

Hiking the Engadine: Avoid arthritis pain

Description

Gentle Reader,

I am back safe and sound from my hike through the Engadine Valley in the Alps in Switzerland and the Writers Workshop in Villa Lina north of Rome. And my body is not suffering from arthritis! Sitting in the airplane for the long flight to Amsterdam, the first stop of my journey, I actually slept with the help of medication, Lunesta is my sleeping aid of choice, a prescription only drug that costs plenty. I used it twice on the trip to help me get into the European hemisphere and the first night back home. Otherwise, [Gentle Sleep Complex](#), an herbal combination of Valerian, passion flower and chamomile. It works like a dream to take 3 before going to bed, no matter what hotel I found myself in.

The real challenge to a body with a lot of spinal stenosis and potential joint discomfort is hauling suitcases and loading the heavy hiking pack up onto my shoulders. Paying close attention to all the good advice I have posted over the past 1 ½, and asking for help getting in and out of trains—"you're looking strong. Can you help me with my suitcase, please?"—I managed to arrived back home without pulling a muscle from lifting suitcases. Read on to see what a silly thing I did to pull a muscle badly.

I'd like to share my challenges with you in case you ever encounter similar problems. You might avoid the same pitfalls.

First, a little back ground. I am in a hiking group that hits the trails in the Pacific Northwest every Wednesday, rain or shine, except for January and February when we cross country ski. Keep moving to keep arthritis at bay, is our motto. Of all the gals in our group, Pedie took me up on taking a hike in Switzerland. Jaco, our friend and fellow hiker who has returned to her homeland in the Netherlands to live out her life, was eager to join us as she ship. She, Pedie and I all celebrate our 75th birthdays festive. Our fourth hiker was Chris, already 83 yrs old.



May I just add here that we met plenty of older people

hiking as this sort of trekking is not unusual in Europe. Jaco and I took an overnight train to Zurich and then a train to the southeast part of Switzerland to join the other two. You'll recognize the place names St. Moritz and Davos if you follow the rich and famous. We stuck to smaller, less glitzy places.

Our first stop in the Engadine valley was a town called Scuol. It is famous in Europe for its mineral baths and the modern spa is worth the trip. I had so much luggage that I had exploded into a collapsible cloth bag to make my back pack as light as possible and still not leave anything behind that I might need on the trail. We were walking from one village to the next, up over the mountains and needed to be ready for any change in the weather. [Ryder/Walker](#), our self guided tour company, arranged for our luggage to be taken to the next hotel along the way, arriving in our rooms well ahead of us.

Helping with jet lag and pounding our muscle into jelly, we spent a luxurious afternoon soaking in the mineral baths, going from super hot indoors, through the watery opening into the sun, blue sky and swirling outdoor pool with its jets and waterfall showers. By the time I got back to the hotel, I was a noodle.

Here's the trouble #1. I spent half an hour bent over my luggage rearranging things to begin hiking the next day. When I tried to stand up, all the muscles in my lower back had stretched out and refused to budge. Here I was, pain shooting through my body, unable to catch my breath or stand and walk to dinner. I got out my theraband and hit the floor with stretches and exersizes; filled the ice bag I had brought just in case and took a couple [Pain Relief Complex](#) herbal Cox 2 and 5 Loc inhibitors, pain pills that don't hurt your stomach. I'm the one who put this great hiking experience together and I wasn't going to be able to walk a mile, much less carry a pack.

After a fabulous 8 course dinner and a bottle of Swiss wine between us, more ice and Pain Relief Complex, a good night's sleep, and a ice bag tucked into my hiking pants, I was ready to walk it out this next morning. It worked. Walking is the best thing for lower back pain. After about a half hour, I was ready to dump the ice and the rest of the 6 days I was free of lower back difficulties.



The take away from this is

1. Never do any extreme movements after a hot tub, deep tissue massage or the

pummeling pleasure of a mineral springs spa. I should not have bent over rearranging my luggage, and a little voice told me that at the time, to which I paid no attention.

2. Don't give up on yourself when you do pull a muscle. Ice, stretch and do your best to walk it out. This idea of lying flat on your back and taking muscle relaxants, in my opinion and long time experience, is not the way to handle lower back pain. I have loosened up sciatica several times in the past by icing, stretching and walking.

Now, Please, tell us your methods for dealing with this kind of muscle pain, how you got yourself into the mess in the first place and how you got out of it. We all want to learn from each other. So go ahead, leave a comment, and sign up to get notification of my next posting which will take you on down the trail in the Engadine to the next near calamity on our great adventure.

Fondly, Betsy

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