



Alpine Pass Route (Self-Guided)

Please email us at info@alpineexploratory.com to ask about this trip.

You'll find all the latest information at www.alpineexploratory.com/holidays/alpine-pass-route.html.



A hut below the Truttlisbergpass

About these Holiday Notes

These Holiday Notes help you decide whether this holiday is right for you. Before your trip we send you final detailed information.

Details

Start Sargans

Finish Montreux

Region Bernese Oberland

Country Switzerland

Length 18 walking days and 2 rest days

Total distance 349km (219 miles)

Typical day 19.5km with 1,110m ascent

Highest altitude 2,834m

Grade Black3

Introduction

The Alpine Pass Route crosses Switzerland from East to West, from Sargans to Montreux. We take 18 days for the route, which breaks the longest stages into manageable days, still leaving a very long last stage to Montreux... though the theme is downhill!

A full Alpine Pass Route will reveal the rural Switzerland of farmland, meadows, villages and small towns. The ski resorts tend to be in the Central week, including the famous Grindelwald, Wengen and Murren. Life follows a reliable pattern; as a trekker, most days you'll start with a climb through forests to high meadows, a col - in some instances quite rocky and narrow - and a descent to the next village. A handful of days do not involve cols, or only minor grassy ones, being cross-country journeys, perhaps not far from the road.

The Alpine Pass Route follows a generally settled route, unlike some treks, though looking at the Swiss maps we supply will reveal several variants. We give some of these, but not all; to do so would be an enormous exercise! The Swiss path network is quite dense and some days can be made by different passes.

This being a self-guided holiday, you're free to walk as you choose. We make the arrangements, including booking accommodation and giving you our detailed route cards, and then it's up to you to complete each day's walk.

Our approach

Your route

Our trip gives a complete journey on foot from Sargans to Montreux, along the Alpine Pass Route. On completion you will have walked the full APR. On the trek itself, we use the postbus to reach Altdorf from the Klausenpass, to give better choice of accommodation. Otherwise no transport is taken except for any that you would like to add in, to skip certain sections of valley walking or to descend by cable car. The route cards explain these places.

Route cards and maps

Each day's route is explained in detail on your route cards, to bring you to your night's accommodation. We give you the real Swiss maps for you to follow.

Getting there and back

Your holiday starts in the valley town of Sargans and ends on the shore of Lac Lemán at Montreux. Travel to Sargans and from Montreux is not included in the holiday price - we leave it to you to make the arrangements that suit you best. Zurich and Basel (for Sargans) and Geneva (for Montreux) are the most convenient airports, with good trains. Full information on flight and transfer options will be sent to you on booking.

Itinerary

Arrival day: Arrival in Sargans

Evening arrival in Sargans, with nearby Mels a local Swiss town. **Hotel in Mels**

Stage 1: Sargans to Weisstannen

(14km with 650m ascent)

A short first stage, climbing steadily in woods to burst into the upper valley and walk to the sweet village of Weisstannen.

Hotel in Weisstannen

Stage 2: Weisstannen to Elm

(22km with 1,215m ascent)

Leaving Weisstannen, continue on the valley road and over the grassy Foopass (2,223m) to Elm. This is the first pass.

Hotel in Elm

Stage 3: Elm to Linthal

(22km with 1,460m ascent)

Leaving Elm, the Richetlipass (2261m) is the higher of two passes on a strenuous stage to Linthal.

Hotel in Linthal

Stage 4: Linthal to the Klausenpass

(16.5km with 330m ascent)

The next two stages cross the Klausenpass, a grassy area famed for cow pastures. A postbus crosses the pass too, by a hairpin road. We climb one day, take the bus to Altdorf on the far side, and return the next.

Hotel in Altdorf

Stage 5: Klausenpass to Altdorf

(21.5km with 100m ascent)

Having returned to the Klausenpass by bus, descend steadily near road and river, passing the magnificent meadow at Äsch.

Hotel in Altdorf

Stage 6: Altdorf to Engelberg

(29.5km with 1,880m ascent)

A fabulous stage, perhaps the most demanding of the whole APR in terms of physical effort. The pass is the Surenenpass (2,291m) which has a rocky approach. The first ascent can be shortened by a cable car to Brüsti. The long roll down to Engelberg follows the course of the valley and is charming.

Hotel in Engelberg

Rest day in Engelberg

Take the train to Luzerne or relax in Engelberg.

Stage 7: Engelberg to Engstlenalp

(11km with 1,260m ascent)

The Jochpass is the next col, relatively modest at 2,207m and with ski infrastructure on either side. Nevertheless, the mountains are building up and we descend to the delightful meadow of Engstlenalp.

Auberge at Engstlenalp

Stage 8: Engstlenalp to Meiringen

(20km with 650m ascent)

Our main route is a traverse via Tannalp to Planplatten, where a cable car can be used to drop to Meiringen. On the way is the Balmeregghorn, a grassy hill with long views over meadows and the deep Gental.

Hotel in Meiringen

Stage 9: Meiringen to Grindelwald

(22km with 1,470m ascent)

The passes continue with the easy-angled Grosse Scheidegg. A small road goes over the pass and down to Grindelwald. We climb and descend through woods and meadows.

Hotel in Grindelwald

Stage 10: Grindelwald to Wengen

(18.5km with 1,170m ascent)

The Kleine Scheidegg is today's pass, different to all others on the Alpine Pass Route in having a railway station at its summit: next stop the Jungfrauoch. We are walking under the North Face of the Eiger.

Hotel in Wengen

Stage 11: Wengen to Murren

(8.5km with 860m ascent)

If walked all the way, today is still a modest one. Our aim is the mountainside village of Murren, car-free and a curious delight. It feels as if suspended in mid-air. The Grutschalp cable car and sweet old train can be used to bypass the stiff climb.

Hotel in Murren

Stage 12: Murren to Griesalp

(15.5km with 1,050m ascent)

The first of a two-stage finale comes with the long climb to the Sefinafurgga (2,612m), the second-highest col of the whole APR. (The highest comes tomorrow!) The ascent is exceptionally scenic over Murren and back to the Kleine Scheidegg. The pass is narrow, loose and rocky, and the descent to tiny Griesalp quick down meadows.

Auberge in Griesalp

Stage 13: Griesalp to Kandersteg

(16km with 1,440m ascent)

The rocky Höhturli (2,778m) col is not even the highlight of this exceptional day in the mountains. Perhaps the highlight is the Blümlisalphütte (2,834m) just above the col, in classic Swiss Alpine Club style,

or the glacial views and features on the descent. We walk on lateral moraine with waterfalls opposite.

Hotel in Kandersteg

Rest day in Kandersteg

The train to Bern is an easy excursion.

Stage 14: Kandersteg to Adelboden

(16.5km with 1,355m ascent)

The third of the 3 rockiest passes is today, the Bunderchrinde (2,385m). It is a notch in the rock, framing the onward view to Adelboden. The initial descent path is rocky and loose; lower down, the descent is fine and Adelboden is one of the most pleasant of APR resorts.

Hotel in Adelboden

Stage 15: Adelboden to Lenk

(18.5km with 760m ascent)

Choose from two routes today, both crossing the mountains at the grassy Hahnenmoospass. This is a gentler day than those before or after. Lenk is another charming, small resort.

Hotel in Lenk

Stage 16: Lenk to Gsteig

(23km with 1,420m ascent)

We cross to Lauenen first (optional bus to Gstaad) then a second pass to Gsteig. The bus runs to Gstaad for railways scenes and a lively atmosphere. Today's cols are grassy with long views.

Hotel in Gstaad

Stage 17: Gsteig to Col des Mosses

(23km with 1,050m ascent)

A grassy pass crossing and a long farmland traverse, above French-speaking village Les Diablerets; we have crossed a language border and arrive at the minor crossing of Col des Mosses.

Hotel at Col des Mosses

Stage 18: Col des Mosses to Montreux

(31km with 840m ascent)

Our long last stage – which can be helped by taking the mountain railway in descent – goes cross-country to the Rochers de Naves, a pinnacle high above Montreux. The descent is long, but the middle section of path is a delight, twisting and surprising in its views.

Hotel in Montreux

Departure day: Departure from Montreux

Departure from Montreux after breakfast.



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Our normal schedule of accommodation might not be available, especially for busier times or at shorter notice. We book accommodation as close as possible to this itinerary and give you a schedule to check before we proceed.

Accommodation

Our standard schedule of accommodation consists of 16 nights in 3- or 4-star hotels, 1 night in a 2-star hotel,

and 4 nights in auberges (like simple hotels). You will have a private room each night; at the hotels you have an ensuite bathroom, while at the auberges your bathroom might be shared.

If availability is tight at 2 of the auberges then we'll let you know; in that case the choice is between dormitories, or taking the bus (scenic) to a nearby hotel, or finally shifting your dates either side.

It is possible to stay in one or more Swiss mountain huts, on the Alpine Pass Route. Please ask us for details. The huts are comfortable and welcoming. Hut accommodation is in dormitories, either on Alpine-style communal sleeping platforms or in bunk beds. We can sometimes book private rooms at some of the huts.

Your info pack contains full details of your accommodation including contact details and directions.

The walking

Terrain

The Alpine Pass Route's terrain comprises the full range of Alpine walking, a typical day starting with wide tracks through forests, tarmac country lanes, then up to zig-zagging hillside paths and steep, rocky mountain paths. The two highest cols, the Sefinafurgga (2,612m) and the Höturli (2,778m) involve loose paths over scree and shale, plus wooden steps built into the hillside, on both approach and descent. The Alpine Pass Route has no *via ferrata* or climbing sections and is a trek throughout.

Your own routes

While your routecards make up the walking for the trip, you are of course free to walk wherever you choose, taking side trips or going by a different route of your own choice. Please note that if you follow your own route you will have left the holiday for the duration.

Food

Meals included are all breakfasts plus 3 evening meals (at 3 of the auberges). For lunches there is lots of opportunity to stock up on ingredients along the route. You will often find huts and cafés during the walking, useful for lunch stops. Your routecards give information about food shops and refreshment stops along the route. For eating out on the nights when dinner is not included, there are good options in the village or town.

Insurance

Clients must have insurance to cover themselves for helicopter search & rescue, medical expenses and repatriation. We recommend, but it is not compulsory, that you also have cover for personal liability, cancellation and your baggage and money. You might find that your annual multi-trip travel insurance covers these items already. We will send you details of suitable insurance policies on booking.

Passports and visas

Passport holders of the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Singapore do not need a visa to enter Switzerland.

Weather

The weather in these parts of the Swiss Alps from mid-July to mid-September is generally highly suitable for Alpine walking. While snowfall is possible on higher ground all year round, it is unlikely in the Summer season.

During cold spells in summer, rain can fall as snow on the Alpine Pass Route's higher cols. Additionally,

patches of snow left over from Winter and Spring might linger into July, but should not pose problems. July and August are commonly the hottest months but with greater amounts of rain and greater risk of afternoon thunder storms; the first half of September can be stable, with the chance of some beautifully clear days.

Thunderstorms are a particular danger in summer, occurring most often in the afternoons.

This all means that it is sensible to come equipped and expecting all the types of weather that might be experienced in a typical summer in the UK: from heavy rain storms with a chill in the air, to hot sunshine.

Equipment

You will need the usual equipment for mountain walking in the Alps. Especially important are good walking boots, good waterproof jacket and waterproof trousers, and sun protection. For any huts you will need a sheet liner. No *via ferrata* equipment is needed. We will send you an equipment list on booking. Please also see the Equipment page of our website for more information.

Local expenses

Local expenses include food and drink other than those meals that are included, plus any local transport, attractions and extras.

Guided days

Hire one of Alpine Exploratory's leaders to join you on this self-guided holiday, for one or more days. A leader helps plan and carry out each day's walking and adds interest to your holiday by pointing out local features. Please contact us for prices and more information.

Groups

Walk by yourself or in your own group, or see if we can match you up with other like-minded walkers on the same holiday. Any group will be a maximum of 8 people.

Hazards

Health

Switzerland does not require tourists to take any vaccinations. However, it is recommended to keep tetanus vaccines up to date.

Safety

This is adventure travel! This holiday takes you to some wild and remote areas, in particular some areas of upland mountains where navigation can be difficult in poor weather. The weather can also be a hazard in itself. During any walking, whether following a routecard or making your own route, you are responsible for your own actions and safety and you should join the trip with suitable skills, experience and equipment.

Further information

Please email us with any questions at info@alpineexploratory.com.

Disclaimer

This information is given in good faith and is believed to be correct at the time of issue. Alpine Exploratory cannot be liable for any loss or injury incurred.