



THE GRAND TOUR: MÜRREN, ZERMATT, PONTRESINA, SWITZERLAND: VILLAGE-BASED LUXURY HIKING TOUR

MEET: Mürren
VISIT: Mürren, Zermatt, Pontresina
LENGTH: 8 days
HIKE RATING: Moderate – Strenuous, 5–7 hours/day,
1000'–3500' elevation gain/loss

Stay in luxurious inns, enjoy classic train rides, and hike three of the grandest mountain destinations in world. Tour beautiful Mürren, then stay high above Zermatt at the 5-star Riffelalp Resort, and ride the Glacier Express across the Alps to Pontresina. World-class hotels and great hikes in perfect combination.

DAY ONE

The Grand Tour starts with arrival in Zürich and a train ride to Mürren, our home away from home in Switzerland. The trip takes just over 3 hours. Mürren is an idyllic, car-free village, perched atop a sheer 3000-foot cliff above the waterfall-filled Lauterbrunnen valley (picture Yosemite with a Swiss village on top). We'll meet to talk about the tour before settling in to our welcome dinner at the elegant 4-star Hotel Eiger. (Hotel Eiger)

DAY TWO

One of our favorite hikes starts in town, and gently meanders up the hills to the pastoral setting at Spielboden. Here we cross the Schiltbach stream, and start a steep and invigorating ascent to the local peak of Bryndli. We'll take our lunch enjoying birds-eye views of Mürren and the Lauterbrunnen valley, perhaps with a soaring golden eagle for company. From here the trail levels off, and becomes a relaxing stroll through flowery meadows to a quiet alpine hut at Bogangen. The trail back leads over a small ridge for more great views, before dropping back down to Mürren. (Hotel Eiger)

DAY THREE

The Upper Lauterbrunnen valley curls back beneath the white-capped Breithorn - considered by many to be the most perfect mountain in the region. It's also a nature preserve, and contains many wonderful hiking trails. One of our favorites takes us to the small farm at Obersteinberg, where the proprietors keep cows and make cheese by the same simple methods that have been used for centuries. This part of the valley also contains some of the area's prettiest waterfalls. (Hotel Eiger)

DAY FOUR

After breakfast, we'll say good-bye to Mürren, and board the train for Zermatt. You'll have a chance to check out the atmospheric village center, and perhaps a visit to the Matterhorn museum, before transferring by historic cogwheel train to Riffelalp. Enjoy wonderful views of the Matterhorn before settling in for dinner at the luxurious and recently-restored 5-star Riffelalp Resort. (Riffelalp Resort)

DAY FIVE

Taking quiet trails through fields and forest, we have a range of choices up to the wide ridge of Gornergrat, past marmots and small glacial lakes, to what has to be one of the finest viewpoints in Europe. The jumbled mass of the Gorner glacier stretches out before us, and behind that, Monte Rosa, Lyskamm, the Breithorn, and the Matterhorn form a spectacular backdrop. (Riffelalp Resort)

DAY SIX

We'll spend the day crossing Switzerland on the famous Glacier Express train to the mellow and pretty resort town of Pontresina. The hiking here is amazingly varied, and we'll have numerous hikes to choose from. Our



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home in Pontresina is the friendly and classy Hotel Walther, with a great pool and spa and wonderful food. Enjoy a short walk through the village or relax at the pool and extensive hotel spa. (Hotel Walther)

DAY SEVEN

From Pontresina, one of our favorite hikes anywhere is the panoramic Muragl traverse above Pontresina. Ascending through a quiet back valley, we'll hike up to the gorgeous views from Segantini hut. Traversing from here, pass small alpine lakes on a scenic descent back to Pontresina. Boasting quiet wooded stretches, abundant wildlife, and surprising views of the giant Piz Bernina and the pater-noster lakes of St. Moritz, this hike provides a wonderful farewell to the Engadine region. (Hotel Walther)

DAY EIGHT

After breakfast at our hotel, we'll say our good-byes and leave for our post-trip destinations.