

Switzerland

Wildflowers of the Bernese Oberland

A Greentours Itinerary

The Bernese Oberland transports us back to a by-gone era in more ways than one. Beautiful alpine and subalpine meadows backed by the timeless Swiss Alps have changed little since a century ago. In Wengen, our base for the entire trip, the timber-framed buildings and Belle Epoque hotels are only enhanced by the town's car-free policy. Indeed our tour is a car and minibus-free tour! A wonderful network of mountain railways, cablecars and trails allows easy access to the breathtaking scenery, botanically rich alpine meadows, and spruce forests from our delightfully positioned hotel.

Day 1

Arrive Zürich and train to Wengen

From Zürich Airport we'll catch a train to Wengen. The hotel will meet us and collect baggage, and we'll then have an eight-minute walk from the station to the hotel. Wengen is largely car free as no public road leads to the village. After a welcome drink we'll be allocated our rooms, some are south facing looking towards the Lauterbrunnen Valley and others are facing the woods and up to the Mannlichen Ridge.

Day 2

Kleine Scheideg and Wengenalp

The train up to Kleine Schidegg provides fantastic panoramas to the south looking towards the Jungfrau, Monch and the side of the Eiger. We travel through beautiful meadows full of flowers passing Alpenrose in flower. Today we'll explore a trail through rich alpine turf with abundant Frog Orchids and Small White Orchids, *Gentiana acaulis* and *Gentiana verna*, all growing right by the side of the path. There are amazing views towards the Grindlewald. By a fantastically sited cafe is a large rock full of beautiful Alpines such as *Primula hirsuta*, *Lloydia serotina* and *Androsace helvetica*.

After a picnic lunch amongst the flowers we'll walk back down to the station and then continue our walk towards Wengenalp Station. We'll pass through those meadows we saw from the train, these decorated with splashes of colour from *Trollius europeus*, *Ranunculus aconitifolius*, and the many *Orchis* growing in the boggy areas.

Day 3

Mannlichen

A cablecar takes us up to the Mannlichen in about ten minutes where the views are stunning. Looking down to Interlaken and on to Lake Thun, clockwise we can see the Schilthorn, Murren, Jungfrau, Eiger, Grindewald and Schengen Platte, a lot of these areas we are going to travel to over the next few days. Already on the way to the famed viewpoint there are meadows full of *Gentiana acaulis*, and areas where snow patches have just melted give us *Crocus albiflorus*, *Soldanella alpina*, *Primula hirsuta* and *Primula farinosa*. We'll walk the opposite end of the Mannlichen path from yesterday, this time towards Kleine Schidegg, soon entering fine turf littered with many *Anemone narcissiflora*, yellow *Pulsatilla alpina apiifolia* and the white *Pulsatilla alpina*, there are even some hybrids between the latter two. By snowpatches we'll also find the beautiful *Pulsatilla verna* with beautiful pink backs to the petals. On rock faces we can find large clumps of the lovely *Androsace helvetica* though it can often be awkward to get to.

Later in the afternoon there's the option to go straight back to Wengen by train or to carry on up by train to the Eigergletscher at 2,320m. A short walk from the station takes us down onto glacier screes where we can find *Thlaspi rotundifolia*, *Viola cenisia*, *Cerastium uniflorum* and *Linaria alpina* all in a stunning setting right underneath the glacier!

Day 4

Schilthorn & Winteregg

Bus, cable car and cogwheel see us to 2970m above sea level on the Schilthorn where the 360° views are sensational. We'll enjoy a coffee and the view in the James Bond revolving restaurant - a James Bond movie was partially filmed here. Walking the paths we will find thousands of *Ranunculus glacialis*, a beautiful white buttercup which turns pink once it is pollinated. There's also *Thlaspi rotundifolia*, pink *Saxifraga oppositifolia* and sometimes *Androsace alpina* depending on how much snow there is at the top.

We descend by cable car to Murren for a sedate walk through the woods and meadows looking at the flowers. Here are *Aquilegia atrata*, *Corallorhiza trifida*, the Coralroot Orchid, and tiny *Listera cordata*, the Lesser Twayblade, all of two inches high and with either green or brown flowers! There are many other nice woodland plants including *Pyrolas*, *Phyteumas* and *Vacciniums* to name but a few.

Day 5

Biglenalp

From Wengenalp we are looking straight up at the Jungfrau. This morning's walk takes us down past two cheese farms. The meadows are still in full flower but in the next few

days the cows will get to munching them as they move up the side of the mountain section by section. On Biglanalp we can see the Lady's Slipper Orchid. Some of the clumps are spectacular with a dozen flowers or more. Also here is the lovely *Moneses uniflora*, the One-flowered Wintergreen. The path continues towards Wengen through meadows and woodland with fine flowers such as *Orchis ustulata* and lots of *Gentiana lutea*.

Day 6

Grindlewald and First

Today we'll head to Grindlewald and thence by gondola to interestingly-named First. A walk takes us up towards a lake where by the first snow patches are many large clumps of *Gentiana verna*. Exploring the area we'll find lots of *Soldanella pusilla* and *Pedicularis oederi*, whilst by streams are *Saxifraga stellaris* and more *Gentiana acaulis*. Descending we'll take the new cable car from Grindlewald back up to Eigerglescher with great views up to the North Face of the Eiger.

Day 7

Schynige

A little alpine train takes us up to Schynige Platte. Here we'll visit the famous Alpine Garden which is full of local Swiss plants which handily are all labeled – they have no less than 800 species. From here we'll take a ridge walk which gives wonderful views down across Lake Brienz and Lake Thun. The plants are equally glorious with wonders such as *Paradisea lilastrum*, *Gymnadenia conopsea*, *Traunsteinera globosa* and the rare *Campanula thyrsoides*.

Day 8

Train to Zürich and departure

This morning trains will take us back to Zürich airport in plenty of time for our flight back to the UK.

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