

# SWISS MOUNTAIN TREK

## Proposed Geography Department tour for July 2010: Initial information

Following in the footsteps of the AGS Borneo Jungle Trek (1999), the Egyptian Pyramid Trek (2001), the Bali Trek (2001), the Rocky Mountain Trek (2002), the South West America Treks (2005, 2008), and the African Safari Trek (2009).

<b>DURATION</b>	= Approximately 16-18 days
<b>DESTINATION</b>	= Switzerland, France, (with possible brief stopover on way home depending on airline eg. Singapore)
<b>WHEN</b>	= Holidays at end of Term 2, 2010 (July)
<b>NATURE OF TRIP</b>	= This trip will suit those who enjoy the outdoors and are inspired by dramatic natural landscapes. Several relatively straightforward hikes of 2 to 4 hours will be a feature. Accommodation will be in hostels with participants expected to assist in food preparation etc if required.
<b>ROUGH COST ESTIMATE</b>	= Aim is to keep below \$6500 (but final cost is obviously dependant upon a variety of factors)
<b>NUMBER OF TREKKERS</b>	= A <u>maximum</u> of 12 students

While the trip is organised by the Geography Department, it is open to all AGS students.

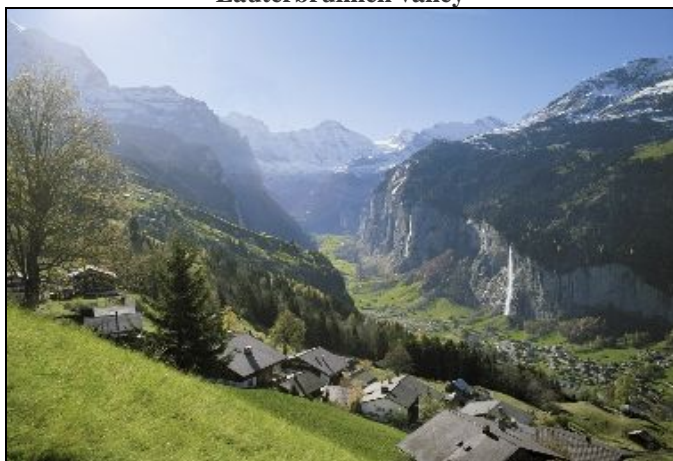
**If you are potentially interested and would like to be kept up to date with developments – please contact Mr M Paton in the Geography staff room (beside G4) or at [m.paton@ags.school.nz](mailto:m.paton@ags.school.nz) as soon as possible. Spaces are very limited and the last two tours have been over-subscribed within a couple of weeks of the advertising beginning.**

**If you are interested in securing a place on this trip, a deposit of \$500 as soon as possible is strongly encouraged.**

**Matterhorn above Zermatt**



**Lauterbrunnen valley**



Switzerland is without doubt one of the safest and most scenically beautiful countries in the world. Dramatic mountain landscapes, lush alpine meadows and quaint villages wait to take ones breath away at every turn.

The aim of this trip is simply to sample the very best that this spectacular region has to offer. Combining the standard tourist activities with a variety of hikes, participants will experience an outstanding alpine environment a safe and accessible way.

First stop Paris, the capital of France. We get rid of our jet lag with a couple of days taking in the sights and lifestyle of this glamorous city. See notable landmarks such as the Eiffel Tower, Arc de Triomphe and Notre Dame. Leaving Paris on the high speed train (TGV) we cross France into Switzerland at speeds up to 275km/hr.

The trek proper gets under way at Grindelwald village; the focal point of the Jungfrau Region. Here, the three giant peaks – the Eiger, Monch and Jungfrau, rise side by side to 4000m. A comprehensive network of trains and cable cars link the picturesque villages of the region. All stops present great opportunities to engage in hikes in a simply breathtaking environment. A not to be missed activity is the train to Jungfraujoch (3454m) - this icy, wind swept saddle, beneath the Jungfrau summit, is known as the “Top of Europe”. In contrast to this is the Lauterbrunnen Valley; a deep, glaciated feature regarded by many as Europe’s most scenic valley, with 1000m sheer sides doused by 72 waterfalls and quintessential Swiss villages hanging to the slopes above. Lower elevation hikes around First, Schynige Platte and Pfingstegg include lakes, mountain meadows and various interesting geologic formations.

From Grindelwald we head on to Zermatt. Unique for its no-car policy, transport around the village is by small electric pollution-free vehicles. The skyline here is dominated by the Matterhorn (4478m), which stands out amidst a region that has 36 mountains over 4000m. Ice fields and spectacular glaciers fill the valleys between. Hiking in this area includes some of the most scenic mountain walks in the whole of Europe – all within easy reach of the village. A network of cable cars, funiculars and trains ascend to various vantage points such as the Gornergrat (3130m) and Klein Matterhorn (3820m). Exploration of the village of Zermatt is an experience in itself, with no visit complete without exploration of the graveyard filled with those who tried, but failed, to conquer the mighty Matterhorn.

Last stop in Switzerland is Zurich, regularly named as one of the world’s three best cities.

A hearty yodel and its farewell to Europe - a one day stopover on the way home eg. Singapore is a possibility and would serve to add to our range of cultural experiences.

## **DRAFT ITINERARY (subject to modification)**

### DAY

**01 Fly Auckland to Paris**

**02 Paris**

*As we adjust to the different time zone we will explore some of the famous sites of Paris –eg. Eiffel Tower, Arc de Triomphe, Sacre Coeur, Notre Dame, Louvre etc...*

**03 Paris**

*Perhaps a visit to the Palace of Versailles, a coffee on the Champs Elysees – or a cruise down the Seine?*

**04 Paris to Grindelwald**

*Departing Paris we cross France at 275km/hr on the TVG train and enter Switzerland – passing through Interlaken our day finishes at Grindelwald, in the heart of the spectacular Jungfrau region of the Bernese Oberland.*

**05-10 Grindelwald (1034m)**

*Dominated by the triple mountain crest of the Eiger, Monch and Jungfrau, this region offers a range of absolutely breathtaking hiking trails along with picturesque Swiss alpine villages.*

*Probable excursions will include:-*

- *The longest gondola line in the world – Grindelwald to Mannlichen, rising 1070m, opens opportunities for hikes in an inspiring environment.*
- *The Lauterbrunnen Valley – regarded as the most beautiful valley in Europe, with a breathtaking cable car ride to the quaint villages of Gimmelwald and Murren clinging to the cliff top and possessing unbeatable views into the valley below and across to the Jungfrau, Monch and Eiger.*
- *Hike among the lakes, alpine meadows and glacial topography around First (2168m), Bachalpsee (2265m), the Faulhorn (2686m) and Pfingstegg (1391m). The panoramic hike around Schynige Platte (2068m) is noted for its spectacular views of the entire Alps.*
- *The Jungfrauoch – travel across the high pastures and inside the famous Eiger to the highest train station in Europe at 3454m. Panoramic views from the open-air Sphinx Terrace (3571m) to Germany's Black Forest, the Vosges in France and across to the Italian Alps. Step out on to the snow field for a first-hand experience.*

**11 Grindelwald to Zermatt**

*Travel by train through deep glacial valleys and spiralling tunnels as we cross Switzerland to the alpine resort of Zermatt.*

**12-15 Zermatt (1620m)**

*During our stay the spectacular scenery will be experienced at close hand through a variety of gondola and train rides combined with straightforward hikes. Wherever we look mountains higher than Mt Cook tower above us.*

*Likely excursions include:-*

- *The Gornergrat railway (3130m). Views of the Matterhorn (4478m) and the Monte Rosa Massif (4634m) amidst a sea of ice. Leisurely hike back down to Zermatt enjoying the alpine landforms and wildlife.*
- *The Klein Matterhorn (3820m). The highest cable car station in Europe with inspiring views into Italy.*
- *Cable cars to Furi, Trockner Steg (2939m) overlooking the gigantic Theodulgletscher (glacier), and Schwarzsee (lake) for the perfect views of the Matterhorn. Various hiking trails are available.*
- *Alpine village life experience, e.g. the Alpine Museum, Climbers Graveyard*

**16 Zermatt to Zurich**

*Departing Zermatt by train we make our way to what has been described as the cleanest and most efficient city in Europe – Zurich.*

**17 Zurich to Singapore?**

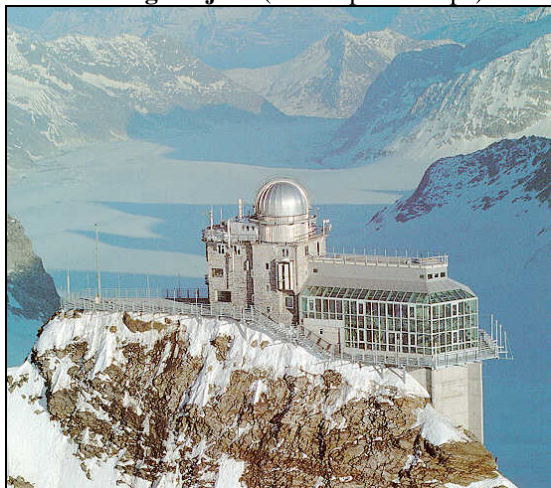
*Depending on which airline we fly – a possible one day stopover eg in Singapore; the tropical sun providing a stark contrast to the alpine experience of Switzerland.*

**18 Singapore to Auckland**

### **SOME EXTRACTS FROM PARENT LETTERS TO THE HEADMASTER AFTER PREVIOUS TREKS**

*“As far as my son is concerned he says that it rates as the best experience of his life so far.” “In my son’s words- ‘the trip rocked’.” “Truly the trip of a lifetime”*  
*“From the very first communication we have felt totally informed and confident with the handling of the trip and Mr Paton’s attitude of responsibility towards the boys was fantastic.” “... has worn us out with anecdotes and stories from the trip and shows no sign of giving us a break.” “the ultimate boys adventure”*  
*“The professionalism with which the information prior to and right up to departure was given allayed any fears that we had.” “A terrific learning experience”*  
*“Thank you for giving my son this fantastic opportunity.” “An extremely well organised tour with a well rehearsed strategy.” “...most amazing experience”*  
*“We hope Mr Paton has the energy to be involved in the future to give other boys the same fabulous experience.” “The trip was clearly a landmark event in our son’s life.” “Mr Paton has shown that he has considerable expertise in organising trips for boys overseas.” “This has been an extremely well orchestrated trip”*  
*“The return of a positive and confident young man, confirmed what a wonderful adventure the boy’s have been on.” “For our son it was a dream come true”*

**Jungfrauoch (The Top of Europe)**



**Mannlichen (with Eiger, Monch, Jungfrau behind)**



Some photos from previous treks are displayed on the windows and walls of the Geography department.