

## 16 Rottalhütte, 2755m

To the Unesco World Natural Heritage Jungfrau – Aletsch – Bietschhorn

### Stechelberg – Altläger – Bäreflue – Rottalhütte – Stechelberg

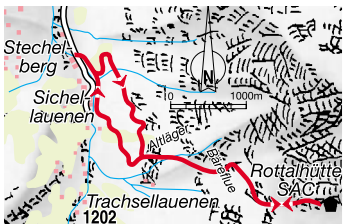
#### Starting point and destination:

Stechelberg (910m); post bus [line 311.15] from Lauterbrunnen; there by train [311] from Interlaken East.

**Walking times:** ascent 5½ hrs., descent 4 hrs.; total time 9½ hrs.

**Difference in height:** ascent and descent both 1850m.

**Grade:** hard mountain walk over precipitous terrain. Key point is a steep gully with a danger of rockfall (cable); also three other places require the utmost care. Marked path except on the descent



from Altläger.

**Best season:** July to Sept.; quietest in autumn when new snow prevents alpinists from making trips into the high mountains.

**Accommodation:** Rottalhütte SAC, 45 places, always open, staffed at weekends in the high season, ☎ 033 855 24 45. In Stechelberg: Hotel Stechelberg (☎ 033 855 29 21), Naturfreundehaus Alpenhof (☎ 033 855 12 02).

**Things to look out for:** the view of the Hinteres Lauterbrunnental. The creaking of the glacier. The Jungfrau close by.

**Map:** 264 T Jungfrau; 1248 Mürren, 1249 Finsteraarhorn.

**Linking walks:** 14, 15, 17.

**Important advice:** don't make a stop between Altläger and Bäreflue where ice could avalanche down from the Jungfrau, nor at the rock where it says '½ way to the Rottalhütte'. Stop instead at the ruins of an alpine building (Point 1937m).



What a location! View of Tschingelhorn, Doldenhorn and Blüemlisalp (from the left).

'As far as the eye can see and one's bold step might penetrate, everything lies buckled and twisted in dreadful devastation.' This discovery of the place where today's Rottalhütte is located, did not stop Franz Josef Hugi, the grammar school teacher and geologist from Solothurn, from pushing on with his guides into the wild and dramatic Rottal four times from 1827 to 1830 or from building a very simple shelter and attempting an ascent of the Jungfrau – one reason why the Rottal is a legendary place in the Bernese Oberland. Today it is a sheer, vertical ascent on narrow paths from the apple trees up to the vegetation line, right into the middle of the first Unesco World Natural Heritage in the Alps.

From **Stechelberg** go along the mule path east of the Lüttschine 400m up the valley to the left turn-off for the marked hut path at the Staldenbach. It leads steeply up to the rocks of the Staldenflue and runs along this on a sometimes exposed ledge to the **Alp Altläger** (1580m); this path was used by the farmers when they used to move up onto the high meadows for the summer. The path continues to zigzag up to the Schafbach, crosses over it

and follows a moraine via Point 1937 past the Silberhornhütte turn-off to the **Bäreflue** which, since 1977, can be overcome at a new place protected from icefall. The route goes through a steep gully of friable rock which you only see at the last minute and where there are cables to help you climb through. Go along the grassy 'roof' of the Bäreflue to a shoulder above the Rottal glacier. Continue eastwards on and above the moraine over partly precipitous ground to the **Rottalhütte** which you finally reach up some rock steps. The descent to **Altläger** goes along the same route. From the hut follow an unmarked, overgrown path southwards down towards the Schafbach where the path joins from Alp Stuefestein. Carry on north-westwards at first for a short way across alpine meadows, then across rock strewn slopes (cables) down to Sichelouwena; this path is the so-called 'footpath', the fast connecting route for alpine dairymen from the valley onto the alpine pasture. Eventually return along the mule path to **Stechelberg**.