



TONI KRASICKI

adventuregirlwrites.com



# SWITZERLAND THE SPECTACULAR

*Toni Krasicki touches base in Interlaken for a fix of mountain adventures that will satiate any thrillseeker.*



The Eiger is the ogre, the Mönch is the monk, and the Jungfrau is the virgin,' explains Martin, my Swiss guide. 'The monk is protecting the virgin, otherwise the Eiger would be on the Jungfrau and we would have a 8000m high mountain!' I've got to say it's not quite the answer I am expecting when I ask the height of the mountains we are admiring. Actually, I'm gobsmacked by the magnificent jagged snow-covered beauty of the three distinct peaks that have miraculously appeared as our train pulls in to Kleine Scheidegg station.

We've taken the train up into the Jungfrau Valley from Interlaken, a tourist hub wedged between two lakes and surrounded by pretty picture-postcard mountains. A well-known adventure destination, Interlaken has something for everyone, enough shopping and high-end hotels for the well-heeled, and an arm's length list of heart stopping adventure activities for outdoor lovers. An all-season resort, there's just as many

activities on offer during the winter as in the summer. The Jungfrau Valley alone offers 214km of pistes for skiers and snowboarders, 100km of winter-walking trails and 50km of sledge runs which, invariably, turn into a hiker's and mountain biker's mecca in the summer months.



The parting of the clouds is perfect timing, as we make our final train change for the last leg of the trip to Jungfraujoch – the top of Europe! The Swiss engineering is impressive, to put it mildly, and to think that over 100 years ago a railway line was cut through the rock of the Eiger and the Mönch to create Europe's highest-altitude railway station at 3,454m above sea level. The views are sensational as you're smack bang in the middle of the snowy Swiss Alps with views of the 22km long Aletsch Glacier. The sub-zero temperatures are tough to handle if you aren't dressed for the occasion.

I miss out on trying the zipline, sledge park or have a ski or snowboard, as the snow park has been 'snowed under'. With six restaurants/eateries, an ice palace, a walk through history presentation, and gift shops – want to buy a Swiss watch anyone? – It's easy to spend a few hours here.

We take an alternate route back to Interlaken and board the world's longest cogwheel railway to the glacier village of Grindelwald. Grindelwald, with its gingerbread-style buildings, is a jumping off point for adventures further up on First Mountain. Arriving by a 25-minute Gondola (cable car) ride, First offers breathtaking views back towards the Eiger North Wall from the summit station and has a multitude of hiking trails around picturesque Lake Bachalpsee. To descend, skip the Gondola and take the First Flyer, an 800m zip line, and then jump on scooters for the final leg to Grindelwald. You'll be back in Interlaken and soaking sore muscles in 30 minutes, or better still stay at the First Mountain Guesthouse and help the monk keep watch over the ogre and the virgin. **OH!**

## NEED TO KNOW

### Stay:

- Splash out at the historic Victoria Jungfrau Grand Hotel & Spa that melds old-world sophistication with a modern appeal. Spend an evening in the Spa, which has fitness facilities including classes, treatment rooms offering oriental therapies and western treatments and a spectacular indoor pool with Jacuzzis including a simmering outdoor one. The steam room and sauna are the ideal hideout during winter months. [www.victoria-jungfrau.ch/en/](http://www.victoria-jungfrau.ch/en/)
- Great value with the same magnificent views, the Metropole Swiss Quality Interlaken Hotel may be the town's eyesore, but it's clean and comfortable with a hearty breakfast included. [www.metropole-interlaken.ch](http://www.metropole-interlaken.ch)

### While you're there:

- Take a ferry ride on Lake Thun to the historic town of the same name and wander around the gorgeous cobbled streets of the old town. Break the journey at the quaint lakeside village of Spiez.
- Try something adventurous like paragliding, river rafting, canyoning, or glacier trekking.

### Getting There & Around:

- SWISS flies to Zurich from Australia via Hong Kong, Bangkok or Singapore. [www.swiss.com](http://www.swiss.com)
- The Swiss Pass is available in a variety of multi-day lengths and includes unlimited train, bus and ferry travel across Switzerland, with free admission to 450 museums and exhibits, and 50 per cent discount on mountains trains and cable cars. [www.raileurope.com.au/pass/swiss-pass-7314](http://www.raileurope.com.au/pass/swiss-pass-7314)
- For access to excursion destinations and hikes in the Jungfrau Region purchase a Jungfrau Railways Pass. [www.swisspasses.com/railpass/swiss-regional-rail-passes/packages/jungfrau-unlimited/](http://www.swisspasses.com/railpass/swiss-regional-rail-passes/packages/jungfrau-unlimited/)

### Train versus Air Travel

In a recent Traveller (SMH) online poll, 2,903 people were asked their preferred form of holiday transport. Sixty six per cent voted for the train, while only 26 per cent preferred the plane. It's quite surprising with the high volume of air travel brought on by the influx of low cost carriers, and where it is often easy to get caught up in the destination rather than the journey. If you have the time, travelling through Europe by train is an absolute joy as you often leave and arrive right in the middle of the city. For instance, nothing beats avoiding London's busy airports by gliding in on the Eurostar to St Pancras Station, Kings Cross from Paris's Gare du Nord, the whole trip takes just over a few hours. [www.raileurope.com.au](http://www.raileurope.com.au)