



Exploring Switzerland's Matterhorn region one step at a time

July 7, 2018 – July 20, 2018 (trip# 1824)



The Matterhorn, Zermatt Switzerland

A personal forward from the trip leader: I first visited Switzerland's Valais region, home of the Matterhorn, many years ago. Saas Fee and Zermatt, where the Matterhorn is located, are the two pre-eminent mountain villages in this region. They always inspired me with their spectacular alpine settings. Numerous opportunities to explore await, all of which include amazing above tree-line views. Come join Claudine and myself on this wonderful fourteen-day hiking and trekking adventure which includes six days in the shadow of the Matterhorn itself.

About the area: The Valais is Switzerland's third largest canton or state. It surrounds the Rhône valley, contains the largest snow fields in the Alps, and is approximately 15% covered by glaciers! Several valleys cut through its 4,000 meter mountains.

The beautiful scenery of the Saastal and Mattertal valleys makes them extremely popular with hikers and



skiers. The valleys converge at the town of Stalden. The Saastal extends to the southeast and contains the towns of Saas Balen, Saas Grund, Saas Almagell and the Saas Fee. The Mattertal is to the southwest and is famous for the town of Zermatt lies at the foot of the distinctive Matterhorn itself.

The car-free mountain resorts of Saas Fee and Zermatt are surrounded by magnificent snow-capped mountain ranges. These villages bustle with hikers and climbers from around the world. But just outside of town, by foot or by lift, one ascends into a tranquil, almost unworldly alpine paradise.

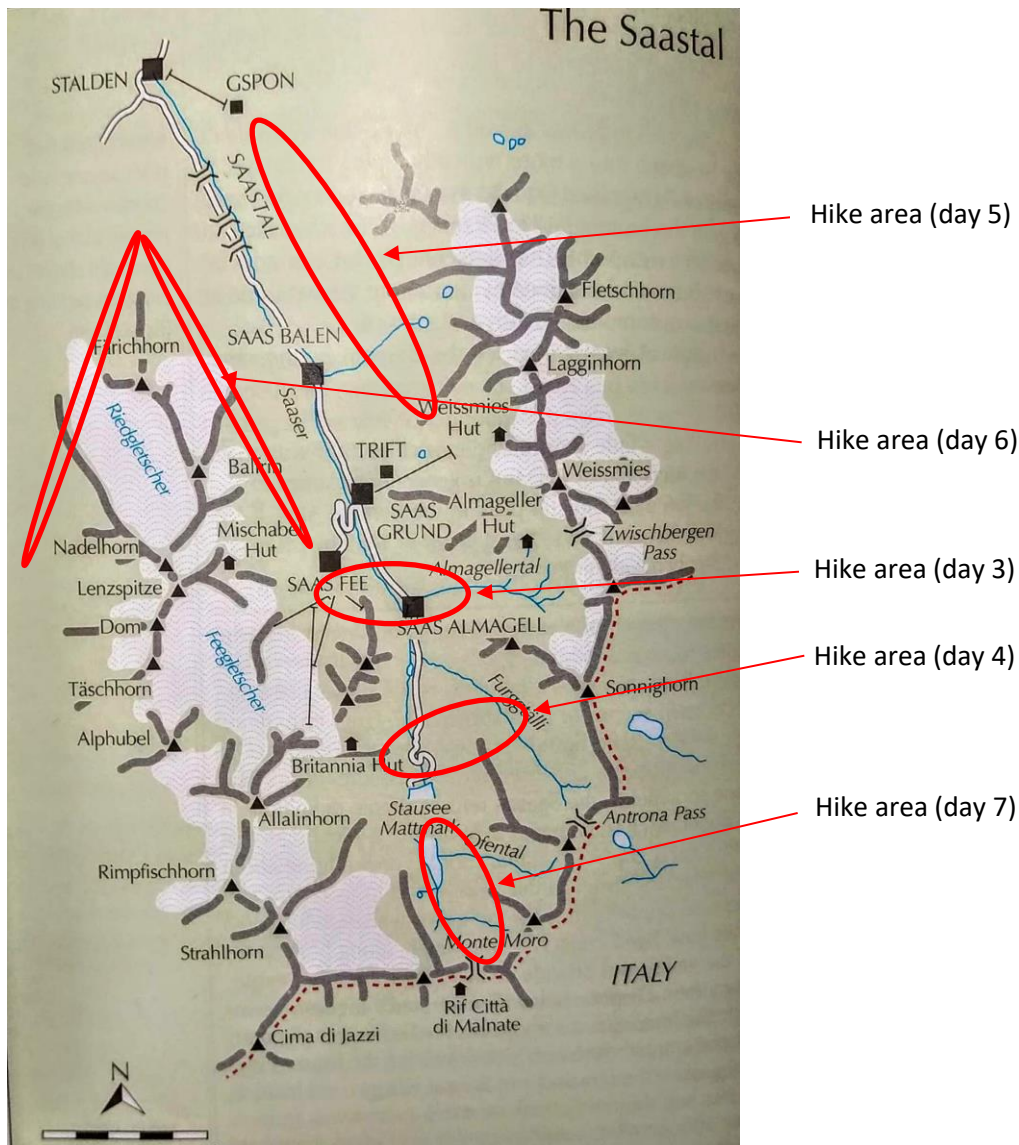
Trip overview:

This trip is broken into two segments. Saas Fee is our base in the Saastal. We will do five days of great day hikes often utilizing cable cars, chair lifts, and gondolas to transport us far above the valley floor, maximizing our time to enjoy spectacular above tree-line views. Note: a fuller description of each day's outing may be found by reviewing the referenced "walk numbers" as described in Kev Reynold's book "Walking in the Valais" published by Cicerone Press: [Walking in the Valais](#)

We then transfer to Täsch. Over the course of six days, we trek a classic high elevation path around the Mattertal valley with regular views of the Matterhorn. We will stay in historic mountain huts each evening. The trip ends with a free afternoon in Zermatt itself.

Day 1. (Sat 7 July) Depart US

Day 2. (Sun 8 July) Train/Bus from Zurich to Saas Fee; free time in Saas Fee



Saastal hikes overview

Day 3. (Mon 9 July) Walk 29/22: Saas Fee (1809m) – Saas Almagell (1670m) – Saas Fee

Today we warm up our legs and get acquainted with one another with an undemanding walk from Saas Fee to Saas Almagell. On the way, we might see some marmots – cute alpine animals related to squirrels. There are a few places in Saas Almagell where we can get refreshments before heading up a steep meadow and through larch woods to Furggstalden. We explore more meadows, cross a stream via bridge, and then loop back to Saas Fee.



marmot

Walking time approx. 5 hours, ascent/descent 541m, 13.5 km.



Saas Fee hiking

Day 4. (Tues 10 July) Walk 33/34r/35: Saas Fee (Felskinn: 2991m) – Britannia hut (3030m) – (Plattjen: 2570m) – Hannig (2340m) (The Gemsweg)

Today we take a classic local hike that sweeps around the slopes of the amphitheater above Saas Fee with views of the Mattmark Reservoir and the Monte Moro pass. The trail is narrow and exposed in parts, but fixed cables provide reassurance. We'll have plenty of variety as we pass open mountainside,



Brittania Hut at 3,030m altitude

wild flowers, shrubbery, woodlands, moraines, streams, ice fields, and cafés! We start by taking the cable car to Felskinn and walk along the Chessjen glacier to our high point at Britannia Hut.

We cut back along the balcony to Plattjen, staying alert for ibex sightings along the way. In Plattjen, we will head along the Gemsweg or Chamois path to the Hannig gondola descent to Saas Fee.



male ibex

Walking time approx. 6.5 hours, ascent 579m, descent 1190m, 15.5 km

Day 5. (Wed 11 July) Walk 16: Gspon (1895m) - Kreuzboden (2400m) (the Gspon Hohenweg)



Kreuzboden

One of the great hikes of the Saastal, this is a trail high on the east side of the Saastal above the valley. We take a bus to the Stalden rail station and then a cable car to the hamlet of Gspon. From here, we head south across pastures, though woodland, and from alp to alp with glorious views from start

to finish. We cross rock slopes, pass through forests full of larch trees, followed by a high pasture. We take the gondola down from Kreuzboden to Saas Grund and the bus back to Saas Fee.

Walking time approx. 5 hours, ascent 645m, descent 135m, 13 km

Day 6. (Thur, 12 July) Walk 40: Grächen (1618m) – Hannigalp (2121m) – Saas Fee (1809m)

The Balfrin Höhenweg - our longest hike in the Saas Fee region is along the west side of the Saastal opposite from our previous day's hike. An early morning bus takes us to Grächen in the Mattertal to start this classic balcony walk back to Saas Fee. The views are splendid, with the distant Matterhorn to the west and the Bietschorn across the Rhône in the other direction. The high point of our day is in Stock (2370m). This trail forms part of the extensive Tour of Monte Rosa. There will be some exposed sections.

Walking time approx. 7.5 hours, ascent 984m, descent 796m, 19 km.

Day 7. (Fri 13 July) Walk 25/26: Mattmark (2197m) – Monte Moro Pass (2868m) – Mattmark

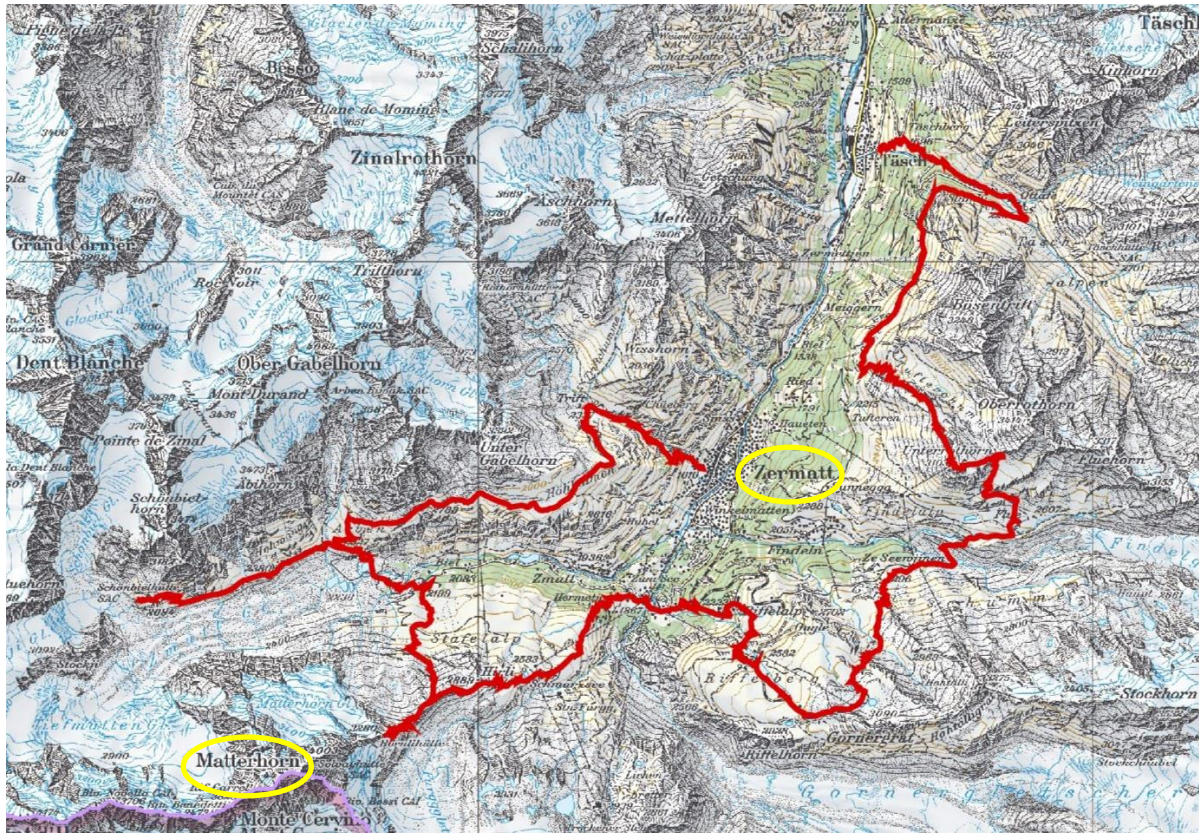
This is one of the best-known hikes in the Saastal, and we get an early start for it. Starting from Restaurant Mattmark, the southernmost terminus of the bus, our walk takes us along the western side of the dam and reservoir and up to the Monte Moro footpath (2225m) and on to the historic Monte Moro pass (2868m). At the pass, there is a statue of the Madonna of the Snows. Italian migrants crossed over the pass to settle in the Saastal in 1250. We will enjoy views of the Seewjinen glacier and the great east face of the magical Monte Rosa "mirror wall." The trail passes through rocks and slabs and there is one section with a fixed cable.



Monte Rosa as viewed from Monte Moro Pass

Walking time approx. 5.5 hours, ascent/descent 671m, 13 km.

We now leave the beautiful Saastal region and head towards Zermatt, home of the Matterhorn.



The trek around the Mattertal Valley

Day 8. (Sat 14 July) Depart Saas Fee for Täschalp



In the morning, a bus and a train take us to Randa. From there we will take the Domweghuetten up to the Europaweg which is the beginning of the Mattertal trek. Immediately after reaching the Europaweg we will traverse the 494-meter-long Charles Kuonen Suspension Bridge, the world's longest pedestrian suspension bridge. You may have seen this bridge on the news when it opened in July 2017. It crosses over the Grabengufer Ravine and

is suspended between 1,600 meters and 2,200 meters above sea level. It is 65 centimeters wide and goes as high as 85 meters above the ground. It has a see-through deck, allowing visitors to peer straight down into the valley below, or gaze out into the distance at the Matterhorn. We reach the



Täschalp Valley

Europaweghütte on the Täschalp (2214m) and enjoy our first big views of the exquisite alps surrounding the Mattertal valley.

Walking time approx. 5.0 hours 1,300m ascent, 600m descent, 11km

Day 9. (Sun 15 July) Täschalp (2214m) along the Europaweg to Fluhalphütte (2618m)

After breakfast, we follow the Europaweg and reach, via the scenic Ritzengrat, the Unterrothorn peak (3103m). We enjoy a well-deserved lunch, and then descend past the Stellisee to the Fluhalphütte (2618m) where we spend the night.

Walking time approx. 5 hours, ascent 900m, descent 500m, 12.5 km.



View from the Fluhalphütte

Day 10. (Mon 16 July) Fluhalphütte (2618m) to Berghotel Schwarzsee (2583m)

After the descent to the "Grünsee" (2300m), we climb up to Rotenboden (2815m). From here we descend over the Gletschergarten to the Gornerschlucht and soon reach Furri station (1867m). In the afternoon, we walk in 2 hours via Furgg to the Berghotel Schwarzsee (2583 m).

Walking time approx. 7 hours, ascent 1150m, descent 1150m, 19.5 km.

Day 11. (Tues 17 July)
Berghotel Schwarzsee
(2583m) - Hörnli hut
(3260m) - Schönbiel Hut
(2694m)

Today's hike brings us to the Hörnli hut (3260m), which is the starting point for a Matterhorn ascent. We are then off to Zmuttbach. We soon reach

the Zmutt glacier, with imposing views of the Matterhorn North Face and the Dent d'Hérens. We end the day's journey at the Schönbiel Hut (2694m).

Walking time approx. 6 hours, ascent 1200m, descent 1050m, 15 km



View from the Berghotel Schwarzsee



Schoenbiel Huette

Day 12. (Wed 18 July) Schönbiel hut to Berghaus Trift (2337m)

After a short descent to Bellen (2380m), we hike on a beautiful high ridge over the Hochbalm to Berghaus Trift (2337m).

Walking time approx. 4 hours, ascent 500m, descent 900m, 11.5 km

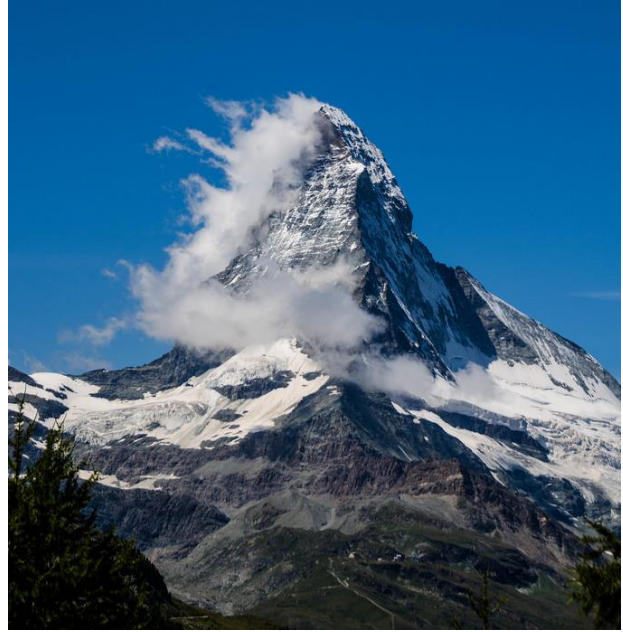
Optional trip in the afternoon to the Wisshorn (2.936 m) where there are fantastic views of the entire Matteredal range.

Walking time about 3 hours,

Day 13. (Thurs 19 July) Mountain Inn Trift (2337m) to Zermatt (1620m)

Zermatt is a mecca for people interested in plants. Almost 900 different types of plants, including many listed as endangered and rare species, can be found here. The wide variety is due to the local climate, geography and history. The stunning range of four thousand meter mountains which surround Zermatt

prevents damp air from penetrating into the region, resulting in a low amount of precipitation and many sunny and mild days. This enables many types of plants to prosper in very high regions. Since 1997, the routes from Zermatt to the Trift's valley have been lined with eight botanical footpaths with different types of vegetation. We descend through the Trift Gorge along these paths initially to guesthouse Edelweiss (1961m) and finally reaching Zermatt (1620m) by lunch time. The remainder of the afternoon is free time to explore this spectacular car-free resort village. *Walking time approx. 2 hours, descent 750m, 4 km*



Day 14. (Friday 20 July) Return to Zurich and back to the US.

PARTICIPANT PROFILE AND EXPECTATIONS

You should have a keen interest in breathtaking views and enjoy moderate to strenuous hiking at elevation. On an average day, we will hike for 5-7 hours and cover 8-12 miles. Daily elevation gain averages ~2,700 feet with a maximum of ~3,700 feet. We will climb to elevations approaching 10,000 feet. On several hikes there are steep sections often aided by cables. On day hikes expect to carry 10-15 pounds including water and lunch; on the Mattertal trek, expect to carry 20-25 pounds including water and lunch.

Anticipate close sleeping quarters and being less comfortable than you are at home.

Make it a priority to helping others on the trip and contributing to everyone having a great time. If you do that, you will have a great time as well.



Relaxing after a great day on the trail

At the start of this trip, you should be in proper condition for the challenges outlined in this prospectus, including being able to hike long distances with elevation gains of ~3,000 feet for several days in a row while at elevation. You should also be equipped with appropriate gear. Always be aware of the risks involved and conduct yourself accordingly. You are ultimately responsible for your own safety. Prior to your acceptance as a participant in this trip, you will be asked to discuss your capabilities and experience

with us. We may also request references to confirm your fitness level and suitability for participating in trip activities.

The exact itinerary may require changes based on safety factors, transportation logistics, or lodging availability, and other unforeseeable circumstances such as weather considerations, natural disasters in areas to be visited, or recommendations of governmental agencies. The leaders reserve the right to make such changes as necessary, both before and during the trip.

It may happen on any trip that a trip member is or becomes unable to participate in one or more of the planned activities. Leaders in their sole judgment have the right and obligation to refuse participation in any activity to any group member for reasons of group or individual safety. Illness, injury or lack of proper gear or fitness for a particular activity are examples of some conditions that might result in a participant's being unable to perform one or more activity. Leaders may try to find a substitute activity for the trip member, but this may not always be possible.

ACCOMMODATIONS

We will spend 6 nights in an upscale youth hostel (optional swimming pool and spa available!), 5 nights in various mountain huts, and our final night in a hotel. There will be bunk beds in the hostel, either bunk beds or adjacent mattresses in mountain lodges, and two people/room in the final hotel. Please note that in Europe twin beds are sometimes mattresses immediately side-by-side in a single bed-frame, while in the US twin beds are in separate bed-frames and are separated by a few inches.



Part of spa area at Saas Fee youth hostel

SAFETY AND RISKS

Participant safety is a high priority for all AMC-sponsored events. Participants should be aware that there are risks associated with outdoor adventure activities, including but not limited to adverse weather and environmental conditions, remote locations of our trips, and transportation in vehicles or on foot. Aside from any personal medical problems, participants should be aware of the possibilities of bug bites, dehydration, sunburn and other heat or cold related problems. You should regularly use sun screen, take care to be adequately hydrated and bring water on all day trips. Please carefully read and sign the AMC Participant Acknowledgement and Assumption of Risks and Release and Indemnity Agreement.

PRICE

The trip price is \$2,350 for AMC members. Non-members can join for \$50, and get the same price. This will cover the following items:

- Lodging, breakfasts and dinners (with the exception of two dinners on your own in Saas Fee) from the welcome dinner in Saas Fee through breakfast on the last day of the trip in Zermatt
- Bus transportation between Saas Fee and Zermatt
- Gondola, cable car, and bus trips within the Saastal region to/from trailheads, if applicable
- Emergency medical and evacuation insurance coverage

Lunches, trail snacks, beverages (e.g. coffee/tea, mineral water, alcohol, etc.) and other personal expenses are NOT included. Transportation costs to Saas Fee and from Zermatt are your responsibility. The trip leaders will provide advice and will facilitate group travel. The most affordable way to get to Saas Fee is to fly to Zurich then take a train. At this time, we estimate that the price for a round trip between the east coast and Zurich, Switzerland will be ~ \$800. Including transfer time it takes about 3 ½ hours to get from the Zurich airport to Saas Fee.

The final trip cost may change in accordance with the exchange rate at the time of booking. Any savings or cost increases will be passed back to you, the participant. The cost estimates in this prospectus are conservative, and so a refund is considerably more likely than a price increase.

AMC Adventure Travel trips are run on a non-profit basis. Leaders are volunteers who are not compensated except for their travel costs associated with the trip. The advertised trip cost includes a surcharge which goes toward the administrative expenses of the AMC Adventure Travel program.

The trip fee includes emergency medical and evacuation insurance coverage, which is required by the AMC. It does *not* include insurance for travel delay, interruption, or cancellation, or for baggage loss. If the possibility of such problems concerns you, individual travel insurance is suggested. The AMC has a recommended vendor whose material will be sent to you if your application is accepted.

Any unspent funds will be refunded to the participants. If the trip's financial position is strong enough at the start, the leaders may make partial refunds during the trip, in the form of payments toward some meals and/or free time activities that would otherwise not be included.

REGISTRATION and CANCELLATION

To apply, you must complete and submit the application, confidential medical form, supplemental medical form (if appropriate) and acknowledgement and assumption of risk and release form. You can download them from this website: [Application Documents](#) Mail the registration deposit of \$1,000 and all required forms to Steve Cohen at the address shown on the application form. You will not actually be accepted, and your check will not be deposited, until the leader has determined by telephone conversation with you that you and the trip are a good match. The final balance of \$1,300 is due March 1, 2018. Deposit checks from wait-listed applicants will not be cashed until they are accepted AND they confirm continued interest in joining the trip. All payments by check should be payable to the *Appalachian Mountain Club*.

Our cancellation policy is based on several considerations. Cancellation will not be allowed to raise the cost to the other participants or to the leaders. Minimum penalty schedule: \$200. If actual costs (expenses already incurred on your behalf, and any unavoidable future expenses that will be incurred as a result of your registration and cancellation) are higher, they will be assessed instead, unless they can be applied toward another acceptable participant.

This trip is likely to fill quickly. If you are interested, you should apply as soon as possible. When registration is complete, we will send all participants the names, addresses, and phone numbers of all those going on the trip.

In the unlikely event that the trip is cancelled because not enough acceptable participants apply, everything you have paid will be refunded in full.

QUESTIONS

A link to the application documents is immediately above in the registration section. If you have any questions, please contact Steve or Claudine.

Steve: 617-997-6861 before 9PM eastern time zone, or at scohen1234@gmail.com.

Claudine: 617-999-9759 before 9PM eastern time zone, or at claudinekos05@yahoo.com.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Places we will visit:

<http://www.saas-fee.ch/en/wandern/>

<http://www.myswitzerland.com/en-us/valais.html>

<http://www.climbing.com/news/10-things-you-may-not-know-about-the-matterhorn/>

<http://www.cnn.com/2017/07/31/design/longest-pedestrian-suspension-bridge-switzerland/index.html>

<https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2017/aug/02/worlds-longest-pedestrian-suspension-bridge-swiss-alps-charles-kuonen>

TRIP LEADER



Steve Cohen leads three season hikes for the Hiking/Backpacking Committee of the AMC Boston Chapter. Since 2012 Steve has planned and led twelve hiking/trekking-oriented Adventure Travel trips to such destinations the Haute Route (from Chamonix, France to Zermatt, Switzerland), the Alta Via II through the Italian Dolomites, the tour of the Jungfrau region (Switzerland), Patagonia, the high mountains huts of Austria, etc. He lived in Europe for four years and is fluent in both French and German. Steve is currently chair of Adventure Travel.

CO-LEADER

Claudine Kos is a three-season leader with the Hiking/Backpacking Committee of the AMC Boston Chapter. She has completed all of the Catskill 3500 peaks and most of the 48 NH 4000 footers. Internationally, she has hiked in Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Corsica, Ireland, Nepal, Patagonia, Poland and Scotland. She is currently focusing on section hiking the Appalachian Trail. She has lived in 4 states and 4 countries, and visited 49 states and over 24 countries.

