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## Die Aareschlucht (The Aare Gorge)



The Haslital, one of the large valleys in the Central Alps, stretches from the Grimsel Pass to the Lake of Brienz. The flat valley floor of the lower Haslital is separated from the upper valley by a transverse rock formation. Over thousands of years, the Aare River eroded a path through this rock formation resulting in a gorge which is 1'400 metres long and up to 200 metres deep.

This gorge has been accessible for over 100 years by a system of safe paths and tunnels. The walk through the gorge is a very special way to experience nature.

### History of construction:

**1888** On 28 September 1887 the government of the canton of Bern Bäuertgemeinde Willigen gave

concession to plan "a gallery and a pedestrian route through the so-called Aarlam Sandey to the 'dark tunnels', leading up to the Court-Meiringen-Road in Lammi". Some citizens of the communities Schattenhalb and Meiringen founded and financed a company, which immediately began the construction of the path. In hazardous working conditions a catwalk through the two parts was created – the same year as the opening of the Brünigtrain. That summer, 12,000 people already visited the Aare gorge.

**1889** The following year, the galleries to the "dark tunnels" and the path to Lammi was finished. In the same year in the Sandey a business and cash building was constructed with woodcarvings.

That summer already 22,000 visitors were recorded.

**1895** The road over the Grimsel Pass was opened. This brought the Aareschlucht an increase in visitor numbers to over the 34,000 mark.

**1898** The rock gallery to the east entrance was built. Simultaneously an iron bridge over the river Aare to the "Trochene Lamb" was developed.

**1912** The tram Meiringen - Reichenbach - Aare Gorge was put into operation. That same year, the first time a night-lighting was set up.

**1928** Construction of the restaurants and kiosks.

**1942** Outbreak of the glacial lake at the pit glacier (Grimsel area). Large parts of the walkways were destroyed by the flood.

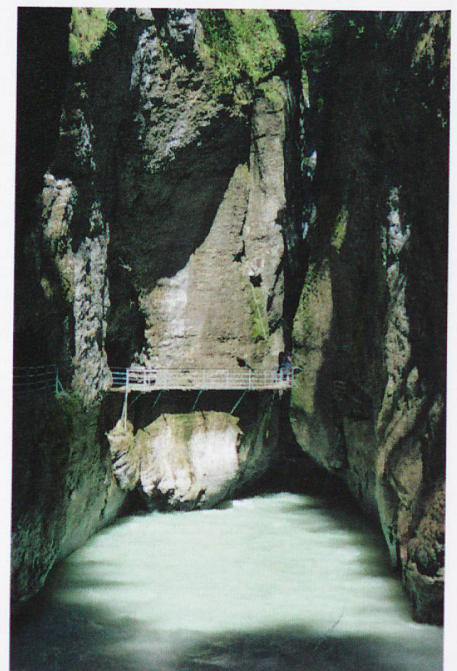
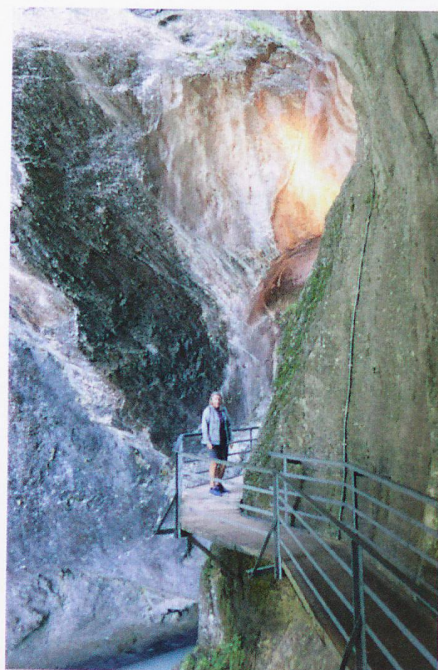
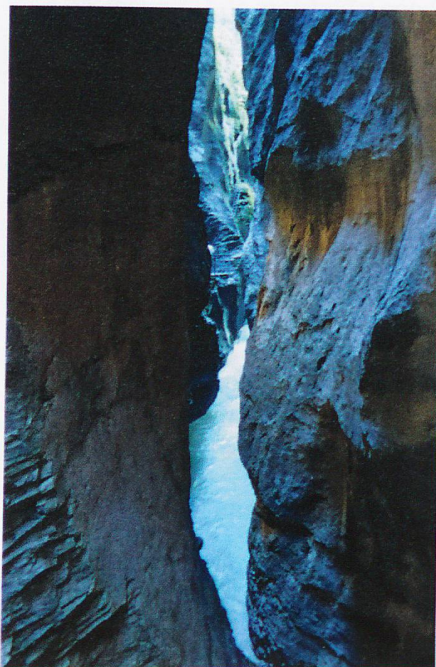
**1947** The opening of the Susten Road lead to a record attendance with 180,000 admissions.

**1957** The operation of the tram was stopped and the plant demolished.

**1960** Demolition of the bridge and the entrance to the "Trochenen Lamb".

**1987** Renovation and partial reconstruction of the restaurants.

**1993** The strength of the rock anchors used for the gallery were checked and found to be in order. The security of the web was improved with an additional rail in the railing.





**1998** Construction of winter and covered terrace was checked.

**2003** Construction of the suspension bridge over the river Aare to the east entrance to public transport.

**2005** Construction of a large playground near the restaurant.

**2008** Construction of the building at the east entrance with a kiosk and restaurant 'Aare Bistro'.

## Through The Aare Gorge

The Path through the Aare Gorge is an easy walk and is mostly between 1 – 2 metres wide. The path is constructed of 1 km of wooden paths built on steel girders which are anchored in the cliff walls, 400 m of tunnels/galleries and 250 m of gravel or asphalt paths complete the way.

The most beautiful parts of the gorge are accessible by wheel chair from the west entrance until the middle.

Hiking through the Aare Gorge from either the west or east entrances takes approx. 40 minutes. The return journey can be made via a hiking trail over the "Lammi" pass and takes around one hour.

The Meiringen Innertkirchen Bahn offers the possibility to make one part of the round trip by train. The walk from Aareschlucht West train stop takes approx. 10 minutes, from Aareschlucht East approx. 5 minutes (not suitable for wheelchairs).

## Geology

The rock formation between Meiringen and Innertkirchen is called the "Kirchet" and consists mainly of very hard limestone. This formation was created in the Cretaceous Period approx. 130 – 160 million years ago as ocean sediment which hardened to limestone over the years (sediment in the Thetis, the Geosynklinal ocean of the alps).

When the alps were formed approx. 15 million years ago, these sediment deposits were vaulted into the sediment casing of the crystalline mountains, but the rock in the area of the Kirchet is autochthon, which means that it was barely moved. As a result, the limestone here is very solid and resistant to water and ice. The glaciers of the ice age, which began approx. 1 – 2 million years ago, were able to erode the cliffs of the Kirchet, but not to carry them away.

In the first warm periods, as the glaciers receded, the water eroded a gorge through the cliffs. In the cold period which followed, the glacier once again covered the Kirchet which filled the gorge with moraine. During the next warm period, the melting water did not wash out the moraine, but instead cut out a new gorge between the cliffs and many new Aare Gorges were created during the ice ages. According to Müller's detailed observations, five further gorges exist which are partially or completely filled with moraine. The "Lautere Schlucht" which begins at the car park of the Aare Gorge and runs more or less parallel to the present gorge is a good example thereof. It has

not been possible to date the formation of each gorge and the different ice ages. (Hantke,1980)

Source: [www.aareschlucht.ch](http://www.aareschlucht.ch)

Walter and I did a day trip to this beautiful part of Switzerland in August 2018 whilst on a three month trip to Europe. This location is very beautiful but also a bit daunting. I found it a bit nerve-racking walking on some of these wooden boards suspended from rock face, especially knowing that it was built more than a hundred years ago. I was glad to get to the other end and finish up on solid ground. I hope these photos tell our story and we hope you too can experience this excursion one day. Anita Zuber. (Photos by Walter Zuber)

## Reichenbach Falls

Here at the 120 meter-high waterfall, Author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle found inspiration and a death place for his hero Sherlock Holmes in the battle against Professor Moriarty.

An excursion to this spot is a must for Sherlock Holmes fans. Today a cableway with 24-seater wooden carriages, once used for the electricity works, brings visitors to the place of the scene – close to the viewing terrace above the powerful waters.

Hiking trails lead back to the Haslital valley, Aare Gorge or direction Rosenlauri to the historic hotel and Rosenlauri Glacier Gorge.

### Information

Altitude: 843m

Accessibility: Train to Meiringen, on foot (20 minutes) or by bus to Willigen, funicular rail to the Reichenbach Falls

View: Over the Reichenbach Falls and Haslital bei Meiringen

Attractions: The Sherlock Holmes story, statue and museum in Meiringen

Culinary aspects: Gasthaus Zwirgi (above the Reichenbach Falls): Haxe (witches) Fondue

Overnight stays: Meiringen or Gasthaus Zwirgi

Winter: not in operation

Special comments: Originally a railway for work purposes, and today nostalgic railway with 24-seater wooden carriages built according to the original ones.

Source: [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com)

