



Lake Lucerne Circular Route

THE COMPLETE GUIDE



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Overview

Lake Lucerne Circular Route: Waldstätterweg Hiking Guide

The Lake Lucerne Circular Route, officially the **Waldstätterweg** and SchweizMobil route 98, is a **115 km, 7-day moderate hike** around the four main arms of Lake Lucerne in **Switzerland**. It suits hikers who want lake views, historic sites and reliable public transport rather than remote wilderness. Expect about **4,800 m of ascent**, mixed surfaces, lakeside towns, forest tracks, urban waterfronts and sections of genuine mountain trail, including the Bürgenstock Felsenweg cliff path.

Route Overview

The route is a waymarked circular hike around Lake Lucerne, usually walked in seven stages from **Brunnen to Rütli** via **Vitznau, Küsnacht, Lucerne, Alpnach(stad), Bürgenstock/Kehrsiten and Beckenried**. It is continuously signposted in both directions as SwitzerlandMobility route 98. Although described as circular, the listed end point is Rütli, the historic meadow on Lake Uri; boats, trains and buses link the lakeside towns, making the trail practical as a continuous week-long walk or as individual day stages. For bigger Swiss mountain itineraries, compare it with the **Alpine Pass Route** or the **Bernina Trek**.

Waldstätterweg history: the cradle of the Swiss Confederation

The Waldstätterweg links places tied to the origins of Switzerland. The “Waldstätte” were the forest cantons around Lake Lucerne — Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden — whose alliance is traditionally associated with the Rütli meadow in 1291. The route also passes sites connected with the William Tell legend, including Tellsplatte, and follows older lakeside and cliff paths such as the Bürgenstock Felsenweg. It is therefore a cultural route as much as a scenic lake circuit.

Notable highlights

- **Rütli meadow:** The trail's end point on Lake Uri and the legendary birthplace of Switzerland, traditionally linked with the founding oath of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden.
- **Tellsplatte / Tellskapelle:** A lakeside chapel on the Axenstein shore commemorating the William Tell legend, where Tell is said to have escaped from Gessler's boat.
- **Bürgenstock Felsenweg:** A cliff-side path cut into the rock high above Lake Lucerne, with the historic Hammetschwand outdoor lift nearby; this section is closed in winter.
- **Lucerne:** The route passes through the city, including the medieval Chapel Bridge and Water Tower, key landmarks for walkers crossing the urban waterfront.
- **Lake Lucerne panoramas:** Much of the route looks across the Vierwaldstättersee towards peaks such as the Rigi, Pilatus and the Mythen, with paddle-steamers crossing the lake.

Challenges to expect

The official grade is **moderate**, but the route still demands good fitness: seven days, about **4,800 m ascent and descent**, and harder stages such as Vitznau–Küsnacht and Lucerne–Alpnach. Surfaces vary from asphalt and streets to forest tracks, footpaths and mountain hiking trails. Navigation is

straightforward on route 98, but the Bürgenstock Felsenweg is closed and impassable from November to April.

Key Data

Country	Switzerland
Distance	115 km
Duration	7 days
Difficulty	Moderate
Trail type	Loop
Elevation gain/loss	4800 m
Highest point	1064 m
Terrain & landscape	Lakeside, Mountainous, Forest, Urban
Trail surface	Paved, Footpath, Natural Trail, Gravel
Accommodation	Hotels, Guesthouses, B&Bs
Average daytime temp.	18°C
Chance of rainfall	Medium
Estimated cost	\$\$
Optimal season	Spring, Summer, Autumn
Accessibility	Family Friendly, Pet Friendly
Facilities	Restrooms, Water Sources, Campsites, Shelters, Picnic Areas
Permits & fees	No permits or fees

Introduction

The Waldstätterweg is a seven-stage circuit of the Vierwaldstättersee (Lake Lucerne) that links lakeside promenades, old resort towns, farmland, forest tracks and real mountain paths. It starts at Brunnen, finishes at Rütli above Lake Uri, and uses the lake itself as part of the journey, with boats, trains and buses never far away.

This is not a remote wilderness trek, and that is part of its strength. The route moves through Luzern, Vitznau, Küssnacht am Rigi, Alpnachstad, Bürgenstock and Beckenried, while still finding high viewpoints, quiet shore paths and tougher days with sustained climbing.

The cultural weight is unusually strong for a moderate long-distance walk. Rütli, the Tellskapelle, the Hohle Gasse and the old tourism centres around the lake give the route a clear Swiss historical thread, with views to the Rigi, Pilatus and the Mythen throughout.

The walking is manageable for fit, walk-experienced beginners, but it should not be treated as an easy lakeside stroll. Across roughly 115 km there is about 4,800 m of ascent, the harder Vitznau–Küssnacht and Luzern–Alpnachstad stages need stamina, and the Bürgenstock Felsenweg requires sure-footedness and is closed from November to April.

This guide covers the stages, daily planning, accommodation, food, transport, terrain, seasonal timing and common mistakes.

Stage-by-Stage Guide

The Waldstätterweg is officially divided into seven SchweizMobil stages. The daily distances are uneven, and the character changes sharply: easy lakeside walking into Luzern sits alongside steep forest climbs, exposed cliff paths and a long mountain-trail day over the Renggpass.

Follow the yellow Wanderweg signs and Route 98 / Waldstätterweg waymarks throughout. A current GPX from SchweizMobil is strongly recommended, especially where closures or seasonal variants affect the route.

Stage 1: Brunnen to Vitznau — approx. 15 km

The route starts from the Brunnen lakeside, around Waldstätterquai and Auslandschweizerplatz, a short walk from Brunnen railway station. The opening is not the finest walking of the trail: expect a lengthy hard-surface section beside the busy Seestrasse before the path becomes more enjoyable.

At Brünischart the character changes, with a steep climb into forest and more genuine mountain-walking terrain. The path includes natural stone steps, rocky sections and occasional railings where it cuts through the slope. Sturdy footwear is useful from the first day, as some sections are T2 mountain hiking trail rather than simple lakeside path.

Gersau is the main place to pause. The village sits on a mild, south-facing slope beneath the Rigi, with a lakeside park, an ornate church and good views across the Vierwaldstättersee towards the Urner Alps, Klewenalp, Stanserhorn and Pilatus. From Gersau the route continues towards Vitznau, a classic lake resort at the foot of the Rigi and the lower station of the historic Vitznau–Rigi rack railway.

Food and supplies are straightforward at both ends. Brunnen has cafés, restaurants and supermarkets, while Gersau has village services and makes the natural lunch stop. Vitznau has lakeside restaurants, hotels and guesthouses, but accommodation should be booked ahead in the summer season.

Brunnen is well connected by rail and boat, and Vitznau has lake boats, bus links and the Rigi rack railway. This makes the stage easy to shorten if needed; the duller opening road section can also be bypassed by local transport to the Seeschlössli / Brünischart area.

A rockfall closure has affected the section between Fallenbach and Brünischart, with a detour using the cantonal road pavement. Check Schwyzer Wanderwege before travelling and never enter a closed section.

Stage 2: Vitznau to Küssnacht am Rigi — approx. 18 km

This is one of the most demanding days of the Waldstätterweg and the most technical stage for many walkers. It begins on asphalt through Vitznau before climbing into steeper forest and cliff-side terrain above the lake.

The distinctive section is the narrow Nagelfluh rock passage above the lake, where ladders and cut steps negotiate the old overland route towards Weggis. It is not difficult in dry conditions for sure-footed walkers, but it is tight, memorable and unsuitable for anyone uncomfortable with height or short ladder sections.

Weggis is the main mid-stage stop, with cafés, restaurants, a supermarket and a pleasant lakeside promenade. The route then continues through forest and countryside, including the Binzifadwald and Lützelauerwald areas, before the descent towards Küsnacht am Rigi.

The Molasse descent is the main caution on this stage. In wet weather the rock and steps can be very slippery, with some exposed and partly unsecured sections. Take time here, use poles if helpful, and avoid treating this as a fast easy descent.

Küsnacht am Rigi has full town services, including supermarkets, bakeries, restaurants and a better choice of accommodation than some smaller stage ends. The Hohle Gasse, the sunken lane associated with the William Tell legend, is a worthwhile detour from town if time and energy allow.

Transport options are good at both ends. Vitznau has boats, buses and the Rigi railway; Küsnacht has boat and bus links, including connections towards Lucerne, Weggis, Gersau and Arth-Goldau. The final approach to Küsnacht includes an unpleasant road section, and some walkers shorten this by using local transport from the Eichholtern area.

Stage 3: Küsnacht am Rigi to Lucerne (Luzern) — approx. 17 km

This is the gentlest stage by elevation and offers a useful recovery day after Vitznau to Küsnacht. The walking is mostly on paths, tracks, suburban lanes and lakeside promenades, with no technical mountain sections.

The route leaves Küsnacht through a mix of agricultural land and nature-reserve terrain, including the Wagenmoos wetland area. It then approaches the lake again around Meggen, where the promenade and Schloss Meggenhorn area give wide views towards Pilatus and the Luzern basin.

The final approach becomes increasingly urban. This is not wilderness walking, but it is one of the strengths of the route: the trail leads directly into Luzern's historic waterfront, with the Kapellbrücke, Wasserturm, riverfront, lakefront and KKL Luzern close to the route.

Food and water are easy on this stage. Meggen has cafés and restaurants, and Luzern has every level of food, resupply and accommodation, from hostels to high-end hotels. Book well ahead for summer weekends and peak travel periods, as Luzern is one of Switzerland's busiest visitor cities.

Navigation is generally simple, though attention is needed through suburban streets where urban signage, crossings and local paths interrupt the rhythm of the waymarks. Luzern is a major rail hub and lake-boat centre, so this is the easiest place on the route to pause, restock, add a rest day or leave the trail.

Stage 4: Lucerne (Luzern) to Alpnachstad — approx. 21 km

This is the longest day of the standard seven-stage itinerary and usually the hardest overall. The distance, ascent, descent and lack of services between Luzern and Alpnachstad make it a stage that needs an early start and a full food-and-water carry.

The day begins on Luzern's waterfront, passing the KKL area and the Tribschen estate, associated with Richard Wagner. After the urban opening, the route climbs steeply into the Bireggwald above the Horw peninsula and becomes much more serious underfoot.

The key crossing is the Renggpas, the historic overland link towards Obwalden before the modern road era. The Renggkapelle marks the pass, after which the route crosses open ground with views towards Pilatus, Stanserhorn, the Alpnachersee and the surrounding mountains.

The descent to Alpnachstad is steep and includes loose rock, making it slower than the map distance might suggest. Trekking poles are useful here, particularly with a multi-day pack or in damp conditions.

There are no shops, cafés or restaurants on the trail between Luzern and Alpnachstad. Carry a full picnic and at least 1.5–2 litres of water from Luzern, more in hot weather. Alpnachstad has limited services, including station facilities, and is the lower station of the Pilatus-Bahn.

Accommodation in Alpnachstad itself is limited. Some walkers overnight nearby in Stansstad or Hergiswil using train or bus connections, while others keep Luzern as a base and start very early. Alpnachstad has rail links and lake boats, so shortening or exiting the stage is practical at the end, but not once committed to the middle of the route.

Navigation is waymarked, but a GPX is useful on the upper meadow and forest sections around the Renggpas. This is not the stage to start late, under-fuelled or in poor footwear.

Stage 5: Alpnachstad to Kehrsiten / Bürgenstock — approx. 16 km

This stage begins gently along the Alpnachersee through the Alpnachstader Ried wetland before reaching Stansstad. Stansstad is the main early service point, with cafés, bakery and small supermarket options, and the Schnitzturm is the obvious historic landmark by the lake.

After Stansstad the route becomes a climbing day. It passes the Rotzlochschlucht gorge and rises steeply past the old Fürigen cable-railway alignment towards Oberschilt, then continues up to the Bürgenstock plateau, which the official stage finishes on at around 875 m. Expect sustained ascent, mixed surfaces and a very different feel from the lake promenade at the start.

This is the build-up day rather than the cliff-path day: the Bürgenstock Felsenweg itself is walked at the start of Stage 6, so most of Stage 5 is the climb onto the plateau with widening views towards Pilatus, the lake and the Mittelland. Because completing the next day depends on the Felsenweg being open, the seasonal closure still shapes this stage too: the Felsenweg is closed and impassable from November to April, so anyone planning outside the snow-free hiking season must check the official route status before committing.

Food is available in Stansstad and at the Bürgenstock resort, though the latter is a luxury resort and can be expensive. Kehrsiten has limited services, so do not rely on it for a full resupply.

Accommodation logistics need thought on this stage. The Bürgenstock has high-end hotel accommodation, while Kehrsiten is small; some walkers use the funicular and boats to position themselves in Stansstad, Luzern or another lakeside base. The descent from the plateau to Kehrsiten can be confusing on foot, and the Bürgenstock–Kehrsiten funicular is the simpler option when it fits the day's plan.

Stage 6: Kehrsiten / Bürgenstock to Beckenried — approx. 13 km

This is the cliff-path day. From the Bürgenstock plateau the route takes the Bürgenstock Felsenweg, a gravel path cut into the rock face high above the Vierwaldstättersee, leading along the north wall

towards the Känzeli viewpoint and the Hammetschwand outdoor lift before descending towards the lakeside villages. It is the scenic set-piece of the whole route, with expansive views over the lake, Rigi, Pilatus and Luzern.

The Felsenweg is not technically hard in normal dry conditions, but it is narrow, exposed and unsuitable for anyone with severe vertigo. Sure-footedness is required, and the path should not be underestimated simply because it is a famous visitor attraction. The Felsenweg is closed and impassable from November to April, which affects the whole route. The Hammetschwand lift is an optional add-on alongside the path: it is seasonal and weather-dependent, with a fee payable in CHF, and can close for rain, wind, ice or maintenance, so current operating times and prices should be checked before travelling.

After the Felsenweg the route passes the pilgrimage church of St. Jost on the Bürgenstock slopes, then descends through woodland towards Ennetbürgen and continues through easier valley-floor terrain towards Buochs and Beckenried. The lake and the Rigi remain regular reference points, and the second half of this stage feels more settled and village-based than the previous mountain days.

Buochs is the most useful mid-stage stop, with restaurants, bakery and supermarket options. The Aawasseregg barbecue spot in Buochs is a practical picnic point if carrying food. Ennetbürgen also has limited village services.

Beckenried is the main overnight stop, with lakeside hotels, guesthouses, restaurants, cafés and a boat pier. It has no direct railway station, but bus connections link to Stans for the rail network.

Navigation is straightforward and Route 98 is well signposted through the villages and valley sections. Apart from the exposed Felsenweg at the start, there are no major technical difficulties on the second half of the stage, and the lower distance leaves some margin to recover time if earlier stages have been shortened.

Public transport is useful throughout this side of the lake. From Beckenried, lake boats run towards Lucerne, Brunnen and Flüelen, and buses connect inland towards Stans.

Stage 7: Beckenried to Rütli — approx. 14 km

The final stage starts with lakeshore walking from Beckenried towards Risleiten before climbing into the Risetenschlucht. The gorge is one of the best natural features of the last day, with waterfalls that are especially impressive in spring after snowmelt.

The gorge paths can be slippery after rain, so treat this section carefully despite the moderate distance. The dinosaur footprints visible on a bare rock face in the gorge add an unexpected geological highlight.

Beyond the gorge, the route crosses the Stützberg by historic paths towards Volligen, then descends through pasture and woodland towards Treib and Rütli. Treib is a useful final stopping point, with the historic Wirtshaus zur Treib and a boat landing.

Rütli is the symbolic finish: an open meadow above Lake Uri, traditionally linked with the 1291 founding oath of the Swiss Confederation. It has a boat dock and limited visitor facilities, but it is not a village and should not be treated as a normal overnight stop.

Food should be planned carefully. Beckenried has full services at the start, the Wirtshaus zur Treib offers meals and drinks, and Rütli may have a small café or kiosk with limited hours. Do not rely on Rütli for food or onward logistics.

There is no accommodation at Rütli. Most walkers leave by boat to Brunnen, Flüelen, Luzern or another lakeside base; Brunnen is the neatest place to close the circuit in practical terms.

The finish is timetable-dependent. Rütli has no road access, and boats are not necessarily hourly, with service frequency depending on season and time of day. Check the SGV / Lake Lucerne boat timetable before leaving Beckenried, and avoid arriving after the last boat unless continuing on foot on another marked route.

Recommended Itinerary

Standard 7-day itinerary

This is the official SchweizMobil route 98 structure: seven walking stages from Brunnen to Rütli, with six overnight stops. It suits fit walkers who are comfortable with several 4–6 hour days, one long mountain-pass day, and mixed terrain ranging from lakeside paths to steeper mountain trail.

Day	From	To	Approx. distance	Why this stage makes sense	Services/accommodation notes
1	Brunnen	Vitznau	15 km	A manageable opening day with lakeside walking, forest paths and the village of Gersau part-way along the shore. It is a good settling-in stage before the harder climb-and-descent days begin.	Brunnen is close to the railway station. Gersau and Vitznau have accommodation, so Gersau can be used to shorten the first day if needed.
2	Vitznau	Küssnacht am Rigi	18 km	One of the tougher early stages, with meaningful ascent, views towards the Rigi and the historic Hohle Gasse near Küssnacht. This day should not be underestimated, especially in warm weather or with a full pack.	Weggis lies on the route and is the most useful place to break the stage. Küssnacht am Rigi has overnight options and transport links.
3	Küssnacht am Rigi	Lucerne (Luzern)	17 km	A steadier day through Meggen and along the lake towards Lucerne, with time to reach the city without rushing. It makes Lucerne the natural mid-route stop.	Lucerne has by far the widest choice of accommodation, food shops, restaurants and transport. Add a rest day here if the route is being walked at a more relaxed pace.
4	Lucerne (Luzern)	Alpnachstad	21 km	The longest and most demanding stage, crossing the Horw peninsula and the Renggpas before descending towards Lake Alpnach. This is the physical crux of the itinerary and needs an early start.	Stansstad is the most practical place to split the day. Alpnachstad has accommodation options, but booking ahead is sensible.
5	Alpnachstad	Kehrsiten / Bürgenstock	16 km	A varied stage through Stansstad, the Rotzlochschlucht area and up towards the Bürgenstock. Although not the longest day, the ascent makes it a proper hill stage.	Overnight options are around Kehrsiten and the Bürgenstock area. Some itineraries label the finish as Bürgenstock rather than Kehrsiten; check exactly where the accommodation sits in relation to the route.

Day	From	To	Approx. distance	Why this stage makes sense	Services/accommodation notes
6	Kehrsiten / Bürgenstock	Beckenried	13 km	A shorter but important day, centred on the Bürgenstock Felsenweg and the optional Hammetschwand lift. The reduced distance gives time for viewpoints before descending via Ennetbürgen and Buochs to Beckenried.	The Felsenweg is closed and impassable from November to April. This should be checked before travelling. Beckenried has lakeside accommodation and boat connections.
7	Beckenried	Rütli	14 km	The final walking stage passes the Seelisberg area and Risletenschlucht before reaching the Lake Uri side of the route. The short boat crossing to Rütli is part of the finish, not just a transfer.	Rütli has no road access; it is reached on foot or by boat. Check current boat timetables before booking onward travel.

Slower variant: 9 days

A slower itinerary suits walkers who want easier opening days, time in Lucerne, or more margin around the harder stages. It is also a good choice if carrying luggage rather than using transfer.

Day	From	To	Approx. distance	Why this stage makes sense	Services/accommodation notes
1	Brunnen	Gersau	9 km	A short lakeside start that avoids beginning the trip with a full 15 km day.	Gersau has accommodation and is a practical first-night stop.
2	Gersau	Vitznau	7 km	Keeps the first section relaxed and leaves time for Vitznau before the harder day to Küsnacht.	Vitznau has accommodation and transport options.
3	Vitznau	Küsnacht am Rigi	18 km	This remains a demanding stage, but it is easier after two short opening days.	Weggis can be used as an additional stop if this day still feels too long. Check official mapping before booking.
4	Küsnacht am Rigi	Lucerne (Luzern)	17 km	A moderate approach to the city, with enough time to arrive without making the day feel rushed.	Lucerne is the best place on the route for a wider choice of hotels, food and transport.
5	Lucerne (Luzern)	Lucerne (Luzern)	—	A rest or sightseeing day before the Renggpas stage.	Book two nights in Lucerne if using this plan.

Day	From	To	Approx. distance	Why this stage makes sense	Services/accommodation notes
6	Lucerne (Luzern)	Stansstad	about 15 km	Splits the longest official stage and avoids doing the full Lucerne–Alpnachstad day in one push.	Stansstad is the practical overnight stop for this split.
7	Stansstad	Kehrsiten / Bürgenstock, via Alpnachstad	about 20 km	Continues through the Alpnachstad and Bürgenstock section. This is still a substantial day, so walkers wanting a genuinely gentle schedule should add a night at Alpnachstad and make this a 10-day itinerary.	Accommodation can be planned at Alpnachstad, Kehrsiten or Bürgenstock depending on the exact split. Check official mapping before booking.
8	Kehrsiten / Bürgenstock	Beckenried	13 km	Gives plenty of time for the Felsenweg and Hammetschwand area.	The Felsenweg closure from November to April must be checked before committing to dates.
9	Beckenried	Rütli	14 km	A moderate final day with the boat approach to Rütli at the finish.	Check the current boat timetable from Treib or the relevant lakeside stop before fixing onward trains.

Faster variant: 6 days

A 6-day itinerary is only sensible for strong walkers who are used to long hill days and who have accommodation fixed in advance. The route is well served by boats, buses and trains, but the compression still creates at least one very long walking day.

Option	How to compress the route	Approx. distance on the long day	Who it suits	Planning notes
Combine the start	Walk Brunnen to Küssnacht am Rigi in one day, then follow the standard stages from Day 3 onwards.	about 33–34 km	Very fit walkers who prefer to get the long day done early.	This combines the gentle opener with the demanding Vitznau–Küsnacht stage, so it should only be attempted with an early start and good conditions.
Combine the finish	Follow the standard itinerary to Kehrsiten / Bürgenstock, then walk on to Rütli via Beckenried in one final day.	about 27 km	Experienced walkers who are comfortable with a long final day and the logistics of the boat finish.	This combines the Felsenweg stage with the Beckenried–Rütli stage. The Felsenweg closure and boat timetable should be checked before travelling.

For most walkers, the 7-day version is the best balance of distance, ascent and logistics. The 9-day version is the better choice for a first long-distance hike, for anyone carrying a heavy pack, or for walkers

who want meaningful time in Lucerne and on the Bürgenstock viewpoints.

Planning the Route

How many days to allow

Most walkers should plan the Waldstätterweg as the official 7-stage route. The daily stages are long enough to feel like proper hiking days, but they still finish in settlements with transport and accommodation, which is the main reason the 7-day structure works so well.

Allowing 8–9 days is sensible if shorter days are preferred, if extra time in Luzern (Lucerne) is a priority, or if the harder stages are likely to feel demanding. The best candidates for splitting are Stage 4 from Luzern to Alpnachstad and, for some walkers, Stage 2 from Vitznau to Küsnacht am Rigi.

Fast walkers can compress the route into 5–6 days by combining shorter sections, but this is not the most comfortable way to enjoy the Waldstätterweg. The route has enough ascent, mountain path and town-to-town logistics that saving a day often creates a much harder itinerary rather than a more efficient one.

Stage planning at a glance

Stage	Section	Typical walking time	Planning note
1	Brunnen to Vitznau, 15 km	about 4.5 hrs	A manageable opening day, with the option to use lake transport from places such as Gersau if needed.
2	Vitznau to Küsnacht am Rigi, 18.6 km	about 5.7 hrs	One of the harder stages; includes unusual ladder sections through narrow Molasse rock folds above the lake between Vitznau and Weggis.
3	Küsnacht am Rigi to Luzern, 17 km	about 4.7 hrs	Easier to manage logistically because it finishes in the largest city on the route.
4	Luzern to Alpnachstad, 21 km	about 6.6 hrs	The longest and most demanding day, crossing the Renggpas with substantial ascent. Start early or split it.
5	Alpnachstad to Kehrsiten / Bürgenstock, 15.5 km	about 4.9 hrs	Significant climb onto the Bürgenstock plateau; the Felsenweg closure is the key seasonal constraint.
6	Kehrsiten / Bürgenstock to Beckenried, 13.3 km	about 4.3 hrs	Shorter on distance, but includes a large descent from the Bürgenstock side.
7	Beckenried to Rütli, 13.5 km	about 4.5 hrs	Plan the boat connection to or from Rütli carefully, especially late in the day.

Where the stages are naturally dictated

Accommodation strongly shapes the itinerary. The official stages end in practical overnight places: Vitznau, Küsnacht am Rigi, Luzern, Alpnachstad or nearby Hergiswil/Stansstad, Kehrsiten / Bürgenstock, and Beckenried.

Luzern has the widest choice and is the easiest overnight to arrange, but it is also busy in summer and should not be left until the last minute. Smaller lake villages such as Vitznau, Gersau and Beckenried have fewer beds, so booking ahead matters, especially from June to August.

The Bürgenstock stage needs particular attention. The plateau has upscale hotel options but limited budget accommodation, so walkers on a tighter budget may need to look carefully at nearby alternatives and transport links. This should be checked before travelling.

The stages that need the most thought

Stage 4 from Luzern to Alpnachstad is the main pacing decision on the route. It is the longest day and climbs over the Renggpas, with a substantial amount of ascent and a similar amount of descent; published figures vary from roughly 770 m to about 1,000 m depending on the source and exact track, so the climb should be checked before travelling. Fit walkers can complete it in a normal hiking day, but anyone wanting a gentler itinerary should split the day or build in transport flexibility around Horw or Hergiswil.

Stage 2 from Vitznau to Küssnacht am Rigi is also worth treating with respect. It is nearly 19 km and includes the route's most unusual terrain, with ladders through Molasse rock folds above the lake before the gentler sections through Weggis, Hertenstein and the Chestenenweid nature reserve.

Stage 5 from Alpnachstad to Kehrsiten / Bürgenstock is not the longest day, but the climb onto the Bürgenstock plateau makes it a serious hiking stage. It is also the stage on which you commit to the Bürgenstock section, because the Felsenweg cliff path walked at the start of Stage 6 is the route's key seasonal risk.

Seasonal planning: the Felsenweg is critical

The Bürgenstock Felsenweg is closed and impassable from November to April, broadly from mid-November to the end of April. The Hammetschwand lift follows the same seasonal pattern.

This makes the full Waldstätterweg a May to October route in practical terms. The exact reopening date varies by year, so check the current Felsenweg and SchweizMobil closure information before booking accommodation or transport.

There is no straightforward like-for-like winter version of the full route using the Felsenweg. Outside the open season, walkers should expect to skip or bypass the Felsenweg section of Stage 6 rather than rely on the official line being passable.

Shortening, splitting and section hiking

The Waldstätterweg is unusually easy to adapt because the lake, railway, buses and boats run close to much of the route. This is useful both for planned section hiking and for changing the day if weather, fatigue or accommodation availability dictates.

Stage ends and many intermediate places can be reached by public transport, using a mix of Lake Lucerne boats, trains, PostBus and local buses. Boats are especially useful because they link key lakeside places such as Luzern, Brunnen, Gersau, Vitznau and Beckenried.

Practical examples include shortening Stage 1 by using a boat from Gersau, or reducing the walking on the Luzern–Alpnachstad day by using public transport around Horw, Hergiswil or Stansstad. Always

check the current timetable before depending on a late connection.

Section hiking is straightforward. A walker based in Luzern, Brunnen or another well-connected lakeside town can complete individual stages over several separate days, returning by boat, bus or train.

Extending the route

The natural extension is to add the Weg der Schweiz, Switzerland Mobility route 99, after reaching Rütli. This continues around the Urnersee through places including Bauen, Flüelen, Altdorf and Sisikon, returning to Brunnen.

Combining route 98 and route 99 creates a fuller circuit of Lake Lucerne and usually needs about 9–10 days in total. Route 99 has its own stage planning, seasonal considerations and accommodation logistics, so it should be planned as an additional route rather than treated as a casual extra day.

Transport planning

No permit is needed for the Waldstätterweg. The important transport planning is about timing, especially where boats are involved.

The start at Brunnen is straightforward, with the lakeside start around a short walk from Brunnen railway station. Luzern is the main transport hub on the route and is useful for arrival, departure, rest days and reshuffling the itinerary.

The finish at Rütli needs more care. Rütli is reached by boat, with connections from the Beckenried / Treib area, and the last useful boat of the day may be earlier than expected. Check the current Lake Lucerne boat timetable before setting off on Stage 7.

Swiss Travel Pass, GA and Half-Fare Card products can be useful because boats, buses and trains are central to the logistics of the route. The Tell-Pass is another regional option for travel around Lake Lucerne. The best value depends on the exact itinerary and should be checked before buying.

Accommodation, food and water

Book accommodation before starting, particularly in summer. Luzern is busy, the smaller villages have limited capacity, and the Bürgenstock area can be expensive or constrained.

Food is not a major logistical problem compared with more remote alpine routes, because the stages pass through towns and lake villages. Even so, carry lunch and enough water for the hillier days, especially Stage 2, Stage 4 and Stage 5, where progress is slower and services are not always where fatigue arrives.

There is no need to plan for wild camping on this route. Hotels, guesthouses and B&Bs are the normal approach, and self-guided packages with booked accommodation and luggage transfer are available.

Luggage transfer and self-guided packages

A luggage-transfer package can make the Waldstätterweg considerably easier, especially on the hillier stages. It is most useful for walkers who want the comfort of hotel-to-hotel walking without carrying a full multi-day pack.

Eurotrek offers a self-guided package combining the Waldstätterweg with the Weg der Schweiz, including accommodation, breakfast, daily luggage transfer, route descriptions and app access. Published pricing has started from CHF 1,815 per person for 2025/26, with some items such as the Bürgenstock funicular and tourist taxes not included; confirm current prices and inclusions before booking.

Navigation and weather

Navigation is not the main challenge. The Waldstätterweg is waymarked as SchweizMobil / Wanderland regional route No. 98 in both directions, and the route is supported by official mapping and GPX resources.

Carry offline mapping anyway. Town waterfronts, diversions, forest tracks and transport exits are all easier to manage with a map available without mobile signal.

Weather matters most on the mountain-trail sections: the ladders and rock folds on Stage 2, the Renggpas on Stage 4, and the Bürgenstock Felsenweg on Stage 6. Central Swiss weather can change quickly, and summer afternoons can bring thunderstorms, so early starts are a sensible habit on the longer hill days.

Towns, Villages and Overnight Stops

The Waldstätterweg is unusually easy to plan for a multi-day walk because most stage ends are established lakeside towns with hotels, restaurants and public transport. The main exception is the Bürgenstock plateau, where accommodation is high-end, and Rütli, which is not an overnight stop at all.

Visitor cards are worth asking about when booking, especially around Weggis, Vitznau and Rigi, where overnight guests may receive discounts on local transport, mountain railways and attractions. Boat, bus and rail timetables should be checked before travelling, particularly if using lake services to shorten a stage or leave Rütli at the end.

Brunnen

Brunnen is the official starting point of the Waldstätterweg and sits on the eastern shore of the Vierwaldstättersee (Lake Lucerne), close to the mouth of Lake Uri. The trail start is about 7 minutes on foot from Brunnen railway station, making it one of the easiest places on the route to reach without a car.

It is a well-equipped resort town and a sensible place to stay the night before starting. Accommodation ranges from larger lakeside hotels such as Seehotel Waldstätterhof and Hotel Schmid & Alfa to B&Bs, apartments and other local options. Published hotel rates vary widely; confirm current prices before booking.

Brunnen has proper town services, including supermarkets, restaurants and lakeside cafés. Restaurant Bellevue, Birdy's by Achtien and Restaurant Stauffacher are among the local dining options, but there is enough choice that walkers do not need to rely on a single venue.

Transport is excellent. Brunnen has SBB rail connections, including access from Zürich, Luzern (Lucerne) and Ticino, as well as SGV lake boats and PostBus links. It is also the start of the Weg der Schweiz (Swiss Path, route 99), so walkers combining both routes often use Brunnen as the main logistical base.

Gersau

Gersau lies on stage 1 between Brunnen and Vitznau, about 8 km from Brunnen. It is a small lakeside village on the sheltered southern slopes of the Rigi and works well for walkers who want to split the first day or take a slower start.

Accommodation is more limited than in Brunnen or Vitznau, but there are options such as Seehotel Riviera, plus apartments and holiday rentals. It is quieter than the larger resort towns, so booking ahead is sensible if planning to stop here overnight.

The village has a mild lakeside feel, open-air lido pools and small-scale visitor facilities. Food options exist, but this is not a major resupply town, so do not depend on extensive shopping.

Gersau is linked by SGV boats to Brunnen, Vitznau and Luzern. This makes it a useful escape point on stage 1 if weather, timing or fitness makes the full Brunnen–Vitznau stage unattractive.

Vitznau

Vitznau is the standard end of day 1 and one of the most important overnight stops on the eastern side of the lake. It sits at the foot of the Rigi and is also the departure point for the Vitznau–Rigi cogwheel railway.

Accommodation ranges from luxury hotels such as Park Hotel Vitznau to more practical options including Hotel Rigi Vitznau and local guesthouses. As an overnight guest in the Weggis Vitznau Rigi area, ask about the visitor card, which can include lido admission and discounts on cable cars or mountain railways.

There are restaurants and hotel dining options, but shops are more limited than in Brunnen, Küssnacht or Luzern. If the next day's food depends on supermarket supplies, stock up before arrival or check opening times carefully.

Vitznau has boat connections across the lake and is easy to use as a bail-out or rest point. The Rigi railway is an obvious side trip, but adding it before the demanding Vitznau–Küssnacht stage will make for a long day unless an extra night is planned.

Weggis

Weggis is passed on day 2 between Vitznau and Küssnacht am Rigi. It is a popular spa and wellness resort on the lake and can be used as an alternative overnight if the standard day 1 or day 2 distances need adjusting.

There is a strong hotel base, including high-end wellness properties and more conventional lakeside hotels such as Seehotel Gotthard. Park Weggis is a luxury option with lake and mountain views.

Food is straightforward around the village and boat landing, with hotels and restaurants close to the route. Between Weggis and Küssnacht, Haldihof farm café and farm shop make a useful walkers' rest stop, particularly for local apple juice or cider.

Weggis has SGV boat links to Luzern and Vitznau. The Weggis–Rigi Kaltbad gondola also gives access to the Rigi area, including the thermal baths at Rigi Kaltbad, though that is best treated as an extra excursion rather than part of a normal walking day.

Küssnacht am Rigi

Küssnacht am Rigi is the standard end of day 2 after one of the harder stages of the route. It is a larger market town on the northern shore and is one of the most practical resupply stops before Luzern.

Accommodation includes Hotel Restaurant Seehof, Tailormade Hotel RIGIBLICK, Gasthaus Engel, Gasthaus Adler and Hotel & Restaurant Frohsinn. There is a useful spread of restaurants, cafés and bakeries, including Osteria La Cantinetta, Restaurant Alpenhof, Schwarzenberger Confiserie and Bäckerei Hänggi.

For walkers, Küssnacht is valuable because it has proper services: supermarkets, pharmacies, banks, cafés and public transport. A Saturday farmers' market operates from late April to late November, which can be useful for provisions if the timing works.

The town has an SBB rail connection and works well for a rest day, late start or partial route exit. The Hohle Gasse, the sunken lane associated with the William Tell story, is a short detour and is the main reason not to rush straight through.

Meggen

Meggen lies on day 3 between Küssnacht am Rigi and Luzern. For most walkers it is an en-route settlement rather than a natural overnight stop, because Luzern is close enough and has far more accommodation and transport.

Use Meggen mainly as a pacing point on the approach to Luzern. Food, cafés and local services may be available, but the route planning should assume the major resupply and overnight stop is Luzern unless accommodation has been arranged in advance.

Public transport in the lakeside corridor makes Meggen useful for shortening or joining the route, but specific services and stops should be checked before travelling.

Lucerne / Luzern

Luzern (Lucerne) is the standard end of day 3 and the only large city on the Waldstätterweg. The route crosses the city waterfront, passing the Kapellbrücke (Chapel Bridge) and Water Tower, so the trail enters directly into the most useful part of town for accommodation and transport.

This is the easiest place on the route to find a bed at almost any budget level, though prices rise sharply in busy periods. Hiker-friendly central options include Hotel Waldstätterhof near the station and ship pier, Altstadt Hotel Magic Luzern and Altstadt Hotel Krone Luzern in the old town, and higher-end hotels such as Hotel Schweizerhof Luzern.

Luzern is the best resupply point on the whole route. Central Coop and Migros supermarkets, pharmacies, banks, restaurants, cafés and outdoor/gear shops make it the right place to replace food, blister care, waterproofing or other walking essentials before the longer Luzern–Alpnachstad day.

Transport is exceptional. Luzern's main station has direct trains to Zürich, Bern, Interlaken and Lugano, while the SGV boat station serves Brunnen, Vitznau, Weggis, Küssnacht, Flüelen and other lake stops. If adding a rest day, Luzern is the most practical place to do it.

Hergiswil

Hergiswil is passed on the long day 4 stage from Luzern to Alpnachstad. It is a small lakeside village in Canton Nidwalden and is more useful as a break point than as a standard overnight.

The Glasi Hergiswil historic glassworks is the main local attraction, with tours and a museum; entry to the workshop is free. There are some accommodation and restaurant options, including apartments and local restaurants, but the village is not as service-heavy as Luzern, Stans or Beckenried.

Hergiswil has a rail station on the Luzern–Stans–Engelberg line, and Hergiswil Matt connects with Pilatus Bahn access. This makes it a useful exit point if the long day 4 stage needs to be cut short.

Shops are limited, and the route continues on towards Stansstad and Alpnachstad. Carry the day's food from Luzern unless specific stops have been planned.

Stansstad

Stansstad sits near the foot of the Bürgenstock peninsula and is part of the day 4 and day 5 logistics. It can be used as an alternative overnight if Alpnachstad or the Bürgenstock plateau does not fit the plan.

Hotel Winkelried am See is a notable lakeside option by the landing stage, with restaurants and lake terraces. Beyond that, Stansstad is quieter and has more limited services than Luzern or Stans.

The town has an SGV boat stop on the Luzern–Flüelen route. Boat and funicular links towards Kehrsiten and Bürgenstock also make it important for walkers who need to bypass, shorten or rearrange the Bürgenstock section.

For food planning, the Alpnachstad–Stansstad section needs attention: there are no food stops on that stretch, so carry provisions and water from Alpnachstad.

Alpnachstad

Alpnachstad is the standard end of day 4, after the longest stage of the official itinerary from Luzern. It sits at the foot of Pilatus and is the lower terminus of the Pilatus Bahn, the world's steepest cogwheel railway.

Accommodation is reasonably varied compared with the smaller villages, and the area is a practical place to stop before continuing towards Stans, Stansstad and Bürgenstock. Walkers wanting a Pilatus side trip may also consider the summit hotels, Pilatus Kulm Hotel and Hotel Bellevue, but that changes the normal route logistics.

There are restaurants in the area and a boat landing stage on the southern lake arm. However, do not leave the next walking day's provisions to chance: the Alpnachstad–Stansstad section has no food stops, so food must be carried.

SGV boats connect Alpnachstad with Luzern. This gives an easy way to leave the route, shorten the previous stage or build in a non-walking transfer if weather or fatigue becomes an issue.

Stans

Stans is not the standard stage end, but it is a useful inland alternative near Stansstad. As the cantonal capital of Nidwalden, it has far better services than many lakeside villages on this part of the route.

Use Stans for restocking, banking, pharmacies, cafés and restaurants. It is also a practical overnight alternative if accommodation around Stansstad, Alpnachstad or Bürgenstock is inconvenient or too expensive.

The town has rail and bus connections to Luzern and Engelberg on the Luzern–Stans–Engelberg line. The historic centre, parish church of St Peter and Paul and Winkelriedhaus museum are useful extras if a slower schedule allows time away from the trail.

Kehrsiten / Bürgenstock

Kehrsiten and the Bürgenstock plateau form the standard end of day 5 and the most logistically distinctive overnight on the route. Kehrsiten is down by the lake, while the Bürgenstock plateau sits high above it and is linked by the Kehrsiten–Bürgenstock funicular.

The key planning issue is cost. The Bürgenstock Resort Lake Lucerne dominates accommodation on the plateau, with high-end hotels including Bürgenstock Hotel & Alpine Spa, Waldhotel by Bürgenstock and Taverne 1879. Budget accommodation is essentially absent on the plateau itself.

If the Bürgenstock overnight is outside budget, plan carefully. Some walkers continue or descend towards Ennetbürgen or Buochs, or use the funicular and boat connections to reposition, but this should be organised before arrival rather than left to the end of a hard day.

The Bürgenstock Felsenweg and Hammetschwand lift are the main reasons to stay here. The cliff path is closed and impassable from November to April, so a full Waldstätterweg itinerary using this section belongs in the snow-free season.

Ennetbürgen

Ennetbürgen is reached on day 6 after the route descends from the Bürgenstock area, passing the pilgrimage site of St Jost before returning towards the lakeshore. It is a quiet residential lakeside village rather than a major hiker-service centre.

Accommodation is limited compared with Beckenried, Luzern or Küsnacht, with some guesthouses and apartments. It can work as a fallback overnight if pre-booked, but most walkers continue to Beckenried.

Bus connections link the area with Stans and onward transport to Luzern. For food and services, do not assume a wide choice; treat Ennetbürgen as a useful transit village rather than a full resupply stop.

Buochs

Buochs lies further along the day 6 lakeshore route between Ennetbürgen and Beckenried. Like Ennetbürgen, it is a quieter Nidwalden village with local services but not a major stage-end hub.

There are some guesthouses and apartments in the wider area, though formal hiker accommodation is limited. If staying here instead of Beckenried, book ahead and check exactly where the accommodation sits in relation to the trail.

Bus and SGV boat connections make Buochs useful for joining or leaving the route. For most walkers, it is a pleasant en-route stop before continuing to the better-served overnight at Beckenried.

Beckenried

Beckenried is the standard end of day 6 and the last major overnight before the finish at Rütli. It has the right mix of accommodation, food, transport and lake access for the penultimate night.

Accommodation includes Hotel Seerausch, Hotel Nidwaldnerhof direkt am See and Hotel-Restaurant Rössli. There are also cafés, restaurants, supermarkets, a petrol station and enough local services to reset before the final day.

Transport is a major advantage. Beckenried has an SGV boat stop with links towards Luzern and Brunnen, and the car ferry to Gersau is useful for walkers accessing the route by car. The cable car to Klewenalp provides another local excursion if adding time in Nidwalden.

Beckenried is a good place to organise the final-day boat logistics, because Rütli has no road access and no overnight accommodation. Check SGV timings before setting off, especially outside peak summer.

Treib

Treib is a historic sheltered harbour on Lake Uri and functions mainly as a boat staging point. It is associated with the final approach to the Rütli area rather than a normal overnight stop.

There is a long-established inn, Gasthaus Treib, but Treib should not be treated as a full service town. For Waldstätterweg planning, its main value is as a lake transport point and a connection towards Seelisberg via the small red cogwheel train.

Use Treib only with a clear boat plan. Services on this part of the lake determine how smoothly the final day works, so check the current SGV timetable before travelling.

Rütli

Rütli is the official endpoint of the Waldstätterweg and the historic meadow above Lake Uri traditionally linked with the 1291 founding oath of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden. It is a destination, not a village.

There is no overnight accommodation at Rütli. The meadow has basic facilities, including WC provision and a summer refreshment kiosk, but nothing that replaces a planned overnight stop.

Rütli has no road access and is reached and left by boat. After finishing the walk, plan to return by SGV boat, commonly towards Brunnen, Flüelen or onward to Luzern depending on the timetable.

Do not finish the route at Rütli without checking the last boat. Missing the final connection would create a serious logistical problem, because there is no simple road pick-up from the meadow itself.

Getting to the Start

The Waldstätterweg starts on Brunnen's lakeside promenade, the Waldstätterquai, on the shore of the Vierwaldstättersee (Lake Lucerne). Bahnhof Brunnen is the practical arrival point for most walkers; from the station, allow about 7–10 minutes on foot to reach the promenade and the start of SchweizMobil route 98.

By train

Brunnen is well connected by Swiss rail, so the start is straightforward to reach without a car. Bahnhof Brunnen is served by InterRegio trains on the Locarno–Arth-Goldau corridor, Lucerne S-Bahn S3 services, Zug Stadtbahn S2 services, and the Treno Gottardo service between Zürich HB, Zug, Arth-Goldau, Schwyz, Brunnen, Flüelen and Altdorf UR.

Typical rail access is:

From	Typical journey to Brunnen	Notes
Zürich HB	About 1 hour 10 minutes; fastest around 1 hour	Direct trains are available, though some services require a change.
Zürich Airport	About 1 hour 20 minutes	Usually via Zürich HB and Arth-Goldau, with two changes.
Luzern (Lucerne)	About 50 minutes; fastest around 42 minutes	Frequent services, including direct S3 trains on many departures.
Basel SBB	About 2 hours 27 minutes; fastest around 2 hours 2 minutes	Direct trains are available on some services.

Use [sbb.ch](https://www.sbb.ch) or the SBB app for current timetables, platforms and ticketing. This should be checked before travelling, especially if arriving late in the day or relying on a specific connection.

Advance booking is not usually necessary for ordinary Swiss rail travel, but busy InterRegio services can be crowded at peak times. If travelling with a fixed itinerary, buy the ticket in advance and check whether any seat-reservation options are useful for the specific service.

By bus

A local bus links Brunnen Bahnhof with the SGV boat station at Brunnen, close to the lakeside start area. Most walkers with normal hiking luggage will find it just as easy to walk from the station to the Waldstätterquai, as the promenade is only about 7–10 minutes away.

Buses around the lake are useful later on the Waldstätterweg for shortening or rearranging stages, but they are not essential for reaching the start if arriving by train. Current bus times should be checked through SBB before travelling.

Taxis are rarely needed because the station, town centre, boat pier and trail start are close together. They may be useful only for very late arrivals, heavy luggage or accommodation outside the centre.

By car

Brunnen is easy to reach by road, lying on the A4 motorway corridor in Central Switzerland. From Zürich, the drive is roughly 50 km south via the A4 and typically takes about 45–60 minutes depending on traffic; from Luzern, it is roughly 36 km east via the A14/A4 and usually around 30–40 minutes.

Parking is the main planning issue for drivers, because the route finishes at Rütli, which is only accessible by SGV boat. If leaving a car in Brunnen for the whole walk, plan the final return carefully: after finishing at Rütli, walkers need to use the boat connection towards Treib or Beckenried and then continue back to Brunnen by boat or public transport.

Useful parking options in Brunnen include:

Parking option	Details
P+Rail Brunnen, Bahnhofstrasse 46, 6440 Brunnen SZ	Open 24/7, 44 spaces, CHF 5 per day, payment by app, web, parking meter or machine.
Föhneneichstrasse car park	Large pay car park in the town centre, within walking distance of the start.
Muotaplatz / Gersauerstrasse 56	Another signed parking option in town.

At CHF 5 per day, P+Rail Brunnen is a practical long-stay option for a seven-day hike, but prices, payment methods and availability should be checked before travelling.

From the nearest airport

Zürich Airport (ZRH) is the most convenient international airport for the Waldstätterweg. The airport rail station is directly beneath the terminal area; take a train from Zürich Flughafen to Zürich HB, then continue towards Brunnen, usually changing again at Arth-Goldau.

The typical rail journey from Zürich Airport to Brunnen is about 1 hour 20 minutes. This makes it realistic to land, collect baggage and reach Brunnen the same day, provided the flight arrives early enough.

Geneva Airport is possible but less convenient, with a much longer rail journey of roughly 2.5–3 hours. Bern-Belp Airport has limited international flights and is around 2 hours from Brunnen by train via Bern and Luzern. Milan Malpensa can be reached by rail connections through Ticino and Arth-Goldau, but it adds significant journey time compared with Zürich.

For flights arriving late, staying in Luzern or Zürich and travelling to Brunnen the next morning is often simpler than making the final connections in the evening. This should be checked against current SBB timetables before booking flights.

Where to stay before starting

Brunnen is the most convenient place to stay the night before walking. It puts you within a short walk of the Waldstätterquai start and avoids needing a morning train connection before the first stage to Vitznau.

Accommodation options in Brunnen include lakeside and central hotels such as Seehotel Waldstätterhof, Hotel Schmid & Alfa, City Hotel and Weisses Rössli Swiss Quality Hotel, plus guesthouses and B&Bs in

and around the town. Book early in busy holiday periods, particularly if starting at a weekend.

Luzern (Lucerne) is a good alternative if arriving internationally or late in the evening. It has a much wider choice of hotels and is only about 42–50 minutes by train from Brunnen, with frequent services for a straightforward morning transfer to the start.

Getting Home from the Finish

Rütli is a deliberately awkward finish for road transport: there is no road access and no railway station at the meadow. For most walkers, the practical exit is the SGV boat from the Rütli landing stage across Lake Uri to Brunnen, then train onward.

The final-day plan should be built around the boat timetable, not just the walking time. Summer services are much better than winter/off-season services, and the last boat from Rütli varies by season; check the current SGV timetable at lakelucerne.ch before setting out on the final stage.

By train

There is no train from Rütli itself. The usual sequence is:

1. Walk down to the Rütli landing stage.
2. Take the SGV boat to Brunnen, roughly 10 minutes across the lake.
3. Walk from Brunnen ship pier to Brunnen railway station, about 7 minutes, or use the short local bus link.
4. Continue by SBB train.

Brunnen is the best onward hub for most finishers. It has frequent rail connections, including hourly S-Bahn S3 services to Luzern and InterRegio services on the Locarno–Arth-Goldau axis, with onward trains continuing alternately towards Zürich HB or Basel SBB.

Destination from Brunnen	Typical journey / notes
Luzern (Lucerne)	Around 46–50 minutes; hourly S-Bahn S3 services.
Zürich HB	Around 60–63 minutes direct on some services; other journeys may require a change.
Basel SBB	No direct InterCity from Brunnen; change at Arth-Goldau or Zürich HB.
Flüelen	Alternative boat direction at the southern end of Lake Uri, with its own station, but less useful for most walkers than Brunnen.

Flüelen can work if the boat timetable and onward route suit, but it is usually the less convenient option. Trains from Flüelen towards Luzern are less frequent than from Brunnen.

Swiss Travel Pass, Swiss Travel Pass Flex, Swiss Transfer Ticket, GA and Half Fare Card are valid on regular SGV boat services. Boat tickets can also be bought on board or at major SGV stations; current ticketing rules and prices should be checked before travelling.

By bus

There is no bus stop at Rütli. Bus only becomes useful after leaving the meadow by another mode.

The simplest bus connection is at Brunnen, where a short local bus can link the ship pier with the railway station if preferred. Most walkers will find it just as easy to walk between the pier and station unless

carrying heavy luggage.

A slower alternative is to leave Rütli on foot via Seelisberg, then use PostBus connections onward. This is not the standard exit for tired finishers and should only be used if the route, timing and connections have been checked in advance.

By car/taxi

Do not arrange a taxi to collect you at Rütli: there is no road access. Anyone being collected by car should meet at Brunnen, Flüelen, Seelisberg or another road-accessible village after using boat, footpath, funicular or bus to get there.

For private transfers, Brunnen is usually the cleanest meeting point because it combines the short boat crossing, rail station, hotels and road access. If using a self-guided package, the operator may include return-transfer advice or arrangements from Brunnen; check this before the final day.

From the nearest airport

Zürich Airport is the most practical international airport for most walkers finishing the Waldstätterweg. From Brunnen, take the train to Zürich HB, then continue by direct S-Bahn or mainline connection to the airport.

Brunnen to Zürich Airport via Zürich HB takes roughly 75 minutes in good connections. From Rütli, allow extra time for the boat crossing and the walk between Brunnen pier and station.

It is possible to travel from Rütli to Zürich Airport in under two hours if the boat and trains line up well, but this is a tight plan for a same-day flight. A safer option is to finish the walk, stay overnight in Brunnen or Luzern, and fly the following day.

Luzern is also a useful post-walk base. Trains from Brunnen to Luzern take about 50 minutes, and Luzern has direct IC/IR links to Zürich HB, Bern, Basel, Interlaken and Ticino.

Where to stay at the finish

There is no overnight accommodation at Rütli itself. The Rütlihaus by the landing stage is useful for a finish meal or drink while waiting for the boat, but it should not be treated as a fallback bed for the night.

Brunnen is the most practical overnight stop after finishing: it is only a short boat crossing from Rütli and has rail, bus and road connections. Options include lakeside hotels such as Seehotel Waldstätterhof as well as more modest accommodation in town; prices and availability should be checked before booking.

Luzern is the better choice if you want a wider hotel range or an easier early-morning departure towards Zürich Airport. Seelisberg can work for walkers deliberately using the footpath and funicular/bus exit, but accommodation is more limited and the logistics are less straightforward than simply taking the boat to Brunnen.

Which Direction Should You Walk?

The standard and recommended direction for the Waldstätterweg is **counterclockwise from Brunnen to Rütli**. This is the direction used by the official SchweizMobil route 98 stages and by most self-guided walking packages.

The route is, however, **waymarked in both directions** as regional route No. 98, so walking from **Rütli to Brunnen** is entirely possible. The choice is less about navigation and more about transport, stage flow and the quality of the finish.

Standard direction: Brunnen to Rütli

Starting in Brunnen is the simplest option for most walkers. Brunnen has regular rail connections from Zürich, Lucerne and the Gotthard/Ticino side, and the lakeside start is only a short walk from the station.

Finishing at Rütli also makes practical and psychological sense. Rütli has no road access, so the walk ends at the historic meadow above Lake Uri, followed by a boat connection back across the lake towards Treib or Brunnen. That gives the route a clear destination finish rather than ending at a transport interchange.

The scenery and terrain also build well in this direction. The opening stage from Brunnen to Vitznau is a relatively gentle lakeside introduction, before the harder days towards Küssnacht am Rigi, Lucerne, Alpnachstad and the Bürgenstock. By the time the route reaches the Bürgenstock Felsenweg and the final approach towards Rütli, most walkers have settled into the rhythm of the trail.

Accommodation and luggage-transfer logistics also favour this direction. Operators such as Eurotrek arrange the route in the Brunnen–Rütli direction, and the official stage sequence follows the same flow through Vitznau, Küssnacht am Rigi, Lucerne, Alpnachstad, Kehrsiten / Bürgenstock and Beckenried.

Reverse direction: Rütli to Brunnen

Walking in reverse is viable and has no major navigational disadvantage. The route is signposted both ways, and GPX options are available for both directions.

The main complication is the start. Rütli is reached only by boat, so a reverse walk means beginning the trip with a boat connection before any walking starts. Boat times should be checked carefully with SGV / Lake Lucerne Navigation before booking accommodation or committing to a first-day schedule.

Reverse direction can make sense if approaching the region from Uri, Flüelen, Ticino or the Gotthard side, or if a finish in Brunnen is more convenient for onward rail travel. Brunnen gives straightforward train connections after the final stage, which can be useful for walkers who need a clean departure at the end of the route.

The trade-off is that the most symbolic point of the route, Rütli, becomes the start rather than the culmination. The Bürgenstock Felsenweg also feels different in reverse, with the dramatic Hammetschwand area encountered earlier rather than as part of the later build-up around the lake.

Are the climbs easier one way?

There is no strong reason to choose a direction purely for easier climbing. The route makes a full circuit and includes around 4,800 m of ascent in total, so reversing it mainly swaps climbs for descents on individual days rather than removing the effort.

The more important consideration is pacing. In the standard direction, the route gives a gentler start before the more demanding middle and later stages, including Lucerne to Alpnachstad and the Bürgenstock section. Reverse walkers should be ready for a more logistically awkward opening and a different distribution of harder terrain early in the trip.

Prevailing wind is not a major planning factor for this route. Weather matters most for visibility, heat, rain and the condition of the mountain-trail sections, especially around the Bürgenstock Felsenweg, which is closed from November to April.

Recommendation

Walk the Waldstätterweg **counterclockwise from Brunnen to Rütli** unless there is a specific transport reason to do otherwise. This direction has the easiest start, the best accommodation and luggage-transfer flow, a sensible terrain progression, and the strongest finish at Rütli.

Choose the reverse direction only if it clearly suits arrival or departure logistics better, and plan the initial boat connection to Rütli before fixing the first night's accommodation.

Accommodation Along the Route

The Waldstätterweg works very well as an inn-to-inn walk. Each standard stage finishes in or near a lakeside settlement with hotels, guesthouses or B&Bs, and there is no practical need to camp or carry overnight shelter.

The main planning issue is not finding accommodation somewhere around Lake Lucerne, but finding it in the right overnight stop on the right date. Luzern has the widest choice by far; Alpnachstad and Kehrsiten/Bürgenstock are the pinch points; Vitznau and Brunnen can also fill quickly in summer.

Accommodation by overnight stop

Place	Accommodation level	Best for	Notes
Brunnen	Good	Pre-walk night, post-walk night, circular-route finish base	A popular lakeside resort town with hotels, guesthouses and B&Bs. Seehotel Waldstätterhof Swiss Quality is a historic lakeside hotel with lake access and spa; other options start from roughly CHF 135/night. Book ahead for summer weekends.
Gersau	Moderate	Alternative Stage 1 stop or shorter first day	A quiet village with a handful of hotels, including Seehotel Riviera, Hotel Platten, Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten and Hotel Rigi. Useful if splitting Brunnen-Vitznau, but not an official stage end. Prices can start around CHF 96/night; confirm current rates before booking.
Vitznau	Limited to moderate	Stage 1 overnight, Rigi access, lakeside hotel stay	The main choices are Park Hotel Vitznau, Hotel Vitznauerhof and Hotel Rigi Vitznau. Park Hotel Vitznau is high-end luxury and should be booked well ahead; budget choice is limited here.
Küssnacht am Rigi	Good	Stage 2 overnight without major logistics stress	A market town with a decent spread of options, including Hotel Frohsinn, Hotel RIGIBLICK, Seehof, Hotel Alpha and Wanderlust Guesthouse. Usually easier than Vitznau or Alpnachstad, with prices from around CHF 110/night.
Luzern (Lucerne)	Excellent	Stage 3 overnight, rest day, widest price range	The strongest accommodation base on the route, with hostels, B&Bs, 3-4 star hotels and luxury hotels. Hotel Waldstätterhof is close to the railway station and lake pier. July-August prices can rise sharply, especially during the Lucerne Festival in August; mid-range high-season rooms can be around CHF 300+.

Place	Accommodation level	Best for	Notes
Alpnachstad	Limited	Stage 4 overnight, direct continuation to Stage 5	A genuine pinch point. Options include Budget Rooms Pilatus, Pilatus Apartments, Hotel Rössli and Landgasthof Schlüssel Alpnach, the latter around 1.4 km away. If full, nearby Stansstad or Hergiswil are practical alternatives by public transport.
Kehrsiten / Bürgenstock	Limited and split between hiker-friendly and luxury	Stage 5 overnight, Felsenweg/Hammetschwand access	Seehotel Baumgarten at Kehrsiten is the most practical hiker-style option, with a lakeside setting, restaurant, private beach, sauna and self-check-in for late arrivals. Bürgenstock Resort is 5-star luxury rather than typical hiking accommodation, with very high rates; Apartment Bürgenstock is another limited option. Budget hikers should also look at Ennetbürgen or Buochs.
Beckenried	Good	Stage 6 overnight before the final day to Rütli	A sensible small-town base with several options, including Hotel Nidwaldnerhof, Boutique-Hotel Schlüssel, Hotel Seerausch Swiss Quality, See- und Seminarhotel Flora Alpina and Apartment Badhuisli. Prices can start around CHF 129/night; book ahead in summer.
Rütli	None	Route finish only	There is no overnight accommodation at Rütli itself. Most walkers finish the Beckenried–Rütli stage, then leave by boat the same day, commonly returning towards Brunnen or Luzern.

Where to book early

For July and August, accommodation should be booked well ahead across the route. A sensible lead time is **3–6 months** for summer dates, especially for Luzern, Brunnen and Vitznau, and as early as possible for Alpnachstad and Kehrsiten/Bürgenstock.

Weekends add pressure around the lake, particularly in the smaller resort towns. Shoulder-season trips in May–June and September–October are usually easier to arrange, but the smaller overnight stops should still be booked several weeks ahead.

Luzern needs particular care in August, when the Lucerne Festival can push hotel prices up sharply. If the route schedule allows, midweek nights in Luzern are usually easier to manage than weekends, though current prices should always be checked before booking.

Practical booking strategy

The easiest approach is to secure the scarce nights first: **Alpnachstad**, then **Kehrsiten/Bürgenstock**, then **Vitznau**. Once those are fixed, the larger stops such as Luzern, Küssnacht am Rigi, Beckenried and Brunnen are generally easier to fit around them.

If Alpnachstad is full, staying in **Stansstad** or **Hergiswil** can work with a short train or bus connection. If Kehrsiten/Bürgenstock is full or too expensive, **Ennetbürgen** or **Buochs** are the practical alternatives to check. This should be checked before travelling, as local transport times affect how smoothly the next stage starts.

Rütli should not be treated as an overnight target. Plan the final day with a same-day boat connection away from Rütli, then stay in Brunnen, Luzern or another lake town if an extra night is needed.

Luggage transfer and organised accommodation

Independent walkers can book the Waldstätterweg directly as a hotel-to-hotel route, carrying a light overnight pack. For those who want luggage moved daily, self-guided packages are available; Eurotrek offers a 9-day Waldstätterweg and Weg der Schweiz combination from around **CHF 1,815 per person**, including middle-class hotels or guesthouses with breakfast, daily luggage transfer for one bag up to 20 kg, route notes, GPS material and a SwitzerlandMobility-Plus subscription.

Package prices do not necessarily include every local cost. The Bürgenstock funicular is listed as an extra cost of around **CHF 50 per person**, and tourist tax is not included in the Eurotrek package price. Current inclusions and prices should be confirmed before booking.

Taxi transfers are not normally needed on this route because boats, trains and buses link the lakeside towns well. Where accommodation gaps occur, public transport is usually the cleaner solution than a one-off taxi, especially around Luzern, Hergiswil, Stansstad, Beckenried and Brunnen.

Camping and Wild Camping

The Waldstätterweg is better suited to hotels, guesthouses and B&Bs than to a pure camping itinerary. Campsites exist around Vierwaldstättersee (Lake Lucerne), especially at Brunnen, Vitznau, Luzern and Buochs, but coverage is uneven and several official stage ends have no convenient campsites.

Camping can work if you are willing to adjust stage lengths, use public transport, or mix campsites with conventional accommodation. It is not a route where you can simply walk the official seven stages and expect a tent pitch at every overnight stop.

Wild camping rules on this route

Wild camping should not be treated as a realistic option on the Waldstätterweg. The route stays low, between the lake shore and mid-elevation hills, and passes through towns, private farmland, forest, promenades and managed lakeside areas.

Rules vary by canton, but they are generally restrictive below the treeline:

Canton on the route	Practical position for hikers
Schwyz	Wild camping is forbidden below the treeline outside designated zones. Permission from the landowner is required for overnight stays outside campsites.
Luzern	Wild camping is forbidden below the treeline outside designated zones, and the canton also does not allow wild camping above the treeline.
Obwalden	One night may be permitted without a permit if no third-party interests are harmed, but this should not be relied on for the Waldstätterweg without checking the exact location and local rules.
Nidwalden	Wild camping is generally prohibited, except with landowner consent; individual nights above the treeline may be treated differently, but this is not useful for this route. Groups of more than five people are not permitted.
Uri	Camping below the treeline outside designated zones is forbidden.

The usual Swiss above-treeline exception is largely irrelevant here. The Waldstätterweg's high point is about 1,064 m, well below the alpine treeline, so there are no practical above-treeline camping zones on the route. Emergency bivouacking is different from planned wild camping and should only be used when necessary for safety.

Campsites on or near the Waldstätterweg

The strongest campsite coverage is at the beginning of the route, around Luzern, and near Buochs. The weakest sections are around Alpnachstad, Kehrsiten/Bürgenstock and the finish at Rütli.

Area / stage	Camping option	Notes for walkers
Brunnen — start	Camping Hopfräben	Lakeside/start-area campsite with pitches; useful before day 1. Dogs are allowed.

Area / stage	Camping option	Notes for walkers
Brunnen — start	Campingplatz Urmiberg GmbH	Another Brunnen option near the start; dogs are allowed.
Gersau — day 1	Stellplatz Fähri Gersau	On the route, with lake views and direct lake access. It has a bistro, kayak and SUP rental, and is linked to the car ferry to Beckenried. Check whether tent camping is accepted before relying on it.
Vitznau — day 1 end / day 2 start	Camping Vitznau	Directly on the Waldstätterweg. It has terraced pitches, lake swimming, barbecue areas, a heated pool, Schlafhüsli sleep huts and a two-person studio. Seasonal opening is approximately late March to early October; check current dates before booking.
Weggis area — between days 2 and 3	Private/farm pitches	Several private or farm-style pitches are listed around Weggis, including options with views over the lake and Alps. Availability, facilities and tent suitability should be checked before travelling.
Merlischachen — between Küssnacht and Luzern	Seecamping Merlischachen	Lakeside option with direct lake access on the Küssnacht arm of Lake Lucerne. Useful if splitting the Küssnacht–Luzern section differently.
Luzern — day 3 end / day 4 start	Camping Lido Lucerne	Central city campsite with bus access to Luzern centre. Good for a restock, laundry-style chores and an early start on the Luzern–Alpnachstad stage.
Horw, near Luzern	TCS Camping Lucerne-Horw	Lakeside TCS campsite at the base of Pilatus, useful for the Luzern/Horw side of the route.
Buochs — day 6 area	TCS Camping Buochs Vierwaldstättersee	Strong camping option close to Beckenried. It has small tent pitches, touring pitches, rental accommodation, heated sanitary facilities, kayak rental and lake swimming.
Rütli — finish	No camping on site	Rütli is a historic meadow reached by boat; do not plan to camp there. Stay earlier around Beckenried/Buochs or move on by boat and public transport.

Prices vary by season, pitch type and number of people. As a broad planning figure, campsite nights around Lake Lucerne are often in the region of CHF 50–60 per pitch, with TCS-style standard pitches commonly priced by pitch plus adult fees. Confirm current prices before booking.

Stage-by-stage camping practicality

Day 1: Brunnen to Vitznau is the easiest camping day. There are campsites at Brunnen and Vitznau, with Gersau also offering a possible lakeside stop en route.

Day 2: Vitznau to Küssnacht am Rigi is workable but less straightforward. Vitznau has a campsite, and the Weggis area has private/farm pitches, but Küssnacht itself has less obvious campsite provision.

Day 3: Küssnacht am Rigi to Luzern has better options again. Seecamping Merlischachen can help if breaking the stage, while Luzern has Camping Lido and TCS Camping Lucerne-Horw.

Day 4: Luzern to Alpnachstad is awkward for campers. Luzern has good campsite options, but no major campsite is confirmed on the route at Alpnachstad. This should be checked before travelling, or

plan to use accommodation or transport.

Day 5: Alpnachstad to Kehrsiten/Bürgenstock is also poor for camping. Bürgenstock is a resort plateau rather than a camping stop, and camping should not be expected there.

Day 6: Kehrsiten/Bürgenstock to Beckenried becomes more practical again because TCS Camping Buochs Vierwaldstättersee is close to the route area. It is a sensible camping base before or after the Beckenried section.

Day 7: Beckenried to Rütli should not be planned as a camping finish. Rütli has no campsite, and the endpoint is a historic meadow above Lake Uri reached by boat.

Water and facilities

Do not assume that lake or stream water is safe to drink untreated. The route passes farmland and settled lakeside areas, and water taken from the lake or natural sources should be filtered or treated.

The lake is part of the region's drinking-water landscape, so washing, toileting and cooking waste must be handled carefully. Use campsite sanitary blocks where available, and never dispose of soap, food scraps or wastewater into the lake.

Because the route regularly passes through towns and villages, carrying enormous water loads is usually unnecessary. The more important camping issue is not water availability, but having a legal place to sleep at the end of the day.

Fires, waste and low-impact camping

Open fires are only appropriate in designated Swiss fire pits, known as Feuerstellen. Do not light fires in woods, on lakeshore grass, beside paths or on private land.

In dry summer weather, cantonal fire bans may be imposed. Check local fire restrictions before using even a designated fire place, and use a stove where campsites permit it.

Pack out all rubbish, including food waste and hygiene products. The Waldstätterweg is a high-use cultural and lakeside trail, not a remote backcountry route where informal camping impacts go unnoticed.

Keep noise down at dusk and after dark, avoid disturbing wildlife, and respect private land boundaries. Much of the route passes close to homes, farms, hotels, promenades and managed visitor areas.

Seasonal considerations for campers

Many campsites around the lake are seasonal. Camping Vitznau, for example, operates on a spring-to-autumn season, with dates that should be checked each year.

The full Waldstätterweg is also a snow-free-season route because the Bürgenstock Felsenweg is closed and impassable from November to April. A camping itinerary outside the main walking season is therefore impractical for the full route, even where individual campsites offer winter arrangements.

Food, Water and Resupply

The Waldstätterweg is generally straightforward for food and water because it links lakeside towns, villages and transport hubs. It is not a remote resupply walk, but there are still a few stages where services are sparse or badly placed for the walking line, especially the Lucerne–Alpnachstad mountain stage and the final approach to Rütli.

Switzerland is expensive, so budget realistically. Typical restaurant mains are around CHF 20–35, a café lunch CHF 15–25, and a supermarket sandwich CHF 6–10. Carrying supermarket lunches from larger towns is the simplest way to control costs.

Water on the Waldstätterweg

Tap water in Switzerland is safe to drink, and public village fountains are a reliable part of the route. Unmarked fountains in places such as Brunnen, Gersau, Vitznau, Weggis, Küssnacht am Rigi, Luzern, Hergiswil, Stansstad, Alpnachstad and Beckenried can normally be used for refilling.

Do not drink from fountains marked **“kein Trinkwasser”**, **“Nutzwasser”** or with a livestock-trough symbol. These signs are more likely around farms and agricultural areas. Do not rely on streams, rivers or waterfalls for drinking water, even if they look clean; Giardia, bacteria and agricultural run-off are realistic risks.

Luzern is especially easy for water, with more than 200 public drinking fountains in the city. These are mapped at lucernewater.ch and are useful before the long fourth stage.

Food availability by stage

Section	Food availability	Water availability	Notes
Stage 1: Brunnen → Gersau → Vitznau	Good at the start and finish. Brunnen has cafés, restaurants, bakeries and supermarket-style shops; Gersau has village shops/cafés; Vitznau has hotel restaurants and lakeside cafés. Self-service farm-product shops and a mountain restaurant are also found on this corridor.	Easy in Brunnen, Gersau and Vitznau from village fountains.	Gersau is a useful mid-stage stop and also a decision point for walkers shortening the day by boat.
Stage 2: Vitznau → Weggis → Küssnacht am Rigi	Good overall, but do not assume constant service between villages. Weggis has lakefront restaurants and several dining options. Hügerihof Farm has a small self-service shop; Haldihof Farm is a key self-service farm café/shop between Weggis and Küssnacht; Restaurant Alpenhof near Greppen serves food, drinks and ice cream. Küssnacht has cafés, restaurants and town services.	Refill in Vitznau, Weggis and Küssnacht.	Haldihof is one of the better food stops on the whole route, but farm-shop opening is seasonal and should be checked before relying on it.

Section	Food availability	Water availability	Notes
Stage 3: Küssnacht am Rigi → Meggen → Luzern	Good. Küssnacht has shops and cafés before departure; Meggen has some services; Luzern has extensive restaurants, bakeries, cafés and supermarkets, including Coop and Migros at the railway station.	Easy, especially in Luzern with extensive public fountains.	This is one of the easiest stages for resupply. Stock up in Luzern for the following day.
Stage 4: Luzern → Alpnachstad	Limited on the walking line. There are no restaurants along the route, so carry a picnic from Luzern. Hergiswil and Stansstad have hotel restaurants, but the route passes above or away from town centres. Alpnachstad station has a vending machine and café.	Fill up fully in Luzern. Water is less guaranteed on the mountain sections; fountains may be available if the route dips through Hergiswil or Stansstad.	This is the key stage for carrying lunch, snacks and plenty of water from the start. Picnic areas with fire pits exist, but some are attached to private cabins, so choose stopping places carefully.
Stage 5: Alpnachstad → Stans → Kehrsiten / Bürgenstock	Good if planned around Stans. Stans has proper town services, including Coop and Migros. At Bürgenstock, the resort has extensive restaurant options, including Restaurant Taverne 1879 and The Oak Grill. Bärgeizli Hammetschwand operates at the top of the Hammetschwand lift in season.	Refill in Alpnachstad and Stans; full facilities are available at Bürgenstock.	The Felsenweg and Hammetschwand lift are seasonal, with the cliff path closed November–April. Check current restaurant and lift opening before depending on the Bärgeizli.
Stage 6: Kehrsiten / Bürgenstock → Beckenried	Moderate to good. Ennetbürgen, Buochs and Beckenried have village services; Buochs has a Coop; Beckenried has hotels and cafés.	Generally easy via village fountains.	This is a shorter stage with no major resupply problem in normal opening hours.
Stage 7: Beckenried → Treib → Rütli	Limited after Beckenried. The Seelisberg area is quiet, and Rütli itself has no permanent food shop or café. Boats on Lake Lucerne have on-board café/restaurant service, and food is available after exiting by boat, for example at Flüelen or Brunnen.	Fill up before leaving Beckenried. Do not assume water or food at Rütli.	Carry lunch or substantial snacks for the final section, especially if boat timings leave a wait at the finish.

How much to carry

On most stages, a normal day-walking food load is enough: breakfast at accommodation, lunch or snacks in the pack, and dinner in the next town. The easiest places to stock up are Brunnen, Küssnacht am Rigi, Luzern, Stans and Beckenried.

Stage 4 is the exception. Leave Luzern with a full picnic and enough water for the whole mountain section to Alpnachstad, as services on the route itself are poor.

Stage 7 also deserves more caution than its distance suggests. Rütli is a historic meadow rather than a service village, so carry food and water from Beckenried and treat any boat café as a bonus rather than the main plan.

Sundays and seasonal opening

Small-village shops and cafés can close on Sundays or operate shorter hours. Coop and Migros in larger towns such as Luzern, Küsnacht am Rigi and Stans are better resupply bets, but Sunday hours are still reduced and should be checked before travelling.

Farm shops such as Hügerihof and Haldihof operate seasonally and may not keep the same hours as town shops. Bürgenstock resort restaurants are substantial, but the Felsenweg and Hammetschwand lift season affects access to the mountain food stops connected with that section.

Navigation and Waymarking

The Waldstätterweg is one of the easier long-distance routes in Switzerland to navigate, but it still deserves proper map preparation. It is an official SchweizMobil / Wanderland regional route, waymarked as Route 98 in both directions, and uses the standard Swiss hiking sign system throughout.

At junctions, look for the green 98-Waldstätterweg route marker alongside the usual Swiss yellow hiking signs. Lower lakeside and town sections generally use yellow walking-trail signs and diamonds; the more demanding mountain-trail sections, including around the Bürgenstock Felsenweg, use red-and-white mountain-trail markings where extra care and sure-footedness are expected.

How reliable is the waymarking?

Waymarking is generally very reliable by European standards. Signs are placed at key junctions and are maintained through the cantonal hiking trail organisations across Schwyz, Luzern, Obwalden, Nidwalden and Uri.

Do not treat the route as impossible to miss. Town sections can be harder to follow than mountain paths because there are more street junctions, promenades, underpasses and local footpath options. The 98 marker is the key detail to keep checking, especially when leaving lakeside paths for roads or forest tracks.

Places where extra attention is useful

The urban sections into and out of Luzern require active navigation despite good signage. On Day 3 from Küssnacht am Rigi to Luzern, and Day 4 from Luzern towards Alpnachstad, the route passes through built-up areas and city waterfronts, including the Kapellbrücke area, where it is easy to be distracted or follow the wrong local path.

The final stage from Beckenried towards Treib and Rütli also needs care. In the forested sections around the Risleiten gorge and towards Treib, several paths and route options converge and diverge; keep following signs for Treib and check that the 98 marker remains with the route.

The Bürgenstock Felsenweg is simpler once reached: it is essentially a defined clifftop path with little navigational ambiguity. The main issue there is not route-finding but path condition, exposure, season and closure status. The Felsenweg is closed and impassable from November to April.

GPX and digital navigation

A GPX file is strongly recommended, not because the route is poorly marked, but because it removes uncertainty in towns, forest-road transitions and poor visibility. Official GPX downloads are available from SchweizMobil for Route 98, including the standard tour, reverse tour and return-trip variant.

The SwitzerlandMobility app is the most useful primary tool for this route. It includes official Route 98 mapping, swisstopo-based maps down to detailed scales, offline map downloads, SBB public-transport integration and route information. Download the relevant map section before starting each day rather than relying on live signal.

The swisstopo app is also excellent for walkers who prefer national mapping. It gives access to Swiss national maps, including 1:25,000 mapping, with offline capability.

Komoot is a practical alternative for turn-by-turn guidance, and the Waldstätterweg is available there as a seven-stage collection. It is still worth cross-checking that any third-party route line follows the official 98 waymarks on the ground.

Paper maps

Paper maps are not essential for most walkers on the Waldstätterweg if the route is followed with waymarks plus an offline digital map. They are still useful as a backup, especially for map-confident hikers on the mountain sections or anyone walking without a reliable phone battery system.

Swisstopo produces the relevant national map series at 1:25,000 and 1:50,000. The 1:50,000 sheet 2510 Lucerne–Pilatus–Rigi covers a large part of the route area, but the full circuit spans five cantons, so several 1:25,000 sheets are needed for complete paper coverage. For most hikers, offline swisstopo mapping is more practical than carrying a stack of sheets.

A dedicated printed guide, *Around Lake Lucerne: Waldstätterweg & Weg der Schweiz*, covers both Route 98 and the neighbouring Weg der Schweiz around Lake Uri. It is useful for context and route understanding, but should not replace current waymarks, GPX and up-to-date closure information.

Mobile signal and offline planning

Mobile coverage is generally good around Lake Lucerne, particularly in towns such as Brunnen, Gersau, Vitznau, Weggis, Küssnacht am Rigi, Luzern, Alpnachstad and Beckenried. The Luzern city section has full urban mobile coverage.

Signal can become patchier in forested upland sections and on clifftop or ridgeline paths, including parts of the Bürgenstock area. This is rarely a serious navigation problem if offline maps have already been saved.

Carry enough battery for a full day and avoid navigating only from a live online map. A small power bank is sensible if using GPS continuously.

Is it suitable for less experienced navigators?

Yes, provided basic attention is paid at junctions. The combination of official Route 98 waymarks, frequent Swiss hiking signs, public-transport access and strong digital mapping makes the Waldstätterweg suitable for hikers with limited navigation experience.

The route is not, however, a fully urban promenade. Mountain-trail sections, forest junctions and the Bürgenstock Felsenweg still require the ability to follow signs carefully, read a map line, and recognise when the 98 marker has been lost.

Terrain, Conditions and Difficulty in Practice

The Waldstätterweg is moderate overall, but that label hides a wide spread of terrain. It is not a purely easy lakeside path: the route mixes promenades and town streets with forest singletrack, farm roads, steep hillside paths and several sections that feel much more like mountain hiking.

Across the full route, roughly half the walking is on asphalt, road or hard surfaces. Expect long sections on lakeside promenades, quiet lanes, urban waterfront and farm access roads, especially around Küssnacht am Rigi, Meggen, Luzern, parts of Alpnachstad and the first kilometres out of Beckenried.

The remaining half is mostly footpath, forest trail and natural hillside path. These sections are where the route becomes more demanding: narrow forest paths above Brunnen, the molasse folds and ladders between Vitznau and Küssnacht, the Renggpas stage under Pilatus, the Rotzlochschlucht approach to Bürgenstock and the Bürgenstock Felsenweg.

Underfoot surfaces

Approximate full-route surface mix:

Surface type	Approximate share	What it means in practice
Asphalt	31.90%	Promenades, town streets, quays and some farm/service roads
Path	27.58%	Marked footpaths through woods, hillsides and open country
Road	20.63%	Quiet country roads, lanes and some less interesting connecting sections
Forested / natural trail	18.62%	Rougher mountain-style paths, often shaded and steeper
Dirt road	1%	Short sections of unsurfaced track

This mix makes footwear more important than the lake setting might suggest. Sturdy walking shoes with grippy soles are sensible for almost every stage; Stage 3 from Küssnacht am Rigi to Luzern is the main exception, being largely easier lakeside and urban walking.

There are no significant bogs or persistent mud hazards in normal Swiss trail conditions. After heavy rain, forest paths, gorge sections, stairs and shaded descents can still become slippery, particularly on the Renggpas, around the Rotzlochschlucht and above Beckenried.

The harder terrain: where the route bites

The two hardest days in practice are Stage 2 and Stage 4.

Stage 2, from Vitznau to Küssnacht am Rigi, is the most technical stage. The route crosses narrow molasse rock folds with fixed wooden or iron ladders, mixed with forest paths, orchards, farm tracks and some narrow exposed sections. There is no scrambling, but walkers uncomfortable on ladders or narrow rocky paths should not treat this as a simple lakeside day.

Stage 4, from Luzern to Alpnachstad, is the biggest endurance test. It crosses the Renggpas beneath Pilatus and involves nearly 1,000 m of ascent, followed by a steep descent back towards the lake. The surfaces vary from meadows and farm service roads to natural trail, but the main difficulty is sustained climbing rather than technical ground.

The Bürgenstock Felsenweg on Stage 6 is the most exposed section. It is a gravel cliff path cut into the rock face high above Lake Lucerne, secured by railings on the cliff side and broadly level along the cliff section itself. It is not technically hard in dry conditions, but the drop and narrow setting make sure-footedness essential.

Stage-by-stage difficulty in practice

Stage	Practical terrain notes	Difficulty in real terms
Brunnen → Vitznau	Starts on the Waldstätterquai promenade, then climbs steeply onto the Axenstein hillside. Much of the stage uses narrow forest singletrack, with a descent into Gersau and a further re-ascent.	Medium: short but hillier and rougher than a lakeside map view suggests.
Vitznau → Küssnacht am Rigi	Forest paths, orchards, farm tracks, narrow sections and fixed ladders through molasse rock folds.	Difficult: the most technical day, with ladders and sustained attention needed.
Küssnacht am Rigi → Luzern	Easier trails and roads, lakeside walking around Meggen, nature reserve sections and an urban finish through Luzern along the quay.	Easy to moderate: the least demanding stage, though still a full walking day.
Luzern → Alpnachstad	Long climb into the Pilatus foothills, Renggpas crossing, high meadows, then a steep descent to Alpnachstad.	Difficult/hard: the main fitness stage, with very substantial ascent.
Alpnachstad → Kehrsiten / Bürgenstock	Lakeside walking, Rotzlochschlucht gorge, forest and a sustained climb towards the Bürgenstock plateau.	Moderate to difficult: not very technical, but steep and “sporty”.
Kehrsiten / Bürgenstock → Beckenried	Bürgenstock Felsenweg cliff path, Hammetschwand area, then forest and hillside descent to Beckenried.	Moderate, with exposure: easy enough underfoot in dry weather, but not for vertigo-prone walkers.
Beckenried → Rütli / Treib	Initial quiet lakeside road, then forest stairs to the Risleten Gorge, steep switchbacks, meadows and grassy paths.	Moderate: one concentrated steep climb, then varied but manageable walking.

Exposure, ladders and technical features

There is no glacier travel, scrambling or exposed alpine ridge walking on the Waldstätterweg. The highest point is around 1,064 m, and the route stays within a well-served, waymarked Swiss hiking environment rather than remote mountain terrain.

The technical points are specific and avoidable only with route changes. The Stage 2 ladders require the use of hands and good balance. The Bürgenstock Felsenweg is railed, but the cliffside position and views straight down towards the lake can feel committing.

Walkers with a strong fear of heights should look carefully at Stage 2 and Stage 6 before booking a fixed itinerary. In wet or icy conditions, both stages become more serious than their distance alone suggests.

Climbs and descents

The route has about 4,800 m of total ascent, so the cumulative effort is significant even though many sections look gentle on the map. Several stages repeatedly climb away from the lake, descend to villages, then climb again.

The steepest-feeling efforts are the climb above Brunnen on Stage 1, the Vitznau–Küssnacht terrain on Stage 2, the Renggpas ascent on Stage 4, the climb to the Bürgenstock plateau on Stage 5 and the forest switchbacks above Beckenried on Stage 7.

Descents deserve as much attention as climbs. The drop to Alpnachstad after the Renggpas and the hillside/forest descent towards Beckenried can be tiring on knees, especially after rain or at the end of a long day.

Road walking and urban sections

A noticeable amount of the Waldstätterweg is on hard surface. This is part of the route's character: it links lakeside settlements, quays, historic sites and transport points rather than avoiding civilisation.

Stage 3 has the most obviously urban and promenade-style walking, finishing through Luzern. Stage 7 begins with a quiet lakeside road section out of Beckenried. These parts are straightforward navigationally, but hard surfaces can be tiring over consecutive days, so footwear should balance grip with cushioning.

Fields, farms and livestock

The route crosses farmland on several stages, especially around the orchard and farm-track sections of Stage 2 and the meadow/service-road terrain on Stage 4. Gates, fences or field boundaries may be encountered, but they are not a defining obstacle of the route.

Normal Swiss countryside practice applies: keep to the marked path, close gates where required, give livestock space and avoid walking between cows and calves. This is particularly relevant in spring and summer when animals may be out in open pasture.

Seasonal conditions and closures

The full route is a snow-free-season walk. The Bürgenstock Felsenweg is closed from November to early/mid April, and without it the signed full route cannot be completed as described unless a major detour or transport workaround is used. This should be checked before travelling.

Early spring and late autumn can also affect higher or shaded sections. The Renggpas area may still hold snow or ice outside the main summer season, while forest paths and gorge sections can stay damp and slippery after rain.

Stage 1 has had rockfall-related closures between Fallenbach and Brünischart, with diversion onto the cantonal road and pavement. Current route status should be checked before walking this stage.

In summer, the main difficulty is more likely to be heat on asphalt and exposed climbs than poor ground. Start early on the longer stages, carry enough water between villages, and do not underestimate the Renggpass day simply because the route circles a lake.

Weather and Best Time to Walk

The Waldstätterweg is best treated as a **May to October** route, with **June and September** the strongest months for most walkers. The route stays relatively low by Swiss standards, rising from the lake shore at about 434 m to a high point of around 1,064 m, so altitude is not the main limitation. The decisive seasonal constraint is the **Bürgenstock Felsenweg**, which is closed from roughly **mid-November to the end of April** and may also close in bad weather.

For a full continuous circuit, plan around the Felsenweg opening and the Lake Lucerne transport timetable. Ferry services expand from around mid-April, which improves flexibility for shortening stages or rearranging days, but the most reliable walking window is still late spring through early autumn.

Best months at a glance

Period	Practical verdict	What to expect
April	Possible only with caution	Lake-level paths are often snow-free, but the Felsenweg opening varies and early-season storm damage or muddy paths can still affect walking. This should be checked before travelling.
May	Good, but often wet	Fresh spring conditions, trees in leaf from mid-May, and comfortable temperatures. Rain is frequent, with May rainfall around 140 mm.
June	Excellent	Long daylight, full services, warm conditions and fewer crowds than peak summer. Also one of the wettest months, so waterproofs still matter.
July–August	Good but busy and storm-prone	Warmest period, full transport and accommodation demand at its highest. Afternoon thunderstorms are a real planning factor.
September	Excellent	Mild, generally settled, full services still useful, fewer crowds than high summer and good visibility when fog is absent.
October	Hikeable but more variable	Cooler days, shorter daylight, more fog and slippery forest sections. Plan conservatively and check the Felsenweg status.
November–March	Not suitable for the full route	The Felsenweg is closed, daylight is short, ferry services are reduced and higher sections can be icy or snowy.

Seasonal weather and trail conditions

Spring can be a good time for the lower lakeside and town-to-town sections, especially from mid-April onwards, but it is not the most dependable season for a full 7-stage itinerary. April daytime highs around Luzern are typically about **12–14°C**, rising to about **17–18°C in May**, but rain and cold spells are still common.

The main issue in early spring is not deep alpine snow, but path condition. Forest tracks and natural trail can be muddy, and short sections may be affected by winter storm damage, mudslides or delayed maintenance. The Felsenweg often opens in late March or April, but the exact date varies each year and should be checked at **felsenweg.ch** before committing to the Bürgenstock stage.

Summer brings the easiest logistics: long daylight, the fullest ferry and mountain-transport options, and all lake towns operating at peak capacity. July is usually the warmest month, with an average mean around **19.8°C at lake level**; hot days can exceed **25°C**, and heatwaves can push temperatures above **32°C**.

Summer is also the wettest period around Lake Lucerne. June, July and August each see roughly **155–160 mm** of rain, and afternoon thunderstorms are a genuine hazard. Start early on days with exposed or elevated walking, especially the **Bürgenstock Felsenweg** and open sections on the harder stages, and avoid being on cliff paths or viewpoints if thunder is forecast.

Autumn is often excellent, particularly September. Daytime temperatures around **15–18°C** are comfortable for the climbs, services are still broadly useful, and the route is quieter than in July and August.

October is more marginal. Average highs fall to around **13°C**, lows can be near **5°C**, and forest sections become slippery after rain. Low-level fog is common around the lake from September into November; it can blanket the shore in the morning, though it often lifts by midday. Higher ground such as the Bürgenstock may sit above the fog, but navigation and road crossings still need care in poor visibility.

The Bürgenstock Felsenweg closure

The **Bürgenstock Felsenweg** is the route's key seasonal pinch point. It is closed in winter, roughly from **mid-November to the end of April**, and is not a section to improvise around in poor conditions. The **Hammetschwand lift** also closes in winter and can close in rain, wind or icy weather.

This matters because the Felsenweg is one of the route's true mountain-trail sections rather than a simple lakeside promenade. If it is closed, the full official Waldstätterweg itinerary is not available as described. Check the current status before booking a late autumn, early spring or bad-weather crossing.

Rain, storms and heat

Waterproof jacket and trousers are sensible even in midsummer. The route mixes asphalt, gravel, forest path and natural mountain trail; after heavy rain, the forested and steeper sections are the ones most likely to become greasy underfoot.

Thunderstorms are the main summer safety issue. The practical response is to start early, keep the longest and most exposed stages away from the hottest part of the day, and be willing to use boats, buses or trains to shorten a day if storms are forecast. The Waldstätterweg has unusually good escape options for a long-distance hike, but they only help if plans remain flexible.

Heat is most noticeable on asphalt, town waterfronts and open lanes. Carry enough water between settlements, use shade in the forested sections, and avoid underestimating the harder days simply because the route stays close to the lake.

Daylight and itinerary timing

Daylight is generous in summer. June gives roughly **15–16 hours of daylight**, with sunset around **21:15**, while July and August still provide about **14–15 hours**. This makes even the longest stage, Luzern to Alpnachstad at about **21 km**, straightforward to schedule for fit walkers.

By October, daylight drops to around **11 hours**. That is still enough for the route, but starts need to be earlier and delays matter more, especially if fog, wet paths or transport connections slow the day down.

Snow, ice and winter walking

The full Waldstätterweg is **not a realistic winter route** because the Felsenweg is closed. Some lakeside stretches may remain frost-free thanks to the lake's moderating effect, but cold, ice and reduced boat timetables make winter unsuitable for following the route end to end.

Snowfall at Luzern level averages around **66 cm annually**, with more above 800 m. The Bürgenstock and other higher sections can therefore hold winter conditions even when the lakeside looks clear.

Ticks and insects

Ticks are relevant on this route, especially through forested sections on the Brunnen–Vitznau, Vitznau–Küssnacht, Alpnachstad–Bürgenstock and Bürgenstock–Beckenried stages. Central Switzerland, including the Luzern area, is a higher-risk zone for tick-borne encephalitis (FSME/TBE), and Swiss health authorities recommend TBE vaccination for outdoor activity in forested areas.

Tick season runs broadly from **March to November**, with peak activity in **April–May** and again in **September–October**. Long trousers, repellent and a tick check after each stage are sensible, particularly after walking through grass, woodland edges or damp forest paths.

Accommodation and crowding by season

Accommodation pressure is highest in **July and August**, especially in Luzern and popular lake stops such as Brunnen, Vitznau and the Bürgenstock area. Book well ahead for peak summer, weekends and holiday periods.

June and September usually offer the best balance of good weather, full services and easier availability. May and October can be quieter, but the trade-off is more variable weather and, in October, shorter days and a greater need to check the Felsenweg status before travelling.

Safety Notes

The Waldstätterweg is not a remote alpine traverse, but it is more than a lakeside stroll. Several stages use white-red-white Swiss mountain-trail sections, with steep ground, ladders, exposed paths and long climbs. Treat Stages 2, 4 and the Bürgenstock section as proper mountain days, not sightseeing walks.

Emergency numbers in Switzerland

Keep these numbers saved in your phone before starting the route:

Service	Number
General emergency	112
Ambulance / medical emergency	144
Police	117
Fire	118
Rega Swiss Air-Rescue / mountain rescue	1414
Poison emergency	145

The Rega emergency app is strongly recommended for the mountain stages. It can transmit GPS coordinates to Rega's operations centre, which is useful on forested or exposed sections where describing your location may be difficult.

Trail difficulty and exposed sections

Swiss waymarking matters on this route. Yellow Wanderweg signs indicate easier walking paths, while white-red-white Bergweg markings indicate mountain trails requiring sure-footedness and a head for heights.

The most important safety sections are:

- **Stage 2: Vitznau–Küssnacht am Rigi** — a difficult stage of about 18 km, with roughly 590 m of ascent and descent on the official measurement (figures vary by source and should be checked before travelling). The route passes through narrow molasse folds with fixed ladders, so sure-footedness and some climbing confidence are needed.
- **Stage 4: Luzern–Alpnachstad** — the longest and most physically demanding day, around 21 km with substantial ascent over the Renggpas (published figures range from roughly 770 m to about 1,000 m; check before travelling). It is not a stage to start late or attempt in poor weather.
- **Stage 5: Alpnachstad–Bürgenstock** — a sustained climb of about 15 km onto the Bürgenstock plateau via the Rotzlochschlucht gorge. It is not technical, but it is a serious uphill day, and it commits you to the Bürgenstock section.
- **Stage 6: Bürgenstock–Beckenried / Felsenweg** — begins with the exposed Bürgenstock Felsenweg, a cliff-cut path with narrow sections, rock cut-outs, small tunnels, steps and fixed steel cords. It is protected by fences and barriers, but the drops towards Lake Lucerne are serious.

On the Felsenweg, pause to let oncoming walkers pass in narrow places and avoid leaning over barriers for photographs. Wet rock, ice, strong wind or low cloud make this section much more serious than its official easy rating may suggest.

The **Felsenweg and Hammetschwand lift are closed from November to April**. Exact opening dates vary each year; check felsenweg.ch before travelling.

Weather, heat and cold

Weather around Lake Lucerne and the nearby mountains can change quickly. Summer thunderstorms are common in the afternoon, especially between about 14:00 and 18:00, so early starts are sensible on the longer and more exposed stages.

Check the MeteoSwiss forecast for the relevant canton before each day's walk. Pay particular attention before the Renggpas section on Stage 4 and the Bürgenstock section on Stage 5, where sudden weather changes are more consequential.

In summer, lake reflection increases UV exposure on the waterfront and promenade sections. Carry sunscreen, sunglasses and a hat, especially between 10:00 and 16:00.

Higher ground can feel much cooler than the lake shore, even on warm days. Pack a warm layer and waterproof shell for the mountain-trail stages. In autumn, fog and cloud inversions can reduce visibility on the higher sections.

The full route is not a winter walk. The Felsenweg closure and the risk of snow or ice on mountain stages make November to April unsuitable for completing the standard route.

Footwear and equipment

Sturdy hiking shoes or boots with good grip are recommended for all stages except Stage 3, which is mostly urban and lakeside walking between Küsnacht am Rigi and Luzern. Experienced hikers may be comfortable in grippy trail shoes, but smooth-soled trainers are a poor choice for the ladder sections, Renggpas and the Bürgenstock Felsenweg.

Carry enough water for the full stage, especially on Stage 2 and Stage 4 where resupply is less frequent during the mountain sections. Lakeside towns provide regular access to shops and services, but do not rely on every fountain or mountain refreshment point being available.

Mobile signal and navigation

Mobile coverage is generally good because the route follows Lake Lucerne and passes through towns such as Brunnen, Vitznau, Küsnacht am Rigi, Luzern, Alpnachstad and Beckenried. Short dead spots are still possible in forested gullies, gorges or tucked-away valleys.

Carry a charged phone, a power bank if using digital maps, and an offline copy of the route. The trail is waymarked as SchweizMobil route 98, but mist, diversions or urban intersections can still make navigation awkward.

Road walking and urban sections

Stage 3 includes substantial pavement, lakeside promenade and urban walking through Meggen and Luzern. Other stages pass through village centres and short road sections.

No especially hazardous road section defines the route, but normal road-crossing care is needed, particularly where the trail moves between waterfront paths, village streets and busier urban areas.

Livestock and ticks

Some stages pass through farmland and alpine meadows. Give cattle plenty of space, do not walk between cows and calves, and keep dogs on a lead around livestock.

Ticks are a genuine issue around Lake Lucerne, particularly in woodland, undergrowth, tall grass and forest edges. They are active mainly from March to November when temperatures are above about 7°C.

Wear long trousers or use tick repellent on shoes and lower legs, then check clothing and skin after each stage. Tick-borne encephalitis vaccination is recommended by the Swiss authorities for people visiting Swiss risk areas; Lyme disease is also present, so remove ticks promptly.

Water and lake safety

Drinking water is readily available in lakeside towns, and some stages have fountains, but carry enough for the day rather than depending on untreated natural sources.

Swimming in Lake Lucerne is popular, but open water carries risk from cold water, boat traffic and changing weather. Do not assume supervised bathing along the hiking route.

The final approach to Rütli involves scheduled lake transport from the Beckenried/Treib side. Boats and ferries can be cancelled in extreme weather, so check timings and conditions before relying on a crossing.

Solo hiking

Solo hiking is reasonable on the Waldstätterweg in the main walking season, provided the walker is fit, well equipped and confident on mountain trails. The lakeside and urban stages are usually busy, while the mountain stages can feel much quieter.

When walking Stage 2, Stage 4 or the Bürgenstock section alone, leave an itinerary with someone and state the planned finish point. If weather deteriorates, use the route's strong public-transport network to shorten or rearrange the stage rather than pressing on.

Daily safety check

Before setting off each morning:

1. Check the MeteoSwiss forecast for the specific area of the day's stage.
2. Check that the Bürgenstock Felsenweg is open if walking the Bürgenstock section (it is on Stage 6, Bürgenstock–Beckenried).
3. Confirm boat times if using lake shortcuts or travelling to or from Rütli.

4. Start early on the harder days — Stages 2, 4, 5 and the Felsenweg on Stage 6 — especially in summer thunderstorm season.
5. Carry enough water and food for the full stage.
6. Make sure the phone is charged and the Rega app is installed.
7. Tell someone the plan if walking the quieter mountain sections alone.

Gear Recommendations

The Waldstätterweg is an inn-to-inn route, but it is not just a lakeside stroll. Gear needs to cover urban waterfronts, asphalt lanes and promenades, plus genuine mountain hiking trail on the harder stages, especially Vitznau–Küssnacht, Lucerne–Alpnachstad and the Bürgenstock Felsenweg.

Footwear

Wear grippy hiking footwear for almost the whole route. Official route guidance treats the Waldstätterweg as partly a mountain hiking trail, and sturdy soles are especially important when the path is wet.

Waterproof hiking boots with ankle support are strongly recommended for the full 7-day walk. They are particularly important on Stage 2 from Vitznau to Küssnacht am Rigi, where the route includes ladders, narrow molasse folds and steep exposed sections, and on Stage 4 from Luzern (Lucerne) to Alpnachstad over the Rengg Pass, where the descent towards the lake has loose rock.

Stage 3 from Küssnacht am Rigi to Luzern is the one stage where trail shoes or sturdy walking shoes are normally adequate, as it is largely flat, urban and lakeside. That does not make trail runners a good choice for the whole route: the harder mountain stages are much less forgiving, particularly in rain.

For the Bürgenstock Felsenweg, standard hiking footwear is sufficient in dry conditions. The path is gravel, cliff-cut and protected, but it is exposed and requires sure-footedness; it should not be treated as a casual city-walk section.

Waterproofs and Layers

Carry a packable waterproof jacket every day, even in summer. Weather can change quickly around Vierwaldstättersee (Lake Lucerne), and the mountain stages are exposed enough for wind and rain to become a real issue.

A simple layering system works best:

- moisture-wicking base layer
- fleece or light insulated mid-layer
- waterproof and windproof outer shell

The route's high point is modest at 1,064 m, but temperatures can drop quickly on ridges and exposed sections. A warm hat and gloves are worth carrying in May and again in September–October; they are also sensible for any spring section-walking before the full route is open.

Pack Size and Luggage

Most walkers do not need camping kit. The route is naturally suited to hotel, guesthouse and B&B overnights in lakeside towns.

Walking style	Practical pack size	Notes
Luggage-transfer inn-to-inn	20–25 litres	Enough for waterproofs, warm layer, water, lunch, first aid, sun protection and valuables.
Independent inn-to-inn	40–50 litres	Suitable for a 7-day walk with overnight clothing, toiletries and spare layers, but no tent or cooking kit.
Section/day walker	20–30 litres	Keep it light, but still carry mountain-stage essentials where relevant.
Fast 2–3 day attempt	Light but not minimal	Do not strip out weather protection or proper footwear; Stage 4 is not an ultralight trail-runner section.

Luggage transfer is available through self-guided operators such as Eurotrek. SBB luggage forwarding can also be useful where a stage starts or ends at a railway station, including Brunnen, Küssnacht am Rigi, Luzern and Alpnachstad; current service conditions should be checked before travelling.

Navigation and Electronics

The Waldstätterweg is waymarked as SchweizMobil / Wanderland route 98, with yellow Swiss hiking signs. A phone with the SchweizMobil app, the GPX file from SchweizMobil, or offline Swisstopo mapping is still a sensible backup, particularly where the route leaves towns for forest and mountain sections.

A paper Swisstopo 1:25,000 map is useful if walking independently or in poor weather. Carry a power bank if using a phone for navigation, photography and transport connections across several long days.

Water and Food Carry

Water is generally straightforward on this route because the trail passes through lakeside towns and villages on nearly every stage. For the easier urban and lakeside stages, 1 litre is usually enough in normal conditions.

Carry 1.5–2 litres on the longer or more committing sections, especially Stage 2 on the Rigi-side terrain and Stage 4 over the Rengg Pass. In hot summer weather, increase this rather than relying on the next village.

Swiss drinking fountains marked as drinking water are generally safe. For food, carry lunch and snacks each day rather than assuming a convenient stop exactly where energy levels drop; overnight towns such as Brunnen, Vitznau, Küssnacht am Rigi, Luzern, Alpnachstad and Beckenried are the natural places to resupply. Opening hours should be checked before travelling, especially on Sundays and public holidays.

Trekking Poles

Trekking poles are not essential for the flatter lakeside and urban sections, but they are useful on the harder days. They are most worthwhile on Stage 2, Stage 4 over the Rengg Pass, and Stage 7 around the Risleten gorge switchbacks, where there is a steep climb of around 300 m in 1 km.

Poles are especially helpful on loose descents and in wet conditions. Even walkers using luggage transfer should consider carrying them for Stage 4.

Sun, Heat and Swimming Kit

Sun protection matters on this route. Much of the walking sits between roughly lake level and 1,000 m, where UV exposure is still significant, and reflection from Lake Lucerne can intensify glare.

Carry:

- SPF 30+ sunscreen
- UV-protective sunglasses
- a sun hat or cap
- enough water capacity for hot exposed sections

In summer, swimming is possible at established bathing spots around the lake, including Strandbad Lido in Luzern. Swimwear is worth packing if a short lake swim is part of the plan.

Ticks and Insects

Central Switzerland, including the cantons crossed by the Waldstätterweg, lies within the Swiss tick-borne encephalitis and Lyme disease risk area. Ticks are active from March to November up to around 1,500 m, which covers the route's forest and undergrowth sections.

Take tick precautions on forested stages, especially Brunnen–Gersau–Vitznau, the Chestenenweid area on Stage 2, the Rengg forest on Stage 4 and the Risleten gorge forest on Stage 7. Long socks, trousers that can be tucked in, tick repellent and a full tick check after walking are sensible. TBE vaccination is recommended for people spending time in Swiss forested areas.

Mosquitoes can be present near the lakeside on warm evenings from June to August, so a small insect repellent is useful.

Camping Gear

Camping gear is not needed for the standard Waldstätterweg. The route is designed around settlements and accommodation, not huts or wild camping, and carrying a tent, stove and sleeping system adds weight without much benefit.

Designated campsites exist around Lake Lucerne, but they are not the natural structure of the route and may not sit directly on the walking line. Anyone planning a camping version should check locations, booking rules and transport links before travelling.

Stage-Specific Gear Priorities

Stage	Gear priority
Stage 1: Brunnen–Vitznau	Grippy shoes or boots, tick protection for forest sections, sun protection along the lake.
Stage 2: Vitznau–Küssnacht am Rigi	Ankle-support waterproof boots, poles, waterproof jacket, 1.5–2 litres of water. One of the most demanding stages.
Stage 3: Küssnacht am Rigi–Luzern	Lighter footwear is usually acceptable; good day for restocking or replacing gear in Luzern.

Stage	Gear priority
Stage 4: Luzern–Alpnachstad	Proper hiking boots, poles, waterproofs and care on loose-rock descent over the Rengg Pass. Treat as a mountain day.
Stage 5: Alpnachstad–Kehrsiten / Bürgenstock	Grippy boots for the sustained climb to the Bürgenstock plateau; windproof layer for the exposed upper sections.
Stage 6: Kehrsiten / Bürgenstock–Beckenried	Sure-footed footwear and a windproof layer for the Felsenweg cliff path at the start of the day; standard hiking kit thereafter.
Stage 7: Beckenried–Rütli	Poles useful around the Risleiten gorge switchbacks; carry tick protection and enough water for the hillier sections.

Budget and Costs

Switzerland is one of Europe's more expensive hiking destinations, and the Waldstätterweg is not a wilderness camping route where costs can easily be stripped back. Most walkers should budget around accommodation, meals in lakeside towns, boat links and the Bürgenstock transport costs.

Prices below are in Swiss francs (CHF). Accommodation, boat fares and package prices change by season, so current prices should be checked before booking.

Typical daily budget

Style	Likely spend	What this usually covers
Budget independent	CHF 150–200 per day	Simple guesthouse or budget hotel, supermarket lunch, simple dinner, limited paid transport
Mid-range independent	CHF 200–280 per day	Mid-range hotel with breakfast, café lunch, restaurant dinner, some boat or rail flexibility
Comfortable independent	CHF 280–400+ per day	Better lakeside or city hotels, restaurant meals, boat/funicular extras and more flexibility
Self-guided package	CHF 1,415–1,815+ per person	Accommodation, breakfast, luggage transfer and navigation support, depending on package

For the 7-day route, a realistic independent total is roughly CHF 1,050–1,400 on a careful budget, or CHF 1,400–2,000 for a mid-range trip. Comfortable hotel choices, especially in Luzern (Lucerne) or on/near the Bürgenstock, can push the total well above this.

Accommodation

Accommodation is the largest cost. The route passes through established lakeside towns, so hotels, guesthouses and B&Bs are the normal overnight choice.

Accommodation style	Typical cost
Budget guesthouse / simple hotel	CHF 80–120 per person per night, sharing a twin/double
Mid-range lakeside hotel	CHF 120–200 per person per night
Comfortable / upmarket hotel	CHF 200–300+ per person per night
Single-room supplement	Often CHF 40–80 extra per night

Brunnen, Vitznau, Küsnacht am Rigi, Weggis, Luzern, Alpnachstad and Beckenried all have paid accommodation options, but prices vary sharply by date and lake-view location. Luzern is usually at the upper end of the range, and an extra night there can add significantly to the trip cost.

Tourist or visitor tax is commonly added separately by hotels. Allow roughly CHF 2–5 per person per night unless it is clearly included in the booking.

Food and drink

Food costs are manageable if lunches are bought from Migros, Coop or bakery counters rather than relying on restaurants every day. Tap water and public fountains are safe and free, so there is no need to budget for bottled water.

Item	Typical cost
Supermarket lunch / takeaway	CHF 8–15
Café or Beiz lunch / Tagesteller	CHF 18–25
Restaurant main course	CHF 25–35
Restaurant dinner, 2 courses plus drink	CHF 40–60 per person; more in Luzern
Coffee or tea	CHF 4–5
Beer	CHF 5–7

A practical food budget is CHF 40–60 per day for supermarket lunches and simple dinners, CHF 70–100 per day for café lunches and restaurant dinners, and CHF 100–150+ per day for restaurant meals throughout.

Transport costs

Public transport is excellent around the Vierwaldstättersee (Lake Lucerne), but using boats, trains, buses and mountain railways frequently will add up. A Swiss Travel Pass or Half Fare Card can be good value if the trip includes travel from Zürich, Basel or elsewhere in Switzerland, plus boat sections during or after the hike.

Typical 2nd-class Lake Lucerne boat fares include:

Boat section	One-way fare
Luzern–Weggis	CHF 23
Luzern–Vitznau	CHF 31
Luzern–Beckenried	CHF 36
Luzern–Brunnen	CHF 46
Luzern–Alpnachstad	CHF 31
Lake Lucerne Day Pass	CHF 86
Urnersee Day Pass	CHF 52

A Swiss Travel Pass or GA covers Lake Lucerne boats. A Half Fare Card gives 50% off boat fares and many train and bus legs.

For access, Zürich–Brunnen takes about 60 minutes by train and is around CHF 30–40 each way at full 2nd-class fare. Zürich–Luzern is about 50 minutes and a similar fare. Check current SBB prices before booking, as Swiss rail fares vary by ticket type and timing.

Bürgenstock costs

The Kehrsiten–Bürgenstock funicular is a specific cost to include when planning the Bürgenstock section. Typical fares are CHF 25 single / CHF 50 return from April to October, and CHF 17 single / CHF 34 return from November to March.

The Hammetschwand Lift is an additional paid attraction. A combined Luzern boat, funicular and lift package is roughly CHF 80 per person in high season, but the current adult lift fare should be checked before travelling.

Luggage transfer

Luggage transfer is included in many self-guided packages, which is one reason those packages look expensive but are straightforward logistically.

For independent walkers, SBB luggage forwarding can be used in some cases. As a guide, station-to-station forwarding is around CHF 12 per item when sent ahead, while express door-to-door forwarding is around CHF 30 per destination plus CHF 12 per bag. Remote or car-free locations can add a surcharge of around CHF 30 per destination.

This should be checked before travelling, especially if accommodation is not close to a railway station or if using smaller lakeside villages.

Self-guided packages

Self-guided packages are relevant on this route because they remove much of the accommodation and luggage-transfer administration. They are usually more expensive than the leanest independent trip, but often competitive with a mid-range hotel itinerary once luggage transfer and support are included.

Examples include:

Package type	Typical price	Usually includes
7-day / 6-night Waldstätterweg round tour	From about CHF 1,415 per person in a double room	Accommodation with breakfast, daily luggage transfer, Rütli–Brunnen boat ride, navigation app, SwitzerlandMobility-Plus, hotline
9-day Waldstätterweg + Weg der Schweiz combined loop	From about CHF 1,815 per person	Accommodation with breakfast, luggage transfer, digital navigation, SwitzerlandMobility-Plus, hotline
Shorter 5-day / 4-night Lake Lucerne round tour	From about CHF 1,125 per person	Accommodation with breakfast, luggage transfer, cable cars, boat trips and navigation support

Single-room supplements are substantial. On one 7-day package, the single supplement is around CHF 475; reservation fees and tourist taxes may be extra. The Bürgenstock funicular is also commonly excluded, so allow around CHF 50 per person unless the package states otherwise.

Campsites and taxis

Campsites exist around Lake Lucerne and can reduce accommodation costs, but the Waldstätterweg is primarily planned around towns, hotels and public transport rather than camping stages. Campsite locations, opening dates and prices should be checked before travelling.

A taxi budget is not normally necessary because trains, boats, PostBus and local buses serve the main lakeside towns. If booking accommodation away from the route or arriving late, ask the hotel for current local taxi costs before relying on one.

Luggage Transfer, Guided Tours and Support Services

The Waldstätterweg is well suited to supported inn-to-inn walking. Each stage finishes in a lakeside town or resort area with accommodation, and the combination of hotels, boats, trains and buses makes it much easier to organise than a remote hut-to-hut route.

Support is most useful if you want to walk with a light daypack, avoid booking several hotels separately, or add the Weg der Schweiz / Swiss Path around Lake Uri to make a longer Lake Lucerne circuit. Strong independent walkers can also manage the route without a package, provided accommodation and transport are booked carefully.

Luggage transfer

Most organised packages include daily luggage transfer between hotels. The standard allowance is usually **one bag per person, maximum 20 kg**, with delivery to the next overnight stop while you walk.

Independent, stand-alone baggage forwarding is less straightforward on this route than on some long-distance trails. If luggage transfer is essential, the simplest option is usually to book a self-guided package that includes it. Otherwise, occasional road transfers may be arranged ad hoc with local taxi companies, but this is a custom arrangement rather than a trail-wide luggage service.

For one-off taxi help around Luzern and the lake, firms such as **Taxi Center Luzern**, **Luzerner Taxi** and **HeyTaxi** operate locally. Availability, coverage and luggage capacity should be checked before travelling, especially if the transfer involves smaller villages, evening arrivals or more than one suitcase.

Self-guided walking-holiday packages

Several companies offer self-guided Lake Lucerne walking holidays with accommodation, luggage transfer and navigation support. These are not all identical to the official SchweizMobil Route 98 stage-by-stage itinerary, so compare the daily route notes before booking if following the Waldstätterweg exactly matters.

Operator	Typical package	What is usually included	Indicative price
Eurotrek	<i>Waldstätterweg & Weg der Schweiz</i> , 9 days / 8 nights	Mid-range hotels and guesthouses with breakfast, daily luggage transfer, digital travel documents and navigation app, SwitzerlandMobility-Plus subscription, service hotline, CHF 10 SBB train subsidy	From CHF 1,815 pp
Eurotrek	<i>Shorter Hiking round tour at Lake Lucerne</i> , 5 days / 4 nights	Accommodation, luggage transfer, cable car rides and boat trips according to itinerary	From CHF 1,125 pp
SOB / Südostbahn	<i>Round tour Lake Lucerne</i> , 7 days / 6 nights	3-star hotels with breakfast, daily luggage transfer, Rütli-Brunnen boat ride, digital navigation app, CHF 10 train coupon, service hotline	From CHF 1,415 pp in a double room; single supplement around CHF 475

Operator	Typical package	What is usually included	Indicative price
Eurohike	<i>Loop tour Lake Lucerne, 7 days / 6 nights</i>	3–4 star hotels with breakfast, luggage transfer, cable car and boat rides according to itinerary, digital documents, navigation app, GPS tracks, service hotline	From €1,499 pp
Inn Walking	<i>Lake Lucerne Panoramic Trails, 7 days / 6 nights</i>	3-star B&B accommodation, cable car and boat transfers, luggage transfer, GPS tracks, emergency hotline	Around €1,495–€1,550 pp

Prices, season dates and inclusions change, so check current details before booking. Pay particular attention to tourist taxes, booking fees, single supplements and whether mountain railways or boat sectors are included.

SOB's package uses a station-luggage-counter system for direct departures: luggage is deposited by **10:00** and collected from **17:00**. That arrangement suits walkers comfortable with railway-station logistics, but it requires disciplined timing at the start and end of the day.

What packages are good for

A package is worthwhile if you want the route to feel like a hotel-to-hotel walking holiday rather than a logistics project. It removes most of the work of matching hotel availability to stage ends such as Vitznau, Küssnacht am Rigi, Luzern, Alpnachstad, Bürgenstock / Kehrsiten and Beckenried.

The luggage service is the main practical advantage. The Waldstätterweg has about 4,800 m of ascent overall, and the harder stages — especially Vitznau to Küssnacht am Rigi, Luzern to Alpnachstad and the Bürgenstock section — are noticeably easier with only waterproofs, food, water and spare layers in a daypack.

Packages also suit walkers who prefer a navigation app and an emergency or service hotline. That said, the route is waymarked as SchweizMobil / Wanderland regional route 98, and public transport gives plenty of fallback options, so confident independent hikers do not need a package for safety alone.

What to check before booking

Spring to autumn is the normal season for these holidays, broadly matching the usable hiking season around Lake Lucerne. The Bürgenstock Felsenweg is closed and impassable from **November to April**, so any full-route itinerary relying on that cliff path must be booked outside that closure.

Check whether the package includes the **Bürgenstock funicular** and other uplifts. The Bürgenstock funicular is commonly an extra cost and can be around **CHF 50 per person**, so it should not be assumed to be included unless listed in the itinerary.

Also check whether the final lake transfer is included. Some packages include a boat sector such as **Rütli-Brunnen**, while independent walkers need to plan the boat from the Rütli / Treib side separately.

Book early for the main walking season. Accommodation blocks in the lakeside towns and resort areas are finite, and single rooms can add a substantial supplement.

Guided walking and local tours

A guided walking tour is not normally necessary for the Waldstätterweg. The route is waymarked, passes through regular towns and villages, and has excellent public transport backup, so most supported products are self-guided rather than led group walks.

Guiding may still be useful for walkers who want a more interpretive trip focused on Swiss history, William Tell locations and the Rütli meadow. Public guided tours of **Brunnen** and **Rütli** are available at times, including free options, and are worth adding before or after the walking days. Dates, languages and meeting points should be checked before travelling.

For the walking itself, the key support decision is usually not “guided or unguided”, but whether to pay for accommodation booking and luggage transfer. On this route, those services add more practical value than a full-time walking guide for most hikers.

Shorter Hikes and Best Sections

The Waldstätterweg is one of the easier long-distance routes in Switzerland to break into sections. Every stage starts or ends in a lakeside town or transport hub, and boats, trains, local buses and PostBus services make it realistic to walk one stage, a weekend, or the strongest final half of the route without committing to all seven days.

SchweizMobil route 98 is waymarked in both directions, so most sections can be walked either way. In practice, the best direction is often dictated by boat and train times; check current timetables before fixing a start time, especially outside the main summer season.

Best Standalone Day Walks

Best for	Section	Distance / time	Why walk it	Transport notes
Best all-round day walk	Küssnacht am Rigi to Luzern (Lucerne)	17 km / about 4h40	The easiest full stage on the route, with only about 260 m of ascent. It gives a gentle introduction to the Waldstätterweg: lakeside walking, Meggen, Meggenhorn Castle, nature reserves and a strong finish on the Luzern waterfront by the Kapellbrücke.	Train from Luzern to Küssnacht am Rigi takes about 15–20 minutes. The walk finishes in Luzern city centre, so no return transfer is needed.
Best lakeside scenery	Brunnen to Vitznau	15 km / about 4h30	A scenic first stage with forest, lake views towards the Rigi and Mythen, and a warmer, almost southern feel along parts of the shore. It works well as a day walk and can be extended with the Vitznau–Rigi rack railway if energy and weather allow.	Brunnen is reached by train and the lakeside start is about 7 minutes on foot from the station. Return from Vitznau by boat towards Luzern or onward around the lake. As of 2024/2025, the Fallenbach–Brünischart section has a rockfall closure and road diversion; this should be checked before travelling.
Best historic finish	Beckenried to Rütli	13.5 km / about 4h30	A compact final stage with Risleiten gorge, waterfalls, meadows and mountain views before reaching Rütli, the symbolic founding meadow of the Swiss Confederation. It gives the strongest sense of arrival of any single stage.	Reach Beckenried by bus from Luzern or by lake boat connections. Return by ferry from Rütli/Treib towards Beckenried, Brunnen or Luzern; the Treib–Beckenried ferry is around CHF 21, but current fares should be confirmed before booking.

Best for	Section	Distance / time	Why walk it	Transport notes
Best short highlight walk	Bürgenstock Felsenweg loop	Felsenweg 2.2 km; commonly walked as a loop of about 5.3 km / about 2 hours	The cliff-cut Felsenweg is the route's most dramatic engineered path, leading towards the Känzeli viewpoint and the Hammetschwand lift. It is the best choice if time is short but the aim is to experience the most distinctive mountain section.	Access by boat from Luzern to Kehrsiten and funicular to Bürgenstock, or by train to Stansstad and Bus 321 to Bürgenstock Zentrum. The Felsenweg is closed November–April. The Hammetschwand lift is optional and costs around CHF 15 one way; confirm current prices and operating dates.

Best Weekend Sections

The Bürgenstock Weekend: Alpnachstad to Beckenried

Day	Section	Distance	Notes
1	Alpnachstad to Kehrsiten / Bürgenstock	15.5 km	A strenuous but rewarding stage with about 720 m of ascent, moving from the Alpnachstad side towards the Bürgenstock area.
2	Kehrsiten / Bürgenstock to Beckenried	13.3 km	The classic Bürgenstock day, including the Felsenweg before descending towards the lakeside villages and Beckenried.

This is the best two-day choice for scenery. It combines a proper climb, the Felsenweg, high views over Lake Lucerne and a straightforward lakeside finish.

Use the train to reach Alpnachstad from Luzern. From Beckenried, return by boat, bus or connecting public transport. Accommodation is possible on the Bürgenstock, with further options nearby in Stansstad or Stans.

The Southern Shore: Kehrsiten / Bürgenstock to Rütli

Day	Section	Distance	Notes
1	Kehrsiten / Bürgenstock to Beckenried	13.3 km	Felsenweg, lake views and a manageable day into Beckenried.
2	Beckenried to Rütli	13.5 km	Risleten gorge, waterfalls and the historic finish at Rütli.

This is the strongest weekend if the priority is combining scenery with the route's historic endpoint. It avoids the longer 18–21 km days while still feeling like a complete mini-trek.

Transport is simple at both ends: reach Kehrsiten / Bürgenstock by boat, funicular, train and bus combinations from Luzern, then return from Rütli/Treib by ferry towards Brunnen or Luzern. The Felsenweg closure from November to April is the key planning constraint.

The Rigi Approach: Brunnen to Küssnacht am Rigi

Day	Section	Distance	Notes
1	Brunnen to Vitznau	15 km	Lakeside forest, broad views and a good first day from the official start.
2	Vitznau to Küssnacht am Rigi	18.6 km	One of the harder stages, with about 590 m of ascent and the Hohle Gasse linked to the William Tell story.

Choose this weekend for a tougher, more energetic section rather than an easy scenic sample. The second day is demanding enough that it suits fit walkers who are comfortable with longer mountain-trail stages.

Brunnen is easily reached by train. Vitznau has boat connections and the Rigi rack railway, while Küssnacht am Rigi has onward train options. Check the Fallenbach–Brünischart closure and diversion before setting out on the Brunnen–Vitznau stage.

Best 3–5 Day Sections

Best 3-day section: The Historic Heart, Alpnachstad to Rütli

Day	Section	Distance	Main reason to walk it
1	Alpnachstad to Kehrsiten / Bürgenstock	15.5 km	A substantial climbing day into the Bürgenstock area.
2	Kehrsiten / Bürgenstock to Beckenried	13.3 km	The Felsenweg and high Lake Lucerne views.
3	Beckenried to Rütli	13.5 km	Waterfalls, meadows and the symbolic finish at Rütli.

This is the best short multi-day version of the Waldstätterweg. It concentrates the route's most dramatic path engineering, strong lake scenery and most important historic endpoint into about 42 km.

Alpnachstad is reached by train or boat. From Rütli, use the ferry network towards Brunnen or Luzern. This section should be planned for the snow-free season because the Felsenweg is closed November–April.

Best 4–5 day section: Küssnacht am Rigi to Rütli

A longer cut of the route can start at **Küssnacht am Rigi** and continue through **Luzern, Alpnachstad, Kehrsiten / Bürgenstock, Beckenried and Rütli**. This adds the easier Küssnacht–Luzern stage and the longer Luzern–Alpnachstad stage before the Bürgenstock and final Rütli sections.

This version is well balanced: it includes a city arrival in Luzern, a more demanding day to Alpnachstad, the Felsenweg, the lakeside villages around Beckenried and the historic finish. Start by train to Küssnacht am Rigi and return from Rütli/Treib by ferry.

Best Sections by Hiker Type

Priority	Best section	Distance	Why it fits	Transport notes
Scenery	Alpnachstad to Beckenried via Bürgenstock	28.8 km over 2 days	The Bürgenstock stages give the most concentrated high-level views, with the Felsenweg above the lake as the main highlight.	Train or boat to Alpnachstad; return from Beckenried by boat, bus or onward public transport.
Beginners	Küssnacht am Rigi to Luzern	17 km	Lowest-ascent full stage on the route, with about 260 m of climbing and an easy finish in the city.	Short train ride from Luzern to Küssnacht am Rigi; finish directly in Luzern.
Public transport simplicity	Any single stage, especially Küssnacht-Luzern or Brunnen-Vitznau	15–17 km	The route is designed around lakeside settlements, and all stage ends have boat, train or bus access.	Swiss Travel Passes and Half-Fare Cards can reduce costs. Summer boats on key lake links often run roughly hourly, but timetables vary by season.
Villages and accommodation	Kehrsiten / Bürgenstock to Beckenried or Küssnacht am Rigi to Luzern	13.3 km or 17 km	The Bürgenstock–Beckenried stage passes through settled lakeside areas including Ennetbürgen, Buochs and Beckenried. Küssnacht–Luzern gives Meggen and the full range of city accommodation at the end.	Beckenried, Luzern and the surrounding lakeside towns are practical overnight bases. Book ahead in peak summer and during busy weekends.
History	Beckenried to Rütli	13.5 km	The most meaningful historic stage, finishing at Rütli above Lake Uri.	Use ferry connections from Rütli/Treib after the walk. Check final sailing times before committing to a late start.
Short dramatic highlight	Bürgenstock Felsenweg loop	About 5.3 km loop	Best choice for walkers with limited time who still want the cliff path and Hammetschwand lift area.	Reach Bürgenstock by Kehrsiten boat and funicular, or via Stansstad and Bus 321. Closed November–April.

Camping and Low-Budget Section Choices

The Waldstätterweg is not primarily a wild-camping trek. It is a lakeside-and-mountain route through well-served towns, villages and resort areas, so most section hikers use hotels, guesthouses, B&Bs or public transport to return to a base.

Campsites do exist around Lake Lucerne, but specific campsite planning depends on current opening dates and exact location. This should be checked before travelling. For low-budget logistics, the most practical approach is usually to base in Luzern or another well-connected town and use trains, buses and boats to walk individual stages without moving accommodation every night.

Highlights and Points of Interest

The Waldstätterweg is as much a cultural route as a lake-and-mountain walk. The best places to build in extra time are Luzern, the Bürgenstock Felsenweg, Vitznau/Rigi, Küsnacht am Rigi and the final Rütli area, where transport connections and short side trips can easily affect the shape of a walking day.

Rütli meadow and the Swiss foundation story

Rütli is the symbolic end point of the Waldstätterweg: a modest Alpine meadow above the Urnersee, the southern arm of Lake Lucerne. It is traditionally linked with the founding oath of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden, dated to 1 August 1291, and is commonly described as the birthplace of Switzerland.

Do not expect a large visitor attraction. The appeal is historical atmosphere, the lakeside setting and the sense of arrival after circling much of the Vierwaldstättersee.

Rütli is also the start of the Weg der Schweiz / Swiss Path, a 35 km commemorative trail around Lake Uri created in 1991 for the 700th anniversary of the Federal Charter. The Waldstätterweg was inaugurated in the same anniversary year as the five cantons' contribution, so the final approach has more significance than the facilities on the meadow suggest.

Bürgenstock Felsenweg and Hammetschwand Lift

The Bürgenstock Felsenweg is the technical and scenic set-piece of the route. It is walked at the start of the Bürgenstock to Beckenried stage and follows a cliff-cut gravel path across the northern face of the Bürgenstock peninsula, high above Lake Lucerne.

The path is roughly level for much of its length, with tunnels through the rock, benches and observation points, but it is still a mountain environment with sheer drops close by. Sure-footedness matters, especially in wet weather or when the path is busy.

The views are among the best on the whole route: across the Vierwaldstättersee towards Pilatus, Luzern and Rigi, with the lake far below the cliff face. The Känzeli viewpoint gives a broad panorama before the route reaches the Hammetschwand Lift.

The Hammetschwand Lift is a 152.8 m outdoor lift linking the cliff path with the Hammetschwand summit area at 1,132 m. It is billed as Europe's highest outdoor stand-alone lift and makes a worthwhile add-on if time, weather and budget allow; the adult fare is around CHF 15 one way (CHF 18 return), but current prices should be checked before travelling.

The Felsenweg and lift are closed from November to April, and opening remains weather-dependent in the walking season. For anyone wanting to complete the full route rather than use alternatives, this closure is one of the key planning constraints.

Luzern: Kapellbrücke, Wasserturm and Museggmauer

Luzern is the only large city on the trail and the natural place to slow down. The route crosses the city waterfront and passes close to the Kapellbrücke, the medieval covered wooden bridge built in 1333, and the adjoining octagonal Wasserturm.

The bridge's triangular interior paintings once formed a major 17th-century cycle; many were lost in the 1993 fire, and the bridge was reconstructed by April 1994. Even on a walking itinerary, this is worth allowing time for rather than treating Luzern purely as an overnight stop.

If time allows, the Museggmauer gives a different view over the old town, Lake Lucerne and the Alps. The wall is 870 m long, with nine surviving towers, and is generally open from April to November; this should be checked before planning a visit around it.

Küssnacht am Rigi and the Hohle Gasse

The Vitznau to Küssnacht am Rigi stage is one of the more demanding days, but it also contains one of the route's strongest historical stops: the Hohle Gasse. This sunken lane is tied to the William Tell legend as the place where Tell is said to have shot the Habsburg bailiff Gessler.

The site has been made easier to visit, with an accessible parallel trail for wheelchair users, rest areas, a fountain and a pavilion with interactive information displays. Beyond it, the Tellenweg gives views back over Küssnacht and the lake.

Tellsplatte and Tellskapelle

The Tellsplatte and Tellskapelle sit across the Urnersee at the foot of the Axenberg cliffs, in Sisikon municipality, and are not directly on the Waldstätterweg walking line. They are still relevant to the route because the William Tell narrative recurs around this part of Lake Lucerne.

The chapel marks the legendary Tellensprung, where Tell is said to have leapt from Gessler's boat during a storm. The present chapel dates from 1879 and contains frescoes by Ernst Stückelberg.

Walkers wanting to add it should treat it as a boat-linked side trip, most straightforwardly from Brunnen or Flüelen. Do not assume it can be folded into the main walking day without checking boat times.

Rigi, Pilatus and the Mythen: the main mountain backdrops

The route's scenery is shaped by the peaks around the Vierwaldstättersee rather than by a single summit objective. The Mythen form the backdrop around Brunnen at the start, Rigi dominates the northern and eastern lake views, and Pilatus becomes increasingly prominent around Luzern and Alpnachstad.

Vitznau is the main gateway for adding time on Rigi. The Vitznau–Rigi Bahn, opened in 1871, was one of Europe's first mountain cog railways and still runs up to Rigi Kulm, making Vitznau the obvious place for an extra night if a mountain excursion is planned.

Pilatus is closest to the route around Luzern and Alpnachstad. The Waldstätterweg does not climb it, but it is a constant landmark on the central stages and helps orientate the walk around the lake basin.

Lakeside villages and quieter cultural stops

Gersau, reached on the first day between Brunnen and Vitznau, is one of the most attractive smaller settlements on the route. It has a quiet lakeside setting on the Gersauer Becken, vineyards and views across to Rigi, and it claims the unusual history of having been a tiny independent republic for long periods between 1332 and 1817.

Vitznau is more than a convenient overnight stop. Its position at the foot of Rigi and its cog railway connection make it one of the best places to extend the trip without disrupting the route.

On the Küssnacht to Luzern stage, Schloss Meggenhorn near Meggen is the notable cultural detour. The French Loire-style château was built in 1868–1870 and sits in parkland with a chapel, vineyard and lake-and-Alpine views.

Lake Lucerne boats and paddle steamers

The boats are part of the experience as well as a practical safety net. Historic paddle steamers operated by the Schiffahrtsgesellschaft des Vierwaldstättersees serve the lake alongside motor ships, linking many of the towns used by the route.

For walkers, this matters because the lake services can shorten a stage, help recover from bad weather, or make it easier to visit places such as Rütli or Tellsplatte. Timetables vary by season and should be checked before committing to a shortened walking day or a boat-linked side trip.

Common Mistakes and Planning Tips

1. Planning the Bürgenstock Felsenweg outside its season

The Bürgenstock Felsenweg is the route's most important seasonal constraint. The cliff path is closed and physically gated from mid-November to the end of April, with reopening varying by year depending on conditions.

Fix: plan the full Waldstätterweg for May to early November if the Felsenweg is essential to the itinerary. For any trip in April, October or November, check the current status on Nidwalden Tourism or the Bürgenstock Resort site before booking accommodation.

The Hammetschwand Lift on the same Bürgenstock section also closes for winter. When open, it normally operates during daytime hours, but current operating dates and times should be checked before travelling.

2. Underestimating Stage 4: Luzern to Alpnachstad

Stage 4 is not just another lakeside day. The Luzern–Alpnachstad stage is around 21 km with substantial ascent (published figures range from roughly 770 m to about 1,000 m), and the climb over the Rengg Pass is long enough to make this the hardest day for many walkers.

The descent into Alpnachstad is also steep, so the day can run late if started casually. Treating every stage as a 5–6 hour walk is a common way to arrive tired, short of water or under pressure for onward transport.

Fix: give Stage 4 a full day and start early from Luzern, ideally by around 8am. Carry more water than on the easier waterfront stages, and do not build the day around a tight late-afternoon boat or train connection from Alpnachstad.

3. Treating Vitznau to Küsnacht as a simple promenade walk

Stage 2 includes attractive lakeside and village walking, but it is still one of the tougher days on the route. The Vitznau–Küsnacht am Rigi stage is about 18 km with substantial ascent and descent, and the Riviera section before Weggis includes ladders and narrow molasse rock folds.

This is not mountaineering terrain, but it does require sure-footedness. Casual shoes are a poor choice for this stage, especially if the path is damp.

Fix: wear proper hiking footwear, leave Vitznau early and plan the day as a real mountain-and-lakeside stage, not as a flat walk between resort towns.

4. Booking accommodation too late

The Waldstätterweg passes through popular lakeside towns, and several stage endpoints are small. Vitznau, Küsnacht am Rigi, Kehrsiten / Bürgenstock and Beckenried do not have unlimited beds, and pressure rises in July, August and around Swiss public holidays.

Luzern is one of Switzerland's busiest visitor cities, so summer rooms can be scarce and expensive. On the Bürgenstock plateau itself, accommodation is dominated by the Bürgenstock Resort; cheaper

options are more likely below in Kehrsiten or nearby in Ennetbürgen.

Fix: book all overnight stops before travelling rather than expecting to find rooms day by day. Self-guided packages, such as those offered by Eurotrek, are useful partly because they secure accommodation and luggage transfer in advance.

5. Getting boat timings wrong at Rütli and Treib

Boats are part of the practical logistics of this route, especially at the Rütli end of the walk. Rütli has no road access, so the timetable is not optional: a missed boat can mean a long wait with no simple road-based escape.

Lake Lucerne Navigation (SGV) services are frequent by rural-lake standards, but they are not continuous shuttle services. On some legs, planning around an hourly boat is more realistic than expecting a quick connection whenever the stage finishes.

Fix: download or check the SGV timetable at lakelucerne.ch before every stage that involves a boat transfer. Aim to reach the dock 10–15 minutes early, and on the final day know the last feasible boat off Rütli before setting out.

6. Forgetting to budget for Swiss public transport

The route is well supported by trains, boats, buses, funiculars and lifts, which is a major advantage — but those journeys can add up. Transport may include trains to Brunnen or Luzern, SGV boats, PostBus or local buses, the Kehrsiten–Bürgenstock funicular, the Hammetschwand Lift and other optional connections.

The Swiss Half Fare Card can reduce the cost of trains, buses, boats and many mountain railways or lifts. The adult price is commonly around CHF 150 for one month, but current prices should be checked before buying.

Fix: before the trip, list the likely train, boat, bus and lift journeys and compare the total with the cost of a Swiss Half Fare Card. SGV boats accept Swiss travel discount products such as the GA, Half Fare and Junior cards.

7. Assuming the route is flat because it circles a lake

The Waldstätterweg has plenty of promenades, lanes and urban waterfront, but it also has about 4,800 m of total ascent. Several stages use genuine mountain hiking trail, including steep forest paths and the cliff-cut Felsenweg.

Only the Küssnacht–Luzern stage is comparatively urban and straightforward underfoot. Stages 2, 4, 5 and 6 in particular deserve proper hiking footwear with grippy soles and good support.

Fix: pack for a moderate mountain route, not for a city-and-lakeside stroll. Hiking boots are the safest default for the full week, even though some individual sections are easy.

8. Using old GPX files or assuming every stage is 16 km

SchweizMobil route 98 is officially measured at about 113.94 km and split into seven stages that vary noticeably in length. The stages range from about 13 km to 21 km, so planning around a neat average

can create bad accommodation choices or unrealistic walking days.

Third-party GPX files and older stage descriptions may not match the current official routing. Long-distance Swiss walking routes can be adjusted, and small changes matter when accommodation is tied to a specific village.

Fix: use the current SchweizMobil route 98 map and GPX as the planning baseline. Cross-check the latest stage distances before booking fixed overnight stops.

9. Expecting village shops and cafés to be open on Sundays

Sunday provisioning can be limited in smaller Swiss villages. Places such as Gersau, Vitznau and Kehrsiten are useful stage points, but they should not be treated like large towns with guaranteed supermarket hours.

Luzern is the best resupply point on the route, and the main station has extended-hours shops that are open seven days. This is especially useful before the harder Luzern–Alpnachstad stage.

Fix: if the itinerary puts a small village stop on a Sunday, buy food the day before. Stock up in Luzern before Stage 4 rather than relying on finding everything en route.

10. Leaving late-season checks until the last minute

October and early November can be attractive walking months, but they sit close to the Felsenweg winter closure period. Weather can bring an earlier closure, and the lift season on the Bürgenstock does not necessarily match a hiker's planned dates.

Fix: for any late-autumn itinerary, check the Felsenweg and Hammetschwand Lift status before finalising dates, then check again shortly before travel. If the path is closed, be ready to shorten, reroute or skip the Bürgenstock section rather than trying to force the official line.

Final Advice

The Waldstätterweg is best for fit, walk-experienced hikers who want a Swiss lakeland route with culture, history and real mountain walking, rather than remote wilderness. Confident beginners can complete it with sensible preparation because every stage is close to public transport, but the route should not be underestimated: 115 km, about 4,800 m of ascent, and several mountain-trail sections make it more than a lakeside stroll.

Seasoned hikers will get most satisfaction from the harder days, especially Vitznau–Küssnacht am Rigi and Lucerne–Alpnachstad, while those more interested in scenery and history will appreciate the sequence of Lucerne, Tellsplatte, Bürgenstock and Rütli. Families with fit older children may be better served by choosing individual stages rather than committing to the full 7-day itinerary.

What to plan most carefully

Accommodation is the main fixed point. Book ahead for July, August and weekends, especially in lakeside towns such as Vitznau, Küssnacht am Rigi, Lucerne, Alpnachstad, Bürgenstock and Beckenried. Luggage transfer is available through providers such as Eurotrek, but it should also be arranged well in advance in the busy season.

The second key issue is seasonality. The Bürgenstock Felsenweg and Hammetschwand lift are closed November–April, and the lift may also be affected by wet conditions. If this section is central to the trip, check current opening information before travelling.

Stage planning also matters. The daily distances are not even: they range from about 13 km to 21 km, with Stage 4 from Lucerne to Alpnachstad the longest. Stage 2 and Stage 4 are the days to treat with the most respect when arranging start times, rest stops or possible transport bail-outs.

Full route or section hike?

The 7-stage walk from Brunnen to Rütli works very well as a self-guided thru-hike. The waymarking as SchweizMobil regional route 98, frequent towns, and good public transport make the logistics unusually straightforward for a multi-day route.

It is also one of the better Swiss long-distance routes for section hiking. Every stage end is linked by boat, bus or train, so walkers based in Lucerne or another lakeside town can complete selected days without carrying overnight kit. For a short trip, Stages 5–6 from Alpnachstad over the Bürgenstock area towards Beckenried give the strongest concentration of cliff path, lake views and mountain atmosphere.

Hikers with extra time should consider combining the Waldstätterweg with the Weg der Schweiz / Swiss Path around Lake Uri. Together, routes 98 and 99 create a fuller 9-day circuit of Lake Lucerne.

The most rewarding moments

The Bürgenstock Felsenweg is the standout mountain section: a cliff-cut path high above Lake Lucerne, leading towards the Känzeli viewpoint and the 152.8 m Hammetschwand outdoor lift. It is also the section most affected by seasonal closure, so it deserves careful timing.

The finish at Rütli gives the route its strongest historical ending. Reaching the meadow above Lake Uri after the final stage, with the approach via Treib and boat connections on the Urnersee, makes the last day feel more distinctive than a simple walk into town.

Lucerne is the natural place to slow down. The route crosses the city waterfront by the Kapellbrücke and Water Tower, making it a practical rest-day candidate as well as one of the cultural highlights of the walk.

Final checks before setting out

Check the current SGV boat timetable before Stage 7. Rütli is reached by boat, and missing the final service can create an awkward end to the trip.

Carry Swiss francs (CHF) or reliable card payment options, and budget realistically. Switzerland is expensive, and boats, funiculars, mountain railways and lifts can add noticeably to the cost of an otherwise straightforward self-guided hike.

No permit is needed, and the route is waymarked with the usual Swiss yellow hiking signs. With accommodation booked, the Felsenweg season checked, and the final boat planned, the Waldstätterweg is a highly manageable and rewarding long-distance walk around one of Switzerland's most historic landscapes.