



The beautiful Bernese Oberland is an ideal destination for backpackers, adventurers and sport freaks. Some of the best scenery in the whole of Switzerland can be found in the Jungfrau region. The many spectacular spots will be sure to get even the most stubborn couch potato out into the fresh air! »www.berneroberland.ch; »www.myjungfrau.ch

some highlights

1 All about **Interlaken**, the number one resort for adventure and fun, see page 36.
 2 For **Grindelwald**, the glacier village in the Bernese Oberland, see page 32.

3 Jungfrauoch – Top of Europe (3,454 m / 11,333 ft)

The trip to Jungfrauoch (UNESCO World Natural Heritage) by railway is an unforgettable experience with a 100% guarantee of snow all year round!! Jungfrauoch is **the highest railway station in Europe!** From Kleine Scheidegg (2,061 m at the foot of the notorious Eiger North Wall) the Jungfrau Railway first climbs to the station at Eigergletscher (Eiger glacier). The trip continues through the Eiger tunnel to the stations at Eigerwand and Eismeer (with a five minute stop at each). Enjoy spectacular sightseeing through large observation

windows hewn from solid Alpine rock; and then the arrival on the Jungfrauoch, in the heart of a glorious glacier world on the very roof of Europe! There are lots of attractions on the Jungfrauoch, i.e. the ice palace, the plateau with hikes in the eternal snow, summer ski & snowboard park, and more. Don't miss this tour; it's wonderful!

How to get to the Jungfrauoch: there are **two routes** to the top, either from Grindelwald or from Lauterbrunnen via Wengen (or go up one way and down the other!). Both train routes terminate at Kleine Scheidegg, where you must change for the final pull at Jungfrauoch.

 An adult round-trip fare costs CHF 186.20. But there are **cheaper fares:** if you hold one of the "Swiss Passes" you get free travel from Interlaken to Grindelwald or Wengen, a 25% discount on the connecting ticket to Kleine Scheidegg and from there up to Jungfrauoch (for more about the "Swiss Passes" see **page 5!**) Another chance to save money is the **"Good Morning Ticket"** valid (from May 1st until October 31st). With the "Good Morning Ticket" you travel up on the first train of the day (departs at 6.35 am from Interlaken Ost / 6.55 from Lauterbrunnen / 7.17 from Grindelwald / 7.25 from Grindelwald Grund), and leave the summit no later than 12 noon. Then this whole trip costs CHF 140.– if you start from Interlaken Ost; or CHF 130.– if you start from Lauterbrunnen or Grindelwald.

Or if you prefer to sleep long, there is also a **"Good Afternoon Ticket"**, costs the same as the "Good morning Ticket" if you start from Kleine Scheidegg at 3.30 pm. »www.jungfrau.ch

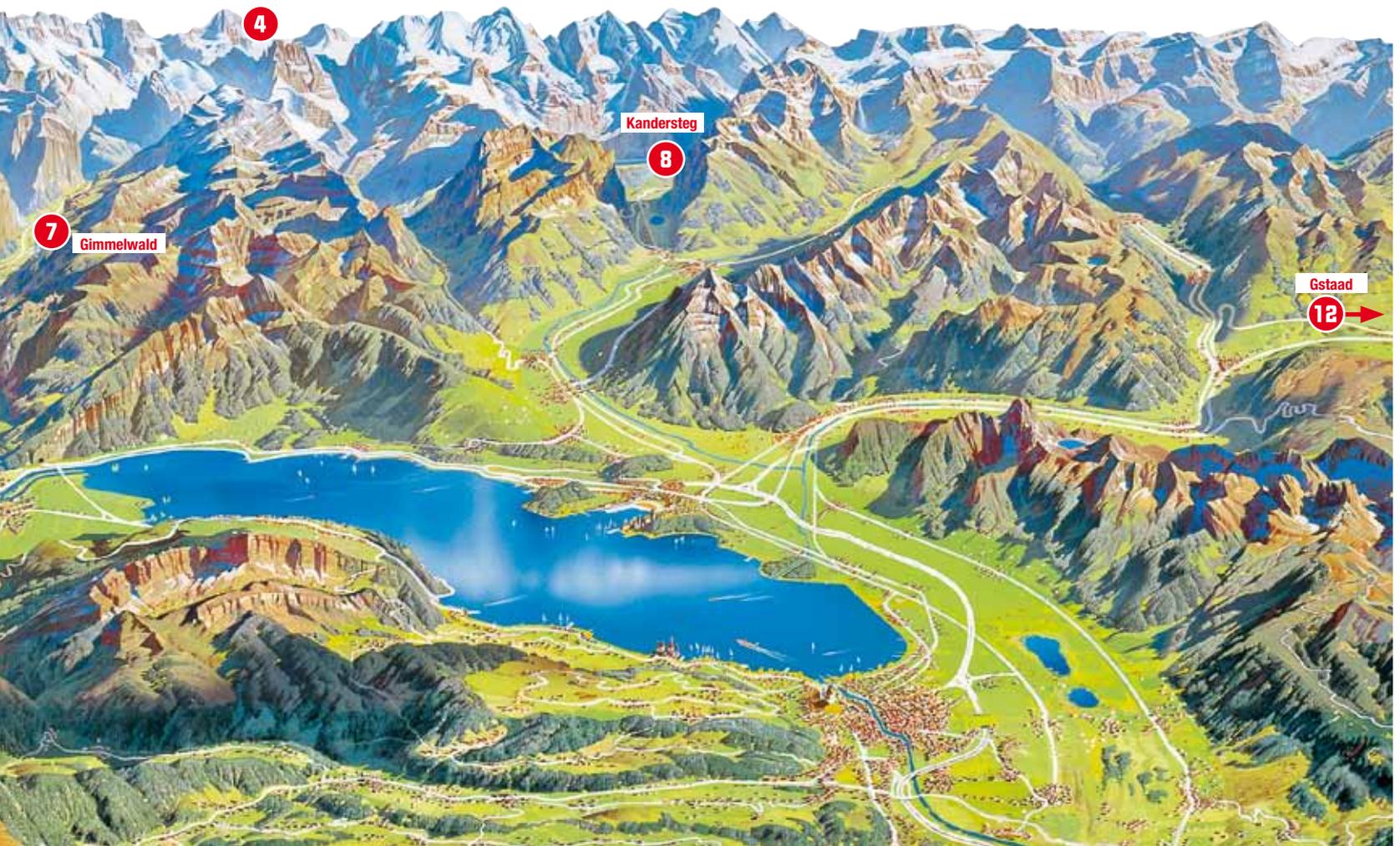
4 Schilthorn (2,970 m / 9,744 ft)

The Schilthorn is not as high as the Jungfrauoch, but a trip up to this summit is just as memorable. The Schilthorn summit offers the **best view** of Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau and on more than 200 other summits! The view from the exposed terrace on the top is dramatic! You can enjoy the exceptional views and sip cocktails in the **revolving Piz Gloria summit restaurant**,

featured in the James Bond film "On Her Majesty's Secret Service" (in the Tourist-orama you can watch extracts of this 007 movie which was filmed here in late 1968). Piz Gloria turns around its axis in 50 minutes, allowing a breathtaking view! The Schilthorn is reached by a series of cable-cars from the valley floor at Stechelberg, via Gimmelwald and Mürren, on a breathtaking ride up to Birg and then the Schilthorn summit. The Mürren-Schilthorn area is a **magnificent hiking region!** The rich variety of alpine flora, combined with breathtaking views of snow-covered Alps, dominated by the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau, guarantee you an absolutely unfor-



Schilthorn cable car in front of the Muerrenbach Falls near Lauterbrunnen



gettable outing. Ask at the tourist office for the detailed hiking map.

How to get to the Schilthorn: take a bus from Lauterbrunnen to Stechelberg (takes 16 minutes). From Stechelberg the cable-car brings you via Gimmelwald and Mürren to the Schilthorn (takes 32 minutes).

💰 A return ticket from Stechelberg costs CHF 94.80. But there are **cheaper fares:** if you hold one of the “Swiss Passes” you get free passage from Stechelberg to Mürren and a 50% discount on the connecting ticket from Mürren to the Schilthorn (for more about the “Swiss Passes” see **page 5!**) »www.schilthorn.ch

5 Bönigen

The village of Bönigen is situated on Lake Brienz, a short 12 minute bus ride from Interlaken. The village, with its quaint chalets and meadows along the lake, is an ideal starting point for excursions throughout the lake and mountain regions of the Bernese Oberland and the Jungfrau Region. An extensive net of hiking and walking paths and trails invites you to explore the area. Bönigen is also called «**the village of wood-carved houses**». Numerous buildings featuring lavish carvings and paintings, dating from 1549 and representing all building styles and eras, have been preserved and are concentrated here. Besides swimming in the lake (there’s a **nice beach** only 200 meters from the HI youth hostel),

Bönigen also offers a heated pool (with a 67 m long water shoot) and boat rental is possible as well.

How to get to Bönigen: by bus from Interlaken Ost (takes only 12 minutes), from Interlaken West (20 minutes), or you can walk along the lake (takes 20 minutes).

① Bönigen at Seestrasse 6, 033 822 29 58 »www.boenigen.ch

Budget Accommodation: Interlaken-Bönigen Youth Hostel, Aareweg 21, 033 822 43 53 (closed April 1st – 7th and after Oct 23rd) »www.youthhostel.ch/boenigen

6 Lauterbrunnen (796 m / 2,648 ft)

The valley that runs directly south from Interlaken leads first to Lauterbrunnen. Lauterbrunnen lies in an impressive glaciated valley between gigantic rock walls and summits. 72 waterfalls plummet over the walls down to the valley. The Lauterbrunnen Valley comprises one of the largest nature-protected areas in Switzerland. The friendly Lauterbrunnen village is a great base for nature-lovers wishing to explore the surrounding region in leisure. It’s where **amazing mountain railways** begin their climb through some of Europe’s most stunning scenery (Jungfrauoch – Top of Europe and the Schilthorn). At the southern end of the main street there’s the sparkling Staubbach Waterfall. And from the train station the public bus brings you to the spectacular

Trümmelbach Waterfalls. You reach the starting point to these impressive waterfalls via stairs or a lift and walk to the various 10 stages (open daily from April to November). From the top, above the falls, trails from Mettlenalp connect to paths leading to Wengen. In summertime, Lauterbrunnen offers many possibilities for **hiking and biking**, leading to the “most beautiful spots on earth”!

High above the “Valley of Waterfalls” lies Winteregg, with its popular **mountain restaurant**. Winteregg is easy to reach from Grütschalp by train or by a 30-minute walk along a panoramic path (you reach Grütschalp by aerial cableway from

Lauterbrunnen, there board the panoramic train to Winteregg).

Do you want to know how cheese is made from milk? From June to September there’s a guided tour to the **Cheese Dairy** on offer, starting every Wed. at 8.30 am (duration 2.5 hours), costs CHF 10.–, meeting point is the tourist office (registration until Tuesday 5 pm at the tourist office).

How to get to Lauterbrunnen: there are direct trains from Interlaken Ost (takes 20 min).

① Lauterbrunnen **tourist information** at Stutzli 6 (right opposite the train station), 033 856 85 68 »www.mylauterbrunnen.com

Budget Accommodation: Valley Hostel, Fuhren, 033 855 20 08, »www.valleyhostel.ch



Hiking in the Bernese Oberland with Mt. Eiger and Mt. Moench in the background



Hiking along Lake Oeschinen (1,578 m) high above Kandersteg JUN6047 Kleine Scheidegg and the impressive Eiger North Wall

7 Gimmelwald (1,367 m / 4,169 ft)

Tiny car-free Gimmelwald nestles on a sunny terrace and the arrival is already spectacular – a cable car takes you high over the rocks to Gimmelwald. The small farming hamlet of 140 inhabitants is a hiking paradise and the ideal starting point for **wonderful walks and hikes** in a wild, romantic area. The footpaths start in front of your hostel's door and offer an imposing view of the mountain scenery.

A wonderful **walk** is the one from Gimmelwald to the Tanzboden (dance floor). The path takes you from Gimmelwald through the Sefinental Valley and then climbs steeply via Busenbrand to Busenalp (2 hours). Then a 30 minute uphill stretch, rewarded by magnificent views from the Tanzbödeli plateau (takes approx. 3 hours in total).

Or try **trout-fishing** in the Sefinenlütschine-River – it's good fun (get your licence at the Mountain Hostel). But never forget that this sport is called fishing, not catching... And if the trout do not bite, follow in the **footsteps of James Bond** and visit the **Schilthorn peak**, one of the most exclusive view points in the alpine world. For details about this dramatic mountain see "Schilthorn" on the former page.

How to get to Gimmelwald: from Interlaken Ost, take the train to Lauterbrunnen and change to the bus for Stechelberg. In Stechelberg take the cable car up to Gimmelwald (approx. 1 hour total).

① Gimmelwald does not have official tourist information (but ask at the Mountain Hostel, they do have lots of information! Official **tourist information** is in Mürren (in the same building as the

Alpine Sports Center) 033 856 86 86 »www.mygimmelwald.ch

Accommodation: Mountain Hostel Gimmelwald, Niedere Matte, 033 855 17 04, »www.mountainhostel.com

8 Kandersteg (1,200 m / 3,660 ft)

The laid-back resort of Kandersteg, at the entrance to the longstanding Lötschberg Tunnel, is a picturesque, chalet-strewn village and a fine place to explore the surrounding area. Attractions are all rural and scenic. A prime hiking and recreation spot above the village is the dramatically crag-ringed **Lake Oeschinen** (1,578 m), a small lake accessed by a chair lift (from the eastern edge of the village). It's a twenty-minute stroll to the lake itself from the top station. There are some beautiful trails in the area and the walk back down to Kandersteg is only about 1 hour. 5 km north of Kandersteg (reachable by bus or on foot) lies the **Blausee** (blue lake) and its namesake **nature park**. Blausee is famous for its fresh trout (there's a nice restaurant). There are over 500 km of hiking trails around Kandersteg, the tourist office will help with suggested routes.

How to get to Kandersteg: there are direct train connections from Bern (takes 1 hour). From Interlaken Ost it takes 1 hour 10 minutes and you have to change trains in Spiez.

① **Tourist information** Kandersteg is in the village centre, straight ahead from the train station on the main street (Hauptstrasse), 033 675 80 80 »www.kandersteg.ch

Budget Accommodation: Kandersteg International Scout Centre, Wagetiweg, 033 675 82 82, »www.kisc.ch

9 Schynige Platte (1,967 m)

An easy trip – and a very fine mountain excursion – is the ride up to the Schynige Platte, from where you can survey some of the best panoramic views in the entire Alps. From Wilderswil the enchantingly old-fashioned cog railway slowly climbs up the mountainside via Alp Breitlauenen to the station at Schynige Platte (operates from May 28th – October 23rd). From here, you have an **overwhelming panoramic view**, especially of the famous three alpine peaks Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau. And many different marked trails lead out in all directions from here. The natural paradise is also famous for its unique Botanical Alpine Garden. The Jungfrau railways have some special offers i.e. "Teatime Ticket", "Guided Moonlit Hike", "Tandem Paragliding Schynige Platte", "Swiss National Day Party on Schynige Platte" (on Aug 1st) and many more. Check out »www.jungfrau.ch

A great **classic alpine hike** is the one from Schynige Platte via Faulhorn to Grindelwald-First. This demanding trail requires a good basic level of fitness; hiking time is about 6 hours. Important: the last descents by First Aerial Cableway are between 5 and 6 pm according to season. You should not underestimate your hiking time and include time for breaks!

How to get to Schynige Platte: take a train from Interlaken Ost to Wilderswil (takes just 5 minutes), from where the rack-railway will bring you within an hour up to the Schynige Platte top station (climbs 1,420 metres over a distance of 7.2 km through some spectacular scenery!). "Swiss Passes" holders get a **50% discount** (for more about the "Swiss Passes" see **page 5**)!

10 Grindelwald-First (2,168 m)

First is easily reached by aerial gondola from Grindelwald. The views from the top are among the best in the beautiful Bernese Oberland! Take delight in over 100 km of picturesque and well-prepared summer **hiking trails** suitable for every level of hiking, across flower-strewn meadows, past fields of mountain roses or bilberry bushes. On the botanical trail from First via **Lake Bachalp** (magnificent moorland scenery with typical vegetation) to Waldspitz-Bort (about 2 hours 20 minutes in total), you'll find over 100 different flowers. It's a popular voyage of discovery. Crystal-clear lakes reflecting snow-capped summits and pure alpine air. An easy hike without any uphill or downhill sections (1 hour 20 minutes) with spectacular panoramic views is the one from Grindelwald-First to the Grosse Scheidegg. Ask at the tourist office or at your hostel for the "hiking map Grindelwald-First".

 **Thrills and a great time are guaranteed with the First Flyer!** Originated in the USA (where it is known as a Zip Rider) Grindelwald-First has **the only one of its kind in the whole of Europe!** With the First Flyer the dream of swishing through the air becomes reality. Whizz down 800 metres at speeds of up to 84 km/h and a maximum height of 50 metres above ground. One ride costs CHF 25.–; but there are combi-tickets: up to First by cable-car, down with the First Flyer to Schreckfeld and from there back to Grindelwald, costs CHF 75.–. Another attraction on First is the **scooter-bike trip** from Bort Station down to Grindelwald. Such a trip costs CHF 30.– (includes

the aerial-gondola ride from Grindelwald to Bort and the hire of scooter-bike and helmet (deposit of CHF 100.– or credit card!). Or book a combination of both, a ride with the First Flyer and a scooter-bike trip (on the same day); costs CHF 79.– including cable-car, First Flyer, scooter-bike and helmet).

How to get to Grindelwald-First (or Bort): the gondola rises at the eastern edge of Grindelwald village (from May 21st until Oct 23rd). You can **save money** and book the **“combi-special 11”** for CHF 86.– (this includes one night’s accommodation incl. breakfast at the Downtown Lodge Grindelwald, the aerial gondola trip and a flight with the First Flyer (see advertisement on page 33).

1 Grindelwald – Kleine Scheidegg

Kleine Scheidegg (2,061 m), the pass between Grindelwald and Lauterbrunnen Valleys, lies directly beneath the towering trio of the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau. From here, the Jungfrau Railway begins its remarkable journey to the Jungfraujoch – Top of Europe. You’ll meet Alpine herdsmen with their cattle, climbers preparing to attempt the Eiger



Schilthorn Allmendhubel, starting point of several beautiful hikes

North Face and visitors from all over the world. Most people only linger for a few minutes while changing trains for Jungfraujoch, but Kleine Scheidegg is also the trailhead for a wealth of **high-country walks**. Hikes down to Grindelwald (4 hours) or to Wengen (2 hours) are relatively easy-going. A tougher one is the one-hour hike up to the Eigergletscher (Eiger glacier).

How to get to Kleine Scheidegg: there are two routes to Kleine Scheidegg. The one from Grindelwald Grund station takes 34 minutes, the one from the other side of the pass takes 45 minutes if you start in Lauterbrunnen. “Swiss Passes” holders get a **25% discount** (for more about the “Swiss Passes” see **page 5**)!

2 Gstaad-Saanenland

The Gstaad-Saanenland holiday region is popular with a charming mix of visitors. While the car-free chalet village of Gstaad attracts countless stars and starlets, the smaller neighbouring village Saanen offers attractive options a little further away from the hustle, but still close to the action. There are **hiking possibilities**, from short walks to high alpine tours. An enjoyable hike with panoramic views of the Saanenland region starts in the historical village of Saanen (at the train station). The route takes you past the Roti Egg and Gspan meadows as well as the Rittmal alpine pasture and ends at the Berghaus Kellerli. The journey back can be done either in comfort by cable-car or at exhilarating speed on scooters or bikeboards. Hiking time is approx. 2 hours 30 minutes; difference in altitude is 800 metres.

Or how about **river-rafting** on the Saane river (from Saanen to Château-d’Oex), kayaking, canyoning, hydrospeed, etc. The possibilities are countless. Read more about about Château-d’Oex on page 22.

How to get to Gstaad or Saanen: From Interlaken it takes 2 hours and you have to change in Spiez and Zweisimmen (from Gstaad to Saanen and vice versa trains take only 4 minutes). Easy to reach from Gstaad/Saanen is the Lake Geneva Region (trains between Saanen and Château-d’Oex take only 16 minutes, to Montreux 1 hour and 15 minutes). Read more about the Lake Geneva Region on page 18–22.

Tourist office: Promenade 41 in Gstaad (033 748 81 81).

Budget accommodation: Saanen-Gstaad Youth Hostel in Saanen, Chalet Rüblihorn, Spitzhornweg 25 (033 744 13 43, closed April 1st – 20th, April 26th – June 1st and after Oct 23rd) »www.youthhostel.ch/saanen

TIP!



Adventure sports

There is **pure adventure** in the Bernese Oberland. No other part of Switzerland has more adventure in store, hence most of the Swiss adventure companies are based in Interlaken. The Interlaken-Adventure.com network offers extra cool combinations of adventure activities and overnight stays in one of their hostels, summer and winter. During spring (April 15th until May 31st) and autumn (Sep 1st until Dec 15th) they offer **special packages** at sensational prices, i.e. **tandem paragliding** (from CHF 180.–), and **tandem hanggliding** (from CHF 240.–); **Tandem skydiving** from over 4,000 m (from CHF 390.–) with 45 seconds of freefall at over 100 mph; **Canyoning** (from CHF 135.–) or **river rafting** on a powerful mountain river (from CHF 125.–); **ice-climbing** down crystalline blue ice cliffs (from CHF 190.–).

There is no experience necessary and all equipment is included. All the prices above include two nights in a dormitory accommodation and can be upgraded! Well, how about bungee jumping, glacier trekking, rock climbing, a scenic flight, wakeboarding, funyak, windsurfing or waterskiing? The list of things to do is endless. Have fun and enjoy the great outdoors in and around Interlaken.

You can book pure adrenaline adventure right at the hostel’s desk or online on www.interlaken-adventure.com

swiss backpackers

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Check for the SB logo in the hostel list on pages 2/3

www.swissbackpackers.ch