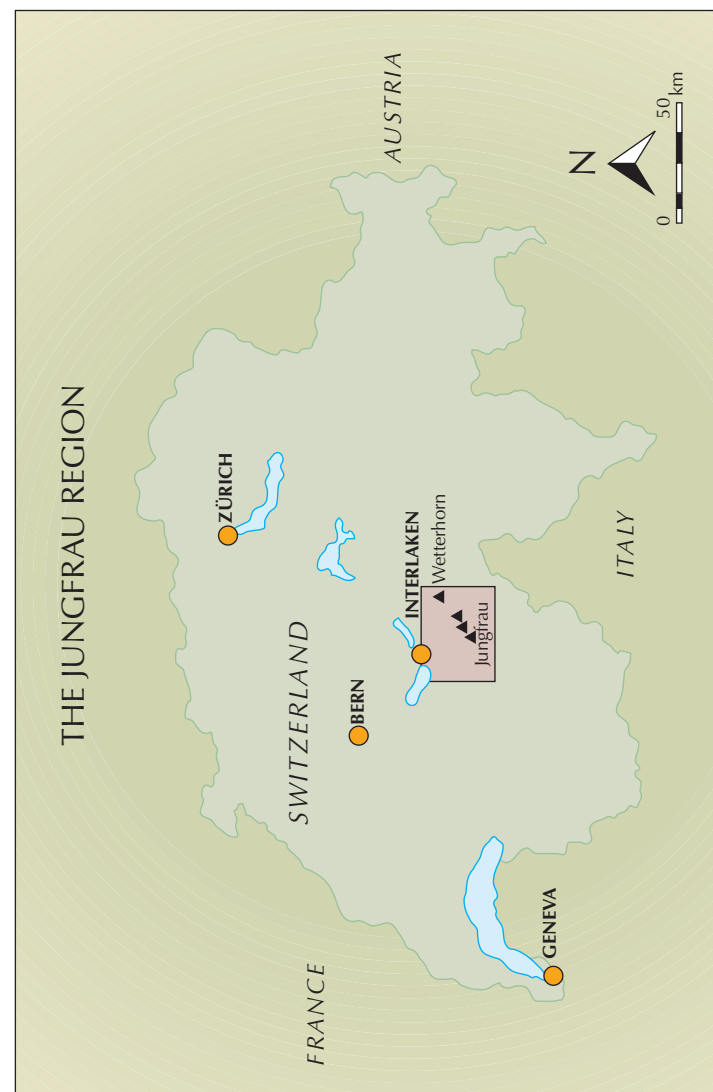


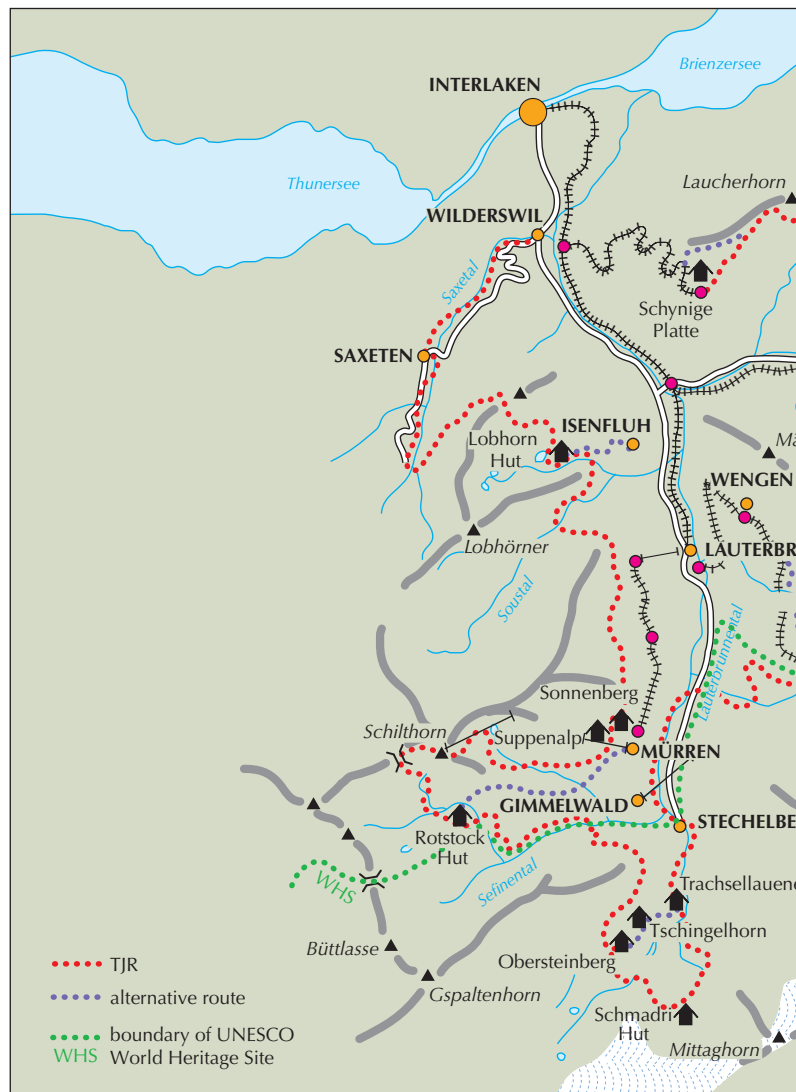
To call out the Mountain Rescue, ring the international emergency number 112: this will connect you via any available network. Once connected to the emergency operator, ask for the police.

Emergency telephone numbers

Ambulance	tel 144
Mountain rescue	tel 112
Swiss Police	tel 117
Swiss Air Search & Rescue (REGA)	tel 1414
Weather report	tel 162 (in French, German or Italian)

Note Mountain rescue can be very expensive – be adequately insured.





As you near Pfingstegg, a backward glance shows the Wetterhorn to be a vast mountain of rock



PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

Shortly after the first edition of this guide was published in 2006, I received an email from a highly experienced trek leader, who said: 'I'm sure the TJR is destined to become one of the great walks of the world!' That view has since been endorsed by countless other hill walkers who have followed in her footsteps.

Located in one of Europe's finest mountain regions, the whole tour is a feast of scenic delights, while accommodation and refreshment stops along the way add much to the trekker's experience.

I knew this long before the route was properly worked out, for since my first visit to the Jungfrau Region in the mid-1960s I've spent a great many weeks either selecting routes for guidebooks or leading walking holidays there, and loving every minute. Who wouldn't? The mountains are second to none in visual drama, the meadows extravagant with alpine flowers, the wildlife plentiful. But every visit would reveal changes, either to the tourist infrastructure, or to the landscape itself. So chairlifts became gondolas, places to stay overnight increased in number, paths were rerouted as a result of a rockfall or spring flood, snowfields and glaciers shrank in size, and huge chunks of mountain and moraine collapsed – thanks to the effects of global warming. Previous editions of this guidebook reflected the landscape as it was during research, but I'm prepared to bet that before the fourth edition goes to print, there will be more changes to report.

None of these things detract from the delights of the Tour of the Jungfrau Region, and my wish is that when you've completed your tour, you will come to echo the words slightly misquoted from the top of the page, that the TJR is one of the great walks of the world!

May you enjoy every step, and greet each day as the gift it is.

Kev Reynolds, 2018

After crossing below the Laucherhorn a view shows the distant Lauterbrunnen Breithorn (Stage 1)



INTRODUCTION

The view from Schynige Platte is one of the finest in all the Alps, with the ice-crested wall of the Bernese Alps spread out for inspection as your attention is inevitably drawn to the south.

From left to right this wall comprises the Wellhorn, Wetterhorn, Bärglistock, Schreckhorn, Lauteraarhorn, Finsteraarhorn, Fiescherhorn, Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau, Ebnefluh, Mittaghorn, Grosshorn, Breithorn, Tschingelhorn, Gspaltenhorn, Blüemlisalp and Doldenhorn; as grand a collection of mountains as you could wish to lay eyes upon. Glaciers and snowfields glisten among the peaks, while the deep U-shaped Lauterbrunnen Valley forms a trench between Jungfrau and Gspaltenhorn, and the middle ground is fussed with green hills, bare slabs and black shadowed pines.

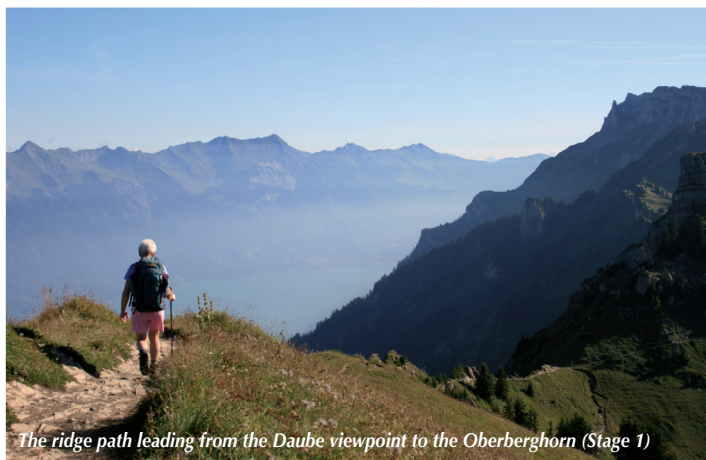
Much of this backdrop forms part of the Jungfrau-Aletsch-Bietschhorn UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site, the first in the Alps to be granted this status, in recognition of the extraordinary beauty of its landscape.

The Tour of the Jungfrau Region (TJR) makes a journey of around 111km through this area, in a constant adoration of mountain and valley, of lake, river and feathery cascade. And by choosing the most scenic trails and

some of the most atmospheric places for an overnight stay, it has all the ingredients to ensure a memorable nine or ten-day trek.

With such an array of iconic mountains as a background, it is no surprise that the Jungfrau Region counts among the most popular of any in the Alps. Since the birth of Alpine tourism in the 18th century, Grindelwald, Wengen, Lauterbrunnen and Mürren have been attracting visitors summer after summer to gaze on this backdrop, to climb its summits or to wander its trails. Over the decades hundreds of kilometres of new footpaths have been created, to join the timeless trails previously known only to local farmers, hunters, traders and crystal gatherers.

To service increasing numbers of visitors, hotels of all grades of luxury have added a kind of sophistication to the busiest of resorts, while more modest (but by no means less welcoming) inns, gasthofs and berghotels continue to provide accommodation and refreshment, often in remote and idyllic locations. Add to these the mountain huts and simple *matratzen-lagers* (dormitories) created to meet the demands of the outdoor fraternity, and it will be clear that the region has a lot going for it!



The ridge path leading from the Daube viewpoint to the Oberberghorn (Stage 1)

remains so as far as Grosse Scheidegg, before descending below the Wetterhorn on what may be seen as a pastoral ramp. At first glance the obvious route would appear to lead to Grindelwald itself, but as it is the intention of the TJR to take the most scenic paths, a diversion is suggested that leads (Alternative Stage 2) to the Gleckstein Hut perched high on the flanks of the Wetterhorn. Meanwhile, the original trek continues down to Hotel Wetterhorn, then breaks away from its valley-bound course to rise above the Upper Grindelwald glacier's gorge to gain the balcony path that cuts across the steep flank of the Mättenberg. However, if timing suits on arrival at Hotel Wetterhorn, it should be possible to wander down to Grindelwald, spend time there and return by bus to resume the TJR next day.

Another alternative 'diversion' from the standard route gives an opportunity to spend a night in Berghaus Bäregg, which enjoys a spectacular location high above the Lower Grindelwald glacier's gorge.

Across the divide formed by that gorge, a second balcony path is taken on the way to Alpigen, then continues along the very fine Eiger Trail below the notorious North Face (Eigerwand) as far as Eigergletscher, where the TJR diverts to Kleine Scheidegg.

The way then resumes with an exceptionally long and knee-crunching descent to the Lauterbrunnen Valley, following the melt of snowfields and glaciers that hang from Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau, finally meeting the bed of the valley beside the famous Trümmelbach Falls. A gentle riverside walk to Stechelberg concludes this first part of the Tour of the Jungfrau Region.

STAGE 1

Schynige Platte to First

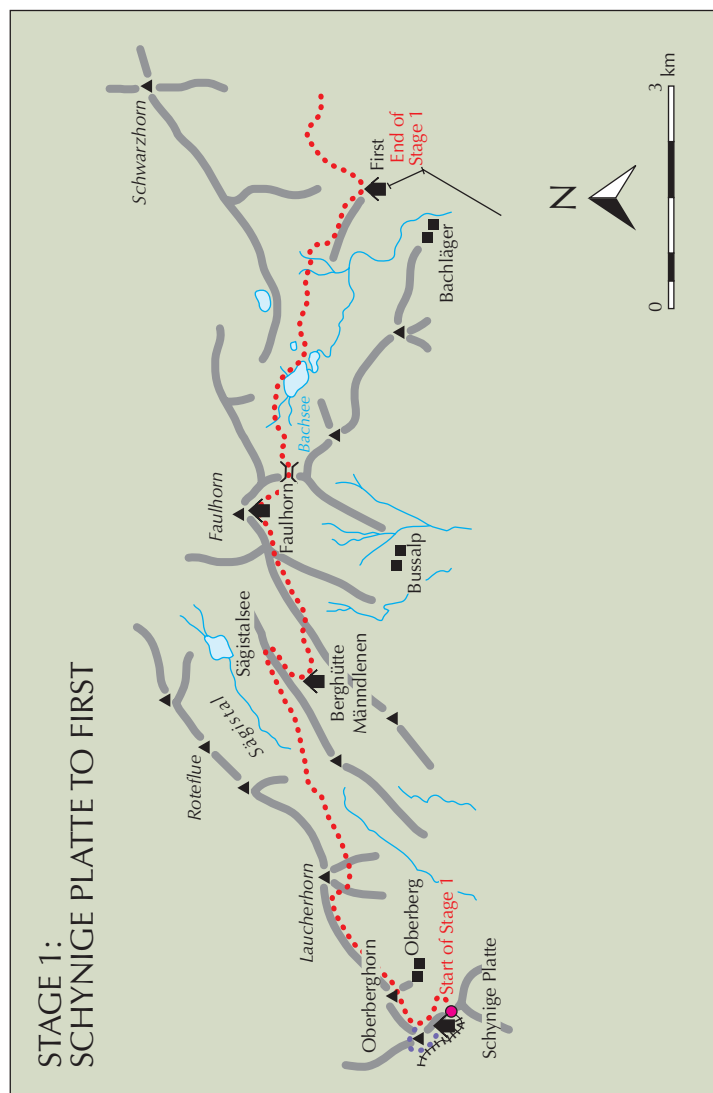
Distance	15km
Time	5½–6hr
Start altitude	1967m
High point	Faulhorn 2681m
Low point	First 2167m
Height gain	714m
Height loss	514m
Accommodation	Schynige Platte – hotel beds Männlenen/Weber Hut (2hr 35mins) – dorms Faulhorn (3hr 55mins) – hotel beds & dorms First (5½–6hr) – dorms

Throughout this first stage the trek follows the route of the justifiably popular Faulhornweg, one of the finest day walks in all the Alps. It's a visually stimulating route, with breathtaking panoramic views that frequently expand and contract as you weave your way along the trail. There's an exciting ridge walk with a bird's-eye view onto the Brienzersee; there are rough boulder tips, patches of limestone pavement, and high pastures to wander through. There's some curious twisted rock strata; an immensely rich alpine flora, a tiny mountain hut and Switzerland's oldest mountain hotel perched just below the summit of the Faulhorn. And on the descent to First, a mountain lake to mirror the pencil-sharp peaks of Schreckhorn and Finsteraarhorn in its glassy waters.

Schynige Platte is reached by an historic narrow-gauge cog railway from Wilderswil that makes the 1403m climb in about 50mins. Above the station you'll find the *Alpengarten* (open mid-June to mid-Sept), but for overnight accommodation walk back along the station platform to a narrow service road/track which curves uphill and leads directly to the Berghotel Schynige Platte.

Berghotel Schynige Platte (1980m) 36 beds, spectacular views, and open from May to Oct (tel 033 828 73 73).

Note Much of this stage is above 2000m, with long stretches without shelter. Watch out for deteriorating weather; storms should be avoided. See the bad weather alternative below.



BERGHOTEL SCHYNYGE PLATTE

A year after the Schynige Platte railway opened for business in June 1893, the hotel was built to exploit the magnificent views. Sadly, it only lasted four years before being destroyed by fire in July 1898, but was rebuilt the following year. Although the restaurant at the Berghotel is light and spacious, the bedrooms retain a distinctly Victorian air, but the opportunity to enjoy the splendours of sunset and sunrise (not to mention moonlight) casting their glow on the Oberland mountains is hard to resist. It makes an unforgettable start to the TJR.



START OF TREK FROM BERGHOTEL SCHYNYGE PLATTE

Immediately behind the hotel an obvious path twists uphill to a junction, where the left branch is signed to Oberberghorn via the Panoramaweg. Contouring among pines with views of the Thunersee below, and west into the Saxettal, the trail passes below a prominent limestone turret, then zig-zags up to the Daube viewpoint at 2076m, where there's a (locked) wooden shelter. From here you look directly down onto Interlaken and the lakes of Thun and Brienz, before taking the continuing path northeast along a ridge crest towards the craggy Oberberghorn. About 35–40mins from the hotel

reach another path junction (Grat, 1978m) at the foot of the **Oberberghorn**, and veering to the right, join the direct path from Schynige Platte station.

Note A 15min signed diversion to the summit vantage point of the 2069m Oberberghorn is worth considering, although the day's route is not short of outstanding views.

The standard walk begins below the station platform where a sign indicates the path to the Faulhorn heading northeast. When this forks shortly after, the left branch connects with the recommended Panoramaweg (see above), while the direct option goes ahead through pastures, passes the alp hut of **Oberberg** and, rising gently, joins the Panoramaweg trail below the Laucherhorn.

The preferred Panoramaweg option (which forks left just beyond Schynige Platte station) goes uphill alongside the *Alpengarten* boundary fence and works its way towards the **Oberberghorn**, cuts across its south flank and comes onto a ridge overlooking the Brienzersee. There follows a safe but dramatic ridge walk that ends by descending a metal ladder to a junction with the Oberberg path.

The way now goes ahead up the slope towards the base of the **Laucherhorn**, angles right to cross a ridge spur with more breathtaking views, descends a little, then passes through a gap to enter a hidden region of rocks, limestone ribs and cliffs. At the end of this the path twists up into the shallow trough of the **Sägistal**, with sloping limestone slabs to the left and grey crags walling the valley on the right.

After rising up steps near the head of the valley, the path curves right into a region of limestone pavement and, rising still, brings you to a saddle with a path junction and the privately-owned Berghütte Männlenen.

2hr 35mins: Berghütte Männlenen (2344m) 30 dormitory places, refreshments and full meals service; open end June to mid-Oct (tel 033 853 44 64). At the nearby path junction one option descends to Burglauenen below Grindelwald in 2hr 40mins.



From the saddle the continuing path climbs a series of steps with fixed chains (mostly of use in descent in wet or icy conditions). Above this you turn a corner to rise across slanting shelves of bare rock that lead to the open Winteregg ridge with its stunning view dominated by the Schreckhorn, Finsteraarhorn and the big wall of the Fiescherwand above unseen Grindelwald.

Coming to another junction ignore the left branch (which leads to Iseltwald on the edge of the Brienzersee), and keep ahead towards the Faulhorn for a further 15mins where the path divides once more. Unless your plan is to visit the Faulhorn summit and hotel, the more direct route takes the right branch cutting across the south flank of the mountain to join the main Faulhorn–First path, where it then turns right. But if conditions are good, it would be a shame to miss the summit panorama here, so the preferred option is to zigzag up the ridge for another 15mins to gain the Faulhorn hotel.

1hr 20mins: Berghotel Faulhorn (2681m) 16 beds and 60 dormitory places; refreshments and full meals

The ridge-crest path beyond Schynige Platte, from which you look onto the Brienzersee



The summit of the Faulhorn is a great vantage point. The Brienzersee lies far below

service; open from end June to mid-Oct (tel 033 853 27 13). The hotel stands just a few paces below the actual summit.

From the hotel descend a broad path to the Gassenboden saddle (2553m) and, ignoring the right-hand path to Bussalp, continue down the eastern slope, passing several little emergency shelters, to reach the **Bachsee** (also

BERGHOTEL FAULHORN

Built in 1830 Berghotel Faulhorn is the oldest mountain hotel in Switzerland, among whose earliest visitors were the composer Mendelssohn and poet Matthew Arnold. Given settled conditions it provides an unmissable opportunity to capture sunset and sunrise from the summit, whose view was deemed worthy of a pull-out panorama in the early Baedeker guides. Including all the mountains seen from Schynige Platte, the focus here is more to those peaks lying east of the Lauterbrunnen Valley. The north side of the mountain falls away steeply to the Brienzersee, and to the north-east a section of the Lake of Lucerne can be seen along with those symbolic mountains of Central Switzerland, Pilatus and Rigi.

known as the Bachalpsee) at 2265m. This is one of the most idyllic lakes in all the Alps, with glassy reflections of Schreckhorn and Finsteraarhorn viewed from the northern end. Not surprisingly the shoreline path is invariably crowded on fine summer days.

The path edges the northeast shore, rises past a second, lower lake, then winds round and through rolling pastures on the way down to the upper gondola station of First. Immediately behind it you will find a restaurant which has overnight accommodation.

1hr 45mins: Berggasthaus First (2167m) 110 dormitory places, refreshments and full meals service; excellent facilities, open mid-May to end of October – advisable to telephone before 4pm to book accommodation (tel 033 828 77 88). Although very busy by day, after the final gondola lift has descended to Grindelwald the restaurant and its surroundings take on a tranquil atmosphere, with only the distant clattering of cowbells from the Bachläger alp to disturb the peace. Having a direct view across the valley to Wetterhorn, Schreckhorn, Eiger and so on, the play of evening light – and at dawn – can be truly magical.

The Bachsee, a gem of a lake reflecting a tiara of peaks



STAGE 1 BAD WEATHER ALTERNATIVE

Should the forecast be dire, or conditions deem the route from Schynige Platte to First to be dangerous, there is no really viable walking alternative, apart from a valley route from Wilderswil. One option then is to descend by the cog railway from Schynige Platte to Wilderswil and walk south to Gsteigwiler to join a route along the east side of the valley. This forks near Zweilütschinen. Take the left branch to curve into the Lütschental, cross the railway, road and river at Burglauenen and continue on the south side of the river as far as Grund railway station, directly below Grindelwald. Walk up the steep slope to the heart of Grindelwald, and ride the gondola lift to First. A second option is to take the train from Wilderswil to Grindelwald, where you can then join the trek at First by way of the gondola lift.



The gondola lift that connects Grindelwald with First

STAGE 2

First to Hotel Wetterhorn

Distance	9km
Time	2½–3hr
Start altitude	2167m
Low point	Hotel Wetterhorn 1228m
Height loss	939m
Accommodation	Grosse Scheidegg (1hr 15mins) – hotel beds & dorms Hotel Wetterhorn (2½–3hr) – beds & dorms
Alternative route	Gross Scheidegg to Hotel Wetterhorn via the Gleckstein Hut – see Alternative Stage 2 (below)

Despite the brevity of this stage, the first section as far as Grosse Scheidegg provides yet more stimulating views of the high Oberland peaks off to your right. And on arrival at the Scheidegg saddle immediately below the Wetterhorn, the Eiger is seen in stark profile above the Grindelwald pastures. The way then descends through grassland towards Grindelwald, crossing and recrossing the sinuous road several times before arriving at Hotel Wetterhorn.

On leaving the gondola station, take a descending gravel path which passes alongside Café Genepi and brings you onto a dirt road/track where you bear right. Winding downhill, after about 12mins it makes a sharp right-hand bend. At this point take a footpath striking ahead across the sloping pastureland of Alp Grindel. This is the route known as the Höhenweg 2400; a rippling contour of a path with consistently fine views that steadily change as you make progress towards the Grosse Scheidegg.

Crossing several minor streams and passing above the alp buildings of **Oberläger**, you eventually come onto the broad grass-covered saddle of the **Grosse Scheidegg** where a track runs along its west flank, just below the crest, now heading towards the Wetterhorn. Keep on the track all the way to Berghotel Grosse Scheidegg,

This very short stage enables the next fairly demanding 5hr stage to Alpiglen to be taken at a more leisurely pace, and gives an opportunity to visit either Grindelwald, or the glacier gorge southeast of Hotel Wetterhorn, after arrival at the hotel.