

Alps 2003

Itinerary details and route descriptions

Day 2 Wednesday 27 August
Meiringen (595m) to Schwarzwaldalp (1458m) to
Grosse Scheidegg (1962m) to Grindelwald (1034m)

Possible peak .. Schwarzhorn (2927m)

Map required is Landeskarte der Schweiz 5004 Berner Oberland

Kev Reynolds' guide book describes this as "the classic walker's route to Grindelwald. It's well worth tackling, either in its entirety or by taking the Postbus to Rosenlauri or Schwarzwaldalp and walking from there". He describes the route

Distance:	21km (13 miles)
Height gain:	1367m (4500ft)
Height loss:	928m (3050ft)
Likely time:	7½ hours

Take the main valley road out of town and across the Aare river to enter the neighbouring village of Willigen. About 50m beyond Hotel Tourist turn right along a driveway between a house and a barn. When the driveway ends, continue along a grass path rising steeply ahead. It brings you on to a narrow road which you follow briefly before cutting away again on the continuing path. Several times this path leapfrogs the road, but is waymarked with precision, so there's little chance of missing it. It leads over pastures and soon reaches the hamlet of Schwendi (792m, 50mins, refreshments)

By a combination of footpath and narrow road, gaining height all the time, you enter the heavily forested Reichenbach valley. The signposted route takes you past Gasthaus Zwirgi and along footpath in forest again until at last being returned to the road. Walking along this, you come to another solitary gasthaus, Kaltenbrunnen (1210m, 2h15min).

By now the gradient has eased and the valley stretches ahead, steep-walled and forested still. As you approach Gschwantenmad (1034m 2h35min), the valley opens to show the dramatic Wellhorn and the broken snout of the Rosenlauri Glacier ahead .. a memorable view. The wall above to the left, partly hidden from the road by trees, is that of the Engelhorner.

At Gschwantenmad, leave the road and take the farm track off to the right across the pastures. A footpath soon leaves this, heads through a collection

of trees, across more pastures, and rejoins the farm track at Rufenen, an open region of grazing land with fine mountain views. A signpost now directs you away across the meadows on the left in the direction of Broch and Schwarzwaldalp. Meadowland leads to forest, and out again to join the valley road at the hamlet of Broch. Bear right and follow the road a short distance to Schwarzwaldalp (1454m 3h35min).

A few metres beyond Chalet Schwarzwaldalp, leave the road again and follow a path off to the left, signposted to Alpiglen. This pleasant stretch of path takes you over the river among trees and shrubs at the foot of the Wellhorn. You recross the Reichenbach stream again, then go over an area of rough pasture to rejoin the road once more near a farm building. The continuing path is found on the right hand side of the road, and this takes you up to the Grosse Scheidegg, crossing and recrossing the road as it does.

Grosse Scheidegg (1962m 5h20min) is a true saddle slung between the Wetterhorn and the Schwarzhorn. From it you look over the rich basin of meadowland in which Grindelwald is scattered, and across to the Männlichen ridge. The bleak profile of the Eiger side-on is seen from here.

The way down to Grindelwald is easy and needs little description. It begins directly below the hotel, but soon offers numerous alternative paths. Most are signposted with times given, so you simply take your choice. All give ever-growing views of the mountains and glaciers for which Grindelwald is justly famous, and will take you past romantic timber chalets and farms brightened with petunias and geraniums at their windows .. it's a delightful walk down!

We're booked in to the Hotel Alpenblick, which we'll need to find, but I think it's on the descent from Grosse Scheidegg before we reach the centre of town. The phone number is 0041 33 853 1105 and you can read all about it at www.alpenblick.info. You can also have a look at the view on www.grindelwald.net/webcam1.html !

Possible peak for bagging ... Schwarzhorn (2927m)



If the weather is on our side, those who want can have a go at the Schwarzhorn by taking the 0815 PostBus up to Schwarzwaldalp (arriving 0900) and walking on to Grosse Scheidegg and Oberläger to start the ascent. The tourist information sheet claims that the Schwarzhorn is one of the peaks offering the most spectacular views in the Berner

Oberland .. so how can we resist?

You can download the information sheet as an Acrobat pdf from the following site, with a useful colour map showing the route

www.gofirst.ch/english/s_sommer/s_wan_wandern/s_wan_weg/s_wan_weg_3.htm

The well-marked route goes from Grosse Scheidegg to Oberläger, then ascends to the Schilt at 2258m. The walking route to the summit is the easterly path .. the westerly one is the climbing route! We'd descend by the same route to the Schilt, then slightly further down to First (2168m) for the cable car to Grindelwald.

The likely times are 5 hours to the summit from Schwarzwaldalp, then 2 hours descent to First. The last cable car is at 1800, so we should have plenty of time?!
