



57th World Congress of Chess Composition August 23-30, 2014 in Berne

What to do around Berne / daytrips

I. Bernese Oberland

If you plan day trips, the obvious choice is the Bernese Oberland. It is beautiful, close and easily reachable by train or car.

If the weather is nice, I suggest that you go to the top of a mountain. The train up to the Jungfrau Joch is on every Japanese's list for a "Europe in 7 days" trip, but it's a long trip (1:35h one way from Grindelwald or 3:24h one way from Berne) and costs quite a lot (CHF 177.- per person from Grindelwald or CHF 251.- from Berne).

An alternative would be the Schilthorn, known from the James Bond movie "On Her Majesty's Secret Service". There is not a train but a series of 3 cable cars that take you to the top of the mountain; it takes only 32 minutes from Stechelberg to the top. The [price](#) from Stechelberg is still almost CHF 100.-. Note that there are early/late bird specials for less. The view from up there is phenomenal (even for me as a Swiss) and you'll have a great view over the famous Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau chain and a lot more peaks of the Alps.



If you always want to know which mountain is in front of you then I suggest you buy [Peakfinder](#) for your smartphone or iPad. I have it and it (usually) really works.

- 1) There are many more **mountains** in the area that you can visit or hike/climb:
 - a) One other option is to go on top of [Niesen](#) by cable railway. The shape of Niesen is like a pyramid that rises over the Lake of Thun. With only 2362 meters above sea level, it's not nearly as high as Jungfrau Joch (3,466) and Schilthorn (2,970), but it still offers great views and is much [cheaper](#). If you like hiking, there is a special ticket and you can hike one section (up or down, whatever you prefer).
 - b) On the other side of Lake Thun there is [Niederhorn](#), again not as high as the others, but the view is still great and it offers special attractions that appeal active adults and families with kids. One of them is "[Trotti-biken](#)". After visiting the top of the mountain, you get back to middle station where you can rent a dirt scooter (kickboard with a handle and good tires = Trottinett or Trotti-Bike in German) and drive down the mountain with it. There are two ways to do this: The "direttissima" and the more leisurely decent. If you choose this trip, you can even combine it with taking a ship from Thun to Beatenbucht.

- c) A few other possibilities to get on top of a mountain are:
 - i) [Brienzer Rothorn](#)¹ where they still have a few steam engines to get on top.
 - ii) [Stockhorn](#), a mountain in the Simmental, where you can go hiking, fishing and even bungee jumping.
 - iii) [Kleine Scheidegg](#) is a railway station on the way to Jungfrau Joch with beautiful hiking possibilities.
 - iv) [Schynige Platte](#) is reachable by cog railway in “Belle Epoque” style and offers a great view over Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau.
- d) Another great excursion could lead you to [Oeschinensee](#) surrounded by Blüemlisalp, Oeschinenhorn, Fründenhorn und Doldenhorn (all of them more than 3000 meters high): From Kandersteg at the end of Kander valley, there is a cable car up the mountain (about 1600 meters over sea level); you can reach this natural lake on a short walk of about 20 minutes. Besides hiking you can go fishing as well and there is a [summer sled run](#) that is a lot of fun for families and adventurous adults.
- e) If you like extremes, then [Gelmer Funicular](#) is your choice: It's in the Grimselarea, where the river Aare has its source (about 100 km away from Berne, about 1.5h by car). There are lots of artificial lakes there, and waterpower is the main source of income in that area. Gelmer Funicular is the steepest in Europe (106% inclination) and it leads to Gelmer Lake one of the artificial lakes in that area. There is a suspension bridge over a waterfall to get to the Funicular: If you suffer from fear of heights, this is nothing for you ☺. On top there is a 2h [hike around Gelmer Lake](#) that sounds very interesting. – [Grimselarea](#) has more to offer like [Power Plant Tours](#) (some of them only for groups of 10-24 people) and lots of hikes.

2) Where there are mountains, there are waterfalls and gorges as well:

- a) On the way to Schilthorn Cable Car station, you'll drive through [Lauterbrunnen Valley](#). This is Bernese Oberland at its best. Lauterbrunnen Valley has many waterfalls, and you shouldn't miss the [Staubbach Falls](#), an impressive high waterfall and [Trümmelbach Falls](#), which are waterfalls within a mountain (CHF 11.- per person for the elevator ride up). [Here the link](#) to additional waterfalls nearby. After having been to Lauterbrunnen Valley, you might understand that Thomas and I are often disappointed when visiting waterfalls abroad (especially those smaller than Iguaçu or Victoria Falls) ☺.
- b) If you like Sherlock Holmes, then you need to visit [Reichenbach Falls](#), where he supposedly lost his life. There is [Reichenbach Funicular](#) to take you to the base of the falls.
- c) [Giessbach Falls](#) on Lake of Brienz are very well known, too. You can get there by car or by ship and enjoy coffee and pastries at the stylish Grand hotel.
- d) If you go past Lake of Brienz, you'll get to [Aare Gorge](#). The gorge is 1.4 km long and up to 180 meters deep and as narrow as 1 meter. The [hike](#) one way is about 40 minutes and you can either go back through the gorge, take a pass over the gorge or take the train back to the entrance.
- e) Off the beaten track of international tourists, there are beautiful waterfalls at [Lenk](#), at the end (or the beginning?) of Simmental. My parents had a chalet up there and I spent a lot of my childhood in that area. There are [Simmentfalls](#) where you can hike along (quite a steep hike) to Siebenbrunnen. [Iffigen Falls](#) is a great site too, very

¹ Their website seems to have a problem, just click around the pop-up window and there is the information.

different from Simmenfalls, [Lenk](#) itself is still a village that maintained its charm. Going up to Leiterli by cable car, you reach the area where I learnt how to ski and broke my leg doing so ☺. Besides normal hiking trails, there are several theme trails: [Murmeli trail](#) (Murmeli=marmot), [Lynx trail](#) and [Alpflower trail](#). From Leiterli there is the possibility to rent Trottibikes (scooters like described at Niederhorn), too. It might be a little more adventurous, since the minimum age is 12 years old.

3) Other activities in the Bernese Oberland:

- a) My first idea for our excursion was [Ballenberg](#), the Swiss open-air museum. Because you need to be in good physical shape to fully enjoy the museum, we chose another destination. [Here the link to the map](#). Many old farmhouses from all over Switzerland were moved to this location, and old trades and crafts are shown everywhere. A lot of fun for active adults and families.
 - b) A few years ago [Tropenhaus Frutigen](#) opened its doors. With warm water from the new Lötschberg railroad tunnel a tropical garden, orchid garden and a sturgeon-breeding center were built and you can visit those. A good Choice for a rainy day.
 - c) Brienz is the center of woodcarving. There is a woodcarving school there and a [museum](#) as well. Of course, they will be more than happy to sell you their products, too.
 - d) Although Berne does not have a lake, there are a few lakes nearby: I have already mentioned Lake of Thun and Lake of Brienz, and both have [ships with regular schedules](#) on them.
 - e) Right at the banks of Lake of Thun, there is [Schloss Oberhofen](#), a romantic castle with a long history. Not worth a special trip IMHO but definitely worth a stop when driving by.
 - f) German speaking guests may be interested in the “[Tellspele](#)” in Interlaken. It’s the open air theater about the Legend of Wilhelm Tell (famous play by Friedrich Schiller) that is supposedly the story of the beginning of the Swiss Confederation.
- 4) Adventure sports: Interlaken is the center of all adventure sports, but adrenalin kicks are all over.
- a) [River Rafting](#) from an easy Aare float trip to wilder rafting trips on Lüttschine or Simme.
 - b) [Canyoning](#)
 - c) [Lake Tours](#) from jet boat rides to kayaking tours.
 - d) [Bungee and Canyon jumping](#)
 - e) [Skydiving](#), [Paragliding](#) and [Hanggliding](#) as a passenger
 - f) Visit the [historic caves in Oberwil](#) / Simmental. Bring good shoes, sturdy clothes and headlamps or other flashlights for this adventure.
 - g) Last but not least: Lauterbrunnen Valley is the Mekka for [Base Jumpers](#).
- Please avoid getting killed while doing one of those sports....

II. Other places

- 1) If you like the medieval old town of Berne, you might like a visit in [Murten](#) and its surrounding with the medieval town and its intact fortifications, Lake of Murten, Vully hills with its grapes, Avenches with the roman amphitheater and the fertile fields of the “Great Marsh” where most of our vegetable grows.

- 2) About half way to Murten, there is [Papilorama](#) in Kerzers, where you can see butterflies flying around in a protected dome. A great outing for a rainy day. All kids love it.
- 3) [Emmental](#), where the famous Emmental cheese comes from, is another part of Canton of Berne. It's quite mountainous, but the mountains are much lower than the Alps. It's a very rural area and very picturesque. There are lots of beautiful hikes. In Affoltern, there is a cheese dairy (but note that we will visit a different one on our excursion). In Trubschachen, you can visit the cookie factory [Kambly](#), a very traditional company. In Rütthubelbad (Walkringen), you'll find [Sensorium](#) a place to experience all senses².
- 4) North of Canton of Berne, there is the mountain range [Jura](#), that gave the Jurassic period its name. This mountain range is much lower than the Alps, but there are still mountains like [Chasseral](#) with beautiful view over the middle lands. A fun visit for families is [Prehisto-Parc Réclère](#), where you can visit a cave and a park with dinosaurs. If you are interested in watches, there is the [International Watch Museum](#) in La Chaux-de-Fonds.
- 5) [Lucerne](#) is the place where all Japanese tourists will stay at least one night, and it's only a one-hour train ride away. Besides the beautiful setting of the city at the lake and with mountains not far, there are many sights like [Kapellbrücke](#), [Glacier Garden](#) (don't miss mirror maze) and the [Swiss Transport Museum](#).
- 6) For art lovers, [Basel](#) is the city to visit, and its only a one-hour train ride away: There is no shortage of [art museums](#) in Basel like [Fondation Beyeler](#), [Museum Tinguely](#) and [Vitra Design Museum](#) to name the most important ones. Around the museums and in the old town, there are many Galleries with contemporary art. Basel has a nice old town, too.
- 7) If you still have time left, I am happy to give you more tips to places like [Zermatt](#) (Matterhorn), [Montreux](#) (Lake of Geneva), [Lausanne](#) (Lake of Geneva, Olympic Museum) and if you insist, even to [Zurich](#) ☺.

III. Our excursion

Our excursion is all about Swiss clichés: We will visit the Gruyère area in the neighboring Canton of Freiburg: We will visit [Maison Cailler](#) in Broc, where we will learn (almost) everything about chocolate making and can try the product, too. Then we will visit [Maison Du Gruyère](#) where we will learn everything about cheese making and get some samples as well. And we will have some free time to visit the medieval town of [Gruyères](#) where we will enjoy an Alphorn concert. You will be provided with a flyer with suggestions what to do in Gruyères. Except the samples of chocolate and cheese all food and drink during excursion is on you.

That's all for today. More to come.

² Description on the website: The visitor experiences "how the eye sees, the ear hears, the nose smells, the skin feels, the fingers touch, the foot understands, the hand grasps, the brain thinks, the lungs breath, the blood pulsates, the body resonates"

