

SWITZERLAND - JUNE 2009.

We decided to visit the area around Wengen for a week in mid June, in the hope of locating a few mammals and birds, and enjoying the superb scenery.

We stayed in the excellent Hotel Berghaus www.wengen.com/hotel/berghaus which is a small family run establishment. As we were aware of the high cost of living in Switzerland, we opted for half board which allowed us to have a four course evening meal at a pre determined cost. This was a good move, although it did somewhat limit our flexibility in the evenings.

As Wengen is a largely car-free town (the only vehicles being licensed to residents) having a hire car is not an option. Therefore travel is by cog railway, cable car or on foot ! We pre-bought Swiss Passes prior to our visit. These entitled us to free transfers from the airport to Wengen and back, and half price tickets on the trains and cable cars, for £ 107 each.

As someone who rarely (if ever) uses public transport, I was slightly apprehensive about how easy all the travel would be. In fact, the signs throughout were excellent both on public transport, and on the walking trails and it proved simple to get around.

The weather was mixed during our week. It is fairly obvious that on sunny days concentrate on the higher areas, as if the cloud or rain sets in the visibility falls to near zero !!

Mammals:

- Alpine Ibex - 2 males seen on the slopes above Biglenalp on 17th. This seems to be a favoured area, as others have seen them here in previous years. Having viewed them at range from the path to Eigergletscher, we climbed up the slope to closer range for photos... a lung bursting experience !
- Chamois - regularly seen on the slopes to Mannlichen, above our hotel. These views are at best distant, and a telescope would be required for decent looks.(Up to 8 seen together here at times). A close male was seen from the train near to Kleine Scheidegg on the 14th and up to 5 were seen on the slopes above Mettlenalp on 15th. One was with the Ibex on the 17th. Generally they are wary and much less approachable than the Ibex.
- Alpine Marmot - 2 on the trail from Kleine Scheidegg to Mannlichen on 14th. 1 located in the field of boulders below Wengernalp on 16th. Many (15+) on the slope towards Grindelwald from Mannlichen on 18th – these proved the most approachable.
- Snow Vole - 1 smartly located by Karen in a rocky patch by the path from Kleine Scheidegg to Mannlichen on 14th. It gave several views, but not long enough for photos !
- Bank Vole - 1 gave good views in a mossy wall on the path below Wengen to Lauterbrunnen on 15th.
- Red Fox - 1 crossed the field outside the hotel in the evening sunshine on 13th. 1 hunting under the gondola from Mannlichen to Grindelwald on 18th.
- Vole sp. - 1 'chunky' vole seen briefly in the meadow near Mettlenalp was either Field or Common – unfortunately the views were just too brief .



Stuff we missed:

European Badger had been regularly seen around the fields and gardens near our hotel in the weeks prior to our visit. We wandered around after dark on at least 3 evenings, but failed to score. Roe Deer are apparently occasionally seen, and two guests who had been to the hotel in several previous years had once seen a Marten on the road near the hotel after dark. They didn't know whether it was Pine or Beech, but I guess both are probably in the area. The biggest miss was undoubtedly Red Squirrel. I've no idea how or why, and we spent a considerable amount of time in the woods !

Birds:

Cormorant
Mute Swan
Mallard
Red Kite
Black Kite
Common Buzzard
Kestrel
Ptarmigan - 1 on path below Eigergletscher
Coot
Collared Dove
Cuckoo
Swift
Great Spotted Woodpecker
Skylark
Barn Swallow
House Martin
Water Pipit
White Wagtail

Grey Wagtail
Wren
Dunnock
Alpine Accentor - 4 on trail from Eigergletscher to Biglenalp
Robin
Black Redstart
Wheatear
Rock Thrush
Song Thrush
Mistle Thrush
Fieldfare
Blackbird
Ring Ouzel
Blackcap
Chiffchaff
Goldcrest
Firecrest
Spotted Flycatcher
Great Tit
Coal Tit
Crested Tit
Marsh Tit
Long-tailed Tit
Nuthatch
Short-toed Treecreeper
Magpie
Jay
Nutmacker - 2 around Wengen, 3 + near Mettlenalp.
Jackdaw
Alpine Chough - easy to see, esp. around Kleine Scheidegg.
Carrion Crow
Raven
Starling
House Sparrow
Snowfinch - nesting at Kleine Scheidegg and Mannlichen.
Chaffinch
Linnet
Redpoll
Goldfinch
Greenfinch
Siskin
Citril Finch - mainly between Wengernalp, Biglenalp & Mettlenalp.
Serin
Bullfinch
Common Crossbill



Steve Davis & Karen Baker - 2009.