

Guide to the Bernese Oberland Region of Switzerland

INFORMATION ABOUT WENGEN AND SURROUNDING AREAS

By Kim Hawley

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INTRODUCTION

My husband and I are Americans in our 60s that love good food, good wine, and active vacations. We've traveled extensively, but Switzerland is our most favorite vacation destination – we've been on hiking vacations there 18 out of the last 19 years for anywhere from 2 weeks to 3 months at a time. We are quite active but have outgrown our desire to “rough it”. We like to stay in comfortable, well-appointed hotels with local character and charm vs. a chain or a luxury hotel (which tend to look and feel the same from country to country).

We've traveled extensively throughout Switzerland and have even hiked the entire span on the Alpine Pass Route, beginning on the Austrian border and ending on the French. Although pretty much everywhere you go in this stunning land is wonderful, Wengen (pronounced “VEHN-gehn”) is our hands-down favorite. “Yes, ____ (fill in the blank with Saas Fee, Lucerne, Vevey, Montreux, Locarno, Zermatt, etc.) is great, but it's not Wengen!”

This document provides our perspective of the Jungfrau Region, written from a Wengen base. I began putting it together many years ago at the request of friends that like challenging hiking so it is written from that angle. However, those desiring a more leisurely vacation will find descriptions of easier hikes as well as many outings in the region. It is focused on summer travel only, although winter travelers may find some of the ideas useful as well.

Please let me know if you have questions or would like additional information.

Have a wonderful trip!

Kim Hawley
Kimhawley60@gmail.com

BEFORE YOU GO

For a good general overview of travel in Switzerland look through <http://wikitravel.org/en/Switzerland>. This site has particularly good information about train travel (much more in section below) as well as driving in the country.

A quite comprehensive view of Swiss travel along with many suggestions can be read at www.myswitzerland.com.

Most of the villages have websites that are the town names with either a .ch or .com suffix. For example:

Wengen is at www.wengen.ch

Mürren is at www.muerrren.ch

Adelboden is at www.adelboden.ch

and so on. This is a good way to see some pictures and get some local color in advance of your trip. A good, high level map of most of the Bernese Oberland is at http://www.jungfrau.ch/fileadmin/images/ausflugziele/kleine_scheidegg/documents/So_Pano_JB_Pass.jpg.

And another one that shows transport routes is at <http://www.alpineskimaps.com/swit/jungfrau/mapsum.htm>

If you are interested in wild flowers this link describes the blooming season possibilities <http://www.alpengarten.ch/en/flowercalendar>. The highest concentration of wild flowers can be found at the Alpen Garden at Schynige Platte and on the trails accessible from the Allmendhubel lift above Mürren.

Weather

Early July through mid/late-September is the ideal time to visit Wengen and the Bernese Oberland (BO) region for summer activities. June can be beautiful but higher elevation hikes may still be closed due to snow until at least June 15, sometimes later. The busiest months are July and particularly August. We have found September to usually be the best time of all for a visit. Typically the days are warm (around 72 F) and dry, evenings cool, with an occasional late afternoon thunderstorm. The weather typically begins to change to wetter and cooler weather around mid to late September, but can also be very fine until the end of the month. Many businesses (retail, bars, hotels, restaurants) in the mountain villages (Wengen and Mürren) close beginning early to mid October until ski season begins in December, then again from March until mid or late April.

Rain is always a possibility and weather conditions can change frequently in the mountains. You should plan to dress in multiple thin layers and be sure to bring a waterproof shell, ideally one with a hood since this will give you more flexibility than an umbrella.

Do not rely on your smart phone weather application nor even www.weather.com for forecasts as these often default to weather at the ski peaks or nearby valley towns and not in the mountain villages. Or are just completely wrong. For example, last year we were enjoying a beautiful 70F degree sunny day in Wengen and weather.com told us it was snowing! To complicate matters, forecasting weather more than one to two days in advance in mountainous areas is largely folly. Mountains create their own weather. Some reasonable sites for near term weather forecasts follow

- With the caveats mentioned above, a quite reliable site is www.landi.ch/fr/meteo/prevision-locale. It is even used by local farmers.
- Another easy to use site is www.meteoblue.com/en/weather/forecast/week/wengen_switzerland_2658020
- A private weather service with its own stations displays forecasts at www.meteocentrale.ch/en/europe/switzerland/weather-wengen/details/N-3517887/
- You can find average climate information for a number of larger Swiss towns and cities at <http://www.about.ch/geography/climate/index.html>. The closest town to Wengen at this site is Interlaken. Typically Wengen is about 7 – 10 degrees F cooler than Interlaken.

For a look at what's going on in real time weather-wise see the following webcams.

- A good live webcam just above Wengen opposite the Hotel Bellevue at <http://www.bellevue-wengen.ch/>
- Live webcams of Männlichen, Kleine Scheidegg, Jungfrauoch, and First at <http://www.jungfrau.ch/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-138/>.
- Another live webcam from Männlichen at <http://panocam.skiline.cc/maennlichen>
- Webcams for Mürren, Grindelwald, Interlaken, and other towns around the area at <http://www.the-webcam-network.com/Switzerland/Lauterbrunnen/2538094.html>

Locations and Tourists

Summer visitors to the Bernese Oberland will run into tourists during high season of July and August. Interlaken and Grindelwald are positively overrun. Grindelwald is full of large tour groups, some of which come just for the day. The sidewalks in town are usually packed and car traffic is heavy. Interlaken is jammed with tour busses and large groups a good portion of the year. And, although Interlaken is a major railway center, it is not a well-developed town – full of souvenir shops, fast food outlets, and other “un-Swiss” features. We try to avoid it whenever possible. Lauterbrunnen, being the last village on the Valley floor that allows car traffic, sees a lot of business in August as well

but is certainly a better choice than Interlaken or Grindelwald. Lodging is less expensive here than in the mountain resorts as it sits down in the valley under imposing cliffs and has fewer amenities (although several restaurants, a grocery store, and a butcher). There is more of a “back-packers” vibe here and is attractive to extreme sports enthusiasts (parasailing, face-jumping, and so on). With the world economy improving, now even the car-free mountain villages of Wengen and Mürren are quite busy during August but don’t have as many crowds as the other areas do.

The region is very popular with a quite diverse set of visitors. Tourists from Asia, India, Japan, Muslim regions, Great Britain, and The Netherlands predominate with fewer visitors from United States and central European countries.

Language

The BO is in the German-speaking section of Switzerland but, given that the British popularized the area as a vacation destination, pretty much everyone speaks English except the staff in the huts around the high mountain pass areas such as Sefinenfurge, Höhturli, etc. But, if you do pass through these areas, you will do just fine at a lunch stop without speaking the language. The menus at these places are very limited (soup, cheese, ham sandwiches) and you can’t go wrong with anything. If all else fails, just point at something on the menu and you’ll probably like what you get. They don’t serve weird food like jellyfish or monkey brains anywhere in the BO.

Clothing

Having the right gear is essential to a pleasant hiking holiday. Buy your shoes in your home country and break them in. Any of the walks in the “Easy Hikes” section can be accomplished with gym shoes/trainers as long as they have sturdy soles with good grip (no Keds, for example). For more aggressive hikes you will need full-on hiking shoes or boots. We like the low topped, lightweight shoes with sturdy lugs the best (Vibram soles are tops). If you don’t own hiking shoes/boots nor have a need for them back home you can rent them at sports shops in all the larger towns and villages (including Wengen).

Hiking poles are strongly recommended for any hikes with meaningful altitude change (for example, those listed in the “Moderate Hikes” section below). Any will do, but generally the lighter the better. If you don’t want to travel with poles (since you can’t carry them on flights this may trip you over into checking luggage rather than going with carry-on only) you can rent some at Wengen Central-Sport right in the middle of the village. They have Leki brand poles, rental cost of 24 CHF for 6 days (reservations not necessary). Or you can buy poles there from 39 CHF to 99 CHF per pair.

We think that Arcteryx makes the very best backpacks as they are sturdy, lightweight, and very water-resistant. They can be hard to find but you can find dealers via their website www.arcteryx.com . You may want to take two different sizes. We take the Bora 35 to hold both of our gear for a 4 day hike (I can’t carry a pack thanks to a bad back, how convenient!), but we are very light packers so you might want to take a 30 or 35 per person. You will want something *much* smaller for day hikes. We usually never take a

lunch on day hikes (just water and a couple of energy bars) since you can nearly always find food and beverage en route.

Dress in layers and always carry Goretex outerwear unless you are only going for a short stroll on a clear day. Storms blow up quickly in the mountains.

Food

The quality of food nearly everywhere in the BO is exceptional. Many restaurants have similar menus of traditional foods: soups, salads, wurst (sausages), rösti (similar to hash browns but better), pork cutlets and pork steaks, chicken, veal dishes, pasta with red sauce, and outstanding cheeses and other dairy products. Any previous love affair you've had with butter will be re-ignited! Vegetarians can do fine with cheese-based foods, risotto, pasta, salads, tomato soup (ubiquitous) and the occasional fish dish; many restaurants even in Wengen have started featuring vegetarian and/or Asian sections in their menus. Unfortunately vegans won't find much to eat other than salads and pasta or rice dishes. Other than salads, which can be wonderful, the Swiss tend to view vegetables as condiments rather than the focus of a meal. The things the Swiss don't do well are peanut butter (hard to find and pretty awful if you do), red pepper flakes (for pizza and pasta), and decaf coffee (if you can find it, it usually comes freeze-dried). If you can't live without these things, bring your own. (Note: the Café Spettacolo at the Interlaken Ost (East) train station has decaf espresso beans so can make you a real decaf coffee drink.)

Money

Switzerland is not a member of the Euro zone and has its own currency, the Swiss Franc (CHF). Some businesses in large cities and the long-distance inter-city trains will accept Euros (paper money only, no coins) but will give you change in Francs and a lousy exchange rate as well. As a general rule, businesses and trains in smaller cities and villages will not accept Euros. You can change currencies at the airports, the main train station in Zurich and Geneva (via an automated machine), or at banks. However, a less costly approach is to simply withdraw Francs from an ATM, which are pretty much everywhere.

The ATMs work just as they do in the US; this is the least expensive and most convenient option for getting Francs, much less costly than trying to change currencies. Your US bank will likely charge you \$5 - \$10 per withdrawal and the Swiss banks usually charge a base rate, too, regardless of the amount of cash you withdraw. Therefore, you should plan on making fewer and larger withdrawals. Before you leave the US, **call your bank** to inform them of your travel plans (virtually all banks shut down ATM access when they see a foreign transaction) **and** get your maximum daily withdrawal amount increased to the highest level the bank will allow. ATMs are plentiful at both the Zurich and Geneva airports and throughout the country. There are even two ATMs (and bank offices) in Wengen village.

An important note - if you withdraw money from a US bank account on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday, the withdrawal isn't posted until Monday afternoon Swiss time when the US banks open. So if you have withdrawn to your maximum limit you will not be able to withdraw cash on each of those days. Plan ahead!

If you are nervous about relying on ATMs upon your arrival in the country (no reason to be, but some people are) simply change a small amount of your home country currency (say, \$100 USD) into Swiss Francs at a major airport before you leave home base.

Credit cards are accepted nearly everywhere other than in small restaurants/huts/inns in the high Alps and a few small shops in villages. Most credit card issuers will add a foreign transaction fee (up to 5%) to all international credit card purchases. Capital One (www.capitalone.com) really started the trend for 'no foreign transaction fee' cards and there are now a number to choose from, including Chase. So if you plan on using a card a lot I suggest that you apply for one before you leave. Either do Capital One or google to get a current list to pick from.

Also, you must **call the issuers of the credit cards you plan to use** to let them know where and when you will be travelling. Due to extensive fraud, credit card issuers routinely deny foreign transactions if they aren't informed in advance. Many issuers now provide a notification feature on their websites, which makes the process a bit easier.

Finally, if you are using a card from a US-based bank, some merchants will ask if you want your credit card transaction to take place in US dollars/British Pounds or CHF. If you are using a card with no foreign transaction fees CHF is the best choice. (Choosing USD/other currency will yield less favorable exchange rate.) Otherwise, go for USD/other so your card issuer doesn't charge you a conversion fee (although they still may charge you a transaction fee).

Phone and Internet

GSM, 3G, and 4G cell service is excellent throughout the country, but calls are expensive. Check with your carrier before you leave your home country to determine pricing and specials. For example, calls to/from my iPhone are \$1 a minute, and that's with a special discount package.

iPhone users need to also be aware that international data roaming is extraordinarily expensive without a special package (it's not unusual for iPhone data roaming users to receive bills of \$1,000/month), so either turn roaming off (which means you cannot use any data services during this time) or buy a data add-on plan from AT&T or your carrier.

If your hotel or apartment has wifi available (usually called "WR-Lan" or "V-Lan") you can, of course use this for data and for Skype voice calls. This is surely the best deal of all.

If you have an unlocked quad-band smart phone and want to use voice and data when away from a wifi connection, a more cost-effective approach than special plans from your carrier is to buy and install a pre-paid SIM card. There are large outlets for Swisscom, Orange, and Lebara at the Zurich airport where you can get set up. The Wengen Post Office also sells all popular SIM cards – Swisscom, Orange, Lebara, etc – and activates them on the spot. They also sell top-up vouchers or you can top-up on-line. To date, my only experience is with Lebara for voice service and I encountered several times when service was not available. I was also never available to top up on-line, seems Lebara has some server/IT issues. I expect that Swisscom or Orange provide more reliable service. As of August 2014, calls from Switzerland to the US cost 0.49 CHF per minute with incoming calls free (although your callers from US/other countries will incur international long distance charges). Check the various service provider websites for more information. The Wengen Post office is open 8:00 am to 12:00 noon and 2:00 pm to 6:00pm Monday – Friday; 8:30 am to 11:30 am on Saturday, closed Sunday. SIM cards and top up vouchers for Orange, Lebara, and providers from various Latin America and Asian countries (no Swisscom) are available at the Kiosk by Wengen station, open 5:45 am – 7:00 pm seven days a week. Coop in Wengen does not sell SIM cards nor top up vouchers

Another workable although rather “ancient” approach to making low cost phone calls (no data service) is the Flash pre-paid card. However, calls need to be made from a land-line (not a cell phone) in Switzerland. So this only works if your apartment or hotel room has a land line and the per call charge (if any) is low. Other than that you’ll be standing in a phone booth. In Wengen there is a phone booth near the Post Office and one near the Palace Club Med Hotel. Flash cards can be purchased at any Kiosk (located next to virtually all train stations) for 20 CHF, which provides over 200 minutes of phone time. Calls can be completed in three simple steps:

1. Dial the 0800 toll free number on the strip that corresponds with the language in which you want to receive instructions. (If you are using a pay phone, you will need to deposit 0.20 CHF to get a dial tone; the full amount will be returned.)
2. Enter the PIN code on the strip.
3. Dial the number you wish to call, including the international code. For example, to dial the U.S., dial 001-area code- phone number.

If your hotel or rental apartment does not offer internet services and you don’t have a SIM card data solution there are several places in town where you can get on-line. The Wengen Tourist Information Center (next to the Männlichen gondola lift, right in the center of the village) offers wifi for free with a Wengen Guest Card (all hotels and most apartments will provide you one), otherwise access costs 5 CHF for 30 mins or 9 CHF for an hour. If you don’t have your own computer you can use theirs (there is only one) to access the internet at a cost of 8 CHF for 30 mins or 15 CHF for an hour. The tourist office is usually open 9 am – 7 pm (sometimes later) seven days a week.

Another good internet access spot is Rock’s Bar next to the Post Office. It’s also a great place to stop for a drink (coffee drinks, mineral waters, juices, and pretty much every

alcoholic concoction you can dream up) as well. For a modest fee you can borrow a PC from the staff there or use your own to access their high-speed wireless network. If you use your own PC you will need to spend 5 CHF on drinks per 30-minute period to get your “free” access. This is not at all hard to do in Switzerland, trust me. You can also print here for 1 CHF per page. Rock’s is a full-time sports bar (albeit a highly civilized one), so if you’re a sports fan you may end up spending lots of time here anyway. The only downside to Rock’s is that there is no food served here, although patrons of Santos’ Fine Foods just down the street may bring in their take out for consumption. And the owner of one of the nicest restaurants in the village tells me that Santos’ hamburgers, curry wurst, and other snack food menu items are the best in the village. Who knew? Rocks is open from 4:00 pm to 12:30 am, closed Mondays.

The Crystal Bar up the main street from Rock’s also advertises “free” internet access but, of course, you need to buy something to get a code good for 1 hour of connectivity. Unfortunately, the log in procedure is long and tedious and, once logged in, the service is so slow as to be nearly unusable. Crystal sells snack foods (sandwiches, curry wurst, goulash soup, pizza) in addition to drinks and has a “college bar” sort of vibe. The only upside is that Crystal is open continuously from about 8:00 am until late.

TRANSPORTATION

Overview

I am offering some pointers of my own in this section but, without a doubt, the best website I’ve ever encountered to make sense of rail travel in Europe is www.seat61.com. Mark Smith’s explanations make it simple to sort out the complexity one encounters when dealing directly with the rail websites of various countries. His section on Switzerland is fantastic and great place to start. See http://www.seat61.com/Swiss-trains.htm#Swiss_train_tickets.

The rail system in Switzerland is pretty much beyond belief. Everything runs on time to the minute about 99% of the time. I think it is worth the trip just to see the variety of trains that go places you just can’t imagine trains could go. The public bus system is also fantastic. Most of the buses in the Bernese Oberland are run by the Post Office and are called Post Buses. They are bright yellow, ultra-clean and modern large Mercedes buses. In some regions the BLS rail line runs the public buses, these are bright green with the blue BLS emblem. In some other regions (such as the Emmental) private companies run buses as well. Everything runs on time to the minute. Most of the larger train stations have bus stops/stations on the same property or sometimes directly across the street.

The Swiss national rail system is called the SBB, then each region has its own rail system. SBB is the long haul carrier; the local train companies run the cogs, cable trains, and other formats that are needed for short hauls and steep grades. Around the Wengen area you will encounter the BOB (Bernese Oberland Bahn) and the WAB (Wengernalp

Bahn) and a few others. Not to worry, though, they are all well coordinated and any station can give you a complete and accurate timetable for any journey using any of the trains throughout the whole system. Note that you will need to ask for a *timetable*, not an itinerary. Everyone at the train stations speaks English, but their proficiency is limited to the words they have been taught. Apparently no one at the Bahn training centers has ever heard the words *itinerary* or *schedule*.

The Swiss rail system is very punctual; it even makes the Deutsche Bahn in Germany look a bit sloppy. Connections can be very tight so I recommend getting a printed timetable from the station attendant for journeys involving multiple changes so you know exactly what track (“Gleis”) you need to look for to connect. Connection times as short as 5 minutes are very do-able as long as you and your luggage are at the train exit door when it pulls into the station. In the higher mountain areas you may see some stops that are on request only. To request a stop, press the “Halt Verlangen” button or the red button located near the train door.

The SBB website (www.sbb.ch) is a good way to check on timetables, trip durations, and prices for the entire network. (Tip: if your destination includes both train and gondola transport options, the letters “BLM” indicate the gondola option.) However, you do not need to (actually cannot) book in advance nor reserve seats other than on the Golden Pass or Glacier & Bernina Express Routes. Simply buy your ticket at the window or from the automated machines before boarding. It is important that you do so as passengers without a valid ticket will be charged full fare for the route (regardless of whether you are holding a discount pass or not) AND a 90 CHF fine payable on the spot. Unlike other countries, train passengers are checked about 95% of the time. You must present your ticket prior to boarding a bus, gondola, cable train, lift, boat, etc. so that’s a 100% check rate. If you are traveling with a discounted ticket you must also present your discount pass upon request. *An important point when using the SBB site: once you find an itinerary you are interested in you need to select “Fare/Buy” then choose from the “Reductions” drop down box whether you are buying full fare or half fare.* The “prices from” amount in the initial screen reflects a half fare as virtually all travelers in Switzerland purchase a discount card enabling the reduction. If you do not have a Half Fare or other discount travel card your trip will cost double the amount initially displayed in the “prices from” column.

Families or small groups travelling together often wonder if they will be able to find seats together on Swiss trains. When using the SBB website to consult schedules you will see some little figures of people beneath the First and Second class designations in the “Information” column, just to the left of the “Price” column. One figure means very light passenger load, two a heavier passenger load, three a crowded train. This is SBB’s prediction from past experience and it’s pretty accurate. If you choose trains with a light load, families and small groups (4 – 5 people) are almost guaranteed to be able to sit together. And, since it is often not more than half an hour between stops on many trains, if you aren’t able to sit together when you board you may well be able to move and do so as other passengers disembark at intermediate stops. Choosing trains outside of commuting hours will help as well. However, be aware that mountain transports (for visitors with destinations Wengen, Mürren or Grindelwald this means any transports

beyond Interlaken Ost) are much smaller and you may not find seats together nor can seats on these transports be reserved. Most tourists are happy to move/make room for families with small children. And, if you don't find seats exactly next to each other, rarely will you be more than a few seats apart.

Another thing families traveling with children need to be aware of is that some of the cars in First Class are Silent Cars. There will be a clear sign on the carriage – a face with a finger to the lips. This really does mean silent. No talking, no jumping around, no seat kicking, no rattling of papers, no headphones, no cell phones, no cameras, no clickity-clack of fingers on keyboard. Nothing that makes noise at all. It's taken very seriously. Most kids cannot be totally silent (nor live without their electronics) for more than a few minutes. So be alert and take this into careful consideration.

Mountain Transports

Many of the funiculars, gondolas, and ski lifts (which operate in summer as well) in the Jungfrau region are operated by the Jungfrau Bahn. This includes the gondola to Mürren and up the Schilthorn, the lifts at First, the cog train to Harder Kulm, and, of course, the train up to the Jungfrauoch.

Many of the higher elevation trains and cable cars close during low season, generally early April through mid-May or early June, and mid-October through early December. The trains to the Jungfrauoch run year-round (weather permitting). See Appendix A: 2017 Mountain Transport Operating Dates for a summary of openings and closings. For more detailed information see the following links:

Männlichenbahn operating information (from Wengen and from Grindelwald) is at <http://www.maennlichen.ch/en/home.html>.

Schilthorn gondola and Allmendhubel cable train timetables and fares are at http://schilthorn.ch/en/Angebot/Timetable__Tariffs/Timetable.

Schynigge Platte to First train information at <http://www.myswitzerland.com/en-us/schynige-platte-railway.html>

Note that the hikes that these transports provide you access to may or may not be open when the transports are scheduled to begin running. Often the paths are still closed for days or even weeks later due to mud or snow; most re-open around June 15. Also, be aware that early in the season both the transports and open hiking trails may close again at any time due to weather.

As an aside, I have had several questions about health issues related to travelling up to the Jungfrauoch, which sits at over 10,000 feet. You can get detailed information via the following link: <http://www.jungfrau.ch/en/tourism/travel-information/medizinische-tipps/>

An excellent tool for finding locations and operating times (summer and winter) of secondary forms of transport (cable cars, funiculars, mountain trains, etc.) is on the website www.alternatives-wandern.ch/bergbahnen.htm. The site is a great resource for “off the beaten path” transport; you can find nearly all public cable cars, mountain trains, funiculars etc. in Switzerland. It's in German, but is possible to navigate without understanding the language (or you can invoke Google Translate). To find transportation in a specific canton, click on the flag of the canton and then on Sommer (summer), Winter, or Link to get to the timetable of the cable car.

And for those of you that are *really* into planning, here's a link that will advise you which side of the train you should sit on for the best views – what fun!

<http://licencefreemusic.co.uk/id37.html>

Discount Cards – A Must!

The transport system is privately run and not subsidized, so is very expensive. This is also why it is clean, safe, and runs perfectly. However, if you are headed to the BO mountain areas, public transport is your very best alternative. Renting a car is not a good option; most of the places you want to go cannot be accessed via auto. (Wengen, for example, is only accessible via cog train, helicopter, or on foot.)

The good news is that you can buy discount Passes that significantly reduce your costs. Although you can purchase these Passes at major train stations in Switzerland, you should do your research ahead of time so you don't waste any of your holiday time trying to figure out which one to buy once you get there. Some Passes can be purchased in advance and will be mailed to you in your home country should you so desire, but there is a pretty steep shipping fee, usually around \$30 US. Every adult (16 and over) in your party will need their own pass. Children under 16 generally travel for free with one or more parent with the upon-request Family Card (you must ask for it when you buy a travel pass).

All of the Passes are described in detail at www.swisstravelsystem.com (which is the official Swiss transport site) and you can also purchase Passes in advance on this site. The site does a good job answering high-level questions at <http://www.swisstravelsystem.ch/en/content/faq/>.

Another great site to read about the various different Passes is www.myswissalps.com. This site also has a forum moderated by local experts that will quickly answer any question you post. Discount Passes can be purchased from this site as well.

Regarding discount Passes, my most favorite is the Half Fare Card. The HFC, priced at \$133 USD (February 2015), provides a 50% discount on all forms of public transportation including trains, busses, gondolas, cable trains, boats, and so on. It is valid

for either first or second class travel – you simply pay half of the going rate for whichever class you choose. It is very easy to understand and virtually always turns out to provide the best value for the money. Just buy one at any train station when you arrive in country and begin using it immediately. You can also use the HFC if you are arriving into Switzerland from another European country via rail or bus, enabling a 50% discount of the portion of your trip that is within Switzerland. If you want to do this you will need to have the HFC with you when you travel so you will need to buy it in advance and have it sent to you in your home country. The HFC is valid for a full month and each member of your party age 16 and older needs one. Children under age 16 travel for free with a parent/guardian with the upon-request Swiss Family Card. The Family Card is free but you MUST request it at the same time that you purchase a HFC or any other Swiss Travel System card/pass.

There is also a Swiss Travel Pass and a number of regional Passes. These Passes are good for a set number of days of travel and provide good flexibility as you don't have to buy tickets for each train/bus/boat trip – you simply get on. However, they are considerably more expensive than the Half Fare Card. And they typically don't provide "free" travel on the most expensive high mountain transports, which are the ones you will want to travel on to reach the most scenic areas! On these routes there is only a 25% or 50% reduction, depending on the route and the Pass. So, you end up paying a lot of money for the Pass then still have to pay as much or more for these scenic routes -- and buy individual tickets -- as you would have with the much less expensive Half Fare Card.

Consult the following websites if you are one of those industrious types that wants to do the math and figure out to the dollar/franc which card/pass is most beneficial:

- Major routes at www.sbb.ch Note that prices on this site default to half fare; if you don't purchase a discount card your fare will be double.
- Mountain railways fares in the Jungfrau region at the sites mentioned previously. Some default to full fare, others to half fare. Be sure to check.

You need to validate Passes before making your first journey, which you can do at any staffed railway station in Switzerland (which certainly includes the major points of entry such as Zurich and Geneva). If you are arriving in Switzerland by train, the conductor on the train can validate your Pass at the border, i.e., you do not need to get off the train to get the Pass validated. However, if you have neglected to buy a Pass before arriving in Switzerland you can do so by getting off the train at the border station (which you can determine by expanding to see the details of all stops at www.sbb.ch, www.bahn.de, or whatever train system you are using to get to Switzerland) and purchasing the Pass there. Usually there is another train that comes along with 30 mins or so that can get you to your destination. If you have purchased a ticket for half fare and you neglect to buy your discount card you will face a stiff fine and a requirement to buy a full fare ticket.

Keep your Discount Card or Pass with you at all times. Swiss Card or Half Fare Card users will need to show your card to buy a discount ticket. You are expected to buy tickets at the ticket window (or from a ticket machine) before you get on the train, but on

many routes you can also buy them on train for a nominal extra fee. (Note that you cannot do this on the WAB in and out of Wengen, you must buy your ticket before boarding or have a Pass that doesn't require ticket purchase.) Once on board, the train staff checks for tickets 100% of the time. Many of them will ask to see your Discount Card in addition to your ticket, and they will all ask to see a Pass (such as Swiss Pass) since that *is* your ticket. You will be charged full fare and face a fine if you don't have your Card/Pass with you.

Transport From Zurich Airport to Wengen

The SBB trains depart directly from the Zurich airport ("Flughafen"). When you get off the plane and clear customs, simply follow the "Bahn" signs to get to the station downstairs. Once there, buy and/or have your discount travel card validated at any ticket window. (This is important – if you board the train without having your card validated at the window you can be subject to a 180 Euro fine.) Ask for a printed timetable for your trip to Wengen. Trains connecting to Wengen leave at least once an hour. You don't need reservations as the trains departing from the airport are usually pretty empty. They pick up lots of passengers along on the way, many at the main train station ("Hauptbahnhof") which is your first stop. Food and drinks are available on all long haul trains, or you can buy something to take on-board with you at one of the many markets at the Zurich airport. *Tip: take the escalator up one level from the ticket windows to find a nice large supermarket where the selection is better (and the prices less) than the smaller shops and stands in the station. This is also a great place to buy food for your first night if you are renting a chalet and arriving after the stores in Wengen are closed.*

The train journey to Wengen takes three to four hours (depending on routing) and is beautiful, particularly the last hour when you travel right by the lakes (it's amazing how close the tracks are to the water, sometimes it looks like you're floating!) and then up into the mountains. The trip usually requires at least three switches: usually one at Spiez or Berne, and always at Interlaken and at Lauterbrunnen. There are assistants at every Gleis (track) to help make sure you get on the right train. There are a couple of spots that are a bit tricky. The first tricky spot is Interlaken, where there are two stops – Interlaken West and Interlaken Ost (East). Stay on the train until you get to Ost, which is the last stop for the SBB. There you will change to the BOB train bound for Lauterbrunnen. This is the second tricky spot as the same train is also bound for Grindelwald; it stops and splits in a little place called Zweilütschinen ("Two Rivers"). One half of the train proceeds to Lauterbrunnen, where you want to go, and the other half goes to Grindelwald, where you don't. So, you need to make sure you get on the correct end of the train in Interlaken. It is well marked and there are many assistants to help out so be sure to ask if you have any questions. They spend their entire day trying to keep tourists on the proper end of the train so don't be shy. Once you get to Lauterbrunnen, switch to the WAB with destination Wengen (all uphill trains pass through Wengen so there's no confusion here!), about 15 minutes up the hill. I recommend that you sit on the right side (facing forward) of the train so you can get the best views. There's a nice YouTube video of the ride (which also includes footage of the gondola ride from Wengen to Männlichen and the

lifts from Männlichen down to Grindelwald):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1fTFJUrd1Bw&feature=related> (14 minutes). A52 second video of the spectacular ride from Wengen down to Lauterbrunnen is at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whzGDFFSz58&feature=youtube_gdata.

On the day you leave Switzerland you will need to fill in the return date on your Swiss Card (if using one), providing your return fare to Zurich (or wherever you depart the country) and effectively “canceling” it out at the end of that day. If you forget to do this the train staff checking tickets will remind you. Important note: rarely, well-meaning (but mis-informed) train staff will fill in an end date (30 days on) for you at the beginning of your trip. Don’t let them do this as it will confuse staff you encounter on your return trip and, worst case, you may have to buy a ticket to your departure point.

Most hotels in Wengen are within walking distance of the train station. However, you can get a lift if you have lots of luggage. Wengen is a carless village but there are two small vans that serve as taxis. If there isn’t one waiting there, simply walk to the information board located to the left (when facing toward the station from train) of the ticket counters. There you can pick up the phone and dial the three digit code displayed for taxis (hotels too) and be immediately connected. One of the taxi drivers doesn’t speak English, but will understand that you are at the station and he’ll show up presently. Many of the hotels also provide pick-up service at the train station. They all have funny little battery powered carts or small electric vans.

Luggage Service

Many people ask, “What do I do with my luggage on the train – do I check it in or carry it.” The short answer is “carry it”. There is usually plenty of room on the trains to stow luggage, see this link for more information <http://www.myswissalps.com/train/practical/luggage>

The SBB offers several luggage transfer services that are quite convenient if you are traveling with lots of bags and/or lots of people. This is also a great way to get your luggage from start to end points on multi-day hikes if you want to hike with just a day pack and catch up with your luggage every few days. One option gets your luggage to your destination same day (for most locations), another within two days. See the following link for more information and prices: <http://www.sbb.ch/en/station-services/services/baggage/fast-baggage.html>. Be sure to check how late the luggage area of your destination station is open so you don’t arrive and find your luggage locked up. You can check opening hours at <http://www.sbb.ch/en/station-services/am-bahnhof/railway-stations/bahnhof-finden.html>; be sure to check baggage hours not just station operating hours.

For travelers coming from the U.S., Rail Europe offers a very convenient service that enables you to check your bags at your U.S. departure airport and have them delivered to any of over 50 rail stations in Switzerland. For example, you can check your bags in at

San Francisco airport and have them delivered to the train station in Wengen. See the following link for more information:

<http://www.raileurope.com/activities/fly-rail-baggage-to-switzerland/index.html>

Finally, most of the larger train stations also provide lockers for short-term storage of luggage for day-trippers. They are coin-operated so be sure to have some 1, 2, and/or 5 CHF coins with you. You can use the SBB website to determine which stations provide lockers, their sizes, and pricing. Use this link <http://www.sbb.ch/en/station-services/ambahnhof/railway-stations/bahnhof-finden.html> then fill in the name of the station for which you need the information. Select “Equipment”. If no lockers are listed, click back on “Services” and see if “Baggage” or “Left Luggage Office” is listed and the hours. This means that the baggage area is staffed and generally you can leave your luggage with them; just be sure to pick it up during opening hours.

Transport to Wengen via Auto

If you plan to arrive in the Bernese Oberland area via car be aware that virtually all the top sites are reachable only via public transport. Wengen, Kleine Scheidegg, Jungfrauoch, Mürren, Gimmelwald, Almendhubel, Schilthorn, Schynige Platte, First, Harder Kulm, Rothorn, Sulwald are all car-free and can be reached only via trains, gondolas, lifts, etc. There is a large covered parking structure at the Lauterbrunnen train station where you can leave your car. Parking (as of 2014) is 13.50 CHF per day, more information here <http://shop.jungfrau.ch/de/parking/fees>. You do not need reservations during the summer months, only during the peak of the ski season.

GENERAL WENGEN INFORMATION

Wengen is perched about half way up the mountainside overlooking Lauterbrunnen Valley. Lauterbrunnen Valley is like the Yosemite Valley of Switzerland – a glacier-formed valley but one that is nearly twice as deep as Yosemite. The distance from the valley floor to the mountain peaks is nearly 10,000 feet. It is truly stunning. Wengen sits on a shelf (4180 feet up) at the mouth of the valley and, in my opinion, sports the best views in all of Switzerland. It is a car-less village; the only way to get here is to walk, take the WAB cog train or charter a helicopter. There are about 1050 full time residents.

Tourist Information

The Tourist Information Office is a good resource for maps and advice on local events, excursions, hikes, and weather forecasts. It is located just set back on the east side of the main street near the tennis courts and the Männlichen cable car station. The Office is open 7 days a week from 9:00 am – 7:00 pm (sometimes later).

Business Hours

Be aware that most retail shops, banks, etc. keep mountain hours. This is true in most of the villages including Wengen and Mürren. Opening times are usually 8 am – 12 noon, then 2 pm – 6 pm. (Everyone is supposed to be in the restaurants having lunch from 12 – 2.) Some retail establishments re-open from 8 pm – 10 pm during high season, but not all. Most places are closed on Sunday although in Wengen the Coop food market is now open on Sunday and the Dorflade opens for a few hours as well. During high season a handful of Wengen retail shops will also open for a bit on Sunday. Mürren is pretty well shut down on Sundays.

Medical

The pharmacy in Wengen is well stocked and served by English speaking, medically-trained staff. There is also a very competent, English-speaking doctor (the “Artz”) in town that keeps the same hours as the rest of the establishments in a nice, well-run walk-in clinic and is also available by appointment. The tourist office or pharmacy staff can direct you if you need to see him. Although he can’t do open-heart surgery there, he’s pretty well equipped for most anything else thanks to the many aggressive snow skiers that keep him busy during winter season. There is helicopter medical evacuation service as well.

Laundry

There is a small public laundromat in Wengen behind the Intersport Alpi store (across from the Eiger Residence, near the train station) that is open 7:00 am to 10:00 pm seven days a week. Follow the signs to the hair salon. The Laundromat (“Waschsalon”) is located directly across from the entrance to the hair salon behind a brown door (usually there is no sign). There are two washers that take four 1 franc coins only (wash time approximately 40 minutes) and one dryer that takes 1, 2 and 5 franc coins (2 francs per hour). If you don’t have correct change you can get some at Hotel Silberhorn which is just south of the Intersport Alpi store. (The Silberhorn manages the laundry facility and is also the place to go if you run into trouble with any of the machines.) The dryer doesn’t work particularly well but if you don’t overload it you can get a load dry in an hour. There are instructions printed on the machines in English. There is usually no detergent available there so you will have to buy some at one of the markets in town. (In a pinch, check the area just behind the washers. That’s where a number of frequent visitors stash their left-over detergent for the next “in the know” visitor.) It’s best to go early since there’s often a line at other times. And given the limited public laundry services, be on time to retrieve your laundry from the machines. Otherwise, expect to find your things piled up on one of the tables. Alternatively, most hotels provide laundry service. There is no dry-cleaner in town, but most of the larger hotels can provide this service as well.

Food Shopping

If you choose to rent a chalet or apartment you will be responsible for your own breakfast and other meals that you prefer eat in rather than out. There are two food markets in town, the Co-op and the Dorflade, and a couple of specialty shops. We find it great fun to go food shopping in Wengen, it makes one feel more like a local. Groceries in Switzerland, and particularly in the mountains, are likely much more expensive than in your home country. You can see prices at <http://www.coopathome.ch>. Select “Supermarket” on the upper left part of the screen, then click on the type of products that interest you. Hover over the individual entries to get weights and pricing. 250 grams is about half a pound, a liter is about a quart.

For the most part food shopping in Wengen is straightforward but there are a few tricks:

- To use the shopping carts, insert a 1 CHF coin in the slot in the handle to release the key to the lock. When you have finished shopping, insert the key back into the slot to return your coin.
- You are expected to weigh and price produce purchases before proceeding to the main check out area. All produce has a distinct identifying number prominently displayed on the box or shelf next to the product. Simply place produce in the provided plastic bags (bagged separately by type), place on the scale, and press the produce’s number. The scale machine will print a tag you then stick on the plastic bag. If pricing is per piece (“Pro Stuck”) you do not label the item.
- You need to bring (or buy) your own bags and package your purchases yourself. A backpack (or two) is the easiest way to do this. If you have lots of heavy things, you can take the cart to your chalet but be sure to return it promptly.
- Finally, garbage (the inevitable outcome from doing your own food prep) is handled differently in Wengen than it may be where you live. Household garbage can only be placed in the pick up bins when placed in taxed bags. Typically the apartment agent or owner will provide you with one bag per week; you can buy additional bags at Coop or Dorflade for around 2 CHF but be sure to get the taxed bags, not the plain bags. You are expected to bring plastic and glass containers to the recycling area located underneath the train station. Co-op also has a small area for recycling just inside the entry.

The largest market, **Coop**, is located directly across from the train station, opening hours are 8:00 am – 6:30 pm seven days a week during high seasons, shorter or no hours on Sundays during low. The Coop has a surprisingly wide range of goods for such a small village. The breads here are very good, even better than the bakery in town IMO. Produce is nice, there is a good selection of coffees, teas, wine, soft drinks, dairy products, breakfast items, etc. They also have nice quality fresh meats but they are cut and packaged into individual servings down in the “flatlands” before they come up the hill. About the only thing you can't get here (or anywhere in Wengen) are large cuts of meat

such as pork roasts, etc. If you want the larger cuts you will need to go down to the Coop right across from Interlaken Ost train station. (This takes about an hour each way.) They have a very good butcher there. Alternatively you may be able to ask the staff at Coop Wengen to have larger meats sent up to you.

In addition to Coop there is a smaller shop called Dorflade in town (on the main street, can't miss it) that has amazing produce, including some from gardens in town, and other items. Dairy, meats, cheeses, dry goods, and so on. About the only staple you can't buy here is bread. Opening hours here are 8:00 am – 12:15 pm noon then 2:30 pm – 7:00 pm Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – 12 noon then 2:00 pm – 7:00 pm on Saturday, and 10:00 am – 12 noon then 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm on Sunday. During peak summer seasons, Dorflade is often open until 9:00 or 9:30 pm every evening. They will also deliver directly you your rental chalet/apartment, delivery is free for orders over 50 CHF. See www.dorflade-wengen.ch/4894.html for more information.

Don't miss the **Chäs Grübi** cheese market, open the same hours as Coop, but closed Sundays. Chäs Grübi features over 100 cheeses (many of them VERY local, from the cows you see in town), jams, snack foods, and a small selection of produce, breads, and wine. They have milk and yogurts on display in the refrigerated cases, but the best thing to do is to ask them for the fresh, unpasteurized local milk and yogurt that they keep in the back room. They sell it to you in either plastic or returnable glass containers (your choice) and it is simply to die for. Chäs Grübi is located just off the main street. When headed north on the main street, turn right at the street in front of Hotel Schöneegg and walk about 1 1/2 blocks. You will run right into it.

Finally, there is a bakery on the main street very close to the train station. Breads and pastries are the featured items here; they also sell walk-away coffee. They open earlier than the markets, around 7:00 am.

HOTELS IN WENGEN

Note: all phone and fax numbers assume calls from the US. Substitute appropriate international calling code for calls from other countries.

There are many hotels to choose from at www.wengen.com, but, because we typically rent a chalet, our direct experience with hotels is rather limited. If you're interested in renting a chalet or apartment during your stay, you can find a good selection through locally-owned Swiss Maid Services at <http://www.swissmaidservices.com/en/>. The website is very easy to use and SMS has a good reputation. Another good and local choice is Alpine Holiday Services at <http://www.alpineholidayservices.ch/>. Interhome also has extensive listings and agents/staff on the ground in Wengen, see <http://www.interhome.com/switzerland/bernese-oberland/wengen/>.

Finally, rental apartments are also listed on the Wengen village website at <http://wengen.com/hotapa.html>.

Hotels rates in Wengen include breakfast and most hotels also offer half-pension (half-board) which includes both breakfast and dinner. There are many good restaurants in town (and you can always arrange to have dinner in your hotel) so half-pension wouldn't be my choice but that's a personal preference. Many hotels assume you want half-pension (and will charge you for it) unless you tell them differently so be sure to specify.

Hotel Berghaus is a special traditional place to stay. It's just off the main street in town and has lovely views. The proprietor, Aldo Fontana, is a very fun fellow and the food is quite good, with many fish specialties (see Restaurant section below).

Hotel Berghaus
Fam. Fontana-Fuchs
CH - 3823 Wengen
berghaus@wengen.com
www.berghaus-wengen.ch
Tel: +41-33-855-21-51
Fax: +41-33-855-38-20

The **Hotel Schöneegg** is a more upscale version of a traditional Swiss hotel, beautifully outfitted with antique wood and classic Swiss decor. Long-time proprietor Rene Berthod retired in 2012 and turned over management of the Schöneegg to the very capable Philippe Allenspach. Herr Allenspach was raised in Wengen (his father is the doctor in the village) and returned to manage this lovely hotel after graduating from hospitality academy. The restaurant is world-class; award-winning chef Hubert Mayer grows his own herbs, forages for local wild mushrooms, and spotlights meats and produce from the region on his menu. Truly superb – the best restaurant in a village with some stiff competition. It's pricey but worth it. Even if you don't stay here be sure to reserve a table for dinner!

Romantik Hotel Schöneegg
CH - 3823 Wengen
mail@hotel-schoenegg.ch
www.hotel-schoenegg.ch
Tel: +41-33-855-34-22
Fax: +41-33-855-42-33

Hotel Bellevue is an older property but well maintained and charming with great service. Bellevue sports the very best views of all the hotels in the village. The rooms are rather small but the lovely wrap-around verandas with the corner view-facing rooms make up for that. There is a stunning live web-cam on their home page, take a look for yourself and you'll see what I mean. For years we have rented the chalet directly next door and, although we've not stayed at the Bellevue, have been happy to have drinks in their lovely

sitting area and great dinners (must book in advance as the restaurant is private, see Restaurants section below).

Hotel Bellevue Wengen
Judith Graf Engi and Andi Engi
CH-3823 Wengen
www.bellevue-wengen.ch
Tel: +41 33 856 66 55
Fax: +41 33 856 66 44
info@bellevue-wengen.ch

I've had good reports from other Trip Advisor members about the **Hotel Beausite Park**. It has been described as "top notch, the friendly owners are always present, the four course dinners are lovely and tasty, and the breakfast has everything anyone could ever possibly want. The rooms have jaw-dropping views and are very spacious." Quite the recommendation!

Beausite Park Hotel
Margrit & Erich Leeman-von Allmen
CH – 3823 Wengen
Tel: +41-33-856-51-56
Fax: +41-33-855-30-10
hotel@parkwengen.ch
www.parkwengen.ch

I've heard good reports about the **Hotel Caprice** as well, another hotel on the upscale/pricy side.

Monica and Christian Aubert
Caprice Hotel
CH – 3823 Wengen
www.caprice-wengen.ch
hotel@caprice-wengen.com
Tel: +41-33-856-06-06
Fax: +41-33-856-06-07

Alpenrose gets rave reviews from TripAdvisor members as well. Many families return to the Alpenrose every year for a week or two.

Hotel Alpenrose Wengen
Family von Allmen
CH – 3823 Wengen
<http://www.alpenrose.ch/>
Tel: +41-33-855-3216

Fax: +41-33-855-1518
info@alpenrose.ch

Hotel Edelweiss, across the street from Alpenrose, is becoming increasingly popular as a less-expensive alternative. Many Wengen visitors have raved to me about the food and service.

Hotel Edelweiss
Daniel and Susanne Eisenegger
Am Acher
3832 Wengen
<http://www.edelweisswengen.ch/>
Tel: +41 33 855 23 88
Fax: +41 33 855 42 88

Finally, if you're looking for a "Fawlty Towers" type experience (with all the charisma and none of the aggravation) the **Hotel Falken** is absolutely charming. Sina Cova, the proprietor of Pizzeria da Sina (see Restaurant section) is the owner and is delightful. Even if you don't stay here I recommend visiting for a drink in the bar or a dinner (you will need to provide them a day's notice as the dining room is not public, but for half-board hotel visitors). Be sure to visit the public room and read the letter from British tourists (dated August 1914) thanking the management and staff for their graciousness during the "recent unpleasantness" – delay in travel plans due to outbreak of WWI.

Hotel Falken
CH – 3823 Wengen
www.hotelfalken.com
Tel: +41-33-856-51-21
Fax: +41-33-856-33-39
info@hotelfalken.com

DAY HIKES FROM WENGEN BASE

Many first-time visitors ask us, "How many miles/kilometers do you usually hike in a day?" In Switzerland, distance is not the point. Elevation gain is the key. Walking 3 – 5 miles (just to pick some numbers) on flat terrain is one thing; hiking this distance while gaining 1500 – 3000 feet (or more) on mountainous terrain is quite another. That's why Swiss hiking trail signs (which are plentiful) show "distance" in hours and minutes rather than in miles or kilometers. You will see things like "1Std 15Min", which means one hour ("Stunde") and fifteen minutes. Posted times are for experienced walkers/hikers and do not include time for food, rest, taking pictures, or just gawking in general (which you will do a lot). Times mentioned in my recommendations below are for moderately-fast to

fast hikers. It's a good idea to figure out your pace relative to the posted times early in your trip.

There are two types of trails in Switzerland. "Wanderwegs" are easy trails marked with yellow stripes or triangles and are "paths for everyone" (at least according to the Swiss!) Wanderwegs are flat (or nearly so) with well-groomed wide paths and have no exposure (things like steep drop offs). These can be navigated with sturdy walking shoes, no need for boots.

"Bergwegs", marked with red and white stripes, are more challenging mountain trails featuring uneven footing and some (or many) sections of steep inclines and descents. Hiking on Bergwegs requires hiking shoes/boots, previous mountain hiking experience, and I recommend hiking poles as the footing often requires close attention. Most Bergwegs are well-marked and reasonably well-maintained, but some (particularly those over the high passes) are nothing more than red blazes painted on rocks. Bergwegs with exposure often have a cable or rope you can use to steady yourself over the less-secure portions.

The link below takes you to a map that provides a good overview of many of the hikes in the region. It also gives you a pretty good picture of where various places are in relation to one another. This map is available at all tourist offices.

http://www.jungfrau.ch/fileadmin/images/ausflugsziele/kleine_scheidegg/documents/So_Pano_JB_Pass.jpg

Moderate to Challenging Hikes

If you are unsure of your hiking aptitude but want to try some of the hikes described in this section I recommend you start with the Wengen to Kleine Scheidegg trek. This is one of the most visually-stunning of all the hikes in the region, has fewer super-steep segments, and features two "bail out" points where you can catch a train. Compare the sign-posted time to your actual achievement to get a good idea how much faster or slower you are than "standard", then use this information to gauge your timing on subsequent treks.

All of the hikes in this section are Bergwegs for some or all of the distance.

Wengen to Kleine Scheidegg (pronounced KLINE-eh SHY-dek). This is a moderately strenuous hike – about 2700 feet of ascent over about 6 miles with a posted time of 2 hours 50 minutes to – and the views are spectacular. See <http://www.pictures-switzerland.com/klscheidegg/index.htm> for some marvelous photos of Kleine Scheidegg and a selection of views from there.

There are three different routes: high, center, and low, which should be clear on a trail map or ask at the Tourist Office. The low route (trail number 42 on the hiking map

available in the Tourist Office) is the most stunning of all, with richly varied terrain. To follow this route, walk on the paved road from the center of Wengen village to below the train station and continue on until you begin to see the small brown signs for “Mendelssohnweg”. Continue to follow these signs, eventually heading up hill then through a gorgeous forested section where you will have great views of Lauterbrunnen Valley, Mürren off to the right, and Wengen fading into the background. There is a lovely small waterfall along the way, a good spot for a rest and wading in the cool water. Continue to follow the Mendelssohnweg signs and eventually you will pop out into a clearing and see a wide gravel road above you. Your first “bail out” point is here: walk up to the road, turn left and walk down to Allmend station where you can catch a train back to Wengen or on up to Kleine Scheidegg. (*Note: Allmend is a request-only stop. To make a request press the “Halt auf Verlangen” button at the small station there.*) To continue your hike, turn right on the road (following the Mendelssohnweg signs) and, as you round the corner you will come face-to-face with the Jungfrau and Mönch massif and glaciers. Stunning. Continue to follow the gravel road until you come to a fork, with Mendelssohnweg clearly marked to the right and also Mendelssonweg to the left along with the Jungfrau Marathon sign. Either gets you where you want to go but the trail to the right is more scenic (trail to the left continues on the wide gravel road). After a short uphill through forest you will come out into a clearing and see the Wengernalp Hotel and train station on your left. Continue to follow the obvious trail up to the station where you can end your journey if you wish, taking the train on up to Kleine Scheidegg or back down to Wengen.

Note: on the entire stretch from the beginning of the gravel road to Wengernalp Hotel you will likely hear booming sounds, which are avalanches coming off the glaciers. Most of them are small and you will hear the noise long after you can see any snowfall. However, occasionally there are larger falls and if you are quick to turn and face the glaciers when you begin to hear the sounds you may be treated to an amazing visual!

To continue the trek on up to Kleine Scheidegg follow the wide path (first gravel, then paved) up the hill, reaching your destination approximately 1 mile and an additional 600 feet of vertical ascent later.

Kleine Scheidegg is the traditional base camp for Eiger mountain climbing ascents. This is also where all the trains going to the Jungfraujoche (pronounced “YOONG-frow-yock”) change so it is swarming with tourists changing trains and buying T-shirts. But don’t be put off by all the touristy-looking stuff – the food here is just fantastic and is your reward for a nice hike. Sit at the long communal tables by the tracks at Restaurant Bahnhof (<http://www.bahnhof-scheidegg.ch/default.asp?itemid=119&lang=e>) and order either the Wurst (sausage) and Rösti (a Swiss national dish that is basically the best hash browns you’ve ever eaten) that are being prepared outdoors or something off of the extensive menu. They have some of the best salads in the country– huge bowls of fresh local vegetables in the green salads and an amazing array of fresh fruits, nuts, and vegetables in the “Half-Pipe Salate”. Other menu choices include hamburgers, the ubiquitous cheese and dried meat plates, Schweinschnitzel (pork schnitzel), and so on. Everything is great except the sauerkraut and something they call “Röstizerria” which is an attempt to make a pizza out of Rösti. Resist that temptation. But do not leave here without having an

Apfelkuchen mit Rahm (apple cake with whipped cream – don't skip the cream!) and, if they have it, the Grande Nussini, which is a cookie that's like a cross between shortbread and biscotti and loaded with hazelnuts, pistachios, and sometimes pecans (you usually have to go inside the restaurant to find one, and consider yourself lucky if they've made any that day). Portions here are enormous and can easily be shared by two people. Like most restaurants, there is an additional charge (usually about 3 CHF) when dishes are shared (except for desserts).

A large herd of very tame goats has taken up residence at Kleine Scheidegg. They have no qualms about walking/standing on the tracks and it's not unusual to see trains stop and the conductors come out to shoo them off. They are also quite the beggars so watch your lunch!

We prefer to take the train back to Wengen since we don't like hiking down. Trains run about every 30 minutes. Another option if you still have energy is to hike up to Männlichen (see below) and return to Wengen by gondola ("Luftseilbahn").

Wengen to Männlichen to Kleine Scheidegg. Although you end up in Kleine Scheidegg again it is well worth it. Männlichen (pronounced "MEHN-leek-en, www.maennlichen.ch) is the peak behind the village. This is rather aggressive and quite steep; about 3300 feet of vertical over less than 3 miles, but the views are breathtaking. The terrain is interesting and varied – some in lush forest, other through fields of wildflowers with open vistas.

Note: if the aggressive Wengen to Männlichen hike isn't your cup of tea, take the gondola ("Luftseilbahn") from the station in the center of Wengen up to the top. It runs every 15 minutes, usually 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, and the trip takes about 7 minutes. From there you can catch the easy trail down to Kleine Scheidegg.

To get to the Männlichen trailhead take the road that runs in front of the Schöneegg Hotel east toward the mountain, past Hotel Berghaus then past Beausite Park Hotel. You will see the trail sign just past the Beausite that indicates a time of 2 hours 50 minutes to the top. Which doesn't sound too bad until you realize it's nearly 3 hours of Stairmaster. Turn left and head out up the trail. Or chicken out and take the gondola. If you've decided to go up under your own power you will quickly come to an intersection with trail signs that point Männlichen in both left and right directions. It doesn't really matter which route you take as within 30 minutes or so the two trails converge. The trail to the right wanders around a bit therefore is flatter. The trail to the left takes you to a marker at the site that indicates where Mendelssohn created his famous pencil drawing of Wengen, complete with a placard replica. Up this route you will be treated to fantastic views of Wengen and the snow-capped peaks beyond. Both of the trails are tagged as Wanderwegs but they are steeper than most. However, once the trails converge you enter a forested area and the trail becomes a Bergweg with some steeper sections and tree roots to navigate. If there has been recent rain you will likely see some of the wildest, most colorful mushrooms you can imagine. Brilliant orange, bright red with white dots, crazy

stuff. After quite some time in the forest you pop out once again and have spectacular views of Lauterbrunnen Valley and Mürren on the opposite shelf.

About an hour and a half into the hike you will come upon the avalanche fences, first the old-fashioned wooden ones, then the new large metal structures. The trail becomes very steep and narrow at this point, winding through (and sometimes over, under, or around) the fences. In a few sections you will be glad for walking sticks to help push yourself up steep steps or will need to pull yourself up by using your hands – and sometimes a bit of both. However, there isn't a great deal of exposure since the fences that keep the snow from falling too quickly also provide some comfort to hikers that may be concerned about coming off the mountain themselves!

After a lot of steep uphill you will finally reach the top, very near the highest peak above the Männlichen gondola station. The views here are unbelievable, with Lauterbrunnen Valley and peaks to the right, the Eiger massif directly in front, and Grindelwald off to the left.

I should probably mention that you will see lots of cows grazing in many areas, but particularly around Männlichen. Although they are huge by US cow standards and tend to stand around on the trails, don't be concerned. They are accustomed to humans and don't cause problems. They like to be petted. Unless they have calves with them then avoid at all costs.

At the top, Berghaus Männlichen (www.maennlichen.ch/berghaus/gastgeber/) has a large self-service cafeteria with indoor and a large outdoor seating area. They have an extensive "BergRestaurant" menu: local cheese plates, dried beef, Rösti, Wurst, Swiss-style hamburgers (no bun), Pomme Frites (french fries), delicious goulash soup ("Gulaschsuppe") plus a soup of the day, house made cakes and tarts. Table service is provided outside at the tables nearest the full service ("Bedienung") indoor restaurant and are well marked as such. The food here is pretty good, but not as good as Kleine Scheidegg so you may want to just stop for a drink here. I recommend the half apple juice ("Apfelsaft" sometimes listed on menus as "Suessemost"), half mineral water, which is served just about everywhere and is very refreshing. Some places will mix it for you, others you need to buy a bottle of each and mix it yourself. Recently, I've started seeing "Apfelschoeler" listed on drink menus. The Ramseier folks that make the Suessemost brand of Apfelsaft have started bottling this half juice/half water mixture and it's very good.

After a rest and refreshment at Männlichen, take the easy trail down to Kleine Scheidegg. (Or, alternatively, simply take the gondola back down to Wengen.) The "Panoramaweg" is about three miles long with a gentle mostly downhill slope, about 500 feet of total descent (signposted at 1 hour 30 minutes). It may be crowded as it is the easiest hike with spectacular views, but it's definitely worth the trip. You will see stunning views of the Eiger, Mönch (pronounced "Mohnk"), and Jungfrau massifs and you will likely see carpets of wildflowers in July and August. You can then take the train back to Wengen from Kleine Scheidegg. Alternatively, if it's a nice day you could take the train up to the

Jungfrauoch from Kleine Scheidegg (see the Excursions section for more). This will take a little more than an hour and you'll want an hour or so at the top. Then, you can take the train back down to Wengen (about 1.5 hours from Jungfrauoch).

Lauterbrunnen to Stechelberg, optional to Mürren. This is another must-do hike as it provides a glorious trip down the entire Lauterbrunnen Valley and beyond. The first segment (Lauterbrunnen to Stechelberg) is an easy, four mile long flat Wanderweg and truly a "trail for everyone". The valley is full of waterfalls – the literature claims 72 but, depending on the time of year, you may see as few as 10. Take the train from Wengen down to Lauterbrunnen, exit left from the train station, walk through town, and directly onto the wide footpath that runs down the Valley. The path is paved about half of the total distance from Lauterbrunnen to Stechelberg then turns into a wide and well-graded dirt and gravel path that parallels the Weiss Lutschine river. Soon after leaving Lauterbrunnen you will pass right by the famous Staubbach Falls. In fact, along the trail there are markers at all of the major falls enroute with interesting details about each.

About 45 minutes into the walk you will see a cut off (to the left) that leads across the Valley to Trümmelbach Falls. This is well worth doing -- these are falls that run through the center of the mountain and it is all very dramatic. Secure footing and railings let you get an up-close look. See "Excursions" section for more information. After touring there, you can either walk on the road in front of the falls down to Stechelberg (continuing south) or, preferably, cut back across the meadow and rejoin the footpath.

Another 30 minutes or so after rejoining the footpath you will come upon the Stechelberg-Schilthornbahn station where you can catch the gondola up to the Schilthorn or the bus back to Lauterbrunnen.

If you wish to continue the walk, I highly recommend heading onward to the Stechelberg Inn, which lies at the end of the Valley and is a great lunch spot. It's usually full of locals and they have a nice patio and an extensive menu with top-notch food and desserts.

Note: this trail is excellent for walkers, families with strollers, and mountain bikers. Once you enter Stechelberg village the path Ys off. Walkers will want to take a right (the more scenic route) to head to Stechelberg Inn. The path narrows but is still very easy and navigable. However, just before reaching the Inn there is a bridge with snow grates that is not navigable by bike or with a stroller (unless one adult carries the child and another carries the stroller). Visitors with wheels simply turn left at the Y (toward "Stechelberg Post") and connect with the local road that takes you directly to the Inn. You can also catch the bus back to Lauterbrunnen at Stechelberg Post station.

After lunch you have several options:

- Take the Post Bus that stops near Stechelberg Inn back to Lauterbrunnen train station then return to Wengen by train. This bus runs twice an hour during high season, once an hour otherwise; check the schedule at the bus stop before lunch so

you don't miss one by 5 minutes! If you aren't using an all-inclusive pass buy tickets when you enter the bus (i.e., for Half Fare Card and Swiss Card holders).

- Walk up to Mürren (see below for more info on Mürren). It's a lovely hike with spectacular views across the valley back towards the Eiger massif and nicely varied terrain. It is a moderately aggressive hike, about 2800 feet of vertical over 5 or so miles. It is shorter but steeper than the hike from Wengen to Kleine Scheidegg therefore a bit more challenging. The first uphill bit from Stechelberg is quite a workout, with 1,000 feet of vertical ascent in a mile or less over well-groomed steps through a forest. After reaching the first large waterfall you get a short break when the trail flattens briefly. Catch your breath then head up the next steep stage to Gimmelwald. Here, the lure of a cold drink on the incredibly scenic patio of Pension Gimmelwald is too much to resist. If you've had enough hiking, hop aboard the gondola up to Mürren. If you're intent on making it to Mürren under your own power, head up following the Wanderweg signs for the final stage which is about another mile and steeper than you want it to be (about 800 feet of ascent). Follow the signs for the Mürren gondola if you want to pop out at the south end of the village, or the signs for Mürren village and train station if you want to emerge mid-village. Walk through the charming village of Mürren to the train station on the opposite end of town, stopping for lunch along the way at either Alpenruh (located by the gondola, so follow those signs on your way up) which features average food but a dining patio with a remarkable view, La Grotte restaurant in mid-village which has the best food in town but no views, or any other spot that takes your fancy. To return to Wengen, take the train to Grütschalp (or walk, it is lovely – see the “Easy Hikes” section for more details), the gondola back down to the Lauterbrunnen train station and the WAB train back up to Wengen.
- Take the gondola up to Mürren. The gondola to Mürren (and on to the Schilthorn) is about ½ mile before Stechelberg; you will have seen it in passing. You can return via the same gondola and take the Post Bus back to Lauterbrunnen. A better choice is to walk through Mürren to the train station and take the train (or walk) to Grütschalp, then switch to the gondola that goes down to the Lauterbrunnen train station, then train it up the hill back to Wengen.

Schynige Platte to First. This is an all day event, but, in my opinion, is perhaps the most spectacular day hike in all of Switzerland. However, you want to do this on a reasonably clear day or you will not be able to take advantage of the views. Leave Wengen early, like at 8:00 am or before, and take the train down the hill to Wilderswil (via Lauterbrunnen) which is the last stop before Interlaken Ost. There you will catch the Schynige Platte Bahn which is a 100 year old cog train that takes you up about 5000 feet of vertical to Schynige Platte (pronounced “Shin-nig-geh PLAH-teh”). The views of Interlaken and the lakes on the way up are breathtaking. The ride takes about an hour, the entire trip to SP from Wengen takes about two hours. There is a large restaurant and inn at SP and the views back toward the Eiger massif are different than any you will have

seen and are fantastic. Be sure to walk around the west corner of the grounds for a wonderful view of the lakes. There is a cool video on You Tube of the views from the restaurant viewing platform at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vK94B9nsdic>.

Follow the trail signs to First (pronounced “Feerst”). The trail covers wonderfully varied terrain with frequent spectacular views of the lakes to your north and the mountains to your south. About 1/3 of the way into the walk there is a stunning large meadow full of grazing sheep and goats. You then enter a rocky terrain area (the footing is stable but requires attention; there is no exposure) with spectacular views of the hanging meadow retreating below you. There is a quaint Berghotel (mountain hotel), the Weberhütte, about 2/3 of the way through the trip which is a grand place to stop for snacks and a refill of liquids. And by all means don’t miss the Faulhorn, about 45 minutes further on atop a rise (you can’t miss it). Built in 1832, it is the oldest Berghotel and restaurant in Switzerland. This is a good lunch spot. It’s all downhill from there to First with gorgeous carpets of wildflowers, a spectacular view of the Wetterhorn peak reflected in the small Bachalpsee, and occasional sightings of marmots. There is more information about this hike along with pictures at <http://activityworkshop.net/hiking/switzerland/faulhorn.html>.

All in, the hike has a total ascent of about 3,200 feet/980 meters over a span of about 10 miles (16 km) or so. Allow 6+ hours just for the hike (posted time is 6 hours 10 minutes), excluding breaks and lunch.

At First you can take the ski gondolas down to Grindelwald. This is a stunning ride, but **make sure you get there by 5:00 pm** (as late as 6:30 during peak summer season) because that’s when the last gondola heads down the hill. Otherwise, you face a descent of 3,000 vertical feet on foot. The ride down takes about 30 minutes and, being a ski lift, runs continuously. See the First ski gondola timetable at <http://www.jungfrau.ch/tourismus/reiseinfos/fahrplan/grindelwald/>.

Once you reach Grindelwald turn left out of the gondola station then turn right on the main street. Walk through town (which is somewhat interesting, but too touristy and too many cars for my taste) to the train station on the opposite end of the village. Trains run back to Lauterbrunnen about every 20 minutes, you will need to switch at Zweilütschinen. (If you’ve arrived at the station just after a train has departed, there’s a restaurant with a patio one block before the station where you can get a drink and watch the world go by.) The total train trip from Grindelwald back to Lauterbrunnen then up to Wengen takes about 45 minutes. If you leave Wengen at 8:00 am you should be back around 6:00 pm, ready for a Schnitzel and Röstli or some Pomme Frites! This sounds like a long day – which it is – but I’ve frequently seen locals in their 80s on this hike so it’s not as aggressive as it may sound.

Note: you can, of course, do this hike in reverse – starting at First and walking to Schynige Platte. In this direction, most of the ascent comes between First and the Faulhorn with the remainder of the hike (the most distance) being primarily downhill. Although this may sound attractive, it is a LOT of downhill and the trail surface requires

constant attention, making the descent rather tedious. Everyone I've encountered (myself included) that has hiked this direction prefers the Schynige Platte to First direction.

Eiger Trail. This is a lovely hike under the imposing North Face of the Eiger. It's approximately 2400 ft of vertical over 5 miles. If you like to hike up (rather than down) take the train from Wengen to Alpiglen via Kleine Scheidegg. The trail starts at the Alpiglen train station. (*Note: Alpiglen is a request-only stop, press the green button by the train doors labeled "Nächster Halt" to make the request.*) There are a series of steep switchbacks up the mountain where probably 60% of the total ascent occurs. You then reach just over 7,000 ft and begin a gradual ascent across an area just under the North Face. The trail is well outside of rockfall areas, though, so don't be concerned. You will pass by a number of gorgeous waterfalls enroute, during most years you will need to cross some occasional very shallow water that crosses the trail downstream from these. This is also a good hike if the weather turns hot – it stays cool due to the high altitude and proximity to the mountain. If the weather is cool, you will definitely want to put on warm clothes topped by a windbreaker once you enter the shade of the Eiger. Take gloves, too. If you're lucky, you'll get to see some "face jumpers". This seems to be Switzerland's latest extreme sport. Jumpers are dropped at the top of the Eiger by helicopter, fling themselves off, and free fall until pulling the cords on their parasails (not parachutes) at the very last minute. It's all quite dramatic. You'll be surprised by how much noise a free-falling human makes cutting through the air – even when they're not screaming!

The hike ends at the Eigergletscher station. The food at the restaurant here is very good and, if you're lucky enough to get a seat out on the veranda, you'll have a stunning, up close view of the glaciers and mountaintops. From here, you can take the short walk down to Kleine Scheidegg and catch the train to Wengen, or – easier yet – take the Jungfraubahn train down to Kleine Scheidegg (no ticket office at Eigergletscher, buy tickets once on-board), change to the WAB train there and return to Wengen.

Lauterbrunnen to Lohornhütte, return via Grütschalp. This is another stunning hike that is pretty much an all day deal. Take the train down to Lauterbrunnen, then walk up to Isenfluh (pronounced EESen-flu). The trail will be marked very near the station or just ask. This is about 1000 feet of vertical and 3 or so miles via an unused road that got wiped out in a rockfall. There are a couple of nice waterfalls and the remains of the rockfall are quite impressive. There's one nice restaurant/inn in Isenfluh where you can stop for lunch if you wish (it's obvious).

From Isenfluh, walk up to Sulwald for some stunning views. This is fairly steep, about 1500 feet of vertical over a couple of miles. If you want to opt out of this section, there's a small lift that runs up from Isenfluh (it's pretty obvious, but ask at the restaurant if you miss it). There is a charming café, the Sulwald Stübli, at the top of the trail/lift serving wurst, sandwiches, and such at outdoor tables. I recommend this be your lunch (or at least a drink) stop as the views are simply breathtaking. (There's a shot of the Stübli at <http://www.mylauterbrunnen.com/en.cfm/gastronomie/offer-GastroLT-Gastronomie->

[325743.html](#) but it doesn't show the best views!) The proprietor spent several years working at Squaw Valley in Lake Tahoe, California so speaks good English. She makes a marvelous and unusual hazelnut cake ("Haesslikuchen") – don't miss this if she has it available.

After lunch, head up the trail to the Lobhornhütte (www.lobhornhuetten.ch), which is about another 1400 feet and about 2 miles. The hut is primitive, but the soups are good and it's a view spot well worth seeing. It is very popular with the locals and with other tourists from Europe, so you will likely be surprised by how crowded this "out of the way" spot actually is, particularly since you rarely see many others on the trail. How did all these people get there? (There is a more detailed description of this portion of the hike along with pictures at http://www.walkingswitzerland.com/walks/walk_descrip/8029/)

After a rest at the Lobhornhütte, head down the hill to Grütschalp. Again, great scenery, but different views. This section is nearly all down hill and takes about 2 – 3 hours as the terrain is quite steep in places and the trail surface requires constant attention (rocks, roots, and such) at least half of the way. There is no exposure so nothing to be concerned about, it's just a bit tedious. (However, I don't recommend this route the day after a heavy rain as it will be very muddy – if you end up going to Lobhornhütte on such a day, simply retrace your steps to return to Wengen.) You'll end up at the train station in Grütschalp, where you can catch the gondola down to Lauterbrunnen then return to Wengen on the WAB. (Note: if you've started late, take longer to walk routes than the signposted times, or lingered at Lobhornhütte, be aware that the last train from Grütschalp down to Lauterbrunnen is at 8:22 pm.) Or, if you're still ready for more walking, take the stunningly gorgeous 1 mile (flat) walk from Grütschalp to Mürrren and take the gondola down from there to Stechelberg. Take the bus back to Lauterbrunnen (or walk) and train back up the hill to Wengen.

Meiringen to Grosse Scheidegg. This is yet another stunning all day hike with varied terrain and majestic views of the Wetterhorn and other peaks. First, take the train from Wengen to Meiringen. You should plan to arrive at Meiringen no later than 10:00 am; ask the rail station staff at Wengen to print you a timetable so you can make convenient changes at Lauterbrunnen and Interlaken.

Walk through Meiringen to the cable train up to Reichenbach Falls. (It's fairly well marked but train station staff can also direct you.) Once you arrive at the cable train, you can take it up to the Falls (which cuts about 900 feet of vertical out of the hike) but bear in mind that the staff breaks for lunch for 2 hours beginning sometime between 11:30 and 12:00 noon during low season (usually May 5 – June 30, Sept 1 – Oct 14). More information about the lift and operating hours is at <http://www.grimswelt.ch/grimswelt-experience/transport-lifts/reichenbach-funicular/> Alternatively, take the trail just behind the café and walk up. It is a lovely, fairly steep walk largely through a forested area. The Falls are quite dramatic and achieved fame as the spot where Sherlock Holmes allegedly met his fate. See more at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reichenbach_Falls

Note: Another alternative that cuts time and vertical out of the journey (but misses Reichenbach Falls) is to take the bus (right at the train station) to Zwirgi (direction Rosenloui/Schwarzwaldalp). This cuts about 1100 feet of total vertical ascent vs walking up the trail from under the Reichenbach Falls cable train.

If you've taken the lift up, a series of steep (but very wide and stable) steps will take you up to Restaurant Zwirgi. You will also pass this way if you've walked up and it's a good place to stop for a drink. Continue on, following the signs to Rosenloui/Grosse Scheidegg. You'll have a bit more climbing to do before you come upon a large hanging valley, the Reichenbachtal, with the gorgeous Aar river running through it. The path follows the river for over a mile and you'll have spectacular views of the Wetterhorn and other peaks. The flat terrain on this section is also a welcome relief!

DO NOT miss stopping for lunch at Rosenloui, a beautiful old hotel with a lovely patio. (See a photo at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/ogil/2688599684/>.) The food here is truly exceptional and presented beautifully. Plan on at least an hour for lunch and try not to eat too much, although that's a difficult thing to do here!

After lunch, press on toward Grosse Scheidegg. There is more up and down with about 500 feet of climbing required at the very end (when it is least welcome). However, the views continue to be marvelous and the scene from atop Grosse Scheidegg is well worth your effort. Stop at the inn here for a drink (if you've eaten lunch at Rosenloui you won't be hungry!), then take the Post Bus down to Grindelwald train station. Take the train back to Wengen via Zweilütschinen (where you will switch) and Lauterbrunnen.

This is a fairly aggressive hike covering about 4400 feet of vertical (or 3300 to 3500 feet if you've taken the bus to Zwirgi or the lift up the Falls, respectively) and ten miles. A quick pace will yield walking time of 5 – 6 hours without public transport assists, 3.5 – 4 hours with. Of course, this exclude travel, meals, breaks and gawking stops. All the travel getting to and from the trail makes it sound like a big hassle, but the connections are really quite easy and the hike is definitely worth it.

This is also a great hike if you have a group of people with varying levels of hiking ability. After you reach the Restaurant Zwirgi atop the Falls, the trail intersects a road serviced by Post Bus at four different spots. Less aggressive hikers can take the lift to the top of the Falls, take the steps up, catch the bus at Restaurant Zwirgi, get off at the next stop, then walk to Rosenloui (this is the flattest section of the hike). After lunch, walk from Rosenloui to Schwarzwaldalp (another relatively flat section), then catch the Post Bus from Schwarzwaldalp to Grosse Scheidegg.

Easy Hikes

There are a number of glorious hikes for those that like a more leisurely pace – or for the real go-getters that need a bit of a break! All of these trails are Wanderwegs.

Männlichen to Kleine Scheidegg. This walk (the “Panoramaweg”), described in some detail in the “Wengen to Männlichen to Kleine Scheidegg” hike listed in the previous section, is likely the most stunning of the easy hikes. It is about 3 miles long with a gentle downhill descent on a very wide path. The views of the Eiger, Mönch, and Jungfrau are breathtaking and visitors in July and August will likely see carpets of wildflowers. To start the hike, take the gondola (“Luftseilbahn”) from the center of Wengen up to Männlichen. The gondola runs every 15 minutes and the trip to the top takes about 7 minutes. From there, catch the trail down to Kleine Scheidegg, and don’t miss the Apfelkuchen mit Rahm (apple cake with cream) once you get there! Take the train from Kleine Scheidegg back down to Wengen.

Grütschalp to Mürren. A trip to the village of Mürren is highly recommended and the walk there from the gondola station at Grütschalp is breathtaking. Approximately 3 miles on flat terrain, this walk provides a spectacular view of the Eiger massif, but from a different perspective than the Männlichen to Kleine Scheidegg walk. To begin, take the train down the hill to Lauterbrunnen, then cross the street (or use the underground walk) to the gondola to Grütschalp/Mürren. The trail to Mürren begins at the Grütschalp station where you depart the gondola. See suggestions for Mürren restaurants in the “Excursions Around Wengen” section, “Mürren and the Schilthorn” description.

Lauterbrunnen to Stechelberg. This highly recommended walk, about 4 miles in length and over flat terrain, is described in the previous section under “Lauterbrunnen to Stechelberg, optional to Mürren”.

Lauterbrunnen to Wilderswil, optional to Interlaken. This is a lovely walk that parallels the river from Lauterbrunnen to Wilderswil and also covers some beautiful forested areas. This path is in two stages, both approximately 3 miles in length and on flat (or nearly) terrain. The first stage, Lauterbrunnen to Zweilütschinen, starts right at the Lauterbrunnen train station. Follow the signs to the Parking Garage and WCs east of the station and you’ll come upon the trail signs direction Zweilütschinen and Wilderswil. At the very beginning, there is a short descent over a path that can be a bit muddy and a wee bit steep but quickly puts you out onto a very wide, well-maintained Wanderweg. This stage of the trail follows directly along the river through a lovely forest; you will also see a fish ladder about half way on.

Once you reach Zweilütschinen you can catch the train back to Wengen or press on for the second stage: Zweilütschinen to Wilderswil. (Alternatively, of course, you can take the train from Lauterbrunnen to Zweilütschinen and pick up the trail here.) The local train companies have done visitors yet another favor by constructing a lovely “Nature und Bahn” (loosely translated: “Nature and Railway”) path on this stretch. Cross the train tracks (heading east) at the north end of the Zweilütschinen station and look for the signs direction Wilderswil and Nature und Bahn trail. This stage is also about 3 miles in length and passes through more forested area. One of the highlights of this segment is the charming village of Gsteigwiler, which sits up on a small knoll so there is a very gradual incline up to reach it. The village celebrated their 800th anniversary in 1996 and features

fabulous gardens, trees laden with pears and apples, and some beautiful old chalets with complex woodwork trim. Once you pass through, continue on the Nature and Bahn trail – there are a number of other paths that also lead to Wilderswil, but the Nature und Bahn trail is the most easily navigated. Within half a mile or so you will come upon a covered bridge which marks the end of the trail and time for lunch! One good pick is Restaurant Steinbock (closed Mondays) directly at the east side of the bridge (the side you’re still on). They have a few tables out by the river and a nice indoor restaurant. This is our favorite pick. If Steinbock doesn’t suit, cross the bridge to a small square and veer off slightly to the right to Restaurant Hirschen (closed Tuesdays). Good food and a charming traditional interior are the highlights here. If you press on to the train station you will see Restaurant Christina, directly across (west) from the station. Christina offers a quite unusual combination – Swiss German and Korean food! Most of the more elaborate Korean hot plate dishes are only available after 5:00 pm. The Swiss German food is remarkably good, especially the Röstli and the Goulash Soup (“Gulaschsuppe”). The village of Wilderswil is another half mile or so west of the train station and also has very good restaurants. You can catch the train at Wilderswil back to Wengen.

If you’re ready for more walking, pick up the trail to Interlaken across the street from the Wilderswil train station. A short walk of 45 minutes will put you in town, where you can browse the shops, restaurants, and catch the train back to Wengen.

North Face and Flower Trails. There are three glorious trails that are accessed via the Allmendhubel lift from Mürren. All are easy, suitable for families (although not pram/stroller-friendly), and feature stunning views of the Eiger, Mönch, and Jungfrau peaks, weather willing. The Flower Trail is a simple 20-minute loop featuring, well, wildflowers during late June – early September blooming season. The Northface Trail (not to be confused with the Eiger Trail between Alpiglen and Eigergletscher Station) covers more terrain, has remarkable views, and can be completed in about 2.5 hours. There is also a Children’s Adventure Trail, duration approximately one hour. See <http://schilthorn.twwt.com/hiking-region/theme-trails/index.html?l=cn> for more information. Information about the Allmendhubel lift, including operating dates (important as the lift closes for two months for maintenance in spring and fall) and tariffs found here <http://www.schilthorn.ch/en/timetable-tariffs/timetable/>

First to Bachalpsee. This is one of the iconic hikes in the region, with stunning scenery both out and back on a (mostly) flat trail of 2.5 miles in length (each way). The lift up to First is amazing and there is a lot to do in the area. See “Things To Do With Kids” section for more information.

MULTI-DAY HIKES

Switzerland is a perfect place to do multi-day hikes – think of it like back-packing without the need to drag along sleeping bags, tents, stoves, and food. You can hike from village to village with a large day pack, have great meals, take a shower, and sleep in a bed with a down comforter. What a way to go! (Disclaimer: all of these wonderful

attributes apply only if you are staying in hotels or inns; hut hikers will find accommodations far more rustic.)

We usually only carry one change of clothes for the evening, rain gear (always), water, and one lunch that can last a few days in a pack (invariably it's the third or fourth day when you can't find food on the trail). We wash out our hiking clothes in the sink at night thereby saving lots of weight and space in packs.

You will want trail maps for some of these hikes. The best place to start is in the tourist office in the center of the village. If you want more detailed maps than those they provide they can direct you to where to buy them in town.

Wengen to Kandersteg

Wengen to Lauterbrunnen to Mürren. Take the train (or walk) down to Lauterbrunnen from Wengen, then hike to Mürren as described in the "Lauterbrunnen to Stechelberg optional Mürren" entry in the "Easy Hikes" section. In Mürren I'd recommend staying at either:

Hotel Blumental (the hotel connected to La Grotte restaurant)
Ralph & Heidi von Allmen
www.muerrren.ch/blumental
blumental@muerrren.ch
Tel: 011-41-88-855-18-26
Fax: 011-41-33-855-36-86

or

Hotel Alpenrüh
Willem Thomas + Jasmin
CH-3825 Mürren
alpenruh@schilthorn.ch
www.alpenruh-muerrren.ch
Tel: 011-41-33 856 88 00
Fax: 011-41-33 856 88 88

Mürren to Griesalp via Sefinenfürgge Pass, a classic Swiss mountain pass with stunning Alpine scenery. Take a lunch since you will encounter no food on the trail once you pass the Rotstockhut fairly early in the hike. Now things get more serious, with 10 miles, just over 3000 feet of vertical (both up and down – 6,000 total, there are no lifts) and some exposure. There is loose skree on the very steep tops, both on the ascent and particularly on the descent where the trail is very narrow and a steep drop off. There is a solid cable to hold on to on the North (descent) side, which is helpful. (The steps that also helped a bit were wiped out in a storm last winter, they may or may not have been rebuilt.) The Pass itself is a quite narrow flat spot atop the steep slopes. If you are inclined to vertigo or

have any fear of heights this is not a hike for you. If you are an experienced alpine hiker without these concerns, the rewards are positively stunning views and a good sense of accomplishment when you arrive in Griesalp. A wonderful place to stay is the Berggasthaus Golderli. Golderli provides classic Swiss Berghotel style accommodations (albeit upscale compared to most Berghotels) with bunk beds, shared baths, and a set menu served family style to all guests at dinner. They have a lovely patio where they will gladly serve up cheese plates and beer in the late afternoon to starving hikers. The set menu dinner meal is always quite good (what wouldn't be after that walk!) and they have a wine list. The website is all in German, but you can use Google translate to translate it (and you have to click on the picture on the home page to enter the site). They are extraordinarily accommodating and the place is usually full of locals passing through (on foot, of course).

Berggasthaus Golderli
Alexandra and Robert Schnitzler
Tel.: 011-33-676-21-92
Fax: 011-33-676-20-90
www.golderli.ch
mail@golderli.ch

If Golderli is full or you want something more upscale, another choice in the area is “Griesalp Hotelzentrum”, a large complex offering accommodations ranging from dormitory/shared bath to luxury suites. Although the website has an “English” button, it is all in German. Use Google “Translate this Page” button to translate.

Griesalp Hotelzentrum
CH-3723 Kiental
mail@griesalp-hotelzentrum.ch
www.griesalp-hotelzentrum.ch
Tel: 011-33-676-71-71
Fax: 011-33-676-71-72

There is bus service that runs once every two hours from Griesalp to Kiental and on to the train station at Reichenbach. You can search connections at www.sbb.ch or visit <http://www.griesalp.ch/de/infos/index.html> to access a PDF of the timetable. The Griesalp bus stop is at the Hotelzentrum complex, which is a short walk from the Golderli. The bus ride is quite dramatic as it is the steepest bus route in all of Europe. Mercedes has built specially articulated busses that make it possible to drive the very twisty, narrow roads in the area. See a picture at <http://www.griesalp.ch/de/infos/index.html>.

Griesalp to Kandersteg via Höhturli pass. This is the most aggressive hiking stretch, with 13 miles and 4000 ft of vertical ascent (and descent) with even more exposure than the trail over Sefinenfürgge. However, it is the most spectacular day of the trip as you pass close to the famous Blumlisalp massif and see fabulous alpine lakes. Unlike

Sefinenfürrgge, there's a hut at the top of the pass with food and refreshments. Downhill from the Pass lies Kandersteg, a lovely little village in the Kiental valley region. The best place to stay in Kandersteg is a positively charming inn just on the outside of town called Landgasthof Ruedihus (pronounced ROY-dee-hoos). It was built in the 1700s but has modern amenities. The restaurant there has been exceptionally good, although recent reports say it has gone downhill a bit. There are many other restaurants within walking distance in the town.

Landgasthof Ruedihus
Familie Rene and Anne Maeder
3718 Kandersteg
www.doldenhorn-ruedihus.ch
doldenhorn@compuserve.com
Tel: 011-41-33-675-81-81
Fax: 011-41-33-675-81-85

If you're tired of quaint and are ready for a 4 star sort of hotel, the Waldhotel Doldenhorn is just across the road and is owned by the same family.

In September 2009 we stayed at the Hotel Bernerhof and found the accomodations, service and food to be very good.

Hotel Bernerhof Kandersteg
Fam. G. & C. Lehmann
Aeussere Hauptstrasse
CH-3718 Kandersteg
hotel@bernerhof.ch
www.bernerhof.ch
Tel: 011-41-33-675-88-75
Fax: 011-41-33-675-88-77

Kandersteg is home to a number of other good hotels in all price ranges, see www.kandersteg.ch for more information.

Kandersteg to Gstaad

Another lovely 4 day hike, to tack on to the previous (after a day or two lay-over in Kandersteg) or to do as a stand-alone venture.

Kandersteg to Adelboden via the Bunderchrinde pass. This is another spectacular hike. It's about 3,500 to 4,000 feet of vertical over 12 or so miles. The Lonely Planet guide to Swiss hikes describes this route very well; I suggest you pick that up so I won't repeat their trail comments here. Adelboden is a charming little town with cobblestone streets although it is somewhat touristy. There is no train service to town, only bus and auto. There's an outstanding Italian restaurant I highly recommend, Trattoria Alfredo at 3715

Dorfstrasse. A good place to stay here is the Hotel Bären which you can book through the Adelboden site at www.adelboden.ch

Adelboden to Lenk via the Hahnenmoospass. This is a relatively short (4 hours) hike through rolling hills and over another of the famous passes. The Berghotel Hahnenmoospass is a great place for lunch. This hike is described in the Lonely Planet guide as well.

Lenk to Lauenen via the Trüttlisbergpass. Another lovely hike also described in Lonely Planet. The village of Lauenen is really charming, a throwback to the old days of small working villages. The best place to stay is Hotel Geltenhorn. It's a charming old house; most of the rooms are shared bath. The restaurant is very good and there is a lovely little beer garden. You can see a picture at www.lauenen.ch/de/tourismus/hotels/?action=showunternehmen&unternehmen_id=8098

Hotel Geltenhorn
Peter and Heidi Zumbrunen
3782 Lauenen
geltenhorn@bluewin.ch
Tel: 011-41-33-765-30-22
Fax: 011-41-33-765-32-31

Lauenen is only a short distance from **Gstaad**. You can walk it or catch the bus in front of the Geltenhorn which runs about once an hour. Gstaad is much like Vail – very upscale shops, restaurants, and hotels. You can get very good train connections from here to most anywhere.

EXCURSIONS AROUND WENGEN

There are countless excursions but, in my opinion, these are the best. You can view all the events happening in any region, sorted by date, at <http://www.myswitzerland.com/en-us/service-updates/events.html>

Lakes. There are two large, gorgeous lakes on either side of Interlaken (hence the town's name): the Thunersee (TOOner-zay) and Brienersee (BREENTSer-zay). Taking one of the many scheduled ferry rides from town to town is a delightful way to spend half a day or longer. Catch the Brienersee ferry just behind the train station at Interlaken Ost. (We find this a more interesting, picturesque trip than the Thunersee trip. Thunersee ferries depart from behind the train station at Interlaken West.) Your discount travel card works on these, too. Second class is fine, but first class is divine during peak season as the boats can get pretty crowded at times. If you have a second class discount travel card you can

pay a small fee to upgrade to first class for the boat trip. There is nice food and drink service on board all of the boats.

You will want to do some planning for this as boat departures can be as infrequent as once every two hours and you don't want to arrive at the boat dock just after one has left! Ask the staff at the Wengen train station to put together a timetable for you with convenient connections; they can also sell you the boat tickets there. You may want to make these arrangements the day before so you have the most flexibility. If possible, take one of the restored old ones, like the Blumlisalp on the Brienersee. You can read all about the boats, ports of call, and hikes from various different stops at www.bls.ch/e/schiffahrt/schiffahrt.php. The 2017 timetable for Lakes Thun and Brienz are at <https://www.bls.ch/-/media/bls/pdf/fahrplaene/schiff/fahrplan-2017.pdf?la=en&vs=1>

If you are looking for a shorter (1.5 hours) boat ride, buy a boat ticket from Interlaken to Brienz. Brienz is the center for woodworking and has some fabulous homes well worth seeing on a stroll through town. An "add-on" to this journey is a trip up the Rothorn (see below). Return from Brienz to Interlaken via train (the Brienz train station is right at the boat dock), then back to Wengen.

If you want to spend more time on and about the lake, buy a roundtrip boat ticket at Interlaken. You can make as many stops as you like and stroll through several of the villages along the shore. Just be sure to check when boats are departing so you can time your explorations (you can get on any boat, not just the one that you started on.) The entire round trip without stopping at any of the ports of call takes about 3.5 hours. As described in the "Easy Hikes" section, there is also a very nice hiking trail called the "Planetenweg" that runs along the north side of the Brienersee, which is another way to do the "village to village" jaunt (you can get on a boat at any of the villages). Access it from the Interlaken Ost train station by walking toward Interlaken and crossing over the river at the first bridge you come to (just before the Hotel Beau Rivage). The trailhead is on the north end of the bridge.

There are a number of swimming opportunities in and around both lakes. More information at <http://www.interlaken.ch/en/activities-excursions-adventure-festivals/summer-sports-and-adventure/bathing-weather-swimming-interlaken.html>

Ballenberg Open Air Museum. This is a wonderful, mostly outdoor museum that features more than one hundred centuries-old buildings from all over Switzerland, 250 farmyard animals, traditional old-time gardens and fields, demonstrations of local crafts and many special events that create a vivid impression of rural life in days gone by. The Museum (if you can call it that, it's fun and not stuffy) is divided into cantonal sections so you can get a feel for the different regions of Switzerland. It's almost like a giant petting zoo as well with chickens, roosters, and goats roaming around pretty much everywhere but mostly concentrated around the regional cafes, begging for bites. (Speaking of the "regional" cafes, I highly recommend lunch at the café in the Ticino

section. Stunning risotto among other delicious dishes.) Pigs, cows, and rabbits in fenced areas or pens that love to be petted. There is even a very small dairy operation where you can see cheese being made (not available on Mondays) and buy some to take with you. Kids of all ages will enjoy this outing! It's really a great day, plan on at least 4 hours.

There are two ways to get there. You may want to go using one method and come back using the other.

1. Take the train from Wengen to Interlaken, then take a ferry from Interlaken to Brienz. (See the "Lakes" section for information about the ferries). At Brienz, take either the bus to the museum or hop on the train for one stop from Brienz to Brienzwiler. (The bus and train stations are right next to the Brienz boat dock). Brienzwiler is directly across the street from the east entrance to the museum, the bus will delivery you to the west entrance. This option sounds a bit complicated but it's really not at all and it is great fun to take the boat!
2. Take the train from Wengen to Brienzwiler, enter through the east entrance to the museum (which is just across the street from the train station).

To return, you can take the train from Brienzwiler back to Wengen or take the bus from Brienzwiler east entrance or the west entrance back to Brienz.

Highly suggest you buy the entire package at Wengen station where you can often get a special deal. Transport to and from Ballenberg plus entrance for 26 CHF per adult (with Swiss Card or Half Fare Card). Given that museum entrance alone is 22 CHF per adult this is a great deal. Read more about Ballenberg at <http://www.ballenberg.ch/en/Welcome>

Jüngfrauoch. This is an expensive train fare at 166 CHF (May 2013) round trip from Wengen, but a Half Fare or Swiss Card cuts that in half. There are reductions (typically 25%) with other Passes as well. There is an excellent Trip Advisor post explaining the rather "byzantine" structure of discounts available at http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowTopic-g188082-i7944-k6459116-Discounts_for_Jungfrauoch_trains-Jungfrau_Region_Bernese_Oberland.html#49217086

Although expensive, it is worth doing if for no other reason than to witness the engineering miracle of this train. The Jüngfrauoch is the highest train station in all of Europe at 3,454 meters. Take the train from Wengen to Kleine Scheidegg where you connect with the Jüngfraubahn. The train burrows through the Jüngfrau, with a stop at two "windows" so you can see out of the mountain. Once on top, you'll see the year round snow (and some not-very-good skiing) atop the glaciers and there are all sorts of touristy things like an ice palace, multiple restaurants, and so on. The best outing up top is the walk out to Monchshütte, which takes about 1 – 1.5 hours each way and gives you a flat walk in the snow atop the permanent glacier.

Total travel time from Wengen to Jungfrauoch is approximately 1.5 hours each way. The restaurants are not very good; I suggest you stop for lunch in Kleine Scheidegg on the way up or pack a picnic. On a clear day you can pretty much see forever up here.

However, I wouldn't recommend doing it if it is raining or foggy because you won't be able to see anything from the top. There's a live webcam feed at the train station in Wengen so you can see what the weather is like on top before you go. You should always plan to go up in the morning as afternoon clouds often come in and obscure the view.

Read more about the Jungfrauoch at

<http://www.jungfraubahn.ch/en/DesktopDefault.aspx>

Many have asked questions about the dangers of the low levels of oxygen at high altitudes. You can read the medical tips about a Jungfrauoch excursion at <http://www.jungfrau.ch/en/tourism/travel-information/medizinische-tipps>. (Use Google Translate to translate the document from German.) Those with serious heart or lung conditions, or pregnant women should not make the Jungfrauoch ascent. Those with less serious conditions but concerns about low oxygen levels can buy small portable oxygen canisters at the Wengen pharmacy ("Wengen Apotheke", next to the Hotel Schöneegg, a 4 minute walk from the train station). 2 and 5 liter containers must be ordered one day in advance, 8 liter containers are available at the pharmacy. The phone number there is 41 (0) 33 855 1246.

Mürren and the Schilthorn. Mürren is like a sister village to Wengen. It sits on a shelf opposite Wengen, about half way up from the valley floor. (You will be able to see Mürren from Wengen). Like Wengen, it is also car free and is well worth a visit. To get there, take the train from Wengen to Lauterbrunnen, then cross the street (or use the under-street tunnel) to get to the Mürren gondola. Once you get to Grütschalp at the top of the gondola you will switch to a regular train for the last leg of the journey to Mürren. Or, better yet, get off at the station and cross the tracks to the footpath leading to Mürren. (Note: this is the same as the Grütschalp to Mürren walk mentioned in previous sections.) It is about a three mile walk and is virtually flat. The views are fantastic, whether you are walking it or riding. The entire train/lift trip from Wengen to Mürren should take about 45 minutes. Add an hour if you choose to hike to Mürren from the train stop in Grütschalp.

Walk through the town, which has some very old structures and is absolutely charming. It takes about 15 to 20 minutes to get from one end to the other. There are two great spots for lunch. One is Restaurant La Grotte, about in the middle of town. They have a quite varied menu and the restaurant (and patio) are traditional and quaint, but there isn't a view. However, the food is the best in town and the waiter, who has been there for 23 years, can be a hoot if he's in the mood to entertain. Another option is the Alpenrüh, which is on the far end of town just before the gondola up to the Schilthorn. This is a newer hotel/restaurant done in traditional style, has a great view from the dining patio, and the food is quite good. They have the best fruit tarts in this part of the country but, interestingly, they never put them on the menu. You have to ask. All the "insiders" know about it. Strange marketing. . .

After lunch catch the gondola up to the Schilthorn (www.schilthorn.ch/en). The Schilthorn provides another bird's eye view of the Alps, but from a different and wider vantage point than the one at the Jungfrauoch and I find the views even more

compelling. It's also less expensive at about CHF 70 full fare round trip from Mürren to Schilthorn and discount cards apply. The ride takes about 20 minutes. The big attraction on top is a revolving restaurant (Piz Gloria) that provides 360 degree panoramas of this part of Switzerland. There are labeled etchings in the base of the windows so you can tell what you are seeing. The food here is lousy, so have breakfast or lunch in Mürren before you go up. The beer, however, is drinkable. Plan on spending one hour here, which is one entire revolution of the restaurant. This structure was the filming site for much of "Her Majesty's Secret Service" starring James Bond, so you'll see lots of movie trinkets in the gift shop. You can see a Schilthorn gondola timetable with self-selected date ranges at <http://fahrplan.sbb.ch/bin/bhftafel.exe/dn?>.

Rothornbahn. This is another one for train fans. The Rothornbahn is an antique steam-powered engine – the last in the country – and climbs up about 7000 feet from Lake Brienze to the Rothorn (pronounced "ROAT-horn"). On the way up, the views of Lake Brienz and the entire Interlaken area are simply stunning. And, as always, there's a large restaurant up top. This is a good choice for travelers with children as this attraction caters to families. To get there, take the train from Wengen to Interlaken Ost, then follow the boat signs to the Brienersee ferries, which dock just behind the train station. Take one to Brienz, then cross the street to the Rothornbahn station. To return to Wengen, either retrace your steps or, if the weather has come up, you can take the train back from Brienz. There are some hiking trails around the top of the Rothorn as well so you can make a whole day of it. If you're feeling really sporty, hike up and take the train down. It's a haul, though! More info at www.brienz-rothorn-bahn.ch/en.html.

Trümmelbach Falls. Located in Lauterbrunnen Valley mid-way between Lauterbrunnen and Stechelberg, the Trümmelbach Falls are a stunning site. It is a series of 10 waterfalls in a cave-like environment, hidden inside a mountain. It's a natural UNESCO World heritage site, and rightly so. Melt water flowing down from the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau form a powerful raging torrent that carries 20,000 liters of water per second through the caves. The torrent carved its way through solid rock and debris over thousands of years and sculpted elegant and impressive shaped of rock formations. The result is spectacular and the thunder from crashing waters deafening. You will need shoes with good soles as the ground is slippery from spray and, yes, you will get a little damp! Entry fees are 11 CHF adults, 4 CHF children, cash only. See more information at <http://www.swiss-switzerland.com/trummelbach-falls.html#Ug5IZmR4ZYI>

Helicopter Tours. See the Jungfrau region from an entirely new perspective, the air! Air Glaciers, operating out of Lauterbrunnen, offers a variety of helicopter tours ranging from a quick 13 minute spin to a 70 minute trip that includes Jungfrau region, Matterhorn, and a glacier landing (although pricing of the latter is not for the faint of heart at 3,350 CHF pp). See more at <http://www.air-glaciers.ch/lauterbrunnen/index.php/de/passagierfluege>

Chocolate Show in Interlaken. No reason to go all the way to Montreux for the chocolate train, just swing by the Grand Restaurant Schuh in Interlaken for some demonstrations and hands-on fun! Daily at 5:00 pm. <http://www.interlaken.ch/en/the-chocolate-show-interlaken.html> and <http://www.schuh-interlaken.ch/en/content/chocolatier-schokoladen-show>

First Gondola and more. See information in “Things to Do With Kids” section.

THINGS TO DO WITH KIDS

The Bernese Oberland, and Wengen in particular, is very family-friendly. Following are a few suggestions for things to do with children.

Swimming. There is an outdoor heated public swimming pool in the middle of Wengen, usually open from late June until early September. It is located at the far east side of the large common area in the village center. Cost is 4 CHF per adult, children enter for free. There is a pay machine at the entrance, be sure to take some coins.

There are also indoor heated pools at the Beausite, Sunstar, and Silberhorn hotels. Non-guests can usually use them for a fee but some have “adults only” time so check before going/promising!

There are a number of swimming opportunities in and around Lakes Thun and Brienz, on either side of Interlaken. More information at <http://www.interlaken.ch/en/activities-excursions-adventure-festivals/summer-sports-and-adventure/bathing-weather-swimming-interlaken.html>

Miniature Golf. There is a mini-golf course located between the Männlichen gondola and the playground in the center of the village. (*Note: the course is currently under renovation and is scheduled to re-open September 5 2014.*)

Playgrounds. There is a playground located in the center of Wengen village and another one atop Männlichen. In Mürren there is a lovely playground next to the Sportzentrum/Ice Rink. Also from Mürren you can take the funicular up to Allmendhubel where you will find another play area. There is also a large play area at the restaurant at Winteregg (the stop between Mürren and Grütschalp) that I believe also has a trampoline (if memory serves!) Probably the best playground in the area is at Bort, see a description below under “First Gondola and More”.

Hikes. Any of the hikes listed in the “Easy Hikes” section are suitable for children, depending on their age and physical condition. There are also a number of walks directly from Wengen village. The tourist office can guide you.

Stroller-friendly Walks. The walks from Männlichen to Kleine Scheidegg, Lauterbrunnen to Stechelberg, and Mürren down to Gimmelwald are all stroller-friendly.

Events. If you are in Wengen on August 1 there will be a large town party and parade to celebrate the national holiday. If you are in town on a Wednesday, be sure to see the traditional music performance at the Sunstar that begins at 9:00 pm. And, if you're lucky,

there will be a "tent party" one evening you are there. These are local events (the timing of which appears random to me) that bring out pretty much the entire town for an evening of performances, music, and traditional Swiss food. The tent is pitched right by the tennis courts in the center of the village, you can't miss it.

High Mountain Excursions. Be sure to take the cable car up to Mannlichen. It's a beautiful ride and children usually get a kick out of the VERY large cows that hang out at the top (they are friendly). There is a playground up top. Then, take a short hike (about 3 miles slightly downhill, stroller-friendly) to Kleine Scheidegg as described in the "Easy Hikes" section. There is lots to do and see at Kleine Scheidegg, which usually is home to a family of very friendly goats (watch your lunch!)

A trip up to the Schilthorn is a dramatic, stunning ride that children usually love. See "Excursions Around Wengen" section for more information.

A Jungfrauoch ascent may also be fun for children, but not for very small ones or those that are easily bored. The ride up is a long one, enclosed in a train that spends quite a bit of time in a tunnel through the mountain. During peak times during peak season the trains may have standing room only, which makes for a very long ride for the younger set. See "Excursions Around Wengen" section for more information.

Lake Cruise. As described in the previous "Excursions" section, lake cruises are great fun for everyone. Some of the routes cater to children, see more about this at <http://www.bls.ch/e/schiffahrt/kinder.php>. You can combine a cruise with a trip up the Rothorn to make it an all day outing. Take a Brienzensee ferry to the town of [Brienz](#), cross the road from the train station, then take the RothornBahn <http://www.brienz-rothorn-bahn.ch/en.html> up the Rothorn. The Rothornbahn is an antique steam-powered engine – the last in the country – and climbs up about 7000 feet to the peak of the Rothorn. On the way up, the views of Lake Brienz and the entire Interlaken area are simply stunning. There is a large restaurant up top and some short hiking trails.

First Gondola and More. Take the train to Grindelwald and walk through the village to the First (pronounced "Feerst") gondola on the opposite end of town. Take the gondola up (it's a glorious ride) to the First ski resort. From there, it is about a 2.5 mile walk to a stunning Alpine lake called the Bachalpsee. You may even see marmots along the way.

Then, return to First and ride the zip lines the "First Flieger", more info at <http://www.ausflugsziele.ch/winter/ausflug.asp?Linkid=1295>. This is an adventure for adults and older children, not toddlers. The zip line runs from the First cable car station, 800 meters down to the next station with a 250 meters drop. Speeds reach about 80kph - enough to take your breath away - and the "flight" takes about a minute.

Once you are done with that, take the gondola back down to Bort, a mid-way station that you will have passed on your way up. There is a large play area there with trampolines, slides and swings. See http://www.swissholidayco.com/page/GRINDELWALD_FIRST. There are also some lovely short walks to do in the area.

If you're still up for more adventure, rent some Trottibikes at Bort and ride them from there down to Grindelwald (again, not for toddlers). More information here http://www.jungfrau.ch/sommer/tourismus/erlebnisse/kinder-familien/#trottibike-abenteuer-bort_35. There are also YouTube videos of both the First Flieger and the Trottibikes, just search on that site.

Toboggan Run. There is a toboggan run at Pfinstegg that you can easily access from Grindelwald. This could be combined with a First/Bort trip as well. More at <http://www.pfingstegg.ch/index.php?lang=en>

The Ballenberg Open-Air Museum in Brienz is well worth a visit. As the name implies, it's an outdoor museum with over 100 structures and 200 farm animals that show a variety of scenes from Old Switzerland. It's interesting, not hokey. You get there from Wengen via train and short bus ride -- you can buy tickets for all transport and museum entrance at the train station in Wengen, it is all very easy. See "Excursions" section and more info at <http://www.ballenberg.ch/en/visiting/tickets-and-prices/package-offers/railaway/>.

Trümmellbach Falls. Children usually love Trümmellbach Falls. It is a very nice walk there from Lauterbrunnen, about 2.5 miles and flat, or you can take the bus. The waterfalls in the valley along the way are spectacular and Trümmellbach is very exciting. It is the world's only glacial waterfall accessible underground. Very secure footing and railings let you get an up-close look. You can walk back to Lauterbrunnen or take the bus (runs once an hour, stops at the Falls parking lot). See more at <http://www.myswitzerland.com/en/destinations/waterland-switzerland/waterfalls/truemmelbach-falls-water-in-a-corset-of-stone.html>.

Chocolate Show in Interlaken, see "Excursions" section.

RAINY DAY ACTIVITIES

Rain is always a possibility in the Jungfrau region. As mentioned in the "Before You Go" section, you should pack thin layers and a waterproof shell, ideally with a hood.

Lake Brienz cruise. A cruise on Lake Brienz is fun even in the rain. In fact, it is even MORE dramatic and interesting in inclement weather. All of the lake steamers have large indoor cabins and have good food and drink service. If you are travelling with a very large group (or just want some elbow room) you may want to upgrade to first class tickets. Good value for the money.

Ballenberg Museum. Another good rainy day activities is a visit to the Ballenberg Museum outside of Brienz. It is largely an outdoor museum but perfectly navigable with an umbrella or rain coat with hood unless it's just pouring and very windy at the same

time. You can add this on to a lake cruise as well. Again, the train staff at Wengen station can arrange all of this for you, including selling you all the tickets you need to get there and back and to enter the museum.

The **Lauterbrunnen to Stechelberg walk with the Trümmelbach Falls** side trip is also very do-able with proper rain gear – you’re going to get somewhat wet inside the falls anyway! If it is really pouring, you can take the Post Bus from Lauterbrunnen to Trümmelbach and return.

Chocolate Show in Interlaken, see Excursions section.

A visit to the Swiss capital city of **Berne** (about two hours by train) is a fun outing. Berne is a medieval city and a UNESCO-designated world heritage site. You can explore the lovely old shopping arcades and relax in the lovely cafes/coffee shops, among other city highlights. Stop by the tourist office by the train station for up-to-date information on walking tours and other things to do/see. There’s a good but short overview of Berne at <http://www.magicswitzerland.com/berne.htm>, and more detailed information at <http://www.berninfo.com/en/>

WENGEN RESTAURANTS

Wengen has approximately 20 public restaurants and most of them are quite good. A few are exceptional. Most restaurants only serve Swiss and French wines and, although we have had some good Swiss Syrahs, in my opinion Swiss wines are better left to the Swiss to drink. (*Disclaimer: I live near California wine country so my taste runs to wines done in this style.*) A few restaurants have begun offering some drinkable to very good Spanish, Argentinian, Chilean, and Italian reds. As for beer, all restaurants serve either Feldschlossen or Rugenbraü beer. Both are local, the latter is far better, but neither are in the same league as German beers or the good micro-brews we get in the US these days. But when you want a beer either of these will suit!

The **Shönegg** (pronounced “SHERN-egg”), at the north end of the main street, is exceptional. In my opinion, it is the best restaurant in town, somewhat more pricey than others but worth every cent. It sports traditional décor and is more formal than most of the other restaurants I’m reviewing. They have a delightful patio that is nice for a summer dinner (or lunch) and is more casual than the formal dining room. Everything we’ve ever had here has been just perfect. The chef, who has won many awards, raises his own salad and herbs in a garden just behind the hotel. He also forages the local forests for fresh wild mushrooms. Anything offered with fresh mushrooms here is a must-do, simply amazing. The poultry, pork and meats are outstanding and they occasionally offer very local wild boar. They have an excellent wine list, the best in town. Reservations suggested.

Pizzeria da Sina is just behind the Shönegg. Don’t let the Pub/Disco/Open Late signs put you off, this is a very good Italian restaurant. The pizza is the best I’ve eaten anywhere (including Italy and France) and the pastas and steaks are good, too. They have

dozens of different types of pizza – the best one, in my opinion, is the pizza de parma, which is thin crust pizza, mozzarella, parma ham, and arugula (they call it rocket or rucola in Switzerland). They also have great rucola salads. The wine list is mostly Italian (with some fantastic Sicilian reds) with a few big U.S. reds thrown in. We usually eat here at least twice a week, it's that good. And, yes, there really is a Sina. She is there some nights, but also owns and runs the Falken hotel in town so isn't a fixture. Reservations usually not necessary but during high season you will want one or risk being turned away.

The **Berghaus Hotel** offers fine cuisine and marvelous service in a wonderful setting. They are located off the main street, toward the mountains. Simply turn right at the Schöneegg (walking north from town center) and follow that street until you run into it. They specialize in fish, which is remarkable (I highly recommend the char), but also offer lamb, pork, veal, and other choices. The patio dining room has wonderful views of town and the peaks. Everything here is done beautifully. Aldo, the proprietor and chef, is great fun and his daughter Martina (who will likely be your waitress) is positively charming. Reservations suggested.

The Eiger Restaurant, right at the train station and on the main square in town, is quite good. If the weather is nice it's fun to have lunch or dinner on the patio and watch all the action. If you are in town during pilze (mushroom) season, you are in luck as they do an excellent version of sautéed chanterelles as an appetizer. The soups are also very good. The proprietor, Rudy, is a charming fellow from Berne (the capital); his partner, Beatrice, is gracious; and the Austrian chef will make Kaiserschmarren (a traditional Bavarian dessert comprised of crepe strips, powdered sugar, and lignonberry jam) if you ask – a rare treat, even rarer outside of Germany and Austria. Reservations usually not necessary. Closed Mondays

The **Pickel Bar** (on the main street in town) is a small establishment owned by Rudy and Beatrice, the Eiger restaurant proprietors. Despite the odd-sounding name (a "Pickel" is a mountaineering ice axe) this is one of our most favorite spots in town. Jeremy the charming British bartender holds court here Wednesdays – Saturdays from 6:00 pm "until late" (closed Sundays and Mondays). The dinner menu (from 6:00 – 9:00 pm) is brief but superb and now includes traditional Swiss fondue as well. The food is quite stunning, some of the very best in town. Once you go here it is hard to stay away. Reservations usually not necessary.

The **Bären**, in the "below the train station" part of town, has top-notch traditional food with a lighter, more gourmet touch. If you happen to be there during the two weeks (usually early September) that the regular chef is on vacation, check to see if the visiting chef from Hong Kong is in the kitchen. If so, you will be treated to some of the best Chinese food you've ever eaten. In the second week of September, the Bären (and a few other restaurants) also offer the Wild Speisekarte (wild game menu). This typically features Gemse (like venison), boar and other treats with all the trimmings – roasted chestnuts, currant sauce, brussels sprouts, potatoes, and so on. It's much like a Swiss

version of Thanksgiving dinner in the US. The Bären does the best version of this around. Reservations suggested.

In addition to the public restaurants in town many hotels have their own private restaurants. These are primarily intended to serve half-board (room + breakfast + dinner) hotel guests but many will also allow non-guests to dine with a day or two notice. Some of these restaurants are really outstanding. They all offer set menus of 4 – 5 courses, with prices in the 40 – 50 CHF per person range (drinks extra). Although this may sound expensive it's a good value given the prices in Switzerland. And, during high season, they are less busy/more efficient than the public restaurants. Simply stop by and inquire or call ahead a couple days in advance.

One of our favorite private restaurants is at the **Hotel Bellevue**. The food is excellent and, since the hotel is perched at the mouth of Lauterbrunnen Valley, the view is the best in all of Wengen.

The **Alpenrose Hotel** also serves delicious food, a set menu 6 days a week and a buffet one night, usually on Thursdays.

The restaurant at the **Falken Hotel** is quite a hoot. The Falken is a charming old traditional hotel and the dining room is the same. The food ranges from good to very good but you go here mostly for the charm of the place. The bar and public room are a throwback to the old days. Read more about the Falken in the “Hotels” section.

WENGEN NIGHTLIFE

This will be brief because there isn't much! That said, there are a few options for those of you still ready to howl after a late dinner. (I hear evenings are more active during winter ski season.)

The top spot in town for an after dinner drink is the **Pickel Bar**, see more in the Restaurant section.

The bar at **The Sunstar Hotel** is open until midnight and often later. They frequently host tour groups so the bar is very large. They sometimes have some form of music after 9:00 pm.

Sina's Pub, next door to Pizzeria da Sina, is usually open until midnight or later. In addition to drinks they occasionally have music, karaoke, and always have internet access.

Rock's Bar, next to the Post Office, is open from 4:00 pm until 12:30 am, closed Monday. It's also a sports bar, but a very civilized one. This is a favorite locals place as well.

The **Crystal Bar**, located on the main street, is open late too.

APPENDIX A: 2017 MOUNTAIN TRANSPORT OPERATING DATES

Please note that all scheduled operating dates are weather-dependent

Wengernalpbahn (Lauterbrunnen to/from Kleine Scheidegg via Wengen) runs year round.

Jungfrau Railway (between Kleine Scheidegg and Jungfrauoch) operates year round.

SchynigePlatte Bahn (Wilderswil to Schynige Platte): operations resume 24 May 2017 and run until 26 October 2017 (*note: the Schynige Platte to First hike is often closed until mid-June due to snow then closes again when the snow begins to fall*)

Lauterbrunnen to Mürren via Grütschalp train and gondola: operates year round except 1 May to 5 May 2017, and a few dates in October and November. During these dates public transport to Mürren is available via the Schilthorn gondola only.

Schilthorn gondola (Stechelberg to Schilthorn via Gimmelwald and Mürren): operates year round **except** 24 April to 28 April 2017 and 13 November to 8 December 2017.

Männlichen gondola (from Wengen) until 2 April 2017 then reopens 20 May 2017. The gondola then runs until 22 October 2017. The lifts from Grindelwald Grund operate until 2 April then reopen 25 May until 22 October. 2017
(*Note: the Männlichen to Kleine Scheidegg walk is possible during summer but is usually closed until mid-June due to snow*)

Allmendhubel cog train (Mürren to Allmendhubel): operates year round except 18 April 2017 to 9 June 2017 and 16 October until 8 December 2017

First gondola (Grindelwald to First via Bort): operates until 17 April 2017, closed until 6 May 2017 then runs until mid to late October 2017
(*Note: the First to Bachalpsee walk, accessible during summer season, is typically closed until mid-June due to snow*)

Harder Kulm funicular operates from April to November. The only way to ascertain exact dates is to enter a query at www.sbb.ch: Interlaken Ost to Harder Kulm, insert your travel dates and see if you get a result. In 2017 it appears to start running 14 April.

And for those of you venturing at outing to **Oechinensee** lake above Kandersteg, the cable car operates on the following dates:

13 May 2017 – 16 June: 9:00 to 17:00

17 June 2017 – 10 September: 8:00 to 18:00

11 September – 22 October 2017: 9:00 to 17:00

Trümmelbach Falls typically opens from early April until November.

Lake cruises:

Lake Thun and Brienz cruises operate from April through mid to late October. Lake Brienz cruises have a limited schedule in spring and fall. To check operating dates and times use the route planner at <https://fahrplan.bls.ch/index.html?travelMode=ship>. The site is in German only but easy enough to navigate. For point of departure enter either Interlaken Ost (Lake Brienz) or Interlaken West (Lake Thun). For destination enter Brienz or Thun, respectively. Enter your date and desired time then available cruises will be displayed. You will also see a graphic that indicates stops in between but no information about arrival time is available. The ships are in dock for 5 minutes at most before continuing on to the next port.