



COSLEY & HOUSTON ALPINE GUIDES
151 Route de Lausenaz • 74310 Les Houches • France +33 (0)4 50 21 24 47
www.cosleyhouston.com • kathyandmark@cosleyhouston.com

Grindelwald to Leukerbad Trek with optional Wildstrubel ascent Personal Equipment List

The Alps are noted for incredible mountain trekking in a very civilized setting. The high towns and villages, mechanical lift systems and well-maintained trails all make the high country relatively easy of access. In addition the extensive network of mountain huts permit multi-day travel carrying little more than a small daypack. The Swiss rail company puts frosting on this cake of hiking convenience, by offering a reasonably priced baggage forwarding service which will send a bag to the train or bus terminal of nearly any Swiss town or village, it will arrive there within 36 hours and be held in their baggage depot until your arrival.

Our trekking itinerary will take advantage of all of these amenities. We will stay mostly in comfortable hotels in villages and towns, with two nights in rustic lodges in more remote settings. Those opting for the Wildstrubel climb add-on will spend one night in a climbers' hut. This hut has bunks with comfortable mattresses, blankets, and nutritious meals cooked by a professional staff. The difference between this hut and our other lodgings, is that in the hut the sleeping rooms are dormitory style, the meals served family style, and there are no hot showers or potable running water available.

For trekkers and climbers alike, we will have the option of sending a fresh, clean set of hiking clothes to meet us on the morning of day 5, in Kandersteg. Our dirty clothes can be switched out and sent onward in their turn, either to our terminus at Leukerbad, back to our start point at Grindelwald, or wherever in Switzerland that you plan to go next after the trek; although this adds a layer of complexity, it does allow you to freshen up mid-trip. Likewise, those wishing to continue on for the climb of Wildstrubel, can have their climbing gear forwarded to Leukerbad so that they don't have to schlepp it along the whole week!

The trekking on this program is strenuous and occasionally somewhat exposed. Every day involves thousands of feet of ascent or descent. To enjoy the trip to the utmost we will want to travel light; in the mountains, weight is our enemy!

There are two categories of clothing and equipment listed here: that needed for the trek itself, and that needed for those opting to continue on to climb the Wildstrubel. Also, there will be the option to switch out some of our dirty clothes for clean clothes on day 5. Doubles of some items that you may want to switch out, are indicated with an *.

CLOTHING

Hiking or Mountaineering Boots (B0 or B1 for the trek only, B1 or B2 for the Wildstrubel add-on) - Boots continue to evolve, and lighter, warmer and more comfortable models appear with every passing year. If you are considering investing in a new pair, this trip might provide a good excuse to do so. Boots are rated according to intended use.

B0: Not really suitable for crampons, but adequate for the trek only.

B1: Flexible boots that are suitable for trekking and hill walking, these are compatible with C1 crampons only—that is, flexible crampons that attach to the boot only with straps.

B2: Semi-rigid boots designed for mountaineering and easier grade snow and mixed climbing, but not for steep ice and harder mixed climbs. Compatible with C1 or C2 crampons—C2 crampons are more rigid and attach to the boot via a lever that snaps onto a deep groove or "shelf" in the back of the boot.

B3: Fully rigid boots for mountaineering, ice and mixed climbing at all grades - but not always the most comfortable boots to walk in (though things are improving). C1, C2 or C3 crampons—C3 crampons use the back lever, and also have a wire "bail" that fits neatly into a groove on the toe of the boot. These will not be suitable for either part of this program, as they are too heavy and uncomfortable on the trail.

For those ending the trek in Leukerbad, a B0 or B1 boot is adequate.

For those continuing on to the Wildstrubel climb, the ideal boot for the entire trip would be one with a B1 or a B2 rating. A B1 boot will be the most comfortable for the miles of trail walking on this program,

but note that they will only be compatible with a C1 type of crampon (fully strapped on). A B2 boot will be potentially less comfortable, but more supportive and waterproof than a B1 boot, and more versatile in terms of the crampons that can be used (compatible with back-lever type crampon). These heavier and stiffer boots can become uncomfortable after long miles on the trail, but if you have a well-fitted and broken-in pair that you know will not hurt even after a long day, they should work for this program. We don't recommend a B3 boot for this program, as they are typically too warm, too heavy, and too stiff for comfort on long trail marches.

Socks - For fitting your boots use a single medium thick sock, with an additional and optional thin liner sock. A single change of socks should do, with a replacement pair or two sent to Kandersteg to be picked up on day 5.

Gaiters - optional - At times we will be walking on scree, sand, or possibly even some snow. An ankle gaiter can help keep debris out of your shoes. Several manufacturers offer "trail running" style gaiters. They are relatively cool to walk in and weigh almost nothing. The O.R. Salamander or Rocky Mountain Low gaiters, or REI's Trail Running or Desert Gaiters are good examples.

Pants - We personally like some kind of light and stretchy synthetic pant with a hard finish. In our opinion the best pants incorporate Schoeller or a similar light soft-shell type nylon fabric. Stretchy and comfortable, this kind of fabric is also somewhat resistant to wind, snow and light rain. Many pants of this kind are made by both U.S. and European manufacturers. Patagonia's Guide Pant series is one such example, and any of this line would work well. Zip-off hiking pants, convertible to shorts, are a popular and versatile option for warm weather. Keep in mind that these will be less stretchy, and less resistant to rain or snow.

Rain/Wind Pants- In case the weather turns foul, you will need a pair of waterproof rain pants to keep you dry. Our favorites are extremely light weight two-ply Gore-tex or similar fabric. Our pants weigh 8.5 ounces. Integral Designs eVENT, Marmot PreCip, or Patagonia Torrentshell, Rain Shadow or M10 pants all fill the bill at the lightest possible weight.

Rain/Wind Parka - Again, extreme lightweight keeps the hiking more fun. Our two-ply hooded Gore-tex jackets weigh in at 12.5 ounces. The Marmot PreCip, MontBell Rain Trekker or Patagonia's Torrentshell or Rain Shadow jackets all combine the lightest weight with adequate rain protection.

Shorts - If you opt for the zip-off style pants, you already have these. If you are hiking in the warmer stretchy-synthetic pants described above, you may want shorts also, depending on the weather forecast.

Light warm-weather hiking shirt * - You will want a light shirt for warm weather. Depending on whether you prefer to take in every available ray of the sun, or to minimize your UV exposure, you might choose a T-shirt or tank top, or a long-sleeved cotton or nylon shirt. Ex-Officio makes shirts in the latter category with good ventilation.

Long Underwear Tops - Light synthetic or modern merino wool base layer for the top, preferably long-sleeved.

Long Underwear Bottoms - Light synthetic or modern merino wool base layer for the legs.

Light fleece shirt - Something about the weight of Polartec 100, (very heavy synthetic underwear). One of our favorites in this category is the Marmot Dri-clime.

Heavier insulating layer - A light-weight down or synthetic insulated sweater or pull-over. Marmot's Baffin jacket or Patagonia's Nano Puff series or down sweaters are good examples of what we mean. A heavier and bulkier fleece or pile jacket will also work here. This layer is rarely worn while hiking, but is nice to have in reserve in case we have to stop in the wind or rain, or for warming up quickly in the evening after a wet day.

Gloves - Fairly lightweight windstopper gloves are idea. The Marmot Windstopper Glove is one example. Very light liner gloves are not sufficient. And heavily insulated gloves for winter conditions will be too hot on most days.

Warm Hat or Balaclava

Baseball cap or other sun-hat with a brim

Buff - The Buff is a Spanish invention. It's a stretchy lightweight neck gaiter, headband, pirate head piece, hair control unit, and Lord knows what else. Google "Buff" to learn more. Indispensable!

Around-town clothes and shoes - For around town only. Those ending the trek in Leukerbad will have these sent ahead to meet them at the end of their trek, along with all their other luggage. You won't want to bring these along with you on the trek; as noted above, we will have one fresh change of trekking clothes sent to meet us on day 5.

Bathing suit - For our day 6 afternoon and evening at the spa in Leukerbad. Those continuing on to climb the Wildstrubel will have this sent back to Grindelwald or whichever Swiss town they plan to visit next, along with all any other luggage not needed for the last part of their program.

MISCELLANEOUS

Trekking Poles - (Optional) Some folks, ourselves included, like to use trekking poles for routes such as this. Three-section collapsible trekking poles are best, as they collapse shorter and are less cumbersome when packed. Be sure to bring the baskets!

Food - Breakfasts and dinners are provided by the hotels and huts and included in your trip fees. However lunches are "extra". You will want to pack a sack lunch or some kind of handy snack food during the day. We will have occasional access to supermarkets and bakeries, and when we don't it's often possible to have the hotel pack us a sack lunch for an extra fee. We may opt for a restaurant meal when we are in a village at lunchtime. Nevertheless you might want to bring some of your own special bars, Gu's or potions from home for handy "pocket food" on the trail. Keep it light!

Hiking back pack - A simple and lightweight pack with a capacity of about 30 liters is recommended. The Black Diamond Speed and also the Deuter Guide Lite are some good choices.

Pack rain cover - Just in case!

Water bottle - Bring bottles or a combination of bottle and thermos to carry 1 to 2 liters of water. Bladder style hydrations systems are becoming increasingly popular as well and can save you time and hassle on the trail.

Head lamp or flashlight - These will be used mostly for emergencies and/or getting around in the hut on the night following our Wildstrubel climb. We don't plan any pre-dawn starts on the trip. Any small and light hand-held or headlamp light will work. Petzl makes some very light and compact headlamp models such as the Tikkina and the Zipka.

Pocket knife - Keep it simple and light. The Victorinox Spartan model is our favorite.

Blister kit - Moleskin, athletic tape. Spenco Second Skin or Compeed or similar products are worth the price.

Sun Glasses - Make sure they screen out 100 % UV. Modern wrap-around glasses are great, if the lenses are dark enough to block 90% of visible light (it's very bright up there!). Traditional glacier glasses with side shields are also fine for this trip, though you may find them hot and annoying on the trail. If you use prescription glasses you should get prescription dark glasses or use contact lenses if you can. We like to use sport sunglasses with dark lenses, designed for skiing or mountaineering.

Sunscreen - Look for as small a container as possible, or decant into a smaller container. There is no point in carrying month's worth of cream on a week-long trek.

Lip Protection -

Toiletries - Here again, try to minimize, for instance look for those small tubes of toothpaste in the travel section of your supermarket. A small bottle of Purel or singles packets of Handi-wipes would not be amiss.

Silk Sleeping Sack - Essentially for the Wildstrubel climbers only; a silk or cotton-blend sleeping sack is required for some climbers' huts, and it is more comfortable than scratchy blankets they sometimes supply. This

is NOT for insulation (the huts are often too hot as it is, and they provide plenty of blankets) but only for hygiene and comfort. Do not bring a sleeping bag!

Ear Plugs - VERY IMPORTANT! For noisy lodgings or snoring neighbors.

Camera - (optional, of course) To get the best photos, your camera will need to be accessible at a moments notice. An easy-to-use camera pouch that can be worn over a shoulder is ideal. Also, learn to use your camera with your gloves on.

Entertainment - Here again you'll want to make an effort to keep it light and compact. We like to carry an iPod Nano. Preload it with a couple of good books from iTunes or Audible.com for days of listening pleasure. Snipped-out New York Times crossword puzzles, small paperbacks, travel-size checker sets or a pack of cards, all would work (choose ONE!).

Mobile phone (optional) - A note on mobile phones: Many folks like to carry them on trips like this and in general, this is a good idea from a security perspective. Be aware, however, that battery life is limited, especially when the phone is searching for a service provider as it may often do in this remote setting, so you will probably need to leave it turned off except when making a call. Watching movies or playing games on your phone also consumes a lot of battery power. You can recharge at the hotels, but this will require carrying both a recharger and an adapter suitable for Swiss electrical outlets. You should limit the number of rechargers you bring on the trail!

Small duffels (2 for trek only, 3 for Wildstrubel folks) - For leaving street clothes in hotels, and for the various sets of extra clothes we send along from point to point. Its a good idea to lock it.

Money - We usually use ATM cards to supply us with cash. Hotels, shops and restaurants all readily accept credit cards. You will want to have some Swiss Francs cash for extra beverages or treats in the hut and the hotels.

We recommend carrying your passport and credit cards with you on this trip, buried in a plastic bag in the bottom of your pack. Other papers, such as plane tickets and such can be left in the hotel, awaiting your return.

CLIMBING GEAR (for those participating in the Wildstrubel climb only)

A note regarding mountaineering gear: we have some items available to lend. If you sign up for the Wildstrubel climb, we should discuss with you what we can supply and what you will need to buy, rent or borrow elsewhere.

Ice Axe - 50 to 60 cm maximum length is recommended. Again, look for a light weight axe for this purpose. For many non-technical glacier climbs (and even on some steep terrain) good choices include the Petzl Summit, or slightly more technical SumTec, or 53 cm Air Tech Evolution. All of these axes weigh in at 500 grams or less.

Crampons - Like boots, crampons are rated as to their attachment method and stiffness. Some boot types require one method while others will use another.

C1 crampons are flexible and will strap onto B1, B2 or B3 boots.

C2 crampons are stiffer and require a heel shelf on the boot and are compatible with B2 and B3 boots.

C3 crampons are quite stiff and require a toe and heel shelf, for example B3 boots.

C1 or C2 crampons will work for this program, but must be compatible with your boots.

Harness - Most modern harnesses are great. Adjustable leg loops for multiple leg layers can be helpful.