



# WORLD HERITAGE GLACIER TREK



*This information should answer some of your questions about the trip and give you a better idea of what we do day-to-day. It doesn't hope to answer everything. If you have any questions please get in touch.*



*Swiss Glacier Trek. Photo Dick van Brummen*

- **An exceptional glacier trek in the Bernese Oberland in Swiss Alps**
- **Led by UIAGM guide**
- **Carry lightweight backpacks – no sleeping bag needed**
- **Traverse through spectacular scenery, often walking off trail**
- **Max group size is 8**
- **Includes the famous cog wheel train ride to Eigerwand and Jungfrauoch**

## **Bernese Oberland**

The Bernese Oberland lies north of the Rhone Valley with much of its chain forming a watershed between the North Sea and the Mediterranean. The eastern part contains a number of significant peaks such as the Finsteraarhorn (4,274m), the highest peak in the Bernese Alps, the Eiger

(3970m), renowned over many years for its north face dramas, and the adjacent peaks of Mönch (4105m) and Jungfrau (4166m). These three peaks create a majestic wall whose steep sides support the Aletsch Glacier, the longest in western Europe.

The area has been named as a World Heritage Site because it is considered to be of 'outstanding universal value'. The landscape clearly tells a story, providing an excellent model of how mountains were formed and how they were eroded by glaciers. In addition to this, the region clearly reveals the impact of climate change, with its receding glaciers and moraines. It also supports significant numbers of diverse flora and fauna, and the mountains, particularly the Eiger, Monch, Jungfrau, are considered to have played an important role in European art, literature, mountaineering and alpine tourism. In 2001, the World Heritage Site was increased from 53,900ha to 82,400ha to include the Jungfrau, Aletsch and Bietschhorn peaks.

### **Trip summary**

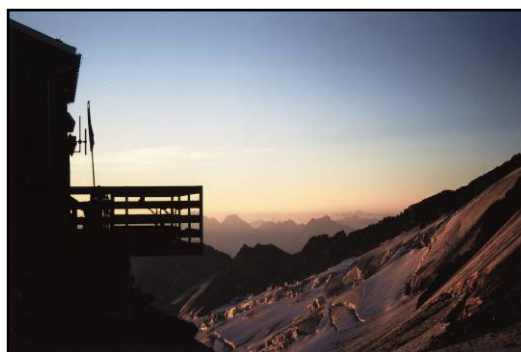
Starting in the traditional alpine village of Kandersteg, we journey through the Bernese Oberland following mountain trails and crossing dramatic glaciers on foot through some of the most spectacular scenery in the Swiss Alps. A train ride through the Eiger tunnel to Jungfrauoch (3500m) 'the top of Europe' is included. The trip is guided by a UIAGM guide who will give instruction on glacier travel so it not necessary to have done this before, however much of the terrain is off trail so you should have previous experience of walking on rough terrain. There are some long days so the trip will be more enjoyable if you start with a reasonable level of fitness. If conditions allow, there will be an opportunity to climb Oberaarhorn (3631m).

### **Accommodation**

On the first and last nights of the trip we stay in a hotel in Kandersteg. For the rest of the trip we stay in a simple guesthouse (1 night), a mountain lodge (1 night) and in Swiss Alpine Refuges (4 nights) which are fully catered.

### **How much will I have to carry?**

You will need to carry a sheet inner (duvets or blankets provided), a change of clothes, basic toilet kit and lunch as well as your personal outdoor gear. A 40-50 litre rucksack/pack should be ample. If you keep your personal gear to a minimum, your load should not exceed 10kg.



*Oberaar Refuge. Photo Daniel Martig*

### **Meals**

All breakfasts and dinners are included – see B,L,D (breakfast/lunch/dinner) on day to day itinerary. Lunch, snacks and drinks are not included. We will shop for lunch and snack items for 3 days on DAY 2 in Kandersteg and again for 4 days on DAY 4 in Lauterbrunnen. Allow 20 Swiss Francs per lunch, or more if you decide to top up your supplies at the alpine refuges. The refuges provide 1 litre of hot fruit tea per person per day which is usually carried in a drink bottle – which works better than a bladder for the hot tea. Appetising vegetarian meals are available.

### **Trip grade**

This trip has been graded 'Tough' to allow for carrying the overnight gear and walking/scrambling off trail. If you are used to these you may find it a grade easier. If you keep your personal gear down to a minimum, the carrying element will not be significant.

### **Luggage**

You can leave any non trekking gear at the hotel in Kandersteg.

**Equipment**

Crampons and harnesses + karabiner can be hired by arrangement so you do not need to buy any specialist equipment. When it is sunny, glacier travel can be very hot so a good sun hat and sunglasses suitable for snow are important. Your gear should also allow you to operate in bad weather so a layering system works well. A kit list will be sent with your booking confirmation.

**Climate**

The Bernese Oberland is affected by a western continental climate which is usually warm during the day in July, but as in any mountain area there is a chance of bad weather in the mountains and rain could fall as snow on the glaciers.



*Good weather!* Photo Dick van Brummen

## DAY BY DAY ITINERARY

*This itinerary is flexible and should be seen as a guide only. Local conditions, weather or fitness could lead to changes in our daily plans. All times and distances are approximate. 'B,L,D' refers to meals included in the trip cost, i.e. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner. Walking times include breaks.*

**Most people will fly to Geneva or Zurich then catch a train to Kandersteg where the trip begins.**

DAY 1 Arrive in the traditional village of Kandersteg in time for a trip briefing and welcome at 5pm. Hotel. (D)

DAY 2 In the morning there is time to buy lunch items for the first few days. A short ride on the gondola gives access to a track leading towards Lake Oeschinen, situated in a magnificent mountain setting. After a picnic lunch, we follow a narrow gorge leading to Gastern Valley, a World Heritage site renowned for its beauty and diverse flora and with views of the north face of Balmhorn (3700m).

We emerge through alpine forest to reach the mountain village of Selden (1562m), where we stay in a simple family run guesthouse. Walking time 3 hours on good tracks, 400m ascent. (B,D)

DAY 3 The Gastern Valley is inhabited only in the summer months as in winter there is a high avalanche risk as well as a harsh climate. At first our route leads through farmland then a track through alpine vegetation leads to the Kander Glacier.

Now it's time to get the harnesses out and rope up – those who are not familiar with glacier travel will be shown what to do. We follow the glacier for 3 hours to reach the Mutthorn Refuge (2900m), which is situated on the edge of a rocky ridge. Views of the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau can be enjoyed from a terrace with a steaming mug of tea or a beer in hand – after 1300m of ascent you will have earned it! Walking time 6 - 7 hours. (B,D)



*Ibex. Photo Daniel Martig*

DAY 4 Sunrise produces a wonderful silhouette of the Eiger (3970m). We follow the glacier downhill for about an hour, then a rough track leads through ibex terrain and alpine rhododendrons to the lush flora of Lauterbrunnen Valley, a beautiful valley with 73 waterfalls. We top up lunch supplies in Lauterbrunnen (799m), then board the cogwheel train which takes us via Wengen to Kleine Scheidegg (2061m) where the famous Lauberhorn downhill ski-race is held each winter. Our mountain lodge has views of the Eiger, Monch and Jungfrau mountains. Walking time 7 hours, 1700m descent. (B,D)

DAY 5 From Kleine Scheidegg the Jungfrau railway climbs to the station at Eigergletscher (Eiger Glacier), well known for its mountain restaurant and polar dog kennels. The ride continues through the Eiger Tunnel to the stations at Eigerwand and Eismeer with a five minute stop at each. We arrive at Jungfrauoch (3454m) to superb views

from the Sphinx Observation Terrace extending as far as the summits of the Vosges Mountains in France and the Black Forest in Germany.

The 22 km Aletsch Glacier is the longest in the Alps, and begins at Jungfrauoch. Today our route follows the glacier so we rope up, following it downhill through crevassed terrain as far as the Konkordia Hut (2850m), which is situated on a rocky outcrop with views of Konkordia, a junction of three major glaciers where the thickness of the ice is 800m. Walking time 5 hours, 600m descent. (B,D)

DAY 6 We follow Gruneg Glacier to reach Grunhornlucke (3280m) from where there are great views of Finsteraarhorn (4273m) straight ahead. Our destination tonight is the new Finsteraar Refuge (3048m), located in an impressive situation on the edge of the Fiescher Glacier which we have to cross to reach it. Walking time 6 hours, 600m ascent. (B,D)

DAY 7 A rough track leads down to the glacier which we follow to Rochloch (2700m). After a break we head up Galmi Glacier to Oberaar Refuge (3256m), located at the base of Oberaarhorn (3631m) with fantastic views of Finsteraarhorn (4273m), the highest peak in the Bernese Oberland, in the foreground and the Matterhorn in the distance.

There is an optional ascent of Oberaarhorn, a straight forward peak but due to the terrain and the exposure it is necessary to climb it in smaller groups. The return trip takes approx 3 hours and the first group will climb it this afternoon, returning in time for dinner. Walking time 6 hours, 350m descent followed by 560m ascent, plus the optional ascent of Oberaarhorn. (B,D)



*Crossing Aletsch Glacier.* Photo Daniel Martig

DAY 8 For those who didn't climb it yesterday, an early morning ascent of Oberaarhorn (3631m) in time to see the sunrise. Then we all walk down the Oberaar Glacier to Oberaar Lake where the alpine flowers provide a welcome contrast to the colours of the glacial terrain which we have been living in for the last four days. Sadly, this is the end of our walk, and from here we travel back to Kandersteg by bus and train to stay in our hotel again for a final evening together. (B,D)

DAY 9 After breakfast it's time to travel home or continue with your own arrangements. (B)

ML/DM 9/10