

Heart attack? Climbing high

Description

Gentle Reader,

How do you survive trekking at a high altitude? The Engadine Valley hike in Switzerland began and ended for us with a train ride



from Guarda where our 1st day ended.

No more sciatica or lower back pain. No more arthritis troubles with Pain Relief Complex on board. Now the only task was to climb from 5700 ft to 8400 ft. to Escha Hut. We knew it would be hard, but we managed to make it harder. Instead of muscles spasms and a struggle with osteoarthritis, the pain and suffering of the day was mostly in my head.

As we climbed, I was short of breath. Then came the unsettled stomach. Then a feeling of light headedness. We passed a couple in their late 70's from Zurich who had been in Zuoz over the weekend to play bridge and stayed on for a couple days to "take a little walk" in the area with their retired seeing-eye dog. Looking very out of shape and carrying only a light nap sac, these two seemed to climb this trail with ease. They did turn back when the path left the farm road and joined the cow tracks leading straight up the treeless slope. Paging through all I know about women and heart disease, reviewing in detail my mother's congestive heart failure symptoms and subsequent death AT MY EXACT AGE, I managed to get myself into a panic, anticipating a heart attack any moment. At one point I called out "Would you just glance back here once in a while to see if I'm still upright?" At this point Jaco, my Dutch friend, decided to walk behind me. I later learned that all of us were struggling with shortness of breath. Chris, the 83 yr. old veteran of several Mt Rainier

climbs, reminded us of deep inhales and slow, whistling out breaths. The gals in front were already taking 10 steps and resting for a couple breaths. I was absolutely sure I was

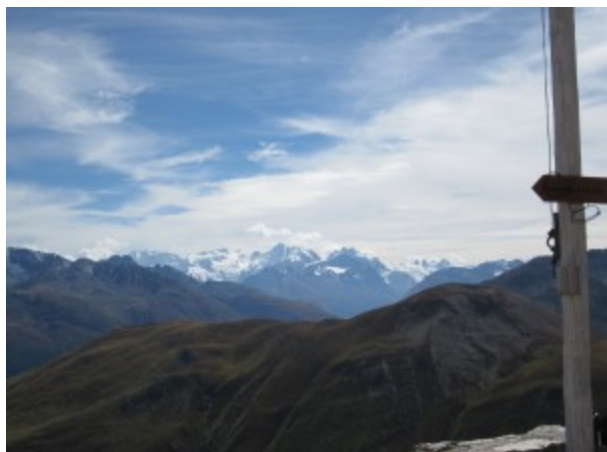


ing in the sun,

a busy place in

the summer and even busier in the winter. A mountain biker peddled up the way we went down, paused for a drink and went down the way we had just come up. Way more impressive than Lance Armstrong. No doubt powered by his own lungs, blood and muscle, this cyclist was out for recreation.

As we sat there gazing at the Bernina mountain range in the distance, completely covered with snow at 13,000 ft, I remember my first ascent to 10,000 ft on Mt. Shasta and realiz



ed I was suffering from altitude sickness, not heart disease. The relief was so great, I fairly danced down the far side of the valley, past this amazing high mountain field of art.



To avoid the precipitous downhill trail, we cut through a pass and circumnavigated the mountain in front of us, extending our trek by an additional 7 miles, making it a 14 mile day. The benefit was this shot of a marmot late in the afternoon, one of many familiar critters scampering and diving into their burrows. I'd been looking for them as all the telltale signs of marmot, just like in the Cascades, were everywhere.



One more physical challenge before our 6 days RyderWalker self guided trek was finished. Tune in next Thursday for more pictures and that story.

Now let's hear from you. Have you had altitude sickness? Were you aware of what was happening to you or did you think you were having a heart attack? We'd like to hear your story. If you enjoyed this read, pass it along. Check me out on Facebook: betsyjbell, and while you are there, 'like' my business page, <https://www.facebook.com/BetsyBellsHealth4U>.

Fondly, Betsy

Be Well, Do Well and Keep Moving

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