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# GLACIER HIKING THE SWISS ALPS

## TRIP DETAILS

*9 days ~ Switzerland*

*8 days strenuous hiking  
and glacier crossings (max.  
elev. 10,922')*

*3 night hotels,  
5 nights alpine huts or  
mountain lodges*

## 2008 DATES

*Jul 5–Jul 13*

*Aug 23–Aug 31*

*Sep 13–Sep 21*

## LAND COST

*\$3,395 per person  
(5-14 members)*

*\$3,695 per person  
(3-4 members)*

TRIP LEVEL  
ULTIMATE CHALLENGE

## HIGHLIGHTS

- *Hike the glaciers of the Swiss Alps—an MTS exclusive itinerary!*
- *See the great peaks of the Bernese Oberland: the Mönch, Eiger, and Jungfrau*
- *Cross the massive Aletsch Glacier, largest glacier in the Alps and a UNESCO World Heritage Site*

*Revised February 28, 2008*



# GLACIER HIKING THE SWISS ALPS

**M**any people see the Alps from afar, but few have the chance to strap on crampons and cross the high glaciers for themselves! Join expert MTS mountain guides for this strenuous trek over sparkling ice and beneath towering peaks. No previous experience with crampons is required, and you'll receive thorough training before heading out onto the Aletsch, the largest glacier in the Alps and a newly designated UNESCO World Heritage Site. You'll challenge yourself with eight glacier crossings in all, as well as rugged overland hikes over dizzying mountain passes, past dramatic crystal formations, and with views of famed peaks like the Matterhorn and Mont Blanc. If you're the kind of person who understands that a true alpine immersion requires more than an espresso on the veranda of a ski lodge, then this is the ultimate trip for you!



## ITINERARY

☞ This trip begins with a rendezvous at the hotel in Ulrichen, Switzerland, in the afternoon of Day 1.

### DAY 1 ~ Arrive in Ulrichen

You'll begin this trip by making your way on your own to Ulrichen, Switzerland. We recommend you fly into Geneva, then board the train to Brig and transfer onto the Glacier Express to Ulrichen. The scenic four-hour ride will take you through the state, or *canton*, of Valais to the Goms, a verdant region surrounded by some of the highest peaks in the Alps. Your guide will meet you at the hotel in Ulrichen in the early afternoon to go over the details and make sure you have all of the necessary gear for the challenging glacier traverses that lie ahead. Ulrichen (4,482') is a lovely mountain town, and we encourage you to take some time to enjoy this charming hamlet before we meet at the hotel for a briefing and an exquisite dinner.

*D...Hotel Nufenen*

### DAY 2 ~ Ulrichen—Rhône Glacier

We'll start the day with a brief ride on the Glacier Express until we reach the village of Oberwald (4,522') where we'll begin our acclimatization hike. This beautiful trail winds through fragrant conifer forests before emerging into classic alpine meadows thick with wildflowers. We reach Gletsch (5,850'), a spot where we'll have an impressive view of the wide swath cut by the Rhône Glacier. As the name suggests, this mass of ice is the source of the Rhône River, which flows west into Lake Geneva before reaching the Mediterranean near Arles, France. Surrounded by an amphitheater of mountains we will hike upriver, skirting the road that leads to the Furkapass. Our destination for the day is either the Grand Hotel Glacier du Rhône, in the valley at the foot of the Rhône Glacier, or the Hotel Belvedere, higher up in the valley and sitting at the edge of the glacier. Either way, you can relax and enjoy a glass of "Glacier Wine," a white wine stored in oak barrels in cellars that are cooled by the glacier itself. (5 hours hiking; elevation gain of about 3,130 feet.)

*B,L,D...Grand Hotel Glacier du Rhône, Gletsch, or Hotel Belvedere, Furka Pass*

**DAY 3 ~ Rhone Glacier—Grimsel Pass**

Today is our first day truly *on* the glaciers, and what an introduction it is! Leaving right from the hotel, a half hour walk along a moraine trail brings us to the edge of the Rhone Glacier. With technical gear in place, we'll set foot onto the ice for the first time and cross from one side of the glacier to the other. After removing our crampons we'll continue our trek on an alpine trail that takes us to our high point for the day—nearly 9,000 feet. Here we'll have a picnic lunch with a view of the Rhone Glacier framed by the Dammastock (12,088') and the Galenstock (11,941'). A descent of about an hour and a half brings us to Grimsel Pass (7,206'), where we get a northerly view of the Haslital Valley, its vertical granite rock walls worn smooth by the passage of the glaciers. To the south is a bird's-eye view of the southerly Alps, stretching through the Swiss cantons of Ticino and Valais, all the way into Italy. (7 hours hiking; elevation gain of about 900' and drop of about 1,785'.)

*B,L,D...Mountain hotel TBA*

**DAY 4 ~ Grimsel Pass—Oberaarjoch Hut**

We'll start off at the Grimsel Pass (7,206'), hiking an alpine trail just below the Sidelhorn mountain. This is a granite region with astonishing quartz crystals as well as other minerals found in the fissures in the rock. We'll continue along the lateral moraine of the Oberaar Lake region before coming to the western edge of the Oberaar Glacier itself (7,708'). Here we'll rope up, strap on our crampons, and ascend 3,130 feet in altitude to reach the Oberaarjoch Hut (10,842'). Once we reach the saddle we can look behind and be rewarded with an incredibly open view of the dramatic rock walls of the U-shaped valley that the Oberaar glacier carved as it crawled along ever so slowly. Looking beyond Grimsel Lake and Grimsel Pass, we'll have our first glimpse of the spectacular shark fin-shaped Finsteraarhorn (14,232'). (8 hours hiking; elevation gain of about 3,636'.)

*B,L,D...Oberaarjoch Hut*

**DAY 5 ~ Oberaarjoch Hut—Finsteraarhorn Hut**

This is the first of three days spent completely on the ice. As soon as we step out of the hut we'll be in crampons and safety harnesses. We begin by descending 1,850 feet over the Studer and Galmi Glaciers at the foot of the menacing Finsteraarhorn, Oberaarhorn, and Galmihorn peaks. When we meet up with the Fiescher Glacier we'll get a view of the ice's receding tongue, which once stretched all the way down to the now lush valleys of the Goms. To the south and west is the Valais, framed by the legendary 4,000-meter peaks of the Alps, including the Matterhorn, Dom, Weisshorn, and the Monte Rosa Chain. From here we'll begin our climb up the Fiescher Glacier and along the southwest rock wall of the Finsteraarhorn. We'll picnic along the way and overnight at the Finsteraarhorn Hut (10,150'). (6 hours hiking; elevation drop of about 1,850' and gain of about 1,000'.)

*B,L,D...Finsteraarhorn Hut*

**DAY 6 ~ Rest day at Finsteraarhorn**

We'll enjoy a relaxed day in the majestic company of the wide glaciers and high mountains. If you're feeling strong you can opt to do a summit hike to one of the nearby peaks. Or if you like, simply relax among the comforts of this newly renovated mountain hut. Either way your day will be rewarding.

*B,L,D...Finsteraarhorn Hut*

**DAY 7 ~ Finsteraarhorn Hut—Konkordia Hut**

We'll descend from the Finsteraarhorn hut and then cross the Fiescher Glacier, taking in the view of yet another massive peak, the Fiescherhorn (13,483'). We reach the small saddle at Grünhornlücke (10,922') and get a taste of what lies in store for us tomorrow: the magnificent Aletschglacier and Konkordiaplatz as well as the Jungfraufirn—"firn" is compacted snow older than a year—and the Ewigschneefeld (Eternal Snow Field). Our final descent takes

us along the Grüneggfirn to the Konkordia Hut (9,491'). (5 hours hiking; elevation gain of about 950' and drop of about 1,450'.)

*B,L,D...Konkordia Hut*

### **DAY 8 ~ Konkordia Hut—Fiesch**

Another day of immersion in the cathedral-like world of ice, snow, granite, and towering peaks. We leave the hut and descend onto Konkordiaplatz (9,150'). To the south lies the vastness of the Aletsch Glacier. The Aletsch is the largest glacier in western Eurasia, covering more than 45 square miles. Its topography is varied and includes fascinating features such as U-shaped valleys, cirques, horn peaks, and moraines. We'll be completely surrounded by an awesome amphitheater of glaciated mountains, including the Fiesherhorn (13,483'), Eiger (13,220'), Mönch (13,650'), Jungfrau (13,616'), and Aletschorn (13,969'). After admiring the surroundings we'll begin our hike onto the Aletsch Glacier itself. As we descend, the ice of the glacier transitions gently to the flower-filled alpine meadows and we'll reemerge into the vibrant world we left behind just a few short days ago. Once on the moraine, we'll remove our crampons and hike along a mountain path that leads to Fiescheralp. Looking backwards we'll have one last opportunity to take in the panorama from which we have just descended, as well as the Alps in the distance—the Weisshorn, Monte Rosa, and Mitschabel ranges. We'll raise a well-deserved glass of beer before descending by tram into the town of Fiesch. (6 hours hiking; elevation drop of 1,350'.)

*B,L,D...Hotel Christiana*

### **DAY 9 ~ Fiesch—Geneva**

Our trip ends here in Fiesch. After breakfast you will transfer on your own to the Geneva airport for your homeward-bound flight, or connect with other destinations in Europe.

*B...*

## **LAND COST**

\$3,395 per person (5-14 members)

\$3,695 per person (3-4 members)

Rates quoted are per person, based on sharing double accommodations.

Single Supplement—\$600 for “requested” singles; \$300 for “forced” singles. If you prefer single accommodations, you must pay the Single Supplement Fee. If you're traveling alone and wish to share accommodations, we'll try our best to find you a roommate. If that's not possible, we will only charge you half of the single supplement.

### **Tier Pricing**

Adventure travel works best with a small group of people. In order to operate these small groups, our trips are priced according to the number of full-price passengers on the trip. (Mountain Travel Sobek staff, trip doctors, and other discounted travelers are excluded from the count for this purpose.) We initially invoice you at the highest tier level price (the smallest group size we can operate). If the price drops due to an increase in group size, you will be refunded the difference.

### **What's Included**

- ◆ expert leadership
- ◆ accommodations in hotels or mountain huts

- ◆ meals as noted (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- ◆ luggage transfers
- ◆ basic medical and evacuation insurance

### What's Not

International airfare; any transfer to Ulrichen at the beginning of the trip or from Fiesch at the end of the trip; meals not noted in itinerary; insurance other than basic medical and evacuation insurance as noted above (we strongly recommend you purchase the supplementary trip insurance offered by Mountain Travel Sobek, which includes trip cancellation insurance); optional tipping to leader, guides and local staff; excess baggage charges; airport taxes; and items of a personal nature (sodas, alcoholic beverages, laundry, etc.).

### Air Travel

Airfare is not included in the land cost of our trips. For air reservations, we recommend you contact the airlines directly, either by phone or the Internet. In addition, many travelers elect to use their "frequent flyer" miles when traveling with us. **But please check with our staff before purchasing or obtaining your tickets.** We need to verify your arrival and departure schedule and ensure we have enough participants to operate the trip.

## WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

### Expert Leadership

Expert leadership is the key to an exciting, unforgettable experience. Our trips feature gifted leaders for whom leading trips is a true vocation. Besides showing you wonders you'd never find on your own, they make sure everything runs smoothly and safely without a hitch. They are knowledgeable about all aspects of your trip, and take great pleasure in sharing their insights with you. More than just guides, they positively elevate your experience by being teachers, companions, and the best of friends. You'll be in good hands with them every step of the way.

#### *Your Lead Guide*

**Mario Casella** has been an avid mountain climber since childhood, and became a licensed alpine guide in 1985. For years he dedicated himself to teaching climbing and ski mountaineering, until journalism became his main profession. He was a correspondent in Washington, DC, for the Swiss-Italian TV (TSI), for whom he directed documentaries and did research about the fall of the Berlin wall, Croatia, Bosnia, and more. He still works for TSI, but only part-time, as he is too busy guiding, ski mountaineering, climbing mountains the world over, and producing freelance documentaries, some of which feature ecological and economic issues relating to the Alps. This is his first trip with Mountain Travel Sobek.

#### *Your Assistant Guide*

In addition to a career as a Swissair pilot, from which he recently retired, **Bruno Hahn** is an experienced mountain climber and has guided mountaineering courses for the Swiss military. He is a long-standing member of the Swiss Alpine Club and now dedicates his free time to his passions of hiking, climbing, and ski mountaineering. But flying has also remained in his blood and, weather permitting, he never misses a chance to enjoy scenic mountain flying in his single-engine airplane. Bruno has been guiding for Mountain Travel Sobek for many years, and his trips have included *Hiking in Ticino* and *The North face Route*, a challenging trek in the Bernese Oberland.

### **Activity Level**

Mountain Travel Sobek trips are designed for flexible, energetic people who like to be active and have a spirit of adventure and a positive attitude. No mountaineering experience is necessary for this itinerary, but you need to be in excellent physical condition and health to enjoy this trip, as glacier travel is demanding. You will be trekking from 5-8 hours a day in a glaciated environment on ice and moraine, and while on the glaciers, you will be roped up and wearing crampons. Trekking at higher altitude in this type of mountainous environment for five consecutive days is challenging. You will also need to carry additional gear during the five days on glaciers, when your luggage will not be available to you at night. Additionally, weather can greatly affect the difficulty of any trip, and have a psychological impact on people. Because weather in the Alps is very unpredictable, you can expect sunny days, cold temperatures, and even snow.

There will be one guide for every 4-5 participants. With the exception of the first and last nights, when we will stay in three- and four-star hotels, we will overnight in mountain huts and in a simple mountain hotel at considerable altitude (10,842' maximum).

The level of fitness needed for this trip requires regular aerobic exercise for at least one hour 4-5 times a week. This may include aerobic fitness classes, power walking, jogging, cycling on hills, swimming, and cross-country skiing. Additionally, you must be able to sustain exercise for prolonged periods. We recommend that you start a moderate training program *several months* before departure, then slowly build up to a more strenuous level. Since training is highly sport-specific, include some hiking or running in your program. Consult your physician if you have questions concerning your underlying health. We can help answer questions for you or your physician concerning required levels of fitness and health conditions at altitude. If you have concerns about your ability to do this trip, we can suggest appropriate alternatives.

## **THE NEXT STEP**

### **Ready to go? Signing up is easy!**

Just call us at 1-888-MTSOBEK (687-6235) and reserve your spot! You can also book a reservation online at our website ([www.mtsobek.com](http://www.mtsobek.com)). If you prefer to use a travel agent, he or she can book your trip at no extra cost and provide other helpful assistance.

### **Then Leave the Rest to Us**

Before you go, we provide you with extensive pre-departure information, including clothing recommendations, suggested reading lists, up-to-date health advice prepared by our consulting physician (an expert in wilderness medicine), and other details.

### **Why Mountain Travel Sobek is Your First Choice for Adventure**

Mountain Travel Sobek is the pioneer in active adventure travel. No other adventure travel company can lay claim to that title. We were the first to take Americans trekking in Nepal, raft the wild rivers of Africa, and open up many previously inaccessible corners of the world to curious travelers. We set the standard for adventure travel and have a strong reputation for excellence that we do everything we can to maintain. Since we are the leading adventure company, we have a lot to live up to, so we make sure we provide safe, quality trips and the best customer service to our passengers.

### **References**

Don't take our word for how great our trips are. We'll be happy to provide you with references of satisfied past travelers.

### **Questions?**

Feel free to call us at 1-888-MTSOBEK (687-6235) if you still have any questions or concerns. We're here to help you. You can also check out our website at [www.mtsobek.com](http://www.mtsobek.com).

### **Note on Itinerary**

Although we will do our best to adhere to the itinerary schedule as listed, it is subject to change. Please read the Limitation of Liability and Booking Conditions in the four-page Participant Information Form. You can find all this information on our website at [www.mtsobek.com/faq](http://www.mtsobek.com/faq) and the form itself at [www.mtsobek.com/pdf/participant\\_info.pdf](http://www.mtsobek.com/pdf/participant_info.pdf).

### **Terms & Conditions**

Once you have made a deposit for a trip, you agree to be bound by all our terms and conditions including the Limitation of Liability Clause. The full Terms and Conditions can be found at [www.mtsobek.com/faq/#liability](http://www.mtsobek.com/faq/#liability) or call 1-888-MTSOBEK (687-6235) for a copy. These are partial conditions. Your participation is contingent on your signature on the full list of terms specified in the four-page Participant Information Form ([www.mtsobek.com/pdf/participant\\_info.pdf](http://www.mtsobek.com/pdf/participant_info.pdf)). Any dispute concerning, relating or referring to the Terms and Conditions, to any literature concerning this trip, or the trip itself, shall be resolved exclusively by binding arbitration in San Francisco, California, according to the then existing commercial rules of the American Arbitration Association. Such proceedings will be governed by substantive California law (but not procedural law) without regard to the California Arbitration Act.

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