

Waterfalls and Three Cultures Tour - Daily Itinerary

- Day 1 We personally meet you at the Zurich airport or the Zurich main train station on the morning of July 4 to validate your Swiss Travel Pass and exchange currency. We board our first train to the lovely city of Bern, the capital of Switzerland and a World Historic Site. We lead you on a tour of the city with highlights such as the picturesque farmer's market, the beautiful minster (a three-aisled pillared basilica) and the famous Zeitglockenturm (towering clock). We next visit the small village of Thun and enjoy a light lunch (provided by Yankee Travels) during a wonderful lake steamer ride while traveling down the Thunersee. We will then complete our picturesque train journey to Saas Fee.
- Day 2 The light hikers do an exciting part of the famous panorama hike above Zermatt. This will include wonderful views of the Matterhorn and the higher peaks around the village and a visit to the lovely hamlet of Zmutt. You may choose to descend by a cable system or walk back to the village through a beautiful area with many old-style mountain farms.. The rigorous hikers will do a higher panorama hike above Zermatt enjoying constant but ever changing vistas, including the Matterhorn.
- Day 3 The light hikers will ride the famous Gornegrat cog railway above Zermatt and do a dramatic hike with vistas of glaciers and a gorgeous view of all the mountains around Zermatt. This day will be much closer to the Monte Rosa, the highest mountain in Switzerland. The rigorous hikers will do an exciting trek across the Monte Rosa glacier. No special equipment is necessary for this glacier hike but you do need to have a sense of adventure. This day will feature high alpine flowers as well as spectacular vistas for both groups.
- Day 4 We will choose from many options including a hike to a high alpine hut where the technical climbers stay before their ascent of the Matterhorn, a hike into the lovely Findeln Valley and other equally attractive hikes.
- Day 5 We travel to the Engadine Valley by means of one of the world's great train rides, the Glacier Express. We reserve a special first class panorama car to make our journey even more delightful. The Glacier Express crosses 291 bridges and uses 91 tunnels on its way to St. Moritz. Pontresina, a quaint and quiet village, is a 10 minute train ride from St. Moritz. During our ride you may relax in 1st class comfort while sipping wine and enjoying some delicious Swiss cheeses and bread, watching the lovely Swiss countryside flow past you punctuated by the crossing of dramatic viaducts and the vistas of snow covered peaks. This is a classic journey few other companies offer as part of a hiking tour. We think this is a superb way to permit your muscles to re-energize.
- Day 6 Both the hikes begin in the lovely town of Sils Maria. From there both groups hike (higher and lower routes to choose from) above the beautiful Fextal, along a high ridge to a gorgeous high alpine lake (brave and hearty hikers go swimming). Both groups return along a ridge to a spectacular view of all the lakes of the upper Engadine Valley. This ridge is always covered by many species of lovely wildflowers; we even know where to find the elusive edelweiss in bloom.
- Day 7 Both groups travel by funicular to a high plateau. The light hikers do a lovely ridge walk with continually changing views of St. Moritz, the lakes of the Upper Engadine Valley, and the Rosegg and Morterasch Valleys as well. The rigorous hikers take a higher route past a high mountain hut, joining the walkers for a chair lift ride that takes us back to Pontresina.
- Day 8 FREE DAY. Both groups enjoy an early morning tour by our Swiss naturalist/cultural guide of the lovely village of Zuoz. Zuoz is a beautifully preserved town resplendent with ancient dwellings, doorways and churches. Then most people choose to go over the highest pass traversed by another great train ride in Switzerland, the Bernina Express, which takes you through the Bernina Pass. The Bernina Pass is the highest location any point to point train traverses in all of Switzerland. There are great walks in this area and a lunch in Poschiavo, a village with a distinctly Italian feeling, makes a wonderful destination. Other popular uses of the day are to enjoy all that St. Moritz has to offer including spas and unique shops or to attend an outdoor classical music concert followed by a relaxing lunch and some time in the wonderful swimming pools in Pontresina.
- Day 9 Again we will choose from a wide variety of hikes that this beautiful area of Switzerland offers. We can choose high hikes over passes, lovely light hikes through glorious valleys of wildflowers, and hikes to mountain huts and berg restaurants. This night our hotel offers a Swiss specialty meal - raclette, a wonderful dinner with this delicious melted cheese.

- Day 10 We travel to Kandersteg, this time passing by Davos and Klosters and doing part of the Golden Pass train journey as well. Along the way we will stop in Luzern. Here you have a choice: enjoy a delightful afternoon in this charming city perhaps lunching along the lovely Lake Luzern or choose to continue your train journey culminating with a lovely ride on a lake steamer on the Brienzensee before arriving in Kandersteg.
- Day 11 - We begin our hikes in Kandersteg, our favorite hiking village because of its grand views of lakes and mountains. The light hikers enjoy a lovely walk along streams and massive waterfalls in a valley to the west of Kandersteg. The rigorous hikers do a high hike to a remote meadow above Kandersteg with one of the finest and most dramatic views in all of Switzerland. We are very likely to see large wild animals in this area.
- Day 12 We visit one of Switzerland's largest alpine lakes. The light hikers walk up to and around the lake, returning on a trail above the lake for a beautiful panorama. The rigorous hikers take a higher route above the lake and up toward a pass above the valley for a panorama that will take their breath away at the foot of two glaciers. The rigorous hikers may instead choose to hike to a high alpine hut above the lake.
- Day 13 The light hikers do a gorgeous valley walk along streams and near glaciers with lovely views of this hidden valley. The rigorous hikers enter a different hidden side valley and hike over a dramatic high pass which includes a short hike over part of a glacier, finishing in the same valley the light hikers have visited. These are among our favorite hikes in all of Switzerland and a wonderful way to end your tour. We always end our tour with an "awards night" and a celebratory dinner.
- Day 14 You take your last train ride to Zurich for your flight home. The earliest you could reach the Zurich airport would be about 8:16 AM.