

BERNER OBERLANDS DESTINATION GUIDE



Lauterbrunnen

Many believe Lauterbrunnen is derived from lauter meaning “many” and brunnen meaning springs, fountains, or wells. However there appears to be much controversy about lauter with varied translations such as: louder, clean or bright. Ask a local for their interpretation.



Lauterbrunnen is a municipality within Interlaken, in the canton of Bern. The Lauterbrunnen region contains the towns of Lauterbrunnen, Mürren, Wengen, Stechelberg and Isenfluh.

The town of Lauterbrunnen serves as the jumping off point for the alpine villages located high

on the cliffs above. A series of trains, cog railways, funiculars and lifts conveniently connect the towns in the region.

The River Weisse Lütschine flows through the town of Lauterbrunnen. Beginning in the glaciers (to the south) it flows north along the road you traveled from Inter-laken. Lauterbrunnen’s water attraction is the 300-meter tumbling waterfall know as Staubbach Falls. Check it out Staubbach Falls at night when it is illuminated. There is also a circular path leading to the falls and behind them as well.



Planning Your Day in the Alps

Go outside your hotel to the main road running through town. If the sky is clear, and there is no fog or clouds, you should see the majestic glacial mountains of the Eiger (13026'), the Mönch (13449') and the Jungfrau (13642').

Turn to face the snow capped mountains (or if you're fogged in, look in the direction opposite the train station). From this vantage point, let's discuss several options for today's adventures.

The town of Lauterbrunnen is in a deep valley. Cliffs rise steeply on both sides. To your right notice Staubbach Falls, the sheer cliffs and the tree line above. High above the tree line, and out of sight, are the villages of Grütschalp, Mürren and Gimmelwald. Above that soars the Schilthorn (9748'), advertised as "Piz Gloria."

To the left, checkout the little cog railway meandering through the valley, up the hill and finally out of view. The railway ends in the village of Wengen, the largest of the five towns in the Lauterbrunnen region. From Wengen it is possible to take a mountain lift to Männlichen (7317'), walk to Klein Scheidegg (6762'), and either take the train or walk back to Wengen. From Klein Scheidegg you can catch the "Jungfraubahn" railway to an area near the summit of the Jungfrau (11336'), advertised as the "Top of Europe."

There are many possible walks and hikes in the area. Most combine a series of mountain lifts (cable cars), gondolas, railways and trails.

All trails are open to the public and the walker has the right-of-way. Even if there are fences you are permitted access. Just close the gate behind you!

Often you will see signs pointing in various directions listing the length of time it takes to walk to a given destination. You will also see the term wanderweg which notes a walking path.

Snow often curtails walking and hiking activities, even in the summer months. Many of the lifts (including Männlichen) don't even open until mid-June. Before setting off on your own, seek the advice of a knowledgeable local (such as your hotelier or the tourist information office) to help plan your excursion. Here are some questions to consider:

- Are the trails open and walkable?
- How much walking through snow is involved?
- Is the route attainable given the amount of time you have? CAN I FINISH BEFORE DARK!
- Are the huts and shops open at the destination?

The weather changes rapidly in this region.

Usually the best weather is in the morning, so set off for your trip as early as possible (check the summit images on TVs as previously noted). Be sure to bring an umbrella and rain-gear, sunscreen, sunglasses, a hat and wear comfortable walking shoes. Never set off on a hike in flip-flops, backless shoes, sandals, or high heels!

Alpine Excursions in Detail

Excursions in the direction of the Schilthorn

On your right facing the Alps (south).

The Schilthornbahn delivers people (and goods) to the 3,000-meter summit on the Schilthorn. There are a lot of possibilities for excursions along the way. But if the weather is good, the TV monitors show clear views, and it fits your budget, this is the best excursion for the price.

#1. LAUTERBRUNNEN to SCHILTHORN — Begin as early as possible at the Schilthornbahn lift station (down the road, on the left, in the direction of Interlaken). Check the timetables at your hotel or pick up a brochure (available at your hotel or tourist office). Purchase your ticket.

A good route would be: Lauterbrunnen-Grütschalp-Mürren-Schilthorn and return. This route involves very little walking. See additional suggestion to include a walk or hike.

#2. LAUTERBRUNNEN-MÜRREN-GIMMELWALD-STECHELBERG-LAUTERBRUNNEN ~20 CHF—

This is my most popular all-day excursion. It is relatively inexpensive, allows you to walk on several alpine trails, and is not too difficult. Begin as early as possible at the Schilthornbahn lift station (down the road, on the left, in the direction of Interlaken).

Check the timetables at your hotel or pick up a brochure (available at your hotel or tourist office).

Purchase your ticket like this: Lauterbrunnen-Grütschalp, WALK, Gimmelwald-Stechelberg-Lauterbrunnen.

Take the lift to Grütschalp. GET OFF. DO NOT GET ON THE TRAIN. Cross the tracks and follow the path in the direction of Mürren (well marked by signs). Follow the trail wandering through pastures, patches of snow and woodlands for about an hour until you come to the village of Mürren.

Spend some time in Mürren doing a little shopping and either stop at a restaurant for lunch, or purchase picnic supplies at the local COOP grocery store.

Follow the signs to the next village of GIMMELWALD. There are various routes some taking you through gardens and backyards others down a modern asphalt street. Just keep look-

ing at the signs and follow them in the direction of Gimmelwald.

Walk for about an hour on a well maintained trail through alpine meadows, forests and snow patches.

Take your time! If it is a clear day, the scenery is breathtaking. Even if it is cloudy, the scenery is still beautiful and worth the hike.

As you enter Gimmelwald notice Walter's Hotel on the right. Stop in here for a beer or just "sit a spell" on one of the benches.

Follow the path as it snakes through "town." Down the hill, on the right, notice the local school house—one room, six grades (It's the building with a playground out front). Notice the fire station at the sharp turn on the left.

Continue down to the lift station. Catch the lift to Stechelberg and the bus back to Lauterbrunnen.

#3. NO HIKE: LAUTERBRUNNEN-GRÜTSCHALP-MÜRREN-GIMELWALD-STECHELBERG-LAUTERBRUNNEN

~30 CHF—

Take the same route as mention in the previous section. The only walking you need to do is through the town of Mürren.

Excursions in the Direction of the Jungfrau

On your left facing the Alps.

#4. LAUTERBRUNNEN TO WENGEN ~ 15 CHF—

This trip takes you to the alpine village of Wengen and involves very little walking.

The trip begins at the train station (follow the main road back toward Interlaken) located on the east (right) side of the main road from your hotel.

Purchase a “return ticket” Lauterbrunnen-Wengen-Lauterbrunnen.

The cog railway will take you on a slow and pleasant ride up the hill through woodlands and pastures. After twenty minutes you will arrive in Wengen (larger than Lauterbrunnen) where you can spend as much time as you like exploring the town. Return to Lauterbrunnen whenever you like.

#5. LAUTERBRUNNEN-WENGEN-MÄNNLICHEN-KLEINE SCHEIDEGG-LAUTERBRUNNEN ~60 CHF

Follow the instruction in route #4 above but purchase the ticket: Lauterbrunnen-Wengen-Männlichen (Walk) Kleine Scheidegg-Lauterbrunnen.

When you get to Wengen follow the sign to the Männlichen lift station. Ride the lift to Männ-

lichen. Get off and walk about two hours on a relatively level plateau to Kleine Scheidegg.

Catch the train to Wengen at Kleine Scheidegg and then ride the cog railway down to Lauterbrunnen.

When you first arrive in Wengen, don't tarry in town. Remember our rule of getting up high as early as possible to get the best weather. You can visit Wengen on your return.

#6. LAUTERBRUNNEN-WENGEN-MÄNNLICHEN-WENGEN-LAUTERBRUNNEN ~40 CHF

Follow the instruction in #5 above but purchase a ticket for Lauterbrunnen-Wengen-Männlichen (Walk) Wengen-Lauterbrunnen.

On this hike your ride all the way to Männlichen. Get out and walk (about an 1.5 hours) to Kleine Scheidegg (relatively flat plateau).

Stop at Kleine Scheidegg for a rest, snacks, lunch or provisions. Continue walking downhill for three hours until you reach Wengen.

The trail from Kleine Scheidegg to Wengen is an easy walk, but it is 90% downhill. Many people complain of the constant downhill stress on their knee and thighs. The alpine scenery is amazing and worth the time if you are up to the hike.

#7. LAUTERBRUNNEN-JUNGFRAU-JOCH ~180 CHF

This is the most expensive of all excursions in the area. If the weather is good, you want to do very little walking, and it fits your budget, there is no other grand and glorious vista.

Buy your ticket at the Lauterbrunnen train station: Lauterbrunnen-Jungfrauoch-Lauterbrunnen. Remember you can get off and explore any stop along the way, but do it on your return.

I've explained getting to Kleine Scheidegg.

From there board to train to the Jungfrau-joch. It takes about an hour to ride a small train through the Eiger and ultimately to an outpost on the Jungfrau.

This tunnel and railways were constructed over 100 years ago, without the aide of our modern technology. You'll get an up close and personal view of the solid rock and glacial face of the mountains. How does anyone ever climb these things?

When you get to the top, get off the train and study the chart which lists Jungfrau options for the day (many of them are weather dependent).

There is a restaurant, history exhibit, ice palace with ice carvings, and some videos. A tun-

nel leads outside where it is possible to ski, sled, dog sled or hike. The hike takes 45 minutes across the ice to Mönchslochhütte. Here you will find a small restaurant charging big prices.

From here an elevator leads to the Sphinx observatory where you can enjoy marvelous views of the Aletsch Glacier stretching to the south. This is Europe's longest glacier, stretching some 11 miles (and getting shorter every year).

Rainy/Cloudy Day Options

TRÜMMELBACH FALLS ~15CHF

The Trümmelbach Falls are located south of Lauterbrunnen on the main road. You can take the Post Bus from the Lauterbrunnen tourist office or get a group together and ask your Exploring Europe guide if the bus is available. At the falls you will ride an elevator up through the mountain and climb through several small caves to see the falls. The falls are a result of the glacial run-off water from the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau.

LAUTERBRUNNEN VALLEY WALK

Hike to Staubbach Falls then follow the riverside trail south toward Stechelberg. This is easy, mostly flat walking. The hike is about five miles roundtrip, but you can turn around anywhere to make it suit your needs.

ALPINE EXCURSIONS

Hikes #2 and #4 (from pages 2/3) are still great options for cloudy days. There is plenty to see and do even if the mountain vistas are obscured by clouds.



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