

Switzerland for the over 50, 60s, 70s and Co by Denys Vaughan

We lucky people who live in or near the *ENGLISH* Lake Districts are allowed to look at mountains but here they are reserved for the young, fit and adventurous. If you are very rich you might get to a summit by helicopter. Poor old Chris Bonington needs 2 sticks to reach a modest mountain top.

In Switzerland they make better arrangements.

Come and have a look and listen.

These are Swiss Mountains

Swiss People and Visitors are luckier than us Brits.

In Switzerland clever Engineers have made it possible for babes in arms and even old grannies to be carried to the tops of these exciting heights,

Lake District Planners are afraid to do this in case they spoil the view that Willie Wordsmith so admired.

(Scotland and Wales have got away with it.)

Come with me to Switzerland and breathe clean mountain air.

A speedy silent intercity train takes you to Interlaken. Here you will find every kind of shop and service you could wish for and all Swiss shopkeepers speak English.

You leave Interlaken on a local stopping train. It slowly climbs the **Lauterbrunnen** valley to a big junction at Lauterbrunnen station. Now you really begin to climb to **Grutschalp** where you change to a more level track to **Murren**.

Murren is a lovely little village perched hundreds of feet above the valley.

Another day you could take a cable car up the **Schilthorn**, where a James Bond film was shot.

Look at the choice of travel!

Grutschalp.

An alp is a sort of terrace high above a valley and below the peaks.

Some alps are only used in the summer to graze cattle and make cheese.

Many people live all year round on **Grutschalp**. They welcome walkers (and riders) in Summer and Skiers in Winter.

Some back gardens go right to the edge of the enormous crag.

The **Murren-Grutschalp** train just runs up and down shuttling people and goods.

Grass is cut for hay or fed to cattle housed in large sheds,

Murren Main St with the **Eiger** looming not far away.

You can even get a train up it, inside the mountain to the **Jungfrauoch**.

Alps get much more sunshine than shaded valleys and the sunlight is dangerously strong.

Big hats, good sunglasses and skin protection are vital, so get plastered

Before you go out.

Main St Murren

The homes are mostly timbered. Eaves overhang to keep snow away from the walls. Gardens are very sunny and fenced off to protect against cattle in transit helping themselves to the flowers.

Sometimes you can see a single cow being air-lifted from the valley to an alpine pasture in a sling.

Keeps them out of the gardens.

Gondelbahn thinks big, 100 people at a time. Doesn't take long to put 500 people on the summit.

There is lots of room in the air-conditioned restaurant.

Huge choice of Swiss Cuisine.

From the Schilthorn Viewing platz.

Don't be fooled. None of these walkers have walked the whole route.

They are just posing for their relatives.

No ropes? No Ice-axes no Crampons?

These would be a nuisance in the Gondelbahn.

Thrilling if you don't slip.

A cunning trick if you are able to walk at all is to get a lift as far up as you can and WALK down looking smug and enjoy looking at the alpine flowers. Roadside and meadows are thick with them, at their best in Summer.

Pick your trail and jump on a train if you get short of breath.

Another good trick is to stop for some close-up photos.

In the days of roll films I used an empty camera which allowed you to get your breath back without spending a fortune.

Bird watching binoculars work well for watching busy bees and other insects trying to get a living.

You may see some spectacular birds of prey looking for their lunch, and the usual spivs round restaurants.

Some lovely small mammals hide among rocks like this.

Back down on Grutschalp

Swiss National Day is in the first week in August, a good time to visit. Local bands, choirs and dancing groups are always ready to turn out in their traditional kit and perform for each other and visitors.

Wine and beer flows abundantly and should be drunk while it is still cool.

Back to **Lauterbrunnen** Station

Just look at that waterfall. From here you can join a mountain network to take you some spectacular rides up and down too if you want .

You can tarry in a score of cafes and walk down miles of signposted trails between stations.

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I will leave you here on top of the **Mannlichen** ridge. If you have the time and the will to enjoy yourself, you could spend another month here in Switzerland.

Auf Wiedersehen, Au Revoir and tara mate.