

Grindelwald to Wengen

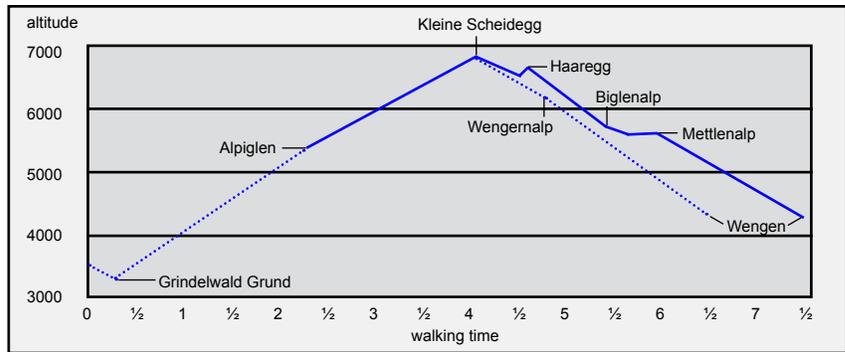
Start: Alpigen

Distance: 16 km

Altitude: ↑1720 ft, ↓2840 ft

Grade: moderate

An uphill climb through farms and trees along the base of the incredible Eiger North Face. You have dramatic close-up views of the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau from the pass. A long descent through woods, remote farms and peaceful meadows to Wengen.



Directions: The first part of this hike is not an isolated walk, especially at the bustling hub of Kleine Scheidegg, but it is deservedly one of the classic traverse routes in the Alps. You'll enjoy powerful, close-up views of the mountains and a sweeping panorama of the Grindelwald valley. Avalanches cascade regularly off the Jungfrau's north face in summer, and on a sunny day it's a heavenly walk. Send your luggage from the Grindelwald train station to Wengen at the beginning of the day. There are restaurants at Alpigen, Kleine Scheidegg and Wengen.

My suggestion is to start by taking the train to Alpigen (any train to Kleine Scheidegg, leaves every 30 min, CHF 13.40). This cuts out the least interesting part of the hike, saves 2200' of uphill hiking, and leaves you more time near the pass. If you do want to hike the whole way though, you'll find the trail leading downhill just to the right of the tourist office, near the train station. Follow the small road to the Grindelwald Grund train station, cross the river over a small bridge and take the narrow path leading up towards the Eiger that is signposted to Alpigen. You'll be walking sometimes through woods and sometimes along a small road. The trail leads ever upward, well-signposted, and eventually crosses beneath the railway to reach the restaurant, farm, and train station at Alpigen.

At Alpigen, you've left the development of Grindelwald behind. If you've taken the train, or have arrived very quickly, there is a higher route leading from the restaurant called the "Eiger trail". It's rugged, with a nice, high-country feel, and passes right below the main wall of the Eiger. It's a great trail, but not a good choice for bad weather or early summer hikes, due to lingering snow. The Eiger trail adds about two hours to the direct trail to Kleine Scheidegg. The direct trail leaves from the inn at Alpigen, and also enjoys gorgeous views of the Eiger as you rise steadily towards the pass. Whether you take the direct trail or the Eiger trail, the stretch from Alpigen to Wengernalp is the heart of this hike, and doing just that would be a fairly easy day. Non-hikers can simply take the train to Kleine Scheidegg for views, then train to Wengen later.

From Kleine Scheidegg, the easiest way down is the broad, clear path to Wengernalp and Wengen, starting from the south side of the train station and heading west. Following this trail will take you to Wengen in a little less than 2 hours. The trail is popular and easy to follow.

For a quieter and more adventurous option, go through the small gate just south of the tracks near the train station, and take the narrow path leading down into the meadows below the Kleine Scheidegg station. This trail winds through flower-covered fields, signposted to Haaregg. A short 5 minute uphill brings you to the top of the moraine wall about 30 minutes after leaving Kleine Scheidegg, where you're rewarded with incredible views. Turn right here to walk down along the crest of this ridge. In 15 minutes, a hairpin left (a trace of a trail keeps straight, dead-ending soon after) takes you down through the woods off the ridge, and shortly after, turn left at Wyssi Flue just before the Wixi skilift, to reach Biglenalp, an open meadow with a small barn, and a great place to sit and enjoy the mountains.

The trail continues, at first rising gently and then descending again and following signs to Mettlenalp (Mettla on the map), Stalden (which is nothing more than an open meadow) and finally Wengen.

Jungfrauojoch: Today could also be a fine day for the Jungfrauojoch if the weather is good. You can buy a ticket from Grindelwald to Jungfrauojoch (Switzerland's highest train station), returning to Kleine Scheidegg, and walk from there to Wengen in about 2 hours. Or you can buy a return ticket all the way to Wengen. The Jungfrauojoch is beautiful on a nice day. Try to get there early.

If it rains... You can take the train from Grindelwald to Wengen (CHF 14.80 via Zweilütschinen, CHF 56 via Kleine Scheidegg), and spend the day exploring shops and cafes there. There is a nice woody walk outside of Wengen that takes a couple hours. From the Coop near the Wengen train station, cross underneath the train tracks and keep right towards the Hotel Bären. Shortly before reaching the hotel, branch left on the signposted road to Stalden. This more or less level path eventually leaves town and then starts to rise through some beautiful woods (the Ronenwald) and past many pretty little waterfalls. After the Hasenbach stream (40 minutes), the trail gets steep, so for an easier outing you should turn around here. You can continue up to Stalden, just a small clearing in the woods, and make a loop by turning left to follow the slightly higher signposted trail back to Wengen. There is internet at your hotel.