

Hiking the Swiss & French Alps

August 4 - 13, 2024 • 10 Days • \$6050

Are you ready for Alpine sensory overload?!

Cable cars, mountain vistas, flower boxes, cogwheel trains, Alpine trails, cowbells—we're excited to present the official itinerary for Hiking the Swiss & French Alps!—featuring the peerless, pristine Alpine scenery of France and Switzerland, with a taste of Italy's Alps and an optional day in the lake district thrown in for good measure!

[Book Now Contact Us](#)

[Tour Type: Classic Curated, Hiking](#)

Overview / Trip Details

- [Tour Details](#)

OVERVIEW

This trip is packed with outstanding nature experiences and mountain hiking. Though we use gondolas and Switzerland's peerless railroad system to level out much of the uphill grades, most of the trails are more hikes than walks and travelers should be prepared for the challenge.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Zermatt** - our base for exploring the Matterhorn area, which we do from multiple angles using the excellent Swiss system of inclined trains, gondolas, and cable car ski lifts.
- **Lauterbrunnen Valley** - our home while exploring the Bernese Oberland and a trio of alpine peaks: Mönch, Eiger, and Jungfrau (hosting the highest railway station in Europe), epic both in alpine splendor and their renown as mountain climbing challenges.
- **Chamonix** - staging village for exploring the Mont Blanc region with more excellent high-mountain transport systems and some of the most stunning alpine scenery on the Adventure.

Including

- Airport to hotel group transfers on first day
- All land travel as outlined by motorcoach
- Superior tourist-class or better hotel accommodations
- Glacier Express train from Andermatt to Zermatt, Switzerland
- 14 meals: All breakfasts and 5 dinners as denoted (BD)
- 8 walk routes included
- 2 optional walk routes available

- Fees for walking credit (if IVV approved**)
- Cultural and historical expertise of national guide throughout program
- WAI guide service throughout
- All tipping for national guide, coach drivers and group meals
- Pricing is based on double occupancy. A supplement is available for single travelers: \$925. We also provide a roommate matching service.

**Walks in Switzerland and Italy are not sanctioned. IVV stamps for walks in France will be requested.

Visits to / admission fees

- 3 gondola segments: Zermatt to Klein Matterhorn - Zermatt area
- Train and gondola from Zermatt to Rothorn - Zermatt area
- Train from Lauterbrunnen to Wengen (roundtrip) - Wengen area
- Gondola from Wengen to Männlichen - Wengen area
- Montenvers train from Chamonix to Mer de Glace - Chamonix area
- Gondola from Chamonix to Aiguille du Midi - Chamonix area
- Gondola from Chamonix to Planpraz - Chamonix area
- Gondola from La Flégère to Les Praz - Chamonix area
- More fun stops than we can list!

Optional Excursions

- Lake Orta Walk and Borromean Islands Excursion - Italy (Day 1)
- Lauterbrunnen Valley Walk - Switzerland (Day 6) - *Guide service is included but transport via gondola and train is not.*

- [Book Now](#)
- [360.260.9393](#)
- [Email Us](#)

Itinerary

Click on each day for more details. (BD) refers to meals included - Breakfast and Dinner.

[DAY 1~August 4: Arrive Orta San Giulio, Italy \(D\)](#)

Lake Orta Walk - 6 km, rated 2B (Optional)

Travelers arrive throughout the day into Milan's Malpensa Airport. As you exit customs, you'll be greeted by a representative of Walking Adventures and transferred to our hotel overlooking lovely Lake Orta, in a quiet, charming corner of the Italian Lake District. This evening, we rendezvous for a Welcome Orientation meeting followed by dinner.

Optional Lake Orta Walk and Borromean Islands Excursion

Travelers who arrive in Italy a day early are invited to join us this morning for a full day excursion between lovely Lake Orta and Lake Maggiore. Lake Orta is a gem, one of the smallest lakes in the Lake District, its shores dotted with romantic, time-washed villages.

Our walk along the lake is followed by a drive to nearby Stresa, on the shores of much larger Lake Maggiore. After a short lakeside stroll and free time for lunch among the delightful shopping lanes and café-lined squares in Stresa's Old Town, we embark on a relaxing boat ride to the Borromean Islands to explore the 17th century villas and gardens. Included are the walk in Orta, bus service for the half day excursion in Stresa, ferry rides between the Borromean Islands and entrance to any villas and gardens we enter, and guide service from our team. Estimated price: \$155 per person

[DAY 2~August 5: Orta San Giulio - Zermatt, Switzerland \(BD\)](#)

This morning's coach ride takes us north along placid, picturesque Lake Maggiore and into the mountains of Switzerland. In Andermatt, we transfer to the fabled Glacier Express, one of the famous railways of the world, for a memorable train trip west around mountains, over bridges, and through tunnels to Zermatt (5,250 Feet Above Sea Level - FASL), our home in the shadow of the Matterhorn for the next two nights.

[DAY 3~August 6: Activities in Zermatt \(B\)](#)

Walk #1: Matterhorn Magic Walk: Furi to Zermatt - 8 km, rated 3B

Officially a car-free zone, the town of Zermatt is perfect for a Walking Adventure.

From our centrally-located hotel, we walk to one of three Zermatt gondola stations for the first of many Alpine gondola and train experiences! Our destination is Klein Matterhorn, highest gondola station in Europe at over 12,700 FASL! After admiring the views—this is the closest we come to the Matterhorn—and enjoying the ice sculpture gallery inside a glacier, we descend and disembark at Furi station (6,125 FASL) on our way down. From here, our trail back to Zermatt winds along valley walls and through the delightful, if oddly named village of Zmutt.

The afternoon and evening are free to explore this lovely town or hop on another gondola for a different vista of Matterhorn magic (our pass is good for two days!).

[DAY 4~August 7: Zermatt - Lauterbrunnen, Switzerland \(BD\)](#)

Walk #2: Blumenweg (Flower Trail) - 6 km, rated 3B

A funicular (inclined train) carries us up through the living stone of a mountain tunnel this morning. Shortly after we exit the tunnel, we transfer to gondolas, bound for the summit at Rothern (10,629 FASL), which provides the most breathtaking views of the Matterhorn. Starting at 8,435 FASL, the Blumenweg trail takes us through an area noted for its wildflowers, against a never-ending backdrop of the Matterhorn and the Pennine Alps.

Following lunch, we return to the Zermatt train station for a ride north into Switzerland's Bernese Oberland region. We spend the next three nights in the village of Lauterbrunnen (4,180 FASL), situated in lovely Lauterbrunnen valley with easy access to train and gondola up both slopes.

[DAY 5~August 8: Activities from Lauterbrunnen \(B\)](#)

Walk #3: Männlichen to Kleine Scheidegg Walk - 5 km, rated 2B

Walk #4: Kleine Scheidegg to Wengen Walk - 10 km, rated 3B

From our hotel in Lauterbrunnen, we start the day with a train ride to Wengen (4,180 FASL) followed by a gondola ride to Männlichen (7,306 FASL). From Männlichen, we walk to the Kleine Scheidegg mountain train station then return to Wengen by walking opposite the sheer precipices of the Mönch, Eiger, and Jungfrau mountains through some of the Alps' most jaw-dropping scenery.

From Kleine Scheidegg, those who've walked enough are free to purchase a ticket on the famous Swiss cog-wheeled train back to Wengen. Travelers may also wish to ascend from Kleine Scheidegg by train through the Eiger and Mönch mountains to the Jungfraujoch, the highest rail station in Europe (11,333 FASL)! *NOTE: Train fees for optional activities are not included.*

[DAY 6~August 9: Activities from Lauterbrunnen \(B\)](#)

Lauterbrunnen Valley Walk - 13 km, rated 2B (Optional)

Explore this fabulous Alpine setting on your own today with multiple excursion suggestions from your guides! Or, consider joining us for the optional group activity, which includes boarding a gondola that whisks us up the west side of the valley to Grütschalp (4,885 FASL). We follow an easy forest trail, often shared with Swiss Brown dairy cows—bells a-tinkling—to the tiny hamlet of Mürren.

Here we have a chance for a rest before a second gondola ride from Schilthornbahn to the valley floor. Alternatively, you may continue on foot to Gimmelwald before descending by gondola to the valley floor, then return to Lauterbrunnen on foot through a quintessential Alpine setting: fields dotted by chalets, grazing herds of sheep and cows, glacier-fed waterfalls, and more.

Travelers looking for more adventure may take another series of gondolas from Mürren up to the Schilthorn (9,711 FASL), to marvel at views over the Bernese Alps in the revolving restaurant, or consider a visit to thundering Trummelbach Falls on the valley floor. The optional walk concludes at our hotel in Lauterbrunnen. *NOTE: Transport (train and gondola) and any entrance fees are not included for today's optional activities.*

[DAY 7~August 10: Lauterbrunnen - Geneva - Chamonix, France \(BD\)](#)

Walk #5: Chateau de Chillon Lake Geneva Walk – 3 km, rated 1A

Walk #6: Geneva Old Town Walk – 4 km, rated 1B

Back on the motorcoach today, we drive through more classic Alpine scenery toward Geneva. Landscapes change, however, as we motor west, and soon it feels as though we're in France, vineyard-covered hillsides sloping down to serene scenes along Lake Geneva, largest body of water in Switzerland.

A stop at picture-perfect, lakeside Chateau de Chillon marks the beginning of today's first walk, a delightful stroll down a flower-lined path along the shores of Lake Geneva that ends in the charming village of Montreux.

Further west along the lake in the eclectic, French-speaking city of Geneva, our second walk includes the Old Town, where John Calvin established a bulwark of the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, and a lively, picturesque lakefront district.

From Geneva, we cross the border into France to Chamonix (3,396 FASL) and our last Alpine conquest—the Mont Blanc region!

[DAY 8~August 11: Activities in Chamonix \(B\)](#)

Walk #7: Chamonix Grand Balcony North Hike – 8 km, rated 4C

Today's hike begins with a trek to the train station, followed by a ride aboard the Montenvers Train to Mer de Glace glacier (6,276 FASL). A tantalizingly rugged trail then takes us along the Grand Balcony North trail, offering a variety of awesome vistas over sweeping rivers of ice, jagged alpine peaks, hardy pine forests, and a welcoming array of alpine wildflowers.

The trail ends at the midway station for the gondola that takes us to the Mont Blanc viewing station—Aiguille du Midi (12,604 FASL). Travelers who opt out of the walk can rendezvous here to enjoy eye-popping panoramas over the rooftop of Europe and Mont Blanc, its highest peak!

Late afternoon and evening are free to explore the delights of this appealing mountain community.

[DAY 9~August 12: Chamonix – Malpensa, Italy \(BD\)](#)

Walk #8: Chamonix Grand Balcony South Hike – 10 km, rated 3C

Today starts with a walk along the valley floor followed by a gondola ride up to Planpraz (6,562 FASL). From Planpraz, the Grand Balcony South trail winds along the side of the mountain with breathtaking non-stop panoramas across the valley to the Mont Blanc massif. At La Flégère (6,214 FASL), we catch another gondola down to the valley floor to join a tree-lined, riverside footpath back to our hotel in the heart of Chamonix.

We return into Italy by coach to our hotel near Milan's Malpensa Airport, enjoying our final evening together at a fun Farewell Dinner!

[DAY 10~August 13: Depart Italy \(B\)](#)

Our travels together through the amazing Alps end this morning. We return to North America with new walking friends and a knapsack of marvelous mountain memories from our Hiking the Swiss & French Alps adventure!

Before You Book

Click on each heading for more details.

[How Do I Lock in My Place on This Adventure?](#)

To register, a non-refundable \$300 deposit is required to hold your spot. A final payment is due 100 days before departure and is non-refundable after the due date. You will receive a prompt email from us 2 to 3 weeks in advance.

Soon after registration, an "Adventure Advice" email will be sent with critical information on flight arrangements as well as important steps to take in the months before your trip. Please do not buy your airline tickets until you review this Adventure Advice email.

Please follow this link to read our full [General Tour Conditions](#).

[What is a Classic Curated Tour?](#)

With help from local experts and walking guides, these itineraries are crafted with extensive on-site planning by WAI tour planners.

When designing Classic Curated Tours, our objective is to capture the essence of a destination—the history, culture, and natural wonders unique to that part of the world. We then build activities and walks that take us *inside* these characteristics.

Yes, these tours are educational, but they are also interactive and immersive; walking gets us off the bus and penetrates local cultures to not only see, but also touch, smell, and feel these special spaces.

Along the way, interactions with locals amplify the experience by sharing insights into the magic of that particular location.

[What is a Hiking Tour?](#)

This trip is packed with outstanding nature experiences and mountain hiking. Though we use gondolas and Switzerland's peerless railroad system to level out most of the uphill grades, many of the trails are more hikes than walks and travelers should be prepared for the challenge.

Note that the verb “hiking” has been included in this tour title with good reason. As mentioned above, we have taken care to use the Swiss and French mountain train and cable car systems to ease the amount of climbing involved, but these are still mountain trails and we are walking at higher than usual altitudes.

How High Are We Going?

Altitude is a factor on this trip, but our hotels are generally located only at moderately high elevation, which means you are sleeping at a more manageable elevation.

Elevations are listed throughout the brochure, but once we leave the lake district of Italy, we sleep in Zermatt (5,250 feet above sea level – fasl), Lauterbrunnen (2,631 fasl), and Chamonix (3,396 fasl).

Walks are then offered between those elevations and 5,000-6,000 fasl for the most part; we may start a walk at higher elevations, in one instance we feature a walk start at about 8,500 fasl and descend from there. This itinerary also features cable car rides to viewpoints at just over 12,000 fasl.

Walk Ratings

We generally walk at a pace of 2 to 3 miles per hour. Several walks on this trip are oriented more towards education, and therefore take longer due to stops for guide commentary. Nature walks, on the other hand, generally continue at a steadier pace because we’re stopping less to talk.

In most cases, we are not “strolling.” We are walking at a relaxed but steady pace. Your experience will be significantly affected by your level of physical fitness. If not walking regularly at home, we strongly recommend that you make a priority of “training” beforehand in order to both enjoy the trip and avoid medical issues due to overexertion. If you have questions about your ability to participate, please call our office at 1.360.260.9393.

We have adopted a walk difficulty rating system which contains a numeric indicator for trail incline and an alpha indicator for trail terrain. The explanation for this system is presented on the table below:

INCLINE

1. Minimal hills or stair climbing. Cumulative elevation gain: <200 feet.
2. Some moderate hills and stair climbing. Cumulative elevation gain: 200-1000 feet.
3. Some significant hill or stair climbing. Cumulative elevation gain: 1000-2000 feet.

TERRAIN

- A. Almost entirely on pavement.
- B. A significant part of the route is on well-groomed trails with very few obstacles.
- C. A significant part of the route is on somewhat difficult terrain (rocky / rooted paths or

soft sand).

[How Is Airfare Arranged?](#)

The official start point for this Adventure is our hotel in Orta San Giulio. The official finish point is Milan's Malpensa Airport (airport code MXP).

Airport to hotel shuttles are provided on the first day. Our final hotel is only 10 km from Malpensa Airport; the transfer is not included.

We recommend that you contact Laura Pfahler, the travel agent we work with, to help book your flight arrangements. In this age of airfare complications and airport uncertainty, using a travel agent is a good investment! More details about flight arrangements and travel agent contact information will be provided in an Adventure Advice PDF by email after you register for the Adventure. Please do not book your airfare prior to receiving these flight details from us!

- Laura Pfahler: 503.434.6401 or llp@wtpdx.com

[Travel Insurance](#)

WAI believes strongly in the importance of travel insurance for financial and medical protection from any number of unforeseen circumstances that can arise before departure or during your Adventure. Many travel insurance providers are available for you to consider. Laura Pfahler and Sharon Mitchell of World Travel Inc. are travel agents who provides air travel and insurance services to many WAI travelers.

Laura Pfahler: 503-434-6401 or llp@wtpdx.com

Sharon Mitchell: 971-261-2091 or smitchell@wtpdx.com

Check out [Insurance Tips](#) from World Travel for a short introduction to travel insurance. (NOTE: WAI receives no commission or financial remuneration from World Travel Inc.).

Be aware that some travel insurance policies contain time-sensitive provisions (i.e. some benefits, such as coverage of pre-existing conditions, are available only if the policy is purchased within a certain number of days of the purchase of the travel package). In addition, remember that airfare is not covered by any travel insurance policy you may have purchased for the tour.

As always, do some shopping to ensure you are getting the best value. Using the [SquareMouth.com](https://www.squaremouth.com) website can be a good way to compare pricing.

Other options include:

- Allianz

- Betins
- Travel Guard
- Travel Insured International

WAI bears no responsibility for travel insurance benefits advertised by various credit card companies. If you are relying on this type of benefit for insurance, we advise you to verify coverage types and limits and that your purchase does in fact qualify you for this insurance.

NOTE: We suggest purchasing from a reputable, well-established insurance company (avoid buying insurance from an unknown company found only online). Travelers interested in purchasing “cancel for any reason” insurance coverage should be careful to check pricing and terms BEFORE they register for a tour. Recent changes in the international travel landscape has caused changes in the policies of some insurance companies, and made the purchase of this particular type of policy even more time-sensitive.

[What if WAI Cancels the Tour](#)

Walking Adventures International reserves the right to cancel this tour departure with fewer than 15 participants, in which case registered participants will receive a 100% refund of payments received.

This refund policy contains one exclusion. Many suppliers require non-refundable deposits as a condition of booking services. Though it is rare, unforeseen circumstances can force us to cancel a tour. In cases where supplier’s non-refundable policies are imposed, WAI attempts to retrieve as much of these deposits as possible but cannot guarantee a 100% refund. In cases where full refunds cannot be obtained for a cancelled tour, we will do our best to transfer unrefunded money as traveler credits to be applied to a future tour to that destination.

[Wellness Procedures for This Tour](#)

Our approach to wellness on tour has traditionally been to encourage travelers to:

- Focus on health before the tour so you start healthy.
- Pace yourself while on tour; travel is inherently stimulating and can produce adrenalin boosts that mask energy drain. Guard your energy reserves and consider the length of the trip and whether to opt out of some activities and/or walks.
- Be self-aware. If you feel yourself tiring or feel a bug coming on, take precautions to block it (e.g. extra rest, extra doses of vitamin C, etc).
- If you feel a bug coming on or if you take ill, distance yourself from others when possible.
- If you feel ill, isolate yourself towards the back of the bus and away from others

Click [WAI Wellness on Tour Policy](#) to view the WAI policy on Wellness on Tour.

[What Happens Next?](#)

Soon after registration, an “Adventure Advice” email will be sent with critical information on flight arrangements as well as important steps to take in the months before your trip. Please do not buy your airline tickets until you review this Adventure Advice email.

A final payment is due 100 days before departure (April 26, 2024) and is non-refundable after the due date. You will receive a prompt email from us 2-3 weeks in advance. Please see our [General Tour Conditions](#) for the full terms and conditions for participation in this Adventure.

Around 2 weeks before departure, you will receive a final email packet with details of the program, including hotel names and contact information, a list of fellow travelers, and a more detailed daily schedule.

Enjoy perusing the Adventure itinerary—this is a one-of-a-kind, panorama-packed program featuring the breathtaking vistas and Alpine trails of Switzerland & France!



Adventure Pace

Tour Pace: 1 2 3 4 5

Walk Challenge: 1 2 3 4 5

[About Adventure Pace](#)

Adventure Pace

How much Adventure do you want? Here are a few features to help gauge the following factors on each tour.

Tour Pace: On a scale of 1 (slowest pace) to 5 (fastest pace), we've rated the following factors: number of 1-night hotels; driving miles per day; fullness of schedule; mid-tour

airline flights; high elevation setting; and average amount of walking per day.

Walk Challenge: This number represents an average walk difficulty rating for the tour using a scale of 1 (easiest) to 5 (hardest).

[Book Now](#) [Contact Us](#)

Important Info



Group Size

24 traveler maximum



Accommodations

Strategically located Superior Tourist Class or better hotels



Meals

Breakfasts included daily with a selection of 5 dinners. Letters BD indicate which meals are included.



Airfare

Not included. The official start point for this Adventure is our hotel in Orta San Giulio, Italy. The official finish point is Milan's Malpensa Airport (airport code MXP).



Transportation

Included. We use full-size motorcoaches with a seating capacity of 40+ seats, as well as gondolas and trains for transportation.



Traveler Age

Our travelers usually range from 50-75 years of age. All ages welcome!

Your Guides



Scott Isom (left) has had a passion for the outdoors ever since his childhood days spent exploring the waterfalls and outstanding hiking trails of the Columbia River Gorge with his family.

Scott has led tours on all 7 continents and is one of WAI's busiest guides and on-site Adventure planners.

Tim Friesen has been guiding for Walking Adventures since 2003, most often leading summertime adventures in Europe due to his long career as a high school music teacher in Molalla, Oregon.

Tim recently retired from teaching music but is still occasionally known to burst into song

on the trail!