

A hike in the Bernese Oberland

During the Annual General Meeting in March, Helen informed us that Estefania could no longer write the Travel Blog for the Grapevine. Since I enjoyed reading her blogs very much, I thought it would be a pity not to have new travel stories and thus I volunteered to continue her good work.

I have always been a keen traveller and have visited lots of countries on all continents. However since we are in Switzerland, I thought that this year it might be nice to concentrate on this small and diverse alpine country where we live. I will try to make it a mix of culture and sporty trips or a combination of the two.

In September it is not too late to go hiking and thus for this first edition I would like to share a spectacular hike that I did with Barbara Metaxas in the Bernese Oberland in June. This hike can be as easy or as difficult as you like as there are many options to take cable cars up or down the mountains if walking is too strenuous or if you are short of time. We took 3 days and started in Meiringen with Engelberg as our final destination. However, the hike can also be done the other way around and will be just as wonderful. The train from Nyon to Meiringen takes about 3h30.



If you plan to overnight in the Meiringen area, you could explore the Reichenbach Falls in the afternoon. The falls can be reached by the Reichenbach funicular that leaves from Willingen, south of the Aare river or by walking up the steep path besides the falls. When you see the Reichenbach falls cascading with a deafening roar, you can see how Arthur Conan Doyle thought them perfect to dispatch Sherlock Holmes and his arch-enemy, Dr Moriarty, by pushing them both over the precipice.

<http://www.grimselwelt.ch/en/transport-lift/reichenbachfall>.

The walk back down to Meiringen is pleasant and once there, you can enjoy a meringue which was invented in the town around 1600.

The following day, you can hike up the trail of the Via Alpina no. 1 past Reuti to Planplatten which is a good 3-hour hike with steep ascents. Alternatively you can take the cable car from Meiringen some- or all of the way to reach Planplatten which will bring you back on the Via Alpina. From there it is a 4-hour hike to the Engstleralp Hotel.

This hike is one of the most spectacular I have done in Switzerland. The Wetterhorn, Mittelhorn and Rosenhorn towered above us with constant views of the Trift Glacier as well as deep valleys far below us. On the way we saw a rich variety of alpine flora and we spotted marmots several times. The hike is not too strenuous, the altitude is around 2300m and the track winds up as well as down. Enough for us to work up a thirst and appetite when we reached the hotel.



The Engstleralp Hotel is a relic of old-world charm. It has been renovated but retains many of the old features complete with nostalgic rooms that have old wooden beds but also thin walls. It is in a beautiful peaceful location at an altitude of 1834m with a charming host,

good wholesome food and lots of cold beer. <http://www.engstlenalp.ch/en/> (From the end of June until mid-October a bus leaves from the hotel back to Meiringen at 16h42. A trip that takes about 50 minutes. This means that the hike could be done in one day if you return to Meiringen)

Just beside the hotel is a farm where mountain cheese is made and they welcome visitors to watch its production. They have excellent cheeses for sale as well as local butter and yoghurts.

The following day Barbara and I hiked up to the Joch Pass along the Engstlensee which is the largest mountain lake in the canton of Bern. It is very peaceful and the water often reflects the high mountains around it. (The Joch Pass can also be reached by cable car from nearby the hotel). We hiked from there down to the Trübsee and then took a cable car down to Engelberg which is teeming with tourists keen to take the aerial cablecar to the top of the Titlis, the tallest mountain in Central Switzerland.

<https://www.titlis.ch/en>



From Engelberg, the train to Nyon takes around 3h30