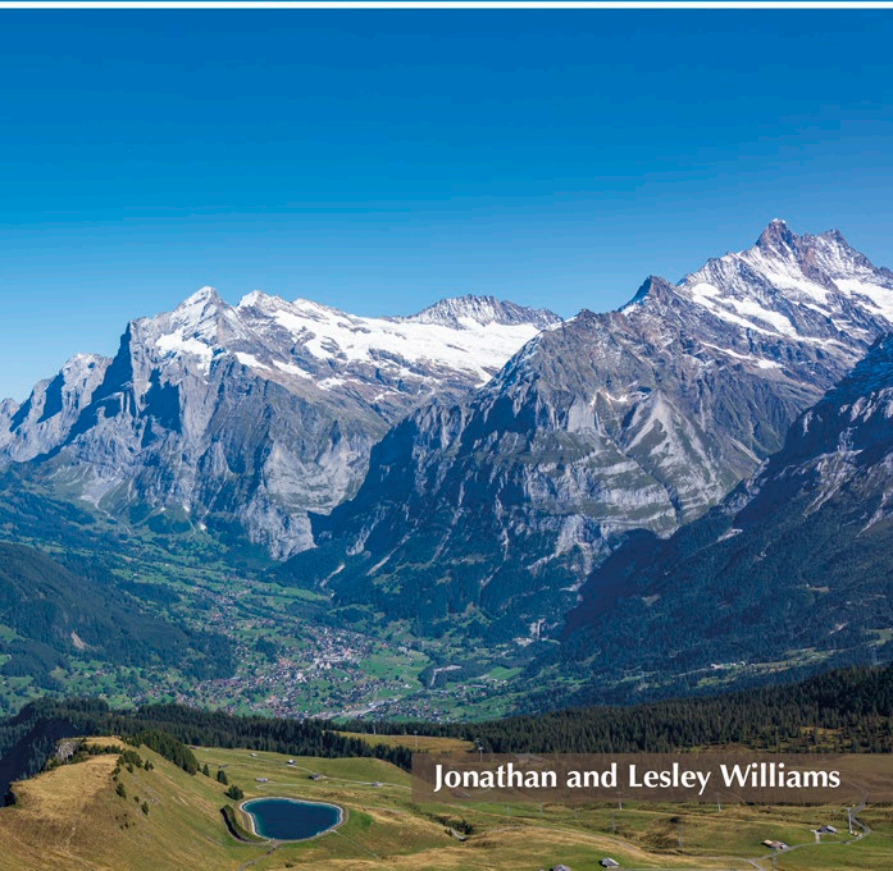


CICERONE

WALKING IN THE BERNESE OBERLAND – JUNGFRAU REGION

50 day walks in Grindelwald, Wengen,
Lauterbrunnen and Mürren



Jonathan and Lesley Williams

WALKING IN THE BERNESE OBERLAND – JUNGFRAU REGION

**50 DAY WALKS IN GRINDELWALD, WENGEN,
LAUTERBRUNNEN AND MURREN**

By Jonathan and Lesley Williams

CICERONE

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Updates to this guide

While every effort is made by our authors to ensure the accuracy of guidebooks as they go to print, changes can occur during the lifetime of an edition. Any updates that we know of for this guide will be on the Cicerone website (www.cicerone.co.uk/1114/updates), so please check before planning your trip. We also advise that you check information about such things as transport, accommodation and shops locally. Even rights of way can be altered over time. We are always grateful for information about any discrepancies between a guidebook and the facts on the ground, sent by email to updates@cicerone.co.uk or by post to Cicerone, Juniper House, Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road, Kendal, LA9 7RL.

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Front cover: Grindelwald and its mountains — the Schreckhorn and Wetterhorn

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Mountain safety

Every mountain walk has its dangers, and those described in this guidebook are no exception. All who walk or climb in the mountains should recognise this and take responsibility for themselves and their companions along the way. The author and publisher have made every effort to ensure that the information contained in this guide was correct when it went to press, but, except for any liability that cannot be excluded by law, they cannot accept responsibility for any loss, injury or inconvenience sustained by any person using this book.

International distress signal *(emergency only)*

Six blasts on a whistle (and flashes with a torch after dark) spaced evenly for one minute, followed by a minute's pause. Repeat until an answer is received. The response is three signals per minute followed by a minute's pause.

Helicopter rescue

The following signals are used to communicate with a helicopter:

Help needed:
raise both arms
above head to
form a 'Y'



Help not needed:
raise one arm
above head, extend
other arm downward



Emergency telephone numbers

If telephoning from the UK the dialling code is: 0041

Switzerland: Accident Services tel 144

Europe-wide: Emergency tel 112

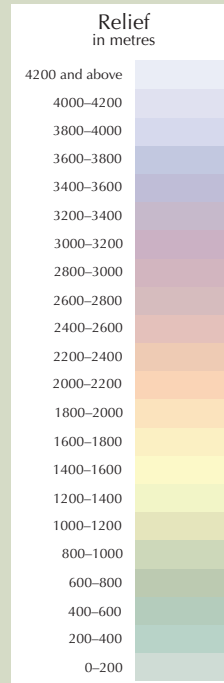
Weather reports

Switzerland: tel 162 (in French, German or Italian), www.meteoschweiz.ch/en

Mountain rescue can be very expensive – be adequately insured.

Symbols used on route maps

	route
	alternative route
	start point
	finish point
	start/finish point
	alternative start/finish point
	alternative finish point
	route direction
	glacier
	woodland
	urban areas
	station/railway
	parking
	bus stop/station
	cable car/gondola
	car/chair lift
	peak
	manned/unmanned refuge
	other accommodation
	museum
	refreshment
	public toilets
	building
	point of interest
	col/bridge
	waterfall/water feature
	picnic area
	viewpoint
	other feature



Maps are at 1:50,000
unless otherwise stated.

SCALE: 1:50,000

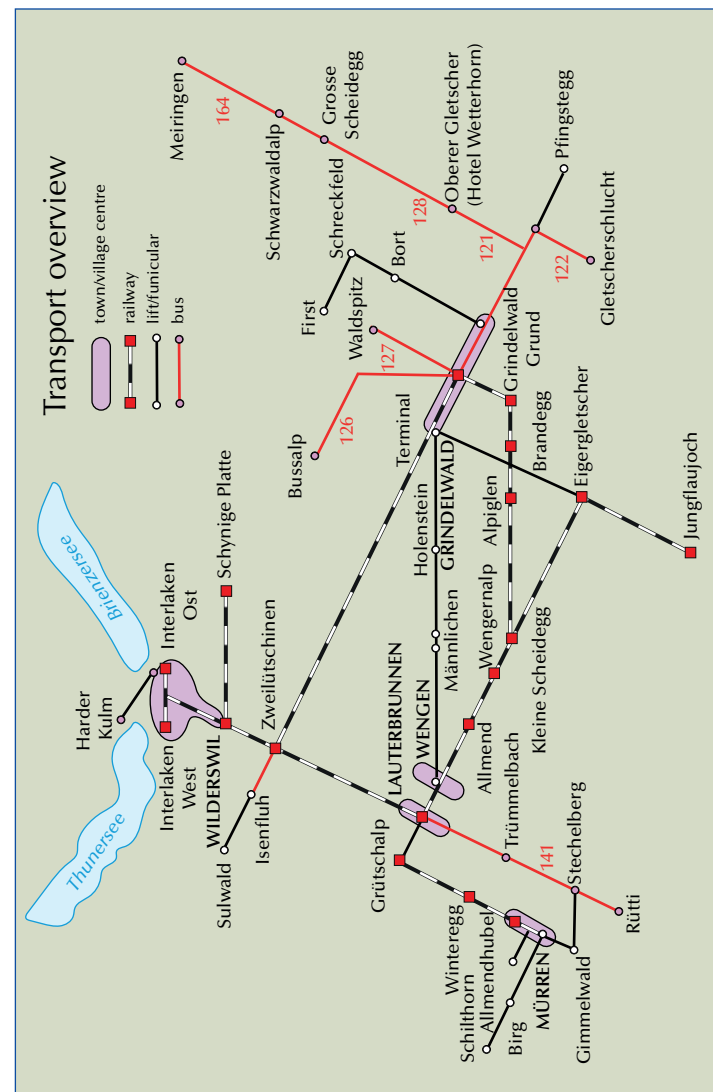
0 kilometres 0.5 1
0 miles 0.5

Contour lines are drawn at
25m intervals and highlighted
at 100m intervals.

GPX files for all routes can be downloaded free at www.cicerone.co.uk/1114/GPX.



The awesome wall of the Gspaltenhorn overlooks the entire Scifental valley (Walk 44)



Superb views into the Lauterbrunnen valley from just above the Schynige Platte
(Walk 1)



INTRODUCTION



Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau from Schynige Platte (Walk 1)

Dawn breaks, and the uppermost tip of the Eiger glows amber, while wispy pillows of cloud still linger in the valley, partly obscuring the hillside below Männlichen and Kleine Scheidegg. The villages are waking to another fine day, the first rays of sun catching terraces festooned with bright geraniums, while the smell of fresh bread and coffee fills the air. The day will be good, and there will be fine views – some of the most awe-inspiring views in the whole of the Alps, and there will be great walking – striding out on good paths, with mountain inns to visit, and trains and cable cars easing tired legs back to the villages below.

While the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau together form the iconic wall of rock and ice towering over the settlements of Grindelwald, Wengen and Mürren, there are more shapely and higher peaks to admire too, including the Schreckhorn, Finsteraarhorn and Fiescherhorn. The Wetterhorn stands as a powerful and distinctive guardian at the eastern end of the Jungfrau region looming high above Grosse Scheidegg – the high pass leading directly down to Grindelwald.

Below these mighty rock faces lies a world of rich green pastures, studded by glimmering lakes creating reflections that double the impressive

The Eiger and Kleine Scheidegg seen from near the base of the Wetterhorn (Walk 15)



views. Good mountain paths lead to lesser peaks and impressive ridges, while mountaineers revel in the challenges that the high mountains offer. Cascading mountain streams cut deep gorges, and some of Europe's most impressive waterfalls fall 300m or more, like great lace curtains into the Lauterbrunnen valley. There are easier paths too, threading through larch and pine woodlands, or easing along panoramic balcony routes between inviting mountain restaurants and refuges, most in fantastic locations providing the opportunity to linger and admire the view at your leisure. In short, this is a Swiss chocolate box with varieties for everyone!

Grindelwald is the largest of the three main holiday villages covered in this guide, occupying a grassy hillside at just over 1000m altitude

directly facing the impressive mountain wall of the Eiger, with the rising hillside between Kleine Scheidegg and Männlichen opposite. It's a friendly resort, still holding strong farming connections and traditions, with local artisan produce readily available, and festivals celebrating the seasons. Thanks to its position as a major ski resort there is an impressive modern infrastructure of lift systems and railways to speedily transport walkers to higher ground from where many of the routes either start or finish, but fear not – there is little evidence of ski pistes to worry you or to scar the landscape. Grindelwald has additional attractions including a good sports centre, the impressive Gletscherschlucht Gorge, a small but worthwhile museum, and options to rent scooters on which to zoom

down the hillside from Bort back to Grindelwald.

Basking on a sunny terrace on the western side of the Lauterbrunnen valley, **Mürren** is the highest of the three main resorts at around 1600m, with impressive views directly to the great mountain wall stretching from the Eiger westwards to beyond the Breithorn. Mürren has an excellent infrastructure of lifts linking Stechelberg in the lower valley up to the Schilthorn (aka Piz Gloria of James Bond fame), via Gimmelwald and Mürren. Entirely car-free, the village is also accessed from Lauterbrunnen via a cable car and a special train from Grütschalp. Although smaller than Grindelwald, Mürren also has its own sports centre, and other attractions include the little hamlet of Gimmelwald perched

INTRODUCTION

on the very edge of the cliff above the Lauterbrunnen valley, where traditional farming practices are normal, and where 21st-century tourism has had little influence.

Occupying a sloping sunny terrace on the eastern side of the Lauterbrunnen valley, much of car-free **Wengen** enjoys superb views south to the magnificent mountain wall of the central Bernese Oberland, but also deep into the Lauterbrunnen valley and across to Mürren. The village is accessed from both Lauterbrunnen and Grindelwald by the mountain railway system leading to Kleine Scheidegg. More developed than Mürren, Wengen lies at just over 1200m and has been favoured for decades by alpine walkers and explorers including composer Felix Mendelssohn, who found peace and inspiration among these mountains.

The Lauterbrunnen valley from above Stechelberg with Mürren just visible at the top of the left-hand cliff (Walk 49)



For those seeking quieter locations to base themselves, there are smaller hamlets and chalets dotted on the hillsides, many with good access, just fewer people and amenities! This area is indeed a delight, and a near-perfect part of the Alps for the adventurous walker.

EIGER, MÖNCH AND JUNGFRAU

Although known by tourists throughout the world as the Jungfrau Region, mainly due to the amazing railway to the Jungfrauoch, it is the Eiger at 3967m (meaning Ogre), and its impressive 1800m near-vertical north face that has attracted the world's leading mountaineers over many generations. The first ascent of the Eiger was made in 1858 by Swiss guides Christian Almer and Peter Bohren and an Irishman Charles Barrington, while the north face was only conquered by an Austrian–German expedition in 1938. *The White Spider* is a classic work of mountain literature giving a harrowing account of the first ascent of the north face in 1938 by the author Heinrich Harrer and other members of the team – Anderl Heckmair, Ludwig Vörg and Fritz Kasperek. Many climbers have lost their lives before and since, making an attempt on the north face, most losing their lives when climbing during the summer months. Summer ascents via the Mittellegi Ridge are considered easier, but all are difficult.

The mountain by which the area is better known is the elegant Jungfrau (meaning maiden, or virgin) at 4158m, first climbed in 1811 by the Meyer brothers and two hunters from the Valais. In summer, walkers who take the train to the Jungfrauoch can enjoy an excellent walk up the Jungfrau glacier as far as the Obers Mönchsloch at 3623m, then for refreshments at the Mönchslochhütte above.

Sandwiched between these iconic mountains is another giant, the Mönch (meaning Monk) at 4,110m, with the prominent Eiger Glacier separating it from the Eiger.

THE SHAPE OF THE MOUNTAINS

The Bernese Alps lie to the north of the Rhône valley and stretch from the end of the Uri Alps at the Grimsel Pass in the east, through to the Chablais Alps and Martigny where the Rhône forces its way between these mountain ranges.

The Engelhörner group of mountains lie between Meiringen and Grindelwald, which although lower than the giant neighbours to the south, are very distinctive, with towering peaks and slabs and the remnants of glaciers high above. Then follows the Wetterhorn, a huge bulky mountain with multiple summits acting as guardian to the main area covered in this guide, and together with its neighbour the Mättenberg, is visible from most of the walks from Grindelwald



The Schreckhorn, distant Finsteraarhorn and Fiescherhorn from the classic view at Bachsee (Walk 3)

and Kleine Scheidegg, while the Gleckstein Hut occupies the space between, and is a popular outing for more experienced mountain walkers, and climbers.

The Bernese giants Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau follow in succession, but less visible is the Finsteraarhorn (4274m), the highest in the Bernese Oberland, the Schreckhorn and Fiescherhorn among others, which can be seen at close quarters from the Schreckhorn Hut, another challenging route for the experienced. For those less willing or able to undertake a challenging mountain route, these superb peaks can be seen from many of the walks which explore the hillsides of Bussalp, Bachsee and the Faulhorn, as well as from Schynige Platte. From these easily accessed viewpoints, the entire magnificent range is laid out before you in a

dazzling panorama of rock and ice which scratches the (often) deep blue sky, with the greenest of pastures lying far below.

From the Jungfrau west the mountain chain includes, in order, the Gletcherhorn, Mittaghorn, Grosshorn, Breithorn and Tschingelhorn. The Blümlisalp and Gspaltenhorn lie to the west above the Rotstock Hut and Sefinafurrga, while the Schilthorn is also clearly visible within the more extensive Schynige Platte panorama.

Several impressive glaciers carve their way through the range, the most impressive being the Aletsch glacier which originates in a vast snowfield to the south of the Mönch and Jungfrau near the Jungfrauoch, part of the Jungfrau-Aletsch UNESCO World Heritage Site. It then flows in a huge loop south and west down to the Rhône, enclosed on the northern side

WALK 1

Schynige Platte Panoramaweg

Start/Finish	Schynige Platte 1967m
Distance	5.5km
Total ascent	225m
Total descent	225m
Grade	2
Time	1hr 45min
Max altitude	2025m above Schynige Platte (2069m if Oberberghorn is included)
Refreshments	Schynige Platte
Access	Schynige Platte cog railway from Wilderswil

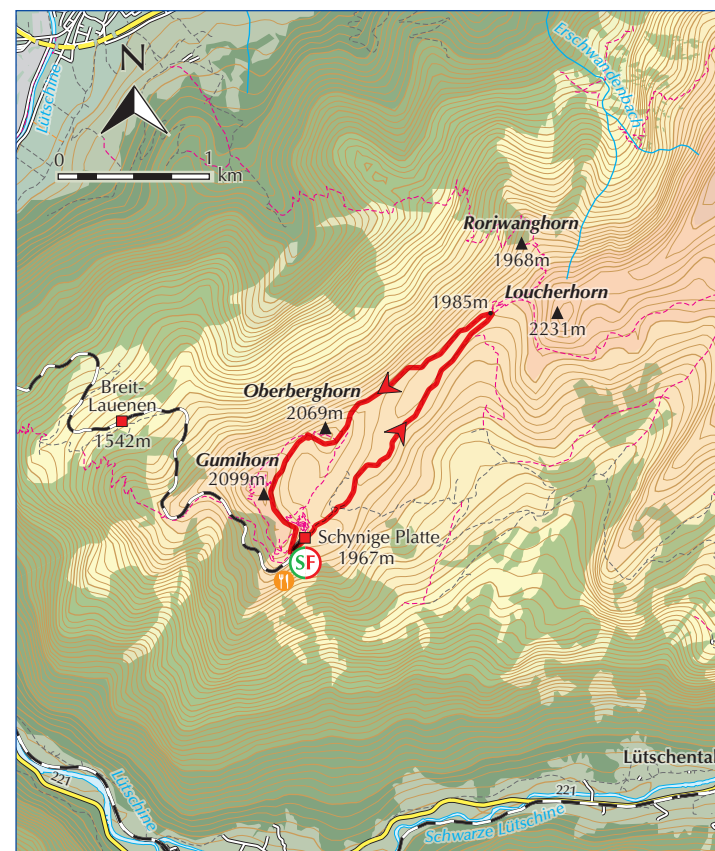
This walk is utterly fantastic on a fine clear day. Superb panoramic views are enjoyed throughout, and although the actual walking time is shown as under two hours, you will probably want to spend much more time, just to enjoy the views in all directions, and to take photographs. The walk is described anti-clockwise, but can be reversed. The superb views can be equally enjoyed in either direction. The Alpine Garden at Schynige Platte is also worthwhile, and entrance is free.

Superb views of the mountains stretching from the Wetterhorn all the way through to beyond the Breithorn, and to the Schilthorn, provide numerous opportunities for photography, so take your time here.

Take the cog railway from Wilderswil which climbs 1400m steadily and steeply to **Schynige Platte** with views of the valley below and Breinzersee. The train takes 45min; allow 1hr 15min from Grindelwald.

On arriving at the top station, walk back along the platform towards the restaurant, cross the tracks and take the path downhill. After 0.3km keep on the main path. Descend gently, then fork left after 0.5km. The path now rises a little then continues along a balcony route as it weaves around the hillside towards the **Loucherhorn** (2231m), which rises in rocky towers ahead. ◀

On reaching a path junction after 3.3km at 1985m, go right if you wish to climb further, (with good views



over the ridge just a short distance further on) otherwise turn sharp left, climb a metal staircase to reach the path which now takes a line along the cliff edge, with superb views down to Interlaken, the Thunersee and Brienzensee glistening far below, and a wall of mountains behind. Although the path keeps very close to the edge of the cliffs, there is no exposure to worry about.

Superb views east from the summit of the Oberberghorn to the Loucherhorn and mountains beyond and Brienersee below



There are fine views from this modest peak. Allow an additional 20–30min for a round trip ascent.

After 3.75km (about 1hr) a path forks left leading directly to the station and Alpine Garden, otherwise take the right fork to continue climbing easily below cliffs around a bowl in the hillside, then after a further 15min, look for a path up to the **Oberberghorn** (2069m). ◀

If not climbing the Oberberghorn, keep left then fork left to descend a little, then climb to reach a level path leading round below the **Gumihorn** (2099m) to a viewpoint above the Alpine Garden and station. Descend the path in two zigzags to reach the Schynige Platte station.

The Alpine Garden is home to 730 alpine plants found above the tree line in their natural environment. The Alpine Garden is twinned with the Rokko Alpine Garden in the Japanese city of Kobe, and together, the two institutions exchange knowledge related to ecology, culture, tourism and education. The garden is open daily 8:30–5:45pm. +41 (0)33 828 73 76 alpengarten.ch.

WALK 2

Schynige Platte – Faulhorn – First

Start	Schynige Platte 1967m
Finish	First 2165m
Distance	16km
Total ascent	950m
Total descent	750m
Grade	3
Time	5hr 30min
Max altitude	2681m on the Faulhorn
Refreshments	Schynige Platte, Berghaus Männndlenen, Hotel Faulhorn, First
Access	Schynige Platte is reached by the train from Wilderswil

This is one of the great walks of the region high along the ridge above the Brienersee with almost continual views of the Oberland mountain wall to the south. From the start the views cover the Lauterbrunnen valley and surrounding peaks, then the Jungfrau and its neighbours and finally the Wetterhorn. With two mountain restaurants, supplies are no problem. The route is continually above 2000m and will take most of a day. The path is well-marked and clear, but the section between Berghaus Männndlenen and the Faulhorn could become a challenge in poor visibility.

Take the train from Wilderswil to **Schynige Platte**. The old cog railway climbs slowly for 1400m in around 45min with occasional views through the forest to the lakes far below. ▶

Cross the railway tracks and descend slightly. The route is clearly signed, initially on a broad track. Descend into an attractive ablation valley, surrounded by the limestone towers of the Oberberghorn (2069m). The path keeps right with views across to the Jungfrau, before it climbs gradually to a **path junction** at 2029m, 45min.

At the station there is an Alpine Garden, hotel and restaurant as well as the gentle Panoramic Trail described in Walk 1.



- explore the stunning scenery of the Jungfrau region
- panorama trails and ascents of accessible summits
- Wetterhorn, Untersteinberg, Bachsee, Eiger, Mönch

The Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau dominate the views in the beautiful central Bernese Oberland area with iconic walls of rock and ice, and their shadows are the setting for the 50 walking routes in this guide.

Routes range from easy short walks to mountain ascents that require more experience. Many also take advantage of the widespread public transport and lifts to provide options for walks at a higher altitude. From grassy hillsides dotted with alp buildings, to glistening lakes, tarns and waterfalls there is something for everyone.

- best for walking between early June and mid October – though higher altitude walks may still have snow patches well into late June and July



- routes accessible by public transport including bus, mountain train and cable car
- routes to mountain huts, hotels and restaurants

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