

ADVENTURE In the Alps



Glide down mountain slopes in Leysin or hike up a glacier in Jungfrau to experience the adrenalin rush in the mountains. **BY PALLAVI PASRICHA**

“Your name is not registered in the list so I’m afraid you won’t be able to paraglide,” the guide tells me politely. I cannot believe what I am hearing. All my dreams of getting a bird’s eye view of the Swiss landscape and landing at Leysin village come crashing down. Standing at the height of 2,048m, on the Berneuse summit in the Lake Geneva region, I look around at the Alpine peaks like Eiger and Matterhorn, but nothing seems as charming as it did moments ago. I try to convince the guide that I have registered but it just does not work. This cannot be happening. I almost give up till an Israeli fellow traveller asks, “Have you done this before?”

I shake my head despondently and then come his kind words, “All right, you can go in my place. I have done it before.” I can’t believe what I’m hearing and ask him if he is sure he wants to give up his turn. For me, Istramius is nothing short of an angel sent from heaven to fulfil my wish. I thank him profusely and soon my dream turns into reality.

I am helped into the contraption, attached to a parachute, where a guide can sit behind me. I take a few steps, and up I go. Gliding high above houses nestled in

green meadows and villages, with lofty peaks in the distance and the Lake Geneva that now seems a mere stream—it is an experience I’m going to take with me to my grave. Literally flying over the mountains is pure exhilaration and a great adrenalin rush. Initially I had thought it might be a bit scary, but the reassuring presence of the guide and the harness makes me feel quite safe. The guide even has a camera and captures the most beautiful moments of my trip.

Fifteen minutes later I land in the middle of a lush pasture close to the cable car station at Leysin village and walk back to the hotel feeling absolutely content and happy.

Leysin is popular for winter sports like skiing. It’s my last day in Switzerland and I have made the most of my time in the Alps.

I love adventure sports, but have not had the opportunity to do much—this trip makes up for it. If someone had told me a few years ago that I’ll be hiking on a glacier in the Alps, I would have probably laughed out loud. But on the second day of my visit, I am all geared up for it and determined to do it. In fact when the tour leader tells me that my shoes may get wet, I promptly buy a pair of snow boots, not heeding the cost. Nothing can deter me

from walking on the glacier at Jungfrau. This is the charm of this fascinating country—you do things which you thought are simply impossible. From Interlaken, we reach Jungfrau by a cog wheel train, which chugs alongside gurgling streams and green Alps that slowly turn white till all you can see around you is pristine snow and high peaks like Jungfrau, Eiger and Monch.

Located at the height of 3,454m, Jungfraujoch is the highest rail station in Europe, and the temperature is -1 degree when we start our trek to Mönchsloch Hut, the world’s highest altitude mountain hut that offers meals. With the sun shining down, the weather is comfortable, but the 2.5 km hike along the clearly marked snow path seems endless. The breathtaking view of high peaks around me and spotting a few mountain climbers ahead keeps me going. My fellow travellers, who have completely different fitness levels, are way ahead of me,

and it takes me longer than them to reach the hut. But the stunning view out there with high peaks all around is well worth the one-hour trek.

After lunch, we make our way to a tunnel which leads to the ice palace, where everything, even the walls and floor is made of ice. After spending about half an hour here, we finally back to Interlaken via Grindelwald. Green pastures, charming houses, and of course the towering Swiss Alps in the backdrop makes this one of the most stunning villages I have ever seen. I sit with my jaw open, literally. Images of Yash Chopra movies immediately come to my mind—was this the road where SRK danced or was it that one, I wonder.

Switzerland is impossibly pretty with its endless lush pastures, charming villages on the Alpine slopes. Sitting on a mountain with nothing but the sound of cow bells reaching my ears, I get one of my best moments in life.

DON’T MISS

- Leysin is home to one of the three revolving restaurants in Switzerland. Located at the Berneuse summit, is Le Kuklos that gives a panoramic view of the peaks around. The restaurant revolves 360° within one hour and a half. Besides multi cuisines, it serves Swiss dishes as well.
- Have a meal at Fromagerie, located in the old part of Leysin. It is famous for its cheese fondue, raclette and great selection of Swiss wines. The cheese is homemade and tastes very different from something you may have eaten before.

CHECK OUT
Grand Café Restaurant Schuh in Interlaken for chocolate truffles and desserts



1. Snow walking at the glacier in Jungfrau 2. & 3. Leysin is popular for winter sports 4. Paragliding at Interlaken

