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Roam free, the youth hostel way

NO matter what the famous Swiss cities have to offer, they cannot compare with the beauties of the Swiss countryside. And what better way to see that than on foot?

If you really can forsake the trappings of luxury and sophistication for a week or so – and limit your luggage to what can be carried in a back-pack – then a youth hostelling holiday in Switzerland might be right for you.

The idea of roaming freely through the countryside may be appealing but in practice it does help to have a little organisation.

First, hostels can be very popular during the summer months so it's good to know that when you arrive, tired and hungry, there will be a place for you.

Second, there's the question of motivation. When so much of our lives is structured, there is a very real danger that if you woke up in the morning with nowhere to go, you simply would not travel.

The Swiss Youth Hostel Federation has got around this problem very nicely by organising hiking tours in Switzerland which suggest attractive routes between guaranteed hostel beds – yet leave the walker completely free during the day.

For example, one tour takes walkers through the beautiful Bernese Oberland, alongside clear mountain lakes and through flower filled alpine meadows.

The price, which is based on arrival in Interlaken on any Saturday, is Sfr. 200. This covers six accommodation vouchers for specified hostels, breakfasts, dinners and some useful extras such as maps and entrance fees.

The longest walk on this particular tour comes on the second day (when you are pre-

sumably fresh and keen) and takes about seven hours.

Generally, the tours are recommended only to well trained mountain hikers with some experience in the high mountains. The self guided hikes are mainly along established paths, but peaks and ridges are encountered with altitudes up to 1500 metres.

Further information is available from Jugi Tours, PO Box 201, CH-8957 Spreitenbach, Switzerland.



Hiking in the Swiss Alps



Valbella-Lenzerheide



Winterthur-Hegi



Grindelwald