



Fred Jacobson

ALPINE TRAILS NEWSLETTER

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◆ FALL 2017 ◆

Our Program for 2018

Our 2018 program offers trips to Austria, Italy, Sud Tirol and Switzerland.

- A “Spring Spectacular” is to my two favorite destinations for Spring hiking – Meran and Soglio.
- Two iconic peaks and the villages at their feet will kick off the summer season. For the first time, we’ll combine visits to Courmayeur and Zermatt – a chance to know both Mont Blanc and the Matterhorn up close and personal.
- A special two weeks at our beloved Hotel Waldhaus in Sils Maria. This year’s visit will include another sponsored chamber music concert as well as a party celebrating the 45th anniversary of Alpine Trails. Last summer, we had a waiting list, so sign up early.
- We’ll head east for our final trip – to Sulden in Italy’s Sud Tirol and Vent in Austria’s Oetztal, two personal favorites of our hikers.
- Despite a declining dollar, we are holding prices for our final season.
- Our “smell the roses” philosophy worked well in 2017. Once again walks will generally not exceed 2,000 - 2,500 feet of height gain and 4 - 5 hours of actual hiking time.

Some of our favorite destinations are world renowned. Others are little known to Americans, although beloved of experienced European hikers. Each has its own distinctive personality. What fol-

lows is intended to whet your appetite to share some of the finest hiking and most charming “base camps” anywhere. More detailed descriptions will be found on our website.

Our season starts (April 20–May 5) with visits to two areas which offer spectacular Spring hiking – Meran, in Italy’s Sud Tirol and Soglio above Switzerland’s Val Bregaglia, halfway between St. Moritz and Lake Como.



One of the countless Alpine waterfalls

Meran lies at the foot of the Vinschgau (Val Venosta) and exudes Old World Charm in a cosmopolitan, bustling city. Our visit is timed to coincide with apple blossom time. The area produces some 20,000 tons of apples, and the valley appears as a sea of pink blossoms, dotted with palm trees and surrounded by snow covered peaks. While high season is still weeks away, mountain lifts are running, mountain restaurants are

open and the hiking trails are snow free. Museums, castles and concerts are part of the culture scene. An excellent bus and lift system enables us to reach a wide range of trails. Pure joy!

Soglio is a 15th century cobblestone village, perched high above the Val Bregaglia and seemingly untouched by modern times – a photographer’s delight. It will be hard to leave Meran, but Soglio provides a perfect contrast – a gorgeous hotel in a seemingly unchanged ancient village. Hikes take place in the Italian and Swiss ends of the valley. Our hotel, built at the end of the last century, is simply

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Savogno - across the Italian border from Soglio

magnificent – modern comforts, large rooms, excellent food and arguably one of the most dramatic mountain views in the Alps. Snow capped peaks are framed by palm trees and magnolias. The valley is just emerging from its winter sleep and temperatures are ideal for hiking – warm but not hot. The hiking trails are snow free, early spring flowers abound, the mountain huts and “crotti” are open, serving mouth-watering local specialties. Best of all, we have the valley and its hiking trails – overrun in the summer months – and the lovely Hotel La Sogliana virtually entirely to ourselves. IF YOU HAVE THE TIME, I AM OFFERING A SECOND WEEK OPTION AT COST (i.e. hotel cost). It’s that good.

Summer 2018 will offer for the first time the chance to spend a week each at the feet of both Mont Blanc and the Matterhorn (June 23 - July 8).

Courmayeur is literally in the shadow of Mont Blanc (Monte Bianco) – the highest peak in the Alps – which towers over the village. At the same time Alpine and elegant, it can be very crowded from mid-July to the end of August. We should be just in time for peak flowers and just before peak tourism! There are several astoundingly beautiful traverses, with the full range in view. Several mountain huts and hidden valleys add to the charm. We will stay in the picture book village of Entreves – just a 10 minute ride by public or hotel shuttle bus from Courmayeur’s center. Our 4 star hotel – Auberge de la Maison – offers elegance without pretention. It has won raves from virtually all our hikers.

Zermatt show cases the Matterhorn, perhaps the world’s most photographed peak. The auto-free village retains much of its original charm despite offering all the modern attractions you’d expect at a

world famous international resort. The trails are extremely well designed and well kept. The peaks, glaciers and deep gorges provide constant spectacular views. A wide variety of mountain restaurants add to the ambiance. Thanks to an extensive lift system, a wide choice of hikes are within relatively easy reach. We should be in time for the peak flower season. Our four star Hotel Schoenegg lies high above the village, reached easily by an underground lift. It combines a quiet setting and overview of the village with being a minute from the center. Next summer will be my 60th year in Zermatt.

The charms of **Sils Maria** (July 27-August 11) and the five star Hotel Waldhaus in the world renowned Swiss Engadine are familiar to Alpine Trails veterans. I have explored more than 150 trails in this charming area and have distilled 45 years’ experience into a fascinating variety of hikes. Glaciers and lakes abound. There are numerous side valleys to explore, huts to visit, ridges to cross, gastronomic specialties to sample. Our hotel, high above the village, commands gorgeous views in every direction. A 20 meter swimming pool, indoor and outdoor tennis courts, a fitness room, sauna, tea concerts and after dinner dancing are all part of life at the Hotel Waldhaus and help explain the trip’s higher price. As always, I will sponsor a chamber music concert during our stay. In addition, I will host a special cocktail party on August 10th. It’s a triple celebration – the 45th anniversary of Alpine Trails, my 60th year in the Swiss Alps and my 80th birthday. That’s a lot to celebrate and a great place to do it! I hope to see a number of you there.



Remote enchantment - Uschione



The "High Life"

August 25-September 9, we'll return to two enchanting villages in Italy's Sud Tirol and Austria's Oetzal. **Sulden** is in the Obervinschgau and lies on a grassy plateau surrounded on four sides by the steepest peaks east of Switzerland and their glaciers. The Ortler is the highest. Many consider the neighboring Koenigspitz one of the most beautiful peaks in the entire Alps. No less than eight mountain huts and restaurants provide rewards at lunch time (picnics are also popular) and several lifts provide great flexibility in tailoring our walks to different levels of motivation and ability. Despite all this infrastructure, Sulden remains a quiet village – a favorite of Angela Merkel.

Vent lies at the head of Austria's famous Oetzal. It was above this small village that the now famous Ice Man was found. The village is surrounded on three sides by glaciers and rushing streams with deep gorges. Climbing huts dot the landscape. It's no surprise that this year the village was designated and officially recognized as a "Bergsteiger Dorf" – especially devoted to mountain lovers. It's a great honor to be added to this exclusive list. Naturally the hiking is superb. Our Hotel Post is owned and run by a mountain guide family, and they are used to taking special care of hikers.

Visit Our Website

If you would like to learn more about any of our areas – the village, the hiking, the hotel, non-hiking suggestions – please check the destination pages on our website – www.alptrails.com. Our website's photo gallery is a pictorial guide to what you'll experience when you travel with Alpine Trails.

I particularly enjoy talking to veterans and newcomers alike in as much detail as you wish, whenever I'm in the States.

Our Hotels

Over the years we have refined not only our trail selection but also our hotel choices. They range from extremely comfortable and cozy country inns to four star hotels and one five star. We have established excellent relationships with all of them. They spoil us. We are usually the only American guests, and they make a special effort to make us feel at home. I urge you to ask any of our veterans about the hotels as well as the hiking. All of our hotels offer great value – Sud Tirol's lower cost of living is

reflected in the lower price of this trip. Hotel quality is uniformly high.

Two updates: At the Schoenegg, we've upgraded, and all rooms – singles and doubles – will have a Matterhorn view and a balcony. In Meran, we have upgraded to the Meranerhof, a charming four-star superior hotel with Old World charm, a central location on the Passer River and spacious rooms with balcony.

Leadership

After 45 years of leading hiking groups, long experience of Alpine guiding has given me a unique knowledge of the areas we will visit – trails, inns, mountain restaurants, local culture, customs, food and wines – as well as a good feel for the interpersonal dynamics of a happy group experience. Speaking French, German and Italian has given me the ability to communicate and form relationships with inhabitants wherever we go and learn from them. I'm told these insights and my on-going enthusiasm add to our hikers' enjoyment. If you believe that "experience is the best teacher" and appreciate leadership continuity, all of these trips should provide an optimal Alpine experience!

Gateways and Transportation

To facilitate travel for guests, we will use Zurich as our principal gateway. Private bus will take the Spring group to Meran and transfer them to Soglio. Return to Zurich will be by public bus (not included) and train. Courmayeur /Zermatt guests will be met by a private bus in Geneva and driven to Courmayeur and from there to Zermatt the second week.

One way rail tickets from Zermatt to Geneva will be provided. Zurich will also be used for Sils Maria. Guests will receive round trip tickets from Zurich and a pass for local trains, buses and mountain lifts from the hotel. A private bus will meet our final group in Zurich, take them to Sulden, transfer to Vent and finally back to Zurich.

Travel Arrangements

Sheila Duigan of Alpine Travel handles the travel aspects of our trips to make them as problem-free as possible. To sign up, or for more information about any of these trips, please contact her at Alpine Travel, P.O. Box 1477, Newburyport, MA 01950 (800) 291-8126 or (978) 465-8510. Sheila always enjoys talking with you, but she can also be reached by email: alpine.travel@verizon.net or by fax: (978)465-8550.

References

Our repeat ratio continues to range between 80% and 90%. It's not surprising that we have hundreds of happy hikers who would be happy to share their experiences with you. Call Sheila to put you in touch with them.

Book Early – One Week Options

Trips are limited to ten hikers, so book early to assure yourself the trip of your choice. Due to the popularity of our carefully chosen inns, WE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO GUARANTEE HOTEL SPACE

LESS THAN SIX WEEKS BEFORE DEPARTURE. In any event, early booking gives you more time to anticipate the joys of your trip to the Alps!

JUST A REMINDER: If any two week trip is not filled three months ahead of time, we will accept hikers for the first week only. Two weeks are more than twice as good as one, but a single week in the Alps is infinitely better than none at all!

Highlights of 2017

We believe that a picture is worth 1,000 words. So, we included in this newsletter a few pictures of the highlights of 2017. Hope you'll be part of 2018's highlights!



A beautiful traverse above Courmayeur

LOOKING BACK

While I will continue to look forward in my personal life, it is time to count my blessings while looking back on my “business” life as creator and leader of Alpine Trails. Many, many years ago, a reasonably successful young investment banker had the crazy idea that he could turn his hobby into a career. This year will mark the 45th anniversary of that idea – Alpine Trails. As a pioneer of organized Alpine hiking trips for Americans, I “enjoyed” a couple of very challenging years before there were signs that my dream might become sustainable. This year, on the eve of my retirement, I am indulging myself in looking back with profound gratitude to so many people – my loyal guests, my co-leaders, the wonderfully supportive innkeepers, the many friends I made in the villages I visited and, of course, Sheila Duigan, without whose collaboration I simply could not have managed. Looking back evokes many happy memories. As I said last year, I plan to continue my “Alphaholism” for many more years but will cease guiding on September 9, 2018. I still feel very well – so this decision has been reached after much soul searching. It seems a good time to switch gears. There will be a party on August 10th to celebrate multiple milestones mentioned elsewhere. I hope to see many of you during the summer and have the opportunity to thank you in person. For those of you who can't make it this summer, I can only repeat my heart felt thanks for helping to make my dream a long-playing reality.

Berg Heil!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fred".