

**Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> – Friday, 12<sup>th</sup> October**



Most aviation photographers will have heard about, and perhaps seen the fabulous photos and videos available on the internet, of the annual firepower demonstration put on by the Swiss Air Force on their Alpine firing range.

But there is nothing like seeing it in person. The sight and sound of jets letting go with cannons and rockets at nearby targets on the tops and sides of adjacent mountains has to be experienced to be believed. The aircraft pass only yards away at near supersonic speed!

The Patrouille Swiss, the national acrobatic team, fly their display over the top, around and below the adjacent mountains! Truly amazing!

Yes, you have to climb up a mountain – but it is well worth the effort. You do not need the stamina of an Olympic athlete, nor be as sure-footed as a goat: it is not as difficult as you might think. You are going to a truly amazing aviation event, and you will most certainly not come away disappointed!

Of course, everything depends on the weather and this can change in the mountains with very little warning despite what the forecast might be. However, the Swiss Met people seem to get it right most times and Axalp has only been completely cancelled, i.e., every day, on very few occasions because of the weather; it is definitely worth the taking the risk. In 2009 and 2010 the weather was good, allowing at least 1 practice day and a firepower demo day. Last year (2011), after the first day of training, the event was unfortunately cancelled; this was due solely to heavy rainfall on the Monday, causing flooding and landslides in another region of Switzerland and the government, for the first time, drafting in all of their Armed Forces to help.

There are 3 public viewing areas located at or near to the top of the mountain. The summit is reachable part-way by a chairlift, but mostly on foot up narrow, winding paths. As well as the more direct, but steeper path, in 2009 a couple of enthusiasts from our group took a longer, but easier, route partly walking on tarmac road. For details of the other recommended ways up, please see details on page 4, and the excellent website: <http://www.utopia-photography.ch/action/b/info.html>

We also plan to spend a day visiting Emmen flight-training airbase: PC-6, PC-7, PC-9, PC-21 and F-5Es of the Patrouille Suisse; and Buochs, home of Pilatus Aircraft, where we have requested a visit to their production factory. Both visits are to be confirmed.

We fly on the scheduled services of a major airline from London's Heathrow Airport, currently British Airways, to/from Zurich; travel around Switzerland is by de-luxe coach and/or mini-coach; and we stay overnight in comfortable hotels on a bed and continental breakfast basis.

## **PROVISIONAL ITINERARY (all times local)**

### **DAY 1: SUNDAY, 7<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER**

Between 10:30hrs. and 11:35 hrs. please check-in with British Airways in Terminal 5 at London's Heathrow Airport. Then meet your Ian Allan Tour Manager and fellow enthusiasts who will be standing by Column G which is located in the Departures Hall immediately before the check-in area. We recommend you check in no later than 11:35 hrs..

✈ Heathrow Airport, Terminal 5  
✈ Zurich

Flight: BA 716

Departs: 13:40  
Arrives: 16:25

Meeting our local driver we board our chartered coach and transfer to Stans, staying overnight at the Hotel Stans-Sud, opposite the airfield. The hotel has no restaurant and bar on-site, however, there are several places in the immediate area. Website: [www.hotelstans.ch/en/hotel/](http://www.hotelstans.ch/en/hotel/)

## DAY 2: MONDAY, 8<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER

Today we visit the Swiss Air Force base at Emmen, where we photograph from the perimeter; and the Pilatus Aircraft Factory on Buochs airfield (visit to be confirmed at time of preparing this itinerary).

Late afternoon we drive to Meiringen; this small town is famous for 2 reasons: they invented meringues here, and it's the place where the dastardly Moriarty killed Sherlock Holmes at the nearby Reichenbach Falls (which you can visit by cable car); there is a museum in the town and several streets have names connected with the Arthur Conan Doyle. We stay 4 nights at the Hotel Baer which has its own restaurant and bar on the premises. There are also several other restaurants and bars within a 300-yards walk. Website: <http://www.hotel-baer.ch/homee.html>

## DAY 3: TUESDAY, 9<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER

Meeting our local driver at 08:30hrs. we board our coach for the short drive down the valley to Meiringen airbase. Today is the designated training day, and like we have done for the past 3 years, we spend the day at the base which is used to support the firepower demonstration.

There is also a taxi-way (pictured right) leading into/out of the base's mountain where the Hornets and F-5s hide!

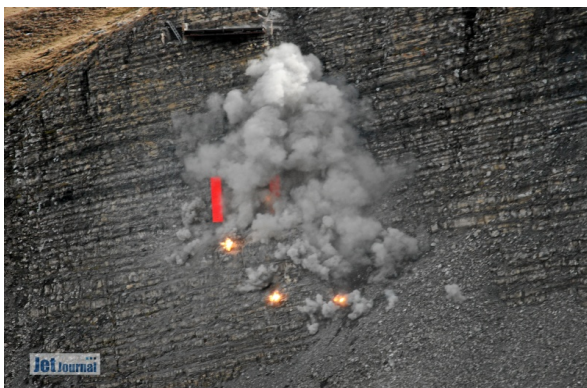
Hornets, F-5s, plus various helicopters and transport aircraft fly in and out of the base from morning until late afternoon. At 17:00 hrs. we return to our hotel.



With no fences to contend with, there are various spots along the side of the runway, at its mid-point, and at both ends, which are perfect for photography and spotting. A public road, complete with traffic lights(!) crosses the runway's mid-point and is used by vehicles and pedestrians alike! For photographers there is also a special, roped-off area near to the western end of the runway.

In the air terminal there is the excellent "Fliegetreff" restaurant which serves hot and cold meals to both military personnel and civilians throughout the day. Above the restaurant is a viewing terrace overlooking the ramp, taxiway and runway – another popular place to watch/photograph the action.

Alternatively, you have the option of going to Axalp and up to the range (own arrangements and expense) for the training flights: please note that no firing takes place on this day.



## DAY'S 4 & 5: WEDNESDAY, 10<sup>th</sup> & THURSDAY, 11<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER

After an early continental breakfast at 04:00 hrs., we depart the hotel at 04:30 hrs. for nearby Brienz Brunnen where, from 05:00 hrs, a coach shuttle service will take enthusiasts up to Axalp village. As introduced in 2010, access by vehicles is no longer possible up to Axalp village, and everyone must now use the official shuttle coach service: the daily price in 2011 was CHF40.00 (which also includes return rides on the chairlift, whether you use it or not). This charge is only payable on the day and is not included in the tour price. 2012 price is currently not available.

On arrival in Axalp village you have the option of joining the queue for the Windegg chairlift (coffee is available from the adjacent hotel). The majority of people take the chairlift as it saves a 1-hour walk; however, you then have a difficult trek across badly broken ground: see page 4. There is an easier, but longer, route walking on the asphalt road which goes around the back of the mountain whilst gently climbing to join a steep path up to the first viewing area and continuing to the second and third viewing areas.

Practice flights take place in the morning with no firing, in preparation for the actual firepower demo in the afternoon from 14:00 hrs.

You have the option of going up on one or both days. We recommend that you bring with you 2 walking poles as they will be very helpful going up and coming back down the mountain; also, a backpack/haversack in place of a camera bag.

At 16:30 hrs. the demo ends and its time to make the descent back down the mountain to Axalp village; from here we take the shuttle service back to Brienz railway station where our drivers will be waiting (we use 2 or more mini-vans).



## DAY 6: FRIDAY, 12<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER

This morning we drive back to Zurich Airport where we check in for our return flight to London; latest check-in time is 13:30 hrs..

✈ Zurich

Flight: BA 715

Departs: 15:30

✈ Heathrow Airport, Terminal 5

Arrives: 16:15

Awaiting our luggage in Baggage Reclaim, we bid each other farewell – until we meet again!

TOUR PRICE PER PERSON	TOUR: 227228
From £ 839.00	Package price based on sharing a twin bedded room on a bed and continental breakfast basis
From £ 60.00	Single room supplement
From £ 619.00	Land-only (NO flights) <i>PLEASE SPEAK WITH ONE OF OUR CONSULTANTS BEFORE BOOKING</i>

### TOUR PRICE INCLUDES

- Flights on the scheduled services of British Airways from London's Heathrow Airport, as stated
- UK & Swiss airport taxes and UK Air Passenger Duty, currently £94.95 (subject to change)
- All coach and/or mini-van transfers and transportation as stated
- 5-nights hotel accommodation in rooms with private facilities
- Continental breakfast each morning
- Services of an Ian Allan Tour Manager throughout
- Gratuity for coach driver

### NOT INCLUDED

- Meals, other than as stated above
- Any charge to visit Pilatus Factory
- Travel insurance – see General Information
- Visa – see General Information
- Return shuttle coach transfers Brienz-Axalp (including chairlift): CHF40.00 return trip per day (2011 price – 2012 not yet available). Pay on the day only
- Personal expenditure, e.g. telephone calls, laundry, drinks, etc.
- Tips and gratuities (other than for coach drivers)

## **INFORMATION ON AXALP & THE SWISS AIR FORCE FIREPOWER DEMONSTRATIONS**

The official viewing sites for everyone attending the firepower demonstrations and practice days are situated near to the top of the mountain. For obvious safety reasons these are the only places you can see the action!

If one is in a normal physical condition it should not be a problem for you to walk up the mountain. For people with circulation or heart problems it is advisable **to consult your doctor before booking on this tour.**

As the show takes place in October it may be cool so bring appropriate (warm, winter) clothing with you. The weather can change very quickly in the mountains, therefore it is recommended that you also include fresh clothes in a backpack. When you arrive at the viewing areas it is advisable to change out of any sweated clothing, for example, your shirt, it can be cold and windy at the viewing areas, although when the sun comes out later in the day it gets warmer. That said, in 2009, 2010 and 2011 the weather in the Axalp area was very co-operative with blue skies, sunshine and temperatures high enough to allow you to remove outer layers of clothing down to shirt sleeves!

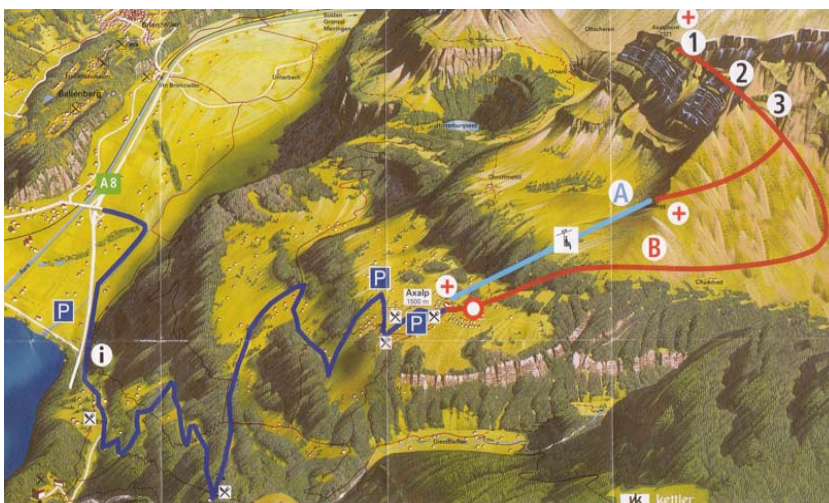
Apropos weather - this is beyond Ian Allan's control. On the mountain the sun is shining but you don't see anything flying because the aircraft/helicopters can't take off if there is fog down at the departure airbase. It can also be the other way round: good conditions on the airbase but the range is in the clouds or fog - so again no flying can take place. The local weather forecasts are posted at various places, as well as being announced on the radio and television. The worst scenario: the weather is unco-operative and both firepower demonstrations are cancelled. Although a rare occurrence, you need to bear this in mind when booking.

Useful items to take up the mountain with you: hiking (or a good pair of walking) boots, extra clothes, flask of tea/coffee/soup, snacks/sandwiches (café only open on Wednesday and Thursday). Also, a torch - preferably one that you can affix to your headgear, rather than hand-held - as it will be dark in the early morning when we set off, first using the chairlift and then the path.

It is possible to go up to the viewing areas on the Tuesday training day (the lift does not normally operate on this day), when you might also see training flights for the official demonstration, for example, Puma and Hornet displays, Patrouille Suisse etc.!

Firing practice normally starts around 09:00, and it is essential to depart Axalp village around 06:00 to give you time for as easy an ascent as possible; and also because the authorities close the pathway from Axalp just before the actual practice starts! Firing usually takes place between 09:00-11:30 and 14:00-16:30.

The official Axalp firepower demonstrations take place on the Wednesday and Thursday, starting at 14:00 each day and lasts for around 1½ - 2 hrs. In the morning practice flights and/or normal shooting takes place.



On training days you need to take food and drink with you, but on the Wednesday and Thursday drinks and snacks are sold in the three spectator areas.

The map shows the way from the direction of Meiringen to Axalp village (dark (blue) line), however, access to the village is now only possible by shuttle coach from the nearby town of Brienz.

Viewing areas are marked 1, 2 and 3. The light (blue) line is the chairlift. Red lines are the two walking routes.

### Payment for Ian Allan Aviation Tours

A deposit of £250.00 per person should accompany your Booking Form, with the balance due 10 weeks prior to the tour's departure. Please see your Booking Confirmation/Invoice for the exact date. Please note that a reminder of the payment date will not be sent.

### Passports and Visas

Citizens of the UK are required to be in possession of a Full UK Passport, which must be valid for at least 6 months from the date of your return. You may also refer to the World Travel Guide website: [www.wtgonline.com](http://www.wtgonline.com) for general information on passports, visas and health requirements.

UK passport holders do not require a visa to enter Switzerland.

### Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) Consular Advice

The FCO's consular service is a major operation. Every hour of every day consular staff around the world are advising and helping British nationals. For up-to-date passport, visa and security information on the destination you intend visiting, we suggest you visit: [www.fco.gov.uk/knowbeforeyougo](http://www.fco.gov.uk/knowbeforeyougo)

In addition, the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) provide an Information Line, telephone: 0901 201 505 (calls currently charged at 51p per minute).

### Baggage Regulations – British Airways

**Hold baggage** – BA's baggage rules, for Economy Class, currently allow 1 piece in the aircraft's hold, up to a maximum weight of 23kgs (51lbs). Where it is clear that a passenger cannot manage one bag of 23kgs, they will be able to check-in an additional bag free of charge, as long as the sum weight of both bags when totalled does not exceed 23kgs. Any amount in excess of 23kgs and excess baggage charges are likely to be applied.

**Hand baggage** - Passengers departing from or transferring through Heathrow can take 2 standard-sized bags no bigger than 56cm x 45cm x 25cm (22" x 17.5" x 9.85") including wheels, pockets and handles. There is no weight limit for cabin bags, provided passengers can lift the bags, unaided, into the overhead lockers in the aircraft cabin.

Restrictions remain in place for the carriage of liquids, gels, and creams in hand baggage for all passengers departing from and transferring through all EU airports. Some other airports around the world operate their own restrictions. Customers are advised to check before they travel.

Limited quantities of liquids (individual containers must not exceed 100ml or 3.5 fl oz), are allowed as hand baggage but must be carried separately through security in a clear plastic, zip-top or re-sealable bag that does not exceed 20cm x 20cm (8 inches x 8 inches), or quart size. Items must fit in the bag comfortably and the bag must be completely closed.

The bag can only contain liquids such as shampoo, suntan lotions, creams, toothpaste, hair gel and hair spray, perfumes, cosmetics such as mascara and lip gloss, water and other drinks, soups and syrups and other items of a similar consistency.

Cigarette lighters are NOT permitted in hold baggage or through the security search. These may be purchased airside.

Hand baggage can also include electronic equipment such as mobile phones, digital cameras and MP3 players (such as i-Pods). Laptops must be removed from the bag for x-ray.

Prescription medicines in liquid form, e.g. diabetic kit can also be included.

At security all remaining items should be placed in the tray provided for screening, e.g. car keys and fobs, cash, solid food, books, newspapers, cigarettes and tobacco, belts and shoes. Pushchairs and walking aids are permitted but must be x-ray screened. All wheelchairs will be subject to search. Please note: you may be subject to a hand search by the security team and required to remove footwear to be x-ray screened.

*If flying from any other airport on BA, i.e. on connecting services to/from Heathrow, the allowance differs depending on the airport and you are advised to check beforehand.*

## **Baggage Weight Restrictions – UK Airports**

Since 1<sup>st</sup> June 2004, any single piece of checked baggage weighing more than 70lbs (32kgs) has not been accepted at check-in by any airline operating from London's Heathrow Airport. The BAA may introduce this limit at their other airports in the UK (and so might non-BAA airports), in an attempt to reduce manual handling injuries amongst airport staff. Please bear this in mind when packing your suitcase.

## **Meals**

On this tour continental breakfast each day at the hotel is included in the tour price.

## **Health Requirements**

There are no known mandatory or recommended precautions for visiting Switzerland; however, if you are in doubt we strongly recommend you consult your local doctor or health centre for the latest information.

## **Climate and Dress**

The weather in October is likely to be on the "cool side" but sunny (around 10°C, but colder up the mountain), so we recommend warm, winter clothing which is also waterproof. In place of a camera bag, which goes over your shoulder, we strongly recommend a backpack or haversack; also hiking, or strong walking boots, a vacuum flask, a torch and 2 walking poles.

## **Currency**

Please note that the currency of Switzerland is the Swiss Franc (CHF), not the Euro (€).

## **Travel Insurance**

For citizens of the United Kingdom, Ian Allan Travel Ltd are able to offer competitive and comprehensive insurance cover. However, if you do not wish to take out our insurance, you must ensure that comparable or greater cover is taken. The number of your Insurance Policy should be written, if known, on your Booking Form at the time of making the reservation, but no later than the date when final payment is due. A copy of the policy must be forwarded to Ian Allan Travel Ltd.

Individual insurance policies are arranged through CoverMore Insurance Services Limited; the premiums for which will vary according to your circumstances. Full details are available on request.

These policies also include cover for non-scheduled flights, i.e. pleasure flights, where the aircraft is licensed and insured to undertake such flights, and where a payment is made.

## **Wheelchair Assistance at Airports.**

This tour is not suitable for anyone using a wheelchair, or anyone who cannot walk up a mountainside unaided (but possible with aid of 2 walking poles).

## **Flexible Itinerary**

We are very happy for enthusiasts to take time away from the printed itinerary to pursue their own interests during multi-day stays in the same place, so long as they inform the Tour Manager. It will be the individual's responsibility to ensure that they re-join the group in the hotel at the stated time on the day of departure.

## **Land Only Price**

For enthusiasts who would prefer to join the tour in Switzerland (instead of flying from the UK with the main group), we will have provided a 'Land Only' price on request.

You are strongly advised to contact us before making your own flight arrangements in the event that there has been a change to the published itinerary.

Please note that the 'Land only' price is based on you meeting the tour at the hotel in Stans and the airport transfer on Day 1 is not included. However, should your flight arrival time at Zurich Airport coincide with that of the main group from London, a seat will be offered if available.

## **Flight Timings & Connecting Travel Arrangements to Departure Airport**

All flight departure and arrival times are correct at the time of preparing each itinerary; however, airlines may change these times with little or no prior warning. In practice such changes are only a few minutes either way and the final itinerary will show the actual times. Clients making their own arrangements to get to the departure airport by air, rail, coach etc., should bear the above in mind if purchasing non-refundable or non-changeable tickets. Ian Allan Travel cannot be held responsible for any changes to flight times and any privately arranged travel tickets to the airport becoming invalid.

## **Pre-departure**

For connecting flights from UK regional airports - please call Ian Allan Travel on 01932 255627 for the latest special offers available.

Airport Hotel and/or Car Parking - we can offer special rates for the above at most UK airports, please ask for details.

**‘Meet & Greet’ Car Parking, London’s Heathrow Airport:** from your home or overnight hotel, simply drive directly to the Drop Off/Pick Up lane at Terminal 5 and hand your car over to the waiting driver who will then take it to an off-airport, secure, car park. On your return, the driver and your car will be waiting for you in the same location. Simple and very convenient. Recommended by our Tour Managers. Please call for details.

**Pleasure Flights – Disclaimer**

Should you decide to undertake any pleasure/sightseeing flights which have not been offered or sanctioned by us, Ian Allan Travel Ltd will not be held liable for any injuries or death resulting thereon.

**Tours Affected by World Events or Unforeseen/Unplanned Circumstances**

In an ever-changing world, events may occur immediately before or during a tour that result in cancellations or changes to the tour itinerary. For example, an increase in security may result in an approved visit being cancelled by the host, etc.. Ian Allan Travel Ltd cannot be held responsible for any tour being cancelled, or itineraries affected, due to world events or circumstances beyond our control.

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