

Swiss Alps

Marvel at the majestic scenery of the Swiss Alps, whilst enjoying yourself by ticking off the most iconic climbs in the region

Summary

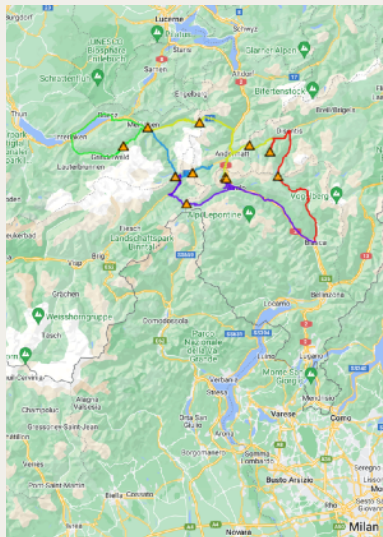
WHERE: Switzerland

DISTANCE: to suit you

TIME : 5 days

PRICE : see website

DATES: July



Highlights

Five mountain stages in the beautiful Swiss Alps

Bucket list climbs: Furka, Grimsel, Susten, Oberalp, Lucomagno, Nufenen & St Gotthard passes

Spectacular Grosse Scheidegg and Lake Brienz loop

2 customised support vehicles & experienced, fun and energetic guides



Switzerland is famous for its beautiful mountains, luxury chocolate, alpine cheese, warm hospitality, pristine villages, and ambitious road-building projects. Combining all these is the perfect formula for an incredible road cycling holiday!

High passes are dotted all over this breathtaking and mountainous country, but most of the iconic and famous road climbs are concentrated in a small area to the east of the Eiger. It is a Mecca for road cyclists and our playground for the five days of this holiday.

We have crafted this truly superb cycling tour so that our Classic route takes in all the iconic climbs, while those wanting more of a challenge get to tick off some of them from both sides - after all, there is a constant debate in the cycling world about which side is best!

The climbs in this part of Switzerland are long with significant altitude gain, so our Classic route is a considerable challenge; the daily average is 80km with 2020m ascent. However, the rides can be made more manageable with a tactical lift in our support van at the start of each day. With a daily average of 104km with 2800m ascent, our Challenge route will satisfy your need for big rides.

This is your ride, and we are here to support you as individuals. As with all our holidays, we do not insist that everyone rides as a group; you are free to ride at the speed you like, stop when you want, and make the days your own. With our experienced support team in customised vehicles, we will provide you with all the moral, nutritional and mechanical support you require. All you have to do is eat, sleep and cycle – we do the rest!

Exploring the Italian lakes is a pleasant option if arriving a few days before the holiday (suggested for long-haul travellers).

We offer Classic Cols style holidays in many different mountain ranges so you may want to check the [website](#) for more details. For cyclists new to the mountains we recommend starting with the Pyrenean Foothills or Pyrenean Classic Cols holiday.

Itinerary

Day 0 - Travel Out

Included transfers from Milan Malpensa airport to Biasca (1hr 30min) at set times. Meet your guides, assemble your bikes and have a welcome briefing and dinner.

Day 1: Biasca to Sedrun

The Swiss National Cycling route to the **Passo del Lucomagno / Lukmanierpass (1915m)** is the perfect way to start your holiday. Starting from an altitude of just 300m, this 41km climb is never steep, and the scenery constantly evolves. The small towns give way to villages and alpine meadows dotted with farmsteads, which in turn give way to open mountainsides. The pass itself is adorned with a large reservoir reflecting the surrounding high peaks of this lesser-known pass.

Your reward is the descent into the German-speaking part of Switzerland and onto the village of Tujetsch where we spend the night in a charming hotel.

The climb up to the reservoir of **Lai da Nalps (1967m)** in the heart of the mountains is a worthwhile addition for those wanting more.

Classic Route

67km with 2060m ascent

Challenge Route

85km with 2730m ascent

Day 2: Sedrun to Innertkirchen

With the sun on your back, the road climb to the **Oberalp Pass (2044m)** is a delightful way to start the day. The natural beauty of the mountains is broken only by the occasional red Glacier Express train snaking its way to the pass.

Following a great descent to Andermatt for coffee (and chocolate), it is decision time - have you got the energy to take on the north side of the **Sankt Gotthardpass / Passo del San Gottardo (2107m)**? This punchy 12km climb includes 2km of cobbles, and while we get to take on the more famous south side later in the week, this is a thoroughly worthwhile addition to the day.

Back on the Classic route, we descend northwards to Wassen and turn west over the incredible **Sustenpass (2224m)**. This climb has everything you could possibly want, and it really showcases the beauty of the Swiss mountains. The views of

the Sustenhorn and its glacier are genuinely breathtaking. From the top, the only thing left to do is to freewheel 28km to our hotel in Innertkirchen, where we spend the next two nights.

Classic Route

79km with 2010m ascent

Challenge Route

106km with 2750m ascent



Day 3: Dayride from Innertkirchen

Surrounded by Alpine pastures and the sheer cliffs of the Eiger, the **Grosse Scheidegg (1962m)** pass is in a mind-blowingly beautiful setting. However, the cherry on the cake is that the upper section of the road is closed to regular traffic, making this (challenging) climb a true delight. The tranquillity is only broken by cow bells and the distinctive horn of the occasional public bus.

We enjoy the climb from the east and then descend to Interlaken for lunch. Here, we pick up a delightful road that undulates around the northern shore of Lake Brienz for 15km before heading back through the green meadows to our hotel via Meiringen.

Our Challenge route allows you to add the western side of the **Grosse Scheidegg (1962m)** to your Strava climb list!

Classic Route

86km with 1680m ascent

Challenge Route

99km with 2410m ascent

Day 4: Innertkirchen to Obergoms

Hairpin bends dominate today's ride and come in many forms - tight, stacked, sweeping, and even elevated on stilts. The **Grimselfpass (2164m)** and **Furkapass (2429m)** are two of the most spectacular mountain passes in the world and a marvel of Swiss ingenuity.

The road to the Grimselfpass makes for a characterful climb with ever changing gradients and scenery. The final part crosses a barren granite landscape broken only by vast opal-coloured reservoirs. From here, you can see the zig-zag road leading to the Furkapass on the other side of the valley.

The Furkapass is another fantastic bucket list climb that was immortalised by a car chase in the James Bond film *Goldfinger* in the 1960s. From here, we descend back down to our sport-focused hotel in Obergoms near the source of the Rhône.

Today's Challenge route involves descending down to Realp and taking on the **Furkapass (2429m)** again from the east!

Classic Route

65km with 2260m ascent

Challenge Route

89km with 3150m ascent

you head back to our starting point at Biasca (300m).

There is, however, road cycling's most remarkable climb to be taken on first - the Tremola to **Sankt Gotthardpass / Passo del San Gottardo (2107m)**. This incredible road was cut into the mountainside and surfaced with cobbles in the 1830's. The Swiss have since superseded it with a new road and a tunnel which takes most of the traffic, but amazingly, they still maintain the upper 5km of cobbles! Once at the top, you jump on the new road and get to enjoy the beautiful smooth tarmac and sweeping bends back into the valley.



Those wanting a serious challenge can take on the south side of the **Grimselfpass (2164m)** first thing in the morning.

Classic Route

101km with 2090m ascent

Challenge Route

134km with 2930m ascent

Day 6: Travel Back

We offer transfers at set times from Biasca to Milan Malpensa airport (about 1hr 30min) - read on for travel details.



Day 5: Obergoms to Biasca

We've saved the best until last! Our route takes you over the second-highest pass and finishes with the most unique climb in the Swiss Alps.

Snow-capped peaks and rugged rock formations accompany you on the challenging climb to the **Nufenenpass / Passo della Novena (2480m)**. From the top, the view down the valley towards Italy way off in the distance hints at the spectacular descent you have to look forward to as



Start & End

Hotel Al Giardinetto, Via Aleardo Pini 21, 6710 Biasca (+41 91 862 1771)

Travel

Finding flights

We recommend using a comparison tool such as www.skyscanner.net when searching for direct or indirect flights from various airports/regions/countries. It can be helpful if you search for one-way flights, giving results of all direct routes available, eg. 'UK to MXP'. Search results may change as airlines release their schedules for the following year at varying times.

If you are flying long haul, we recommend arriving into Milan a day early to help you acclimatise to the new time zone before you start cycling. We can generally only offer an airport transfer on the start/finish days of the itinerary but can certainly arrange a taxi transfer for you (payable direct to your driver) on other days.

If you are travelling in a group of 6 or more and are unable to join the group airport transfers, we may be able to organise a private transfer for you. Please contact us to discuss.

Under your own steam...

If you are going to meet us at the start hotel or are leaving independently at the end of your trip to go on elsewhere, please let us know so we can plan accordingly; we may also be able to help you with your travel plans, so do get in touch if you need assistance.

Driving / Train

The hotel is 1km away from Biasca train station. If you are driving, it will be possible to park close to the hotel and leave the car for the week.

Foreign Travel Advice

For the latest travel advice from the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office including security and local laws, plus passport and visa information, check www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice.

Airport Transfers

Marmot Tours offer airport transfers at designated times from the most convenient airport for the start of your trip. Transfers are timed to fit in with as many flights from as many regional airports as possible.

Transfers at set times from and to **Milan Malpensa airport (MXP)** are included in the holiday price. The transfers between Milan Malpensa airport and Biasca take about 1hr 30min.

If you arrive earlier than the transfer time then you will need to wait at the airport for your pick up. If flights are delayed then transfers may also be delayed. If flights are significantly delayed or cancelled then you may need to take a taxi to the start hotel and make a claim on your insurance or to your airline.

You will find our most up to date transfer times on the **Holiday Details** page on the Link (once you've made your booking). If you need to know the timings before booking, please get in touch via email: cycle@marmot-tours.co.uk.

Navigation

We provide you with colour maps and altitude profiles, as well as detailed directions of where to go. Our guides will even aim to be at those 'easy to miss' junctions and as you will see the van and guides regularly, navigation does not tend to be a problem.

For those of you with GPS units, we have GPS files available and will post them on The Link a few weeks before departure, in .gpx, and .tcx formats.

The files can be downloaded onto most units, including Garmin and Wahoo and in their most basic form provide a purple line to follow. With the more recent units you will also receive a set of visual instructions as you approach a turning. Our GPS tracks take you from hotel to hotel.

Am I Fit Enough?

It is normal (and only right) that you should consider whether or not you are fit enough for a cycling holiday in the mountains.

The Classic route on this holiday is our most challenging, due to the length of climbs and altitude gain, and will require adequate training in order to get the most out of it. Those looking for a good challenge will not be disappointed!

If you are new to cycling in the mountains, we suggest you start with one of our easier Classic Cols style holidays, like the Pyrenean Foothills, Pyrenean Classic Cols or the Cévennes & Ardèche holidays instead.

Our goal at Marmot Tours is to create an ambience of non-competitive cycling with no pressure to keep up with anyone else. It is about achieving your own individual goals and having a fabulous time doing it.

Our vehicles and guides are on hand to support you on your holiday and can offer advice, moral support and lifts in the van if you are tired.

Am I too fit?

We have designed our Classic Cols style holidays to be accessible to a range of riding ability. Having a quick peek at each day's stats for the Challenge route should reassure you that even if you are a very fit and experienced road cyclist, there will be plenty to entertain you on this holiday.

With our daily route options you have the opportunity to cycle all day long, making yourself very tired indeed! If you do our Challenge Route each day then you are looking at 513km with 13970m of ascent during your 5 days on the bike. In terms of comparing our Classic Cols Challenge routes, the optional extras are a bit more punchy and similar to our Raids and other Challenge routes, particularly the Alpine and Dolomites itineraries.

What is so nice about this range of holidays is that you can come along with people who are either less or more experienced than you and you can each get out of it what you want by choosing the daily route for you.

Pacing and Training

As with all sports holidays, the fitter you are, the more you can relax and enjoy the stunning route.

It can be difficult to find extended climbs for training in the UK, but generally, if you can build up your comfort on the bike (ideally on consecutive days) and your stamina and cardio vascular fitness overall, then you will really benefit when it comes to the holiday itself.

As well as training before the holiday, pacing yourself will go a long way towards you achieving your goals. The joy of a group holiday is that you are likely to find someone to cycle at a similar speed to you, so you don't need to try and keep up with your partner/friend/room mate. The quickest way to injure yourself or burn out is to cycle faster than you feel comfortable going.

We can't emphasise enough that this is your holiday and so, if you want a lift up the hill for whatever reason, your guides will be happy to help.



Strava

Many cyclists nowadays are using apps like Strava and Garmin Connect to track their progress, training and to compare themselves to their peers.

These apps make for great training tools and interesting post-ride analysis but there are obvious risks associated with competitive cycling styles, pushing yourself beyond your usual tolerance and focusing on live feed information whilst on the bike.

We therefore ask our clients to avoid such 'Live Segment' features when cycling on a Marmot Tours holiday, especially descending, and to focus on the road at all times.

Gearing/Bikes

Mainly, climbs are not particularly steep and comparable to climbs in the French Alps, but they do go on for a very long time. The profiles on the website are showing the average gradient per km. It is best to make sure that your bike will be suitable for your level of strength/fitness.

For most people a compact (smallest ring on front having 34 teeth), fitted with a 30 or 32 cassette on the rear, is a good choice. It is possible to fit your bike with larger cassettes, using a rear hanger extender, like the WolfTooth RoadLink.

If this all sounds too complicated then we do have some excellent titanium-framed bikes for hire, which are fitted with SRAM 50-34 at the front with 11 speed 11-36 toothed cassettes.

Guiding

Supporting you on your holiday will be two of our experienced, approachable, knowledgeable and fun guides. Despite being passionate about cycling, both guides will be in support vans as this holiday is all about you and your needs. Between them they will have knowledge of the area and the language and be skilled at bike mechanics.

Having two vehicles per group (regardless of the number of bookings up to a group size of around 20) is what allows us to offer you freedom to cycle at your own pace with a level of independence on this holiday. One van stays on the Classic route and one van covers the Challenge route. Due to the distances involved, those cyclists doing the full challenge route may need to be more independent than those on the Classic Route. Our guides are experts at advising you on the routes, where you can expect to see the van, and what you might need with you.

In the event that you need help for a mechanical issue (for example) one of the vans will be able to quickly get to you with full tool kits, spare back wheels and even a spare bike. We hope you won't need us for anything serious but being prepared for all eventualities is what we do exceptionally well.

You can expect to see a support van with water, snacks and your personal day bag 2 - 4 times a day, so you don't need to carry much on your bike, unless the weather is exceptional!

“What a FANTASTIC trip! Best cycling experience I've had to date! ... Nothing was too much trouble for them. ... We'll be back for sure!!!” Eugene L

Group Dynamics

Your group will be any number up to around 20 riders. This number works really well - it's big enough for you to find others to cycle with at your pace, but not so huge as to feel impersonal! We get lots of clients booking alone and lots of small groups of friends. If you think you can get a group of 18 - 20 people together then we can offer you a custom departure date.

We love that we get a really big variety in terms of cycling experience... from club cyclists, people training for other events, those raising money for charity, ex-pro cyclists and people who are relatively new to cycling who like to try something new on holiday.

Accommodation

All of the hotels are a good 3*, with the exception of our hotel Innertkirchen, which is a comfortable, family-run hotel in the perfect location but un-starred. All rooms have en-suite facilities. The hotels have been selected for their customer service towards cyclists and their location. You will be sharing a twin room with another client (of the same gender) unless you book a single room for a supplement (contact cycle@marmot-tours.co.uk for availability). Each hotel has a garage/locked room to ensure that your trusty steed has a comfortable night too.

Food

Breakfast

No surprise that this is the crucial meal of the day. You can expect continental style breakfasts. We supplement hotel breakfasts with cereals and fruit, where necessary. Some hotels offer cheese, eggs & meats for your protein kick start.

Lunches

You know what you like to eat when you are riding and it is not likely to be the same as what the others in your group will want to eat. We don't include lunches so there are no enforced group stops. We strongly advise that you stop for proper food at lunchtime. Each day we recommend a suitable place serving cyclist friendly food which is great for you, and the

locals appreciate your custom. We will be sure to have a van there for your midday faff!

Snacks

Your support van aka snack-shack will be well stocked with a variety of tasty delectables: Salty crisps, bars, cakes, fresh fruit (bananas obviously!), nuts & sweets are the staples. We suggest you bring your own favourite energy powders/gels/bars with you as these will not be easily available en route.

Dinner

We eat as a group in the evening - either in the hotel or at a nearby restaurant. Expect three courses (and generous portions) which are tailored to the needs of cyclists. Dinner will be served at around 19:30. Wine at dinner is included, however, coffees/soft drinks and beers are not.

Special diets

Please note your special dietary requirements on the booking form or contact us. Our hotels can cater for most dietary needs and allergies if we know well in advance. Please note that we request that you stick to your dietary preference for the entire trip, as it is very complicated for the hotels (and guides) if an individual is vegetarian for some meals and not for others.

What's Included

- 5 days supported riding
- Airport transfers at specified times
- Route notes, directions, maps and GPS files
- 6 nights half board accommodation including wine at dinner
- 2 customised and well stocked vehicles with experienced guides, offering moral support, and nutritional, mechanical and first aid assistance, plus snacks & water



Bike Hire

Marmot Tours has an excellently maintained fleet of custom built, titanium framed bikes available to rent for your holiday. Advantages of rental include:

- avoiding hefty fees levied by airlines for transport
- worry free travel (knowing your trusty steed is safely stored away at home!)
- the chance to try a titanium bike built specifically with climbing cols in mind (gearing!)
- relinquishing responsibility for cleaning and maintenance to our experienced team

Please see our [Bike Hire webpage](#) for details like prices as well as full specs and dimensions.

Please note that despite the size of our fleet steadily growing, we cannot guarantee that we will have a bike in your size available. If you would like to hire a bike, please check availability before booking your holiday.

How to Book

1. Email cycle@marmot-tours.co.uk to check availability for your preferred departure date. Remember to also check availability for single room and bike hire if they are your preference.
2. Bag your spot with a provisional booking for a week or so while you get planning.
3. Log on to or register with our online booking system, The Link (link.marmot-tours.co.uk), to make your holiday booking.
4. Pay the £400 deposit by BACS or by card online. Receive a confirmation email.
5. Confirmed single room supplements and bike hire are being added manually to your balance invoices, so may take a day or two to appear.
6. We'll post regular holiday information and updates on the Link (you'll receive an email notification).
7. You can meet your fellow holiday makers via The Link Forum and share training / travel plans etc.

Insurance

Holiday insurance is **essential** for all Marmot Tours holidays and anyone without insurance is not able to take part in the trip. Please arrange your insurance cover at the time of booking, as this will ensure that you are covered if you incur an injury during training and are unable to go on your holiday. We have a very high cancellation rate so are unable to deviate from our [cancellation policy](#).

Your insurance needs to cover you for non-competitive road cycling (cycle touring) at altitude with the following fairly standard inclusions:

- Medical Expenses
- Repatriation

Some clients also like to ensure they have the following optional items:

- Cancellation cover
- Loss or damage to their bike

NB if you are hiring a bike from us there is an insurance element in the fee so you will not need additional cover.

Once you have arranged your insurance, please add the relevant details to the **Before you go...** section of your holiday on [The Link](#). Unlike your passport and emergency contact details, you will need to add insurance details for every trip you are taking.

This ensures we have the most up to date information and are able to assist you in case you have an accident on your holiday.

Financial Protection

Marmot Tours are members of ABTA, the Association of British Travel Agents.

ABTA and ABTA members help holidaymakers to get the most from their travel and assist them when things do not go according to plan.

As part of our membership contract we are obliged to maintain a high standard of service to you by ABTA's Code of Conduct.

- In line with our ABTA membership (no Y6184), we hold an insurance policy that gives you full financial protection for all funds you pay us for your holiday
- We have full Tour Operators Professional and Public Liability Insurance with specialist brokers Campbell Irvine
- We carry out risk assessments on all of our holidays to ensure we have thought through every detail
- We employ staff with the correct experience and skills to ensure you have a safe and fun trip, and have a thorough training programme each season.

For further information about ABTA, the Code of Conduct and the arbitration scheme available to you if you have a complaint, please contact ABTA, 30 Park St, London, SE1 9EQ (Tel 0203 117 0500).

