

In the Eiger's Shadow: Hut to Hut in Switzerland's Jungfrau Region

August 18-31, 2023 Trip #2346



Eiger, Grindelwald, Switzerland courtesy of Markus Spiske/Unsplash

A personal forward from trip leader Steve Cohen

I have never led the same trek twice. Until this one.

There are so many beautiful parts of the world to explore: why revisit what one has already seen? The simple reason that I am repeating the Jungfrau trip is that it is one of my favorite treks that I have led in the last ten years. Extraordinary above-treeline alpine scenery greets us every day. For the entire two

week period we are remote, immersed in spectacular mountain settings, away from the noise and distractions of city environments. Kev Reynolds, the pre-eminent alpine travel writer of our times, describes our first overnight on the trail as follows, “The view from Schynige Platte is one of the finest in all the Alps... it includes the Eiger, Mönch, and Jungfrau peaks.... Much of this backdrop forms part of a 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 Jungfrau region of Switzerland is located approximately halfway between Geneva and Zürich. The well-known resort towns of Grindelwald, Mürren, Lauterbrunnen and Interlaken have been attracting visitors since the birth of alpine tourism in the 18th century.

Our journey will maximize our exposure to the natural beauty of the region as we hike day by day through this enchanting region. We will stay in hostels, hotels, and mountain huts similar to those of the AMC with the important difference that they all serve wine and beer and most have hot showers. Join Samir and me on this outstanding trek through the Swiss Alps.

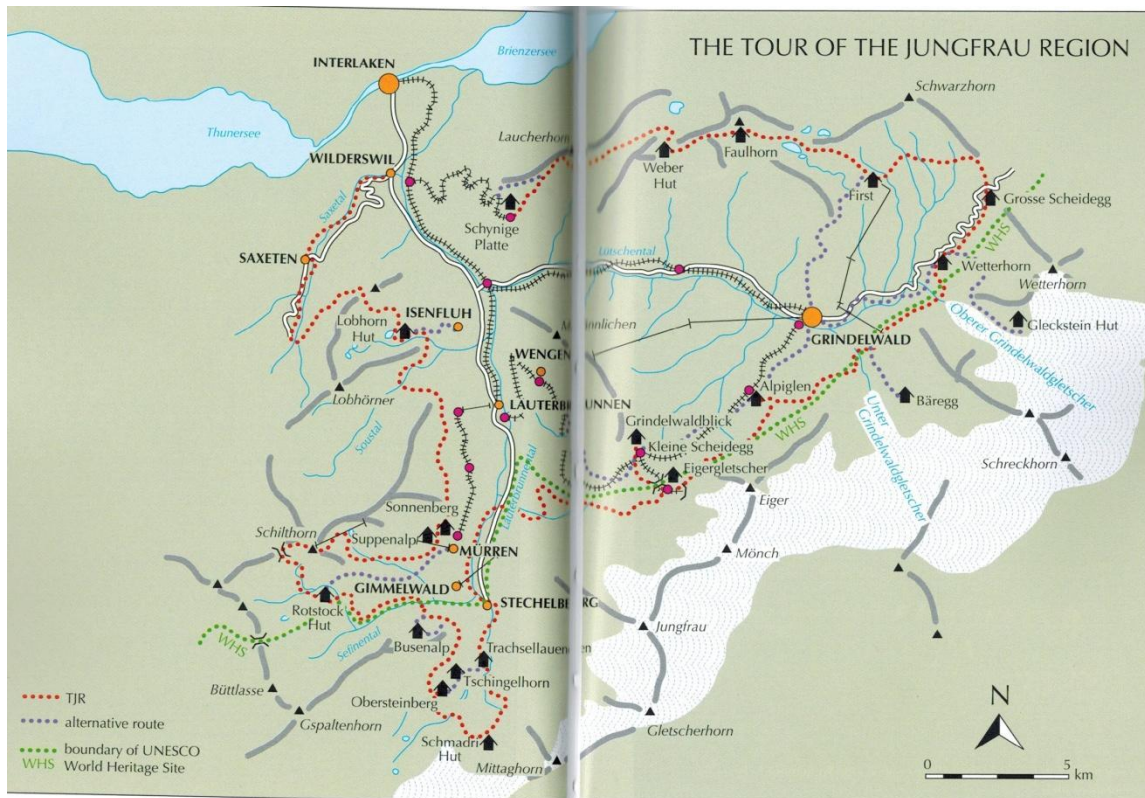


Trip Difficulty

This trip is rated strenuous. Every day [no ‘rest’ days] we average ~five hours/day of hiking time. This excludes breaks for lunch, photos, etc. Carrying a 20lb pack, we traverse on average ~10km [6.4 miles] each day, climbing and descending on average ~600m [2000’]. On three days in a row we will ascend 3,000’ or more. You will be carrying all your possessions including clothing, lunch and water. While no technical climbing is required, there will be some narrow trails bordered by steep drop offs. We may use ladders bolted to the mountain side for short ascents/descents of steep terrain.

Daily Itinerary

Our travels will follow the [Tour of the Jungfrau Region \[TJR\]](#) as described by Kev Reynolds in a guide book published in 2018 by Cicerone Press. We start our adventure at dinner time in the town of Interlaken and end there 12 days later. Note that all hike statistics are in metric because the guide book and local signage use it. km = kilometers with 1 km = 0.6 mile; hr = booktime in hours; XXXm/YYYYm = ascent/descent in meters with 1.0m = 3.3 feet.



A typical day will have us waking up at 6:30AM and on the trail by 8:00AM. We may pass other huts along the way and stop for lunch or a snack. We aim to arrive at our destination by ~4PM each afternoon. Dinner is at 6:30 or 7:00PM. Most people are in bed by 9-10PM.

Below is a day-by-day summary of the trek:

Friday, August 18: Arrive in Interlaken. The closest airport is Zurich, about a two hour train ride away. Explore Interlaken on one's own. Welcome dinner.

Saturday, August 19: A busy day! We take a bus to Iseltwald and hike along the Brienzensee to Giessbach, home to an exquisitely restored [early 20th century hotel](#) built alongside [fast flowing waterfalls](#) that drop 400m in fourteen stages. Later a boat and a train brings us to the Schynige Platte, the start of our trek. In the afternoon we will have a private tour of the [Alpine Garden](#) that displays over 750 plants native to the Swiss Alps. From the terrace of our hotel we can see the alpine summits of the Moench, Eiger, and Jungfrau and gain an overview of our upcoming travels. Overnight at the Schynige Platte. 6km, 2hrs, 200m↑, 200m↓



Overnight at the Schynige Platte. 6km, 2hrs, 200m↑, 200m↓



Sunday, August 20: We follow the Panoramic Trail from the Schynige Platte along a ridge and obtain outstanding views overlooking the Thun and Brienz Lakes. Time and weather allowing, we may stop mid-way at the [historic Hotel Faulhorn](#) for refreshments. Descending gradually past the Bach See, an idyllic lake, we end at First, the mountain station of the gondola originating in Grindelwald. Overnight at First. 15km, 6hrs, 714m↑, 514m↓



Monday, August 21: Following the path along the Große Scheidegg we deviate from the main TJR route to climb up to the Schweizer Alpin Club's [SAC's] Gleckstein Hütte. It stands on a knoll overlooking the southwest flank of the Wetterhorn. Modest accommodations are more than offset by the spectacular location. The name "Gleckstein" refers to a type of rock salt found nearby. It attracts ibex, which we may see at close quarters. 11km, 5hrs, 759m↑, 609m↓

Tuesday, August 22: After a descent from the hut to the main TJR path, we continue along until a side route takes us back up to a mountain refuge, the Berghaus Baeregg. This unique establishment, perched alongside a glacier, is a popular starting point for many climbers. 10km, 5.5hrs, 547m↑, 1049m↓

Wednesday, August 23: We descend from the hut back to the main TJR path, cross the gorge of the glacier on a footbridge, and climb at times steeply and then descend again to our shelter for the night, Berghaus Alpighen. With clear skies we will get a good view of The Eiger. 9 km, 4hrs, 502m↑, 834m↓



Thursday, August 24: We continue along the TJR path, now part of the Eiger Trail, with tremendous views of the Wetterhorn, Grosse Scheidegg, and Schynige Platte. We will arrive at Kleine Scheidegg by early afternoon, a bustling area with many shops. There may be an opportunity to do some additional exploration on your own. 8km, 4hrs, 700m↑, 259m↓

Friday, August 25: We have a long and steep descent today to the valley along a varied terrain. Eventually we reach the spectacular Trummelbach waterfalls, fed by the combined snows of the Eiger, Moench, and Jungfrau. Overnight in Stechelberg. 15km, 5hrs, 0m↑, 1297m↓



Saturday, August 26: The TJR path enters the Jungfrau Aletsch Bietschhorn UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site. We will climb over 1215m in varied terrain, cross numerous streams, and see the Schadribach Falls. Eventually we reach the crest at 2125m which offers dramatic views of the Lauterbrunnen Valley. We finally arrive at the Berghotel Obersteinberg, our accommodation for the night. This atmospheric lodging dating from the 1880's is illuminated by gaslight or candles. 9km, 5.5hrs, 1215m↑, 0m↓

Sunday, August 27: Today's stage is a demanding but visually rewarding series of ascents and descents as it

crosses a high ridge and descends into the Sefinental, a steep-walled valley, before climbing to the Rotstock Hütte for the night. Views along the way include the Lauterbrunnen Valley, Gimmelwald and Muerren. 10km, 5hrs, 1096m↑, 835m↓

Monday, August 28: With good conditions, today will be a spectacular day's hiking. We will walk through a hanging valley on the way to the saddle, which leads to the ridge. We will use fixed cables, rungs, and a section of metal ladder as we ascend to the summit of Schilthorn, a peak made famous by James Bond "In her Majesty's Service". On the other side, we will see the beautiful Grauseeli (lake) before dropping into the pastureland to our lodging in the Blumental. 10km, 5hrs, 931m↑, 1108m↓

Tuesday, August 29: We walk through less dramatic, but no less rewarding, shrub-lined pastureland, and we will see a dairy farm on the way to the Suls-Lobhorn Hut. 10km, 3.5hrs, 332m↑, 349m↓

Wednesday, August 30: Descending is the name of the game as we walk down 1414m through dairy farms and forest. We will arrive in Wilderswil, where we began our TJR. From Wilderswil we will board a train to our hostel in Interlaken. 14km, 4.2hrs, 43m↑, 1414m↓.

Thursday, August 31: We say farewell to Switzerland and depart for flights back to the US or elsewhere.

Accommodations, Meals and Transportation

We will spend each night in refuges, hostels, or small village inns. Almost all huts/hotels have showers. Accommodations will vary from 2-12 persons per room depending on availability. Blankets and pillows are provided, but we must bring sleeping bag liners (a.k.a. sleep sacks) to be used instead of sheets. You may wish to bring your own pillow case as well. In some cases there will be twin beds [two beds separated by a few inches] but we will also have the situation of two mattresses side-by-side in a single bed frame, many mattresses laid out side by side particularly in refuges, and upper/lower bunk beds. The trip will try to reserve the most comfortable arrangements possible, but undoubtedly you will be sleeping in closer quarters than you would at home - this is a backcountry trek, right?!

The cuisine is Swiss-German which is heavy on meat at dinner. A vegetarian option that includes eggs and dairy products will be offered as an alternative. All huts serve beer or wine. Snacks and beverages are typically available at most times. Breakfasts are simple and usually consist of bread, jam, cheese and sometimes yogurt and muesli. Bag lunches or sandwiches are available at the refuges. Interlaken is the last certain place to buy non-perishable food.

Your transportation to Interlaken and back is your responsibility. Convenient airports are either Geneva or Zurich. Frequent trains run from these airports to Interlaken. The trip leaders will advise you as much as you need and will facilitate group travel. At this time, we estimate that the cost for a round trip ticket between the East Coast and Europe will be in the vicinity of \$1400.

Summary of Daily Itinerary Table with location/times/distance/elevation

Day	Date	Lodging	Pg#	Dist	Time	Ascent	Descent	
				[km]	hrs	[m]	[m]	
Sat	8/19	Schynige Platte	43	6.0	2.0	200	200	
Sun	8/20	First	47	15.0	6.0	714	514	
Mon	8/21	Gleckstein Hut	58	11.0	5.0	759	609	
Tue	8/22	Berghaus Baregg	67	10.0	5.5	547	1089	
Wed	8/23	Alpiglen	65	9.0	4.0	502	834	
Thu	8/24	Kleine Scheidegg	78	8.0	4.0	700	259	
Fri	8/25	Stechelberg	83	15.0	5.0	0	1297	
Sat	8/26	Obersteinberg	95	9.0	5.5	1215	0	
Sun	8/27	Rotstock Hut	100	10.0	5.0	1096	835	
Mon	8/28	Blumental	107	10.0	5.0	931	1108	
Tue	8/29	Suls-Lobhorn Hut	112	10.0	3.5	332	349	
Wed	8/30	Interlaken	113	14.0	4.2	43	1414	
Thu	8/31	Depart						
				123.0	54.5	7039	8508	Total (km/m)
				76.9		23229	28076	Total (miles/feet)
				10.3		587	709	Ave. hiking day (km/m)
				6.4		1936	2340	Ave. hiking day (miles/feet)

Weather

Typical temperatures will range from the low 40's at night to daytime temperatures as high as the 70's. It could rain. It could and has snowed every day of the year. The key to an excellent hiking experience is to dress in layers and bring a waterproof jacket and rain pants.

Trip Price

The AMC Member price is \$3350. The non-member price is \$3450. To join the AMC (2022 pricing \$50 individual, \$75 family) click [here](#). We expect a group size of 12 people, including the 2 leaders. This trip is likely to fill quickly.



To register for the trip, fill out the [online application](#). At the time of your application a check for \$1,000 payable to the Appalachian Mountain Club should be sent to Stephen Cohen 2802 Arbor Drive #2 Madison, WI 53711. The balance of \$2350 is due March 1, 2023. A minimum \$200 cancellation fee will be assessed should a cancellation be made after the trip has been confirmed to run on schedule. NOTE: Due to leader travels, all applications received prior to July 31, 2022 will be reviewed as a group in the first week of August.

Price includes:

- Lodging, breakfasts, and dinners, from dinner on Saturday, August 19 through breakfast on Friday, September 1. This includes beverages included as part of a meal, e.g. coffee at breakfast.
- Train, bus, cable car, gondola rides taken by the whole group during the same period.
- Emergency medical and evacuation insurance coverage

Price does not include:

- Lunch, trail snacks, beverages except those [e.g. coffee] served as part of a meal. Sandwiches for lunch are easily obtained at mountain huts or hotels.
- personal expenses
- transportation to and from Interlaken

Participant Expectations

You should enjoy traveling and be comfortable traveling in areas which are unfamiliar to you. You should recognize that you may find yourself in closer quarters or be less comfortable than you are used to at home. You should make it a priority to help others on the trip and contribute to their having a great time. If you do that, we guarantee that you will have a great time.

Terms, Conditions and General Information

Please carefully read the [Adventure Travel Standard Terms and Conditions](#)

TRIP LEADERS



Since 2012 Steve has planned and led twenty-nine hiking/trekking-oriented adventure travel trips to such destinations the Haute Route (from Chamonix, France to Zermatt, Switzerland), the Alta Via I and II through the Italian Dolomites, the tour of the Jungfrau region (Switzerland), Patagonia, the high mountains huts of Austria, etc. He lived in Europe for four years and is fluent in both French and German. Steve is currently chair of AMC's Adventure Travel program. Visit www.adventuretravelwithsteve.com to learn more about Steve and his past travels. Contact Steve at scohen1234@gmail.com or 617 997-6861.



Samir Patel first became a member of AMC in 1992. He has led Adventure Travel trips to New Zealand, Ireland, Alaska, Canadian Rockies, National Parks in the US, and has traveled to many parts of the world with AMC Adventure Travel Program, the Dolomites in Italy, Patagonia, Japan, Ireland, and Mexico. He is certified in Wilderness First Aid and CPR. Samir can be reached at 978-270-0714 or hikerspatel@gmail.com.

EQUIPMENT LIST

Below is a list of the required and recommended gear for the trip, as well as a list of items which some people will bring and share.

Required and Essential Gear

- broken-in waterproof hiking boots
- at least 2-3 set of hiking socks with liners
- non-cotton shorts (or long pants if you prefer) and shirt for hiking
- backpack (aim for 35 liter)
- sleeping bag liner (a.k.a sleep sack)
- pillow case [if a pillow covering is not included in the sleeping bag liner]
- waterproof wind and rain gear (tops and bottoms)
- wool sweater, or synthetic pile/fleece jacket
- long underwear top and bottom
- hat for warmth, and gloves or mittens
- polypropylene, Coolmax, Bergelene or other synthetic extra layer clothing
- sunglasses
- hat or bandanna for sun protection
- sunscreen
- Texas, Crocs or other sandals (to wear in huts, which do NOT permit the wearing of hiking boots outside of the public areas)
- headlamp or flashlight with fresh batteries
- unbreakable bottles or hydration bladder (at least 2 liters total capacity)
- waterproof pack liner and/or pack cover
- high-energy trail snacks
- toiletry kit (many huts do not supply soap or shampoo)
- camp towel (many, but not all huts supply towels)
- ear plugs
- personal first aid kit (leaders will have a group first aid kit)

Optional Gear

- casual clothing for use in a hut
- gaiters (for rain)
- hiking poles
- whistle
- knife
- camera
- batteries/recharger/adaptor plug
- pillowcase

Join us on this great adventure in one of the world's most spectacular mountain regions!

Photo credits - With the exception of the photo on page one, all photos are from Steve Cohen's 2013 trip to the Jungfrau region.