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PDF

# Switzerland

Geneva  
walking tour

Family  
adventure  
guide

Hike the  
Aletsch

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# Switzerland



**Nicola Williams, Caroline Bishop,  
Anthony Haywood, Claire O'Dea,  
Simon Richmond, Michaela Scalisi, Kerry Walker**



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Grünsee (p136)

TOP LEFT: AS FOODSTUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK © BOTTOM LEFT: ALFREDO MAQUIE/GETTY IMAGES ©  
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TOP: SCHAME/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Aletsch Glacier (p140)

# SWITZERLAND

## THE JOURNEY BEGINS HERE

It's the insatiable combo of lake and mountain that's so addictive – and energising. Lake Geneva (p40) has been my home for more than a decade and it still tickles me pink that most of my journeys elsewhere in Europe begin with a bewitching 20-minute flit across the water – sometimes in a commuter boat packed with office suits clutching foldable bike or e-scooter, sometimes aboard one of the majestic belle époque steamers that I often see twinkling on the water after dark from my kitchen window.

That you can gorge on five-course gastronomy afloat, dip into a cheese fondue atop a rock-chiselled peak, tuck into the morning's catch lake-side or stock up on wine from an 'honesty fridge' in a Unesco-listed vineyard only makes this God-like tableau even more enticing. With such a grandiose landscape on my doorstep, little wonder I can't sit still for two minutes – the primary hazard of Swiss living!

### Nicola Williams

@tripalong

*British writer Nicola Williams lives on the shore of Lake Geneva. When she's not running up a mountain or dipping in alpine lakes for Lonely Planet, she writes about France, Italy and Switzerland for The Telegraph, National Geographic and BBC. She wrote the, Geneva, Lake Geneva & Vaud, and Valais chapters.*



**My favourite experience** is crunching over ice in crampons on the Aletsch Glacier. The rumbling of water flowing deep beneath your feet is a powerful reminder of the glacier's immensity – and fragility.



## WHO GOES WHERE

Our writers and experts choose the places which, for them, define Switzerland.



Marc Chagall's stained-glass windows in Zürich's Fraumünster (pictured) are a thing of beauty. An equally artistic experience can be had in the entrance hall of the **Amtshaus** (p197) and Augusto Giacometti's 1920s frescoes of fantasy flowers.

### Simon Richmond

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*Simon is a travel writer and photographer.*



**Foroglio** (p156), a village in the Ticino region, is my defining place here. Nestled in the Bavona Valley, this enchanting hamlet is a step back in time, with its stone houses, narrow alleys and the Foroglio waterfall.

### Michaela Scalisi

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*Michaela is a travel writer, blogger and avid ice skater.*



Some of my happiest moments have been spent clambering up exposed crags to jewel-like lakes in the **Swiss National Park** (p236), a wondrously wild, under-the-radar corner of Graubünden.

### Kerry Walker

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*Kerry is an award-winning travel writer, and the author of scores of Lonely Planet guidebooks.*



**Lucerne** (p164) is probably the most typically Swiss part of Switzerland. The old town has that traditional Swiss German feel, the lakeside setting is gorgeous, and it offers every form of transport in the book to reach the nearby mountains.

### Caroline Bishop

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*Caroline is a travel writer and the author of several novels.*



When I moved to the **Basel** (p182) tri-national region, I immediately began exploring Basel's museums, cafes and nightspots, and drifting down the Rhine River in summer. I enjoy seeing the city from this unusual river perspective.

### Anthony Haywood

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*Anthony is an author and editor, who lives in Germany.*

## CONTRIBUTING WRITER



### Clare O'Dea

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*Clare wrote the 'Meet the Swiss' essay (p274). She is a journalist and author and has lived in Switzerland since 2003.*

## Lavaux

Taste wine in Unesco-prized vineyards (p62)

## Bern

Meet the Swiss answer to the Guggenheim (p90)

## Basel

Sightsee adrift down the Rhine River (p182)

## Montreux

Trail flower blooms to Lake Geneva's castle (p64)

## Lausanne

Lake-dip and drink student-style (p52)

## Thun

Explore a fairy-tale Aare River castle (p110)

## Zermatt

Glide across glaciers to Italy (p133)

## Jungfrauoch

Visit Europe's highest train station (p107)

## Grindelwald

'Cliff walk' in adventure-mad alpine town (p105)



## Lucerne

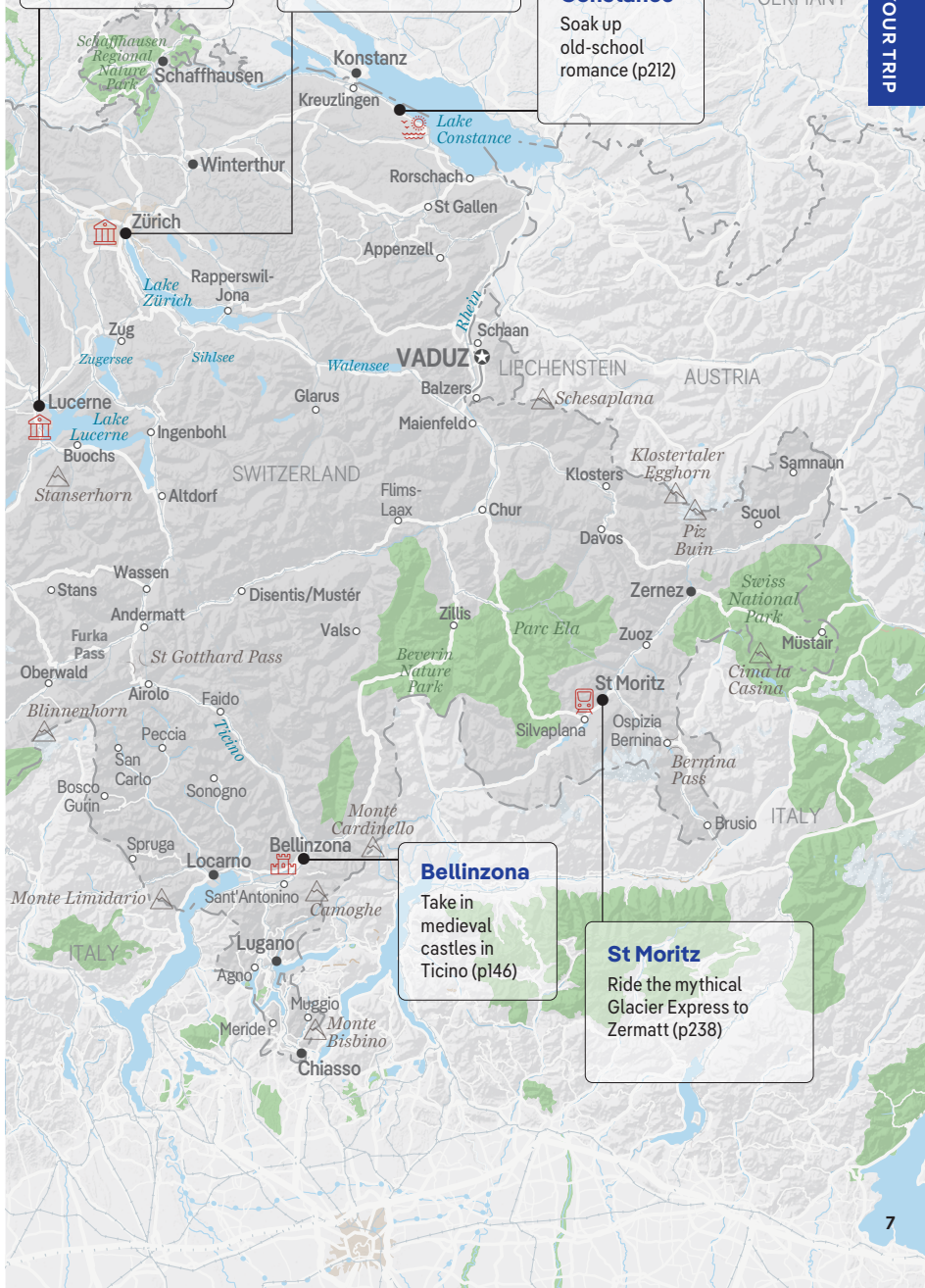
Revel in sparkling vistas and Victorian curiosities (p164)

## Zürich

Feast on world-class art (p196)

## Lake Constance

Soak up old-school romance (p212)



## Bellinzona

Take in medieval castles in Ticino (p146)

## St Moritz

Ride the mythical Glacier Express to Zermatt (p238)





# MOUNTAIN VISTAS

With the Alps rippling across much of the country, Switzerland pairs serious altitude with soul-soaring panoramas. Fierce peaks punch well above 4000m – dizzying mountains of myth where, for centuries, rock climbers have grappled for fame and a foothold in the realms of eternal ice. Fittingly, it is the weather gods who control the ultimate requirement for venerating these celestial vistas: a clear blue sky. Should the gods not be game, save the experience for another day.



## Free Rider

Cable cars (free for hotel guests in some summer resorts) provide seamless access to viewing platforms. Download trail routes and hiking maps at [schweizmobil.ch](http://schweizmobil.ch).



## Gear Up

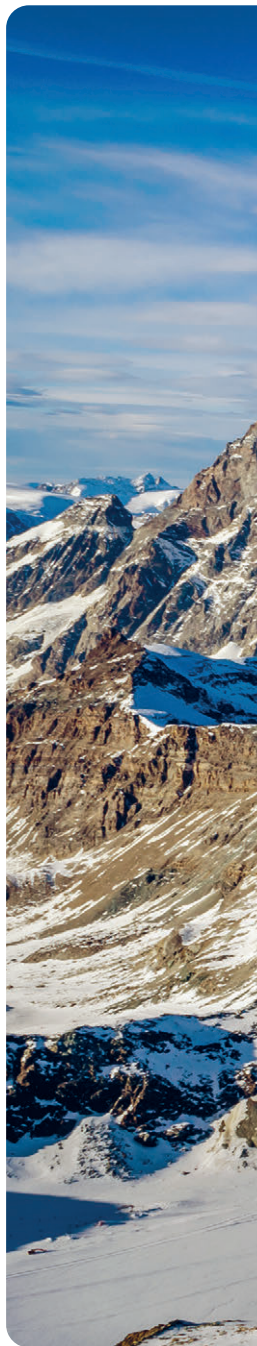
It's eternal winter above 3000m, even in July and August. Come prepared for snow and wind: long trousers, boots, coat, daypack with gloves, hat, scarf or buff.



## Sunrise Views

Sleep at a mountain hut (*refuge/hütte/refugio*) to bookend your day with unforgettable vistas hued pink to fiery orange. Bring your own silk/cotton sleeping-bag liner.

FROM LEFT: FEDOR SELIVANOV/SHUTTERSTOCK ©, PRESSMASTER/SHUTTERSTOCK ©, RASTO KYPHUA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©





### BEST MOUNTAIN EXPERIENCES

Get high on close-enough-to-touch views of Eiger's gnarly north face on a lookout platform above **Grindelwald 1** (p105).

Lap up the sea of snow-encrusted peaks, Aletsch Glacier and Black Forest that unfurls from **Jungfrauoch's 2** (p107) Sphinx observation deck.

Admire A-lister Verbier, the Rhône Valley and Massif du Mont Blanc with early-morning chamois atop the craggy peak of **Pierre Avoi 3** (p122).

Gawp at glaciers and peaks above 4000m from Zermatt's **Klein Matterhorn 4** (3883m; p135), crossing the world's highest cableway border into Italy.

Follow in Mark Twain's footsteps up **Mt Rigi 5** (p169) near Lucerne, and hit the panorama hiking trail for vertiginous views.



STOCKSMART/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO ©

Paltforme 10 (p54)



# URBAN ART

From the life-sizzling stained glass and swirls of Swiss abstract artist Augusto Giacometti to Zürich's rebellious Dadaists and St Gallen's zany 'city lounge' which paints several streets a wild red, urban art in Switzerland is ever progressive. Track its rich and colourful course in a series of world-class city museums.

## Street Art

The 'Sprayer of Zürich', aka Harald Naegeli, brought graffiti stickmen to his city in the 1970s and Swiss street art hasn't looked back since.

## For Free

Spurn the museum crowd for a sculpture trail in the wild – free and peppered with provocative installations, often with an environmental message.



## BEST ART EXPERIENCES

Allow two hours to take in Bern's eye-catching **Zentrum Paul Klee 1** (p93) – the Swiss answer to the Guggenheim.

Don't skip **Basel's 2** (p182) 'big three': a contemporary-art portfolio, a meta-mechanic sculpted quirk and a large public-art collection.

Visit the marble-clad underground tunnel linking new and old galleries at Zürich's **Kunsthaus 3** (p196), a dazzling work of art in itself.

Turn conventional art (and trainspotting) on its head at **Plateforme 10 4** (p54), Lausanne's cutting-edge arts centre at the train station.

Admire masterpieces by Picasso, Klee and other modern masters at **Sammlung Rosengart 5** (p166), Lucerne's 'Picasso Museum'.





# WINE TRAILS

Savouring local reds, whites and rosé in Switzerland is a rare joy in this globalised world – few are exported. Sublime whites come from steeply terraced vineyards stitched with drystone walls on Lake Geneva's shores. Italianate climes in Ticino produce full-bodied merlot, and fruity rosé fuels the Route du Vignoble vineyard trail between Neuchâtel and Biel lakes.



## BEST WINE EXPERIENCES

Unearth emerald vines marching uphill in perfect unison from Lake Geneva in the prized, Unesco-listed

**Lauxaux** ① (p62) wine region.

Hike through vineyards with music, winegrowers and tasting glass in hand in **Sierre** ② (p130).

Taste crisp Rieslings in a *Torkel* (wine cellar) and overnight in a wine barrel in Graubünden's premier wine region **Bündner Herrschaft** ③ (p231).

Explore Pinot noir country around Schaffhausen with a scenic bike ride along the **Klettgau Wine Route** ④ (p211).

Take part in a digital grape harvest, make your own wine and learn about Switzerland's best whites at a 12th-century castle in **Aigle** ⑤ (p68).

LEFT: SHAMONAU PAVEL/SHUTTERSTOCK ©  
RIGHT: ALEXANDER CHAIKIN/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



## Ordering Wine

In restaurants and wine bars, order wine in multiples of *déci* (decilitre) – two *déci* is roughly one glass.



## Open Cellars

Meet local winegrowers and taste boutique wines at May's *caves ouvertes* days in Valais ([caves-ouvertes-valais.ch](http://caves-ouvertes-valais.ch)) and Vaud ([mescavesouvertes.ch](http://mescavesouvertes.ch)).



## Vineyard Dining

Is there anything more romantic than dining around a long table between vines? La Tavolata des Vins du Valais ([tavolata-valais.ch](http://tavolata-valais.ch)) in August is just that.



# RAILROAD ROMANCE

There's no denying it: Swiss train travel is dreamy.

No other country pairs slick, punctual trains and a kaleidoscope of giddy views with such harmony and romance. Summer or winter, this slideshow of epic proportions has been seducing travellers since the days of the Grand Tour. Legendary trains with panoramic coaches such as the Bernina, Glacier or Golden Pass Express are the tip of the iceberg: regular services in this picture-perfect country can be equally bewitching.



## Get the App

Download the SBB app before arrival – it's a one-stop shop for working out train itineraries, checking schedules and buying tickets.



## Bagging a Window Seat

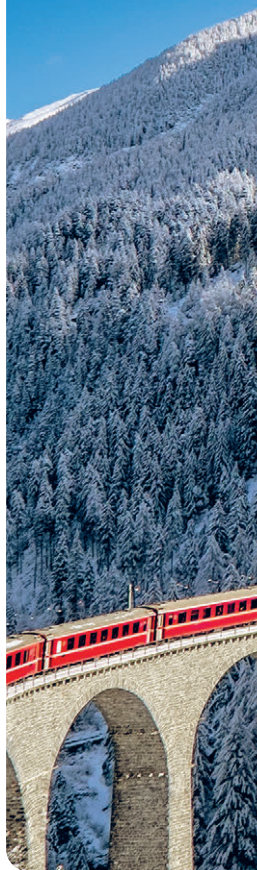
It often costs. Priority boarding (Sfr7) ensures a window seat on Zermatt's Gornergratbahn, as does pricier 'excellence class' on the Glacier Express (pictured).



## Explore Off Track

On remoter routes like Montreux's cogwheel train to Rochers de Naye, alight at a 'stop-on-request' station – stations display panels with hiking routes.

FROM LEFT: OATYAMA/SHUTTERSTOCK © ALEC HARRIGAN/SHUTTERSTOCK © ALESSANDRO COLLE/SHUTTERSTOCK ©





### BEST TRAIN EXPERIENCES

Chink champagne flutes on the **Glacier Express ①** (p139), among the world's most storied trains linking two glitzy alpine resorts.

Puff up to snow-dusted peaks aboard the **Brien Rothorn Bahn ②** (p101), one of two steam-powered cogwheel train lines.

Enjoy the nostalgia of 19th-century rail travel on a little red train through flower meadows and storybook forests to **Schynige Platte ③** (p99).

Soak up the vintage glamour and Matterhorn views on Zermatt's **Gornergratbahn ④** (p137) to Gornergrat at 3089m.

Book ahead for a ride on one of the original steam trains – Europe's oldest mountain railway – back in service on **Mt Rigi ⑤** (p169).







# BEACH LIFE

It has no coastline, but Switzerland's enviable flush of alpine lakes and rivers provide ample opportunity to strip off, play the sun lizard on sand or rock, and – when it all gets sizzling-hot – dive in. This being hyperactive Switzerland, beach life is as much about action afloat as cocktail- or kombucha-quaffing at sunset.



## BEST BEACH EXPERIENCES

Dip from rocks and drink with Lausanne's student set at industrial container turned sunset bar **Jetée de la Compagnie 1** (p57).

Drift down the Rhine River with city slickers commuting home to see **Basel 2** (p182) from a very different perspective.

Leap into **Bern's 3** (p90) turquoise ribbon of a river, the Aare, at sunrise or with the lunchtime work crowd.

Try a *badi* for every mood and moment in **Zürich 4** (p196): art nouveau pool house, floating sauna, hipster hangout.

Soak up the old-school romance of a 1920s bathhouse at Rorschach's **Badhütte 5** (p214) on Lake Constance's shores.



### Swimming with Fish

In Basel, buy a *Wickelfisch* (a fish-shaped watertight bag to stuff your clothes in) from the tourist office to float downstream in style (pictured).



### Swiss Softs

Waterfront snack bars (*buvettes/buvetten*) sell drinks and light bites. Cool down Swiss-style with a Rivella (pictured), Sinalco (like Orangina) or a blue herbal Zyt.



### Paddling Out

From May to September, many lake beaches have a hut with SUP, kayaks and pedalos to rent; some have speedboats. Lifejackets and wet bags are provided.

LEFT: JUDITH LINNE/SHUTTERSTOCK ©;  
RIGHT: ZPP/LAY/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



Schloss Spiez, Lake Thun (p111)



# STORYBOOK CASTLES

Standing sentry on hillside or by the water's edge, Switzerland's portfolio of fairy-tale castles enhances its natural good looks. Linger beyond the snapshot selfie to immerse yourself in the stories hidden within these picture-perfect facades: modern Swiss history might start in 1291, but it's the period before that gave Switzerland its finest *schlösser*, *châteaux* and *castelli* (castles).

## Modern Museums

Switzerland doesn't do castle ruins: well-tended castles house museums celebrating everything from Swiss history to tin soldiers and toys. Many close on Monday.

## Lavish Libraries

Up there with the most regal of castle libraries is the rococo library inside St Gallen's Unesco-listed abbey – tiptoe between bookshelves in felt slippers.



## BEST CASTLE EXPERIENCES

Gulp in breathtaking vistas and centuries of history in **Bellinzona's** ❶ (p146) priceless trio of magnificent medieval castles.

Follow a trail of flowers and art sculptures along the lakeshore from Montreux to Lake Geneva's magnificent **Château de Chillon** ❷ (p64).

Visit Lake Thun's turreted beauty in **Spiez** ❸ (p111) – no *schloss* (castle) in Germanic Switzerland is as fairy-tale.

Castle-hop in a region straight out of legend. Don't miss **Schloss Habsburg** ❹ (p191), ancestral home to the powerful Habsburg dynasty.

Cruise from village to village to uncover French-style gardens, period porcelain, sumptuous salons and tin soldiers in **Nyon's** ❺ *châteaux* (p59).

# REGIONS & CITIES

Find the places that tick all your boxes.

## Fribourg, Drei-Seen-Land & the Jura

### SWISS SERENITY, LAKES AND MOUNTAINS

When Switzerland's high-octane action overwhelms, step into this rural corner in the Drei-Seen-Land (Three Lakes Region).

Farmland fruits fuel appetites here – devilish absinthe, Gruyère cheese and cream thick enough to spoon.

Fribourg,  
Drei-Seen-Land  
& the Jura  
p70

Northwestern  
Switzerland  
p179

Bern  
& Bernese Oberland  
p87

Lake Geneva  
& Vaud  
p41

Valais  
p114

## Lake Geneva & Vaud

### URBAN COOL AND LAKESIDE CHIC

Serenaded by snowcapped Mont Blanc, the French-speaking northern shore of Europe's largest lake is unrivalled. This is summer beach living at its best, coupled with cosmopolitan Geneva, Olympian Lausanne and belle époque beauty Montreux.

## Bern & Bernese Oberland

### MOVING MOUNTAINS IN SWITZERLAND'S ALPINE HEARTLAND

There's no avoiding the call of the wild in this hyper-active region: skydiving, ice climbing or glacial bungee jumping, the adrenalin rush burns. Bern, Switzerland's petite capital, sits at the helm with its Unesco-listed old town and blockbuster ring of mountains.

## Valais

### ACTION AT ALTITUDE AND ALPINE FEASTING

The west speaks French, the east German, but cantonal pride in this rural wedge of southern Switzerland runs deep: Zermatt, Verbier, the Glacier Express, Switzerland's finest cheese and wine, the spellbinding Matterhorn with its chocolate-box angles. Drink it all in, slowly.



## Northwestern Switzerland

### CULTURE, COUNTRYSIDE AND BORDERLANDS

Urbanite Basel woos with explosive art, avant-garde architecture and a giant of a river that sticks its tongue out eastwards to lick fairy-tale castles, medieval villages and a smorgasbord of rolling hills. Embrace the difference.



## Zürich & Northeastern Switzerland

### POST-INDUSTRIAL EDGE AND EPIC NATURE

Meet Zürich the banker and Zürich the night owl in Switzerland's largest city and financial centre, home of fine art, chocolate and affluent lakeside-living. The intoxicating cocktail continues in the deeply Germanic northeast, land of thundering waterfalls, half-timbered villages and handsome castles.

## Liechtenstein

### FAIRY TALES AND ALPINE TRAILS

When it all feels a little large, veer off the Swiss track into Liechtenstein. Thanks to a monarchy that refuses entreaties from neighbours, this whimsical principality remains staunchly independent. It has pretty hikes along the Rhine, a storybook castle, and a flurry of winter-wonderland alpine villages.

## Ticino

### SWITZERLAND'S SUNLIT SOUTHERN JEWEL

Italian lifestyle and a Mediterranean climate in this Italian-speaking canton cast Switzerland in a different light: petrol-blue lakes with palm-fringed shores, towns spun from timeworn *palazzi*, dining in the shade of chestnut trees and olive grove hiking trails.

## Central Switzerland

### THE ESSENCE OF SWISSNESS

The country's heartland is built from picture-book, William Tell legend: bucket-list sunsets, legendary mountains and shimmering cobalt-blue waters. At the helm is lakeside Lucerne, a culture-culture must with cobbled Altstadt (old town) and classical music woven through its romantic waters.

## Graubünden

### WILD ALPS AND ROMANTIC RAILS

Switzerland's skiing A-listers of Davos and St Moritz fame, this glamorous region is where winter tourism was born. Dodge paparazzi at a quartzite spa, lose the chichi crowd on peace-spangled trails in the Swiss National Park, and gaze at mountains of magic and myth aboard the iconic Glacier Express train. It doesn't get any wilder.



Railway station, St Gallen (p217)

## ITINERARIES

# Urban Artistry

Allow: 7 days

Distance: 550km

The perfect antidote to natural rural beauty is Switzerland's urban edge. Not only does travelling by train from city to city unveil a smorgasbord of avant-garde art museums, architectural curiosities and cultural happenings, it also shines light on the country's mixed bag of cultures, eloquently expressed in four languages and a bonanza of varied travel experiences.



## 1 GENEVA ⌚ 1 DAY

Nose-dive into multilingual Switzerland in **Geneva** (p40). Explore its old-town museums, boutiques and cafes. Swoon over Lake Geneva views from the cathedral tower – this is Europe's largest alpine lake. Dash under the Jet d'Eau on the waterfront and lunch with a cool crowd at Bains des Paquis.

**Detour:** Take an e-bike for a spin to **Hermance** (p51) on the Swiss–French border. ⌚ 3 hours



## 2 LAUSANNE ⌚ 1 DAY

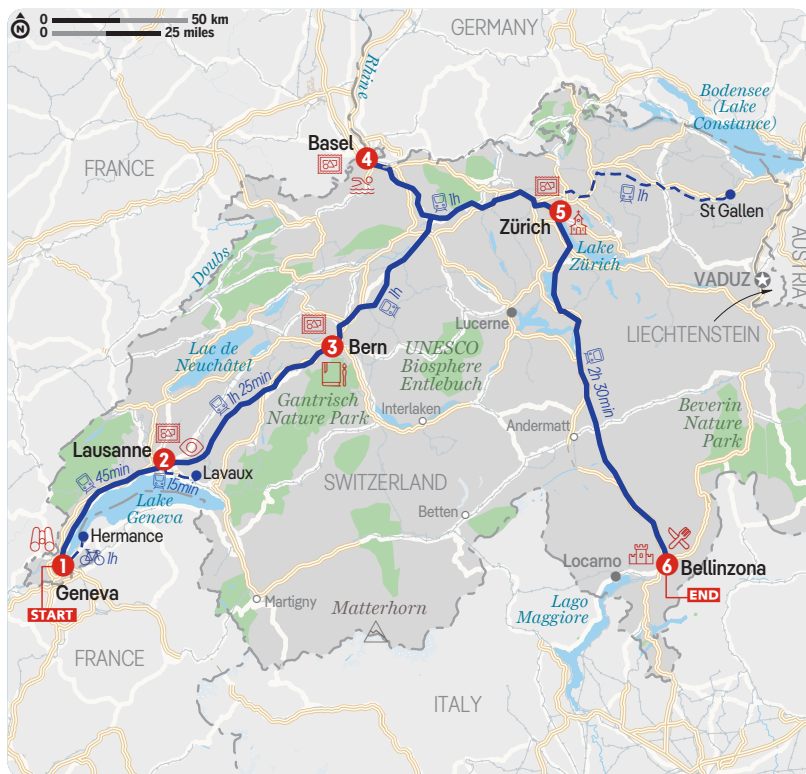
Pulling into **Lausanne** (p52) train station, people-watch over a coffee and croissant at Café de Grancy. Devour Swiss art and photography at Plateforme 10, and world-class Art Brut at the seminal Collection de l'Art Brut. Spend the afternoon exploring lakefront Ouchy or Lausanne's hilly old town.

**Detour:** Tour the **Lavaux** (p62) wine region to sample Swiss whites between vines. ⌚ 5 hours



## 3 BERN ⌚ 1 DAY

Pinch yourself: despite the laid-back vibe, cobbled **Bern** (p90) really is the Swiss capital. Ditch your best French now for German, and allow the small town with a big medieval heart to win you over with Switzerland's oldest fine-arts collection at Kunstmuseum and Guggenheim-esque Zentrum Paul Klee. If it's summer, drift past historic landmarks of the Altstadt afloat the Aare River.



#### 4 BASEL 1 DAY

Aplomb on the French, German and Swiss borders, sassy **Basel** (p182) is captivating. Start at top-billing Fondation Beyeler; then, for something different, spin along the art-strewn Rehberger-Weg footpath to design-buff-must Vitra. Return to Grossbasel's Altstadt on the Rhine's south bank and swim with a *Wickelfisch* (watertight bag) if you dare. Come dusk, riverbank drinks at artsy Cargo Bar are all the rage.



#### 5 ZÜRICH 2 DAYS

**Zürich** (p196) is as 'big city' as Switzerland gets. Tour the old town, marvelling at Chagall stained glass in the cathedral and zipping across the river to old and modern masters in the Kunsthaus. Venture to Züri-West. Watch sunset make its splash from a lakeshore *badi* (swimming area).

 **Detour:** Catch a train to abbey-rich **St Gallen** (p215), 'writing room of Europe'.  4-6 hours



#### 6 BELLINZONA 1 DAY

Load 'Italian' in your translation app as you pull into Ticino's head-turning capital, **Bellinzona** (p146). Begin on the medieval ramparts of Castelgrande, one of three forts with top-of-the-beanstalk views of the old town's cafe-rimmed piazzas, Renaissance churches and snowcapped Alps beyond. Spot Lago Maggiore from Castello di Montebello. Fuel up on homemade pasta and full-throttle Italianate vibe at Ristorante Pedemonte.





Lago St Moritzersee, St Mortiz (p238)



## ITINERARIES

# The Glacier Express

Allow: 6 days

Distance: 290km

One of those irresistible 'champagne picnic' train journeys, this mythical rail route has been in every savvy traveller's little black book of must-dos since the 1930s. Count eight hours in one stretch – or savour it slowly, as several sweet nuggets interwoven with overnights in some of Switzerland's most fashionable alpine resorts.



## 1 ST MORITZ ⌚ 1 DAY

With its shimmering aquamarine lake, emerald forests and aloof mountains, **St Moritz** (p238) looks a million dollars. You can easily devote a day to celeb-spotting on boutique-studded Via Serlas and carving some of the country's greenest slopes at Corviglia: snow canons here use reclaimed water. Bonus buzz: clattering down the world's oldest bobsleigh run.



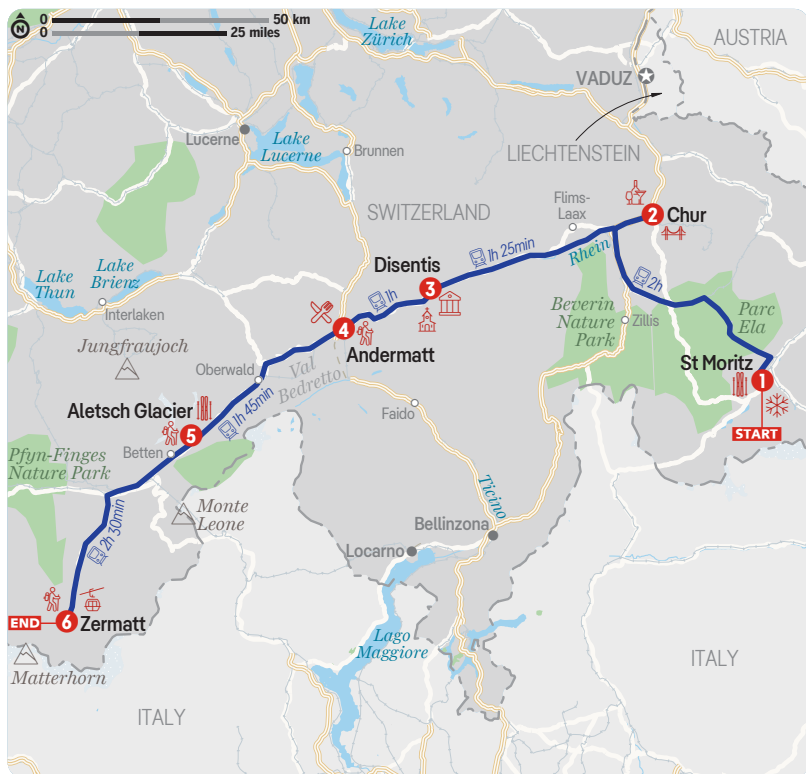
## 2 CHUR ⌚ HALF DAY

Expect fatal attraction in Switzerland's oldest city and Graubünden's capital **Chur** (p226), a captivating overnight with its riverside Altstadt, historic hotels and busy bar scene. If you're craving a replay of the iconic Landwasser Viaduct you crossed en route here, hop aboard a train on the scenic Rhaetian Railway to Arosa – only an hour away – to window-drool over another vintage viaduct.



## 3 DISENTIS ⌚ HALF DAY

Everyone briefly hops off the Glacier Express in this small village in western Graubünden while the train switches to cogwheel engine for the ensuing climb up to the Oberalp Pass at 2044m. Linger longer in **Disentis** (p232) to drink in its unique Romansch vibe and visit the lavishly stuccoed baroque church and museum in the massive Benedictine monastery towering above town.



4

#### ANDERMATT ⌚ 1 DAY

Dump your bags at your hotel and go for a hike – at the crux of several mountain passes, **Andermatt** (p174) is top-drawer hiking terrain. Either train it 20 minutes back to the Oberalp Pass to walk to the source of the Rhine at Lai da Tuma, returning by cable car, or gorge-climb at Devil's Bridge. Refuel on a perfect rösti at Gasthaus zum Sternen.



5

#### ALETSCHE GLACIER ⌚ 1 DAY

Hop off in Betten, cable-car station for the drop-dead gorgeous, car-free village and ski resort of Bettmeralp, or in neighbouring Fiesch. Both villages are launchpads for unforgettable hiking and skiing with open-mouthed views of the **Aletsch Glacier** (p140). Plan ahead to embark on a guided trek – with crampons or touring skis – on this mind-blowing sea of ice.



6

#### ZERMATT ⌚ 2 DAYS

No finale is more fitting than that first glimpse of the Matterhorn in car-free **Zermatt** (p133). The iconic peak dominates any stay in this fashionable mountain resort in the Upper Valais. Rides of a lifetime on the Matterhorn Glacier Paradise and Gornergratbahn easily fill two days, but you could happily spend a week hiking its trails or skiing one of Europe's most desirables.



Maison Cailler chocolate shop, Broc (p77)

## ITINERARIES

## Chocolate Flavours

Allow: 4 days

Distance: 380km

No country is more synonymous with chocolate. More than half of all Swiss chocolate is consumed by the Swiss, making this the obvious place in which to savour it. Switzerland's Chocolate Train consistently gets top billing, but there are ample sweeter ops for crafting, cooking and going plain crazy over Swiss chocolate.



## 1 GENEVA ⌚ HALF DAY

Chocolate pearls, cocoa-dusted truffles, dark chocolate shells filled with fiery herbal *génépi* (liqueur) and praline cigars: **Geneva** (p40) chocolate tours run by the tourist office whisk chocolate aficionados around a select handful of the city's 30-odd luxury *chocolatiers*. Don't miss the old town – the spot where Geneva's 'smash a chocolate cauldron' tradition was born in 1602.



## 2 VEVEY ⌚ HALF DAY

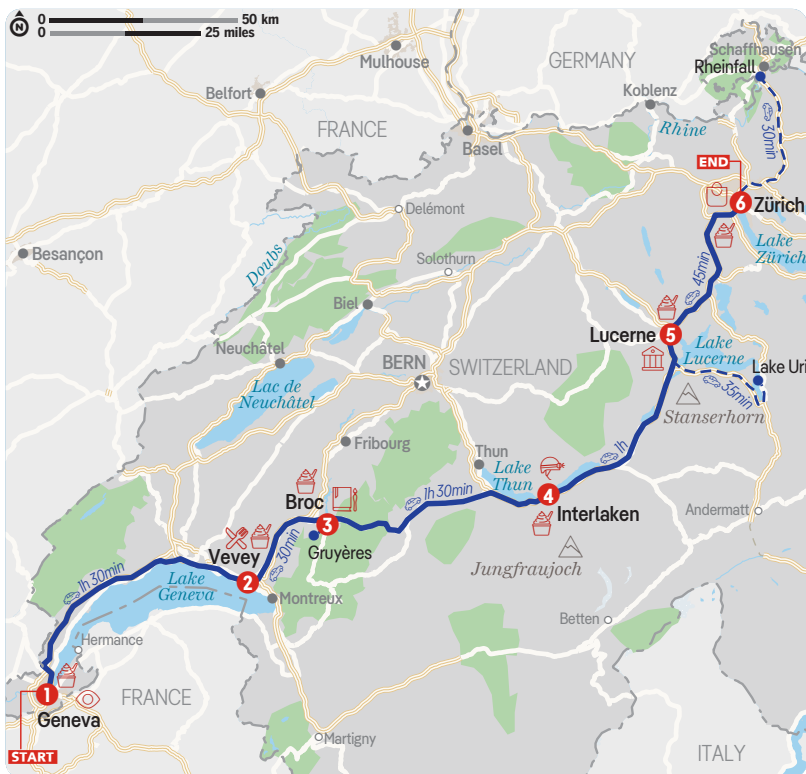
Charlie Chaplin, exceptional dining, goddess lake views deep into the crux of the Alps: there's bags to be said for captivating **Vevey** (p61), HQ to Nestlé since 1814. Take a dip and lunch at the lakefront, then hit the Swiss food giant's playful Alimenterium to gen up on nutrition, chocolate, and edibles past and present. Spot the cylindrical chocolate bar (a fake) from a 1910s window display.



## 3 BROU ⌚ HALF DAY

In 1819, François-Louis Cailler opened a chocolate factory in an old mill in **Broc** (p77) and the rest is history. Twirl through the history of Switzerland's oldest chocolate brand at Maison Cailler, tour its factory or join a chocolate-making workshop.

**Detour:** Further indulge your sweet tooth in **Gruyères** (p77) with piped meringues smothered in thick double Gruyère cream. ⌚ 2 hours



#### 4 INTERLAKEN ⌚ 1 DAY

Things risk getting messy in **Interlaken** (p96), daredevil hub for adrenalin-fused outdoor action in buckets and home base to Sandy and Brad's Funky Chocolate Club. After spending a day indulging in your pick of alpine sporting adventure – abseiling waterfalls, thrashing white water, that sort of stuff – what can be sweeter than getting your hands dirty making chocolate?



#### 5 LUCERNE ⌚ HALF DAY

Lakeside living, culture and nightlife blend in graceful **Lucerne** (p96), a Goethe and Queen Victoria favourite. Tune into its chocolate story at the town's blockbuster transport museum where the 20-minute 'Swiss Chocolate Adventure' funfair ride ends with tastings led by a Lindt *chocolatier*.

 **Detour:** Feel the spirit of William Tell at fjord-like **Lake Uri** (p171).  
⌚ 5 hours



#### 6 ZÜRICH ⌚ 1 DAY

Summon your inner Willy Wonka in urban **Zürich** (p196) where the cinematic Lindt Home of Chocolate unwraps Swiss chocolate's backstory. In town, bite into a chunk of melt-in-your-mouth Grand Cru Absolu at historic Café Sprüngli and shop for bean-to-bar goodies crafted by new-wave contemporary chocolate makers.

 **Detour:** Palate-cleanse with the theatrical splash of the thunderous **Rheinfall** (p206) waterfall. ⌚ 3 hours





Vineyards, Bielersee (p80)

## ITINERARIES

# Northern Treasures

Allow: 5 days

Distance: 335km

Switzerland saves a secret stash of riveting villages and wilderness for those who go the extra mile beyond map and app. From soaking up ancestral savoir-faire in cheese dairies and wineries, to simply holing up overnight in a Jurassian log cabin, this week-long spin through the country's oft-overlooked north is a bucolic romp through pastoral gold.



## 1 APPENZEL ⌚ 1 DAY

Pinch yourself. Contrary to its fairy-tale looks, photogenic **Appenzel** (p219) is real. Feel rural Switzerland's fierce folksy heartbeat pulsate in frescoed old-town lanes and Museum Appenzel. Taste artisanal beer and malt whiskey in the local brewery, and the country's tangiest cheese 9km north in Stein.

**Detour:** Hit the trail in castle-topped **Balzers** (p244) for a 75km walk around pocket-sized **Liechtenstein**. ⌚ 3 days



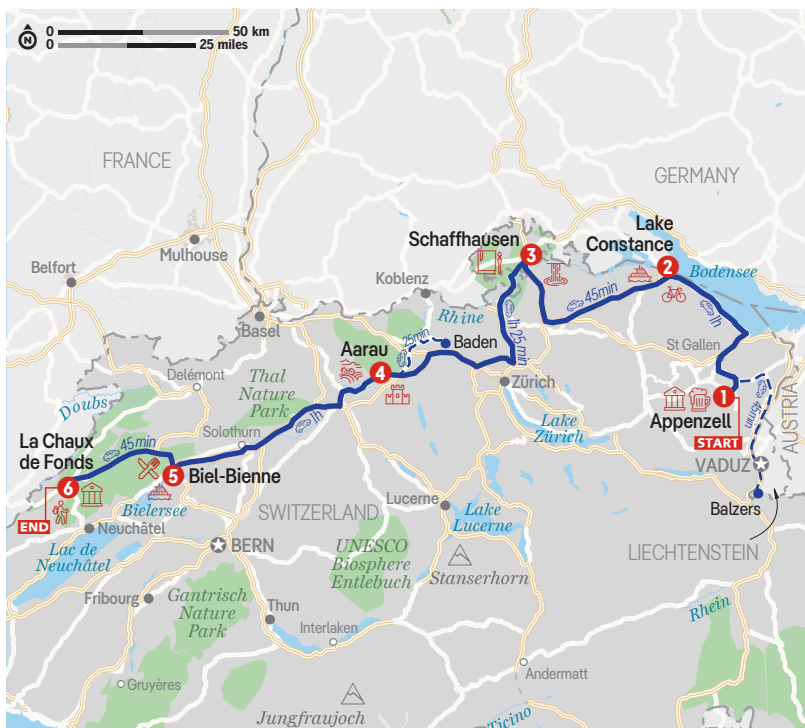
## 2 LAKE CONSTANCE ⌚ 1 DAY

Wind through St Gallen and along this cross-border lake's southern shore to Kreuzlingen, the biggest Swiss town on **Lake Constance** (p212) with showpiece church, art installations and lake museum to entertain. Throw yourself into local life: cruise by boat, cycle through apple orchards, chill on a pebble beach. The flat Bodensee-Radweg cycle path runs for 269km around Lake Constance.



## 3 SCHAFFHAUSEN ⌚ HALF DAY

Medieval **Schaffhausen** (p208) could easily be German – mistaken for a German city by Allied pilots during WWII, the riverside town has the dubious honour of being the only bit of Swiss soil that was hit during the war. Schaffhausen's beautifully preserved old town is sublime and the town is an ideal base for visiting Rheinfall, Europe's biggest plain waterfall.



#### 4 AARAU ⌚ HALF DAY

The Alps feel far, far away now. Velvety green fields and rolling hills punctuated by pretty villages pepper the drive to **Aarau** (p188), another quaint cobbled town in medieval castle country. This is the original homeland of the Habsburg dynasty.

**Detour:** Dip like a Roman in a thermal spa designed by celebrity architect Mario Botta in mineral-rich **Baden** (p191). ⌚ 2 hours



#### 5 BIEL-BIENNE ⌚ 1 DAY

Drei-Seen-Land (Three Lakes Country) is where you go to 'get away'. Catch a boat from **Biel-Bienne** (p94) to the peaceful lake island of Sankt Petersinsel in Bielersee and you'll quickly understand why Jean-Jacques Rousseau spent the happiest time of his life here. Picnic, swim and, back in town, include local wine and Tête de Moine cheese in your dinner plans.



#### 6 LA CHAUX-DE-FONDS ⌚ 1 DAY

Pushing on west along the vine-strewn northern shores of Bielersee and Lac de Neuchâtel into the deepest depths of Switzerland's unexplored Jura rewards with thick forest, isolated villages and abundant hiking, cycling and cross-country skiing trails. In **La Chaux-de-Fonds** (p83), travel through time and the Swiss story of luxury watchmaking through 4000 extraordinary timepieces at the compelling Musée International d'Horlogerie.

# WHEN TO GO

Anytime. Outdoor-action fiends will want to match their sport to the season, but otherwise every month has a piercing allure.

Ever since pilgrims from Rome risked life and limb, not to mention rescue by a St Bernard dog with a casket of eau de vie around its neck, to cross the eponymous mountain pass and English alpinists conquered peaks to usher tourism into the Alps, Switzerland has been a highly desirable place to go. When trip-planning, look beyond high season (winter ski season, plus July and August). Spring (late March to May) is idyllic, with warm temperatures, wild flowers and fresh produce. Autumn, when grapes are harvested and larch trees burn gold, is the clandestine 'best season' in local lore.

## Accommodation

Don't expect seasonal hotel rates in cities like Zürich and Geneva; rather, hotels are pricier Monday to Thursday. Many hotels in mountain resorts shut from mid-October to mid-December and are cheapest in summer. Hostels are not necessarily the most interesting budget choice – consider haystacks, traditional alpine huts, and even sleeping under the stars (p249).



I LIVE HERE

## RUTTING SEASON

**Swiss-American mountain guide Cherries von Maur leads summer hikes, foraging walks and winter snowshoeing treks in Verbier. @cherrieswalks**

Autumn days are warm and the light is amazing. Wild blueberries are sweet and sugary, the larches switch to golden, animals are more visible. Once I was returning to civilisation after a day hiking when 'nature called'. As soon as my pants were around my ankles I went flying. The *brame du cerf* (rutting season) was happening around me! How do those huge male deer hide so well?

## BISE WIND

The Bise – a fierce, bitterly cold, northeasterly wind – is said to blow for three days at a time and whips up mirror-like Lake Geneva and the three lakes of Drei-Seen-Land into an ocean of wild waves. Its southerly wind sister, Foehn, is a warmer beast.



Carnival, Basel (p182)

## Weather through the year in Zurich



**JANUARY**

Ave. daytime max: **4.2°C**  
Days of rainfall: 10



**FEBRUARY**

Ave. daytime max: **5.3°C**  
Days of rainfall: 9



**MARCH**

Ave. daytime max: **9.8°C**  
Days of rainfall: 11



**APRIL**

Ave. daytime max: **14°C**  
Days of rainfall: 11



**MAY**

Ave. daytime max: **17.6°C**  
Days of rainfall: 12



**JUNE**

Ave. daytime max: **21.5°C**  
Days of rainfall: 11



## SNOWFALL

Swiss ski resorts with slopes above 2000m are snow-sure between December and April, but a changing climate is making snow cover at lower altitudes less certain. On 1 January 2023, Switzerland recorded its highest-ever January temperature of 20.9°C north of the Alps in Delémont.

## Carnivals & Crowd-Pullers

Pre-Lenten parades, costumes, music and all the fun of the fair sweep through Catholic cantons during **Fasnacht** (Carnival). Catch the party – stark raving bonkers – in Lucerne (p164) or Basel (p182).

### February

Zürich celebrates winter's end with costumed street parades and the dramatic burning of a scary, firework-filled 'snowman' called Böögg during **Sechseläuten** (p195).

### April

Its name is a misnomer:

**Montreux Jazz Festival** (p66)

raises the curtain on rock, pop, soul, funk, jazz – all sounds – on stages all over the lakeside town. Some are ticketed but bags are free and alfresco, with heavenly lake views to boot.

### July

Fireworks light up lakes, mountains, towns and cities countryside on the prized **Swiss National Day** celebrating its very creation. Among the most impressive illuminations are those lighting up the Rheinfall.

### August

## Sporting Thrills

Farmers in Valais take the valley's traditional **Combats des Reines** (cow-wrestling matches) extremely seriously.

The season climaxes with the grand final in Martigny's Roman amphitheatre (p121).

### March to

### September

Watch grown men in coarse jute breeches throw each other to the ground during wildly exciting **Schwingen** (Swiss wrestling) at Interlaken's **Unspunnen-Schwinget**, an alpine Olympics of sorts (p97).

### August

Harnessing electric power to bike the country's overdose of mountains is on fire right now. Join the party at **Verbier E-Bike Festival**, an exhilarating multiday mashup of wild rides, gourmet snacking and music (p125).

### August

Torch-lit processions in Geneva's old town, fires, hilly running races for kids and adults alike, and some serious chocolate-cauldron smashing and scoffing make Geneva's **L'Escalade** a riot of fun (p48).

### December



Sheep, Schwarzsee



## WEATHER WARNINGS

Download the MétéoSuisse app to check weather forecasts and subscribe to alerts for a specific location or hazard (forest fire, snowstorm etc). Alerts on clickable hazard maps are numbered and coloured green, yellow, orange, red and dark red – the highest – to reflect the level of danger.



### JULY

Ave. daytime max: **23.1°C**

Days of rainfall: 12



### AUGUST

Ave. daytime max: **22.8°C**

Days of rainfall: 11



### SEPTEMBER

Ave. daytime max: **18.7°C**

Days of rainfall: 10



### OCTOBER

Ave. daytime max: **14.6°C**

Days of rainfall: 9



### NOVEMBER

Ave. daytime max: **8.6°C**

Days of rainfall: 10



### DECEMBER

Ave. daytime max: **4.9°C**

Days of rainfall: 11





LEFT: KASAK/PHOTO/SHUTTERSTOCK © FAR RIGHT: VEGA FILM/ALBUM/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO ©

Bachalpsee (p105), Grindelwald

# GET PREPARED FOR SWITZERLAND

Useful things to load in your bag, your ears and your brain.

## Clothes

**Layers** Countrywide, you can't go wrong with a waterproof shell, light scarf or sarong and swimsuit stowed in your bag. While summers are essentially hot and winters cold, the weather changes suddenly – particularly in lake and mountain areas when you can be sweltering in the sun one minute, soaked to the skin the next.

In alpine areas, outdoor gear is *de rigueur*. Dress code in cities is smart-casual. In Geneva, Zürich, Basel and Bern, don't be surprised to see urbanites in suits stripping off into bathers for a swim at lunchtime. The Swiss enjoy dressing up for more formal evenings such as in upmarket bars, restaurants and theatres.

## Manners

**Swiss German is not the same as German.**

Greeting a fellow walker or shopkeeper with 'Grüezi' (hello) goes a long way.

**Call places by their local name**, not the anglicised version. So, Lake Geneva is Lac Léman, Lake Zürich is Zürichsee and Lake Lucerne is Vierwaldstättersee.

**Shake hands when meeting for the first time** and when saying goodbye. Only friends 'air-kiss' – three times on the cheek.

**Shoes** Don't play the fool hiking up a mountain in flimsy sandals or grappling with cobblestones in flip-flops. Pack flat sturdy shoes, hiking boots and thermal socks.



**A Tramp Abroad** (Mark Twain; 1880) Twain's entertaining take on his 1878 hike through the Alps.



**The Magic Mountain** (Thomas Mann; 1924) This novel by the German literary great immerses you in Davos' snowy streets and sanatoriums.



**Hotel du Lac** (Anita Brookner; 1984) Travel to Lake Geneva with a romantic novelist in this 1984 Booker Prize winner.



**Slow Train to Switzerland** (Diccon Bewes; 2013) Modern-day version of the first package tour from London to Lucerne by train, bus and boat.

## Words

Switzerland has three official federal languages: German (spoken by about 64% of the population), French (20%) and Italian (7%). Romansch (1%) is mainly spoken in Graubünden.

### French

*Bonjour* means 'good day' and doubles as 'hello' – until late afternoon when *bonne soirée* (good evening) kicks in.

Forget the French you learnt for 'breakfast', 'lunch' and 'dinner'. In Switzerland it's *déjeuner*, *dîner* and *souper*, respectively. The polite/informal *vous/tu* rules apply: *tu* is for family and close friends. Use *Comment allez-vous?* (How are you?) with people you don't know well.

The Swiss have unique words for 70 (*septante*), 80 (*huitante*) and 90 (*nonante*).

### Swiss German

German speakers might understand little in Switzerland: the Swiss write in *Hochdeutsch* but speak Swiss German.

*Grüezi* is 'hello' in Swiss German and goes a long way – use it as a greeting.

To say goodbye, use *Uf Wiederuege*. Between friends and in casual situations, use *Tschüss*.

*Merci* is 'thank you' in Swiss German; some cantons use the German *danke*.

### Italian

The Swiss have some 200 words not in a regular Italian dictionary.

*Buongiorno* and *arrivederci* mean 'hello' and 'goodbye'; the casual *ciao* can mean either.

To reserve a table, say *Posso riservare un tavolo*. Ticinese don't use the Italian verb *prenotare* (to reserve).



## WATCH



**Journey of Hope** (Xavier Koller; 1990) Oscar-winning tale of a Kurdish family seeking a better life.

**The Divine Order** (Petra Biondina Volpe; 2017) The story of a village housewife turned activist.

**My Little Sister** (Pictured; Stéphanie Chuat, Véronique Reymond; 2020) Family bonds are challenged in this family drama.

**Syriana** (Stephen Gaghan; 2005) American thriller starring Matt Damon and George Clooney, and Geneva's Hôtel President Wilson.

**Je Suis Noires** (Rachel M'Bon, Juliana Fanjul; 2022) Documentary about a Swiss-Congolese journalist's identity quest.



## LISTEN

**La Loi du Papillon** (Nuit Incolore; 2023) The hauntingly sublime work of Valaisan songwriter, pianist and singer Théo Marclay blends French chanson, rap and pop.

**Women** (Pilar Vega; 2021) Tune into Ticino-born, Zürich-based Pilar Vega of Caribbean origin, a rising star on Switzerland's new-wave R&B soul scene.

**Blum** (spreker.com/show/blum-english; 2023) Journey through Switzerland's art world in this inspiring fictional podcast, a Switzerland Tourism project.

**SWI** (swissinfo.ch/eng/podcasts) Indispensable source of Swiss news and current affairs, with regular in-depth podcasts.



Spätzli (cross between pasta and dumplings)

# THE FOOD SCENE

It's inevitable that a land of four languages and cultures cooks up an unprecedented mashup of culinary adventure.

There's far more to the Swiss kitchen than chocolate, cheese and Swiss German rösti. The best dining in this eclectic country is as much about experience as culinary extraordinaire. Fondue in a forest followed by a star-lit toboggan descent between pine trees; autumnal game and air-dried meats in a mountain chalet with bell-strung cows and splendid views; a sunset shot of fiery *génépi* (traditional herbal liqueur) with 4000m peaks or apple strudel in a *buvette* (canteen) after a wild river swim – these are but some of Switzerland's spectacular culinary highs.

If alpine tradition gives Swiss food its earthy soul, geography gives it edge and richness. Cooks in French-speaking cantons take cues from France, Ticino chefs

turn to Italy and a fair chunk of the country looks to Germany and Austria for culinary clues. The result: a novel, hearty cuisine rooted in the land and seasons, with free-flowing craft beers and fine wines impossible to find outside Switzerland.

## The Swiss Pantry

The scratch-cooking trend never took off in Switzerland – it has always been that way. Home pantries burst with oils, herbs and spices. Nutty rapeseed, sunflower and safflower oil are used for cooking, and specialty oils like walnut, hemp and pumpkin seed dress simple green salads – the ubiquitous companion to cheese fondue. Dried herbs jostle for shelf space with Aromat (a pale-yellow spice mix combining garlic, on-

### Best Swiss Dishes

#### BIRCHERMÜESLI

Breakfast staple: rolled oats, grated apple and nuts soaked in milk or yoghurt overnight.

#### RÖSTI

Oven-crisped, shredded-potato bake typical of German-speaking Switzerland.

#### FONDUE

Bread dipped in melted cheese flavoured with garlic, nutmeg, wine and more.

#### RACLETTE

Pairs melted Raclette with boiled potatoes, gherkins, cold meats and salad.

ions, celery seeds, cloves and tumeric, produced in Schaffhausen since 1907) to be sprinkled on eggs or potatoes, and Cenovis (a dark-brown yeast-extract spread not dissimilar to British Marmite or Australian Vegemite) to be spread on bread. Dried pastas and polenta are other pantry staples; buy a sachet of Bündnerpizokel (buckwheat pasta) in Graubünden and Rosso del Ticino (polenta using an ancient corn variety) in Italianate Ticino to take home.

Forget junk food. Refrigerated vending machines here spit out half-rounds of tangy AOP cheese, ready-grated fondue kits, farm eggs, artisan honey and jam. In Vaud, Tout Cru vending machines feed meat lovers with hand-cut steak tartare 24/7.

## Vegetarians & Vegans

Vegetarians and vegans are a burgeoning minority in a predominantly rural country where, for centuries, the family pig was slaughtered to celebrate the start of winter. In cities, vegetarian restaurants cover the gamut of Swiss dining, from self-service to gastronomic. Plant-based buffets charged by weight have been going strong at the world's oldest vegetarian restaurant, Hiltl Haus in Zürich, since 1888. Millennial child Tibits has 11 stylish restaurants across

Switzerland, including in Lausanne's retro train-station diner.

Vegans will struggle with the zealous cheese fest in alpine regions. Hard Swiss cheeses are usually made with rennet, an enzyme derived from the stomach of a calf or young goat. Some red wines are clarified with the albumin of egg whites.

## FOOD & WINE FESTIVALS



**Zuger Chriesisturm** (p175) Zug celebrates its cherry harvest in June with ladder races, a cherry market and abundant cherry-scoffing.

**Bagnes Capitale de la Raclette** (p129) Gorge on golden puddles of melted Raclette cheese by local Valais producers at this cheese fair in September.

**Fête des Vendanges** (p63) Vaud's headline wine fest in Lutry, in September, is a weekend of tasting, drinking, live music gigs, a street procession and fireworks.

**Läset-Sunntig** (p111) Street parades, markets, vineyard walks and tastings enliven Spiez' September wine fest.

**Zibelemärit** (p92) Bern's onion market in November fills the Swiss capital with stalls heaped with onion braids, in all shapes and sizes.

### Onions, Zibelemärit (p92)



### Capuns (Pasta and sausage in chard)

#### SPÄTZLI

A cross between pasta and dumplings, typical of German-speaking Switzerland.

#### ÄPLERMAGRONE

Pasta gratin with potatoes, creams, onions and melted cheese.

#### CAPUNS

A rich mix of finely chopped Spätzli, air-dried beef, ham and herbs wrapped with spinach.

#### HAFENCHABIS

Lamb or pork stew with cabbage.



## Cheese

Not all Swiss cheese has holes. Emmental, the hard cheese made in hefty 95kg wheels in the Emme Valley east of Bern, does – as does Tilsiter from the same valley. Otherwise, most of Switzerland's 450 types of cheese are holeless. Take the well-known hard cheese Gruyère, made in the town of Gruyères near Fribourg; stinky Appenzeller used in several equally strong-smelling dishes in the eponymous town in northeastern Switzerland; or Sbrinz, Switzerland's transalpine ancestor to Italian Parmesan, ripened for 24 months and delicious grated on springtime asparagus.

Summer in the Valais, Bernese Alps, Ticino and other mountain areas sees



IMAGEBROKER.COM/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

### PICNIC PERFECTION

**Bündnerfleisch** Air-dried beef from Graubünden, smoked and thinly sliced.

**Lard sec du Valais** Pork marinated in herbs and spices, then air-dried; *jambon cru* (ham) and *viande séchée* (beef) are other Valaisan air-dried, cold meats.

**Pain de seigle Valaisan** Traditional, AOC-protected rye bread from the Valais; lasts for days.

**Cervelas** Short beef-and-pork sausage with a smoky flavour, best grilled on an open fire or barbecued on a beach grill.

**Basel Lächerli** Utterly addictive, soft and chewy, sugar-glazed biscuits from Basel made with honey, almonds and candied fruits.

**Magenbrot** Sugar-glazed gingerbread spiced with cloves, cinnamon and star anise (pictured).

**Basler Brunli** Almond and chocolate cookies, particularly popular at Christmas when shops fill with (and home cooks bake) dozens of cookie variations.

shepherds craft *fromage d'alpage* (Hobelkäse in German, fromaggio d'Alpe in Italian) in centuries-old huts on summer higher pastures: AOC L'Etivaz cheese is only made from May to early October, using milk from cows that have grazed on pastures in the Vaud Alps.

## Fondue & Raclette

No Swiss ski trip is complete without dunking bite-sized chunks of bread into a pot of bubbling fondue. Equal amounts of grated Emmental and Gruyère cheese are melted with white wine and a splash of kirsch (cherry-flavoured liquor), but there are regional variants – *fondue moitié moitié* is half-half Gruyère and Vacherin Fribourgeois – and an increasingly wild mix of optional flavourings (tomato, mushroom, absinthe, curry, truffle etc).

Raclette is an equally sociable affair. Diners eat puddles of melted, silky-smooth cheese – AOC Raclette du Valais, crafted since the 16th century using raw milk, is considered the best – dribbled on top of boiled potatoes. As with fondue, a plateau of mixed cold meats, cornichons (gherkins) and green salad accompany the cheese fest.

## Chocolate

The era of snapping a selfie clutching a Toblerone in front of the Matterhorn might be over – the Swiss-born chocolate bar that's taken its cue from the peak since 1908 is now made in Slovakia. But Switzerland has mountains more **chocolate** in all shapes and sizes.

Swiss chocolate built its reputation in the 19th century thanks to pioneering spirits like François-Louis Cailler (1796–1852), who opened the first Swiss chocolate factory near Vevey on Lake Geneva in 1819. Thanks to Henri Nestlé (1814–90) who came up with powdered milk, the first milk chocolate rolled off the production line in 1875, and four years later Rodolphe Lindt (1855–1909) changed chocolate forever with conching – an aeration process that gives chocolate its aroma and addictive, melt-in-the-mouth quality. Zürich's **Lindt Home of Chocolate** (p201) unravels the complete story of Swiss chocolate.

## Local Specialities

### City Specials

#### Zürcher Geschnetzeltes

Thin strips of veal served in a creamy sauce, typical of Zürich.

**Basler Mehlsuppe** Basel flour soup combining beef stock, browned flour, onions and a dash of red wine; served with grated Gruyère.

**Wäie** Basel favourite, rolled out at carnival: cheese and onion tart.

**Rippli** Bubbling pot of pork-rib meat cooked up with bacon, potatoes and beans, in and around Bern.

#### Filets de perche

**meunière** Geneva's signature dish: perch filets pan-fried in butter, served with fries and green salad.

**Papet vaudois** Lausanne's mashed potato and leeks in cream-wine sauce, served with *saucisse aux choux* (pork meat, liver and cabbage sausage).

**Polenta ticinese** Creamy cornmeal porridge, often paired with braised meat, cheese or wild mushrooms.

### Just Desserts

**Zuger Kirschtorte** Cherry cake from Zug.



Zuger Kirschtorte

**Bündner Nusstorte** Sweet pastry casing filled with a rich walnut paste.

**Haslikuchen** Hazelnut cake, aka sweet hazelnut paste in a puff-pastry casing.

**Tarte à la raisinée** Pastry flan filled with *vin cuit* (apple or pear juice simmered for 24 hours to form a dense concentrate).

**Tarte au noix** Pastry flan heaped with caramelised walnuts.

**Torta di pane** Traditional Ticino dessert made from stale bread, milk and eggs, vanilla, almonds, raisins and pine kernels.

#### Meringues and cream

Piped swirls of feather-light meringue served with thick cream.



### MEALS OF A LIFETIME

#### Ecco St Moritz (p239)

Stratospheric gastronomic dining in a two-Michelin-starred gastronomic temple in upscale St Moritz.

#### Insel Wirtschaft Ufnau

(p207) Location – a nature-reserve island – and rustic cuisine seduce at this Lake Zürich address.

#### Auberge d'Hermance (p151)

Cut into a whole chicken served in a herbal-salt crust at a village inn on the Swiss-French border.

#### Locanda San Silvestro

(p151) A perfect fusion of traditional and contemporary Ticinese cuisine in an 18th-century inn.

#### Bains des Pâquis (p46)

Little beats a winter sauna, bracing lake dip and lighter-than-air cheese fondue at Geneva's retro baths.

## THE YEAR IN FOOD



### SPRING

Markets burst with asparagus, black salsify whose creamy white stalks pair with schnitzel, tangy watercress and Vacherin Mont d'Or AOC. The first strawberries are picked. Cherry trees blossom.



### SUMMER

Valais apricots, Zug cherries, figs, plums and strawberries brighten markets. Wild blueberries pepper mountainsides. Fruit farmers harvest small Botzi pears, conserving them in sugar water.



### AUTUMN

Pear crops go into AOC *eau-de-vie de Poire du Valais* (pear brandy).

The grape harvest begins. Apples ripen and pumpkin fields turn orange around Geneva. Chestnuts fall in Ticino and onions rock Bern.



### WINTER

The scent of roast chestnuts fills Ticino during November's chestnut festivals. Home cooks make quince tarts and jam. Fishermen on Lake Geneva enjoy a final fling for perch. Alpine skiers dip into fondue.



EVA BOCEK/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Contra Dam, Valle Verzasca (p159)

# THE OUTDOORS

With colossal peaks, raging rivers and outdoor adventure at every turn, kicking back in Switzerland's phenomenal backyard is non-negotiable.

Switzerland's ravishing outdoors demands immediate action. Be it winter skiing in the snowy Valais, Graubünden and Bernese Oberland or frolicking through green summertime pastures strewn with glittering lakes, knife-edge valleys and meadows of wild flowers, the possibilities are endless. Drink in nature from a vertiginous suspension bridge, the wings of a paraglider or afloat on white water. Touch crevassed ice on Jungfrauoch. Most extraordinary of all, you don't need to be a mountaineer to do it.

## Walking & Hiking

With 62,500km of footpaths, the choice and range of walking in Switzerland is phenomenal. Trails are signposted and maintained, and family-friendly funiculars and seasonal cable cars often provide an easy route uphill; [wanderland.ch](http://wanderland.ch) and [map.wanderland.ch](http://map.wanderland.ch)

are definitive planning tools. Alpine hikers gravitate to higher-altitude trails in the Bernese Oberland, Valais and Graubünden for serious hiking, soul-soaring scenery and sky-high peaks to bag. In lowland areas like the Lavaux wine region by Lake Geneva or the bucolic dairy country around Appenzell, shorter and less challenging walks – accessible year-round – offer precious insight in ancestral pastoral and viticultural tradition.

Countrywide, themed trails shine light on Swiss heritage from all sorts of wild perspectives: dinosaur tracks, poisonous flora, glaciers, agricultural architecture, whistling marmots, watchmaking, geology. And when the need to slow down beckons, sensual 'barefoot trails' through grassy meadows and stoney waters kick in.

### Adrenaline Sports

#### CLIMBING

Get to grips with sheer rock faces, *via ferrata* trails and frozen waterfalls with guides from **Zermatters** (p137).

#### CANOEING

Paddle in peace through a mirage of forested crags, castles and snow-iced summits along Lake Thun's **Canoe Trail** (p110).

#### PARAGLIDING

Fly with the birds above Lake Maggiore – eyeball the Alps on the horizon – from Locarno playground **Cimetta** (p154).

## FAMILY ADVENTURES

Saddle up a cow and trek at cow's pace through bucolic countryside to the banks of the **Rhine River** (p187).

Cruise around **Lake Geneva** (p41) on a belle époque steamer, watching the Herculean, well-oiled pistons at work.

Rent a storybook wooden sledge and fly downhill beneath the stars along a legendary toboggan run in **Davos** (p236).

Keep tweens moving and without complaint on an e-bike spin through cheesy **Emmental** (p94). Play James Bond with 007 drama at altitude on **Schilthorn** (p108).

Expose the kids to one of the world's melting glaciers close-up on a hard-hitting, guided **Aletsch Glacier** (p140) hike.

Thrill older teens with a day out on **Lake Silvaplana** (p242) near St Moritz for kitesurfing, wingfoiling or snow-kiting.

## Skiing & Snow Sports

In a land where three-year-olds ski rings around you and seemingly every hamlet has a ski lift, the question is not where you can ski but how. Ritzzy or remote, party-mad or picture-perfect, virgin or veteran, black run or blue – whatever your taste and ability, Switzerland has eminently attractive resorts to match. Glacier descents, hairy blacks with moguls like small cars, vertical drops and freestyle parks packed with jumps: the ski terrain is equally varied, and always with typically busy downhill runs jostling for air space with backcountry ski-touring

itineraries and peaceful cross-country skiing trails. Ski passes cut a hefty chunk out of your budget, but avoiding school holidays and favouring low-key villages over upscale resorts makes it more affordable. And for skiers who simply can't make up their mind where to lay their bobble hat, the incredible-value Magic Pass ([magicpass.ch](http://magicpass.ch)) covers unlimited access to lifts in 69 ski resorts.

## Cycling

Laced with 9000km of cycling trails and 4500km of mountain-biking routes, Switzerland is an efficiently run paradise for the ardent cyclist. Mountain passes with superlative views lure serious road cyclists craving back-breaking inclines and challenging climbs, and a myriad of lakes and rivers ribboned with dedicated, silky-smooth cycling paths beckon bikers keen to mosey along lower-lying, flatter terrain with equally arresting views. For mountain bikers, top-drawer terrain parks in Verbier and Davos and mountain-biking trails in alpine resorts deliver adrenalin rushes in spades. SlowUp days ([slowup.ch](http://slowup.ch)), organised countrywide, are a brilliant family day out on wheels.

Electric-assisted bikes – road and mountain – are hot stuff in Switzerland right now, and easy to rent countrywide.



### E-BIKES

Electric-assisted bikes – road and mountain – are hot stuff in Switzerland right now (p253).



Mountain biking, Zermatt

### BUNGEE JUMPING

Relive the opening of *Golden Eye* in Ticino's Valle Verzasca – **Contra Dam** (p159) is the world's second-highest bungee jump.

### ICE BATHING

Tiptoe through snow and bathe at full moon in a dipping hole cut in the frozen depths of Untersee, **Arosa** (p232).

### STAND-UP PADDLEBOARDING

Enjoy the thrill of standing afloat at **Pointe de la Jonction** (p50), where two rivers meet near Geneva.

### RAFTING & CANYONING

Race through white water in the raging Lûtschine, Simme and Saane rivers and limestone gorges of **Interlaken** (p96).



# ACTION AREAS

Where to find Switzerland's best outdoor activities.



## National Parks & Nature Reserves

- 1 Swiss National Park (p236)
- 2 Parc Ela (p233)
- 3 Grande Caricaie (p82)
- 4 Réserve Naturelle du Nant de Borbaz et des Picolattes (p50)
- 5 Parc Naturel du Jorat (p58)



## Skiing/Snowboarding

- 1 Zermatt, Valais (p133)
- 2 St Moritz, Graubünden (p238)
- 3 Champéry, Les Portes du Soleil (p120)
- 4 Weisse Arena, Graubünden (p232)
- 5 Davos and Klosters, Graubünden (p234)



## Cycling

- 1 Davos and Klosters, Graubünden (p234)
- 2 Bodensee-Radweg cycle path, Lake Constance (p212)
- 3 Emmentaler Käseroute, Burgdorf (p94)
- 4 Geneva to Hermance, Lake Geneva (p51)
- 5 Verbier Bike Park, Verbier (p125)



## Walking/Hiking

- 1 Kandersteg, Bernese Oberland (p112)
- 2 Faulhornweg, Bernese Oberland (p99)
- 3 Five Lakes Walk, Zermatt (p136)
- 4 Fiescheralp to Konkordiahütte, Aletsch Glacier (p141)
- 5 Lakes of Macun, Zernezh (p236)
- 6 Pierre Avoi, Verbier (p122)
- 7 Liechtenstein Trail (p246)



## Cold-Water Swimming

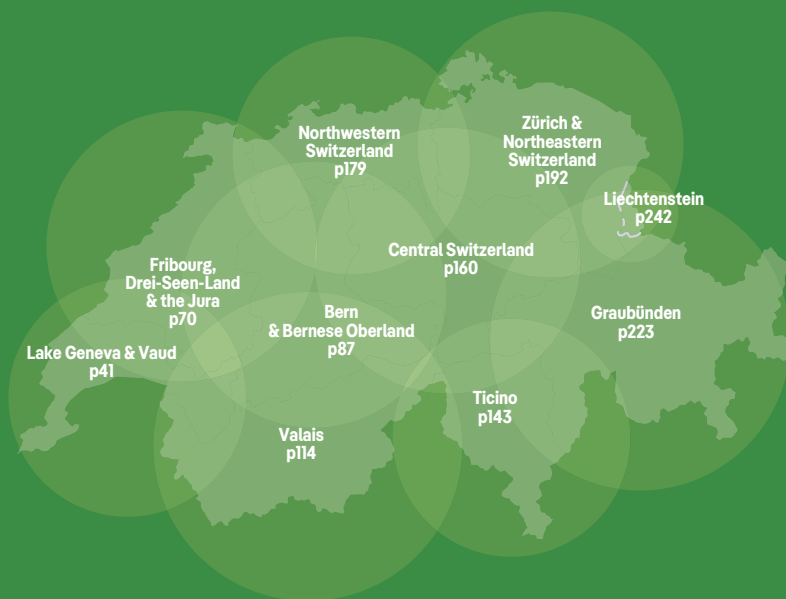
- 1 Aare River, Bern (p90)
- 2 Rhine River, Basel (p185)
- 3 Grünsee and Leisee, Zermatt (p136)
- 4 Bains des Pâquis, Geneva (p46)
- 5 Lutry, Lake Geneva (p63)
- 6 Seebad Seeliken, Zug (p173)
- 7 Eisbadi, Arosa (p232)





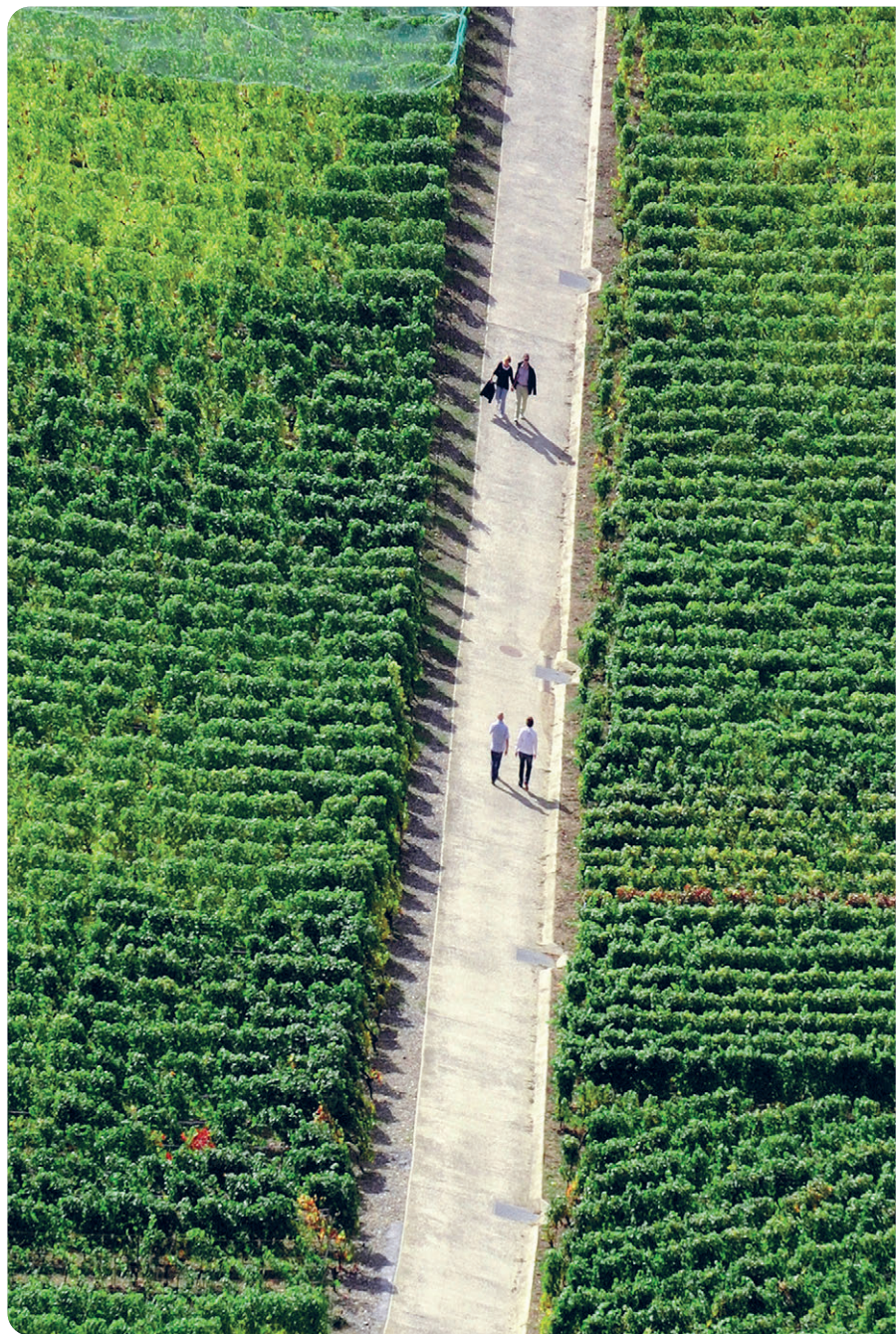
## SWITZERLAND

# THE GUIDE



Chapters in this section are organised by hubs and their surrounding areas. We see the hub as your base in the destination, where you'll find unique experiences, local insights, insider tips and expert recommendations. It's also your gateway to the surrounding area, where you'll see what and how much you can do from there.





Above: Lavaux vineyard (p62), Lake Geneva; Les Diablerets (p68)

# Lake Geneva & Vaud

## URBAN COOL AND LAKESIDE CHIC

Half of Lake Geneva and most of its southern shoreline belongs to France, but the rest of it is the pride of the Vaudoise.

Lake Geneva (Lac Léman in French) is the bedrock of local lifestyle well beyond its eponymous city. Trains journey east right along the shore, beneath Lavaux' Unesco-listed terraced vineyards. Boat trips waltz back in time to the belle époque when Lake Geneva was

coquettish gigolo to European aristocracy. And then, of course, there's Mont Blanc, Europe's highest peak keeping sentry over the French Alps across the water. No surprise that Mont Blanc views from cosmopolitan Geneva's Quai du Mont Blanc are five-star.

The lake itself is a Swiss-French affair. Pristine steamers from the 1900s cross an invisible border tracing the spine of this crescent-shaped pool of freshwater – Europe's largest lake at 580

sq km large and up to 310m deep. On bluebird days, it's a picture of serenity. Other days, the bitterly cold bise wind rolls in from the northeast, whipping the lake into a frenzy of seahorses, exciting kite surfers and chilling everyone to the bone.

French-speaking Geneva (Genève) – which is Switzerland's second-largest city – is slick, cosmopolitan, a place where seemingly every language under the sun is spoken.

Since the 19th century, heights of Swiss mountains have been measured from Pierre du Niton, a rock in the lake by the city's iconic pencil fountain. Lausanne, stacked on a hillside along the lake's northern shore, is student central, while glittering Montreux remains faithful to its glamorous past as riviera queen.



NAME/CREDIT ©

### THE MAIN AREAS

#### GENEVA

Cosmopolitan city ashore Lake Geneva. **p44**

#### LAUSANNE

French-speaking student central. **p52**

#### MONTREUX

Riviera highlife with belle époque beauty. **p64**

# Find Your Way

With shimmering Lake Geneva rarely out of sight, it's only natural that the journey – invariably by boat – in this watery part of Switzerland often becomes the destination. Embrace the experience afloat.

## Geneva, p44

A 'big bang' cycling mission, mermaids and moonlit fondues: Lake Geneva's eponymous town delights and surprises.

## Montreux, p64

A key stop of the historic Grand Tour, this lakeside town has lost none of its charm, with flowers, music, art, rail journeys and Riviera chic in abundance.

## BOAT

CGN operates steamers around Lake Geneva; Geneva and Lausanne are hubs. Check seasonal schedules (boats are less frequent on Sundays and mid-September to May). There are also CGN cruises and commuter boats to France.

## TRAIN

Regular SBB trains from Geneva to Aigle stop at dozens of places along the northern shore of Lake Geneva. Montreux is a hub for scenic journeys aboard special panoramic trains, cogwheel railways and funiculars operated by MOB.

## Lausanne, p52

From live jazz in churches to beachside DJs and eclectic museums, Lake Geneva's boisterous student city lives up to its culture-vulture reputation.

0 0 10 km  
0 0 5 miles





Montreux' cogwheel railway (p67)

# Plan Your Time

Don't rush through this region, especially in summer when daily life – dining, festivals and cultural events – spills outside. Plan a shoulder-season visit to unearth Lake Geneva's heritage, richly rooted in wine and mountain lore.

## A Weekend Away

Devote a day to multicultural **Geneva** (p44), an 'international city', with a handsome old town, fascinating museums and vibrant nightlife. Catch a train to Olympian **Lausanne** (p52) to celebrate the global sporting event. Revel in remarkable lake views along the scenic **Sentier des Rives du Lac** (p54), ending with a lake fish feast and overnight in enchanting **Lutry** (p63).

## One Week to Explore

Seven days give you time to dive into less-sung lake villages like **Vevey** (p61); arrive from Geneva or Lausanne by belle époque steamer. Visit **Montreux** (p64), not missing the cogwheel train ride to **Rochers de Naye** (p67). A flower-festooned lake walk to **Château de Chillon** (p64) and hiking in the Unesco-listed **Lavaux** (p62) vineyards are other unmissable day trips.

## SEASONAL HIGHLIGHTS

### SPRING

Cafe terraces open, flowers bloom and runners own Lausanne during April's **20km de Lausanne** race.

### SUMMER

Pop-up bars, **music festivals**, concerts and moonlit **movie screenings** pack cultural calendars.

### AUTUMN

September's **wine harvest** offers tastings, banquets and village festivals such as Lutry's **Fête des Vendanges**.

### WINTER

Geneva's **L'Escalade** festival opens December. By mid-month, **ski resorts** in Vaud are in full swing.



# Geneva



ART & CULTURE | LAKESIDE LIFE | OLD TOWN CHARM



## GETTING AROUND

Geneva tourist office maps out superb, DIY themed walking trails in the city – download handy audio files at [geneve.com](http://geneve.com).

The same tickets cover TPG's highly efficient network of buses, trams, trolleybuses and yellow Les Mouettes shuttle boats across the lake. Purchase at stops, via SMS or the SBB app. Buy day tickets after 9am to save Sfr2.

Genèveroule, with branches outside the train station and on the right bank by Bains des Pâquis, rents regular and e-bikes. Or grab shared wheels with the Donkey Republic app.

## TOP TIP

Hotel guests receive a complimentary Geneva Transport Card covering unlimited use of city buses, trams and shuttle boats during their stay.

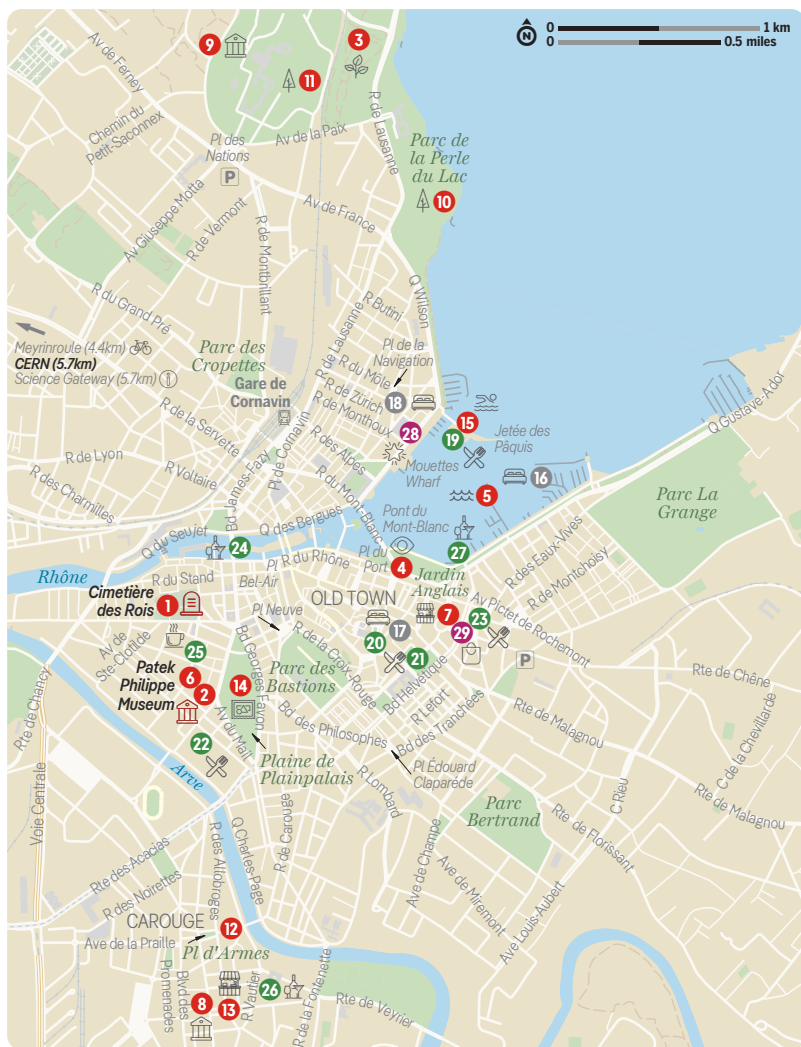
French-speaking Geneva is a rare breed of city. Glinting in the sun with the wealth and prestige of luxury jewellers, chocolate shops and investment banks that pave its streets, its flawless, glossy veneer can feel impenetrable. But meander away from the hill-top old town and manicured lakeshore – into grungier Pâquis, village-like Carouge or along the post-industrial Rhône – and a rougher-cut diamond emerges, quietly humming with attitude and buzzing with artists and activists, drifters and denizens.

A place of international diplomacy ever since persecuted Protestants from France sought refuge here during the Reformation in the 16th century, contemporary Geneva is home to 200-odd international and non-governmental organisations, including the UN, World Trade Organization, World Health Organization, International Committee of the Red Cross and World Bank. As grey and dreary as a banker's suit on a foggy winter day, lakeside Geneva works its magic on China-blue summer days when local life overflows outside with infectious enthusiasm impossible to resist.

## Saturday Morning at the Market

### Unearthing local produce by season

Lap up urban life at **Marché de Rive** (also called **Marché Helvétique**) on Saturday and Wednesday mornings. Open-air stalls piled high with seasonal produce grown by *maraîchers* (market gardeners) in surrounding villages spill along Bd Helvétique. On side street Rue Louis Duchosal, opposite Genevans popping caviar on the sleek pavement terrace of **Planet Caviar**, fridge mechanic turned fisherman Julien Monney sells his catch – perch, whitefish, arctic char, crayfish, depending on the season, caught from his fishing boat in Hermance, 15km north. Sit down to taste wine from **Domaine de la Devinère** at the organic winery's stall, and buy urban honey from **Genevabeez**. For cheese, charcuterie and prepared dishes, dive into indoor food market **Halle de Rive** on Bd Helvétique.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- ① Cimetière des Rois  
② Patek Philippe Museum

**SIGHTS**

- ③ Conservatoire et Jardin Botaniques  
See ⑦ Halle de Rive  
④ Horloge Fleurie  
⑤ Jet d'Eau  
⑥ MAMCO  
⑦ Marché de Rive

- ⑧ Musée de Carouge  
⑨ Musée International de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge  
⑩ Parc de la Perle du Lac  
⑪ Parc de l'Ariana  
⑫ Place de l'Octroi  
⑬ Place du Marché  
⑭ Plaine de Plainpalais

**ACTIVITIES**

- ⑮ Bains des Pâquis

**SLEEPING**

- ⑯ Float Inn  
⑰ Hôtel Bel'Esperance  
⑱ Hôtel Edelweiss

**EATING**

- ⑲ Buvette des Bains  
See ⑬ Café du Marché  
⑳ Chez Ma Cousine  
㉑ Légumes en Ville  
㉒ Madame  
㉓ Planet Caviar

**DRINKING****& NIGHTLIFE**

- ㉔ Bateau Lavoir  
㉕ Birdie  
㉖ Chat Noir  
㉗ La Buvette du Bateau

**ENTERTAINMENT**

- ㉘ Java Club

**SHOPPING**

- ㉙ Genevabeez



## WHY I LOVE GENEVA

**Nicola Williams,**  
writer

The seductive play of rippling, iridescent light – never the same twice – on Lake Geneva has been my wake-up call for the last 15 years, and cycling along its shoreline into the city never dulls.

Appropriately, Geneva's 1930s city baths, Bains des Pâquis, are so much more than a joyously retro place to swim year-round. They are also my faithful go-to with girlfriends for sassy lakeside music concerts at dawn (in summer), and sauna and ice-cold dips by moonlight (in winter) followed by the fluffiest, creamiest cheese fondue you're ever likely to taste.

The secret? Crémant de Dardagny, a sparkling white chardonnay from vineyards west of Geneva.



Patek Philippe Museum

BASCAR/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Afterwards, walk five minutes north along Bd Helvétique and duck right up the staircase beside the Musée d'Arts et d'Histoire. In the **Légumes en Ville** vegetable garden opposite, information panels unearth crops by season, and the tree-shaded sofas and armchairs crafted from wooden pallets are a perfect picnic spot.

## Venerate Mont Blanc

### A waterfront walk along Quai du Mont Blanc

Flowers, statues, alfresco photography exhibitions and – on clear days – superlative views of Mont Blanc abound on aptly named Quai du Mont Blanc. Geneva's picturesque northern lakeshore promenade leads past the vintage public baths **Bains des Pâquis**, where the Genevois have frolicked in the sun since 1872, to **Parc de la Perle du Lac**, a city park where Romans built ornate thermal baths. Further north, the peacock-studded lawns of **Parc de l'Ariana** ensnare the UN and Geneva's premier **Conservatoire et Jardin Botaniques**, botanical gardens planted with 12,000 species from around the world.

## Cemetery of the Kings

### Find peace with the souls of Swiss presidents

Leave the old-town crowds behind at **Cimetière des Rois**, a serene and eclectic urban cemetery in Plainpalais. It was built outside the city walls in the 15th century to bury plague victims, and during the Reformation a century later it became the final resting place of Genevans too – notably without



## WHERE TO STAY IN STYLE

### Hôtel Edelweiss

Tuck into the Swiss Alps *en ville* at this *Heidi*-style hideout with fireplace and top-notch cheese restaurant. €€

### Hôtel Bel'Esperance

Single to family rooms sleeping four add extra appeal to this midrange hotel; there's a rooftop terrace. €€

### Float Inn

Dreamy lake and city views are a given at this catamaran turned luxe floating B&B; sailing weekends too. €€

tombstones as per ecclesiastical custom of this austere 'Protestant Rome'. The simple stone engraved with the initials JC on the grave of zealous Protestant preacher Jean Calvin (1509–64) was added in the 19th century.

Genevan statesmen, politicians, doctors, bankers and academics were later buried here. Graves are a whimsical mix of rocks, sculptures and headstones randomly peppering lush lawns and the shade of centurion trees strung with bird boxes. Spot rogue artworks masquerading as tombstones by contemporary artists, including Gianni Motti's provocative *Je vous avais dit que je n'allais pas très bien* ('I told you I wasn't very well'; 2016). Picnic on the grass or walk five minutes to Scandi-styled coffee shop **Birdie** on Rue des Bains for an iced ginger tea, AeroPress or cold brew.

## Watch Genevan Watchmakers at Work

### Wind through five centuries of horological history

Singing birds, automated mice, the first ladies' sports watch with a face that flipped over in the 1930s to save the glass when playing polo, black oxidised timepieces for widows and 'love duel' pistols loaded with a fragrance providing the necessary distraction to glance surreptitiously at the hidden watch face in the handle. Geneva's **Patek Philippe Museum** is as much a study in social etiquette as learning about a family firm from 1839 whose limited timepieces begin at Sfr20,000 and command a waiting list of years: Patek Philippe handcrafts just 70,000 watches a year, each taking between nine months and two years to make.

Arrive no later than 12.45pm to ensure one of 20 spots on the Saturday-afternoon guided tour in English (two hours, Sfr15, no reservations) around the elegant museum, styled like a sumptuous jewellery shop with plush carpets, wood paneling and glass cabinets displaying 2500 timepieces from the 16th century to present day. From Tuesday to Friday, watch highly skilled watchmakers at work in restoration workshops here and take a DIY tour with a free digital audioguide.

## A Detour into Bohemia

### Village vibe and market shopping in Carouge

Bohemia strikes in artsy **Carouge** where 18th-century houses open onto courtyard gardens and ceramics conjure up local 19th-century history at tiny **Musée de Carouge**. Yesteryear rival to the city of Geneva, the once-powerful neighbourhood was refashioned in the 18th century by Vittorio Amedeo III, king of Sardinia and duke of Savoy, in a bid to outdo Geneva



### SWISS TIMING

In a city synonymous with luxury timepieces, precision is key. While satellites ensure that Geneva's

#### Horloge Fleurie

(Flower Clock) by Pont du Mont Blanc keeps perfect time with the world's longest second hand (2.5m) and 6500 flowers replanted each season. Genevan watchmakers rely on ancestral savoir-faire.

After all, this is where the wristwatch's wind-up crown, perpetual calendar and sky charts blazing 400 stars in the night sky were first crafted. French Protestants brought watchmaking to Geneva in the 16th century. With the austerity of the Reformation, Genevan goldsmiths and jewellers turned their hand to watchmaking.

By 1760, the city was home to 600 master watchmakers. Geneva-based Rolex, Richemont and Patek Philippe are among the 700 watchmaking companies that are headquartered in Switzerland today.



### WHERE TO DRINK & DANCE AFTER DARK

#### Bateau Lavoie

Mingle with a hip crowd on this trendy barge, moored between Pont de la Coulouvrenière and the old market hall.

#### Java Club

Three bars, a VIP area and dance floor pack Geneva's most popular nightclub to bursting. Or hit glam Le Baroque.

#### La Buvette du Bateau

Sip Champagne with unparalleled lake views aboard this retired 1896 paddle steamer by the Jet d'Eau.



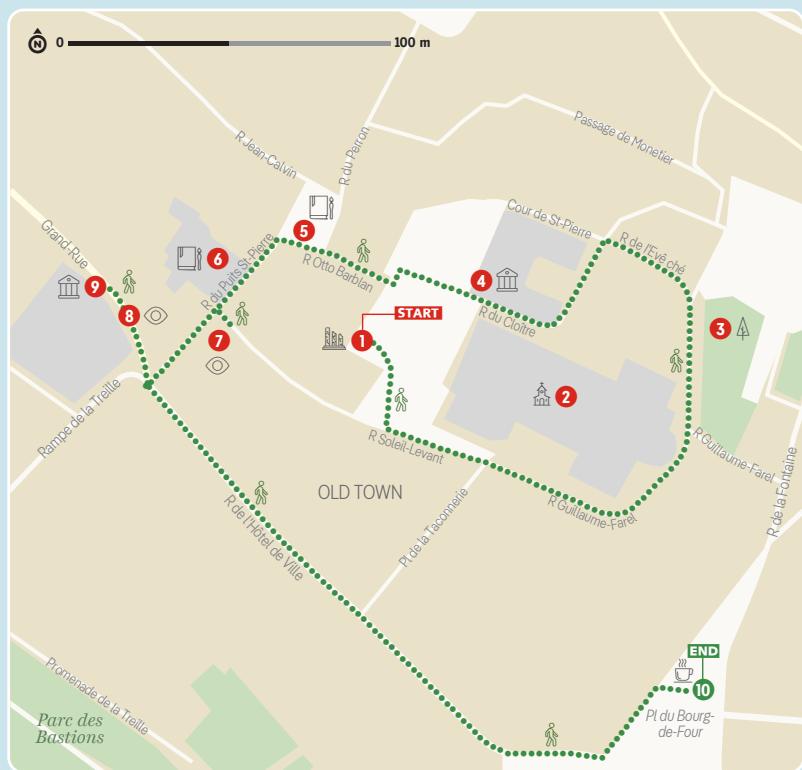
## OLD TOWN EXPLORER

Occupied by the Romans and later a 5th-century bishopric, rich old Geneva's antique heartbeat resonates in its hilltop Vieille Ville. Unearth Celtic to Roman origins at **1 Site Archéologique de la Cathédrale St-Pierre**, beneath Cour de St-Pierre. A bonfire is lit on the cathedral square during December's L'Escalade to celebrate Geneva's defeat of Savoy troops in 1602. Legend hails a Genevan housewife atop the city walls as the real hero who tipped a pot of boiling soup over a trooper's head, whacked him with her cauldron, and raised the alarm.

During the 16th-century Reformation, French theologian Jean Calvin (1509–64) preached fiery sermons at Gothic **2 Cathédrale St-Pierre**, with an 18th-century neoclassical portico purportedly inspired by Rome's Pantheon. Spiral up 157 steps in its north and south towers for bird's-eye views of the old town – magical on nights of the full moon in July and August when

the towers open until 11.30pm. More seductive rooftop views unfold from **3TerrasseAgrippa d'Aubigné**, a tree-shaded park behind the cathedral. Continue to **4Musée International de la Réforme** and learn how Calvin's Geneva became a safe haven for Protestant refugees persecuted for their faith.

Follow Rue Otto Barblan past 17th-century **5 Les Amures**, now a luxurious hotel, and uphill to the city's oldest surviving residential building **6 Maison Tavel** and the **7 Arsenal**, showcasing cannons once aimed squarely at Savoy. On the old town's main thoroughfare, **8 Grand-Rue**, 18th-century philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78) was born at No 40 – now the **9 Maison de Rousseau et de la Literature**. End on **10 Place du Bourg-de-Four**. Roman forum and host to wildly popular medieval fairs in the 13th century; it's abuzz with cafe terraces today.



as a centre of commerce. In 1816 the Treaty of Turin handed Carouge to Geneva.

Narrow streets lined with late-night music bars like **Chat Noir**, cafe terraces, boutiques and artists' workshops create a village vibe. A market unfurls beneath plane trees on **Place du Marché** on Wednesday and Saturday mornings (have lunch afterwards at **Café du Marché**, not missing the feather-light Grand Marnier soufflé), while the Thursday market (2pm to 9pm) is an after-work 'drinks and tapas' institution. In December, horse-drawn carriages line up on **Place de l'Octroi** to take Christmas shoppers for a festive ride. Tram 18 links the train station and Place du Marché (20 minutes).

## Night Art in Plainpalais

### Admiring contemporary art after dark

Nightfall shines light on Geneva's eye-catching public art, an ephemeral feast of contemporary sculptures and installations that extends well beyond the Jet d'Eau blazing pink, blue et al to celebrate various events throughout the year.

Summer evenings' soft glow lends added atmosphere to the industrial architecture of 1950s factory **MAMCO** (Modern and Contemporary Art Museum), cutting-edge host to young, international and cross-media exhibitions. Visit in July or August when the museum only opens late (5pm to 10pm, free admission) and live music, DJs and festive soirees spill across its courtyard Le Square. End on **Plaine de Plainpalais**, a massive diamond-shaped 'square' illuminated with several thought-provoking neon and LED light artworks on its building rooftops – look up!

## Unravel the Universe at CERN

### Science shows, tours and a cycling mission

Fathoming out particles that make up matter is, in essence, what top-drawer physicists at the European Organization for Nuclear Research, or CERN, do. This is where British scientist Tim Berners Lee invented the World Wide Web in 1989, and where protons are pushed down a 27km circular tube (the Large Hadron Collider, the world's biggest machine) at near the speed of light to collide and create new matter.

Spots on 90-minute guided tours around the vast research centre and underground laboratory in Meyrin are like gold dust (visit.cern; tram 18 leaves from Geneva train station). But state-of-the-art visitors centre **Science Gateway**, designed in 2023 by celebrity Italian architect Renzo Piano, shines brilliant new light on CERN's work with science shows, interactive exhibitions and films.

To learn more about ugly quarks and beauty anti-quarks at CERN, rent a mountain bike from **Meyrinroule** (geneveroule.ch) near the entrance to CERN and embark on an imaginary mission to restart its particle accelerator. Cycle around 10 stations, collecting activation codes as you go, on the **Passport to the Big Bang** cycling itinerary. It's circular (54km) but can be tackled in segments and is free.



### CREATING THE RED CROSS

The world was in luck that in 1859 Genevan businessman Henry Dunant happened to pass through Solferino in Italy. The horror he encountered – thousands of wounded Italian, French and Austrian soldiers, left to die where they fell during the Battle of Solferino – inspired him to round up volunteers to provide first aid.

Back home, he campaigned for the creation of national bodies trained to provide neutral medical assistance in times of war. This led to the creation of the international Red Cross movement in 1863.

A year later, the Geneva Convention granted neutrality and protection to medical services and the wounded on battlefields. In 1901, Dunant won the first Nobel Peace Prize for his humanitarian efforts. Learn more at Geneva's compelling **Musée International de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge**.



# Beyond Geneva

Wrapped around the southwestern tip of Europe's largest alpine lake, urban Geneva is a springboard to villages and pristine nature.



## Places

**Peney-Dessous** p50

**Hermance** p51



## GETTING AROUND

From TPG bus hub Rive on Geneva's left bank, bus E follows the lakeshore northeast to the Swiss-French border in Hermance (30 minutes), stopping en route at TCS Camping Genève-Vésenaz (18 minutes), Corsier Port (20 minutes) and Anières (25 minutes). Or hop aboard a seasonal CGN paddle steamer.

Whichever direction you head out of town, you can't go wrong. Stick to the waterfront and soon you're playing dot-to-dot with medieval villages, bijou pleasure ports and grassy 'beaches' cascading down to pebbly shores. Head away from the water and up – south by cable car to the summit of Genevan-loved local peak Mont Salève (1100m) or north on foot to bulbous La Dôle (1677m) – and breathtaking views of Lake Geneva, the Jura mountains, Alps and snow-white Mont Blanc in France blow your mind.

Geneva is ringed by beach and mountain, and there's no 'right way' to explore its *très belle* surrounds. Bike, boat, steamer, SUP, car or snowshoes: pick your means and level up with the locals.

## Peney-Dessous Paddling down the Rhône

TIME FROM GENEVA: 3 HRS

The mighty Rhône River has been a source of mystery, fascination and terror – mythical dragons, headless martyrs – since the ancients settled its fertile banks. On Geneva's green fringe, rent a SUP or kayak at **Pointe de la Jonction** to witness the river's finest Swiss moment.

No TikTok video prepares you for the psychedelic moment when the Rhône meets the Arve River at the end of the latter's short alpine journey from the Mont Blanc massif in neighbouring France. Paddling off from **Rafting Loisirs** (Sfr40 per person), next to TPG's trolleybus depot and L'Asphalte on the Rhône's left bank, it takes two minutes to reach the confluence where the rivers – one milky with glacial sediment, the other clear green – meet. Paddle to the distinct line in the water to observe the contrast in flow as well as hue. The Arve is faster-paced, and within 10 minutes of paddling further downstream, the once-crystalline Rhône is a murky, muddy sage-green.

Count three hours for the 8km-long paddle downstream from La Jonction to **Pont de Peney** in Peney-Dessous, a two-minute walk from Café de Peney and 45-minute bus journey back to central Geneva. Wild swans, herons and tufted ducks are abundant along the serene route, which passes under six rail, road or foot bridges and past cliffs, forest and reed beds. On its final leg, a channel ducks into the **Réserve Naturelle du Nant de Borbaz et des Picolattes**. Bring binoculars (watertight

## TOP TIP

French Haute-Savoie, with pretty lake villages including tourist hotspot Yvoire, is 10km northeast of Geneva. Fuel is notably cheaper in France.

tubs provided) to observe kingfishers, redshanks and perhaps great cormorants in flight. Guided kayaking trips by moonlight provide a rare chance to listen to the song of tawny owls and cuckoos.

## Hermance

TIME FROM GENEVA: 30 MINS 

### Cycle through vines to the Swiss–French border

Dust off the urban cobwebs Genevan-style with a bucolic outing by bicycle – traditional or electric – to Hermance, a medieval lakeside village northeast of Geneva on the French–Swiss border. Stitched from narrow lanes framing terraced cottages festooned with flower boxes, this chic weekend getaway was made for *flânerie* – hapless meandering at leisure.

Plane trees shade its elegant lakefront and families adore its grassy beach with sandpit, playground and occasional music concerts after dark. Remains of the village's 13th-century castle flank the tiny port where belle époque steamers dock in summer and local fisherman Julien Monney sells his catch on the waterfront at **Pêcherie du Coheran**. Perch at the artisanal fishery comes expertly filleted and the ready-to-eat *fêra marinée* (marinated whitefish) is sublime.

Continue the epicurean deep-dive into village life with a drink and tapas (homemade empanadas, focaccia and smoked-trout dips) at **Buvette au Près de L'Eau**. From May to September, drinks are served in a flower garden with potted lemon trees, fairy lights and pallet furniture. Come winter, locals hobnob over cheese fondue in the chicken coop. Lake views are smouldering. Nearby at legendary hotel-restaurant **Auberge d'Hermance**, whole chickens are baked and served in a magical herbal-salt crust.

Count one hour (less with e-bike) to cover the 14.5km ride from Geneva's Jet d'Eau. A two-lane bike lane runs the length of Quai Gustave Ador. Watch for pedestrians, cyclist traffic lights and brown signs indicating bike route No 46 winding past vineyards, wineries and fields of sunflowers to Hermance. Leaving the city, lake views quickly become your faithful companion.



### SUMMER BUVETTES

Lounging on the Rhône's left bank next to Rafting Loisirs, with prime river views, hipster snack bar **Buvette à la Pointe** is a popular summertime spot for drinks, weekend brunch, yoga and music concerts. Head into **Geneva** (p44) for more summertime pop-ups lakeside.



## BEST LAKE BEACHES

### Corsier Port

The bijou port's pebbly shore is ideal for paddling, and pontoons double as sun decks. Use the Equip Sport app to rent a SUP from the automated station.

### Pointe à la Bise

This grassy beach adjoins TCS Camping Genève-Vésenaz (Geneva's nearest campsite 7km north), with cabins, tent pitches and van park.

### Plage de la Savonnière

With vast lawns, showers, toilets and snack bar, Collonge-Bellerive's beach is a family favourite.

### Plage de la Nymphé

Near Port de Bellerive, duck down the unmarked path between Chemin de Milieu 27 and 29 to this clandestine beach overlooking a bronze mermaid on a rock in the water.



## WHERE TO SAVOUR AN AFTERNOON LUNCH

### Le Petit Lac, Corsier Port

A Genevan favourite, this sublime lakefront *auberge* (inn) cooks up some of Lake Geneva's finest perch filets. €€

### Café de Peney, Satigny

This picture-postcard village restaurant, with shutters and geranium window boxes, offers outstanding cuisine. €€

### Le Floris, Anières

Cocktails, brunch, modern gastronomy and 'romantic lake views' in spades: this is the pure Lake Geneva chic. €€€



# Lausanne

OLD-TIME GLAMOUR | ART MUSEUMS | HIP URBAN BEACHES



## GETTING AROUND

Lausanne's 28-stop metro, buses and trolleybuses make it easy to get around; for timetables see t-l.ch.

If you have time to kill between trains at the station, two achingly cool cafes are right next door: exit the station's southern side (signposted 'Lac') for Café du Simplon and Café de Grancy.

Smart, sassy and on the ball: stacked on a hillside overlooking Lake Geneva, Switzerland's fourth-largest city is upbeat and fun, with vistas that pack a serial punch. While university students inject a contagious party vibe into grungy-to-glam downtown bars and summer pop-ups on the beach, up on the hill at EPFL (Europe's version of Boston's MIT), bold young scientists are engineering future brilliance.

Lausanne is a city of steps and steep hills. *Escaliers* (staircases) zig-zag up through the Gothic old town and down to trendy bars squatting in the arches of majestic old bridges: search out Grand Pont and Pont Bessières to join the crowd for a local Doctor Gab's craft beer or chill white *vin de Lausanne* from urban vineyards. To be real, gravitate west to Flon, the city's rehabilitated industrial wasteland where the homeless coexist with fashionistas in reimagined warehouses around Voie du Chariot and Place de l'Europe, and clubbers dance until dawn at MAD.

## A Belle Époque Promenade

### Ouchy glamour and Olympian greats

Wedge between flower gardens and steamers parading in and out of port, lakefront Ouchy screams vintage glamour. Originally a fishing village, it became a thriving port and 'the place to be' during the belle époque. European aristocracy flocked to balls and galas at waterfront **Beau Rivage Hotel** (1861), and in 1877 a funicular was built – Switzerland's first – linking the lake with hilltop Lausanne.

At the port, admire the whimsical neo-Gothic facade of **Château d'Ouchy** (1889–93), built as a hotel atop ruins of a medieval tower. Saunter east along the water to **Quai de Belgique** and **Quai d'Ouchy**, as elegant as the day when ladies in long skirts promenaded with parasols here in 1901. Extravagantly watered lawns, flowerbeds and centurion trees run its entire length (1.2km) to ruined **Tour Haldimand** (1830), once a crenellated tower in **Parc du Dernantou**. A shiny gold

## TOP TIP

Lausanne tourist office by the train station organises enticing thematic guided tours, including a DIY Choco Tour starring tastings with five of its 11 chocolatiers (chocolate makers). Surf [lausanne-musees.ch](http://lausanne-musees.ch) to track current exhibitions. For serial sightseers, the Lausanne City Pass (Sfr35/39 one/two days) cuts costs.





## SENTIER DES RIVES DU LAC

Off-limits to bicycles, this peaceful footpath winding along the lakeshore from Ouchy to Lutry (4.7km) is a perfect crowd escaper.

Bar a few savvy local runners, it's just swanky lake cottages and clandestine beaches backed by fig or willow trees. Intoxicating glimpses of Lavaux' pea-green vineyards rise above the water from **Pully**, with boat-filled pleasure port, superlative all-wood children's playground and a trendy outdoor cafe-bar.

Dent d'Oche (2222m) and other French alpine peaks across the water dominate the pretty patch of grass beach, with diving board, at **Paudex**. In medieval **Lutry**, vineyard and mountain views crescendo. Its pebble and grass beach, 500m east from the lakefront village, has optimum vineyard views.

**Thai Pavilion**, offered to the city by the king of Thailand, provides the requisite element of romance in the park today.

Allow a couple of hours to absorb Olympian drama, interactive exhibits and historic footage in Lausanne's outstanding **Olympic Museum**, midway along Quai d'Ouchy. The footpath up through its terraced gardens (free), studded with sculptures, measures 1363 Greek feet – the exact length of an ancient Greek stadium. Lunch or 'after-work' drinks with sensational lake view in the museum's **TOM Café** – weekend brunch alert, reservations essential! – is worth every cent. For drinks between lake swims, hit summer pop-up **Côte Lac**, a wooden hut by the water with deckchairs, swing seat, snacks and music.

## A Fishy Affair

### Feasting on Lake Geneva's staple dish

Not all *filets de perche meunière* (perch fillets pan-fried in butter) served in lake restaurants are from Lake Geneva – June to December is the local perch-fishing season. Those cooked up with super-skinny fries, tartare sauce and a *beurre maison* (buttery sauce) to die for at Lutry's lakefront **Café de la Poste** are among Lausanne's best. The enchanting setting alone – beneath sunflower-yellow parasols, on a terrace facing the sun-spangled water – is sublime. The perfect pairing? A scenic train ride (five minutes) or lakeside walk here along the Sentier des Rives du Lac.

## Art Attack on Plateforme 10

### Contemporary creativity at Lausanne train station

The city's sassy art district takes no prisoners. Three museums celebrate 18th-century to present day fine arts, applied arts and photography, and the daring architecture is a masterpiece in itself. Expect to be repeatedly awestruck: by the God-like play of light on white concrete by Portuguese architect Manuel Aires Mateus at **MUDAC** and **Photo Ellysée**; and by the window framing railway tracks in the sky-high



### C'EST LE GUET! IL A SONNÉ DIX!

In medieval tradition, a night watchman (or woman since 2021) in Lausanne still calls out the hours into the night, from 10pm to 2am, from the **cathedral belfry**. To join *le guet* (the watch) at 10pm, contact the tourist office.



## EASY CENT-SMART EATS

### Le Barbare

Local farm sausages, organic trout and other *produits du terroir* entice foodies to this cafe by Escaliers du Marché. €

### Café de Grancy

This trendy cafe behind the train station cooks up an excellent-value *plat du jour*. Books and board games too. €€

### Un Po di Più

Italianate trattoria by Place de Riponne with crockery salvaged from flea markets; ask for a courtyard table. €€



## BEST DRINKS WITH A VIEW

### Great Escape

Party with the cool crowd at this veteran favourite, with grungy club-like interior and fabulous terrace overlooking Place de Riponne.

### Les Jardins

Eyeball sturdy stone ramparts of Lausanne cathedral over drinks in this bucolic garden bar in the old town.

### Lacustre

California meets Lac Léman at this trendy bar-restaurant overlooking the lake in Ouchy. Appease munchies with steaks, wood-fired pizzas and weekend brunch.

### Royal Savoy Skylounge

Mingle with the monied on this sophisticated rooftop with lake view extraordinaire. Any cocktail involving its homemade smoked rosemary syrup is divine.



MUDAC, Lausanne

gabled lobby of **Musée Cantonal des Beaux Arts** where locomotives were repaired in the 19th century. The 14.5m-tall granite-and-gold tree by Italian sculptor Giuseppe Penone is an eye-catching reminder that you're here for the art as well.

Linger in Plateforme 10's courtyard, where **Le Nobi** and **L'Arcadia** cafe terraces provide dress-circle views of a misting fountain hissing out clouds of vapour at intervals. If train-spotting's your cup of tea, slip into MUDAC's **Café Lumen**, slotted into the space where Mateus' white cube 'cracks open'. Avoid Monday and Tuesday when some museums are closed. Thursday is late-night opening (until 8pm). Admission is free on the first Saturday of each month.



## WHERE TO SLEEP FOR (SWISS) CHEAP

### Auberge de Jeunesse Lausanne Jeunotel

Smart hostel near the lake, a Roman archaeological dig and the IOC's shiny HQ. €

### MadHouse

The 'it' address in lively Flon, with a rooftop bar, street-art deco and funky rooms from the team behind MAD club. €

### Rivage Lutry

Rooms with balconies overlooking the water, this old-world hotel on the lakefront in Lutry is charm personified. €€



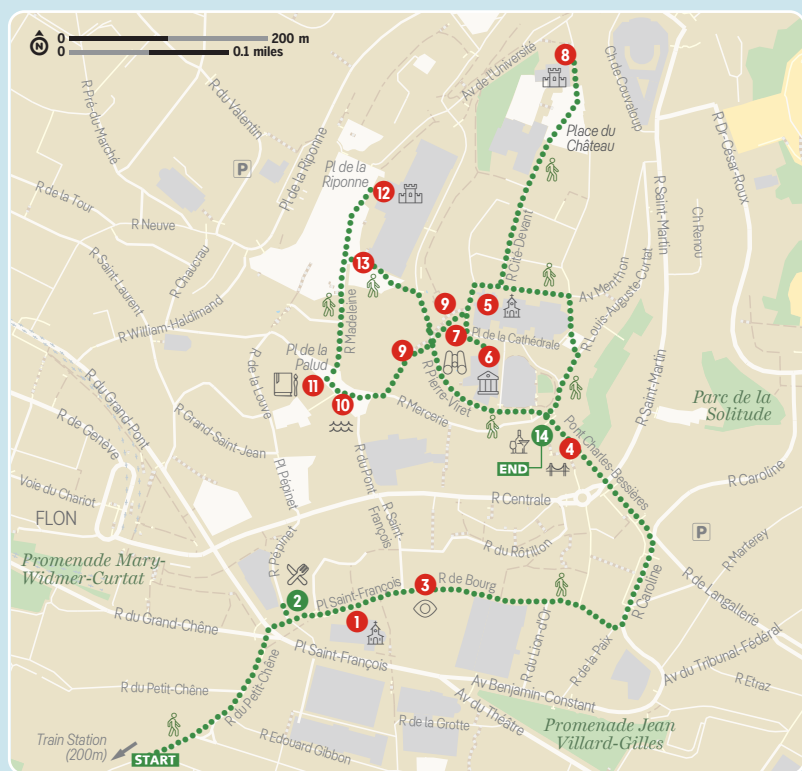
## CLIMBING HIGH IN LA CITÉ

Steep *escaliers* punctuate a walk around medieval Lausanne. From the train station, attack the first climb – up Rue Petite Chêne to Gothic **1 Église St-François**. Don't miss the original 1950s interior of **2 Café Romand** (1951), a brasserie and *pinte* (bar) serving old-style *papet vaudois* (cabbage sausage with mashed potato and creamy leeks). Follow **3 Rue de Bourg**, past Lausanne's oldest chocolate shop Blondel (1850) at No 5, to **4 Pont Bessières**.

Labour up steep Rue Louis-Auguste Curtat – the classic hell point for runners tackling Lausanne's tortuously hilly, 20km road race each April – to **5 Cathédrale de Notre Dame**; scale its belfry tower. Fifteenth-century bishops lived in the **6 Musée Historique de Lausanne** opposite. Sensational views of the city melting into the lake unfurl from the **7 lookout point** here. More views crown the

steps by 15th-century **8 Château St-Maire**, seat of Vaud's cantonal government.

Walk down canopied **9 Escaliers du Marché** to Place de la Palud – ancient bogland turned medieval market square. Sit on the steps of **10 Fontaine de la Justice** (1584–85) and watch the clock above No 23 chime the hour with an animated, one-minute dash through Lausanne history. Nod to the dragon gargoyles keeping sentry at 17th-century **11 Hôtel de Ville** (City Hall), then hike uphill to **12 Palais de Rumine** (1891–1906) where the Treaty of Lausanne was signed in 1923, finalising the break-up of the Ottoman Empire after WWI; archaeology, geology and money museums (free) now fill the Herculean palace. The final climb up **13 Escaliers de l'Université** and back to the bridge ends with a drink beneath bridge arches at student-fave **14 Terrasse des Grandes Roches**.



## Step Away from Society at Collection de l'Art Brut

Unleash your inner artist

Artsy Lausanne is Switzerland's original rebel. No further proof is needed than the seminal Collection de l'Art Brut, an 18th-century château safeguarding the world's original (and finest) collection of Art Brut – subversive, 'raw art' by artists with no formal training, often living on the fringe of society. French winemaker turned artist Jean Dubuffet (1901–85) donated the paintings, drawings and collages to the city of Lausanne in 1976 after they were refused by museums in his native France. Some works had been shown in Paris, in the utmost secrecy at Galerie Drouin, in 1947 – but only to a select group of art curios: the subject matter and radical eschewing of conventional technique was simply too scandalous.

Plan lunch or cocktails and meze beneath plane trees and fairy lights afterwards at nearby **Auberge de Beaulieu**. Count 10 minutes on foot from Place de Riponne (metro line 2) or take bus 3 or 21 to the Beaulieu-Jomini stop.

## Urban Beach Vibes

Sun, shingle and cheese

Yoga, DJ sets, *musique à l'aube* (sunrise concerts): it all happens at **Jetée de la Compagnie** – Lausanne's hippest lakeside 'beach' with a bar in an industrial container, tables by the water, wooden sun decks and French Alps view. Sunsets here, glass of kombucha or local beer in hand, are gold.

Equally idyllic is **La Guinguette de Vidy**, with deckchairs beneath trees and tasty charcuterie and cheese platters. A 10-minute walk west along this tree-shaded lakeshore, the hoi polloi pack out shingle beach **Plage de Vidy**.

Two spotless pools, diving boards, an inflatable obstacle course on the water and vast lawns lure families and swimmers to pool complex **Bellerive-Plage**; admission is cheaper after 5pm.



### BEST FAMILY ATTRACTIONS

#### Olympic Museum

Sprinting against Usain Bolt is a highlight at this top-drawer museum, with stacks of interactive exhibits for all ages.

#### Lakefront Playgrounds

Climbing frames, slides and swings are plentiful in grassy areas along the lakeshore. Don't miss exceptional playgrounds in Vidy and Pully.

#### Aquatris Aquarium-Vivarium

Admire 10,000 fish and reptiles, from Europe's glaciers to the Amazon, in this cutting-edge aquarium; cheaper tickets after 5pm.

#### Parc de Sauvabelin

Climb the wooden watchtower in this hilltop park with a lake, playgrounds and great views. Pair your park foray with art and Sunday brunch at Fondation de l'Hermitage, a 19th-century mansion with exhibitions and cafe-bistro L'Esquisse.



### ALL AFLOAT

Seasonal stands in front of Château d'Ouchy rent pedalos and kayaks; 8HP speedboats at **Cousin**, opposite the Beau Rivage Hotel, don't require a licence. To explore the lake by stand-up paddleboard, head to many Lausanners' favourite beach, with top-dollar *buvette* (snack bar), in **Lutry** (p63).



# Beyond Lausanne

A flush of châteaux and flower-festooned villages bead the lakeshores around Lausanne. The gravity-defying vineyards in Lavaux are so steep they're UNESCO-listed.



## Places

**Morges** p58

**Parc Naturel du Jorat** p58

**Nyon** p59

**Corseaux** p60

**Vevey** p61

The white hulk of Europe's mightiest peak, Mont Blanc (4805m), some 80km across the lake in France, looms extra-large along this developed stretch of Lake Geneva. Perhaps it's the wild contrast to ever-expanding urban Lausanne that makes the snowy dome so omnipresent. Whatever the reason, admiring its natural beauty is part and parcel of explorations beyond Lausanne – from the pretty wine-growing village of Morges whose lakeside promenade is aptly called Quais du Mont-Blanc; from quaint upmarket Vevey with its bijou boutiques and dress-circle viewpoint deep into the crux of the Alps across the shore; from the sweeping terrace of Roman Nyon's very own white fairy-tale castle. Cruise slowly to take it all in.



## GETTING AROUND

Regular (and madly scenic) SBB trains trundle along this stretch of lakeshore from Geneva and Lausanne to Vevey, Morges and Nyon; sit on the right-hand side of the carriage for the best views. For Lavaux, alight at Lutry or Cully.

## TOP TIP

Add buzz to chic Vevey shopping sprees: hit Place Robin's Marché aux Puces (flea market), the first Saturday of the month (March to November).

## Morges

TIME FROM LAUSANNE: 13 MINS 

### Admire tulips and dahlias at eponymous festivals

Lose yourself in a sea of tulips at April's **Fête de la Tulipe** in Morges, 12km east of Lausanne. What with the village's turreted 13th-century château squatting on the lakefront and majestic hulk of Mont Blanc puffing out its snow-white chest on the horizon, seduction stakes are high. From late March to mid-May, 140,000 tulips in bloom – 300 varieties – turn quays and lakeside **Parc de l'Indépendance** into an ocean of colour. From July to October, dahlias are the star turn. Time your visit for Wednesday or Saturday when market stalls laden with fresh produce spill the length of pedestrian **Grand-Rue**.

## Parc Naturel du Jorat

TIME FROM LAUSANNE: 60 MINS 

### Green gastronomy with giving back

North as the crow flies from Lausanne is a vast swathe of thick spruce and beech forest, protected by unknown Parc Naturel du Jorat. The alpine horsetail thrives here, ash groves carpet wetter areas, and natural springs are abundant. Marked walking trails stretch for 37km.

The forest also squirrels away two culinary eco-gems. In the 1940s, while staying at the Beau Rivage Hotel in Lausanne, Coco Chanel would walk to **Auberge du Chalet des Enfants**



Fête de la Tulipe, Morges

in a clearing for a bowl of milk and slice of sweet flan. Absinthe-fried chicken, cheese fondue laced with wild garlic, yellow pea and smoked bacon soup: chefs at the 14th-century farmhouse source produce from their own vegetable garden and local producers, and encourage diners to give back through **1 CHF pour Le Climat** (1francpourleclimat.ch). At kindred spirit **Abbaye de Montheron**, the highlight of its staunchly sustainable, gastronomic kitchen (lunch/menus from Sfr49/115) is occasional nomadic dining in the forest.

## Nyon

### Deep dive into Lac Léman

TIME FROM LAUSANNE: **30 MINS** 

Enjoy a more down-to-earth, grassroots vibe in Nyon – this is Lake Geneva's middle child, midway between Geneva and Lausanne, where boatloads of French commuters arrive each morning from medieval Yvoire across the water in France. At **Musée du Léman**, learn about Lake Geneva's natural heritage, its biodiversity (32 fish species live in the lake, not to mention aquatic garter snakes and pesky duck fleas disliked by lake swimmers today) and climate, its glamorous past as a stop on the Grand Tour and current fleet of historic paddle-wheel steamers.

Continue the deep dive into local lake culture at **Village des Pêcheurs**, a three-minute walk south along Quai Louis Bonnard. Picture-postcard fisherman's cabins and traditional wooden boats line the quayside where Nyon's last professional fishers head out to cast nets for perch and *féra* (whitefish). Buy direct from the source at port-side **Pêcherie Deli** or cooked up with superlative lake view, fries and a buttery sauce at **O'Les Terrasses du Lac**.



## A FLUSH OF CASTLES

### Château de Nyon

Nyon's 12th-century white-turreted castle houses a historical museum and a rare collection of fine porcelain. Don't miss the lake view from its terrace.

### Château de Prangins

French-style gardens with ornamental beds and *potager* (vegetable garden) are a highlight of this 18th-century mansion with history museum, 2km north of Nyon.

### Château de Coppet

In Coppet, admire Louis XVI-style rooms where Paris exile, Madame de Staël (1766–1817), entertained the likes of Edward Gibbon and Lord Byron.

### Château de Morges

Thousands of toy soldiers on parade now occupy Morges' squat, square château, built in 1286 by Louis of Savoy.

## BIRD ISLAND

If you're cycling from Lausanne to Morges (a scenic 14.5km ride, mainly along the lake), stop at **Île aux Oiseaux** to observe cormorants and learn about migratory birdlife on the peninsula in the small museum. Geneva's **Rhône River** (p50) is also popular with birders.





## CHAPLIN'S WORLD

The Swiss home of Charlie Chaplin (1889–1977), **Manoir de Ban** is a neoclassical mansion with 14-hectare park, north of Vevey in Corsier-sur-Vevey.

The London-born film star lived here for his last quarter century and was buried with his wife Dora in Corsier's overgrown cemetery by the Vevey–Funiculaire du Mont Pélerin.

In 1978 two men – Polish and Bulgarian refugees – dug up Chaplin's body and tried to extort a ransom of US\$600,000 from the silent-movie star's family, without success.

The coffin was later found buried in a corn field 20km away. This and other factoids come to life in **Chaplin's World**, a house-museum celebrating the comedian known the world over by his trademark hat and cane.



SANKOBY/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Alimentarium, Vevey

## Corseaux

TIME FROM LAUSANNE: 30 MINS  + 

### Le Corbusier on Lake Geneva

It's inconceivable now that any modern home with Europe's largest alpine lake on its doorstep would *not* have a garden squatting on its rooftop or giant windows to maximise the celestial views. But in 1923 when young Swiss architect Le Corbusier (1887–1965) designed **Villa Le Lac** in Corseaux for his elderly parents, the little white lake house with functional flat roof and 11m-long ribbon window framing the landscape was visionary. What swiftly became the overture to the great modern architect's phenomenal rationalism and love of reinforced concrete is now a Unesco World Heritage site and spectacular host to occasional art exhibitions (Sfr14, cash only, open Saturday and Sunday afternoons). Count 15 minutes on foot from Vevey train station.



## WHERE TO STAY IN STYLE BEYOND LAUSANNE

### La Maison d'Igor

Igor Stravinsky's elegant old digs in Morges are now a boutique hotel, with eight rooms and restaurant. €€

### Hôtel des Trois Couronnes

Fine dining, wining and sleeping in a historic lakefront mansion makes this one of Lake Geneva's best. €€€

### Grand Hôtel du Lac

Vevey's 1868 grand dame impresses with contemporary styling, sumptuous dining and sophisticated bars. €€€

## Dig into culinary culture at Alimentarium

In a town where the local library distributes free seeds with drinks in its café **Le Littéraire** and a weekly market has spilled across main square **Place du Marché** since the Middle Ages, a dedicated food museum is no surprise. From Vevey train station, head into town to the 8m-long silver fork sticking out of the lake opposite **Alimentarium**. Explore gardens planted with rare and ancient, edible veg and flower varieties before diving into the museum's playful food and nutrition exhibitions. Book cooking workshops in advance.

Lurching sharply uphill through flower gardens and terraced vineyards worked by a handful of family-run wineries, Vevey's cherry-red **Funiculaire du Mont Pélerin** (Sfr2.80, 15 minutes) up local mountain Mont Pélerin (1080m) is a dramatic ride. The bottom station is a 12-minute walk from Vevey train station. At the top station, taste rare wines from the small Chardonne appellation with a slice of *tarte à la raisinée* (sweet pastry flan filled with dessert wine) at chalet-restaurant **Le Chalet**. Beer-laced *malakoffs* (breaded, deep-fried cheese balls) oozing Gruyère AOP are a Vaud speciality, and the views of Lake Geneva, the Rhône Valley and French Massif du Chablais across the water are spectacular.

On Chemin de Pélerin behind Le Chalet, rent electric-powered wheels (Sfr30/45 four/eight hours) at the Espace Cendrillon automatic bike station or follow the one-hour hiking trail (3km) to **Tour Plein-Ciel**, a transmission tower on the summit of Mont Pélerin with panoramic glass lift (adult/child Sfr5/3). Whoosh up 65m and be wowed.



### CLOSING THE CIRCLE

Fast-forward to the grand finale of Le Corbusier's seminal career on the northeastern shore of **Zürichsee** (p198) in Zürich where the final building he designed – his only creation in steel and glass – can be visited.



### THE SOUND OF MUSIC

There's far more to the Swiss sound of music than cow bells, yodelling and alpenhorns: the country's headline music festival **Paléo** (yeah.paleo.ch), held in a field in Nyon over six days each July, is among Europe's premier rock and pop festivals.

Over the years, its seven outdoor stages have attracted the likes of Bob Dylan, Elton John, The Cure, Sting, Rosalía and Aya Nakamura.

Yet its roots are in traditional folk music. Some 1800 music lovers attended the First Folk Festival in 1976, organised in the local town hall by Folk Club de l'Escalier.

Today, 230,000 revellers flock to the festival, pitching thousands of tents in the free campground and dancing until dawn.



### WHERE TO EAT & DRINK IN VEVEY

#### Ze Fork

Creative fare and a terrace by the water pack out this nouveau-rustic bistro with rooftop. €€

#### Le Mazot

Tuck into traditional *fondue moitié-moitié* (mixing cheeses) and steaks at this family-run, old-town bistro. €€

#### Le Non-Stop

This refreshingly down-to-earth beer-and-burger joint is an institution for serious American-style burgers. €



Scan this QR code to read more about the rare viticultural world treasure, Angel.

## TOP EXPERIENCE

# Lavaux

East of Lausanne, lush vineyards stagger up steeply terraced slopes above Lake Geneva to form the Lavaux wine region, a Unesco World Heritage site. Vineyard walking, wine tasting and gorging on ethereal lake and mountain views are big reasons to explore the string of winegrowing villages along this 40km stretch of vine and shore.

### DON'T MISS

- Maison Lavaux
- Lavaux Vinorama
- Lavaux Classic
- Sentier Gourmand Lavaux
- Lutry's Paddle School
- Auberge du Raisin
- The vineyards in autumn

## In the Vineyards

One-fifth of Vaud wine is produced on these sun-blazed, gravity-defying slopes. Facing south and southwest, they are divided into neat parcels by ancient dry-stone walls that drink in the hot summer sun during the day and radiate a slow, nourishing heat at night. The proximity of Lake Geneva ensures a mild, temperate climate.

Crisp fruity whites crafted with Chasselas grapes form the bulk of **AOC Lavaux** production – fruity reds made with Gamay, Pinot noir and Salvagnin grapes make up just 20%. Serious wine buffs can't get enough of rare **AOC Calamin Grand Cru** wines, made with grapes from less than 2% of Lavaux vineyards by *vignerons* (winemakers) in the hamlet of Epesses. So steep are the limestone-rich vineyards yielding prestigious **AOC Dézaley** wines that the surface area of the burly, soil-supporting stone walls equal that of the vines.

## Walking & Cycling

Walking trails wind through the vineyards, including the mega **La Grande Traversée** (37km, 9½ hours) from Lausanne to Château de Chillon. For the most scenic slice, however, walk the shorter **Terrasses de Lavaux** (11.3km, 3¼ hours) trail from the medieval village of Lutry (4km east of Lausanne) to St Saphorin. One of the first stops en route is **Domaine du Daley** (2.5km, 45 minutes from Lutry) where vines have been cultivated since 1392; call the estate in advance to arrange a tasting. In Grandvaux the trail pulls up at **Maison Lavaux** (lavaux-unesco.ch), one-stop shop for wine-themed exhibitions, guided walks and cultural events. Continue past the pretty winegrowing villages of Grandvaux and Riex to Epesses, fringed by unfathomably steep Dézaley vineyards. In the village, detour to **Cave Massy** to admire a magnificent mural by street artist LPVDA, etched on wood with sander and sandpaper.

From Riex, the truly ambitious can consider a stiff 3.4km (1½-hour) detour uphill through vines and forest to **Tour de Gourze** (924m), built in the 12th century as a defence tower. The reward: a flawless panorama of Lavaux vines, Lake Geneva, the Vaud and the Jura beyond.

**Lavaux Vinorama**, 1.5km before your end point in St Saphorin is a modern tasting and discovery centre in a designer bunker. A shimmering 15m-long bay window is decorated with 6000 metallic pixels inspired by the veins of a vine leaf. Inside, watch a film and sample wine.

Cyclists can follow an almost identical itinerary, but unlike footpaths that occasionally duck through vineyards, cycling routes stay firmly on paved roads.

## Paddling

Admire the sweep of vineyards afloat Lake Geneva. In Lutry, rent a kayak or SUP from **Lutry's Paddle School** (following-john.ch; April to October) on the beach and paddle east. Views of the vineyards tangoing up the steep hillside are sublime. It also offers guided paddle excursions.

## Tractors, Trains & Funiculars

Sticking to paved roads between vineyards, the tractor-pulled tourist train **Lavaux Express** (April to mid-November) is a great solution for families with young children wanting to gorge on Lavaux views. Pick it up on Cully or Lutry lakefronts, next to the CGN boat pier. Otherwise, Vevey's Funiculaire du Mont Pélerin (p61) offers lovely vineyards views.

### FOOD & MUSIC IN VINES

For 10 days in June during **Lavaux Classic**, concerts by Swiss and international artists pop up on open-air stages in wineries, and on the lakeshore.

July's **Sentier Gourmand Lavaux** leads bons vivants along a 5km vineyard trail of food-and-wine pairings.

October's **vendange** (grape harvest) brings wine-fuelled festivities region-wide.

### TOP TIPS

- Lausanne and Montreux tourist offices stock maps. Cully has an office near its train station.
- October during the harvest is best when vines are heavy with grapes and leaves burn flame-red and gold.
- Keep your eyes peeled for honesty Fridges in vineyards stocked with wine; bring cash to buy a bottle for your picnic.
- On Cully's lakefront, don't miss a meal or overnight at historic **Auberge du Raisin**.
- Each village has a **caveau des vigneron**s (winegrowers' cellar) where you can taste and buy.



# Montreux



LAKESIDE CONCERTS | ART & CULTURE | NATURE



## GETTING AROUND

Bus 201 (15 minutes) links Montreux with Château de Chillon every 10 minutes or so. CGN boats and steamers from Lausanne (1½ hours), Vevey (50 minutes) and Montreux (15 minutes) dock right in front of the fortress.

Art, music and natural beauty collide in Montreux, 30km southeast of Lausanne. The elegant lakeside town was much loved by writers and artists in the 19th century (Lord Byron and the Shelleys, among them), and has been a magnet for the rich and famous ever since.

Promenading along the manicured waterfront lined with 19th-century hotels and flower gardens, shopping at the Friday-morning market on the quays, and lapping up the mild microclimate on a cafe terrace is essentially what you do here. Summer raises the curtain on a smorgasbord of pop-up bars and cultural happenings.

Rock-trivia buffs love the story of British hard rockers Deep Purple recording an album at the town's casino in 1971 and commemorating a fire that broke out during a Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention gig (also at the casino). The pall of smoke cast over Lake Geneva inspired Deep Purple to pen their heavy-chorded classic 'Smoke on the Water'.

## A Trail of Flowers to Château de Chillon

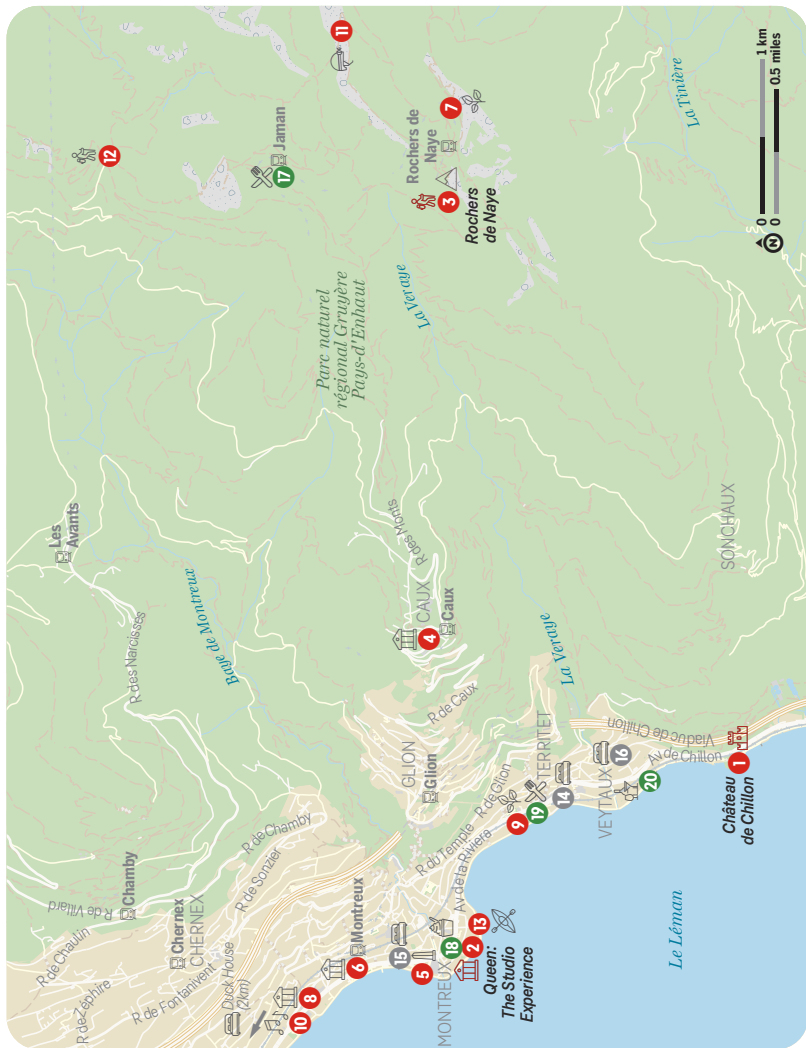
### Walking through art into history

Bejewelled with magnificent flowerbeds and contemporary art sculptures, silky-smooth **Chemin Fleuri** (Flower Path) unfurls serenely along the waterfront for 2.5km (40 minutes) from Montreux to Switzerland's best-preserved medieval fortress on the lakeshore. Spellbinding floral displays are positively tropical in colour, variety and abundance. This is Disney movie stuff.

Pick up the flat, wide, pedestrian promenade signposted **Quai des Fleurs** in front of water-sports hub **Nautic Loisirs** (pedalo/kayak/SUP/motorboat without licence per hour Sfr33/18/20/85), on the lakefront at the southern end of Av Nestlé. Consider a coffee or lunch at **Le Contretemps** in grassy **Parc Mannerheim**, and later stop for a *double crème* ice cream or Valaisian apricot sorbet at the vintage pavilion

### TOP TIP

Catch outdoor music concerts – jazz, swing, big band, lounge, pop, all sounds – on pop-up stages in parks and on the lakefront in Vevey, Montreux and elsewhere during July and August's Dolce Riviera festival. Consult [au-quai-ok.ch](http://au-quai-ok.ch) for quayside concerts and Montreux tourist office ([montreuxriviera.com](http://montreuxriviera.com)) for other cultural events.

**SLEEPING**

- 14** Auberge de Jeunesse
- 15** Hôtel La Rouvenaz
- 16** Hôtel Masson

**EATING**

- 4** Caux Palace
- 5** Freddie
- 17** Mercury Statue
- 18** Grand Hôtel
- 19** La Rambertia
- 20** Montreux Palace
- 21** Parc Mannerheim
- 22** Port de Terri
- 23** Restaurant 45

**SIGHTS**

- 1** Château de Chillon
- 2** Queen: The Studio Experience
- 3** Rochers de Naye
- 4** Caux Palace
- 5** Freddie
- 6** Grand Hôtel
- 7** La Rambertia
- 8** Montreux Palace
- 9** Parc Mannerheim
- 10** Auditorium
- 11** Grottes de Naye
- 12** Jaman
- 13** Nautic Loisirs
- 14** See 13
- 15** Qual des Fleurs

**ACTIVITIES**

- 10** Auditorium
- 11** Grottes de Naye
- 12** Jaman
- 13** Nautic Loisirs
- 14** See 13
- 15** Qual des Fleurs

**DRINKING & NIGHTLIFE**

- 20** Le Cabanon de Mam's
- 21** See 8
- 22** Montreux Jazz Lab

**ENTERTAINMENT**

- 23** See 8
- 24** Montreux Jazz Lab



## ALL THAT JAZZ

Floating bars, jam sessions, pool parties and dance classes: anything flies at **Montreux Jazz Festival**, filling Montreux with music and 250,000 revellers for two weeks each July. Its name is a misnomer: all music genres star. Pink Floyd, David Bowie, Elton John, Ella Fitzgerald, Aretha Franklin, Van Morrison and Paul Simon are among the music legends to have played here since the inaugural festival in 1967. Concerts take place on 11 stages; only those at **Auditorium Stravinsky and Montreux Jazz Lab** are ticketed (Sfr50 to Sfr500). Supporting young and emerging Swiss and international talent is at the core of the festival, and scores of concerts are free.

by **Port de Territet**. The bijou port is a popular swimming spot. In odd years during summer's **Biennale Montreux** (August to November), enjoy 50 or so playful, evocative sculptures along the quays up to here, by Swiss sculptors like Gustav Oggier, Sara H and Sonja Knapp. To ensure the artworks weather Lake Geneva's notorious northerly Bise wind, sculptures must be at least 2.5m tall.

Bewitching views of the medieval arrow-slit turrets and witch-capped towers of **Château de Chillon** dominate the final 1km leg. Linger over drinks, homemade cake and local chit-chat with Antonietta at **Le Cabanon de Mam's** (Quai Alfred Chatelanat). The waterfront cabin doubles as hipster beach club, with sun worshippers laid out on the grass and sizzling sausages on the communal barbecue in the rocks. Approach the castle, duck right to hit its sizeable shingle beach.

## Made in Heaven

### Celebrate Freddie Mercury and give back

It's no coincidence that a Montreux view of Lake Geneva features on the cover of British rock band Queen's final album, *Made in Heaven* (1991). Preferring the peace and anonymity of this lakeside town to the invasive paparazzi of his native London, lead vocalist Freddie Mercury (1946–91) rented a villa in the 1980s in the Montreux suburb of Clarens, 2km west. Gazing out at the water, **Duck House** – or Duckingham Palace, as the squat 1973 villa with leafy park became known – is now a holiday rental (search 'duck house' on [interhome.fr](http://interhome.fr)).

In front of Montreux' historic covered market on waterfront Place du Marché, fresh flowers adorn the feet of a 3m-tall bronze **statue of Freddie Mercury** (1996) by Czech sculptor Irena Sedlecká. Walk five minutes from here to the studio where this legendary 'lover of life – singer of songs' recorded seven albums with Queen before his death in 1991. Tucked away inside the casino, **Queen: The Studio Experience** is an emotive journey through the iconic band's final years in the recording studios that Queen owned between 1978 and 1993. Donations (free admission) go to the Mercury Phoenix Trust's work in fighting AIDS.

Admire Mercury's spectacular show costumes and his handwritten lyrics for 'A Winter's Tale' and 'Mother Love'. Stand on the spot where he sang his last recorded song in May 1991, and remix your favourite Queen song on a full-scale reproduction of the studio's original Neve 8048 mixing deck. To dig deeper, join a Freddy Mercury-themed guided tour ([freddie-tours.com](http://freddie-tours.com)).



## WHERE TO STAY AROUND MONTREUX

### Hôtel Masson

Slumber in hills southeast of Montreux at this enchanting vintner's mansion, a family-run guesthouse since 1829. €€

### Hôtel La Rouvenaz

This boutique hotel-restaurant at Montreux lakefront, with a contemporary ambience, is startling good value. €€

### Auberge de Jeunesse Montreux

Roll out of bed and into the lake at this hostel between Montreux and Château de Chillon. €



Montreux Jazz Festival ticket office

## Rail Adventure to Rochers de Naye

### Mountains, cheese and alpine flowers

It's noisy, clunky and suddenly lurches to a halt before spluttering on again on the steep mountain haul: Montreux' **cog-wheel railway**, departing hourly from the train station to Rochers de Naye at 2042m, was a technical tour de force when it opened in 1892. Plump for a front-facing seat in the vintage carriage (to avoid sliding off) and sit on the right to maximise pop-up lake views between tunnels. Hewed through rock in the 1890s, some are so narrow the train has to inch through.

From **Jaman** (1743m), mountain views are Herculean – tooth-shaped Dent de Jaman (1875m) is awe-inspiring. From the single-platform station, a challenging walking trail (1½ hours, 3km) climbs to Rochers de Naye through unlit **Grottes de Naye** caves (July to October, torch and helmet required). Inside the stationmaster's house, **Buvette de Jaman** (Wednesday to Monday) serves legendary cheese fondue, *croûte au fromage* (cheese on toast) and sweet blueberry tarts.

Alighting at Rochers de Naye (2042m) is breathtaking. Paragliders leap into the void and there are walking trails for all abilities, including back down to Montreux (3½ hours). An easy ridge stroll heads past marmot pens to a viewpoint marked with a wooden cross (30 minutes). Spot Switzerland's big three (Eiger, Mönch, Jungfrau) and snowy Dome du Goûter (4304m) in France's Mont Blanc massif. In the opposite direction, a 15-minute trail winds from the station to alpine garden **La Rambertia** (June to mid-October), created in 1896 and protecting 1000 species.



## MEDIEVAL CHAPELS & GOTHIC DUNGEONS

Lake Geneva's emblematic castle, **Château de Chillon**, was largely built in the 13th century by the House of Savoy and taken over by Bern's governors after Vaud fell to Bern.

Hiding magnificent medieval-frescoed chapels and grizzly Gothic dungeons, the château gained fame in 1816 when Byron wrote *The Prisoner of Chillon*, a poem about François Bonivard, thrown into the dungeon for his seditious ideas and freed by Bernese forces in 1536. Byron carved his name into the pillar to which Bonivard was supposedly chained.

Painters William Turner and Gustave Courbet subsequently immortalised the castle's silhouette on canvas, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Alexandre Dumas and Mary Shelley all wrote about it.



## WHERE TO EAT IN MONTREUX

### La Rouvenaz

The lunch at this contemporary Italian, with Moretti pizza oven and pavement terrace, is unmatched. €

### Restaurant 45

Great lake views at Grand Hôtel's grill restaurant; dozen-odd sauces to accompany steaks, and salads. €€€

### Confiserie Zucher

Indulge in *perchettes du Léman* (fish-shaped chocolates), pâtisserie and hot chocolate at this 19th-century tea room. €€





# Beyond Montreux



In keeping with the lakeside town's nostalgia for its golden past, day trips beyond Montreux embrace a similar old-school romance and eccentricity.

## Places

**Les Diablerets** p68

**Aigle** p68



## GETTING AROUND

SBB trains run frequently to Aigle from Montreux (10 minutes), Lausanne (30 minutes) and Geneva (1¼ hours). MOB trains on the GoldenPass line to Lucerne also use the mainline train station in Montreux.

The sublime views crescendo at this eastern end of the lake. With the serrated Dents du Midi in France lacing the horizon in the south and the low-key Vaud Alps lolloping in waves above Montreux to the north, this is where the lake melts into the mountains. Gaze at the water at sunrise or sunset to fully appreciate nature's uplifting symphony of muted blues, silvers, pinks and golds.

Tucked in an alpine nook, Vaud's inland tapestry of mountains is low-octane ski-bunny country in winter and captivating green escape in summer. Journeys east into Central Switzerland aboard a fleet of legendary trains – the Panoramic Express, Belle Époque and GoldenPass Express – are the icing on the cake.

## Les Diablerets

TIME FROM MONTREUX: 90 MINS  + 

### A dizzying bridge walk

Views of Mont Blanc and Switzerland's big boys – the Matterhorn, Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau – from the world's first peak-to-peak walkway are heaven-sent on bluebird days. The dizzying, 107m-long **Peak Walk by Tissot** on the Tsanfleuron Glacier in Les Diablerets' **Glacier 3000** ski area is an undisputed highlight of any trip into Vaud's mountainous pre-Alps. Summer is best for traversing the vertiginous foot-bridge suspended between View Point Peak (2965m) and Scex Rouge (2971m). Do not attempt it if you're scared of heights!

## Aigle

TIME FROM MONTREUX: 10 MINS 

### Two thousand years of winemaking

Grapes grown on vines carpeting gentle slopes around Aigle, 16km south of Montreux, make some of Switzerland's best whites. Learn how this small town at the southeast end of Lake Geneva became the capital of Vaud's Chablais wine-producing region at its **Musée de la Vigne et du Vin**. Thoroughly modern and interactive displays allow you to digitally take part in a Chasselas grape harvest, make your own wine and so on. Find

## TOP TIP

GoldenPass Line aside, rail company MOB operates chocolate- and cheese-themed trains from May to September from Montreux.



## SKIING IN THE VAUD ALPS

### Les Diablerets for Beginners & Intermediates

Isenau and Glacier 3000 (yes, atop a glacier) are Les Diablerets' most popular ski areas. Watch for the opening of designer glacier restaurant Botta (by Swiss architect Mario Botta) in 2024.

### Family Fun in Villars-Gryon

Swiss families adore this upmarket, uber-quaint twinset centred around the village of Villars-sur-Olon. Ski passes include access to Les Diablerets.

### Crowd-Pleasing Leysin

With 60km of pistes, there's something for every level of skier at this sprawling resort at 1350m, born as a mountain retreat for tuberculosis sufferers.

MARIO KRPAJ/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



Peak Walk by Tissot

the Wine and Vine Museum inside Aigle's 12th-century fairy-tale château, framed by pea-green vineyards protected by low stone walls and dried by the warm Foehn wind.

Each year international winemakers gather at Château d'Aigle for the **Mondial des Chasselas** wine fest, competing for the annual title of 'world's best Chasselas wine'. Otherwise, *caves* (wine cellars) selling wine by local *vignerons* speck the web of old-world lanes leading to the castle and provide an atmospheric tasting op year-round.



# Fribourg, Drei-Seen-Land & the Jura Mountains

## SWISS SERENITY, LAKES AND MOUNTAINS

Step back in time in Fribourg, savour Gruyères' cheese and bask in the Jura mountains' serenity. A unique Swiss journey unfolds in this unexplored region.

Tucked away from Switzerland's iconic alpine landscapes lies a little-explored region: the Canton de Fribourg, the three tranquil lakes of Drei-Seen-Land and the soaring Jura mountains.

Embark on a voyage through time in Fribourg's eponymous medieval capital, where cobblestone streets echo with history blended with the pulse of modern life. In the verdant fields of Gruyères, centuries-old cheesemaking traditions invite you to a sensory feast. Witness nature's grandeur at the Jura mountains' Creux du Van, where sweeping vistas await, framed by hiking trails that meander through rolling hills, dense forest and quaint villages. Val de Travers, with its alluring absinthe lore, adds a dash of whimsy to the region's storied backdrop.



Drei-Seen-Land, comprising the lakes of Bielersee, Lac de Neuchâtel and Murtensee, offers a peaceful respite whether you're strolling along their shores, lounging on beaches or gliding across the waters on gentle boat cruises.

As seasons change, this treasured part of western Switzerland reveals activities for every traveller, from winter's crisp white embrace to summer's lush greenery. Savour the quintessential Swiss delight of meringues with velvety double cream, toast with the region's exquisite wines, and bask in the warmth of local hospitality. Whether you're seeking cultural exploration, adventure or serenity, Fribourg, Drei-Seen-Land and the Jura mountains offer a medley of unforgettable experiences.

TALAT DAVID/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

### THE MAIN AREAS

#### FRIBOURG

Medieval charm and vibrant culture. **p74**

#### DREI-SEEN-LAND

Lakes, legends and tranquillity. **p80**

#### JURA MOUNTAINS

Nature's unspoiled haven. **p83**



XAVO/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Hiking, Gastlosen Mountain (p79), Fribourg



# Find Your Way

In the laid-back expanse of Fribourg, Drei-Seen-Land and the Jura mountains, pace yourself. Traverse from cityscapes to lakefront and up into Jura's heights, all at the unhurried rhythm of Swiss life.

## Jura Mountains, p83

The unspoiled landscapes of the Jura's rolling hills and charming villages reveal Switzerland's tranquil heart.

## Drei-Seen-Land, p80

Nature's beauty meets idyllic lakeside towns at serene Bielersee, Murtensee and Lac de Neuchâtel.

## Fribourg, p74

The charming capital city that straddles the banks of the Sarine River is full of medieval lanes and Gothic marvels.

### BICYCLE

Cycling unveils an intimate connection to the landscape, ideal for adventurous and eco-conscious travellers. Pedal through Fribourg's cobbled streets, wind along Drei-Seen-Land's lakeside trails and tackle the Jura's rugged paths.

### CAR

A car journey through Fribourg, Drei-Seen-Land and the Jura provides flexibility and comfort. Meander through medieval towns, pause at serene lakes and ascend mountain vistas, all at your own pace.



Jura Mountains (p83)

# Plan Your Time

Discover Fribourg, Gruyères and the Jura's captivating landscapes, rich history and culinary delights through immersive short breaks or week-long adventures.

## Pressed for Time

If you only have a few days, make the most of your visit by focusing on Fribourg and Gruyères. Start your exploration with a stroll around the medieval streets of **Fribourg** (p74), absorbing the historical landmarks, then head to the scenic village of **Gruyères** (p77). Here, you can savour the world-renowned cheese and marvel at the fairy-tale castle.

## A Week-Long Sojourn

Kick off the adventure in the captivating capital of **Fribourg** (p74). Spend two days exploring its medieval streets. Next, traverse the hills of **Gruyères** (p77), savouring cheeses at **Fromagerie d'Alpage de Moléson** (p77) and exploring the ancient castle. Devote the latter half of the week to the lakes of **Drei-Seen-Land** (p80) and the **Jura mountains** (p83).

## SEASONAL HIGHLIGHTS

### SPRING

Spring revitalises Fribourg – great for exploring vibrant **gardens**, seasonal **cuisine** and fresh air.

### SUMMER

The perfect time for revelling in the sun, **sailing** pristine lakes and enjoying farm-fresh food.

### AUTUMN

Autumn dresses the region in golden hues. Relish the harvest, witness **cheesemaking** and wander through **forests**.

### WINTER

With the Jura mountains swathed in snow, enjoy **snow sports**, warm up with fondue and join in the seasonal celebrations.

# Fribourg



COBBLED STREETS | ANCIENT BRIDGES | ARTISTIC FUSION



## GETTING AROUND

Fribourg's compact nature makes walking the best way to explore it. While its streets can sometimes offer a gentle workout due to topography, they are generally navigable and the views they provide are worth the effort. For longer distances or to tackle steeper inclines, the city has a reliable bus network.

A city steeped in history and cultural richness, Fribourg (Freiburg or 'Free Town') exudes a timeless charm that will captivate every visitor. Perched atop a rocky outcrop and divided by the meandering Sarine River, Fribourg's well-preserved medieval core offers a glimpse into its fascinating past. The cobbled streets, ancient bridges and towering cathedral are vestiges of a bygone era, while its vibrant arts scene and lively student population infuse the city with youthful energy.

Immerse yourself in this ambience as you explore the iconic Cathédrale de St Nicolas de Myre and the charming old town, sample local delicacies, participate in festive events and admire the works of local artists that dot the city. Fribourg's distinctive blend of old-world allure and contemporary vibe – along with its bilingual culture, since both French and German are spoken here – makes it an extraordinary place, inviting you to uncover the heart and soul of western Switzerland.

## Fribourg's Artistic Treasures

### Creativity in historic surroundings

In Fribourg, an inspiring fusion of modern artistry and old-time charm beckons. Begin your artistic discovery at **Kunsthalle Fri Art**, the old red-brick seminary and a contemporary art haven that showcases visionary works by local and global talents through temporary exhibitions. Don't miss the avant-garde universe at **Espace Jean Tinguely – Niki de Saint Phalle**, a museum located in a 1900 tramway depot and dedicated to the pioneering creations of Fribourg's influential artists: Swiss sculptor Jean Tinguely (1925–91) and French-American artist Niki de Saint Phalle (1930–2002), who worked with Tinguely from the 1950s until his death.

Be sure to meander through the cobbled streets of the old town, which are adorned with vibrant murals and street art that breathe life into Fribourg's communities.

## TOP TIP

The best way to explore Fribourg's alleys and discover historic landmarks is on foot. Climb up to the Cathédrale de St Nicolas de Myre for panoramic views of the city and the surrounding landscapes, and taste local delights at the city's bustling markets and charming cafes.



## HIGHLIGHTS

- ① Espace Jean Tinguely  
– Niki de Saint Phalle
- ② Kunsthalle Friart

## SIGHTS

- 3 Le Port de Fribourg
- 4 Pont de Berne
- 5 Pont de St-Jean
- 6 Pont du Milieu

- ## 7 Quartier d'Artisans

## SLEEPING

- ## 8 Le Sauvage

## EATING

- 9 Brasserie de l'Hôtel de Ville
- 10 Café du Gothard
- 11 Restaurant La Schweizerhalle
- 12 Restaurant Le Beldvédère

For a closer encounter with creativity, visit the **Quartier d'Artisans** along Rue des Épouses, where local artisans open their workshops to the public. Witness the birth of their creations first-hand as painters wield brushes, sculptors shape dreams and craftspeople breathe life into their materials.

## Tranquillity by the Sarine River

## Riverside views and historic charm

Follow the gentle flow of the Sarine River as it winds through the heart of Fribourg, revealing the city's captivating blend of history and nature.

The **Pont de Berne**, a covered wooden bridge built in 1250, is one of the oldest in Switzerland, while the photogenic **Pont du Milieu**, dating from 1720, was the main artery into the city of Fribourg. The iconic **Pont de St-Jean** offers splendid views of the old town's medieval architecture. Strolling along the riverbank, you'll pass charming cafes and boutique shops. **Le Port de Fribourg** is a lovely garden by the river and, especially in the evening, a meeting point for all generations.

## BEST PLACES TO EAT IN FRIBOURG

## Restaurant La Schweizerhalle

This local favourite offers authentic, mouthwatering Swiss cuisine. €€

## Café du Gothard

Tinguely's haunt with 19th-century charm and Swiss and French culinary tradition. €

### Restaurant Le Belvédère

Providing stunning views over Fribourg, Le Belvédère serves Swiss cuisine with a modern twist. €€

### Auberge Aux 4 Vents

At this historic *auberge* (inn), each dish tells a story of Fribourg's rich food heritage. €€

**Brasserie de  
l'Hôtel de Ville**

A hub for gourmets  
in the heart of the  
city, with a lively  
atmosphere. €€



## EXPLORING FRIBOURG'S CHARMS

Begin your adventure at the **1 Cathédrale de St Nicolas de Myre**, a Gothic masterpiece with intricate stained-glass windows and a grand organ. Head northwest to the **2 Espace Jean Tinguely – Niki de Saint Phalle**, dedicated to two of Fribourg's most famous artists. A short stroll north takes you to the **3 Musée d'Art et d'Histoire**, a treasure trove of regional art and historical artefacts.

Continue southeast to the **4 Basilique de Notre-Dame de Fribourg**, which has stunning interior artwork. To the east, the **5 Pont de Zaehringen** is a bridge offering panoramic views of the Sarine River and medieval fortifications. Venture south into the **6 old town**, whose narrow streets are lined with historic buildings.

Next, head west to the **7 Musée Wassmer**, a quirky collection of sewing machines and unusual objects. Stop by the **8 Schweizerhalle**

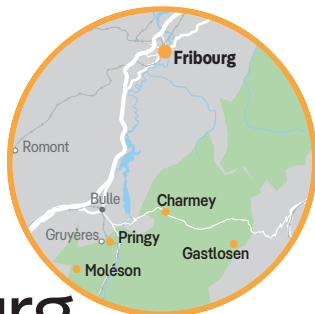
restaurant for some local fare, or pop into **9 Café du Gothard**, a cozy spot for some refreshments.

Proceed south to **10 Hôtel de Ville** (Town Hall), adorned with murals depicting Fribourg's history. Then head southwest to the **11 Fri Art** gallery, which features contemporary works. Stop for a meal in a historical setting at **12 Le Sauvage**.

Make your way north to the **13 Pont de Berne**, another vantage point with river views. To the west along the river, take a leisurely stroll through the picturesque **14 Le Port de Fribourg**. Continue to the **15 Église St-Jean**, a beautiful church with a rich history.

Further south, the small **16 Chapelle de Lorette** has lovely frescos. The **17 Église St-Maurice** is an historic church worth a visit. Finally, conclude your exploration by taking the **18 Funiculaire de Fribourg**.





# Beyond Fribourg

## Places

**Pringy & Moléson** p77

**Charmey** p78

**Gastlosen** p79



## GETTING AROUND

The villages of Gruyères, Bulle and Broc are connected by road and railway, making them easily accessible from Fribourg and to each other. Walking remains the best way to experience their medieval charm up close. However, driving offers the luxury of stopping at scenic spots at one's own pace.

Embark on a delightful discovery through Gruyères, Broc and Charmey, where history, chocolate and thermal baths await.

Beyond Fribourg lies a trio of enchanting destinations that epitomise Switzerland's cultural and gastronomic prowess. Gruyères, a postcard-perfect medieval village, is home to a bewitching turreted castle and famed for the delectable Gruyère cheese. You can see first-hand how the cheese has been made for centuries in Moléson, and also get an introduction to the art of chocolate-making at Maison Cailler in Broc. In the baroque village of Charmey, you will rejuvenate your senses at the popular thermal baths nestled in breathtaking alpine landscapes, and explore the Gastlosen area that's become a haven for hiking and mountain biking. This region's unique linguistic divide means that the western towns speak French, while the eastern speak German.

## Pringy & Moléson

TIME FROM FRIBOURG: 40 MINS

### The craftsmanship of cheesemaking

Embark on a flavourful journey into the artisanal world of Swiss cheese by choosing to visit one of the farms surrounding Gruyères – in Pringy or Moléson – where the famous Gruyère cheese has been produced for centuries.

The nutty, semi-hard cheese is a world-renowned Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (AOC). At **La Maison du Gruyère** in Pringy, you can witness the meticulous craftsmanship of master artisans as they create Gruyère cheese wheels, and indulge in a tasting session that unlocks centuries of gastronomic tradition. Alternatively, ascend to the 17th-century **Fromagerie d'Alpage de Moléson**, a rustic mountain dairy where cheesemaking is still being practised using traditional methods. Here, you can observe the daily cheese rotation all while taking in gorgeous mountain vistas. The alpine chalet also sells cheese and serves fondue and various typical mountain dishes in its restaurant.

For the more active travellers, the **Sentier des Fromageries** (Cheese Dairy Path) is a scenic, albeit steep, circular walk connecting Pringy and Moléson. This 7.3km trail takes walkers through cow-specked high-country pastures to mountain chalets with traditional shingle roofs where cheese is still

## TOP TIP

Sample Swiss chocolate delights in Broc village. One of Switzerland's oldest chocolate makers, Maison Cailler, offers tours and workshops.



## GRUYÈRES' CULTURAL LEGACY

Gruyères' two main sights combine modern-day surrealism and medieval heritage for an extraordinary time-travelling experience.

At the **HR Giger Museum** visitors can get immersed in the bizarre beauty of biomechanical artworks by HR Giger (1940–2014), the Swiss artist who was behind the alien in the *Alien* films. The museum bar opposite is kitted out in the same surrealist style.

The **Château de Gruyères** is a medieval marvel – this turreted castle was home to 19 different counts of Gruyères, who controlled the Sarine Valley from the 11th to 16th centuries. Its centuries-old rooms echo with history, featuring Gothic architecture, tapestries and antique furnishings.



NAME/CREDIT ©

La Maison du Gruyère (p77)

produced. The Maison du Gruyère in Pringy has brochures outlining the walk. It can be done as a four-hour loop, or a two-hour one-way walk, with return transport by bus from Moléson. You will gain unparalleled insight into Switzerland's enduring culinary traditions.

## Charmey

TIME FROM FRIBOURG: 40 MINS 🚗

### Relax in natural hot springs

Nestled amidst the rural landscapes of the Gruyères region, the sleepy village of Charmey attracts visitors for its thermal baths, known as **Les Bains de la Gruyère** (they are located some 13km from the eponymous village). The blend of warm, mineral-rich waters and picturesque alpine vistas creates a haven of tranquillity, while first-class facilities provides

ample relaxation opportunities. Immersing yourself in the soothing indoor and outdoor pools ringed by the mountains is a chance to unwind, and you can also opt for swimming or massages by experienced practitioners and beauty treatments. Quietest times for bathing are on opening and in the hour before closing.

## Gastlosen

### Hike through alpine beauty

For nature enthusiasts, the Gastlosen range near Gruyères – often hailed as the ‘Swiss Dolomites’ for its striking limestone peaks – presents a fantastic hiking adventure. Lace up your boots and hit the signposted trails that take you through ever-changing landscapes, from dense forests to expansive alpine meadows. Starting from the village of **Jaun**, the circular trail spans approximately 11km and takes around five to six hours to complete, making it an ideal day hike. Along the way, hikers can gaze up at the towering peaks such as the iconic Dent de Ruth. The trail also skirts past traditional Swiss chalets and alpine huts. Maps and brochures are available at the local tourist offices in Jaun and nearby Gruyères; guided tours can be arranged to delve into the geological and cultural significance of the region.

TIME FROM FRIBOURG: 1HR 



## BEST PLACES TO EAT AROUND FRIBOURG

### Fromagerie d'Alpage de Moléson

Taste authentic alpine flavours at this charming *fromagerie* (dairy), savouring local cheeses in a beautiful setting. €€

### Brasserie Le Tonnelier

This brasserie with a cosy ambience serves hearty dishes with regional flavours as well as local brews. €€

### Café-Restaurant des Remparts

In a historic setting with city views, this place offers classic Swiss cuisine with a modern twist. €€

### Cheval Blanc

A culinary escapade where classic Swiss dishes are reimaged with flair. €€

### Le Baron

The menu artfully combines local produce with international cuisine, served in a rustic setting. €€



## WHERE TO STAY AROUND GRUYÈRES

### Hotel Cailler

A historical hotel in Charmey offering chalet-style rooms and direct access to Les Bains de la Gruyère. €€

### Hotel de Gruyères

Cosy traditional lodgings in the heart of Gruyères' medieval charm, with views of the surrounding mountains. €€

### Hotel Wasserfall

Scenic views and comfort blend seamlessly at this hotel located at the foot of the Gastlosen mountains. €€





# Drei-Seen-Land

SPRAWLING VINEYARDS | SCENIC BEAUTY | HIKING & CYCLING



## GETTING AROUND

The Drei-Seen-Land is best experienced combining drives, boat rides and leisurely walks. The region is fairly flat, making it ideal for cyclists and pedestrians alike. Reliable bus and train services connect major towns and attractions; however, to truly enjoy the region's magic, take a boat trip across its tranquil lakes.

Nestled in the heart of Switzerland, the Drei-Seen-Land – translated as ‘Three Lakes Region’ – is the epitome of tranquillity and scenic beauty. Here, the glistening waters of Bielersee, Lac de Neuchâtel and Murtensee (each linked by artificial canals) merge to create a picturesque and heavily forested tableau that seems plucked straight from a postcard.

As you traverse the charming towns of Biel, Neuchâtel and Murten, you'll come across plenty of historic landmarks and enjoy serene lakeside walks. Beyond its sights, the region beckons with sensory delights: wander amidst sprawling vineyards and savour the acclaimed wines, experiencing a unique cultural blend where French finesse meets Swiss precision. For those with a penchant for pedalling, the undulating landscape is criss-crossed with cycling routes that weave through natural splendour and architectural wonders alike.

Even though it takes its official name from the German, the predominant language of the Drei-Seen-Land is French.

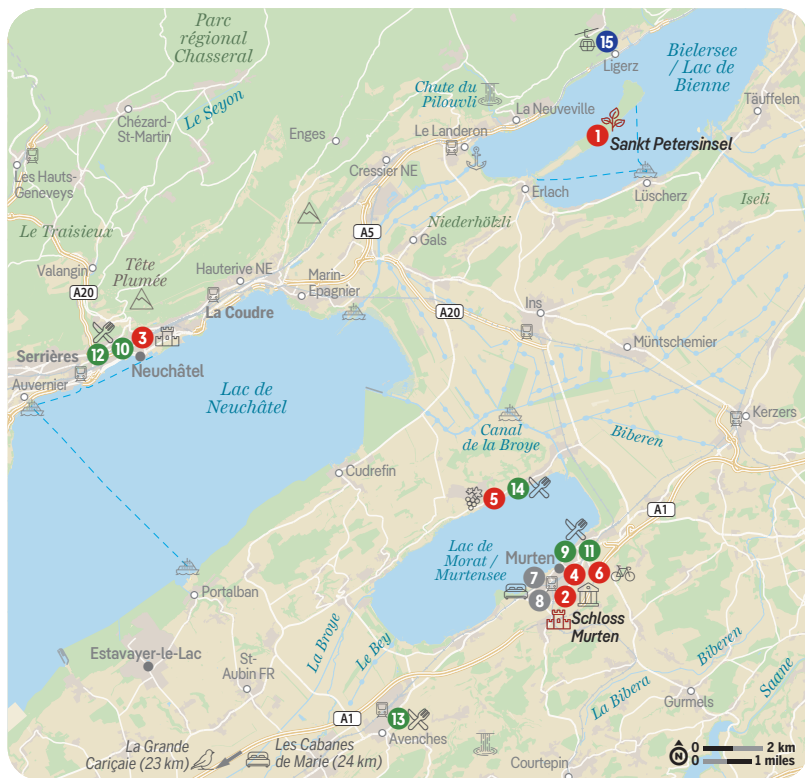
## Cycling Around Lake Murten

### Pedal past lakeshores and vineyards

Drei-Seen-Land's Murtensee provides excellent cycling on a scenic 28km loop trail that begins and ends in the historic town of **Murten**, where bike rentals are available at the train station or in town. The route has well-signposted bike paths, ensuring safety for all levels of cyclists. As you pedal, pause to meander among surrounding vines – the **Vully** vineyards offer tasting sessions, giving you a chance to savour the region's renowned wines.

## TOP TIP

Embark on leisurely cruises with BSG or Navigation Lacs de Neuchâtel et Morat across the three lakes, each offering panoramic vistas.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- 1 Sankt Petersinsel
- 2 Schloss Murten

**SIGHTS**

- 3 Château de Neuchâtel

- 4 Museum Murten

- 5 Vully

**ACTIVITIES**

- 6 Murten

**SLEEPING**

- 7 Adler Boutique-Hotel

- 8 La Pinte du Vieux Manoir

**EATING**

- 9 Chesery
- 10 Famiglia Leccese
- 11 Käserei

- 12 La Maison du Prussien
- 13 Restaurant des Bains
- 14 Restaurant-Cave Bel-Air

**TRANSPORT**

- 15 Vinifuni

## Retreat to St Peter's Island

### A day trip to Sankt Petersinsel

Sitting in the middle of Lake Biel, St Peter's Island or **Sankt Petersinsel** (Île de St Pierre) is a peaceful sanctuary. Celebrated philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau once found solace here, a feeling shared by many who visit. There are two ways to reach the island (actually a promontory jutting into the lake from the southwest shore, due to falling water levels) – on foot along the causeway from Erlach or by regular BSG boat services from Biel-Bienne. The sound of gravel underfoot or the gentle lapping of water accompanies you as you travel. The island is home to a historic inn, housed in the 11th-century monastery that was once Rousseau's residence and is now a restaurant offering sumptuous Swiss cuisine with a backdrop



## BEST PLACES TO EAT IN DREI-SEEN-LAND

### Restaurant-Cave Bel-Air

Lakeside gastronomy with fresh, local ingredients. Make sure to try the perch fish fritters. €€

### Chesery

Innovative dishes with a hint of tradition; cheese in all variations makes your palate happy. €€

### Restaurant des Bains

Delightful dining experience with a weekly changing menu for a variety of tasty options. €€

### La Maison du Prussien

Historic mill ambience and gourmet French cuisine – an elegant culinary journey. €€€

### Famiglia Leccese

Warm hospitality, family recipes and authentic Italian flavours in Switzerland's heart. €

### Käserei

Enjoy Swiss cuisine at this meeting point for cheese lovers in Murten. €€

of stunning lake views. Although the island is welcoming throughout the year, autumn drapes it in a particularly enchanting blanket of russet tones.

## Murten's Medieval Majesty

### Lakeside lore and festive traditions

Enveloped by the placid waters of Murtensee lies German-speaking Murten, Drei-Seen-Land's historical heart. Every brick and cobblestone whispers tales from the past. Begin at the town's imposing gate, part of the city's sturdy 11th-century fortifications. As you wander, the spire of the ancient **Schloss Murten** beckons. Climbing the castle's towers offers panoramic views of the lake and beyond. Then dive deep into the past at the **Museum Murten**, where the 1476 Battle of Murten is vividly depicted.

Yet, Murten isn't just about history. Contemporary cafes line the streets alongside traditional eateries. For art aficionados, the **Murten Festival of Lights** illuminates the town with all manner of projections and installations each January. If you're visiting during summer, the lake offers boat rides, linking Murtensee with Drei-Seen-Land's other destinations. As the day wanes, a lakeside stroll is indispensable, ideally capped off with a glass of local wine.

## Stroll Through History & Nature in Neuchâtel

### Castle views and birdwatching

The medieval town of Neuchâtel, with the eponymous lake forming its glistening backdrop, is an evolving story of history, art and nature's wonders. Explore the attractive 18th-century mansions and decorative fountains of the old town and don't miss the **Château de Neuchâtel** – the panoramic views of the urban sprawl and the surrounding landscape from the castle are unparalleled.

No visit to Neuchâtel is complete without experiencing **La Grande Cariçaie**. Spanning the southern shores of Lac de Neuchâtel, it's the largest lakeside nature reserve in Switzerland. With its lush wetlands and diverse bird species, the reserve is an oasis of tranquillity. Boardwalks guide visitors through reeds, allowing glimpses of the avian inhabitants; from observatories, one can spot everything from ducks to herons. Guided tours, often led by seasoned naturalists, provide insights into the ecosystem. While the reserve is open year-round, spring and autumn migrations are particularly mesmerising.



## WHERE TO STAY IN DREI-SEEN-LAND

### La Pinte du Vieux Manoir

Three glamping offerings south of Murten, plus a lakeside restaurant with a lush garden terrace. €€€

### Adler Boutique-Hotel

Follow in the footsteps of Goethe, Casanova or the Dukes of Savoy at these lodgings in Murten. €€

### Les Cabanes de Marie

A retreat for the soul, offering rustic elegance in cosy wooden cabins south of Lac de Neuchâtel. €€

# Jura Mountains



HIKING ADVENTURES | HISTORY | ABSINTHE TRAIL



## GETTING AROUND

While adventurers will want to hike the Jura mountains trails, those seeking comfort have options. A network of roads cuts through the mountains, though driving requires caution due to the curvy routes and potential for fog.

Public buses service many villages, while the small train lines offer a scenic journey through the peaks. While parking is available in most areas, it's limited in popular starting points for hikes.

## TOP TIP

Visit the majestic Creux du Van, the Jura's Grand Canyon, and embark on a hike to its summit at dawn for a spectacular sunrise.

Well-marked trails offer both challenging hikes and leisurely walks, suitable for a range of fitness levels, all leading to unparalleled views of this natural wonder.

The often-overlooked Jura mountains are a mesmerising and incredibly peaceful region of pristine nature characterised by rolling hills, dense forests and plenty of cows on the pastures.

The quaint town of Porrentruy is where history meets modernity, which is evident in its splendid architecture, cobblestone streets, alfresco dining and vibrant cultural scene. The Jura's largest city and Switzerland's highest, La Chaux-de-Fonds (along with its smaller neighbour Le Locle) is a Unesco World Heritage site.

The Jura mountains offer an array of outdoor activities, from hiking and cycling to skiing and snowshoeing, catering to every nature enthusiast's desires.

## Discover Porrentruy's Allure

### Stroll through a historic enclave

Porrentruy, located in the north of the Jura mountains, has a rich history. Dominating the village is the grand **Château de Porrentruy**, with its 44m-tall Tour de Réfous, which began its life in the 13th century; unfortunately, it isn't open to the public. You'll enjoy wandering the maze-like cobblestone streets of the old town, such as the main Grand Rue, which is lined with fine old buildings. Pop into the delightful **Musée de l'Hôtel Dieu**, displaying everything from books and clocks to pharmaceutical objects; it's housed in the gorgeous baroque building of Porrentruy's former hospital.

## The Artistry of La Chaux-de-Fonds

### Admire the watchmaking tradition

In 2009, La Chaux-de-Fonds was awarded World Heritage status for its historic value as a centre of precision watchmaking. Many of Switzerland's finest timepiece manufacturers are based here. A tour through the elite watch houses showcases the finesse and artistry that brands Swiss watches as unparalleled. You can witness time unfurl at the **Musée International d'Horlogerie**, a gateway to the town's watchmaking tradition; there's a huge steel carillon that plays on



**HIGHLIGHTS**

- 1** Maison de la Tête de Moine  
**2** Musée International d'Horlogerie

**EATING**

- 8** Le Cheval Blanc  
**9** L'Imprimerie

**SIGHTS**

- 3** Château de Portentruy  
**4** Musée de l'Horlogerie du Locle

- 5** Musée de l'Hôtel Dieu  
**6** Saut du Doubs

- 7** Kza Jura Swiss  
**8** Manoir de la Côte Dieu  
**9** Le Cheval Blanc  
**10** Maison Wenger  
**11** Restaurant Coq d'Or

- 12** Union Restaurant du Theatre

**SLEEPING**

- 5** Auberge du Mouton

the quarter-, half-hour and hour. Or head to the **Musée de l'Horlogerie du Locle** in Le Locle, 8km west of La Chaux-de-Fonds. The grand manor house was built for an 18th-century watchmaker, and its rooms are filled with all manner of clocks that make this museum tick.

## Monk's Delicacy: the Cheese of Bellelay

### Cheese tasting and abbey legends

The hamlet of Bellelay, ensconced between Biel-Bienne and Porrentruy, introduces you to the delightful legacy of Tête de Moine (Monk's Head), the cheese originally produced by the monks of the Bellelay Abbey. Relish the nutty flavour of this semi-hard delicacy, said to be named by soldiers of the French Revolution in jest. The fascinating ritual of shaving this cheese, akin to a monk's tonsure, adds a layer of intrigue. A visit to **Maison de la Tête de Moine**, a museum located near the famous abbey, offers a glimpse into Bellelay's history as well as cheese tasting. You can visit the grounds of the abbey, although it now operates as a psychiatric hospital.

## Nature's Serenade on the Doubs River

### The falls where the river sings

Discover the song of nature at **Saut du Doubs**, a splendid waterfall created by the Doubs River which runs along the Swiss–French border. From the village of Les Brenets, 15km southwest of La Chaux-de-Fonds, an hour's walk or a serene boat ride (operated by Navigation sur le Lac des Brenets) takes you to the falls. The river plummets 27m into a pristine pool, creating a symphony with its cascades. Saut du Doubs is part of the Parc du Doubs nature reserve, which covers almost 300 sq km south of the Doubs River to the Franches Montagnes.

## The Absinthe Trail in the Val de Travers

### Green elixir encounters

The Val de Travers is known for its association with absinthe, the tantalising 'green fairy' – it was here in 1740 that the bitter liqueur was first distilled. No visit to the area is complete without stopping by the **Maison de l'Absinthe** in Môtiers, a chic museum where the history of this potent drink is interspersed with tales of rebels and bohemians – including Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Vincent van Gogh and Oscar Wilde – and the banning of the elixir (with, some say, hallucinogenic properties). These days the region's distilleries are fully legal; you can sample the hard stuff in the museum's bar afterwards.



### WHY I LOVE THE JURA MOUNTAINS

**Michaela Scalisi,**  
writer

In the Jura, tranquillity reigns: each undulating hill and dense forest feels like a personal sanctuary.

The iconic Creux du Van stands majestically, a natural amphitheatre that rivals any other monument. The Jura's paths, often softly blanketed with pine needles, lead through landscapes dotted with remote farms and mirror-like lakes that reflect the vast open skies.

You can stumble upon secretive wildlife – from chamois to lynx – while navigating the limestone crags and karst formations. Every visit to the Jura is an encounter with the subtle yet profound beauty of a lesser-known Switzerland, a region where the slower pace of life offers a refreshing contrast to the country's more famous alpine destinations.



### WHERE TO STAY IN THE JURA

#### Manoir de la Côte Dieu

Stay and dine amidst history in Porrentruy, where gourmet Swiss dishes are served in an elegant manor setting. €€€

#### Auberge du Mouton

Historic inn located in Porrentruy's old town, with rustic charm and modern amenities. €€

#### Kza Jura Swiss

Find Jura's essence at this small boutique hotel in Courtoudoux with six rooms and unique lodges. €€



Above: Oeschinensee (p112); Right: rafting, Aare River (p90)

# Bern & Bernese Oberland



## MOVING MOUNTAINS IN SWITZERLAND'S ALPINE HEARTLAND

Shaped by a godlike hand, the Bernese Oberland forces you to constantly peer up in wonder at waterfall-splashed cliffs, glinting glaciers and cloud-shredding peaks.

Pulsing with culture, the pocket-sized Swiss capital, Bern, is a terrific springboard for diving into the region, with its World Heritage treat of an old town, Einstein connection and phenomenal stash of Paul Klee art. But even when you're getting a city fix, your gaze is constantly drawn to those whopping mountains on the horizon. The pull of the outdoors here is irresistible.

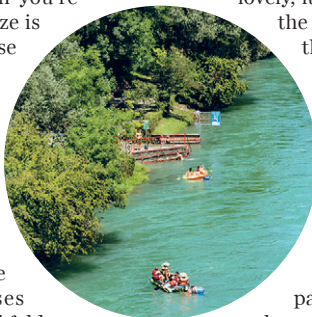
Swing east and you reach the little-visited, quietly pretty, folksy-through-and-through Emmental, a village where dark-timber farmhouses nuzzle into the pleats and folds of velvety hills. Here you can drop off the map for a spell of hiking or e-biking through cow-nibbled, flower-spattered pastures, stopping for tastings of the region's

famous holey cheese (and finding out its secrets).

And this is all just the drumroll for the Bernese Oberland. Just when you think Switzerland couldn't get any more crazily lovely, it hits you squarely between the eyes with beauty that is off the charts.

Whether you're hiking in the shadow of Eiger's gnarly north face, glacier skiing on a crisp winter's morning in Gstaad, canoeing past turreted castles and vineyards on teal-blue Lake Thun as sunset paints the sky in pastels, getting a top-of-the-beanstalk view of the Alps from

Jungfrauoch (3463m), or notching up the thrills white-water rafting, canyoning, skydiving or paragliding in Interlaken, this region will make your heart sing.



NEWTON/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

### THE MAIN AREAS

#### BERN

Historic capital on the Aare River. **p90**

#### INTERLAKEN

Extreme-sports hub. **p96**

#### LAUTERBRUNNEN VALLEY

Waterfalls and alpine thrills. **p103**

#### LAKE THUN

Life on the lake. **p110**



# Find Your Way

In Switzerland's west, Bern is the country's second biggest canton. Zipping around the region by train and mountain railway is a breeze, but bear in mind that summit journeys are only really worth making on clear days.

## Bern, p90

Switzerland's de facto capital seduces with its medieval Altstadt, world-class galleries and knockout location at the foot of the Bernese Alps.

## Interlaken, p96

Victorian-era glamour meets big mountains in Interlaken, which thrills with just about every heart-pumping alpine sport you care to name.

## Lauterbrunnen Valley, p103

Waterfalls leap over vertical cliff faces in Lauterbrunnen, the springboard for alpine adventures and legendary ski slopes in the Jungfrau Region.

## Lake Thun, p110

A heavenly vision in blue, rimmed by snowy peaks, castles, vineyards and elegant towns. Grab a paddle and go canoeing to see it at its silent best.



### CAR

Hiring your own wheels comes into its own in the region's remoter corners. It's a 45-minute ride from Bern to Interlaken on the main A6 Autobahn. If you're sticking to central Bern, public transport is excellent.



### TRAIN

There are fast, efficient SBB train connections linking Bern to hubs like Thun (20 minutes) and Interlaken (50 minutes). Incredible mountain scenery will have you glued to the window for the entire journey.





First Cliff Walk, Grindelwald (p105)

# Plan Your Time

Distances are small and public transport is excellent in the Bernese Oberland, making it viable to have just one base. Allow at least a week; you'll always wish you had longer.

## An Alpine Weekend

Chug into **Interlaken** (p96) and zip across to **Grindelwald** (p105), deep in the Jungfrau Region. The Eiger Express floats up to 3463m-high **Jungfrauoch** (p107) for stupendous views of the Swiss Alps and the Aletsch Glacier. Gawk at Eiger's fearsome north face hiking or skiing at **Kleine Scheidegg** (p105), or find thrills at **First** (p105), with zip-lines, go-carts and scooters in summer and a toboggan run in winter.

## If You Have a Week

Get a shot of culture exploring **Bern** (p90), its Unesco-listed Altstadt and Renzo Piano-designed Zentrum Paul Klee. Then make the short hop to **Lake Thun** (p110) for castles, canoeing and wine tasting among the vines. Next, catch the train to **Lauterbrunnen** (p130) for waterfalls galore. Head to **Mürren** (p109) for outdoor thrills in the Bernese Alps.

## SEASONAL HIGHLIGHTS

### SPRING

The valleys and lakes are glorious, with trees coming into blossom and calm days for **hiking**, **cycling** and **paddling**.

### SUMMER

The region goes crazy for outdoor **music and folk festivals**. The huts open in the Alps allowing hikers to tackle **multi-day treks**.

### AUTUMN

September brings **wine festivals**. Cows descend from alpine pastures and Bern goes mad for onions at **Zibelemärit**.

### WINTER

The peaks glitter and the **ski season** revs up in the Jungfrau Region. **Christmas markets** bring festive sparkle to Bern.

# Bern

UNESCO SITES | RIVER SWIMMING | HISTORIC MUSEUMS



## GETTING AROUND

With most of the top sights huddling in the compact Altstadt, walking is the best way to explore the historic centre.

Bern's public transport network, Bern Mobil, is efficient and inexpensive. Staying overnight entitles you to the Bern Ticket, which lets you travel for free in the central zones, including the Marzili and Gurten funiculars.

Bern is rolling out the PubliBike bike-sharing scheme. You can rent bikes on the Swiss Travel Pass and the PubliBike app.

## TOP TIP

There's always something happening in Bern. Spring brings Jazz Festival Bern, summer the Gurten Rock Festival and upbeat street-music shindig Buskers Bern, autumn the folksy Zibelemärit, with lots of partying and a giant onion market, and winter plenty of festive sparkle at the city's Christmas market.

On a particularly lovely bend in the startlingly turquoise Aare River, encircled by gentle hills and with views of the snow-frosted Alps, Bern is a looker, stepping from urban to outdoors without missing a beat.

Bern often pops up in those I-can't-believe-it's-the-capital quizzes, but frankly, Switzerland's first city deserves a whole lotta love. Its diminutive proportions (population 133,000) are in keeping with this small but perfectly formed land and the vibe is ever so relaxed, but don't be fooled – this city has history, culture and sights to rival the world's biggest metropolises.

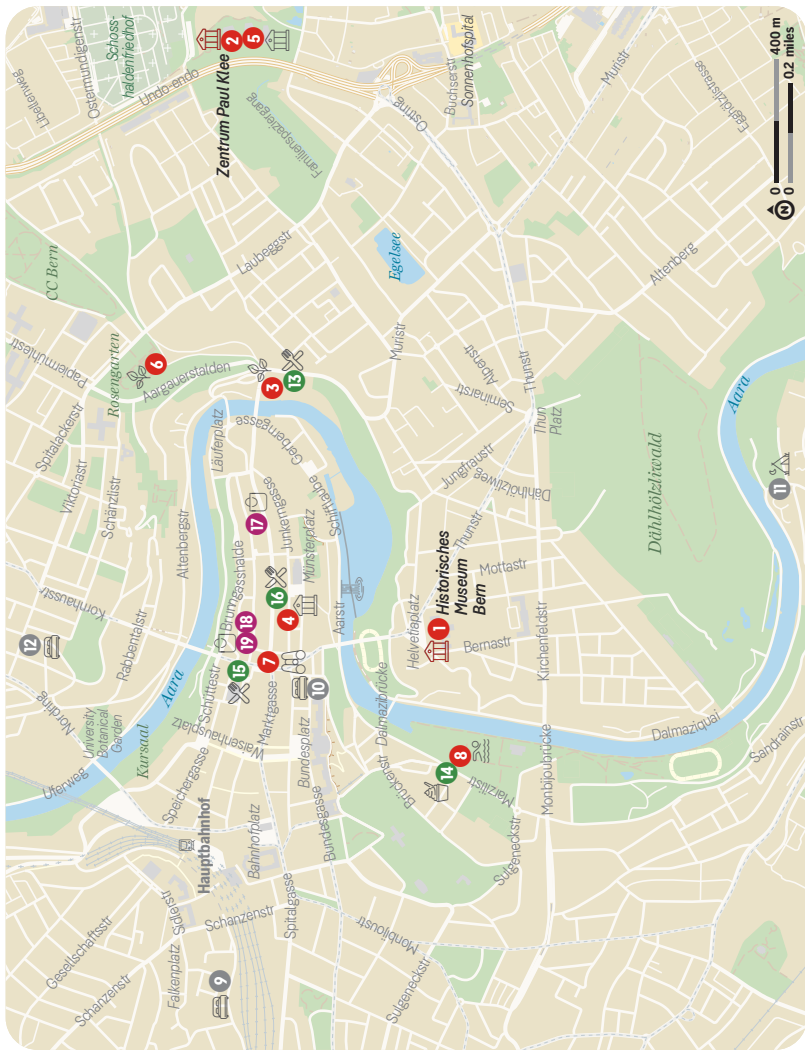
Devote at least a day or two to its Unesco World Heritage-listed heart, where you can trot in Einstein's footsteps, stroll 6km of arcades and dive into art galleries. Just beyond the centre, Renzo Piano's Zentrum Paul Klee rises like a breaking wave and showcases Klee's punchy, colour-charged art.

## Rolling on the Aare River

### Wild swimming in the city

Glacial meltwaters from the Bernese Alps trickle into the Aare River, which wraps around Bern like a perfect ribbon of turquoise. Come summer, locals can't wait to leap in. Whether you join them for a sunrise dip or to drift past the historic landmarks of the Altstadt, swimming in these shockingly cold waters is a rite of passage. You won't be alone: office workers ditch suits and strip down to their bathers for a re-energising midday swim. Around 18°C is the magic temperature, but you'll find the odd brave swimmer in the river even in the depths of winter.

Providing you're an experienced swimmer, there are several places you can go with the flow, with steps leading into the water and red poles marking entrance and exit points. Pop your togs into a waterproof dry bag and try the classic route: hiking 2km upstream from **Marzili Pools** to **Camping Eichholz**, then drifting back with the current to Marzili's brilliant (and free) lido. Here you can swim laps, sunbathe, play volleyball

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- 1** Historisches Museum Bern
- 2** Zentrum Paul Klee

**SIGHTS**

- 3** BärenPark
- 4** Einsteinhaus
- 5** Kindermuseum
- 6** Rosengarten
- 7** Zyglodge

**ACTIVITIES**

- 8** Marzili Pools

**SLEEPING**

- 9** Am Pavillon
- 10** Bellevue Palace

**11** Camping

Eichholz

**12** Hotel

MarthaHaus

**EATING****13** Altes

Tramdepot

**14** Gelateria

di Berna

**15** Kornhauskeller

di Berna

**16** Wein & Sein**SHOPPING****17** Bazaar58**18** Drachennest**19** Ein Laden



## EXPLORING HISTORIC BERN

Diving deep into Bern's Altstadt, this walk ticks off historic big-hitters. Begin with a nose around the greenhouses at the **1 University Botanical Garden**, stopping for drinks among the palms at **2 Café Fleuri**. The Lorrainebrücke bridge vaults the river to the stately 19th-century **3 Kunstmuseum**, which shelters masterpieces from Paul Klee to Picasso.

Strolling south brings you to the baroque **4 Käfigturm** (Prison Tower), where convicts were banged up for centuries. Nearby is the **5 Bundesplatz**, with its 26 dancing water jets (one for every Swiss canton). In late November, this plaza hosts the Zibelenmärkt (Onion Market), a folk fair where you can buy elaborately braided strings of onions and garlic and dig into onion-related street food.

The square's showpiece is the Florentine-style **6 Bundeshaus**, home of the Swiss Federal Assembly, with statues of the nation's founding

fathers and a stained-glass dome. Turn onto Amthausgasse, bearing left to reach **7 Marktgasse**, following the tram tracks past the flag-be-decked arcades to the medieval **8 Zytglogge**. Crowds gather below Bern's iconic clock tower at four minutes before the hour to watch figures twirl, including bears, a golden cockerel, a jester and Chronos, god of time.

Wander north on Kornhausplatz to glimpse the oddball among Bern's decorative 16th-century fountains, the **9 Kindlifresserbrunnen**, depicting an ogre snacking on children.

Backtracking and turning onto Kramgasse, you emerge at the **10 Einsteinhaus**, where Einstein lived from 1903 to 1905, honing his theory of relativity. A step south, you'll gasp at Bern's soaring Gothic **11 Münster**. Its 100m-tall spire is Switzerland's highest. Climb the 344-step spiral staircase for views over the terracotta rooftops and snaking Aare River.



or grab a cone from **Gelateria di Berna** – all with views of the domed Bundeshaus and the Münster's medieval spire.

For more adventure, **Aare Tubing** (aareschlauchboot.ch) will sort you out with tubes, inflatable rafts or stand-up paddleboards. Life jackets and safety instructions are included. Visit the website for details on locations, prices and bookings. And if you're craving more thrills still, give bungee surfing (bungeesurfen.ch) a whirl.

## Einstein's Bern

### In the footsteps of a genius

Bern has inspired many great minds over the years, not least Albert Einstein, who lived and worked in the city as a patent clerk from 1903 to 1905. Peering up at the ornate **Zytglogge** clock tower supposedly helped him hone his revolutionary special theory of relativity, our understanding of the universe and how gravity affects mass, time and space.

For a brush with the genius scientist, devise your own self-guided tour of Einstein's Bern. Begin at the Zytglogge, then seek out the **Einsteinhaus** at Kramgasse 49, the humble apartment where the physicist lived with his young family, now filled with photos and heirlooms. Or swing over to the **Historisches Museum Bern** on Helvetiaplatz for a spin through Einstein's life spelled out in objects, replicas and film. He can also be found (in sculptural form) kicking back on city benches including those in the **Rosengarten** and **BärenPark**. If you'd prefer company and the insight of a guide, hook onto City Tours **Bern's Einstein & Time** tour.

## King of Colour: Zentrum Paul Klee

### Swiss art in technicolour

Rising like three rippling waves above farmland just outside town, Renzo Piano's architecturally striking **Zentrum Paul Klee** is Bern's answer to the Guggenheim. The gallery is an astounding tribute to the visionary Swiss-German artist, born in Münchenbuchsee near Bern in 1879. Rotating exhibitions draw on an unparalleled 4000-strong collection of Klee's colour-charged, music-inspired works, showcasing his playful and prodigious career, from expressionism to cubism and surrealism.

Klee was well in touch with his inner child; the neighbouring fun-packed **Kindermuseum Creaviva** lets kids unleash their creative fantasies with hands-on art exhibits and the atelier's weekend Five Franc Workshop. Bus 12 runs from Bahnhof direct to the museum.



## OFF THE BEATEN TRACK IN BERN

City guide **Beatrice Gyger-Lang** shares recommendations for sidestepping the crowds in Bern.

### By the river

In summer, bars pop up along the Aare River. I particularly like **Eichholz** and the calm of the botanical garden. Head to the **Rosengarten** for sunset views over the river.

### Nature escapes

Go e-biking in Bern's green surrounds. Within minutes you're deep in a forest or pedalling across fields. **Lake Wohlen** and the **Emmental** are beautiful. The farm shops have seasonal produce perfect for a picnic.

### Hidden places

The narrow streets between the Zytglogge and BärenPark hide small shops, ateliers and boutiques.

Try **Ein Laden** for woodcarvings, **Drachennest** for games and **Bazaar58** for buttons and unique gifts.



## WHERE TO STAY IN BERN

### Bellevue Palace

Expect the royal treatment at this palatial five-star affair right in Bern's historic heart.

€€€

### Hotel Marthahaus

In a leafy neighbourhood, this sweet-and-simple guesthouse is crisply designed, quiet and sprinkled with modern art. €€

### Am Pavillon

A pleasingly converted late-19th-century town house near the Hauptbahnhof, with bags of art nouveau charm. €



# Beyond Bern

If you can tear yourself away from Bern, you'll find its backyard as bewitching as the capital is historically compelling.



## Places

**Emmental** p94

**Solothurn** p95



## GETTING AROUND

Reaching the Emmental region from Bern is a breeze. It's around a half-hour drive east of the city or there are frequent train connections to Burgdorf (15 minutes) and Langnau (30 minutes).

Once you're there, hiking and cycling are the best means of zipping around locally.

Emmental nails the country dream, with its bucolic villages and undulating landscape perfect for no-sweat hiking or rattling around on an e-bike. Its dairy farms produce the holey cheese that couldn't be more Swiss if it tried. The gateway towns of Burgdorf and Langnau preside over a patchwork of rustic chalets, thatch-roofed storehouses and grazing cows among fields of gold and green.

Stray north and you'll be blown away by Solothurn, an unsung baroque beauty. With piazzas, fountains, grey cobbles, city gates and resplendent cathedral, its old town feels distinctly more Italian than Swiss. Linger and you'll fall for its historic charms, fine arts museum and riverfront location at the foot of the mountains, especially after dark when the day-trippers leave.

## Emmental

TIME FROM BERN: 15 MINS 

### E-biking the Emmental cheese route

In a land mad about cheese, Emmental has the holey edge. In this lushly green region, cow-nibbled pastures and hip-roofed farmhouses snuggle in among wooded hills, overshadowed by the sky-scraping Alps. Of course, you can just go to scoff fabulous Emmentaler AOP, made with raw milk from grass-fed cows and cellar-ripened in giant wheels for at least 120 days. But to really feel the mellow beat of this cheesy valley, get on your bike or, better still, e-bike.

Kicking off in medieval castle-topped **Burgdorf**, a 15-minute train ride from Bern, the **Emmentaler Käseroute** is a self-guided, app-led e-bike tour, weaving in among fields of gold and green as it rolls from picnic meadow to timber chalet, dairy to farm-door cheese shop. The 35km one-day loop is a gentle ride, leading past lumbering old farmsteads bedecked with flower boxes, neatly stacked woodpiles and immaculately tended kitchen gardens. The 78km two-day loop takes you further still. It's wise to pre-book your FLYER e-bike online at [rentabike.ch](http://rentabike.ch). Charging stations are available en route.

If you're a lover of the soft, nutty, stringy, melty, gooey stuff, the route's highlight is bound to be the **Emmentaler Schaukäserei** in Affolter, where you can watch Emmental cheese being made into 95kg wheels and sample the goodness for yourself with tastings. Short videos race you through the production process, while traditional cheesemaking happens once a day over an open fire in the 18th-century herdsman's cottage.

## TOP TIP

Visit in mid-September for the Alpabfahrt in Sumiswald and Wasen villages, when cows are brought down from summer pastures.



Emmentaler Schaukäserei, Affolter

## Solothurn

TIME FROM BERN: 40 MINS

### A feast of art and architecture

With shuttered town houses in fresco colours, ornate fountains and cobbled alleyways echoing with church bells, Solothurn is an instant heart-stealer. On a bend in the Aare River, it's often touted as Switzerland's most beautiful baroque town and you can believe the hype. When the sun's out, its piazzas, cafe terraces and flower-filled gardens squeezed between old city walls hum with life and have a whisper of Italy about them.

The **Altstadt** is perfectly petite for exploring on foot. Top billing goes to **St Ursen-Kathedrale**. Architect Gaetano Matteo Pisoni restrained himself with the classical Italianate facade of this monolithic 18th-century cathedral, but went wild inside with a white-and-gilt trip of wedding-cake baroque. Other treasures include the lavishly stuccoed **Jesuitenkirche** nearby, and the **Zeitglockenturm**, a 12th-century astronomical clock where a knight, king and Grim Reaper jig on the hour. It's on **Märetplatz**, which springs to life during the Wednesday and Saturday morning produce market.

In a stately neoclassical building just north of the historic heart, the **Kunstmuseum** is an impressive repository of fine arts, presenting showstoppers like Ferdinand Hodler's famous portrait of William Tell (looking a bit like a red-haired, bearded Goliath in a white hippy top and short trousers) and the *Madonna of Solothurn* (1522) by Holbein the Younger.

You can easily tick off the sights in a day, but why hurry? Linger after the day-trippers have departed for sundowners at a riverside haunt like plane-tree-shaded **Hafebar**, summery **Solheure** or beach bar **Bademeister Sommerlounge**.



### GREAT RESTAURANTS IN EMMENTAL & SOLOTHURN

#### Zum Goldenen Löwen

At this half-timbered inn in Langnau, the menu speaks of the seasons and region in ingredient-led dishes like char fillet with peanut-cucumber relish and gnocchi. €€

#### Cantinetta Bindella

This smart Tuscan number in Solothurn attracts a loyal following with its candlelit interior and leafy walled garden with linen tablecloths spread beneath the trees. €€

#### Emmentaler Schaukäserei

The show dairy in Affolter is the perfect place for a cheesy brunch or dipping your fork into a bubbling pot of rich, gooey fondue. €



### WHERE TO STAY IN EMMENTAL AND SOLOTHURN

#### Emme Lodge

This snug rustic hostel lodges in an 18th-century farmhouse in Langnau. €

#### Hotel Möschberg

Wake up to cowbells at this eco-sensitive hotel above a dairy farming hamlet 4km west of Langnau. €€

#### Baseltor

A 17th-century town house turned chic boutique hotel, with light-drenched suites and an Andalusian terrace. €



# Interlaken

MOUNTAIN BUZZ | SWISS CHOCOLATE | FOLK MUSIC



## GETTING AROUND

You can easily get around Interlaken on foot, but taxis and buses are found at each train station, and the local guest card (free when you stay overnight) covers public transport in and around town. Alternatively, pick up mountain and road bikes, tandems, all-terrain bikes and e-bikes at Flying Wheels on Höhweg. They also arrange guided cycling tours.

## TOP TIP

Clued-up guides show visitors around Interlaken on fun two-hour guided walking tours, which begin at 6pm on Wednesday and Saturday. These give insights into local history, stories and legends. The meeting point is the ticket shop at Höhweg 95. No booking is required. For details, see [interlaken-walkingtours.ch](http://interlaken-walkingtours.ch).

Interlaken once made the Victorians swoon with up-lifting mountain views from the chandelier-lit confines of its grand hotels; today it excites adventure lovers with a million and one ways to make the pulse race – up in the peaks, on water and in the sky. Welcome to Europe's biggest extreme-sports hub.

Straddling the fast-flowing turquoise Aare River, squished between glacier-fed Lakes Thun and Brienz and capped off by the pearly white peaks of Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau, the town is the springboard for Switzerland's fabled Jungfrau Region and the country's hottest adventure destination bar none.

If the touristy town itself leaves you cold, the mountains on its doorstep will leave you elated and enraptured, whether you're abseiling waterfalls, thrashing white water in gaspingly cold rivers, jumping Bond-style out of a helicopter in Eiger's shadow or gliding soundlessly above 4000m summits. This is the great outdoors on a blockbuster scale.

## Thrill of the Alps

### Feel the mountain buzz

Backdropped by dazzling lakes and mountains, Interlaken's setting in the Jungfrau Region is film-set stuff. Snow or shine, these peaks, rivers and lakes will move you with adventures you'll be raving about for years to come. You might not realise it at first blush, but this petite alpine town is second only to Queenstown, New Zealand, when it comes to extreme sports.

Go with the pros. A highly reputable expert in the heart of town, **Outdoor Interlaken** ([outdoor.ch](http://outdoor.ch)) is a one-stop adventure shop for pretty much every buzz-inducing activity imaginable. You can glide among the 4000m peaks tandem paragliding or skydiving, bungee jump from a mountain gondola above a dazzling alpine lake, throw yourself along a thundering river white-water rafting, or canyon swing between narrow gorge walls at speeds of 120km/h.



**White-water rafting, Interlaken**

Up for a real challenge? Hook onto one of Outdoor Interlaken's expedition-style tours, which range from a day trip to climb **Mönch** (4107m) on foot, skis or snowshoes (depending on conditions and fitness level) to winter ski touring the **Bernese Oberland Haute Route** and – if you're mega-experienced and super-fit – a three-day ascent of beastly **Eiger** (3970m) via Ostegg. If you're not quite ready to tackle the biggies yet, they offer taster courses in rock climbing, ice climbing, snowshoeing and ski touring.

## Join the Funky Chocolate Club

### Pig out on Swiss chocolate

In a land obsessed with the sweet stuff, what could be more Swiss than giving chocolate making a whirl? Passionate chocoholics Sandy and Brad run the **Funky Chocolate Club** where 75-minute, hands-on workshops whizz through the chocolate-making process from bean to bar, moulding to tempering, and decorating to tasting like a pro – so much, in fact, that you're unlikely to want to look at another chocolate bar again for quite some time.

You'll take home one beautifully gift-wrapped bar, but if you have room for more (unlikely), the cafe serves a feast of chocolate



## INTERLAKEN'S ALPINE OLYMPICS

An Olympics of sorts, the **Unspunnenfest** has been going strong since 1805 and is Switzerland's biggest alpine shindig, with yodelling, alpenhorn playing, flag-tossing, folk music, costumes and dance, *Schwinger* (Swiss wrestling) in a sawdust ring and stone-throwing – notably of the iconic 83.5kg Unspunnen Stone. Only held once every 12 years, the next Interlaken games are set to take place in 2029. Tickets are like gold dust.

For those who can't wait until then, there's Interlaken's next best thing: **Unspunnen-Schwinget**, held in late August, and offering plenty of folksy fun in the form of *Schwinger*, alpenhorn playing, yodelling and more heavy rocks being tossed around with *Steinstossen* (stone putting).



## WHERE TO STAY IN INTERLAKEN

### Salzano Hotel & Spa

This intimate chalet hotel on Interlaken's fringes has a spa, mountain views and Italian home cooking. €€

### Victoria-Jungfrau Grand Hotel & Spa

Art nouveau stunner that's an answer to Raffles – with views of Jungfrau, eateries and spa. €€€

### Backpackers Villa Sonnenhof

Eco-friendly chalet and villa has immaculate dorms, a relaxed lounge and kitchen. €



## GREAT RESTAURANTS IN INTERLAKEN

### Little Thai

This hole-in-the-wall den is authentically Thai. Snag a table to chomp on freshly prepared spring rolls, homemade curries and spicy papaya salads. €

### La Terrasse

A class act at the Victoria-Jungfrau, with a sumptuous French orangery-style setting. The menu finesses regional ingredients in dishes like Swiss salmon ceviche with celery, truffle and borage. €€€

### Hüsi Bierhaus

This nicely chilled joint serves local craft brews with beer grub from enormous schnitzels to *Älpler Makkaroni* (alpine-style macaroni cheese). €€



#### HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Alpenwildpark
- 2 Harder Kulm
- 3 Zweiseensteg

#### ACTIVITIES

- 4 Outdoor Interlaken

#### SLEEPING

- 5 Backpackers Villa Sonnenhof
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#### EATING

- 8 Funky Chocolate Club
- 9 La Terrasse
- 10 Little Thai

#### DRINKING & NIGHTLIFE

- 11 Hüsi Bierhaus

treats, including chocolate-dipped strawberries, properly thick, creamy hot chocolate and chocolate cake. The English-speaking workshops are held at 11am, 2pm, 4pm and 6pm. Skip lunch and come ready to gorge as you'll be eating a lot of chocolate.

## On an Alpine High at Harder Kulm

### A head start to the Alps

One look at the 4000m giants on Innsbruck's doorstep and you'll be itching to hit the heights. At 1322m above sea level, the modest peak of **Harder Kulm** gives you a taster, with front-row views of Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau and the piercingly blue lakes of Thun and Brienz. A funicular races here in just eight minutes, but if you're prepared to hoof it up steep switchbacks through the woods, it's more fun to hike or run (the 8.2km loop trail takes around four hours). The most sensational view is from the **Zweiseensteg** (Two Lake Bridge), a platform that juts out like a diving board above the valley. It's never lovelier than when the pink glow of sunset renders the mountains into silhouette.

If you have kids in tow, they'll love getting up close and personal with the curve-horned ibex and whistling marmots at the free **Alpenwildpark** near the valley station.



# Beyond Interlaken

From sky-high trails to mythical jewel-coloured lakes and raging waterfalls, nature goes into overdrive in Interlaken's cinematically beautiful backyard.

## Places

**Schynige Platte** p99

**Brienz** p100

**Meiringen** p101

**Habkern** p102

**St Beatus Caves** p102



## GETTING AROUND

BLS boats glide across Lake Brienz from Interlaken, or take a 20-minute train to Brienz. The scenic Brünig Pass (1008m) is the road route to Lucerne.

Meiringen is a half-hour train ride from Interlaken or, if you're driving, just off the A6, which swings south to the Valais border and heads west to skirt the northern shore of Lake Brienz.

## TOP TIP

The Jungfrau Travel Pass provides unlimited travel for three to eight days on boats, buses and mountain railways from April to early November.



Even in central Interlaken, the mountains call with uplifting views of snowy peaks. Right on the doorstep is mountain-flanked Lake Brienz, a splash of startling turquoise. At its northern cusp, the town of Brienz offers a gorgeously preserved timber-framed heart, woodcarving workshops and steam-powered cogwheel train. Just a 10-minute trundle away is Meiringen, with thundering falls, glacier-carved gorges, Sherlock Holmes drama and some of the world's most mouth-watering meringues.

A quick shuffle south of Interlaken in Wilderswil, a staggeringly scenic cogwheel train has been trundling up to Schynige Platte since 1893. At the plateau, trails fan out into the Alps, including the rocky and ravishing Faulhornweg, with views of the snow-frosted Jungfrau peaks above and lakes Thun and Brienz below.

## Schynige Platte

TIME FROM INTERLAKEN: 5 MINS 

### Alpine hikes and stunning views

Since 1893, a little red **cogwheel train** has climbed to Schynige Platte from Wilderswil, a five-minute train hop from Interlaken Ost. Rewinding to a slower, more romantic age of travel, this rack railway is something special, teasing you with snapshot mountain views as it trundles up through wildflower-stippled meadows and forest. Eventually it emerges at the 2099m plateau, providing a natural balcony on the Bernese Alps, with gasp-eliciting views of a host of pearly white summits and lakes Thun and Brienz, glinting far below.

At the top, a headily fragranced **botanical garden** nurtures 600 types of alpine blooms, including snowbells, arnicas, gentians, anemones and edelweiss. Hiking trails teeter along the ridge and through meadows chiming with cowbells, including the 6km, two-hour **Panoramaweg** circuit, with uplifting views of the triple whammy of Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau. Paragliders launch themselves from the plateau in summer.

If you're a serious trekker, one of Switzerland's most memorable day hikes starts right here. Catch an early morning train to tackle the 15km, six-hour, high-level **Faulhornweg**





## GREAT PLACES TO EAT IN BRIENZ

### Bino's

On Brienz' main drag, this sweet and simple place serves freshest pizza and ice cream. €

### Steinbock

Cosy up or go alfresco at this old-school fave, well versed in Swiss classics like schnitzel in creamy mushroom sauce and pike-perch fillet with herby rice. €€

### Seehotel Bären

This prime lakefront spot riffs regional with pike perch, Lake Thun whitefish and hay-marinated lamb. Sit on the terrace when the sun's out. €€



MAKSYM KETSUR/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

### Hiking trail, Schynige Platte (p99)

trail, which picks its way across rolling pastures, scree slopes, boulder-strewn passes and high moors to the knobbly peak of Faulhorn ('Lazy Rock'; 2681m), with 360-degree views reaching across a sea of mountains to the Black Forest in Germany and Vosges in France on cloudless days. Views ripple across lakes Thun and Brienz as you walk from Schynige Platte to First, and humungous peaks like the dagger-shaped Wetterhorn and the big three of Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau. Stop for lunch and the dreamiest of views on the terrace of **Berghotel Faulhorn**, in business since 1830.

## Brienz

TIME FROM BINTERLAKEN: 20 MINS 

### Nostalgic rides and rustic romance

If a child had to draw a fantasy alpine village, Brienz, a 20-minute train ride east of Interlaken, would probably be it. With its cluster of dark-timber chalets sprouting red geraniums, tooting steam train and views across the startlingly turquoise waters of its namesake lake to high mountains and thick forests, this deeply traditional, time-lost village is pure Heidi.

It's the 21st century elsewhere, but you'd never know here. The loveliest lane of the lot is the curving, cobbled **Brunngasse**, dotted with immaculately preserved wooden chalets, each



## WHERE TO STAY ON LAKE BRIENZ

### B&B Brienz

This dreamy pair of dinky chalets peer out across the turquoise glitter of the lake. €

### Hotel Steinbock

On the lakefront, this snug alpine chalet has impeccable eco credentials. €€

### Grandhotel Giessbach

What a way to arrive: cross the lake and hop on the funicular to this prettily perched belle époque beauty. €€

seemingly trying to outdo its neighbour with window displays of vines, gnomes and billowing flower boxes. Homing in on Brienz' rich woodcarving heritage, the **Schweizer Holzbildhauerei Museum** on the nearby lakefront promenade shows the prized collection of the Jobin workshop, doing a brisk trade since 1835. You can see its intricately carved sculptures, reliefs and music boxes here.

The village is the jumping-off point for some fabulous excursions, starting with a ride on the **Brien Rothorn Bahn**. Switzerland's only steam-powered cogwheel train still in operation clambors up to Rothorn (2350m), from where you can set out on hikes or enjoy the long views over Brienzersee to a parade of snow-dusted 4000m peaks. Walking up from Brien takes around five hours.

Alternatively, hop on a ferry for a 10-minute chug across the lake to the trailhead for the **Giessbachfälle**. Illuminating the fir forest like a spotlight in the dark, this wispy torrent plummets 500m over 14 rocky ridges. Europe's oldest funicular, dating to 1879, creaks up from the boat station, but it's only a 15-minute walk up to the most striking section of the falls.

## Meiringen

TIME FROM INTERLAKEN: 30 MINS 

### Detective dramas and marvellous meringues

Writer Arthur Conan Doyle left his burdensome detective hero Sherlock Holmes for dead at the base of the Reichenbach Falls in Meiringen. A half-hour train ride east of Interlaken, this town remains eccentrically English. Every 4 May, fans in tweed deerstalker hats and capes flock here for the anniversary of Holmes' 'death', while year-round fans make for the **Sherlock Holmes Museum** in the basement of the English church in Meiringen, where the highlight is a re-created sitting room of 221b Baker St.

But Meiringen's drama isn't just a work of fiction. Gazing over the **Reichenbach Falls**, where the seven-tiered cataract plunges 120m to the ground with a deafening roar, you can see why Conan Doyle had the brainwave to push both Holmes and Dr Moriarty over the precipice here in *The Final Problem* (1891). To reach the falls, take the funicular from Willigen and walk back down. Or for more of a thrill, take the steep path up the side of the falls to the village of Zwirgi, where you can rent a trotti-bike at the Gasthaus to scoot back down to Meiringen.

Meiringen's rugged mountains are carved up by some of Switzerland's most arrestingly beautiful gorges, among them **Rosenluis**, a waterfall-splashed glacier gorge hemmed in by 80m-high cliffs, and the 200m-deep **Aareschlucht**, where



## RURAL TRADITIONS AT BALLEMBERG

Set across 80 hectares east of Brien and open from April to October, the **Ballenberg Swiss Open-Air Museum** provides a fascinating insight into the rural Switzerland of yore. Authentically reconstructed farming hamlets are an architectural romp through Switzerland, with 100 century-old buildings from humble wooden huts in Valais to hip-roofed farmhouses in the Bernese Oberland. Demonstrations – from bobbin lace-making to cow herding, bread baking, smoking, weaving, forging, grinding wheat, hat making and wood shingle-roof tiling – do a cracking job of showcasing Swiss crafts and traditions. There are plenty of kid-pleasing activities in the mix, with an enchanted forest and woodland playground to explore and rare-breed farm animals to pet.



## WHERE TO STAY NEAR SCHYNIGE PLATTE

### Berghotel Faulhorn

Put your feet up after a long hike at these enticingly rustic digs with knockout Eiger views. €€

### Berghotel Schynige Platte

Rewind time at this marvellously old-fashioned mountain hotel, with sublime views of the Bernese Alps. €€

### Dany's Camping

Pitch a tent at this sunny spot in Lüttschental, with walking trails and epic mountain views on its doorstep. €



## THE CALL OF THE ALPS

Reaching up to 3.9m in length, the impressive alpenhorn is a national symbol of Switzerland.

The long wooden wind instrument, curved at the end like a cow's horn, was used for centuries by alpine shepherds – to call cows in from the pastures and pacify them during milking in the barn, as a form of evening prayer for want of a church, and to communicate with farmers in neighbouring valleys.

Nowadays, alpenhorns are mostly carved from a softwood like ash, pine or spruce and fitted with a cup-shaped mouthpiece to make it easier to control tonal range.

Once considered the instrument of poor farmers, the alpenhorn had a renaissance during the 19th century.

tunnels and galleries lead past milky-blue torrents and limestone overhangs. Venture further still into the Hasli Valley and hike to the 170m-long, 100m-high **Triftbrücke**. Europe's longest and highest suspension bridge, it balances above the majestic Trift Glacier, which is turning into meltwater more swiftly than it used to.

## Habkern

TIME FROM INTERLAKEN: 15 MINS 

### Visit an alpenhorn workshop

The deep, resonant, hairs-on-end sound of the alpenhorn belongs utterly to Switzerland. Playing one requires practice (and puff), but you'll often hear them at summer folk festivals and performances, such as the free ones at **Hotel Schynige Platte**, from 11am to 2pm daily between July and October. Making them is a generation-spanning art. For an insight into this highly involved, artful process, join one of Heinz Tschiemer's spruce-scented two-hour workshops at **Berna-tone Alphornbau** in the little mountain village of Habkern, a 15-minute bus ride north of Interlaken West. You can also rent, buy and learn to play the instrument here.

## St Beatus Caves

TIME FROM INTERLAKEN: 15 MINS BUS 

### Discover caves of myth and magic

Looking for a perfect hermit's hideaway, Irish monk St Beatus stumbled across the **St Beatus Caves** back in 100 CE, or so the story goes. Unfazed by their resident fire-breathing dragon, he battled the fierce beast, sending it to its watery grave in Lake Thun. Word has it Tolkien also seized inspiration for *The Lord of the Rings* here. And ripe for a fantasy they are: cross foliage-draped cliffs and tumbling falls to enter the limestone caves, which burrow 14km into the dark heart of the Niederhorn massif. Dress warmly to follow the trail, which whisks you through grottoes stippled with stalagmites and stalactites and past underground lakes that have been sculpted over millennia. The caves are a 15-minute bus or more scenic 30-minute boat ride from Interlaken West.



## WHERE TO STAY IN MEIRINGEN

### Hotel Victoria

Designer digs with boutique flair, riveting mountain views and a restaurant with market-fresh flavours. €€

### Park Hotel du Sauvage

Arthur Conan Doyle once stayed in this art nouveau classic with friendly staff and superb views. €€

### Hotel Alpbach

Charming pine-clad quarters in central Meiringen. Up the romance by opting for a four-poster bed. €€

# Lauterbrunnen Valley



**WATERFALLS | CLIFF HIKES | SKIING & SNOWBOARDING**



## GETTING AROUND

Locals have harnessed these peaks with zeal, so getting around is simpler than you might think.

Frequent trains make the short 20-minute hop from Interlaken to Lauterbrunnen, which is the major transport hub for mountain railways, funiculars and cable cars. Grindelwald is a 30-minute train journey.

If you're planning on travelling around, invest in the three- to eight-day Jungfrau Travel Pass, which includes all mountain railways and boats.

## ✓ TOP TIP

Stay overnight and you'll reap the benefits of the Jungfrau Region digital guest card, with free use of local buses, discounts of 20% to 30% on mountain railways, plus reductions on other activities, guided tours and in shops and restaurants in the region.

As if cupped in celestial hands, Lauterbrunnen gazes up to the glaciated mountains that rise like a theatre curtain above it. This spellbinding valley entranced Goethe, Lord Byron and other romantic souls, with 72 waterfalls that crash over vertical cliffs in summer and freeze solid in winter. BASE jumpers leap fearlessly off its rocky ledges, and trails clamber up through its cow-grazed pastures and dark spruce forest. It's a chilled spot to kick back and marvel at nature's force – or wholeheartedly embrace it.

Lauterbrunnen is a handy base for forays deeper in the Alps, whether you're pounding Wengen's World Cup pistes, with Jungfrau above, or cruising Kleine Scheidegg's well-groomed slopes, with Eiger hogging the horizon. Above the resort of Grindelwald, First ramps up outdoor thrills, with summer zip-lining, go-karting and trotti-bikes. In winter, a challenging stomp through the snow brings you to Faulhorn, the starting point for a 15km downhill dash on the world's longest toboggan run.

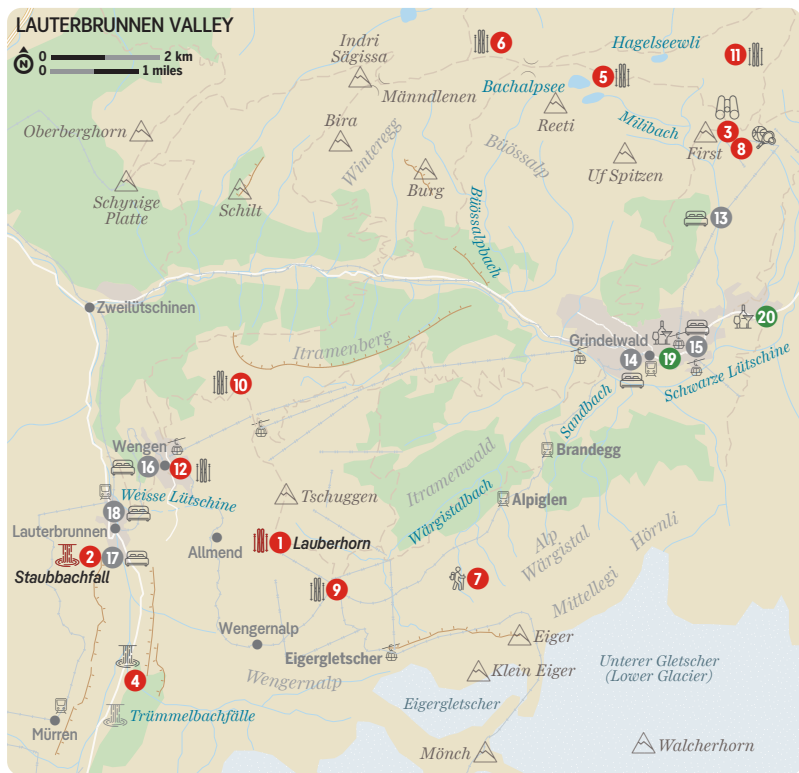
## Chasing Waterfalls in Lauterbrunnen

### Captivating cascades

In Lauterbrunnen, it's literally as though god whipped out the plug. On a summer's day, the valley is a paradisiacal vision, with pea-green meadows where cows jangle their bells lifting the gaze to vertical 400m cliffs splashed with mist-dashed waterfalls and ever higher to dark spruce woods and mountains glinting with glaciers. There are 72 waterfalls nosediving over sheer rock faces in the valley – a view that leaves some speechless and others tutting at smartphone cameras because every photo falls short of the wondrous reality.

The wispy **Staubbachfall** inspired Goethe to pen his poem *Song of the Spirits*, extolling their ethereal beauty, while Lord Byron compared the falls to the 'long white tale of the pale horse upon which death is mounted in the Book of Revelations'. Especially in the early morning light, you can see how this



**HIGHLIGHTS**

- 1 Lauberhorn
- 2 Staubbachfall

**SIGHTS**

- 3 First Cliff Walk by Tissot
- 4 Trümmelbachfälle

**ACTIVITIES**

- 5 Bachalpsee
- 6 Big Pintenfritz
- 7 Eiger Trail
- 8 First Flyer
- 9 Kleine Scheidegg
- 10 Männlichen

**11 Oberjoch**

- 12 Wengen

**SLEEPING**

- 13 Alpinhotel Bort
- 14 Boutique Hotel Glacier
- 15 Gletschergarten

**16 Hotel Silberhorn**

- 17 Hotel Staubbach
- 18 Valley Hostel

**DRINKING & NIGHTLIFE**

- 19 Avocado Bar
- 20 Bus Stop Bar

vaporous, 297m-high waterfall captivated their imagination, with its threads of spray floating down the cliffs. What appears to be ultra-fine mist from a distance, however, becomes a torrent when you walk behind the falls. Be prepared to get wet. Wear sturdy shoes for the short but steep uphill walk.

To make a day of it, stroll half an hour south to the crash-bang **Trümmelbachfälle**, which roar into a boulder-strewn gorge, accessed via a series of galleries, tunnels and platforms. The 10 falls drain the Jungfrau Region's biggest glaciers and snow deposits, with 20,000L of water per second corkscrewing through ravines and potholes shaped by the swirling waters.

## Picking Up Speed at First

### The craziest downhill dash

Rising above the adventure-mad alpine town of Grindelwald, the 2184m summit of First gets hearts thumping with its up-close views of the Jungfrau Alps. Eiger's ferocious north face and the 4078m fang of Schreckhorn feel close enough to touch from the **First Cliff Walk by Tissot**, a gravity-defying look-out platform jutting 45m into the void. Alpine choughs use the lookout as a take-off and landing place.

A short but insanely scenic hike takes you to **Bachalpsee**, at its most entrancing first thing in the morning when its calm sapphire waters hold up a looking glass to snow-polished peaks. The glacial lake is less than an hour's walk from the First cable-car top station, through high meadows brushed with wildflowers and jangling with cowbells. If you want to really let rip, come in summer, when you can whoosh towards Eiger on the **First Flyer** zip-line at speeds of up to 84km/h, with the peaks but a blur. In Schreckfeld, you can switch to a **mountain cart** to bomb downhill through forests and lush pastures. Stop at Bort to switch to a jumbo scooter, or **trotti-bike**, to rattle back down to Grindelwald at speed.

In winter, there's great powder up here for snowboarding and freeskiing. For a proper off-the-radar adventure with an element of challenge, drag your sled for 2½ hours on marked trails through the snow up to Faulhorn (2681m). It's the starting point for the 15km **Big Pintenfritz**, the world's longest toboggan run, which helter-skelters down slopes and through forests all the way back down to Grindelwald. The ride is best tackled in the early morning.

## Skiing in the Jungfrau Region

### Life in the fast lane

Whether you want to slalom wide, sunny slopes, with Eiger peeking over your shoulder, or pound the powder on breath-takingly sheer World Cup slopes, there's a piste with your name on it in the Jungfrau Region. Grindelwald, Männlichen, Mürren and Wengen have access to 211km of immaculately groomed pistes, spread across two valleys and three mountain ranges, with Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau forming one of the most arresting backdrops in the Swiss Alps.

Stretching from Oberjoch at 2486m right down to Grindelwald, the region of First presents a fine mix of cruisy red and challenging black ski runs. From **Kleine Scheidegg** or **Männlichen** there are long, easy runs back to Grindelwald



### WHERE TO SNOWBOARD IN THE JUNGFRAU

Olympic gold medal-winning snowboarder **Gian Simmen** reveals his favourite places to ride and unwind.

#### Snow parks

Grindelwald is surrounded by impressive mountains like Eiger. I love to ride the snow park up at the **Oberjoch** chairlift, with small and big jumps, rails, boxes and a half-pipe. With its flowy lines and stunning backdrop, it's never boring.

#### Off piste

If the snow is good, there's lots of backcountry and powder riding at **Bachalpsee**. The terrain is playful and easily reached by footpath – a great escape if the resort is crowded.

#### Chill out

After a long day on the slopes, we meet at the retro-cool **Bus Stop Bar** or in the **Avocado Bar** to warm up and make plans for the next day.



### WHERE TO STAY IN LAUTERBRUNNEN

#### Hotel Silberhorn

Chic, eco-friendly alpine style meets old-school charm at this central family-run hotel. €€

#### Hotel Staubbach

The pick of the timber-clad rooms have dreamy views of the Staubbachfall at this grand old hotel. €€

#### Valley Hostel

A great activity base, this chilled hostel has panelled dorms and a garden with compelling waterfall views. €€



## THE VELOGEMEL

Skis, snowboards and sleds aren't the only way to zip around on the snow. If you're in the Jungfrau Region in winter, you might spot the *Velogemel* going at full throttle.

This single-track, steerable snow bike was invented by Grindelwald carpenter Christian Bühlmann in 1911 to make getting around the Alps easier for everyone from postal workers to farmers, doctors and children.

Now this wooden bicycle with runners has cult status and its own world championships held in Grindelwald in February.

Rent one out at Grindelwald station or local sports shops; it might look scary to begin with, but after a few wobbly minutes, you'll soon be flying down the mountains (dig in your heels to brake).



BORIS B./SHUTTERSTOCK ©

### Hiking trail, Bachalpsee (p105)

that get up close and personal with Eiger. For a crowd-free swoosh, check out the 15.5km of cross-country skiing trails carving up the area.

On a heavenly perch above the Lauterbrunnen Valley, **Wengen** is a terrific base for hitting the slopes by taking the cable car to Männlichen or train to Allmend, Wengernalp or Kleine Scheidegg. Skiing is mostly gentle blues and reds, though experts can brave nerve-splintering black runs of World Cup fame at **Lauberhorn** and the aptly named 'Oh God'.

Clinging to cliffs on the other side of the valley, the snow-sure, 1650m-high resort of Mürren (p109) has staggering views of Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau, and skiing all the way up to 3000m at Schilthorn (p108). Here you'll find it all in the mix, from vertical descents to fabulous off-piste. If you're here in late January, don't miss Mürren's hell-for-leather **Inferno Run** down from Schilthorn. Daredevils have been competing in the 16km race since 1928.



## WHERE TO STAY IN GRINDELWALD

### Boutique Hotel Glacier

Knockout views of Eiger, stylish rooms in icy colours, mountain-facing spa and an outstanding gourmet restaurant. €€

### Gletschergarten

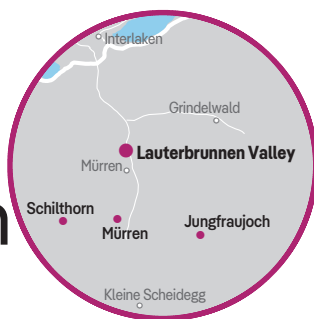
Brimming with pine, warmth and family heirlooms, this sweet family-run chalet has gorgeous mountain views. €€

### Alpinhotel Bort

High above Grindelwald at First middle station, this alpine chalet grants speedy access to the trails and slopes. €€



# Beyond Lauterbrunnen Valley



The Jungfrau Region has a whole lot of vertical. You only really appreciate how big and wild it is when you go up.

## Places

**Jungfrauoch** p107

**Schilthorn** p108

**Mürren** p109



## GETTING AROUND

The quickest way to reach Mürren from Lauterbrunnen is by cable car to Grutschalp, then transfer to a Mürren-bound train. In Mürren, you can take another pair of cable cars to Schilthorn via Birg. The Eiger Express is the best way to reach Jungfrauoch, with the journey to the top taking just 45 minutes.

## TOP TIP

Check weather conditions before heading up to Jungfrauoch or Schilthorn. Take warm clothing, sunglasses and sunscreen; there's snow and glare up here all year.

Lauterbrunnen is the jumping-off point for reaching the mountain village of Mürren, grafted onto a rock ledge, with timber chalets resembling toys against the colossal backdrop. Whether you're here to ski, hike, snowshoe through frosted woods or flirt with mountaineering on its via ferrata, the views of Eiger (the Ogre), Mönch (the Monk) and Jungfrau (the Virgin) are unreal.

Higher still, cable cars and mountain railways shoot through rock and ice. The ride to Jungfrauoch (3463m) is one you'll swoon about forever, revealing a Narnia-like scene of eternal winter, with the Alps rising and falling in great white waves. No less spectacular is eyrie-like Schilthorn, where you can live a Bond moment at head-spinning viewpoints and on knee-tremblingly steep slopes.

## Jungfrauoch

TIME FROM LATTERBRUNNEN: 85 MINS  

### Land of eternal ice and snow

The Swiss were racing towards sustainability long before it became a buzzword. Since 1912, a little red train has twisted up to Jungfrauoch, Europe's highest train station at 3454m. Fuelled by hydropower from the outset and blasting right through Eiger's rocky heart, the railway is a staggering feat of engineering.

As of 2020, the region has a new string to its eco bow: the **Eiger Express**, a fancy, super-fast tri-cable gondola covering the first leg of the journey from Grindelwald and using its wheels to generate green power. And the ride? Just wow. You'll be glued to the window as you float above a tapestry of meadows and spruce forests, emerging so close to Eiger's beastly, mile-high north face that you'll feel as though you're about to smash right into it.

At Unesco World Heritage-listed **Jungfrauoch**, temperatures plummet and the summit is always wintry white. Top-of-the-world views from the **Sphinx** observation deck stretch across an endless sea of snow-encrusted peaks – many grazing the magic 4000m mark – and the 23km swirl of the **Aletsch Glacier**, while Germany and France hover in the distance.





## GLACIER HIKING ON THE ALETSCHE

To really appreciate the full-on, mind-bending beauty of the Aletsch Glacier (the largest in the Alps), consider joining one of the two-day summer hikes across the ice organised by the **Outdoor Mountaineering School** in Grindelwald.

The huge ice flow winds 23km down from the peaks of the Jungfrau Alps to Valais. This unforgettable hike takes you properly off the beaten track, with a night at the **Konkordiahütte** at 2850m above sea level.

No prior glacier experience is necessary, but you'll need a head for heights, sure-footedness and the ability to walk for six hours with a backpack, sometimes as a roped team.



POSTIVETRAVELART/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

### Skyline Walk, Schilthorn

The **Ice Palace** is a subzero wonderland of frozen tunnels and sculptures, which are impressive enough today but must have been even more so when mountaineers first carved them by pickaxe back in the 1930s. Bring warm layers and boots, particularly for the 45-minute stomp through snow to **Mönchsjochehütte**, Switzerland's highest serviced mountain hut.

## Schilthorn

TIME FROM LATTERBRUNN: 50 MINS 🚠 + 🚡 + 🚠

### A Bond-style adventure

As the cable car glides higher above the pleats of the valley and great fists of rock, you feel like a speck on the face of the earth. Day breaks in golden glory above Eiger's mile-high north face. As morning commutes go, this is quite something. You won't forget the ride up to **Schilthorn** (2970m) in a hurry.

Other mountains in the Jungfrau Region have the height edge, but Schilthorn wins for drama, with its eyrie-like summit, **Piz Gloria**, providing wraparound views of 200 peaks, from Titlis to Mont Blanc and Germany's Black Forest on clear days. Get up bright and early to see the peak at its silent best and book a table for brunch in the revolving restaurant.

Embrace your inner Bond while checking out the helicopter



## WHERE TO STAY IN THE JUNGFRAU REGION

### Hotel Eiger

From the pool or rooms, the effect of Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau is mesmerising at this wooden chalet in Mürren. €€

### Mönchsjochehütte

At Switzerland's highest serviced hut, you'll share room and board with rock climbers. Rise at dawn for the sunrise. €

### Esther's Guesthouse

This adorable family-run B&B has spotless rooms full of light, family-sized apartments and an attic room for stargazing. €

and bobsleigh and brushing up on film trivia at **Spy World**. Or give the stunt skiers a run for their money by tossing yourself into the snowy void on the **Direttissima** (No 9) run, one of the region's scariest pistes with an 88% incline.

Dropping down a level to midway station Birg, the glass-and-steel **Skyline Walk** platform reaches out across a gaping abyss, with giddy views of glacier-polished peaks. To notch up the adventure further still, hook onto the cliff-hugging **Thrill Walk**, with its glass balcony and crawl-through tunnel getting you up close and personal with these wild, wild mountains.

## Mürren

TIME FROM LATTERBRUNAN: 30 MINS 🚗 + 🚠

### The Swiss fantasy village

Arriving on a clear evening, as the train from Grütschalp floats along the horizontal ridge towards Mürren, the peaks across the valley look close enough to touch. And that's when you'll think you've died and gone to Heidi heaven. With its pretty log chalets and ringside views of Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau, cliff-hugging Mürren is the Swiss Alps of your wildest childhood dreams.

One look at the village's Hollywood backdrop and you'll long to rush into those hills. In summer, chuck on boots to hike the 7.5km, 2½-hour **North Face Trail** via Schiltalp, starting at Allmendhubel funicular and ending at Schilthorn cableway. The trail is a beauty, looping through flower-filled pastures where cows graze and spruce forest that draws back to reveal views of Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau.

For more of a thrill, clip onto Mürren's sky-high **via ferrata**, with close-ups of the Bernese Alps as it teeters across sheer cliff faces to Gimmelwald. With its ladders, cables, 80m-long suspension bridge and arresting views of the Eiger north face, it's breathtaking in every sense of the word. If you're experienced, hire gear at **Intersport** in the village and go it alone, but otherwise let an **Outdoor Switzerland** guide show you the ropes.

In winter, the pull of the slopes is powerful. But to slip away from the crowds, pop on snowshoes to follow deer and alpine hare prints deep into snowy forests. The well-signposted 3.6km **snowshoeing trail** to Allmiboden and back starts at Mürren station, climbing up to the high moorland nature reserve of Chänelegg. You'll often walk alone, the only sound being the crunch of snow underfoot.



### WHY I LOVE THE JUNGFRAU REGION

**Kerry Walker**,  
Lonely Planet writer

Ever since I first set a snow-booted foot in the Jungfrau Region many moons ago, I have been entranced by its inimitable beauty.

This is the Swiss Alps in microcosm: insanely pretty villages pinned to mountaintops, summer meadows full of bell-swinging cows, valleys rising to forests, falls, jagged peaks and glaciers. There is poetry in these landscapes.

Whether drifting above a sea of snow-polished peaks in a futuristic cable car, hiking in Eiger's rough-and-ready shadow or sledding under a brilliant frieze of stars, this region is ripe for just about every alpine adventure you can imagine.



### WHERE TO EAT IN THE JUNGFRAU REGION

#### Mönchsjochlütte

A snowy stomp from Jungfraujoch works up an appetite for cakes, grub and cheese raclette at this hut. €

#### Tham's

Thai and Asian dishes cooked by a former five-star chef who's literally taken to Mürren's hills to escape the rat race. €

#### Hotel Eiger

With picture windows and a sun terrace, this Mürren crowd-pleaser serves everything from fondue to regional game. €€

# Lake Thun

CANOEING | ALPINE WINE | FOOD HOTELS



## GETTING AROUND

It's an upliftingly pretty half-hour drive on the A6 along the shores of the lake from Interlaken to Thun. But there's no need to get behind the wheel if you don't want to. Public transport connections are superb, with fast and frequent trains to Interlaken and Bern. Boats glide across the lake to Interlaken West and Spiez. You can also pedal around the lake on a 54km circular trail, hiring your bike or e-bike in Interlaken (Flying Wheels) or Thun (at the SBB train station).

## TOP TIP

Stay overnight at an affiliated hotel and you'll get the PanoramaCard Thunersee, a digital guest card that gives you free transport on local buses, plus a 20% reduction on Niederhorn, Stockhorn and Niesen mountain railways, an hour's free bike rental and a 50% discount on Thun Lido for a dip.

Holding up a blue mirror to the Jungfrau Alps, Lake Thun will have you rubbing your eyes in disbelief. It's lovely in every light and season: unruffled on a crisp summer's morning, mist-veiled and gold-tinged in autumn, or pewter as a pastel sunset smudges the sky. With a turreted castle plonked on a hillside above its alley-woven heart, Thun, at the lake's northern tip, is Disney movie stuff. Historic looks aside, it thrums with a youthful energy, with locals sunning themselves at alfresco cafes, riding waves on the Aare River and milling around the boutiques that huddle under elevated arcades.

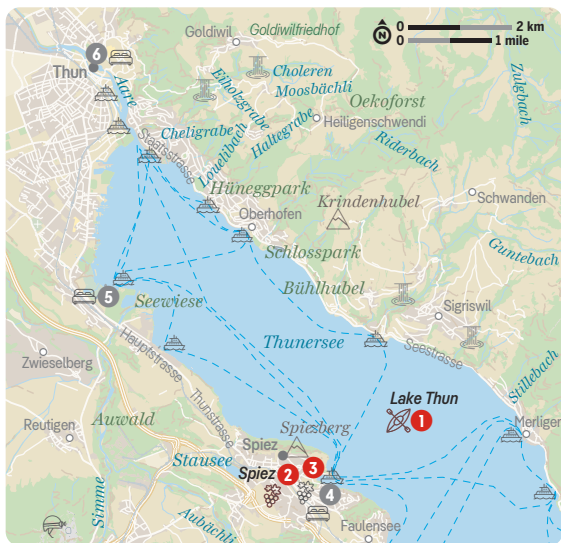
Use the town as a springboard for exploring the lake on foot, by bike or canoe and you'll find castle-sprinkled shores, vineyards laced with trails and beaches with insanely lovely mountain views. There are surprises, too: from top-secret bunkers to head-spinning suspension bridges and caves swirling in the myths of dragon-slaying saints.

## Canoeing Lake Thun

### A paddle along the lake

The mountains look like cardboard cut-outs in the crisp morning light, as you slip into a canoe and dip your oar into a lake as blue as the sky, peering up in quiet wonder at forested crags, neatly serried rows of vines, castle-topped towns and the snow-iced summits of Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau. Lake Thun reveals itself in all its quiet, wild, away-from-the-crowds glory on the **Kanuweg Thunersee** (Canoe Trail) from Gwatt, 4km south of Thun, to Leissigen, 9km west of Interlaken.

Rent a canoe or SUP at **Deltapark Vitalresort** for the 3½-hour paddle to the wine town of Spiez, stopping to swim, picnic or fire up a barbecue in designated areas on the shores. For details on routes and rental pickup and drop-off points, visit [kanuwegthunersee.ch](http://kanuwegthunersee.ch).

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- 1 Lake Thun
- 2 Spiez

**SIGHTS**

- 3 Alpine Weinkultur

**SLEEPING**

- 4 Belvédère Strandhotel
- 5 Deltapark Vitalresort
- 6 Schwert



## GREAT FOODIE HOTELS ON LAKE THUN

### Deltapark Vitalresort

On the northern shores of Lake Thun, this resort has slick contemporary rooms, a vast spa and a gourmet Thai restaurant. €€

### Schwert

At the foot of Schloss Thun, this graceful, antique-sprinkled 18th-century hotel has an inviting wood-panelled restaurant. €€

### Belvédère Strandhotel

Winging you back 100 years, this grand hotel in Spiez harbours nouveau-chic, lake-facing rooms, a spa and a highly regarded restaurant playing up regional produce. €€€

## Popping a Cork in Spiez

### Wine tasting and vineyard trails

On a fjord-like slither of Lake Thun at the foot of the conical peak of Niesen (2362m), the mellow little town of **Spiez** is the fairytale fantasy, with a turreted medieval castle perched above a horseshoe-shaped bay. There's snow up in those mountains, but here emerald vines thrive in the local microclimate, producing fresh, fruit-forward riesling and Sylvaner white wines. The castle's cellars are where the local wine co-operative, **Alpine Weinkultur**, ages its tipples. Join them for an hour-long tour and three-wine tasting (advance booking essential), or link up with the 1km wine adventure trail, which tiptoes through the vines and whisks you through the winemaking process from grape to glass with 12 info panels.

In mid-September, Spiez uncorks its finest wines at the **Läset-Sunntig** wine festival, when parades, markets, wine walks and tastings accompany much drinking and merry-making.



# Beyond Lake Thun

Head into the alpine wilds to hike over impressive mountain passes and speed downhill on glacier slopes.



## Places

**Kandersteg** p112

**Gstaad** p113



## GETTING AROUND

If you're driving, Kandersteg is 26km south of Spiez, which connects with the A8 heading east to Interlaken and the A6 west to Thun.

At the northern end of the Lötschberg Tunnel, it can also be reached by hourly train from Interlaken Ost. Gstaad is a straightforward hour's drive southwest of Lake Thun. A postal bus runs between Gstaad and Les Diablerets several times daily.

## TOP TIP

Many hotels and restaurants close entirely from May to June and October to November. Expect rock-bottom rates at the few places still open.

To the south of Thun, peaks ripple ever higher. Spiez is but a cork-pop from the Diemtital Nature Park, an under-the-radar wilderness where hiking and cycling trails weave through silent forests and flower-daubed meadows. Rural heritage is proudly preserved, with timber facades, ornately carved and painted, and alpine dairies where cheese is made the old-fashioned way.

Trains chug south to hiker's nirvana, Kandersteg, where pulse-quickening trails lead to jewel-coloured lakes, gnarly peaks and the Gemmi Pass, dropping over the shoulder of the Daubenhorn to Leukerbad in Valais. Moving west, the glam resort of Gstaad is a mega hit of outdoor action, with magnificent slopes to play on, views of mountains whooshing above 4000m and icy escapades on Glacier 3000.

## Kandersteg

TIME FROM LAKE THUN: 30 MINS 

### Hit the mountain trails

Turn up in Kandersteg wearing anything but muddy boots and you'll attract a few odd looks. A half-hour train ride from Spiez, this rustic village is where the Bernese Oberland rubs shoulders with Valais. Kandersteg's 550km of diligently way-marked trails give you a backstage pass to proper wilderness, whether you're stomping through sap-scented woods to lakes of piercing blue or hiking over starkly beautiful mountain passes.

Ease yourself in on the 3km, 1½-hour trail over brook and flower-flecked meadow to 1578m-high **Oeschinensee**. A bolt of cerulean blue, the lake is unbelievably lovely, rimmed by spruce forest and ragged, waterfall-splashed peaks. Swim in its tinglingly cold waters or row across them.

Another looker of a lake is **Blausee**, enmeshed in the mossy, fairy-like woods of a nature park, a 6km hike from Kandersteg. Glide across its exquisitely turquoise waters in a glass-bottomed boat and eat fresh trout fished in them in the restaurant on its shores.

Pack a picnic for a full-on day hike crossing the 2270m **Gemmi Pass** to Leukerbad. Allow six to seven hours for this moderately challenging, 14.5km return trek. Up here at eye level with ibex and glaciers, the mountain scenery is out of



this world, with gnarly, cloud-wisped peaks punching above the braided folds of valleys and dark-timber chalets that look as tiny as toys. Travellers have trod this north-south route through the Alps for centuries, Mark Twain and Jules Verne among them.

## Gstaad

### Glaciers and glamour

Swiss pistes don't get posher than those in Gstaad, where skiing comes with a spritz of glamour and celebrity-spotting magic. Beyond the town's five-star hotels, designer boutiques and fancy restaurants, colossal peaks and glaciers beckon, where you can carve 200km of perfectly groomed slopes between 1000m and 3000m. If night skiing is your thing, speed downhill by the light of the moon and stars.

The icing on the cake is **Glacier 3000**, situated high above the pass road between Gstaad and Les Diablerets and affording sensational views of 4000m peaks. It's eternally winter at this glacier, which has the longest ski season in the Bernese Alps, running from late October through early May. Come to swoon over the views, ski your heart out or hone your boarding skills on the rails, kickers and boxes at the snow park. For the full-on Narnia effect in winter, kip in an igloo at the **Iglu Dorf** and be the first to see the sun rise above the slopes.

Summers are just as active, with heart-pumping moments on **Peak Walk by Tissot**, a nerve-splintering suspension bridge linking two mountains, with outrageous views of Matterhorn, Mont Blanc, Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau. Starting at Sex Rouge mountain stage, a 3km, hour-long **Glacier Walk** takes you across the surreally blue, deeply crevassed ice. Kids love dog-sledding with howling huskies and dashing downhill at speeds of up to 40km/h on the **Alpine Coaster** bobsled.

To reach the glacier from Gstaad, take a half-hour bus ride to Col du Pillon, where a cable car trundles to the summit.

TIME FROM LAKE THUN: 30 MINS 



## GREAT ROMANTIC ESCAPES IN KANDERSTEG

### Berghotel Oeschinensee

To experience Oeschinensee lake in pin-drop peace, overnight at this 19th-century, family-run chalet with impeccable eco-credentials. €€

### Ruedihus

Oozing 250 years of history from every creaking beam, this archetypal alpine chalet is a stunner, with low ceilings, antique painted furniture and four-poster beds. €€

### Hayloft

Picture a dark-wood, 500-year-old chalet snuggled against the hillside, flower-strewn meadows where cows graze placidly, views of waterfalls and glaciers – ahhh, this place sure is idyllic! €



## WHERE TO EAT IN KANDERSTEG

### Nico's

Field-to-fork and foraged ingredients in dishes from wild garlic gnocchi to Blausee trout in herb-nut butter. €€

### Ruedihus

Home-grown herbs pepper dishes at this woodsy eatery. Go for fondue, pot roast or specially cured ham. €€

### Bernerhof

At this cosy tavern in Hotel Bernerhof, the seasonal menu includes everything from wild garlic to local fish and game. €€



# Valais

## ACTION AT ALTITUDE AND ALPINE FEASTING

The story of Valais is one of rags to riches, of changing seasons and celebrities, of outdoor life so fantastic it never goes out of fashion.

Tucked away in remote southern Switzerland, natural beauty Valais is where farmers a century ago were so poor they didn't have two francs to rub together and where starlet millennials today sip champagne cocktails with Europe's most monied in Verbier nightclubs.

Landscapes here leave you dumbstruck: from the unfathomable Matterhorn (4478m; pictured) that defies trigonometry to the Rhône Valley's steep vineyards woven with medieval *bisses* (irrigation channels), or the shimmering Aletsch Glacier. With such extraordinary backdrops to dig into, how can any hike, bike or ski tour be anything but momentous?

Across the board, tradition stubbornly rules the roost, from cow fights to glacier

wine and unusual death rituals. October's dazzling gold-leaf days of autumn bring La Brisolée – a celebratory banquet of game, apples, pears, cheeses, chestnuts and other fruits of the forest – to home tables.

The western part speaks French, the eastern German, but cantonal pride unites both in matters of fine wine, glorious cheese and the finest Swiss beef from silky black cows originating in the sleepy and stunning Val d'Hérens.

Travel here is about savouring life's small pleasures – at leisure: an espresso laced with liqueur made from Valais apricots, fluffy cottonwoods dancing in the wind, a cheese fondue enjoyed at altitude, and a sledge home beneath the stars on silent snowy slopes.



ANDREW ANGELOV/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

### THE MAIN AREAS

#### MARTIGNY

Roman gateway to the Alps. **p118**

#### SION

Valais' epicurean heart and vineyard. **p126**

#### ZERMATT

Bucket-list mountain town. **p133**



EKATERINA GRAYEV/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Left: Gornergrat ski resort (p137); Above: Aletsch Glacier (p140)

# Find Your Way

You'll find plenty of (hilly) walking in Valais. There are no major cities and even the largest towns are easily walkable; use bikes and buses for longer distances out of town, and cable cars in mountain resorts.

## Sion, p126

Suisse Romande's love affair with good food and fine wine spills across cafe pavement terraces, wine bars and surrounding vineyards in its epicurean heart.

## Martigny, p118

It's not difficult to feel the French pulse in this sizeable Roman town, gateway to the Swiss Alps and neighbour to Chamonix in France.

## Zermatt, p133

One of Switzerland's few ski resorts to buzz with local life year-round, this historic town at the foot of the Matterhorn is an unparalleled alpine playground.



### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Roads to ski resorts are steep and serpentine. Winter tyres are essential from November to early April. Check cols (mountain passes) before setting out; Col du Grand St Bernard (into Italy) and Furka Pass close in winter.



### TRAIN

Regular SBB trains traverse the valley to Sion, Martigny and Zermatt. Trains and car-shuttle trains use the Furka Base Tunnel from Andermatt (Central Switzerland). Car-shuttle trains link Kandersteg (Bernese Oberland) with Goppenstein above Visp.







Col du Grand St Bernard (St Bernard Pass; p118)

# Plan Your Time

Where you go depends on the time of year. Avoid crowds by checking the 'crowd prediction' tab on the destination pages of [myswitzerland.com](http://myswitzerland.com). Favour unsung villages over celebrity hotspots to reduce costs.

## Autumnal Escape

It's not the obvious season to hit such a bucket-list skiing destination, but time your visit with the *vendange* (grape harvest) in vineyards around **Sion** (p126) and you won't regret it. Spend a day walking and wine tasting between vines from **Sierre** (p130) to **Salgesch**. Feast on autumn's fiery red palette in **Val d'Anniviers** (p130), and overnight on the **Col du Grand St Bernard** (p118).

## Alpine Beach Holiday

Trade a beach sizzle on the Med for scenic hiking, jaw-dropping mountain biking and dipping into jewel-like lakes at altitude. Spend a few days in **Zermatt** (p133), enjoying free use of lifts to walk or mountain-bike between lake beaches. Catch a train east to car-free **Bettmeralp** (p140), the epitome of lakeside summer romance. For big-thrill ice hikes on the **Aletsch Glacier** (p140), hit **Fiesch**.

## SEASONAL HIGHLIGHTS

### SPRING

Sundays in March herald **cow-fighting season** at Martigny. April's **music festivals** celebrate the end of ski season.

### SUMMER

Ski lifts open for **hikers** and **bikers**. **Classical music** fills Verbier in July during the eponymous festival.

### AUTUMN

**Mountain bikers** burn trails in Verbier. **Grapes** are harvested and **raw milk cheese** is made on alpine pastures.

### WINTER

It's cold, snowy and the days are short. **Skiers** flock to mountain resorts. Slopes are packed in February.



# Martigny

SKI TOURS | ST BERNARDS | ROMAN RUINS



## GETTING AROUND

Arriving by train, alight at Martigny Gare for Place Centrale and Martigny Bourg for the Fondation Pierre Gianadda and Barryland. Col du Grand St Bernard is 45 minutes by car from Martigny and only accessible in summer; the 6km-long Tunnel du St Bernard is the direct road route to Italy.

The panoramic Mont Blanc Express train links Martigny with Chamonix (1½ hours) in France, a 30-minute drive across Col de Forclaz.

Love at first sight, it most likely won't be. But time spent in Valais' oldest town and French-speaking capital shines light on why wine- and sunshine-loving Romans lingered here en route to Italy. From Martigny's bijou medieval quarter by the Dranse River, terraced vineyards stagger steeply uphill. At hilltop Château de la Bâtiaz, arresting bird's-eye views span – as intended by its strategic 13th-century makers – the sweeping Rhône Valley and a clutch of *cols* (high mountain passes) leapfrogging into France and Italy.

In the new town, look beyond concrete high-rises to enjoy one of Switzerland's best modern-art galleries, entertaining contemporary art on Av de la Gare and cafe-strewn Place Centrale, and an irresistible posse of droopy St Bernard dogs at Barryland (to be upgraded in 2025 to a swanky new theme park). In its Roman heyday, Martigny's amphitheatre seated 5000 spectators at gladiatorial games. Summer concerts, dance performances and traditional *combats des reines* (cow fights) draw the crowds today.

## On the Trail of St Bernards

### Big dogs and a hostile transalpine pass

With the peal of an almighty brass bell beckoning guests to *le soupe* (dinner) around long shared tables and Vivaldi's rousing *Four Seasons* sweeping through spartan dorms as wake-up call at 7.15am, an overnight at **Hospice du Grand St Bernard** stirs the soul. Tucked well away from the world at large, on the transalpine **Col du Grand St Bernard** (2469m), the hospice has provided shelter and spiritual succour to travellers and Via Francigena pilgrims on the remote mountain pass linking Switzerland with Italy since the 11th century.

Hospice monks famously fed Napoleon's army of 40,000 soldiers and 6000 horses, en route to Piedmont in 1800 to defeat the Austrians at the Battle of Marengo. From late June to mid-October, snow makes the pass inaccessible by road –

## TOP TIP

Not only does October usher in the annual *vendange* (grape harvest) in the town's surrounding vineyards, it also hosts the 10-day Foire du Valais, a regional fair showcasing local cuisine, viticulture, music and culture. The climax is a traditional cow fight of epic proportion.



## ROMAN RUINS TO RODIN

Roman vestiges in town ensure a field day for history aficionados. In 2024 new gardens called **Jardins de Brigitte** planted with aromatics used in Roman times and an alley of bronzes, were scheduled to open by the **amphitheatre** on Rue du Levant. Near modern-art gallery **Fondation Pierre Gianadda** on Rue du Forum, admire remains of tepid water pools adjoining Roman Octodurus' public baths. The art gallery was built around a Gallo-Roman temple unearthed in 1976 and its collection of Roman milestones, coins and bronzes shines light on its Roman heritage. Its sculpture garden includes excavated temple ruins. Rodin's *Le Baiser* (1886) here is the second of four 'kisses' by the French sculptor.



a winter expedition to the hospice on touring skis or snowshoes is a golden ticket to a silent, snowy, polar world of dazzling natural beauty.

In Martigny town, devour a wealth of historical anecdotes and learn how St Bernard dogs traditionally bred at the hospice provided a vital rescue service for lost souls in the snow well into the 1950s at **Barryland**. While a small pack of St Bernards remain in kennels on the mountain pass, the breeding centre is now at Barryland where 20 short-haired pups are raised each year. Admire the emblematic Swiss breed known for its highly sociable nature, and indulge in cuddles galore on a 1½-hour dog walk – around Martigny in spring, through mountainside strewn with wild flowers on Col du Grand St Bernard in summer, and around the frozen fairy-tale shores of snowy Champex-Lac in winter.



# Beyond Martigny

Move from concrete suburbia to a sprinkling of alpine valleys cradling soaring peaks, barns on stilts and cheese fondue in spades.



## Places

**Champéry** p120

**Verbier** p121



## GETTING AROUND

Cable cars link Le Châble train station in the valley with Verbier; the ride is usually included in train tickets to Verbier. Cheaper buses cover the same route in 25 minutes.

If you're staying in Verbier, your hotel should email you the QR code for a VIP Pass covering the Le Châble cable car. Verbier itself is walkable or hop on a free shuttle bus connecting outlying hamlets and cable cars.

## TOP TIP

Verbier scarcely shuts between seasons. June to October, a VIP Pass – free with hotel accommodation – covers some cable-car travel and discounts.

Bucolic valleys around Martigny squirrel away some of Europe's finest ski resorts – mountains of fun in snow-blanketed winter and again in summer when slopes sprinkled with a panoply of wildflowers serenade bikers, walkers and alpine adventurers alike.

Near the French border, Champéry is the village gateway to the extensive Les Portes du Soleil ski area with 650km of downhill runs in the Swiss and French Alps. Southbound, ritzy Verbier dazzles accomplished skiers, celebs and bike bums alike. A 24/7 cheese-vending machine outside the town's *laiterie* (cheese dairy) might be one of many concessions to modernity, but beneath the blatant glamour of one of Europe's most chic resorts lies a trove of rich and timeless pastoral tradition.

## Champéry

TIME FROM MARTIGNY: 35 MINS 

### Skiing the Swiss Alps' toughest black

Mogul fiends won't find bigger or better than white-knuckle **Le Mur Suisse** (The Swiss Wall), accessed from the village-like ski resort of Champéry in the vast cross-border **Les Portes du Soleil** ski area. Quite literally on the Swiss–French border, the top of this daredevil run is actually in Avoriaz, France. Once you've dared launch yourself down the steep, icy headwall that reaches a treacherous angle of 35 to 40 degrees at the top, you're back in Switzerland.

Giant moguls, some the size of small cars, shred the entire piste – graded black, not bashed and officially called **Le Pas de Chavanette**. Even if you're not a mogul expert, ride the Chavanette chairlift up to the top of the 1km-long run, simply to marvel at the monstrous moguls close-up. Once back down again, by skis or chairlift, recover your wits at wooden hut **Buvette Chavanette** with a shot of Génépi or craft Twenty Six beer brewed in nearby Monthey, a plate of *fromage à rebibes* (hard cheese served in grated, wafer-thin tubes), a golden puddle of melted Raclette cheese and a sweet slice of homemade *salée de la vallée* (butter cake).



Le Mur Suisse (The Swiss Wall)

## Verbier

TIME FROM MARTIGNY: 50 MINS  + 

### Snowy summits, zip-lines and wild art

Watching the sun rise over pink peaks at dawn from **Mont Fort** (3330m) – the silhouettes of the Matterhorn, Mont Blanc and Grand Combin form a majestic ensemble – is one of life's goose-bump moments.

If a 4.25am cable-car departure and Sfr80 price tag (covering breakfast and all-day cable-car travel) is too extreme, ride a later bubble up to **Les Ruinettes** (2191m) and beyond to Mont Fort from Verbier's main-street station Médran (Sfr21 with a summertime VIP Pass, free with hotel accommodation).

Don't underestimate the cold atop Mont Fort – bring layers, even in August. The final cable car from **Col de Gentianes** (2994m) glides



### SOLAR POWER

In 2019 the world's first floating solar farm opened on Lac des Toules, a man-made reservoir in the Valais near the Swiss-Italian border. See p280 for other ways the Swiss are harnessing solar power.



## WHERE TO SKI IN LOWER VALAIS

### Ovronnaz

With just eight lifts and 30km of downhill runs, this bijoux 1950s resort is a family-friendly day flit from Martigny.

### 4 Vallées

Verbier is world-renowned, but smaller resorts – Thyon-Les Collons, Nendaz, Vezsonnaz – offer more bang for your buck.

### Crans-Montana

Celebrities and the nouveaux riches gravitate to this sprawling modern resort bejewelled with several lakes.



## WHY I LOVE LES PORTES DU SOLEIL

**Nicola Williams,**  
writer

I'm a winter bunny at heart. By summer's end I'm always desperate for cold days to return so I can ski through backcountry, ice bathe and snowshoe with friends under the full moon.

It's Les Portes du Soleil I look to for my weekend fix of downhill skiing. With the seven jagged summits of Dents du Midi keeping sentry like shark's teeth on the horizon, cruising scenic runs in Champéry really can't get any more scenic.

One of my favourite pistes is Ripaille, a challenging red run that weaves its way for 10km from 1790m down to Grand Paradis at 1055m, spinning down thigh-burning descents and through silent forests en route.

over the Tortin Glacier. At the summit, **Igloo Mont Fort** warms cockles with shots of *abricotine* (apricot liqueur) and Europe's highest-altitude cheese fondue. Drink in the 360-degree vista from the panoramic platform (120 steps up), before embarking on the descent – for daredevils, at 130km/h with the 1.4km-long Mont Fort zip-line (Sfr45).

Back down in **La Chaux** (2265m), lunch at local-loved **Le Dahu**. Afterwards, enjoy art in the wild along the sculpture-strewn hiking trail (3km, 1½ hours) to Les Ruinettes through Verbier's **3-D Sculpture Park**. Snowcapped **Grand Combin** (4314m) dominates the horizon and playful mountainside sculptures, many climate-themed, entertain all ages. Don't miss Antoine's *Bureau A* (a cabin with table and stove, disguised as a rocky boulder with window), which you can duck into, or Zak Ové's *Elephant Walk* crafted from salvaged trash. In Les Ruinettes, enjoy a drink on the terrace at hipster bar **Ice Cube** while paragliders paint rainbows in the sky.

## Gravity-defying peaks and waterways

Summer hiking in Verbier along 500km of marked trails is superb. To view the resort from a different perspective, hike up the precociously angular summit of **Pierre Avoi** (2473m) and along ancient *bisses* (waterways) built to irrigate parched pastures.

From Verbier, ride the Savoleyres cable car to its top station (2347m) – look down on the Bisse du Levrin winding across green pastures. Follow yellow signs for Pierre Avoi (40 minutes) across a grassy ridge to **Col de Marlène**. From here, beautiful views of Verbier, the Rhône Valley and snow-capped Massif du Mont Blanc emerge. At the **Pierre Avoi**

**way-marker** (2420m), the trail morphs into rocks and metal ladders – blue-and-white stripes indicate its classification as a challenging 'Alpine trail'. Climb 10 minutes to the summit where a dizzying panorama rewards: of Verbier's Mont Fort and Grand Combin, the Valais' serrated Dents du Midi, Tsanfleuron and



## DOWNHILL HEAVEN

**Les Portes du Soleil** is downhill heaven for intermediate skiers and snowboarders. Lift passes covering the four village resorts on the Swiss side are cheaper than those also including the eight in France (Morzine and Avoriaz included). See p34 for more on skiing.

WIRESTOCK CREATORS/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



## WHERE TO DRINK & DANCE IN VERBIER

### Pub Mont Fort

Verbier's après-ski heavyweight: live music, DJ sets, terrace and top-notch pub grub.

### Fer à Cheval

Run by local mountain guys, the Horseshoe covers all bases: morning coffee, afternoon tea, après-ski, dinner.

### Milk Bar

This legendary 1930s hut is justifiably famous for its thick hot chocolate, milkshakes, homemade tarts and crepes.





Pierre Avoi



Mountain biking, Verbier

Diablerets glaciers, and Grandes Jorasses (4208m) straddling France and Italy. Early morning, hobnob with chamois.

Clamber back down to the regular footpath (don't let climbers dangling off sheer rock faces distract you) and follow the signposted trail downhill (right) along the precipitous

**Crêtes de la Marlène** and through larch forest to **La Chute du Bisse** (55 minutes). The force of this

thundering waterfall – the swan song of the 18km-long Bisse du Levron irrigation channel, engineered by villagers around 1460 – is staggering. From here, track the medieval-engineered water course through forest along the **Chemin du Vieux Bisse** to La Marlène (1920m; 20 minutes), and all the way to its source beyond Les Ruinettes (two hours). Break at **La Marmotte** in Les Plagnards (40 minutes) for refreshment.



### FESTIVAL FUN

Designed to surprise, delight and democratise classical music, July's two-week **Verbier Festival** brings concerts by international musicians to the mountains – in churches and alfresco stages at altitude. August's smaller **Sion Festival** is also riveting. See p27 for other festivals.



### WHERE TO DRINK & DANCE IN VERBIER

#### Farinet

Less intimidating than other bars, this downtown terrace bar hosts a happy hour and live bands in ski season.

#### Ice Cube

This slope-side hut at Les Ruinettes with sweeping views is the first sun-blazed port of call for savvy après-skiers.

#### Le Rouge

Swoosh off the blue Le Rouge piste and into The Red for après-ski drinks, 'funky fondue' soirées and resident DJs.

## Mountain biking in an alpine playground

Whether you're tearing down the mountainside with the kids on a fat-tyre *trottinette* (hairnet and helmet included in scooter rental; from eight years) from the top of Les Ruinettes and Savoleyres cable cars or tackling technical jumps with expert mountain bikers in a dedicated bike park, ski-celeb **Verbier** is bike central in summer. From June to mid-October, mountain bikers can transport wheels on the Médran cable car and La Chaux Express chairlift to access 19km of downhill descents in **Verbier Bike Park**.

*Pistes de descente* (downhill trails) are colour-graded by difficulty just like ski runs. Beginners can cut their teeth on the easy green **Tsenelle** flow trail (1.9km) from Fontanet to La Chaux, and the fun **Tsopu** blue (2.4km) from trail hub Les Ruinettes. European downhill championships are frequently held on official competition track **Tire's Fire**, and four enduro trails (7.7km to 18.8km) wind beyond Verbier to Le Châble (822m) in the valley. A trio of half-day e-bike itineraries encourage scenic cruising, and August's four-day **Verbier E-Bike Festival** pairs e-biking with gourmet snacking and music.

When bikes and hikers share a trail, those on foot have priority – as do slower bikers ahead of you. In town, **Médran Sports** rents out all manner of wheels (mountain bike, road, downhill, enduro, e-bike), and **Singletrail** and **École Suisse de VTT** are recommended mountain-bike schools run by locals who really know their stuff – hooking up with a guide for a mountain session is invaluable for anyone who hasn't really mountain-biked before or is unfamiliar with rocky flows, forest jumps and hairy downhills.



### BEST-VALUE SWEET DREAMS IN VERBIER

#### Ride Inn

'Chalet-style' B&B with shared bathrooms and summer garden. The hosts are a mine of local information. €€

#### Cabane du Mont Fort

Iconic mountain hut, perched on a rocky pinnacle at 2457m. Excellent grub. €

#### No 8 Bed & Bar

This chalet on the central square is for night owls. From your balcony, lap up the music bar's party vibe. €€

#### Map Hostel

Go vintage in the old vicarage, down the hill in Vieux Verbier. Bunk rooms sleep two to six. €

#### Papill'on

Boutique rooms above a bistro in La Tzoumaz, linked to Verbier by cable car or 30 minutes by car. €€



### MEDIEVAL BISSES

As glaciers shrank between the 13th and 20th centuries, water in sun-blazed Verbier became scarcer. Villagers constructed **bisses** (streams) to irrigate their pastures, engineering channels from wooden planks to divert glacial milk and alpine springs up and down mountains. See p128 for more *bisses*.

# Sion

VINEYARD HIKES | HISTORIC CHATEAUX | FOOD & DRINK



## GETTING AROUND

All trains on the express route between Lausanne (50 to 80 minutes) and Brig (35 to 45 minutes) stop in Sion, a small town easy to explore on foot. If you're in town to taste wine, consider Sion's hop-on/hop-off wine bus ([sionwine.ch](http://sionwine.ch)), which yo-yos around nine cellars every Saturday.

Accessing trailheads for *bisse* hikes above town is tricky without your own wheels; a couple are serviced by PostBus (check schedules at [postauto.ch](http://postauto.ch)).

## TOP TIP

Factor in extra time for old-town lingering on market day (Friday), when a glass of crisp white AOC Fendant du Valais and golden puddle of melted Raclette cheese at a cafe beneath arcades is the only respectable way to end an alfresco shopping spree or picnic shop.

Be warned: French-speaking Sion is disarmingly bewitching. This small town, rising abruptly out of the built-up floor of the Rhône Valley and bisected by the Rhône River, might appear modern and industrial upon first glance. But spend a few hours in its medieval *vieille ville* (old town), guarded since the 13th century by a twinset of châteaux capping craggy hillocks, and the place usurps your soul.

Everyday life moves to a relaxed beat, with winemaking playing an essential role in the town's instinctively epicurean mantra. Vine-terraced hills crisscrossed with ancient *bisses* ring the town, and pavement cafes line the helter-skelter of quaint lanes that thread sharply downhill from its castles to its medieval heart: there is good reason why the main street, Rue de Conthey, is known locally as *rue de la Soif* ('street of thirst').

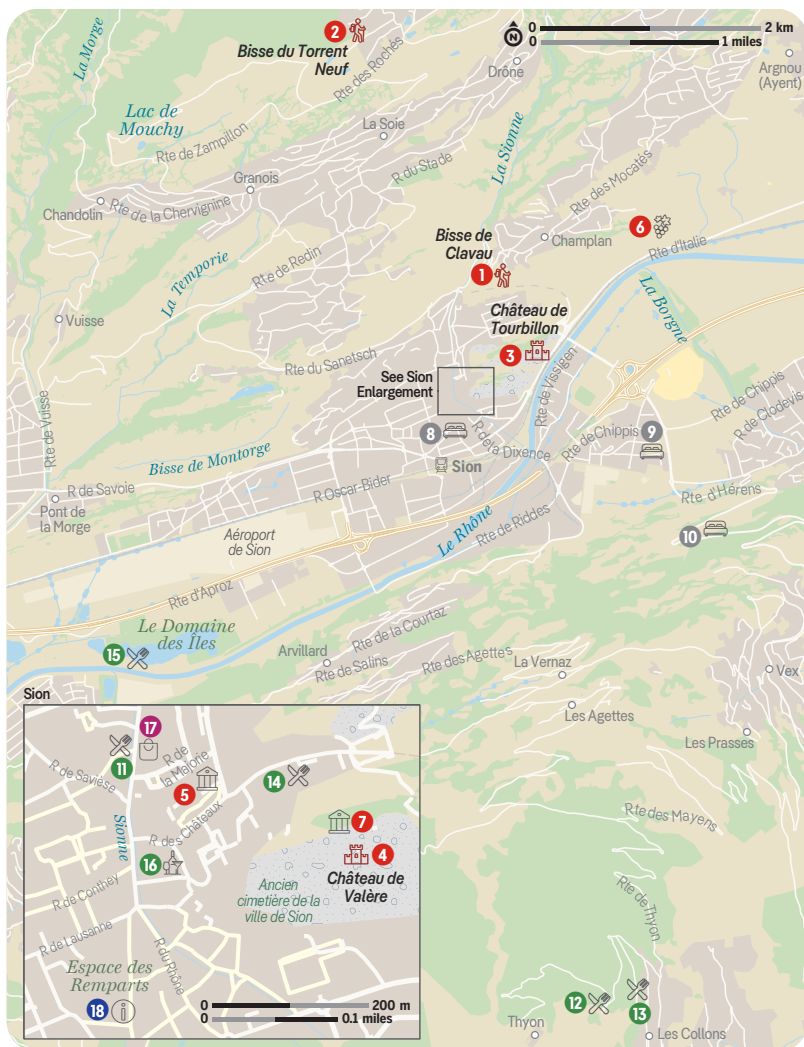
## Château to Château

### A walk through the old town

Keeping sentry since the 11th century, Sion's châteaux twinset is an arresting sight from afar. From the train station on Place de la Gare, walk 10 minutes to the **tourist office** ([siontourisme.ch](http://siontourisme.ch)) on Place de la Planta to pick up a map of a well-plotted **Balade Découverte** (Discovery Walk; 2.5km, 1¼ hours) through the old town with 14 information panels in English. On Rue du Grand-Pont, so called because of the river that runs beneath its entire length, linger over coffee or a glass of Fendant alfresco at **Brasserie du Grand Pont**, a titanic of an old building with rust-coloured shutters and rusty wrought-iron balconies.

Wind uphill along Rue des Châteaux, passing **Château de la Majorie et du Vidomnat** (an art museum since 1947) where Sion bishops resided in the 14th century, to Sion's emblematic **Château de Valère**. This château grew up around a fortified basilica from the 11th to 13th centuries, and the church interior reveals beautifully carved choir stalls, a frescoed apse



**HIGHLIGHTS**

- 1** Bisse de Clavau
- 2** Bisse du Torrent Neuf
- 3** Château de Tourbillon
- 4** Château de Valère
- SIGHTS**
- 5** Château de la Majorie et du Vidomnat
- 6** Le Cube Varone

- 7** Musée Cantonal d'Histoire

**SLEEPING**

- 8** Hôtel Elite
- 9** Moxy Sion
- 10** Ranch des Maragnènes

**EATING**

- 11** Au Cheval Blanc
- 12** Cabane de la Matze
- 13** La Cambuse
- 14** L'Enclos de Valère
- 15** Les Îles

**DRINKING & NIGHTLIFE**

- 16** Brasserie du Grand Pont

**SHOPPING**

- 17** Cave Les Futailles

**INFORMATION**

- 18** Tourist Office





## BEST LOCAL DINING IN SION

### Au Cheval Blanc

Feast on Val d'Hérens beef – as tartare, carpaccio, as a *tagliata di filetto* or *en rossini* – at this local institution with buzzing terrace on Rue du Grand-Pont. €€

### L'Enclos de Valère

Game (goat, chamois, venison) dominates the autumnal menu at this restaurant with cottage garden, midway up the steep cobbled lane to Sion's châteaux. €€

### Les Îles

In summer, pair top-notch beef carpaccio, Valais burgers (with melted Raclette and air-dried beef) and fondues with lakeside living on this leafy estate, 3km from downtown. Bonus: rent a stand-up paddleboard to explore the lake. €€



NICKNKA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

**Bisse du Torrent Neuf**

and the world's oldest playable organ dating to 1440. Organ concerts at weekends and during the town's classical-music **Sion Festival** in August are magical. Artefacts in the château's **Musée Cantonal d'Histoire** explore local history.

It's an atmospheric 15-minute walk through vines to partly ruined, hauntingly beautiful **Château de Tourbillon**. This was Sion's original episcopal palace until 1371 when Bishop Boniface de Challant moved to Château de la Majorie in town, keeping the majestic castle on a hillock above town – with soul-soaring views – as his summer residence. Guided tours ([tourbillon.ch](http://tourbillon.ch)) unearth the fascinating stories buried in its crenellated ruins.



## SWISS FESTIVALS

To enjoy Switzerland's alpenhorn in rousing natural splendour, ride a cable car up from the valley floor to Lac de Tracouet in Nendaz, 13km south of Sion, for July's **Festival International de Cor des Alpes de Nendaz**. See p27 for other festivals in Switzerland.

## Hiking Vines & Bisses

### Walks on the wild and wet side

There's more to hiking around Sion than seductive strolling between grape-heavy vines. Dozens of trails track the course of *bisses* – miniature canals built from the 13th century to

irrigate the Valais' steeply terraced vineyards and fields. Best known is **Bisse de Clavau**, built in 1450 to carry water to sun-drenched vineyards between Sion and St-Léonard. Vines, planted here on narrow terraces supported by dry-stone retaining walls, produce Valaisian dôle (red) and Fendant (white) wines. Taste them alone or with lunch along the Bisse de Clavau footpath (8km, 2½ to four hours) at **Le Cube Varone**, a centurion winegrower's hut between vines. Dishes are paired with wine and the vineyard vista is heady, punchy and out of this world. It opens May to October – the best season for walking the *bisses*.

The prize for high drama goes to 15th-century **Bisse du Torrent Neuf**. Suspension bridges and walkways clinging to sheer rock faces along much of the challenging 8km route are not for vertigo sufferers or young children. Pick up the trailhead to Chapelle Ste-Marguerite and beyond in Prafirmin, 8km north of Sion; early morning is best, when the path is less crowded and in the shade. The trail, open May to October, closes in rainy weather.

Building irrigation channels, often into rock faces with a dizzying overhang of several hundred metres, was no easy task. One-third of the 600 original *bisses* transporting water through the Valais still flow, carrying precious water across alpine pasture, forest and sheer rock face for a staggering 1800km in all. See [les-bisses-du-valais.ch](http://les-bisses-du-valais.ch) for a complete lowdown.



## THE SOUL OF SION

Sion native **Sabine De Kalbermatten-Van Vliet** shares some addresses for getting under the Valaisian skin of her home town.

### Your favourite Sion spot for summer Raclette?

Friday during the market. On Rue du Grand-Pont, Philippe Savioz runs **Cave Les Futailles**, a very old wine cellar from the 13th century. He sells Raclette and wine.

### And for Raclette in winter?

**La Cambuse** in Les Collons; it's on the slopes and you have a real chalet ambience. Another great spot is **Cabane de la Matze** – there's even a beam with De Kalbermatten written on it.

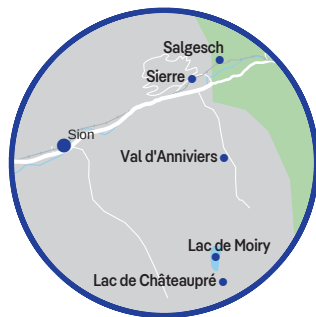
### A Valais unmissable?

AOC Fendant wine. The best is Les Murettes, which is a bit sparkling, too! There's also red Cornalin, made from one of the oldest *cépage* (grape varieties).



# Beyond Sion

Fruit orchards heavy with sun-gorged apricots and terraced vineyards speckled with châteaux in Sion's green-spun surrounds cast a hypnotic spell.



## Places

**Sierre to Salgesch** p130

**Val d'Anniviers** p130

**Lac de Châteaupré  
& Lac de Moiry** p131



## GETTING AROUND

Regular trains link Sierre and Salgesch with Martigny, Sion and beyond. PostBus covers the length of the valley, including summer shuttles between the Moiry Glacier, Grimentz and Zinal – handy for getting back to the starting point of a hike, trail run or bike ride.

Find schedules at [ts-ar.ch](http://ts-ar.ch). Ultimately, you own wheels – two or four – is the easiest way to explore side valleys.

## TOP TIP

Purchase a Valais Wine Pass (Sfr49) at [sionwine.ch](http://sionwine.ch) or Sierre/Sion tourist offices, covering 10 glasses (1dl) of wine at tasting cellars region-wide.

This is where one of Switzerland's linguistic borders kicks in. East of Sion along the Rhône Valley, wine-loving residents in Sierre speak French while their neighbours in Salgesch speak Swiss German. Travel east and feel the invisible *röstigraben* – that legendary cultural divide between the French- and German-speaking Swiss – emerge.

A flush of 4000m-plus peaks and mountain pastures ribbed with gurgling *bisses*, ripe for hiking, form an outdoor playground of the finest degree. In winter, skiers lurch 4.2km up the steep mountainside in Switzerland's longest continuous funicular from Sierre to cruise alpine slopes in glamorous Crans-Montana (1495m). Snow-loving families wind up sinuous mountain roads to smaller resorts in a trio of lesser-known side valleys: Val d'Anniviers, Hérens and Hérémence.

## Sierre to Salgesch

TIME FROM SION: 10 MINS

### Vineyards, cellars and wine museums

Château-dotted vines rise high above small-town Sierre, start or end point for the **Sentier Viticole** (Vineyards Trail). Two wine museums – Sierre's **Musée Valaisan de la Vigne et du Vin**, in 17th-century turreted manor Château de Villa, and Salgesch's **Weinmuseum** – bookend the 6km-long walk, dotted with educational panels about the Pinot noir vines and wines they yield.

The trail can be walked in either direction (both ends are a 1km walk from Sierre or Salgesch train station). But if you want to buy wine and lunch in serious style, end in Sierre: the **Oenothèque** wine cellar in Château de Villa stocks 630 different Valais wines, and its restaurant serves an unparalleled tasting banquet of five local Raclette cheeses paired with local wines.

## Val d'Anniviers

TIME FROM SION: 25 MINS

### Panoramic bridge walks and bungee jumps

You need guts and a head for heights for **Pont Suspendu de Niouc**, a red suspension bridge swaying above the Navidence River in Val d'Anniviers. Walking across the steeply inclined bridge, built in 1922 to transport water through a pipe from

the valley to parched mountain pastures, is a fascinating study in local *bisse* engineering. Views of Sierre, 8km north, and the Rhône Valley are sensational. But it's the bungee jumpers and daredevils training to base jump (Sfr225) from the 190m-high bridge that really stun. A 230m-long zip-line, *via ferrata* and **Le Perchoir** cafe-bar with garden, slack lines, climbing frame and craft beers brewed at nearby **Brasserie La Musicale** complete the laid-back summertime ensemble.

## Lac de Châteaupré & Lac de Moiry

TIME FROM SION: 1HR 

### Glacial mud and mountain adventure

Overnight in a camper van by the milk-blue glacial pool of Lac de Châteaupré, or in bunks at 2850m overlooking crevasses and gushing glacial melt at Cabane de Moiry: either way, sleeping with the **Moiry Glacier** is cinematic.

It's no more than 5km long, but the sea of ice cascading into **Lac de Châteaupré** and beyond into the emerald-green reservoir of **Lac de Moiry** (2250m), 2.5km north, is impressive. Velvety taupe mud from the foot of the glacier goes into beauty treatments at the spa at Hotel Bella Tola in St-Luc. Much of the steep 1½-hour hike (6km, 500m elevation gain) up to the glacier's eponymous *cabane* (mountain hut, open mid-June to mid-September) is over barren moraine. Upon arrival at the mountain hut, the glacier reflection on the glass facade of the 1924 stone hut's contemporary 'shoebox' extension – and glacier views from inside – is breathtaking.

Winter snowfall closes the road between the Lac de Châteaupré car park and Lac de Moiry, 12km south of Grimentz. In summer the Herculean dam, built in 1958 to provide 120,000 homes with electricity, is the starting point for hikes and cycling trails: count two hours to walk around the reservoir, often dotted with kayaks.

Bring your own sleeping-bag liner to overnight at **Cabane de Moiry**. Reservations are obligatory, and half-board rates (cash only) include a three-course dinner and unlimited lounging on a sun terrace with dress-circle glacier view. Lunching on *croûte au fromage d'Anniviers* (bread soaked in local cheese and white wine) or cheese fondue and homemade *tarte aux myrtilles* (blueberry tart) is equally spectacular.

### VIN DU GLACIER

'Glacier wine' has nothing to do with ancient ice. Rather, it's a rare white wine aged at least 10 to 15 years and only sampled directly from larch-wood barrels in Val d'Anniviers cellars – it isn't bottled or sold.

Crafted in the 16th century from *la Rèze* grapes, *Ermitage* is now the main varietal. No cask is ever drained; casks are topped up each year with a newer vintage.

The oldest barrel in cellars at Grimentz' *bourgeoisie* (community house) still contains drops of *vin du glacier* from 1886. Tourist offices in Chandolin, Vissoie and Grimentz run guided cellar tours. In summer, valley tours in a 1940 PostBus start from Grimentz and end with a cellar tasting.



### CHEESE & FENDANT

Dryish white Fendant – the Valais' best-known wine and the perfect accompaniment to fondue and Raclette, best served crisply cold, accounts for two-thirds of Valais wine production. Other Swiss whites hail from Spiez on Lake Thun in Bernese Oberland (p110).



### BEST PLACES FOR REGIONAL CUISINE

#### La Poste

With lilac wooden shutters and window boxes to match, Zinal's third-generation *pension* and restaurant will charm. €

#### Au Vieux Mazot – Chez Raymond

Local beef cooked in traditional wood-fuelled oven at this legendary Evolène eatery. €€

#### Chez Ida – Hotel Bella Tola

Enjoy lunch with the house spritz, Prosecco with pine-bud syrup. Smoked butter is served on a mountain stone. €€€

Brushed with pine and stitched from villages of dark-timber chalets and whitewashed chapels, this side valley is sublime. Drive or e-pedal slowly to savour 4000m-plus peaks on the horizon. Make a weekend of it.

From **1 Sierre**, corkscrew along Route d'Anniviers. Grab coffee with Rhône Valley views at **2 Pont Suspendu de Niouc** (p130). Medieval **3 Vissoie** (1200m) is the valley crossroads for five low-key ski resorts: slalom up switchbacks for 7km to **4 St-Luc** (1655m), discovered by 19th-century English mountaineers pioneering the Haute Route between Zermatt and Chamonix. Stroll through the village, past the *lavoir* (washhouse) and communal *four à pain* (bread oven) where rye bread is still baked; in July and August, craft your own loaf at a two-hour workshop. Lunch with Matterhorn views at vintage Hôtel Bella Tola (1859). Ride St-Luc's funicular up to Tignousa (2180m)

and walk 6km along solar-system-inspired Chemin des Planètes to the Weissshorn Hotel (2337m), a 19th-century mountain hotel only accessible on foot or on skis.

Back in St-Luc, drive 10 minutes to **5 Chandolin** (1936m), linked to St-Luc by 75km of ski runs. At Espace Ella Maillart become acquainted with the Swiss adventurer who lived in Chandolin when not exploring remote Afghanistan or winning ski races. Backtrack south and continue to **6 Grimentz** (1553m), another village crafted from granaries on stilts and geranium-festooned chalets. Taste impossible-to-buy *vin du glacier*. Ride the cable car (or drive 12 minutes) to **7 Zinal** (1675m), launchpad for summer climbs up Dent Blanche (4357m), Weissshorn (4506m) and other giants. Check in with local mountain guides at the Bureau des Guides, opposite the tourist office. End on a glacial high by **8 Lac de Moiry**.





# Zermatt

MATTERHORN | GLACIAL TRAILS | MOUNTAIN MUSEUMS



## GETTING AROUND

Car-free Zermatt is eminently walkable. Electric taxis and free e-buses lighten the load for arrivals laden down with luggage or clunky ski boots; consult e-bus.ch for routes and timetables. Motorists must park in the Matterhorn Terminal Täsch, 5km from Zermatt, and take the Zermatt Shuttle train (return adult/child Sfr16.40/8.20, 12 minutes, every 20 minutes from 6am to 9.40pm) up the mountain. Trains from elsewhere in Switzerland arrive directly in town at Zermatt train station.

## TOP TIP

Tickets for the Matterhorn Glacier Paradise and Glacier Crossing cable cars and Gornergrat railway don't sell out; buy on the day to ensure superlative views. Children under nine, staying at least one night in a hotel with their parents, receive a Wolli Card covering free travel year-round on all Zermatt lifts and railways.

It might be one of Europe's great bucket-list destinations, but nothing prepares you for that first intoxicating glimpse of Zermatt's peak rising majestically above the town and ski slopes. Step off the train and within seconds the Matterhorn risks becoming your obsession – cherry-red benches above the milky-green Vispa River on Kirchbrücke are perfect for unadulterated fawning. A puff cloud invariably clings to the 4478m hooked summit, making the sudden pop-up brilliance of a cloudless Matterhorn all the more wondrous.

Linger a few days in this glitzy ski resort – jammed with walkers and families in summer and style-conscious skiers in winter – and its grassroots origins emerge. In the mid-19th century, British mountaineers came here to climb Zermatt's peaks and in 1927 the first winter tourists arrived by horse-drawn sleigh. Skiing is year-round on the Theodul Glacier, but many of its limited summer runs are reserved for racing clubs and pros, making summer's one-day lift pass a pricey purchase.

## Farmer to A-Lister Celebrity

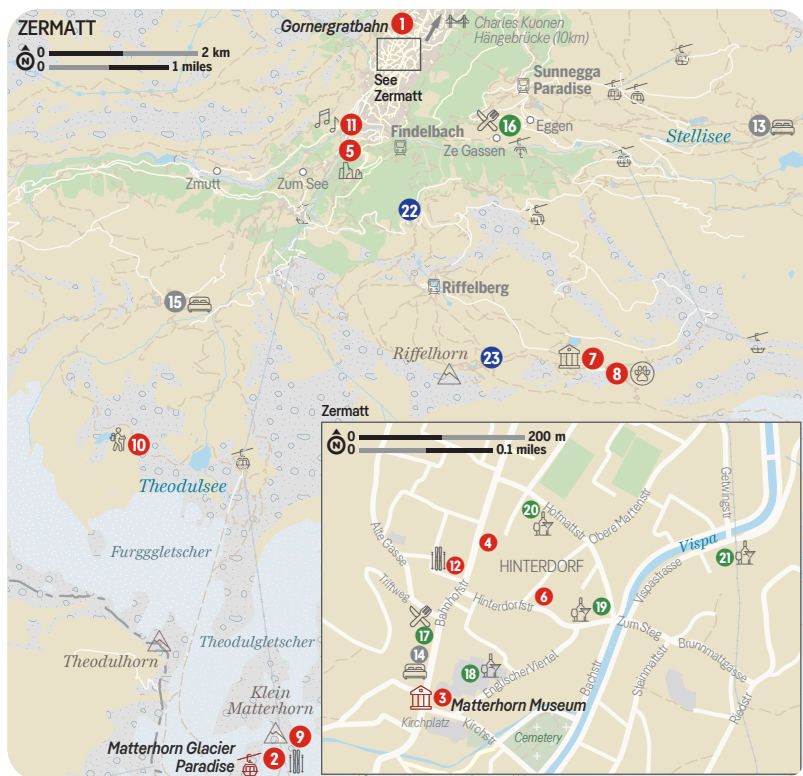
### Romping through Zermatt history

Whiteout day or not, devoting an afternoon to the **Matterhorn Museum** on Kirchplatz sheds light on Zermatt's metamorphosis from agricultural backwater to glitzy ski resort. Ironically, the history museum was born out of the first successful ascent of the Matterhorn on 14 July 1865 which, led by British climber Edward Whymper, ended in tragedy when four team members crashed 1200m to their deaths



## KICK BIKES & DIRT SCOOTERS

Trade skis for summertime kick bikes, go-carts and scooters to shoot down designated mountain tracks (nine to 12 years). In Zermatt, rent off-road wheels in cable-car stations at Sunnegga, Blauherd and Schwarzsee. Also **Verbier** (p121) and **Saas Fee** (p138).

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- 1** Gornergratbahn
- 2** Matterhorn Glacier Paradise
- 3** Matterhorn Museum

**SIGHTS**

- 4** Bahnhofstrasse
- 5** Gornerschlucht
- 6** Hinterdorfstrasse
- 7** Zoom the Matterhorn

**ACTIVITIES**

- 8** Gornergrat
- 9** Klein Matterhorn
- 10** Matterhorn Glacier Trail
- 11** Zen Steckenstrasse
- 12** Zermatters

**SLEEPING**

- 13** Fluhalp
- 14** Hotel Monte Rosa

- 15** Hotel Schwarze See
- 7** Kulmhotel Gornergrat

**EATING**

- 16** Chez Vrony
- 17** Whymper Stube

**DRINKING & NIGHTLIFE**

- 18** Grand Hotel Zermatterhof

- 19** Harry's Ski Bar
- 20** Rooftop by Vernissage
- 21** Snowboat Bar

**INFORMATION**

- 22** Riffelalp
- 23** Rotenboden

during the descent. The rope that broke and other relics taken from the climbers' corpses – a shoe, hat, prayer book and rosary – formed the museum's founding collection.

Reconstructions of timber pig stalls, cheese dairies and granaries – propped up on stone discs and stilts to protect air-dried meat and grain from pesky rats – evoke pastoral tradition. (Post-museum, admire 16th-century originals on old-world **Hinterdorfstrasse**.) In the mountain-guide hut, learn how 19 of the 29 peaks soaring above 4000m around Zermatt were conquered during the Golden Age of mountaineering (1854–65), and how the full-length skirt of Italian climber Félicité Carrel prevented her from becoming the first woman to summit the Matterhorn in 1867. Peek into a 1920s

teahouse where Zermatter women sold soft drinks, alpine flowers and souvenirs on walking trails around the village, while their menfolk worked as mule drivers, mountain guides and sedan-chair bearers. Discover how Zermatt's first winter tourist season in 1927–28 changed local life forever.

End the romp through history with drinks on the lawn at **Grand Hotel Zermatterhof** (1879), followed by cheese fondue or Raclette at **Whymper Stube**. The 1960s bistro is inside **Hotel Monte Rosa** (1839), where Whymper famously stayed before climbing the Matterhorn.

## Ride the Matterhorn Glacier Paradise

### Summit a 3883m mountain peak

Little competes with the 360-degree panorama atop Klein Matterhorn (3883m), accessed from Zermatt town by three cable cars culminating with the **Matterhorn Glacier Paradise** (adult/child return Sfr120/60). At the top the air is thin and the view – of the Matterhorn (4478m), France's Mont Blanc (4805m), Italy's Gran Paradiso (4061m), 14 glaciers and 35 other peaks over 4000m – is beyond breathtaking.

Only embark on this pricey but spellbinding journey aboard the world's highest-altitude 3S cable car on a bluebird day – early morning is best. Splurging an extra Sfr10 per person on a glass-bottomed **Crystal Ride** cabin for the final cable-car leg from Trockener Steg rewards with views of skiers razzing around like glacial ants on the Theodul Glacier. Up top, explore ice sculptures in the **Glacier Palace**, dug 15m deep into the glacier. Don't miss the playful ice slide and snow tubing.

## Hike the Matterhorn Glacial Trail

### Learn about glaciers

Until the Little Ice Age it was safer to cross the Alps using mountain passes than the valleys. By 1665 increasing glaciation had made the route from Zermatt to Sion across Col d'Hérens (3462m) so perilous that the Bishop of Sion absolved Zermatters of their obligation to make an annual pilgrimage to the Valaisan capital.

This is one of many glacial facts revealed on 23 information panels along the **Matterhorn Glacial Trail** (6.5km, two hours), a moderately easy but dramatic hike from Trockener Steg to Schwarzsee through an apocalyptic landscape of boulders, scree and glacial melt. The Matterhorn looms large throughout the trail – this is as close as you'll get to the unfathomable monolith.



### FAMILY SUMMER FUN

#### Sheep tracking

Take the train to **Gornergrat** to track down a shepherdess and her flock of woolly, horned sheep with the aid of a smartphone and GPS sheep collars.

#### Goat parade

Watch 30 black-neck goats parade and pooh along Zermatt's **Bahnhofstrasse** around 9am and 4.30pm daily in July and August.

#### Gorge hiking

Escape the summer heat along a high-drama walkway through the serpentine green rock of 10,000-year-old **Gornerschlucht** canyon.

#### Skywalk

Thrill teens with this steep, circular hike (8.6km, four hours; [europaweg.ch](http://europaweg.ch)) from Randa railway station to **Charles Kuonen Hängebrücke**. The Alps' longest pedestrian suspension bridge (494m) sways 85m above the ground.



### MAGICAL MOUNTAIN NIGHTS

#### Fluhalp

Drink in superlative Matterhorn views at this mountain chalet with twins, triples and dorms; open mid-June to October. €

#### Hotel Schwarzee

One of Zermatt's cheapest in summer, with Matterhorn views; perched at 2600m next to Schwarzsee cable-car. €

#### Kulmhotel Gornergrat

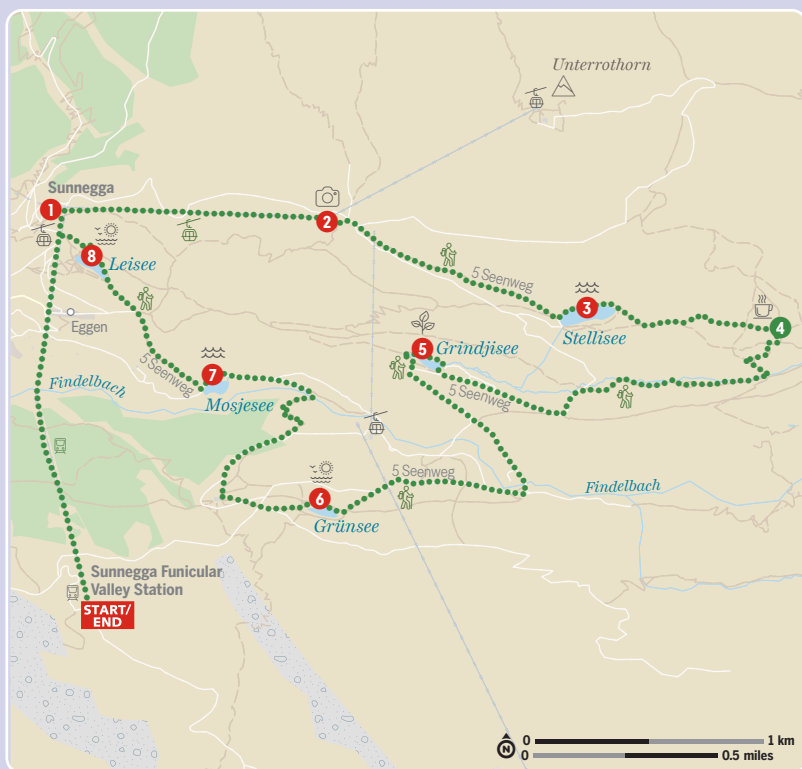
Once the daytime crowd has left, the solitude and mountain panorama at this luxurious, hotel are celestial. €€€

The Matterhorn is spectacularly omnipresent on this 10km hike around five bewitching lakes (three hours, but make a day of it). The mountain trail waltzes along rocky footpaths, gravel roads and the occasional stiff climb; the easy first and final legs are particularly family-friendly. Expect absurdly perfect alpine scenes, spellbinding lake reflections of Zermatt's iconic peak, wild swimming, rare alpine flora and the occasional marmot.

Ride the funicular from Zermatt to **1 Sunnegga** (2288m), then the cable car to **2 Blauherd** (2571m). Follow signs for '5 Seeweg', pausing to snap the Matterhorn viewed through a giant heart-shaped frame. It's 15 minutes to **3 Stellisee** (2537m), a pristine lake reflecting the Matterhorn on sunny days. Hike 15 minutes uphill between rocks and scree to

**4 Fluhalp** (2620m) to Matterhorn swoon over coffee or fondue on the restaurant's terrace. Count one hour to **5 Grindjisee** (2334m), an emerald-green lake cradled by larch trees. Approaching the lake, you might spot a rare edelweiss. Explore the enchanting lakeshore, then continue 30 minutes along the '5 Seeweg' trail to **6 Grünsee** (2300m). Plunging into the bracing water from Grünsee's tiny pebble beach is magical.

Another 30 minutes away, glacial melt from the Findel glacier gushes into **7 Moosjisee** (2140m), an electric-blue pool of milky water used for snowmaking. The final 20-minute climb up to **8 Leisee** (2232m), immediately below the Sunnegga cable car back to town, rewards with more wild swimming, pebble-beach sun loungers, a playground and wooden raft to 'sail' across the lake.



## Nostalgic Chic on the Gornergratbahn

### Riding Europe's highest cogwheel railway

The Matterhorn dominates the staggeringly scenic **Gornergratbahn** train ride – an 1898 vintage – from Zermatt to Gornergrat (3089m). Larch forests and the Vispa River give way to lime-green meadows and rocky peaks as the rust-coloured train staggers up gradients of up to 20% for 9.4km. Alight at the top to an arresting panorama – magical at sunrise and sunset – of the Monte Rosa massif and Switzerland's highest peak Dufourspitze (4634m).

Train tickets allow you to get on and off en route: from **Rotenboden** (2815m), walk 10 minutes to see the Matterhorn famously reflected in Riffelsee; alight at **Riffelalp** (2211m) to buy local cheese from the dispenser next to Restaurant Alphitta.

Priority boarding (Sfr7) ensures a window seat; sit on the right. Cut costs by embarking on the trip after 3.30pm when adult return is Sfr80 (Sfr90 June to August) instead of Sfr110 (Sfr126). Fares include admission to Gornergrat's virtual-reality **Zoom the Matterhorn** exhibition and 3D cinema which paraglides you around the Matterhorn, thrusts you onto the mountain in icy winds, an autumnal storm and so on.

## The Sound of Music

### Learn to play an alpenhorn

Getting a sound out of a 2m- to 4m-long alpenhorn, once used by shepherds to communicate between valleys, is manageable. Producing a melody as beautiful as the hauntingly harmonious ensembles of alpenhorn players who gather around alpine lakes at folklore festivals to play is not. Have a bash at blowing an alpenhorn during a two-hour workshop beneath trees on riverside **Zen Steckenstrasse** with veteran hornist Werner Erb (wernererb.ch). Reserve online via Zermatt tourist office.

## Ciao Italy!

### Alpine X crosses borders and boundaries

Dream finally became reality in summer 2023 for engineers working on Alpine X – the world's highest alpine border crossing by cableway, linking Zermatt's Klein Matterhorn with Cervinia's Testa Grigia (3458m) in neighbouring Italy without a single supporting pylon.

For skiers, the 1.6km-long Matterhorn Alpine Crossing (adult single/return from Zermatt Sfr156/240) means it's now possible to flit with cable-car ease between the slopes of two of Europe's most prized winter ski resorts. For mountain curios, it raises the curtain on a spectacular glacial world of ice and snow. Risk of altitude sickness prohibits children under three from riding the Trockener Steg–Matterhorn Glacier Paradise and Matterhorn Glacier Paradise–Testa Grigia legs.



### SKI HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

#### Klein Matterhorn

Ski the Alps' biggest on-piste vertical drop from Klein Matterhorn (3820m) down to Zermatt – a testy descent of 2200m.

#### Chez Vrony

Ride the Sunnegga Express funicular to 2288m, then ski down to Zermatt's tastiest slope-side address. Cheese dishes galore and legendary burgers.

#### Panorama Trail

Pair a ride in the historic Gornergratbahn with untouched powder while snowshoeing from Rotenboden to Riffelberg (2.5km, 1½ hours).

#### Zermatt Unplugged

Catch acoustic tunes on 14 different stages for five days at Zermatt's headline music festival in early April.

#### Zermatters

Embrace glacial adventure with an experienced mountain guide from the resort's main ski and snowboard school.





# Beyond Zermatt

Extreme peaks, Herculean glaciers and a celebrity train – the pace notches up a gear  
In the eastern or Upper Valais.

## Places

Saas Fee p138

Zermatt to St Moritz p139



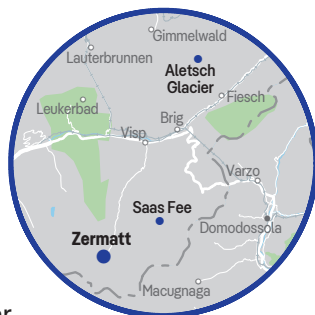
## GETTING AROUND

The Saas Fee valley can only be reached by road. Coming by train from Zermatt, get off at Stalden-Saas and catch a PostBus there. Car-free Bettmeralp and Riederalp are only accessible by cable car from the Rhône Valley; cable-car departures coincide with train arrivals.

Alpine passes are typically open June to October; seasonal PostBuses trundle across the Furka Pass from Oberwald (Valais) to Andermatt.

## TOP TIP

Learn about local fauna and flora at the Centre Pro Natura d'Aletsch inside 1902 Villa Cassel, a 20-minute stroll from Riederalp.



Firmly ensconced in German-speaking Switzerland, the Rhône Valley and small side valleys east of Zermatt plunge visitors into the Germanic soul of Valais' split personality. *Schnitzel* (breaded meat) and *Bratwurst* (sausage) now rule the culinary roost, and it's deemed positively late if you sit down to dinner after 6.30pm.

In the car-free mountain resort of upmarket Saas Fee, the country's national mascot – the cuddly marmot, once cooked up in stews by impoverished farmers to keep hunger at bay – comes alive. Further east, the shimmering white runway of the Aletsch Glacier ushers in some of Switzerland's most uncelebrated yet sensationally picturesque skiing and hiking in the so-called Aletsch Arena ski area.

## Saas Fee

TIME FROM ZERMATT: 2 HRS  

### A family-friendly, wildlife adventure

Switzerland's emblematic marmot spends nine-tenths of its life underground. But come the warm sunny days of July, colonies of marmots in Saas Fee pop out of painstakingly dug tunnels beneath ski slopes to tumble between rocks and unwittingly entertain curious walkers. Unlike marmots elsewhere, who typically warn of human presence with a shrill whistle and keep well out of sight, those living in burrows on the sun-drenched slopes of Spielboden above Saas Fee village show little fear of humans.

From Saas Fee's Talstation Längfluh cable-car station next to the sports ground, ride a bubble up to mid-station **Spielboden** (2448m). Alternatively, follow the footpath signposted 'Gletschersee' uphill to Spielboden (4km, elevation gain 650m, two hours). Buy a cotton sachet of *murmeltier futter* (carrots and peanuts) for Sfr6 from **Restaurant Spielboden by The Capra** – stylish sun terrace alert! – and amble downhill along the 500m-long **Murmeliweg** (Marmot Way) to observe marmots; some eat from your hand. Information panels, with QR codes for audio, detail the life of Eddie who – like all marmots – weighed just 30g when he was born, has four toes on his short front legs and five toes on his longer hind legs. Golden eagles, foxes and ravens are his greatest predators.

From Spielboden, a short, stiff hike zig-zags uphill across moraine to **Längfluh** (2km, one hour) at a glacial 2870m. From

the restaurant terrace here, views of Saas Fee's ski slopes cascading into the icy tongue of the Fee Glacier are panoramic, and an easy 1.3km trail (30 minutes) loops the electric-blue pool of glacial milk at **Gletschersee**. Keep your eyes peeled for ink-black glacier jackdaws.

## Zermatt to St Moritz

TIME FROM ZERMATT: 8 HRS 

### One of Europe's most mythical train journeys

Gorging on one cinematic shot after another of green peaks, sun-spangled lakes, glacial ravines and other hallucinatory natural landscapes is what riding the **Glacier Express** is about. Pulled by steam engine when it first puffed out of Zermatt in 1930, the red train traverses 91 tunnels and 291 bridges on its journey to St Moritz. The icing on the cake: five-course gastronomy and a concierge at your beck and call in Excellence Class.

Tickets for the journey connecting two of Europe's glitziest mountain resorts aren't cheap – Sfr152/268 for a one-way Zermatt–St Moritz ticket in 2nd/1st class, plus Sfr49 for an obligatory seat reservation (Sfr39 in low season, mid-May to mid-October). Splurging in crème de la crème Excellence Class costs Sfr470 on top of the basic ticket. Children under six, or under 16 with an SBB Junior Card, travel for free with a parent; six- to 16-year-olds travel half-price (discounts yielded by Swiss rail cards apply). The Glacier Express doesn't run between mid-October and mid-December.

If you can't tolerate sitting all day watching a 290km-long kaleidoscope of mountain scenery roll by, consider a section of the eight-hour route instead: Disentis to Andermatt (one hour) across the breathtaking **Oberalp Pass** (2033m) is the highest point of the journey. The six-arch, 65m-high **Landwasser Viaduct** dazzles on the 50km-leg between Chur and Filisur.

Summer or winter, beneath a clear blue sky is the only way to embark upon this mythical journey – on a grey, cloudy day you'll definitely feel you've been taken for a ride.



### GLACIER EXPRESS HACK

Panoramic windows on Glacier Express carriages don't open. For photography, ditch the direct glamour train for regular SBB trains – they're cheaper, don't require pricey reservations and have windows that open. See p253.



### CINEMATIC MOUNTAIN PASSES

Immortalised in a car chase in the 1964 James Bond classic *Goldfinger*, the **Furka Pass** in Valais' far northeastern corner is Switzerland's king of alpine passes.

Open since 1867, it chicanes around countless white-knuckle hairpins and the 007-iconic Hotel Belvédère (now closed) to Andermatt in Central Switzerland.

Road-trippers seeking no mercy can either make a glorious loop of it by piggybacking the **Susten** (2260m) and **Grimmel** (2164m) passes onto Furka (a 120km round trip), or hit the high road south into the canton of Ticino via the remote **Nufenen Pass** (2478m).



## WHERE TO DIP INTO SAAS FEE'S BEST FONDUE

### Vieux Chalet

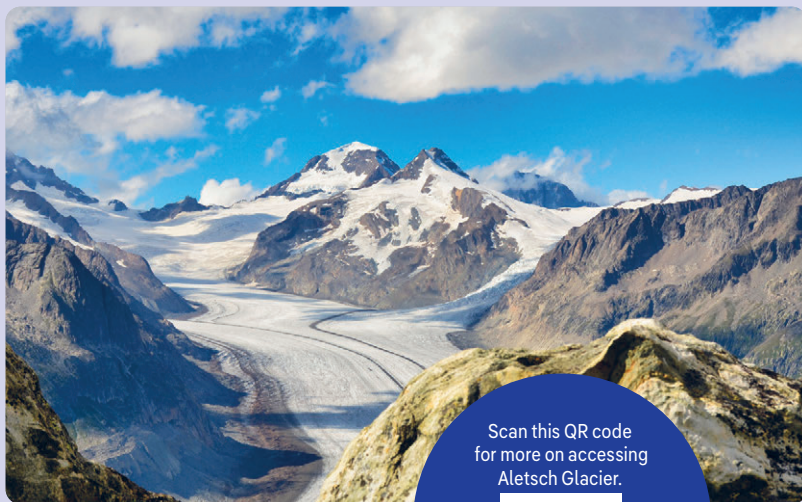
Dip into dozens of flavoured fondues – mushroom, tomato, garlic, with pears or pineapple – at this flower-laden chalet. €€€

### Ski Hütte

This popular brasserie with terrace cooks up fondue burgers and kirsch-laced fondue. €€€

### Spielboden by The Capra

Local, seasonal ingredients fuel modern alpine cuisine at this mountain showcase for star local chefs. €€€



Scan this QR code  
for more on accessing  
Aletsch Glacier.



## TOP EXPERIENCE

# Aletsch Glacier

This breathtaking superhighway of a glacier unearths high-octane ice adventure in spades. Streaming down in a broad curve around Aletschhorn (4195m), in the Upper Valais, the Aletsch Glacier is the second-highest peak in the Bernese Alps and one the world's indisputable natural marvels.

### DON'T MISS

Bettmeralp

Bettmerhorn Ice  
Terrace

Unesco Höhenweg

Eggishorn

Fiesch

Hotel du Glacier

Gletscherstube

Aletschji-Grünsee  
suspension bridge

## Panoramic Viewpoints

Gawping from afar at this jaw-dropping sea of ice – the Alps' longest glacier and a Unesco World Heritage site – has been a Swiss rite of passage since the days of the Grand Tour. The Aletsch view from **Jungfraujoch** (3454m), accessible by Europe's highest train station in the neighbouring Bernese Oberland, is the classic panorama. But the Upper Valais unveils superlative views minus the crowd.

The ultimate panoramic platform is **Aletschji-Grünsee Hängebrücke**, a 124m-long suspension bridge across the 80m-deep Massa Gorge at the foot of Aletsch. Pick up the walking trail (11.4km, five hours, June to October only) on alpine pastures in **Riederalp** (1925m, accessible by cable car from Mörel train station) or **Belalp** (2100m, reached by PostBus from Brig).

With its bijou whitewashed chapel on a hill and quaint main street where kids and luggage are pulled along in wooden sledges in winter, car-free **Bettmeralp** (1900m, accessible by cable car from Betten) is the stuff of Swiss alpine dreams.

Dazzling bird's-eye views of the Aletsch Glacier from its **Bettmerhorn** (2647m) cable-car station are the icing on the cake. At the top, follow the wooden walkway to **Eis Terrasse** (Ice Terrace) where panels unravel glacier life and walking trails are signposted. The high-altitude **Unesco Höhenweg** (3km, three hours) is a tough scramble across rocks to Eggishorn; glacier views are awesome should you dare look down between boulders.

Year-round, an unrivalled 360-degree panorama unfolds from **Eggishorn** (2869m), reached by cable car from **Fiesch** (1049m). At the summit, a family-friendly circular path (one hour) ensnares nine 'glacier lounges' with telescopes and 'fun fact' panels about the Alps' longest ice flow.

## Down on the Ice

Squatting on a rock to picnic on the apocalyptic rubble of **Kranzberg moraine** – one of two threads of moraine rib-boning down the Aletsch Glacier – is unforgettable. Knowing that ice plunges 400m deep beneath your feet is humbling; contemplating the 30% of its ice mass that this phenomenal glacier has lost since 1860 and the further 90% it's predicted to lose by 2100 is simply unsettling.

Guided summer treks (mid-June to mid-October) led by mountain guides at **Bergsteigerzentrum Aletsch** in Fiesch are a dramatic encounter with a retreating glacier; nine out of 10 Swiss glaciers will disappear by the end of this century. On the Aletsch Glacier, 80 cu metres of ice is said to melt every second on a sunny July day.

One-day glacier hikes (adult/child Sfr90/70) are bookended with Fiesch's gondola to **Fiescheralp** (2212m). They wind up-hill, via the dimly lit **Tälli Tunnel**, to the cosy **Gletscherstube** (2360m; open July to October) mountain-hut-restaurant, and down to **Märjensee** (2300m) and the ice-blue edge of the glacier. Nothing can prepare for that first clamber with crampons onto the ice, roped in a line to the guide. More challenging two-day treks (Sfr350) overnight at **Konkordiahütte** (2800m), on a rocky spur since 1869, now accessed by 450 metal steps. Winter ski-touring treks, led by guides across the snow-covered glacier, are magical.

### BELLE ÉPOQUE GLAMOUR

The walking trail from Fiescheralp to the tiny valley of Märjela via Tälli Tunnel passes the ruins of historic **Hotel Jungfrau** (1871), an alpine oasis of sophistication and decadence during the belle époque. In the valley, old-world **Hotel du Glacier** (1866) in Fiesch still hosts those in search of winter snow air.

### TOP TIPS

- Walking on the Aletsch Glacier is only allowed with a guide and the correct equipment.
- Roped glacier hikes with a mountain guide don't require any mountaineering experience, but you must be sure-footed and have an adequate fitness level.
- Wear gloves and long trousers on glacier hikes to protect your hands and knees. Should you slip or fall, razor-sharp ice crystals can shred your skin like glass.
- Bring sunglasses, sun protection, plenty of water and hiking poles for summertime walks.





Above: Ponte dei Salti (p159); Right: Fossil, Monte San Giorgio (p149)



# Ticino



## SWITZERLAND'S SUNLIT SOUTHERN JEWEL

Ticino is where alpine grandeur softens into Mediterranean charm, a unique fusion of nature and culture.

At Switzerland's southernmost embrace lies Ticino, a radiant beacon where the grandeur of the Alps intertwines with Italy's sunny spirit. Here, every cobbled pathway and lakeside esplanade echoes with harmonious duality. Ticino's head-turning capital and Unesco World Heritage site, Bellinzona, whispers tales of valiant knights and ancient lore with its fortified ramparts and medieval charm while also tantalising the palate with Italian-inspired delicacies. Venturing south into the Lugano region, you'll be greeted by tranquil lake waters reflecting quaint villas and bustling promenades, which narrate stories of a time when artists and writers sought solace in its serene embrace.

Meanwhile, the untouched beauty of the western valleys that reach into the high Alps

– specifically Valle Maggia, Valle Verzasca and Centovalli – unfurls before you. They cradle untamed waterfalls, centuries-old hamlets, and pathways that meander through spectacular nature. Ascona and

Locarno, the twin jewels by the majestic Lago Maggiore, share a vivacious spirit. Festivals celebrating art, music and film light up their streets, while languid boat rides and gourmet escapades attract a good-living crowd.

Amidst all this, Ticino remains a study of contrasts, where snowcapped peaks and sunlit terraces co-exist. Inviting both the adventurer and the dreamer alike, Ticino stands as a testament to nature's majesty, enriched by centuries of history and culture.

Its memories linger long after the journey has ended.



PAOLA MARTINI/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

### THE MAIN AREAS

#### BELLINZONA

Medieval castles and vibrant streets. **p146**

#### LUGANO REGION

Lakeside charm and urban elegance. **p149**

#### ASCONA-LOCARNO

Cultural hubs by serene waters. **p152**

#### WESTERN VALLEYS

Untamed beauty and hidden hamlets. **p156**

# Find Your Way

Sprawling across Switzerland's southern tip, Ticino marries alpine expanses with Mediterranean-like towns, creating a tapestry of valleys, lakes and urban centres.

## Western Valleys, p156

Nature's sanctuary bounded by mountains, from cascading waterfalls to secluded hamlets that remain untouched by time.



## CAR

Travelling with your own wheels allows you to unveil the region's attractions at your own pace as you traverse winding mountain roads and scenic coastal routes.



## TRAIN

Switzerland's impeccable railway system seamlessly connects Ticino's key destinations. Train travel is also an opportunity to fully take in the panoramic vistas.

## Ascona-Locarno, p152

These two towns combining lakeside elegance and cultural extravagance are a hub of festivals, art and gastronomy.

## Lugano Region, p149

The area around Lago di Lugano is where chic urban vibes meet tranquil lakeshores, with a touch of Italy in every corner.

## Bellinzona, p146

Medieval allure comes alive at Unesco-listed castles and bustling markets, drawing history enthusiasts and curious souls alike.



Santuario della Madonna del Sasso (p152)

# Plan Your Time

To explore Ticino, whether on a short weekend getaway or a week-long adventure, plan your itinerary around the must-see stops of Bellinzona, Lugano, Ascona, Locarno and the western valleys.

## A Long Weekend

Begin your trip in the **Lugano region** (p149) with a lakeside walk and a visit to the village of **Gandria** (p151). Take a boat ride on Lago di Lugano and watch the sunset at **Morcote** (p151). Next, tour the ancient castles of **Bellinzona** (p146). Finish by experiencing the western valleys' wild beauty in **Valle Verzasca** (p159) or **Valle Maggia** (p156).

## A Whole Week

Start in **Bellinzona** (p146), exploring its medieval strongholds. Head to the Lugano region to see **Gandria** (p151) village, check out the **Fossil Museum** (p149), enjoy the views from **Monte San Giorgio** (p149) and taste wine in **Mendrisiotto**. Afterwards, take a boat to **Morcote** (p151), enjoy the gastronomy of **Ascona** (p152) and visit Locarno's **Madonna del Sasso** (p152).

## SEASONAL HIGHLIGHTS

### SPRING

Ticino's mild climate sets the scene for great **hikes**. Lugano hosts a **classical music** festival in April.

### SUMMER

Ticino's lakes are refreshing. Enjoy **watersports**, concerts and Locarno's **film festival**.

### AUTUMN

Enjoy the outdoors with sunshine and colours. Savour September's **wine harvest**.

### WINTER

Ticino's Mediterranean winter means sunny days and snow-free lakes. In February, enjoy **carnival** in Bellinzona.

# Bellinzona



MEDIEVAL HISTORY | SNOWCAPPED MOUNTAINS | FOOD & DRINK



## GETTING AROUND

Bellinzona's historic centre is flat and walking-friendly, while its iconic castles sit atop hills demanding a bit of uphill trekking. Buses efficiently connect major sights. For drivers, navigating Bellinzona is doable, but keep an eye out for pedestrian zones. Parking spaces, particularly during special events, fill up quickly; it might be more convenient to park a bit further out and use public transport for city exploration.

## TOP TIP

If you fancy exploring the valleys and heights surrounding Bellinzona with your own wheels, you can rent e-bikes at the tourist office located on Piazza Collegiata. They also hand out brochures with suggested itineraries and maps.

As you step into Bellinzona, you will be transported to an era of knights, battles and grand fortifications. Situated in the heart of Ticino, and offering knock-out views of snowcapped mountains, the region's capital has a rich history that stretches back to Roman times.

Over the centuries, Bellinzona's location made it a coveted stronghold, resulting in the construction of its magnificent medieval castles. The three hulking fortresses – Castelgrande, Castello di Montebello and Castello di Sasso Corbaro – are recognised as Unesco World Heritage sites. Their imposing towers, fortified walls and intricate architecture provide a glimpse into the power and grandeur of medieval Bellinzona.

## A Walk Through Medieval Bellinzona

### Tour the historic fortresses

While a walk taking in all three of Bellinzona's medieval fortresses can easily be drawn out into a full day's activity, combine them with Bellinzona's historic core, immersing yourself in both the architectural marvels and the cultural heritage that define this city. Guided tours organised by the tourist office provide insightful commentary on Bellinzona's fascinating past.

Begin at **Castelgrande**, the mighty fortress that dominates the city skyline. It stands high upon a rocky hill, from which it was a Roman frontier post and Lombard defensive tower, and was later developed as a fortified town controlled by Milan. Explore its atmospheric courtyards and museum, and climb the ancient ramparts for panoramic views. Continue to **Castello di Montebello**, with its drawbridges, towers and fascinating archaeological exhibits. Then head south of the city centre to the **Castello di Sasso Corbaro**. Perched high on a wooded hillside, it has an austere beauty. Once you've explored the fortresses, wander around the historic centre, graced with Renaissance churches and pretty piazzas. The **Chiesa Collegiata dei SS Pietro e Stefano** is an exquisite church lavishly adorned with frescoes and baroque stucco, with

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- ① Castelgrande
- ② Castello di Montebello
- ③ Castello di Sasso Corbaro

**SIGHTS**

- ④ Chiesa Collegiata dei SS Pietro e Stefano
- ⑤ Palazzo del Comune
- ⑥ Piazza Collegiata

**SLEEPING**

- ⑦ Hotel Internazionale

**EATING**

- ⑧ Grotto Ticinese Bellinzona
- ⑨ Locanda Orico
- ⑩ Ristorante del Castelgrande
- ⑪ Ristorante Pedemonte

**DRINKING & NIGHTLIFE**

- ⑫ Bar Teatro
- ⑬ Café Nosetto
- ⑭ Folk Bar Bellinzona
- ⑮ L'Arte del Caffé
- ⑯ Paprika Lounge Bar

light streaming through the rose window above the portal. Bellinzona's restored Renaissance **Palazzo del Comune** is the seat of local government; it has a three-storey inner courtyard of loggias and frescoes showing historic scenes of Bellinzona. Finally, immerse yourself in the atmosphere of **Piazza Collegiata**, the vibrant heart of Bellinzona. This cobblestone square is framed by 18th-century patrician houses, many with decorative wrought-iron balconies.

## Cross the Swinging Bridge

### Embrace adventure at the Ponte Tibetano

For an adrenaline-fuelled challenge or a unique perspective on the stunning scenery, head to the **Ponte Tibetano**, a swinging bridge just 5km from Bellinzona. The bridge rises





## BEST PLACES TO DRINK IN BELLINZONA

### Paprika Poke Lounge Bar

Dive into inventive drinks and bites at this trendy spot, perfect for a relaxed evening.

### Folk Bar Bellinzona

A hip hangout where the city's creatives gather over craft cocktails and live tunes.

### Café Nosetto

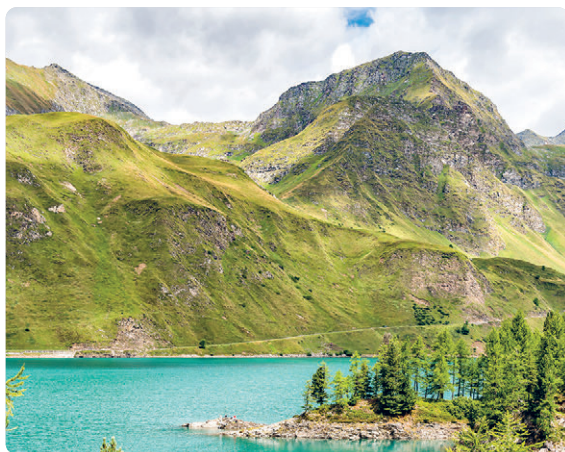
This laid-back local café is a snug spot for a morning coffee or an afternoon *apéro*.

### L'Arte del Caffé

At this elegant café, each cup is a masterpiece of rich Italian coffee tradition.

### Bar Teatro

Just steps from the theatre, mingle with the after-show crowd in a lively bar.



ELISIV/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

### Lago Ritom

130m above the ground and stretches over 270m in length, with a walkway approximately 1m wide made of larch wood. Crossing it represents a true challenge, yet the safety measures guarantee a risk-free approach, making it a top attraction for both intrepid spirits and adventurous families. Feel the adrenaline rush as you navigate the swaying walkway, taking in the breathtaking views of the surrounding valleys and mountains. Accessible via the Monte Carasso–Curzùtt–Mornera cableway, the picturesque hill town of **Curzùtt** is the ideal springboard for this thrilling walk, or a well-deserved gastronomic stop afterward.

## A Slice of Mountain Life

### Slow touring Ticino's northern valleys

North of Bellinzona, the wild Valle di Blenio and Valle Leventina are nestled at the foot of towering peaks. These valleys offer an authentic taste of Ticino mountain life without straying far from the city; and they make for a scenic road trip. In **Biasca**, home to a 13th-century church, you can sample hearty Ticinese home cooking at *grotti* (rustic taverns housed in cool, rock-carved cellars). Nearby, the Ritom-Piora region, accessible from the town of **Piotta** via one of Europe's steepest funiculars, provides hiking opportunities with astonishing alpine views and mountain lakes, including Lago Ritom and the unique ecosystem of Lago Cadagno.



## WHERE TO STAY IN BELLINZONA

### Hotel Internazionale

Located in the heart of Bellinzona, with comfortable contemporary rooms and a spa. €€

### Villa del Gusto

Scenic B&B offering mountain views, delightful homemade breakfasts and garden serenity. €€€

### Hotel La Tureta

This boutique hotel in a restored 18th-century building mixes historic charm with modern facilities. €€

# Lugano Region



PREHISTORIC HISTORY | OLIVE TRAIL | MONTE SAN SALVATORE



## GETTING AROUND

Lugano has an easily walkable city centre, with occasionally hilly terrain that might challenge some but provides gorgeous views. To navigate the ups and downs, consider using the city's buses and the funicular. If you're driving into Lugano, parking can be tight especially during peak tourist seasons. Many travellers opt to park in one of the city's car parks and explore the city on foot or by public transport. For journeys outside Lugano, having a car offers unparalleled flexibility.

## TOP TIP

If you fancy exploring the valleys and heights surrounding Bellinzona with your own wheels, you can rent e-bikes at the tourist office located on Piazza Collegiata. They also hand out brochures with suggested itineraries and maps.

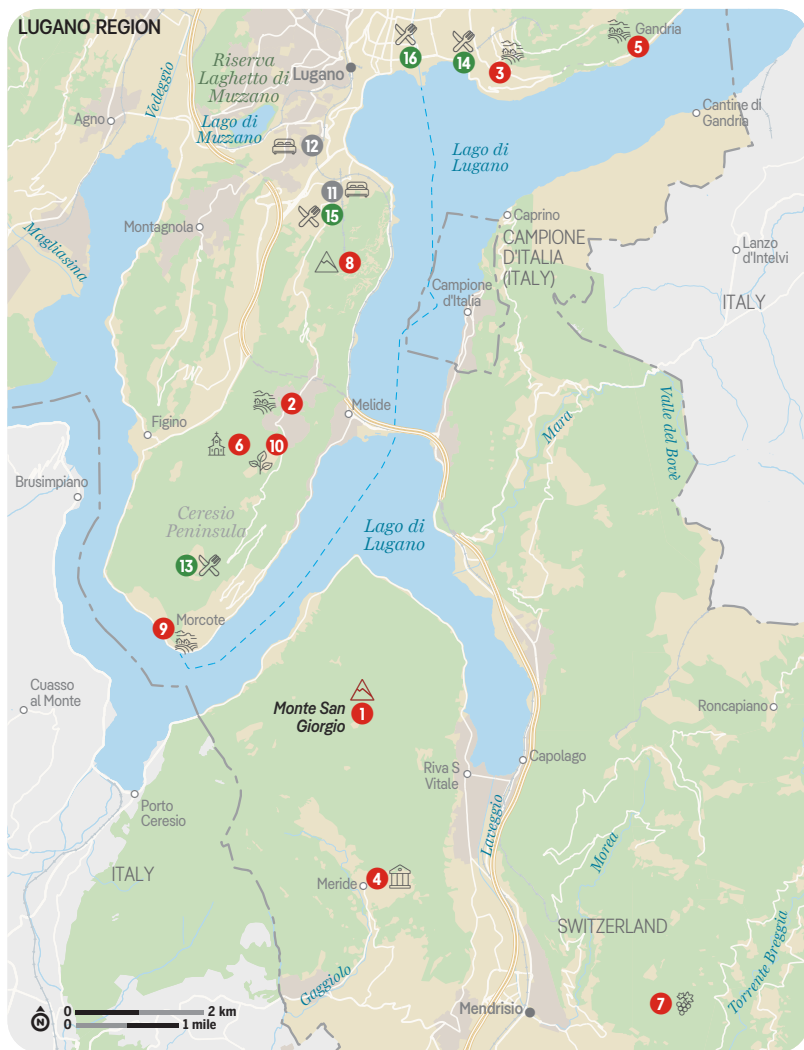
Occupying the southernmost tip of Switzerland, the region around the Lago di Lugano seamlessly combines Swiss precision with Italian flair, and alpine magnificence with Mediterranean charm. It's not just a border area but a mosaic of cultures, landscapes and urban dynamism.

In vivacious Lugano, lakeside promenades are dotted with modern boutiques and historical landmarks, while the pretty village of Gandria was once renowned for its production of olive oil and offers enjoyable walks along the Olive Trail. From Lugano, one can venture further south to Mendrisiotto to tour the many vineyards and wine cellars and sample the region's best merlot. But Lugano surroundings are also a treasure trove of history. The Monte San Giorgio has earned Unesco World Heritage status and become Ticino's mountain of myth thanks to its Triassic marine-life fossils. Its Fossil Museum is an educational experience, unveiling earth's ancient tales.

## Monte San Giorgio's Prehistoric Wonders

### Ancient fossils and marine life

The Swiss saurian mountain, **Monte San Giorgio**, is a magnet for history buffs and palaeontologists. Designated a Unesco World Heritage site in 2003, this geological wonder with a fossil-rich core provides a fascinating insight into ancient marine history. Towering at 1097m, the pyramid-like mountain dominates Lago di Lugano's southern horizon. Scientists have uncovered 230-million-year-old marine-life fossils – including fish and massive 3m-long reptiles – from the prehistoric ocean basin. More than 80 fish species and 30 marine and terrestrial reptiles have been discovered, with each dig site revealing a middle Triassic chapter. Invertebrates and ancient plants add to this time-travel mosaic. The **Fossil Museum** in Meride, revamped by famous Ticinese architect Mario Botta, exhibits a handpicked selection from Monte San Giorgio's excavation sites. You're welcomed by a 2.5m-long

**HIGHLIGHTS**

1 Monte San Giorgio

**SIGHTS**

2 Carona

3 Castagnola

4 Fossil Museum

5 Gandria

6 Madonna d'Ongero

7 Mendrisiotto

8 Monte San Salvatore

9 Morcote

10 Parco San Grato

**SLEEPING**

11 Hotel Bigatt

12 Villa Principe

Leopoldo

**EATING**

13 Alpe Vicania

14 Arté al Lago

15 Grotto Morchino

16 La Fermata

See 5 Le Bucce di Gandria

See 4 Locanda San Silvestro

replica of a *Ticinosuchus*. A four-hour, 12km circular trail takes you from Meride to the summit of Monte San Giorgio, with the scenic backdrop of its vineyard-dotted southern slopes. An old mule track wends through thick forest to the summit, commanding fine lake views; then you'll descend on a path with panels detailing the fossils and their excavation sites.

## Walk the Olive Tree Trail

### A stroll through time around Gandria

Joining the picturesque villages of Castagnola and Gandria, the 3.5km **Olive Trail** beckons travellers with glimpses of Lago di Lugano and Mediterranean flowers, and encapsulates Ticino's harmonious blend of nature's beauty and cultural heritage. Starting from **Castagnola**, near the old community centre, the trail is well marked with the emblematic olive-tree logo. For those venturing from **Gandria**, the trailhead is located near the village's parking lot by the main road.

Display panels emerge at intervals along the route, narrating tales of the region's deep-rooted connection to the cultivation of olives. The path is more than just a scenic route; it's a passage through time. Ancient olive groves stand as reminders of the region's past, while new plantings indicate the resurgence of this age-old tradition. To return, take the bus connecting Gandria and Lugano or a boat trip on the lake.

## The Descent from Monte San Salvatore

### Alpine panoramas and lakeside beauty

Perched at 912m above sea level, the **Monte San Salvatore** delivers riveting 360-degree views of the region, stretching from Lago di Lugano all the way to the Alps beyond. It's accessed via a 12-minute funicular ride from Lugano-Paradiso to the summit. Yet, the true appeal of this journey lies in the descent towards the village of Morcote.

The initial steep trajectory from San Salvatore gradually mellows into comfortable trails. Along the route you'll reach the artist haven of **Carona**, where Hermann Hesse once sought inspiration. You'll also pass by the botanical gem of **Parco San Grato**, which has an exquisite collection of rhododendrons, azaleas and conifers. Beyond, a forested trail guides you past the 17th-century **Madonna d'Ongero** pilgrimage church and **Alpe Vicania**, home to a local summer-favourite *grotto* restaurant.

The trail's finale is a picturesque stretch of chestnut forest, cascading down myriad steps toward **Morcote**. From there, a leisurely boat ride back to Lugano makes the perfect conclusion to this quintessential Ticino adventure.



### BEST PLACES TO EAT IN THE LUGANO REGION

#### Le Bucce di Gandria

This hillside restaurant at Gandria village with gorgeous lake views offers local and seasonal flavours. €€

#### Arté al Lago

Lugano's lakeside Michelin-starred venue; gourmet dishes are served in a contemporary, artistic setting. €€€

#### Locanda San Silvestro

For elegant dining in Meride, this place fuses tradition with modern flair and has regional specialities. €€

#### Grotto Morchino

Paradiso's rustic retreat offers hearty Ticinese specialties in tranquil surroundings. €€

#### La Fermata

Contemporary Italian cuisine in Lugano's cozy, chic culinary corner. €€



### WHERE TO STAY IN THE LUGANO REGION

#### Locanda San Silvestro

Traditional architecture is fused with comfortable modern amenities; located in Meride. €€

#### Villa Principe Leopoldo

The epitome of Ticino's luxurious accommodation, this opulent hotel has panoramic lake views. €€€

#### Hotel Bigatt

A perfect retreat in Paradiso, offering modern comforts and mesmerising lake views. €€



# Ascona-Locarno

TWIN TOWNS | RELIGIOUS HISTORY | BRISSAGO ISLANDS



## GETTING AROUND

Both Ascona and Locarno are tailor-made for exploration on foot. Ascona has a flat lakeside promenade, with mild inclines in its old town.

Locarno's Piazza Grande is perfect for pedestrians, but reaching Madonna del Sasso can mean an uphill journey. Frequent bus services connect the two cities, and in Locarno, the funicular is a great shortcut to Orselina.

If you're driving, consider parking outside the compact centres and using buses or walking for in-city adventures.

## TOP TIP

Experience global cinema by Lake Maggiore at the Locarno Film Festival, which takes place over 11 days in August. At night, films are shown on a giant screen in Piazza Grande.

Ascona and Locarno are sun-dappled twins set against the backdrop of alpine splendor on the northern tip of Lake Maggiore, each radiating its own unique charm. Ascona's bohemian spirit can be felt along its streets, where creativity flows as naturally as the lake's gentle waves. The town is a haven for art lovers and those seeking a quiet escape.

Palm trees and pastel-coloured houses line the promenade, overlooking the glassy waters of Lake Maggiore to the rugged green mountains beyond, while the old town draws visitors with its boutiques, galleries and antique shops. Locarno, on the other hand, blends cinematic glamour with its historic cobblestoned heart. It's a town alive with energy, yet still deeply connected to its roots. The promenade winds along its mountain-facing lakefront and the botanical gardens are filled with subtropical flowers and foliage.

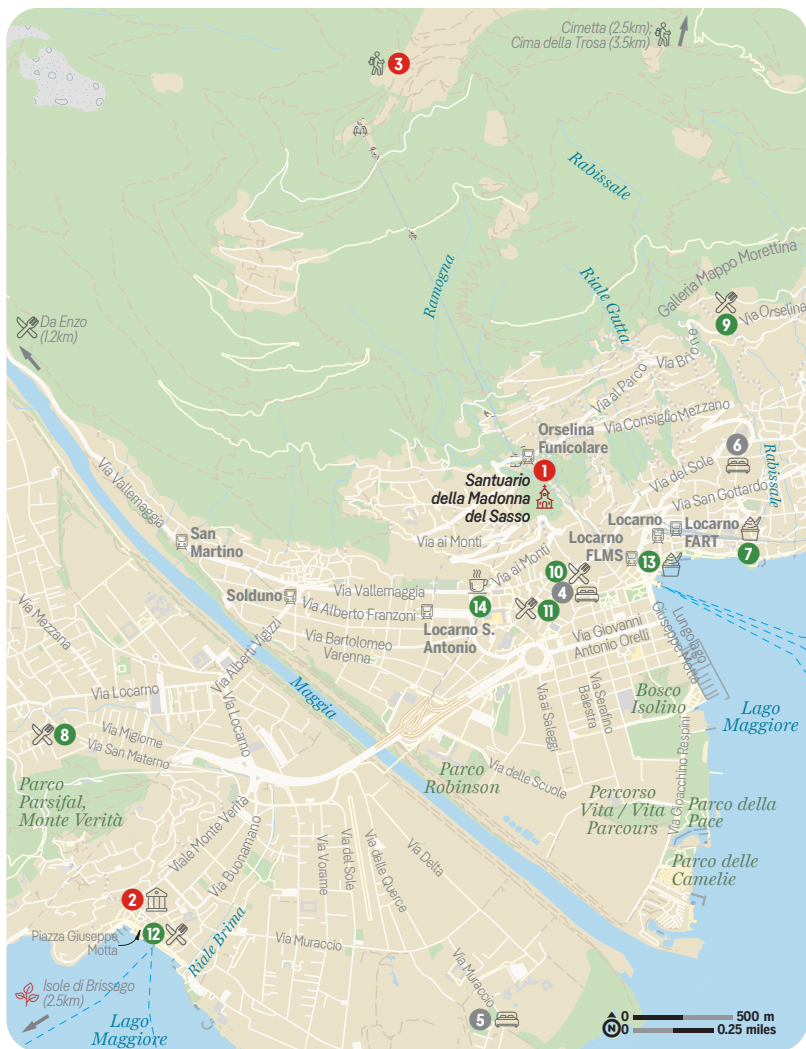
## A Pilgrimage to Madonna del Sasso

### A sanctuary overlooking Lago Maggiore

Overlooking Locarno, the **Santuario della Madonna del Sasso** in Orselina holds profound religious and historical significance in the canton of Ticino. Legend has it that Franciscan friar Bartolomeo d'Ivrea, inspired by a vision of the Virgin Mary in 1480, initiated the construction of the sanctuary. Strategically perched atop a dramatic rock outcrop, it provides an ethereal view over the rugged valley below, Locarno, the shimmering lake and the distant mountains.

There are several near-life-size statue groups (including one of the Last Supper) in niches on the stairway. The best-known painting in the church is *La fuga in egipto* (Flight to Egypt), painted in 1522 by Bramantino. Conveniently, the sanctuary's proximity to the Orselina-Cardada-Cimetta cable car (which runs every 15 minutes from the town centre) makes it an ideal starting point for various hikes, including the scenic trails of **Cima della Trosa**. A more scenic, pilgrim-style approach is the 20-minute walk up the picturesque, chapel-lined Via Crucis.



**HIGHLIGHTS**

- 1 Santuario della Madonna del Sasso

**SIGHTS**

- 2 Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna

**ACTIVITIES, COURSES & TOURS**

- 3 Cardada

**SLEEPING**

- 4 Boutique Hotel Piazza Grande  
5 Giardino Ascona

- 6 Villa Muralto

**EATING**

- 7 Gelateria Riccione  
8 Grotto Ticinese  
9 Grotto Ca Nostra  
10 L'Archetto

- 11 Locanda Locarnese

- 12 Pinotti Panetteria  
13 Vera Gelateria

**DRINKING & NIGHTLIFE**

- 14 Muyu Coffee Roasters



## BEST PLACES FOR GELATI & SWEETS ON LAGO MAGGIORE

### Vera Gelateria

A genuine taste of Italian artisanal gelato tradition, with fresh ingredients. €

### Gelateria Riccione

A haven for ice-cream lovers, offering a myriad of flavours and creamy indulgence. €

### Pinotti Panetteria

Freshly baked delights and authentic breads are a toast to Ticino's baking tradition. €

### Caffè Barocco

Elegant Ascona cafe with baroque-inspired decor, perfect for lakeside relaxation over an espresso. €

### Muyu Coffee Roasters

Expertly roasted beans promise rich coffee aromas in Locarno's cozy niche. €



BENNY MARTY/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Hiking, Cardada-Cimetta trail

## Hit the Trails above Locarno

### Adventures on Cardada and Cimetta mountains

For those yearning for adrenaline, the adventure begins at the Orselina funicular stop. Here, a cable car soars to **Cardada**, sitting at an altitude of 1332m, and continues further by a chairlift to **Cimetta**, elevating you to 1671m. Depending on the season's whim and your adventurous spirit, these forested peaks become a playground for hiking, mountain biking, paragliding or skiing. On Cardada, the promenade suspended above the trees has a lookout point with 180-degree views over the city, Lake Maggiore and the valleys beyond. The panoramic spectacle from Cimetta on cloudless days is stunning. The azure expanse of Lake Maggiore lies beneath, with the Alps seemingly melting into the horizon. If you're lucky, you might be able to make out the snowcapped Dufourspitze, Switzerland's highest peak (4634m). The mountains have myriad marked trails, ranging from 1½-hour strolls to four-hour treks. For the ambitious, pathways lead to the heart of Valle Maggia (p154) and Valle Verzasca (p157).

## Escape to Brissago Islands

### Tropical tranquility on Lago Maggiore

Discover the wonders of nature with a visit to **Isole di Brissago**, a tiny pair of islands on Lago Maggiore. This subtropical paradise, which defies Switzerland's typical alpine climate, is famous for its botanical gardens designed in the 19th century and showcasing the globe's diverse habitats. **Isola di San Pancrazio**, the larger of the two islands, features five distinct areas, each revealing the botanical richness of a different continent. As you wander along the well-curated paths, you'll encounter a variety of plant species in their natural environments, each representing its origins and ecological significance. Magnolias, orchids, yuccas and agaves are among the 1700 species that flourish here. There are regular boat services from various locations between Ascona and Brissago.

## Admire Ascona's Palette

### Museo Comunale's modern-art wonders

Within the venerable walls of the late-16th-century Palazzo Pancaldi, the **Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna** presents a riveting collection of paintings by artists connected with the town, including Paul Klee and the avant-garde Russian-Swiss Expressionist painter Marianne von Werefkin. This temple of modern art guards 90 paintings and 170 sketchbooks by Werefkin. Temporary exhibitions often home in on different aspects of the permanent collection.



### BEST PLACES TO EAT IN ASCONA-LOCARNO

#### Locanda Locarnese

This Locarno old town spot has a cozy ambience and loads of charm, and serves seasonal dishes. €€

#### Da Enzo

A culinary nod to Ticino's rustic roots, focusing on traditional recipes; just northwest of Locarno. €€

#### Grottino Ticinese

Ascona-based *grotto* with a stone-walled interior and local flavours that echo Ticino's heritage. €€

#### Grotto Ca Nostra

Authentic Ticino cuisine in Ascona's intimate, rustic *grotto* setting. €€

#### L'Archetto

Quick, tasty bites to enjoy on the go in Locarno's bustling heart. €



### WHERE TO STAY IN ASCONA-LOCARNO

#### Giardino Ascona

A haven of luxury, with lush gardens for relaxation; located next to Ascona's golf course. €€€

#### Boutique Hotel Piazza Grande

In the heart of Locarno, offering chic urban comfort and views of the historic piazza. €€

#### Villa Muralto

Elegant boutique hotel with eight rooms in a beautiful garden setting north of Locarno's centre. €€

# Western Valleys

**WATERFALLS | HIDDEN TRAILS | SMALLEST VILLAGE**



## GETTING AROUND

Navigating the valleys requires a mix of modes. While walking provides an exhilarating experience, terrains range from flat valley floors to more demanding mountainous trails, so make sure you have suitable footwear.

Public buses run between the main towns and villages, but schedules can be infrequent, especially during off-peak times.

For more flexibility, driving is an option, allowing detours and stopovers. Be prepared for winding roads and, in winter, potentially tricky conditions.

## ✓ TOP TIP

Dip into the tranquil waters of Lago di Vogorno, nestled in Valle Verzasca. Kayaking here offers a peaceful counterpoint to the valley's thrill-seeking bungee jumps.

The western valleys of Ticino – namely Valle Maggia, Valle Verzasca and Centovalli – showcase nature's artistry at its pinnacle. Sculpted by glacial forces, they feature lush forests of chestnuts and fragrant pine, thundering waterfalls shrouded in mist, and rugged, sheer-sided mountain peaks. But these valleys are also a treasure trove of Ticinese traditions, echoing tales of the past in their ancient villages of stone houses with heavy slate roofs.

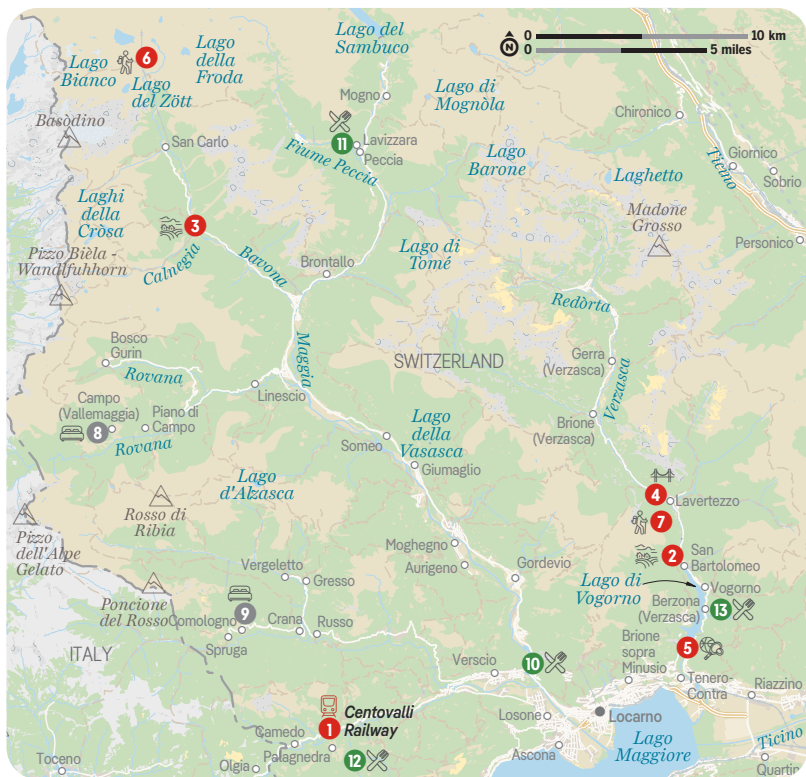
Here, the local architecture, festivities and culinary traditions are cherished and celebrated fervently. Each experience, whether it's hiking hidden trails, attending local festivals or sampling traditional Ticinese cuisine, pays homage to the resilient spirit of the region's inhabitants and the splendour of its natural surroundings. These valleys invite you to rewind, get immersed in nature, discover your intrepid inner self with outdoor pursuits or simply kick back and enjoy the arresting views.

## Meet Foroglio's Cascades

### The village with a waterfall

Deep within verdant nature, a startlingly turquoise river twists through the Valle Maggia until it splits at the main town, Cevio, the first of several divisions into smaller valleys. A smooth road follows a mountain stream through Val Bavona, where narrow meadows are cradled between steep rocky walls. Dominating the landscape around the village of **Foroglio** is a majestic **waterfall**, reminiscent of ancient glaciers and valleys shaped millennia ago.

As this cascade plunges from its remarkable 110m height, it creates both a natural symphony and a visual spectacle. Around the falls the village unfolds, with its pretty slate-roofed homes of grey stone clustered around a historic 15th-century church.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- ① Centovalli Railway

**SIGHTS**

- ② Corippo  
③ Foroglio  
See ③ Foroglio Waterfall  
④ Ponte dei Salti

- See ② Santa Maria del Carmine

**ACTIVITIES, COURSES & TOURS**

- ⑤ Contra Dam  
⑥ Lago di Robièi  
⑦ Valle Verzasca

**SLEEPING**

- See ② Corippo  
Albergo Diffuso  
⑧ Locanda Fior di Campo  
⑨ Palazzo Gamboni

**EATING**

- ⑩ Grotto America  
⑪ Grotto Pozzasc  
⑫ Osteria Bordei  
⑬ Osteria Paradiso

**WHERE TO STAY IN THE WESTERN VALLEYS****Corippo Albergo Diffuso**

This unique accommodation concept is revitalising the tranquil village; embrace the charm of rural life. €€

**Palazzo Gamboni**

Step back in time at this majestic palazzo in Comolengo, aka the Swiss Historic Hotel. €€

**Locanda Fior di Campo**

Experience Ticinese hospitality in the tranquil setting of a side valley of Valle Maggia. €€





## WHY I LOVE THE WESTERN VALLEYS

**Michaela Scalisi,**  
Lonely Planet writer

The western valleys beckon me with a magic that's hard to put into words.

Beyond the lush green expanses that soothe the eyes, there's the allure of hidden grottos, each echoing tales from a time gone by. The valleys merge nature's tranquillity with the vibrant symphony of traditions and history.

Each visit deepens my bond, making the valleys more than just a destination to me. They are a vivid canvas, a testament to nature and culture in harmonious coexistence.



ON PHOTOGRAPHY GERMAN V/S HUTTERSTOCK ©

Centovalli Railway

## Alpine Reverie at Robièi Dam

### Glaciers, lakes and hiking trails

In the high-altitude embrace of **Lago di Robièi**, nature puts on a breathtaking display. This alpine haven at the foot of the Basòdino glacier is a tapestry of pristine lakes, unique flora and undisturbed wildlife. A cable car whisks visitors from San Carlo in Val Bavona up to Robièi where, at an altitude of 1890m, the majestic peak of Basòdino is mirrored by the serene waters of the lake and juxtaposed by the rugged beauty of the valley's rock walls. Robièi makes a cherished retreat from Locarno, offering days filled with outdoor adventures. The area is tailor-made for hiking, with trails meandering through this dramatic landscape. One trail takes you deep into the Robièi dam for an insight into its construction and hydro-electric power.

## All Aboard the Centovalli Railway

### A timeless train voyage

To see the valley in atmospheric slow motion, hop aboard the **Centovalli Railway**. On its 1¼-hour journey from the precincts of Locarno to Domodossola, across the border in Italy, the dinky train chugs deep into the wilderness, across 83 bridges and through 34 tunnels. As you traverse the undulat-

ing terrains of the Centovalli, you're treated to scenic splendour with every curve and incline: waterfalls shooting over cliff faces, vineyards, viaducts, church-topped villages, deep ravines and sun-dappled chestnut forests, all against the backdrop of often snowcapped mountains.

## Adventures in Valle Verzasca

### Where nature and thrills meet

The 26km **Valle Verzasca**, northeast of Locarno, is a showcase of nature's might. An emerald river slices through forested mountains, below towering cliffs and past timeless villages, with the ancient arches of **Ponte dei Salti** overseeing the spectacle. A 34km hiking trail linking Sonogno and Lavertezzo villages takes in the full sweep of the valley. The river itself draws adventurers, and rafting here offers more than just an adrenaline rush – in Verzasca, one experiences a deep connection with nature. The daring can brave a 220m bungee jump from the top of the **Contra Dam**, the striking backdrop for scenes in the Bond movie *Golden Eye*.

## Spend the Night in Corippo

### Valle Verzasca's old-world tapestry

The hamlet of **Corippo** in Valle Verzasca, accessed by a 19th-century carriage road, exudes old-world charm. Switzerland's smallest village is a historic spectacle, protected by a devoted foundation. The central square features the church of **Santa Maria del Carmine**; a cluster of granite-built, slate-roofed houses are seemingly pasted on to the steep, forested mountain flank. Surrounding walls, once rye and hemp field boundaries, reveal the nomadic past of inhabitants seeking winter sustenance, while devotional art recalls the once-thriving community. An *albergo diffuso* offers travellers the opportunity to spend the night in Corippo's preserved heritage.



### BEST PLACES TO EAT IN THE VALLEYS

#### Osteria Paradiso

This culinary oasis in Valle Verzasca serves traditional dishes. Chat with the owner and enjoy the terrace views. €€

#### Grotto Pozzasc

Located in Peccia, offering rustic charm and time-honoured local recipes. Make sure to try their polenta dishes. €€

#### Grotto America, Tegna

This authentic *grotto* in Tegna celebrates Ticino's gastronomic legacy. Sample the *luganighetta* (local sausage) or goat products. €€

#### Osteria Bordei, Palagnedra

Palagnedra's quaint and cozy osteria offers a taste of local tradition. €€



# Central Switzerland

## THE ESSENCE OF SWISSNESS

Lakes and mountains, tradition and innovation, history and myth: this region in the heart of Switzerland encapsulates what the country is all about.

Not only is this area geographically at Switzerland's centre and quintessentially Swiss in appearance, but it's inextricably tied to the country's national identity. The old confederacy began here in 1291, when the three valley communities of Uri, Schwyz and Nidwalden signed a pact against the ruling Habsburgs. They were joined in 1332 by Lucerne, bolstering a growing alliance that was to exist for hundreds of years and is today considered the root of the modern Swiss Confederation.

There remains a quiet reverence about these four so-called 'forest cantons' and the lake that unites them, the Vierwaldstättersee (Lake Lucerne). It's in the soft watercolour silhouettes of the mountains encircling the lake; in the luminous dusks and

dawns that have inspired Turner, Wagner, Goethe and countless other artists; in the eerie call of the paddle-steamer's horn echoing across the water; and in the tranquil forest clearing of Rütli Meadow, where legend has it the original alliance was agreed.



However, this history-infused landscape exists in harmony with modern Switzerland: Lucerne's top-flight concert hall and museums, gravity-defying cable cars and mountain railways that push the boundaries of what's possible, and a cosmopolitan population that ditched the weekday desk for weekend downhill on the slopes or dips in the lake. Hassle-free and a doddle to navigate, it's everything you expect from Switzerland, with a few surprises thrown in.

EVA BOCEK/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

## THE MAIN AREAS

### LUCERNE

Nightlife, culture and lakeside living. **p164**

### ANDERMATT

Hiking, skiing and upmarket après-ski. **p174**





GANZ TWINN/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Left: Carnival masks, Fasnacht, Lucerne (p164); Above: Fronalpstock Mountain (p174)

# Find Your Way

The sparkling waters, flower-rich meadows and rough-hewn peaks of Central Switzerland are yours for the exploring. Base yourself in Lucerne or Andermatt for easy access to some of the country's top experiences.

## Lucerne, p164

The biggest city in the region offers world-class art, music and museums, a fascinating medieval centre, and lakeshore eating and drinking.

## Andermatt, p174

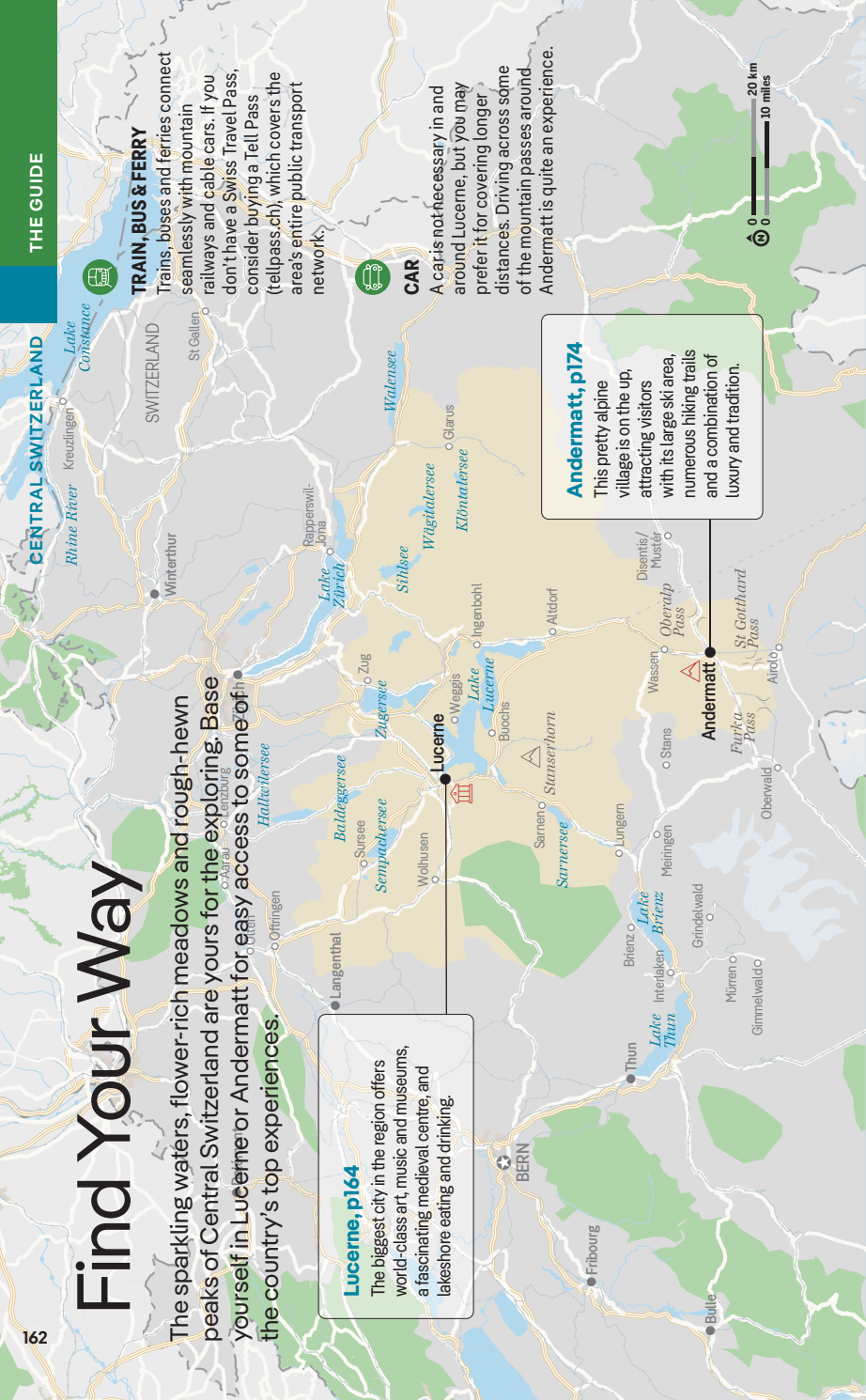
This pretty alpine village is on the up, attracting visitors with its large ski area, numerous hiking trails and a combination of luxury and tradition.

## TRAIN, BUS & FERRY

Trains, buses and ferries connect seamlessly with mountain railways and cable cars. If you don't have a Swiss Travel Pass, consider buying a Tell Pass (tellpass.ch), which covers the area's entire public transport network.

## CAR

A car is not necessary in and around Lucerne, but you may prefer it for covering longer distances. Driving across some of the mountain passes around Andermatt is quite an experience.







Cogwheel railway, Mt Pilatus (pl69)

# Plan Your Time

There's so much to explore in Central Switzerland that you could easily fill a fortnight, but if you have less time, choose your excursions carefully to create your own curated trip.

## Pressed for Time

If you only have a day or so, set out from Lucerne for **Mt Rigi** (pl69) and enjoy some gentle hiking at the top. On your return, have a drink at Inseli park near the **KKL** (pl64), followed by dinner in the medieval **Altstadt** (pl73). Alternatively, get the train to Stans and ride up the **Stanserhorn** (pl71), which is open some evenings in summer.

## A Week in the Centre

Balance culture, history and nature over a week. Visit the **Sammlung Rosengart** (pl66) and **Verkehrshaus** (pl66) in Lucerne, and enjoy day trips to **Mt Rigi** (pl69) and **Mt Pilatus** (pl69). Head to **Schwyz** (pl71) to explore its museums, or hike the ridge above **Stoos** (pl72). Travel to **Andermatt** (pl74) for the last two days; hike the **Oberalp Pass** (pl74) and visit the **Sasso San Gottardo** (pl77) museum.

## SEASONAL HIGHLIGHTS

### SPRING

The **cherry-blossom season** around Zug is in full swing and temperatures are generally mild.

### SUMMER

The lakes and mountains are at their finest for **swimming and hiking**. Lucerne hosts its annual **classical music festival**.

### AUTUMN

Beautiful turning leaves, milder heat and fewer tourists make this a brilliant time for **hiking**.

### WINTER

**Skiers** hit the slopes in Engelberg, Klewenalp, Stoos or Andermatt, and **carnival** fever lights up Lucerne.

# Lucerne

CULTURAL HOMELAND | MUSEUMS | GLACIAL GARDEN



## GETTING AROUND

Lucerne is a very walkable city, and exploring the Altstadt's warren of cobbled streets is best on foot. Beyond that, it's easy to hop from shore to shore on a ferry or take a bus for longer distances. Convenient bicycle hire is available from Next Bike ([nextbike.ch](http://nextbike.ch)) near the train station – download the app and scan a QR code to unlock a bike. Parking can be expensive, but if you must drive, options and prices are available on [parking-luzern.ch](http://parking-luzern.ch).

## TOP TIP

While the cobbled streets and decorative buildings of the Altstadt (old town) are the main draw, the less-crowded Neustadt (new town) across the river offers a diverse array of restaurants and a community vibe around the pretty Vögeligärtli park.

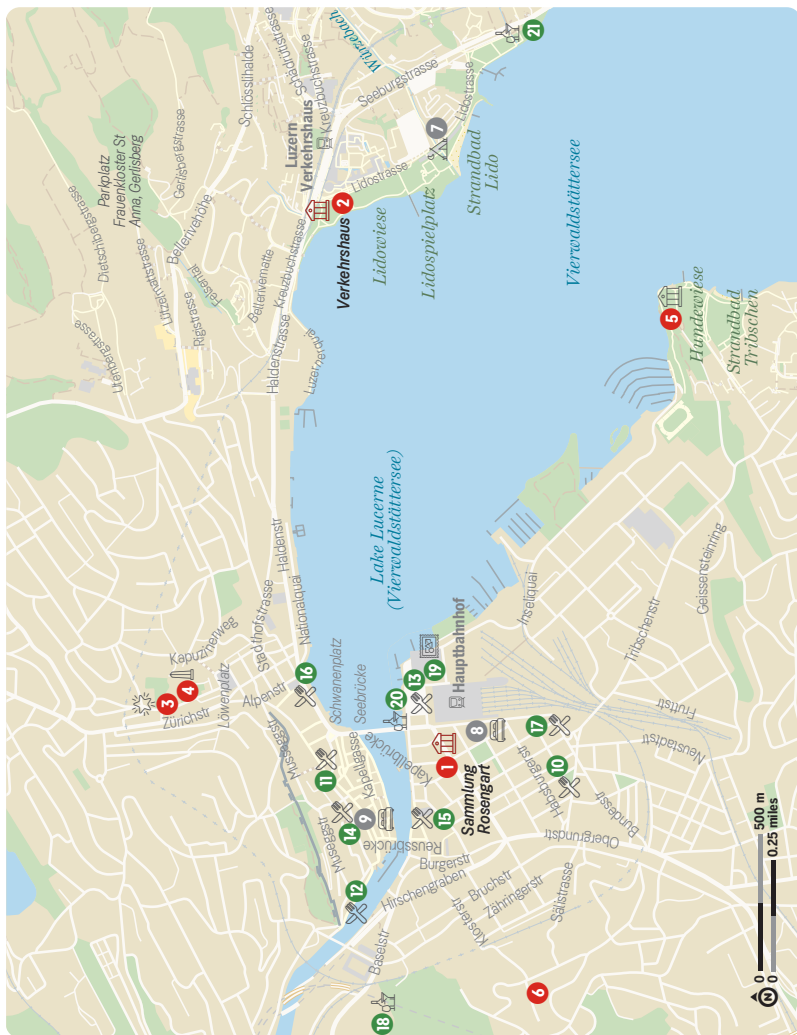
The centrepiece of Central Switzerland, Lucerne (Luzern in German) is only the country's seventh city in terms of population, but it punches far higher in looks and character. It's been on the map since the 13th century, when it became an important trade hub after the St Gotthard Pass opened. Today, this city of 82,000 people is a cultural hub, too: home to an internationally lauded classical music festival, the most popular museum in Switzerland, an energetic carnival and a beautifully preserved old town. Lake Lucerne not only enhances the city's attractiveness but also creates a natural playground for its youthful, outdoor-centric inhabitants. When the sun shines, they're sipping cocktails on the lakeshore at Inseli park, swimming and barbecuing beachside at Ufschötti, drifting down the Reuss River, or simply sitting around the fountain outside the KKL arts centre as the sun sets and the evening melds into the soft light of a Turner painting.

## Musical Lucerne

### Festivals, concerts and composers

Lucerne has music in its waters. Next to the train station is the **Kultur und Kongresszentrum Luzern** (KKL), its huge flat roof like a manta ray above the lakeshore. This Jean Nouvel-designed postmodern arts centre is the focal point for the **Lucerne Festival**, which hosts world-renowned classical musicians every summer. In late June, local bands take to stages around the city during the lively **StadtFest** weekend; in July, **Luzern Live** presents a diverse roster of Swiss and international acts.

But the city's musical roots go back far further. In February, the streets fill with *Guuggenmusigen* (traditional brass marching bands) during **Fasnacht** (pre-Lenten carnival), considered a fifth season here. The city's environs have long provided musical inspiration. Rachmaninoff lived in a villa near Weggis (p170), while Wagner spent six years living and composing in a lakefront house in Tribschen, a few minutes

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- 1** Sammlung Rosengart  
**2** Verkehrshaus

**SIGHTS**

- 3** Gletschergarten  
**4** Löwendenkmal  
**5** Richard Wagner Museum  
**6** Zivilschutzanlage Sonnenberg

**SLEEPING**

- 7** Camping Lido Lucerne  
**8** Hotel Continental Park  
**9** Lupo

**EATING**

- 10** Barbès  
**11** Heini  
**12** Karls Kraut  
**13** Le Pfaf  
**14** Nozomi  
**15** Pastarazzi  
**16** Schiffrestaurant Wilhelm Tell  
**17** Zur Werkstadt

**DRINKING****& NIGHTLIFE**

- 18** Château Gütsch  
**19** Kultur und Kongresszentrum Luzern  
**20** Seebistro LUZ  
**21** Sunset Bar



## LUCERNE'S MUSEUM CARD

If you're planning to visit several of Lucerne's museums, it may be worth picking up a Museum Card, a two-day pass costing Sfr39, available from the tourist office in the train station or online.

The price of admission to the Verkehrshaus alone makes it worthwhile. Also included are Lucerne's history and natural history museums, the interactive gaming museum Gameorama, the Richard Wagner Museum, the Sammlung Rosengart, the Gletschergarten, the Kunstmuseum Luzern on the 4th floor of the KKL, and the Bourbaki Panorama – a huge circular painting by 19th-century Swiss artist Edouard Castres that depicts defeated French soldiers interned in Switzerland in 1871 at the end of the Franco-Prussian war. Visit [shop.luzern.com](http://shop.luzern.com) for details.

by ferry from Bahnhofquai. Now the **Richard Wagner Museum**, it was renovated in 2023 and provides fascinating insights into the composer's life, music and romantic entanglements. It's closed on Mondays.

## Picasso & Klee at Sammlung Rosengart

### A world-class art collection

Siegfried Rosengart and his daughter Angela were Pablo Picasso's Swiss art dealers and friends, and the Sammlung Rosengart displays their private collection of his work, along with numerous paintings and sketches by Paul Klee and superb examples of Monet, Cézanne, Matisse and more. An added extra is a series of photos of Picasso and his second wife Jacqueline in their home near Cannes. Taken by their friend, American photojournalist David Douglas Duncan, the pictures provide a fascinating glimpse into the couple's home life and relationship.

## Planes, Trains & Automobiles

### Switzerland's homage to transport

It is apt that Lucerne, a city serviced by so many forms of transport, should be home to the **Verkehrshaus**. Switzerland's most visited museum pays homage to the remarkable engineering that allows us to travel by everything from boat to space rocket. Each mode of transport gets its own dedicated area, housed in warehouse-like structures around a central courtyard. It's hugely interactive – mini cableways to set in motion, cockpits to explore, digital and physical games to play, toy vehicles to ride around the courtyard – and kids adore it. A planetarium and 3D film theatre complete the picture. Of course, getting there is easy, with buses, trains and ferries scheduled from Lucerne's main station. The boat jetty is next to a popular lakeshore sunbathing spot, so you can relax with a swim after your visit.

## The Dying Lion Monument

### A tribute to the Swiss Guards

There's something very poignant about the **Löwendenkmal**, a larger-than-life stone relief carving of a lion impaled by a spear, his face an expression of pain and sadness. Designed by Danish artist Bertel Thorvaldsen and inaugurated in 1821, it's a memorial to the Swiss Guards who died protecting



## WHERE TO HAVE A DRINK WITH A VIEW IN LUCERNE

### Sunset Bar

Pizzas, cocktails and a lively atmosphere at this outdoor bar near the Strandbad Lido and Verkehrshaus.

### Château Gütsch

Ride the funicular to this fairy-tale castle on the hill to have a glass of wine overlooking the city.

### Seebistro LUZ

Watch the ferries arrive and depart from the balcony terrace of this quayside cafe-bar.

Start your walking tour at the **1 Kapellbrücke**, the symbol of the city, just a few minutes from the train station. This 14th-century covered wooden footbridge and its 17th-century painted roof panels were all but destroyed by fire in 1993 and underwent massive reconstruction, though the adjacent water tower, built around 1300, survived. Cross the Reuss River into Lucerne's medieval Altstadt, a warren of cobbled streets featuring ornate fountains and frescos depicting elements of the city's history and culture.

On Kapellplatz, fill up your water bottle at the colourful **2 Fritschli Fountain**, which plays a central role in Lucerne's annual carnival. Stroll along Kapellgasse until Kornmarkt, home to the Renaissance **3 Rathaus** (Town Hall) and the decorative **4 Pfister** building, a traditional guild house. Head right to **5 Hirschenplatz** to admire its richly painted facades, and then on to **6 Weinmarkt**, a historic market square

whose sculpted stone fountain is considered one of the city's finest.

Around the corner to the left is the beautifully painted **7 Hotel des Balances** on Metzgerainle. From here turn right up Kramgasse into **8 Mühlenplatz**, Lucerne's largest square. You'll emerge at the river and the **9 Spreuerbrücke**, a covered timber bridge built in 1408, whose painted roof panels depict the Dance of Death. Continue walking along St Karliquai to the **10 Nölliturm**, the first of nine towers comprising Lucerne's medieval fortifications, known as the Museggmuer.

Follow the Museggmuerweg to the **11 Männlilturm**, which you can climb for glorious views across the city.

From the **12 Wachturm**, walk along the ramparts themselves, taking in the **13 Zyturm** clock tower and ending at the **14 Schirmer-turm** (April to October only).







## LUCERNE RESTAURANT FAVOURITES

**Roberto Riccardi**, who runs the cargo-bike tour company Loop Tours ([loop-tours.com](http://loop-tours.com)), shares his Lucerne restaurant tips.

### Nozomi

Located in a former prison, this is a Japanese kitchen but there's no sushi; instead, it offers dishes for sharing, tapas-style.

### Schiffrestaurant Wilhelm Tell

Everyone thinks this restaurant – in a former working paddle steamer moored on the lakeshore – must be really touristy, but it's not. The menu features seasonal Swiss dishes: fish from the lake, creative salads and fondue.

### Zur Werkstatt

This new town place usually offers just one set menu, though you can add more courses. The dishes are prepared in an open kitchen right in front of you.

King Louis XVI of France from revolutionaries in 1792. What should be a peaceful spot for this mournful memorial is often flooded with selfie-taking tourists, so come early in the morning to get some quiet time with the lion.

## A Glacier Garden in the City

### Ice Age Lucerne

Possibly Lucerne's quirkiest attraction is the **Gletschergarten**, a slice of prehistory in the city centre. In 1872 Lucerne banker and wine merchant Josef Wilhelm Amrein-Troller was building himself a wine cellar when his excavations uncovered glacial potholes dating from the last Ice Age. Seeing an opportunity, he turned his discovery into a tourist attraction. Today, this glacier garden is a bizarre combo of fascinating geology and 19th-century kitsch. Its newest attraction, an animated trail through the rock, shows how the Lucerne region's landscape has evolved over millions of years, while curios include a mock alpine hut displaying a diorama of the Gorner Glacier, and – strangest of all – a mirror labyrinth based on the Alhambra in Granada. Enter it at your peril – finding your way out takes some time.

## Go Underground at Zivilschutzanlage Sonnenberg

### Visit a Cold War bunker

During the Cold War, neutral Switzerland was concerned it might get caught in the crossfire if nuclear war broke out, so the authorities stipulated that every citizen should have a place to shelter. Lucerne decided to create a bunker big enough to house 20,000 people – a third of the population at the time – in two motorway tunnels beneath the Sonnenberg hill.

Completed in 1976, the Zivilschutzanlage Sonnenberg (Sonnenberg Civil Protection Facility) contained a command centre, hospital, prison, radio studio and more. If deployed, blast doors would have sealed off the tunnels and bunk beds would have been installed along the tarmac. It was never used and was later downsized, but it could still accommodate 2000 people today if needed. A mind-boggling tour reveals the potential horrors of everyday life underground as well as the project's glaring flaws. Public tours in English are held on the last Sunday of every month from April to August (reserve ahead), or you can book a private tour.



## WHERE TO STAY IN LUCERNE

### Lubo

Self-check-in rooms in the old town, with a ground-floor bar for breakfast, street food and cocktails. €€

### Hotel Continental Park

By pretty Vögeligärtli park in the new town, with stylish rooms and a Ticino-inspired restaurant. €€

### Camping Lido Lucerne

Clean and cheerful facilities near the lakeshore and the Verkehrshaus. Caravans are available to rent. €



# Beyond Lucerne

Lucerne is the starting point for some of the country's best day trips. Pack a picnic and get out there.

## Places

**Mt Rigi** p169

**Mt Pilatus** p169

**Engelberg** p170

**Stanserhorn** p171

**Schwyz** p171

**Lake Uri** p171

**Stoos** p172

**Zug** p173



The magical landscape around Lucerne has captivated many a famous visitor. Britain's Queen Victoria rode up Mt Pilatus on horseback, American writer Mark Twain hiked up Mt Rigi, and actress Audrey Hepburn got married on the Bürgenstock. It's not hard to see the appeal: the fjord-like fingers of land around Lake Lucerne create countless glorious viewpoints, all accessed with ease thanks to chocolate-smooth transport connections that make the journey as much a part of the experience as the destination. This is also the country's heartland: the museums in Schwyz explore the origins of Switzerland and the legends of Rütli and William Tell, while Zug and Einsiedeln hark back to the Middle Ages.



## GETTING AROUND

All of these areas are easily reached by public transport from Lucerne, included in the Tell Pass. Roads are excellent and simple to navigate, but parking can be expensive so it may not be worth it unless you're in a group and the cost of multiple train tickets exceeds fuel, parking and the obligatory motorway vignette (sticker).

## Mt Rigi

TIME FROM LUCERNE: 90 MINS  

### Take in the regal mountain views

You can see the communications tower on the top of Mt Rigi (1797m) for miles around, and the trip to stand beside it is one of the most popular outings in the region. There are several ways to ascend the 'Queen of the Mountains', but the typical round trip starts with an hour's ride on a paddle steamer from Lucerne to Vitznau, followed by a cogwheel train up the mountain. In summer, Rigi's summit heaves with visitors, so lose the crowds (at least a little) by hiking one of the many trails. The panorama route, with its vertigo-inducing cliffside section between First and Unterstetten, offers unmissable views. To descend, ride the gondola from Rigi Kaltbad to pretty Weggis, where Mark Twain and his family once spent several weeks. Linger in a lakeside bar or take a dip at **Weggis Lido** before sailing back to Lucerne.

## Mt Pilatus

TIME FROM LUCERNE: 60 MINS  

### Hiking the Dragon Mountain

According to medieval legend, dragons dwell on Mt Pilatus (2070m), whose jagged silhouette overlooking Lucerne does almost resemble a sleeping dragon if you squint a bit. Catch the boat or train to Alpnachstad, from where you can either hike up in a tough, five-hour climb or take the world's steepest cogwheel railway, which has been running up here since 1889.

## TOP TIP

Local cafe chain Bachmann and supermarket Migros Takeaway have branches in Lucerne's train station – good for picking up a takeaway meal.



## THE LOCALS' MOUNTAIN

Less frequented by tourists, **Klewenalp** is beloved by locals for its pretty walking trails in summer and its snowshoeing, skiing and tobogganing runs in winter.

For an easy summer-afternoon outing, catch the gondola from Beckenried on the lakeshore and walk the hour-long, mostly downhill trail through forest and cow-grazed pastures to the Stockhütte, from where a cable car descends to Emmetten (or hire a mountain scooter for a fun whizz down the hill).

Both Beckenried and Emmetten are on the 311 bus line from Stans, which continues to Seelisberg, from where you can walk down to Rütli Meadow or take the funicular to Treib for a boat back to Lucerne or on to Brunnen.



ERNX V/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Cable car, Mt Titlis (p169)

The current sleek red carriages were new in 2023, but they aren't big, so it's worth reserving for a specific train in peak season to avoid standing in line for an hour or more. The rugged summit offers several short trails, the best being the cliff-edge path to the Tomlishorn, while the Matthorn trail makes for a longer and more solitary experience. A gondola descends the mountain via Fräkmüntegg, where there's an easy downhill walk to Krienseregg, which turns into a toboggan run in winter.

## Engelberg

TIME FROM LUCERNE: 45 MINS

### Skiing, hiking and boating

The alpine village of Engelberg (literally, Angel Mountain) is dominated by a 12th-century Benedictine monastery and the high peak of **Mt Titlis** (3028m). A series of cable cars, including the revolving Rotair, whisks visitors up to the summit station above the ice-blue fissures of the glacier. The view is epic, but the attractions are crowded and a tad kitsch (there's a photo studio where you can be snapped wearing traditional Swiss clothes), so after a quick scoot around, it's better to head back down to the mid-station at **Trübsee**, a gorgeous swatch of water reflecting the surrounding peaks. Here, you can hire a rowing boat or walk amongst the cows and marmots on one of the numerous hiking trails – the five-hour hike over the Jochpass down to Engstlensee and on to Meiringen is a beauty. In winter, Engelberg welcomes alpine skiers of all abilities: speed demons love the blacks, reds and off-piste slopes from Klein Titlis (including a 12km descent from the glacier to the village), while Obertrübsee and Gerschnialp offer gentle blues. On the other side of the village, the **Brunni-Ristis** area has a family-oriented vibe, with numerous hiking and snowshoeing trails.



## WHERE TO DRINK AROUND MT RIGI

### Rigi Kulm Hotel

The modern incarnation of Switzerland's oldest mountain hotel offers superlative views from Rigi's peak.

### Rigi Bärenstube Gasthaus

An idyllic spot to stop for a drink in First before taking the path to the panoramic cliff walk.

### Restaurant Seerose

The shady lakeside terrace makes this a tempting spot for a post-hike spritz or beer in Weggis.

## Stanserhorn

### An open-air ascent

The delightful journey up the Stanserhorn (1898m) involves trundling in a 130-year-old funicular railway from the pretty town of Stans and hopping on the open-top Cabrio cable car to the summit. There are hiking trails up here, of course, but it's just as nice to find a quiet spot and soak in the view – particularly on Thursday to Saturday evenings in summer, when you can remain up here for sunset and dinner in the revolving restaurant.

TIME FROM LUCERNE: 45 MINS  + 



### HOME OF THE SWISS ARMY KNIFE

The town of Schwyz is not only central to the creation of Switzerland, it also birthed the ultimate symbol of Swissness: the Swiss army knife by **Victorinox**.

Knife-maker Karl Elsener opened a workshop here in 1884, later naming his company after his ever-supportive mother, Victoria.

A few years later he began supplying knives to the Swiss army, and in 1897 he patented the folding multi-tool that we know as the Swiss army knife. The Victorinox factory is still located in Ibach, a suburb of Schwyz.

There's a larger boutique in Brunnen, where you can have a go assembling your own pocketknife.

## Schwyz

TIME FROM LUCERNE: 40 MINS 

### History versus myth in Switzerland's heartland

Overlooked by the twin Mythen mountains, the town of Schwyz is home to Switzerland's most prized document, the 1291 federal charter. Centuries of upheaval followed the signing of this alliance between Schwyz, Uri and Nidwalden, but when the modern Swiss Confederation was created in 1848 and the authorities wanted to reinforce a sense of national identity, this old bit of paper was dusted off and hailed as the country's founding document. Today, it's on proud display in the **Bundesbriefmuseum**, which uses multilingual interactive screens to explore the history behind the pact and the myths surrounding it. Down the road, the **Forum der Schweizer Geschichte** goes back further still, showing how this part of Europe developed under the Holy Roman Empire. There's a joint entry ticket also including the **Ital Reding-Hofstatt** mansion house. All three are closed on Mondays.

## Lake Uri

TIME FROM LUCERNE: 40 MINS 

### Walking the Swiss Path

The mesmerising turquoise water of Lake Uri (as the eastern finger of Lake Lucerne is known) is the backdrop to the **Swiss Path**, a 35km hiking trail created to commemorate Switzerland's 700th birthday in 1991. From pretty Brunnen, on the lakeshore 10 minutes from Schwyz, catch a boat across to **Rütli**. It's here, in a quiet forest clearing, that the 1291 oath was supposedly sworn, and Swiss politicians gather here every 1 August to celebrate Swiss National Day. From this starting point, the Swiss Path winds up and down around the lake in four stages, with waymarkers placed along the route to represent each Swiss canton according to population size. If you don't fancy the steep hike up from Rütli, take the ferry to Treib and ride the funicular to Seelisberg. Then it's a mostly downhill trail to



### WHERE TO EAT IN ENGELBERG

#### Tea Room

A retro, English-style tea room in the old post office, serving cakes, sandwiches and afternoon tea. €

#### Brasserie Konrad

Find Nordic-Swiss dishes and a pretty decked garden at the restaurant of the Ski Lodge Engelberg. €€

#### Berglodge Restaurant Ristis

Traditional Swiss rösti and *Älplermagronen* (pasta dish) in this mountain restaurant on the Brunni. €€



## TELL TALES

William Tell, who famously shot an apple off his son's head and later killed the cruel bailiff who ordered him to do it, is a heroic folk figure in Switzerland, his story likened to the freedom struggle of the early Swiss confederates.

Tell references are found all over this area, from the monument in **Altdorf**, where it's said these events took place, to the **Tellskapelle** (Tell Chapel) on the shore of Lake Uri where Tell escaped the bailiff, and the **Schillerstein**, an obelisk dedicated to Friedrich Schiller, whose 19th-century play *Wilhelm Tell* helped popularise the legend.

The **Tell Museum** in Bürglen (open mid-May to mid-October) explains the story's relevance to Swiss culture in a short film (available in English on request).



DAVE CUTTS/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

**Stoosbahn railway**

**Bauen**, the end of stage one, with glorious glimpses of Lake Uri en route, its waters dotted with the colourful spinnakers of sailboats catching the thermal breeze.

## Stoos

TIME FROM LUCERNE: **75 MINS** 🚗 + 🚠

### Hiking peak to peak

The car-free village of Stoos, 50km east of Lucerne, is the starting point for one of the most beautiful hikes in the region, and getting to Stoos is part of the experience. From the valley station, jump on the world's steepest funicular railway, which climbs 744m of elevation at a maximum gradient of 110%. The **Stoosbahn** opened in 1933 but was rebuilt in 2017 for new trains, whose wheel-shaped carriages revolve as they ascend, meaning passengers remain vertical the whole way up. At the top, Stoos sits beneath twin peaks, the **Klingenstock** and **Fronalpstock**, whose steep slopes create red and black ski pistes in winter. In summer, however, the main draw is the undulating ridge hike between the two. Take the Klingenstock chairlift and follow the narrow but well-maintained and safe trail to the Fronalpstock for vertiginous views of the whole region: the turquoise swirl of Lake Lucerne, Mt Rigi with its communications mast, the forested cliffs of the Bürgenstock and the ever-shifting cloud shadows on Lake Uri. Note that it's a two- to three-hour hike and there are no facilities between the two summit stations.



## WHERE TO GET A DRINK IN BRUNNEN

### Mezcalito

*Caipirinhas* (cocktails) and nachos at this Mexican restaurant with a balcony overlooking the lakeshore.

### Elvira's Trübli

This cosy riverside wine bar is rightly popular for its wide selection of wines and friendly atmosphere.

### Seehotel Waldstätterhof

The large lakeside terrace of this hotel is a plum spot for an aperitif or dinner as the sun sets.



## Zug

TIME FROM LUCERNE: 20 MINS 

### A lakeshore time capsule

About 30km from Lucerne, Zug is best known for its low tax rates and abundance of multinationals, but it's worth visiting for its well-preserved medieval **Altstadt** (old town) on the shore of Lake Zug. The archway under the Zyturm (clock tower) leads to narrow cobbled streets, half-timbered houses with colourful shutters, decorative buildings and the Landsgemeindeplatz, a market square where people's assemblies were held from the 14th century. Fish references abound, since fishing was historically important to Zug – its name comes from *Fischzug*, meaning 'the catch'. There's still a hatchery and **fishing museum**, as well as a bronze fountain in the corner of Fischmarkt depicting a boy pulling a pike from the water. If you want to make like a fish yourself, the **Seebad Seeliken** is a lovely spot for a swim.

## Einsiedeln

TIME FROM LUCERNE: 60 MINS 

### Monks, cherubs and ski jumpers

The sleepy town of Einsiedeln, 60km from Lucerne, is dominated by its huge monastery. The interior of the **Klosterkirche** (Abbey Church) is a baroque smorgasbord of dramatic ceiling frescos, pudgy pink cherub sculptures and gold flourishes. Pilgrims flock here to pray at the small Chapel of Our Lady – supposedly consecrated by Christ himself – while shoppers make the pilgrimage each December for the annual Christmas market held in front of the abbey. Out the back of the cloister courtyard, an uphill trail leads to the **statue of St Benedikt**, where the view takes in not only the sprawl of the monastery complex but the incongruous sight of four big ski jumps across town, a training venue for Switzerland's ski jumpers.



### TELL TRAIL

The Stoos ridge hike is part of the long-distance Tell Trail, an eight-stage, 156km route that starts in Altdorf and includes **Mt Pilatus** (p170), **Rigi Kaltbad** (p170), the **Stanserhorn** and **Engelberg** (p171).



### CHERRYLAND

Cherries – or *Chriesi* in local dialect – have been associated with Zug for centuries, and the town is known for its kirsch (cherry-flavoured liquor) and *Kirschtorte*.

In spring, the blossoming trees beautify hiking trails in the area, while in late June the town stages the **Zuger Chriesisturm**, a fun event based on the traditions surrounding the start of the cherry-picking season.

When the *Chriesigloggä* (cherry bell) rings at midday, teams of two men race through the old town carrying ladders. Women do the same wearing wicker baskets on their backs, and there are kids races too. It's all followed by a cherry market and general merriment on the Landsgemeindeplatz.



### WHERE TO EAT IN SCHWYZ

#### Café Laden

Tasty vegetarian dishes and baked treats, with gluten-free options, in a homely cafe; also sells secondhand clothes. €

#### Gasthaus Schwyzer Stubli

Local, seasonal dishes in a 17th-century inn with a wood-panelled dining room and secluded terrace. €€

#### Brasserie Engel

French cuisine and homemade chocolates at this family-run restaurant opposite the church. €€



# Andermatt

MOUNTAIN HIKES | VIA FERRATA | MUSEUMS



## GETTING AROUND

It's less than a 10-minute walk from the train station and the Gütsch Express cable car into the village centre.

There are frequent trains to the Oberalp Pass, included in the Andermatt+Sedrun+Disentis PASS.

Bus up the St Gotthard Pass are less frequent (and are not included in the PASS), so a car would give you more flexibility.

Andermatt is a small place with big ambitions. At the crossroads of three mountain passes – St Gotthard, Furka and Oberalp – this pretty village in the Urseren valley was an important staging post until the Gotthard Road Tunnel, built in 1980, took away much of its passing trade. Once a garrison town, Andermatt still has a barracks, but with the military presence now much reduced, it is reinventing itself as a tourist destination.

While powder hounds have long flocked here for the free-riding terrain of the Gemsstock, huge investment in recent years has created a beefed-up ski area for piste skiers connecting Andermatt with the neighbouring villages of Sedrun and Disentis in Graubünden. Swish new hotels and restaurants are springing up on the edge of town, but thankfully the centre remains charmingly traditional, with sun-blackened houses and cosy taverns along cobbled streets and the rush of the Unteralpsee River a constant soundtrack.

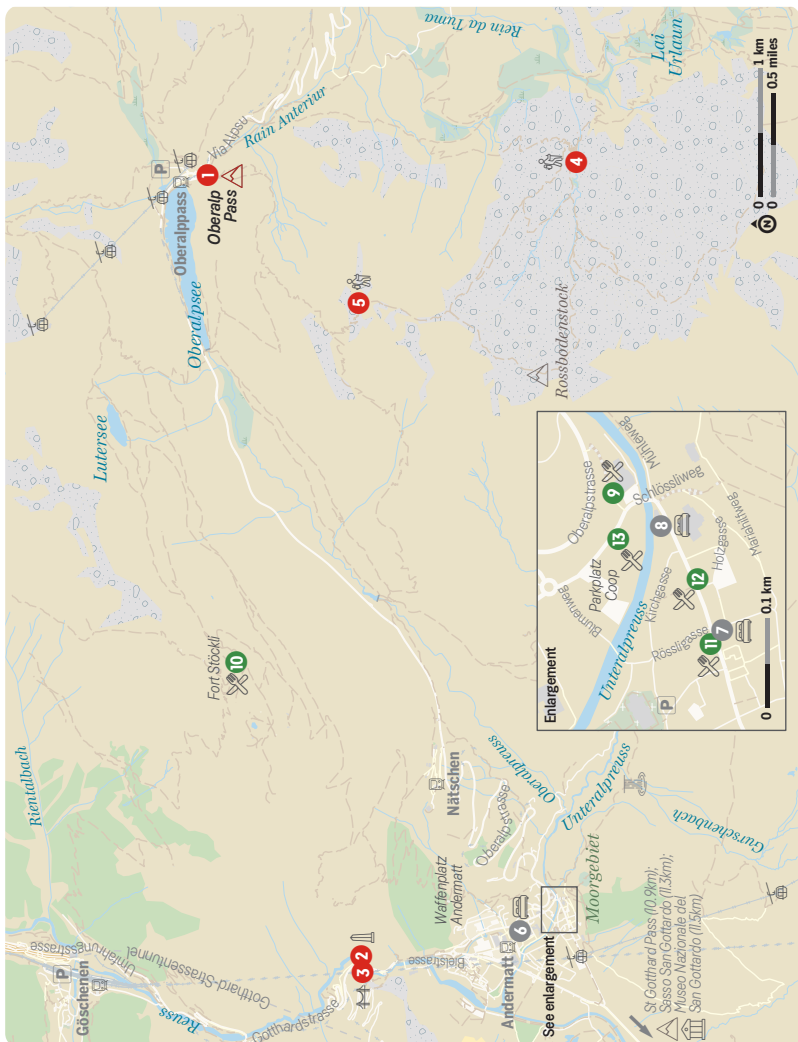
## Hiking to Lai da Tuma

### The source of the Rhine

Andermatt's location at the crux of several mountain passes makes it a wonderful place for hiking. Hop on the Matterhorn Gotthard Bahn for a scenic 20-minute ride to the **Oberalp Pass** (2044m) and hike the popular trail to the Lai da Tuma (Tomasee; 2345m), considered the source of the Rhine. The trail is gentle at first, winding up the hillside opposite the snake-like switchbacks of the road on the other side of the valley. The growl of motorbikes ascending the pass quietens as you climb higher and navigate a rocky section before reaching the tranquil lake. Either return the same way or carry on to the Badshütte and up to the **Pazolastock** (2740m) to make it a circular hike, but this is considerably more strenuous. Instead of taking the train back to Andermatt, catch the Schneehüenerstock

### TOP TIP

Make sure you pick up your free Guest Card from your accommodation. It gives you discounts and freebies in bars, restaurants and shops, as well as a special deal on mountain transport – buy a seven-day Andermatt+Sedrun+Disentis PASS for just Sfr20 (summer only).

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- 1 Oberalp Pass

**SIGHTS**

- 2 Suworow Monument  
3 Teufelsbrücke

**ACTIVITIES**

- 4 Lai da Tuma  
5 Pazdlastock

**SLEEPING**

- 6 Chedi  
7 Gasthaus Tell  
8 River House

**EATING**

- 9 Gasthaus zum Sternen  
10 Gütisch by Markus Neff  
11 Restaurant Ochsen  
12 Toutoune  
13 Vinothek 1620



## A LIGHTHOUSE IN THE ALPS

At 2044m above sea level, the Oberalp Pass is an incongruous location for a lighthouse, nonetheless you'll find one there.

The red-and-white beacon is a smaller replica of the lighthouse that once stood at the mouth of the Rhine River in Hook of Holland, the Netherlands. It was erected here – close to the river's source at Lai da Tuma – in 2010, to mark the spot where this major European waterway begins.

Each year a local celebrity or media personality is named honorary lighthouse keeper, receiving an oversized key at an annual ceremony.



ALAN ALSEVOCH/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

**Teufelsbrücke**

cable car from the Oberalp Pass and then walk the easy, mostly flat trail from the mid-station to Gütsch, from where another gondola descends to Andermatt. Make sure you have enough time, as the lifts usually shut around 4.45pm.

## The Schöllenen Gorge Trail

### A trio of bridges



### AN EPIC RIDE

PostBus 682 travels a near nine-hour 'four passes' circuit that takes in not only the St Gotthard Pass but also the **Susten**, **Grimsel** and **Nufenen** (p139) passes, making it the longest direct public transport service in the country.

The wild Schöllenen gorge, traversed by the **Teufelsbrücke** (Devil's Bridge), is a 15-minute walk from Andermatt. Steeped in myth, it's said that the original 16th-century stone bridge was built by the Devil himself. A circular trail across and around the 20th-century replacement affords beautiful views of the gorge, the rushing Reuss River and two other bridges: a rail viaduct and an arched road bridge. Nearby, the **Suworow Monument** pays tribute to Russian troops who lost their lives fighting the French here in 1799. A **via ferrata** starts next to the monument.

## Military Life Underground

### A top-secret wartime fortress

A 25-minute bus ride from Andermatt brings you to the **St Gotthard Pass** (2106m), a historically vital trade route and the site of a secret military fortress of jaw-droppingly vast proportions. During WWII, fearing invasion from neighbouring Germany and Italy, Switzerland expanded its National Redoubt, a defensive strategy aiming to secure the mountain passes by building fortified positions. In 1941 work began to create a fortress inside a mountain on the St Gotthard Pass. The Sasso da Pigna was in operation until 1998 and is now a museum called **Sasso San Gottardo** (open from June to mid-October).

From a door in the rock, tunnels extend for 2km into the mountain, while 475 stairs (now bypassed by a funicular) lead from the lower exhibition spaces to the fortress high above, containing military dorms, washrooms, a kitchen, a command centre, munitions stores and artillery positions.

From an outside platform you can see guns protruding from the rock ready to fire on invaders far below. Note that most of the information panels are in German and Italian only; private guided tours in English are available for an extra cost, bookable in advance. Buy a combined ticket for Sfr29 if you also want to visit the nearby **Museo Nazionale del San Gottardo**, which explores the historical significance of the St Gotthard Pass.



### GREAT PLACES TO EAT IN ANDERMATT

#### Gasthaus zum Sternen

Tuck into superb rösti and apple strudel at this traditional inn in the heart of the village. €

#### Vinothek 1620

In a beautiful old building, this cosy wine bar has a small menu of pizza, lasagne and focaccia made using organic flour. €

#### Restaurant Ochsen

The smell of melted cheese hits you upon entering this rustic tavern, known for its excellent fondue and lively atmosphere. €

#### Toutoune

Lunch on falafel, meze, pasta or *Flammkuchen* (German pizza) at this Mediterranean-style cafe. €

#### Gütsch by Markus Neff

Michelin-starred French fine dining and superb views at the top of the Gütsch cable car. €€€



### WHERE TO STAY IN ANDERMATT

#### Gasthaus Tell

Simple, spacious rooms and an excellent restaurant run by a welcoming South African-Swiss couple. €

#### River House

Stylish, eco-friendly accommodation with a lively bar and rooftop terrace overlooking the river. €€

#### Chedi

Five-star luxury encased in contemporary wooden design. The spa and restaurants are open to non-guests. €€€





Above: Église Collégiale, St Ursanne (p187); Right: Carnival masks

# Northwestern Switzerland

## CULTURE, COUNTRYSIDE AND BORDERLANDS

Basel's vibrant cultural scene, border-hopping to France and Germany, the Rhine River, and leisurely strolls through Aargau ruins and picturesque towns.

Mostly wrapped into a corner where Switzerland meets France and Germany, northwestern Switzerland has a beauty very different from archetypal soaring mountains and carved alpine valleys.

This is a lush and picturesque region of velvety fields and rolling hills punctuated by pretty towns and villages. At the heart of a confluence of three countries that merge at an invisible point in the middle of the Rhine River is Basel, with several exciting art museums drawing art lovers from far and wide.

The Rhine itself forms much of the region's northern boundary before bending into a 'knee' in Basel. The tri-national nature of the region around Basel lends it a unique feel. It is

perfectly feasible and not unusual to spend a morning in Germany, the afternoon in France, and the evening in Switzerland.

A short excursion outside Basel leads to the Roman ruins of Augusta Raurica, and St Ursanne makes a pleasant day trip. Further east, the pretty medieval city of Aarau is a perfect springboard to explore the original homeland of the Habsburg dynasty that ruled over much of Europe from the Middle Ages.

Here, a journey takes in the castles of craggy Habsburg, Wildegg, Lenzburg and Hallwyl, along with pretty villages and hiking and cycling trails, making it suitable for long or short walks, leisurely rides and delicious picnics.



RELAXFOTO/GETTY IMAGES ©

### THE MAIN AREAS

#### **BASEL**

Culture and three countries in one. **p182**

#### **AARAU AND THE CASTLES**

Charming medieval towns and castles. **p188**

# Find Your Way

Northwestern Switzerland is compact and easy to navigate. The rolling hills and countryside in the tri-national region of Basel and beyond can be easily explored on foot, by bike or public transport.

## Basel, p182

Exciting museums and cultural scene, and the hub for exploring an unusual region that includes chunks of France and Germany.

## Aarau and the Castles, p188

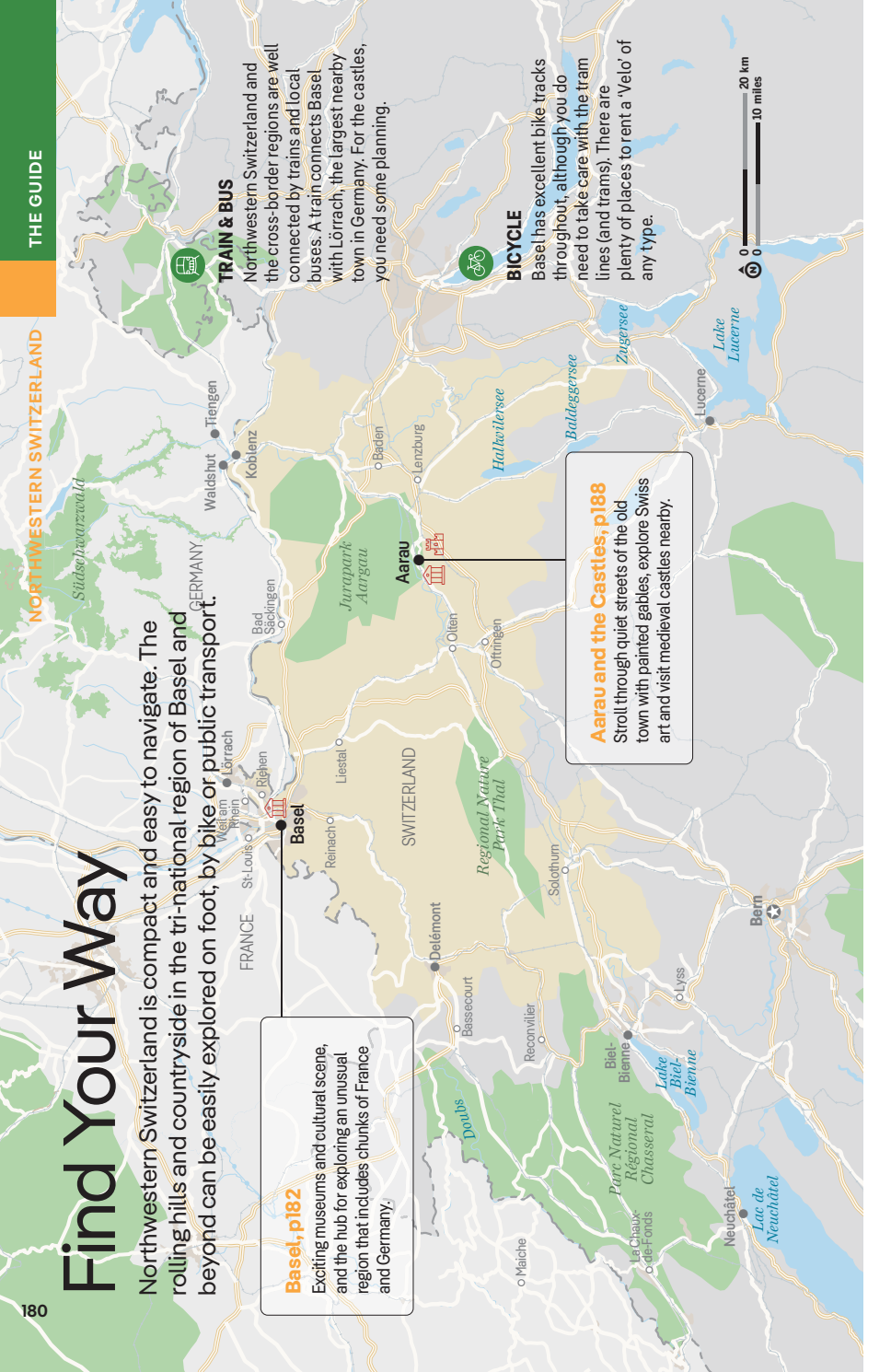
Stroll through quiet streets of the old town with painted gables, explore Swiss art and visit medieval castles nearby.

## BICYCLE

Basel has excellent bike tracks throughout, although you do need to take care with the tram lines (and trams). There are plenty of places to rent a 'Velo' of any type.

## TRAIN & BUS

Northwestern Switzerland and the cross-border regions are well connected by trains and local buses. A train connects Basel with Lörrach, the largest nearby town in Germany. For the castles, you need some planning.





Museum Jean Tinguely (p184)

# Plan Your Time

Explore the museums and cultural highlights in Basel, see the Roman ruins, cross the border into a Rhine wetland in France or walk to Germany, and strike out at leisure into medieval Switzerland.

## Mostly Basel

If you have just one full day, focus on **Basel** (p182), visiting a museum such as the **Kunstmuseum** (p182) or **Fondation Beyeler** (p184), and strolling through the old town to the cathedral. Enjoy a drink at the splendid **Les Trois Rois Hotel** (p185), where you can look over distant hills from the balcony, and spend the evening out on the town.

## Tri-National Region & Aargau

If you're staying for a few days or more, follow the above itinerary at a relaxed pace, combining lesser-known attractions in this tri-national region, such as the **Petite Camargue Alsacienne** (p186) wetland. After Basel, spend a night or more in **Aarau** (p188), travelling on to **Lenzburg** (p188) and **Schloss Habsburg** (p191), and any or all of the other medieval castles.

## SEASONAL HIGHLIGHTS

### SPRING

All the **castles** are open; in good weather walk the **trails**; April to May Basel hosts the **Offbeat Jazz Festival**.

### SUMMER

The warm weather is perfect for **hikes** or **rides**, or enjoying Basel's **music festivals** and Aargau's **castles**.

### AUTUMN

Artists, craftspeople, and carnival rides fill the streets during Basel's **Herbstmesse**. Culture moves indoors.

### WINTER

Magical **Christmas markets**, sensational New Year's Eve fireworks and Basel's famous **carnival**.



# Basel

MUSEUMS | OLD TOWN | NIGHTLIFE



## GETTING AROUND

The Rhine River divides Basel's historic centre, known as Grossbasel, and Kleinbasel on the opposite bank. You can easily cover most distances on foot, or use the excellent tram and bus network. Tram 8 takes you to Weil am Rhein in Germany (also Huningue in France), and Tram 6 to the German border at Riehen.

The city has three railway stations: Basel SBB (for inner-Swiss and most international connections), Basel Badischer Bahnhof (German-run, mostly for connections with Germany), and Basel SCNF (French, part of Basel SBB).

## TOP TIP

In summer, you can make the most of the region by hiring a bike. Rent a Bike (rentabike.ch) is located at SBB train station and has e-bikes as well as city and mountain bikes. Basel has excellent dedicated bike paths.

Basel is more than a city. It's the hub of a multicultural region that spills across the borderlands of France, Germany and Switzerland. Variations of the same tilting Alemannic dialect are traditionally spoken in all three countries, and one of the pleasures of a visit is the sheer cultural diversity at your fingertips.

Over one third of the population is non-Swiss, many of them expats working for the pharmaceutical giants headquartered here (Roche and Novartis), adding to the city's international flavour. Historically, Basel's location astride the Rhine has made it a key transport, trade and cultural hub. The city is located near a colony the Romans founded in Celtic territory in 44 BCE, which grew into a major fortress before the colony began to collapse from the 3rd century. The many museums of Basel, its atmospheric old town and the vibrant nightlife make this such a great place to throw anchor.

## From Old Masters to Wacky Motion

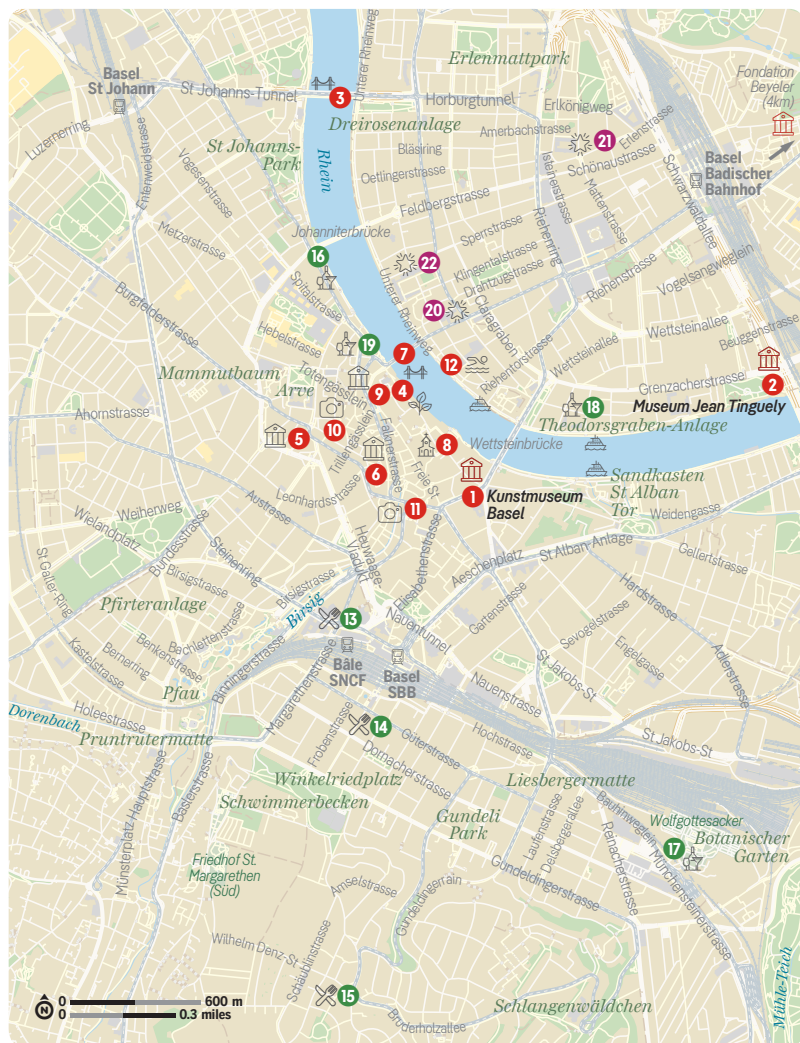
### Basel's big-three museums

Basel's cultural scene is its chief attraction, and three museums in particular tower to international heights, drawing foreign and Swiss visitors to top-ranking exhibitions.

The **Kunstmuseum Basel**, a constellation of three buildings in the heart of the city, houses the largest collection of public art in Switzerland, spanning old masters from the 15th to the 18th centuries, 19th-century and classical modern art, and works from the 1960s into the present day. Highlights are beautiful and provocative works by Hans Holbein the Younger, Picasso, Rousseau, Chagall, Klee, Modigliani and Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, to name just a few. The Hauptbau (main building) and modernist Neubau (new building) stand opposite each other on St Alben-Graben, and the Gegenwart (contemporary building) is a short walk east on St Alben-Rheinweg.

The nicest way to reach the **Museum Jean Tinguely**, across the Rhine from the Kunstmuseum, is by ferry, or take the Mittlere Brücke (Middle Bridge) and walk east along the promenade. The museum is situated above a pebble beach (pleasant for summer swimming), in a building designed by leading





## HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Kunstmuseum Basel  
2 Museum Jean Tinguely

## SIGHTS

- 3 Dreirosenbrücke
- 4 Garten der Alten Universität
- 5 Jewish Museum of Switzerland

- 6 Lohnhof
- 7 Mittlere Brücke
- 8 Münster
- 9 Rathaus
- 10 Spalenberg
- 11 Tinguely Fountain

## ACTIVITIES

- ## 12 Kleinbasel

## EATING

- 13 Markthalle
- 14 Miake Izakaya
- 15 Restaurant Stucki

## DRINKING

## & NIGHTLIFE

- 16 Cargo Bar
- 17 Das Viertel
- 18 Kulturbeiz 113
- 19 Les Trois Rois Hotel

## ENTERTAINMENT

- 20 Grenzwert
- 21 Heimat
- 22 Parterre One



## WHY I LOVE BASEL

**Anthony Haywood,**  
writer

'How about France today for a glass of wine?' In most other contexts, this might sound strange, but in the Basel tri-national region, briefly skipping across one border or another is commonplace. Or riding through picturesque mixed forest, across the green border and into Basel from my home in Germany – 500m from the Swiss border – to meet friends.

A couple of times a month, I then pack the guitar on my back and cycle to a jam session with fellow amateur musos in the 'Wohnzimmer' section of the Markthalle, while brunch happens about us. Lots of improvising, laughs and contraptious melodies – these are just some of the things I love about Basel.



TAKENAK/S/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

### Fondation Beyeler

Ticino architect Mario Botta. After making a name for himself in Basel and Zürich as a store decorator, Tinguely's path took him to Paris and he began working on kinetic art, which became his signature style. The museum showcases his playful, mischievous, musical and downright wacky artistic contraptions. These kinetic sculptures enthral by being seemingly chaotic yet moving in mad, mechanical orderliness. You can set some in motion, and it's great fun to watch them rattle, shake and twirl with springs, feathers and wheels radiating at every angle, or to hear the haunting musical sounds produced by the gigantic Méta-Harmonies on the top floor. You can also see his work in full operational glory at the **Tinguely Fountain** (just west of the Kunstmuseum main building).

The third of these museum highlights is **Fondation Beyeler**, in Riehen. This magnificent private-turned-public collection, assembled by former art dealers Hildy and Ernst Beyeler, is housed in a long, low, light-filled, open-plan building designed by Italian architect Renzo Piano. Exhibits are rotated from the collection, juxtaposing 19th- and 20th-century works by Picasso, Rothko and others against sculptures by the likes of Miró and Max Ernst, and tribal figures from Oceania.

Unlike the other two museums, Fondation Beyeler is also open on Mondays.

## Exploring the Altstadt

### Stroll through Basel's history

While not cutesy like Switzerland's smaller towns, Basel's old town lends itself to a pleasant stroll. Not to be missed are the colourful **Rathaus** (Town Hall) on Marktplatz and the 13th-century **Münster** (Cathedral) on Münsterplatz – rising above the city and offering splendid views over the Rhine, both from a terrace and from its soaring Gothic tower. The three-tiered **Garten der Alten Universität** (Garden of the

Old University) nearby is a perfect spot to relax with views; if you prefer your relaxation on a balcony over a drink, drop into the historic **Les Trois Rois Hotel**. Also highly worthwhile is the climb up through **Spalenberg**, a former artisans' district, and back down via **Lohnhof**, the former prison now housing a small museum of musical instruments.

## Judaism & Zionism in Basel

### Switzerland's Jewish heritage

'In Basel I founded the Jewish state', wrote Theodor Herzl in his diary in September 1897, and a photograph of the Austrian Zionist leader and first president of the World Zionist Organization standing on the balcony of Les Trois Rois Hotel underscores his words. It was here that Herzl and many other representatives resided during the first World Zionist Congress that same year, leading to the founding of Israel some 50 years later. If you would like to explore the Jewish heritage, visit the excellent **Jewish Museum of Switzerland** on Kornhausgasse. Entrance includes a one-hour guided tour with tablet and headphones (in German and English) taking you through the three sections with a focus on ceremonial objects and clothing, which are placed in the overall context of Jewish religious practices. It is closed on Saturdays.

## Swimming in the Rhine

### Go with the flow in Kleinbasel

It's sometimes dubbed 'the Basel Riviera'. The right bank of the Rhine – in the part of town known as **Kleinbasel** – on warm summer days draws flocks of sun worshippers and swimmers to its waterline. The thing to do is float downstream with a *Wickelfisch*, a fish-shaped watertight bag you can buy from the tourist office and elsewhere. The pebble beach in front of the Museum Jean Tinguely is a good place to enter the water, or even just to wade around a bit if you don't want to float downstream, and you can easily exit just after the historic **Mittlere Brücke**, or at the latest, **Dreirosenbrücke**. A section just downstream of the pebble beach is reserved for nude bathing. You need to be a confident swimmer; keep clear of buoys, boats, bridge pillars, and ferries crossing the river at several points, including from the landing below Münsterplatz. Throughout much of August, a stage is set up in the Rhine current for the **Floss Festival** (Raft Festival), with local and international music acts.



### WHERE TO CATCH COMEDY IN BASEL

Native New Yorker **Steve Sanderson** has been living in Basel for over five years and is part of a thriving English-language comedy scene in town. He recommends some favourite places for comedy:

#### Heimat

A club that hosts professional comedy, a lot of it focusing on themes.

#### Parterre One

This is a top place for music acts and also has a singer-songwriter open mic. For comedy, it's one of the venues hosting the professional American Stand-Up Show.

#### Grenzwert

The On the Run Comedy Club stages professional shows at Heimat, as well as the 'Murder Mondays Comedy Open Mic' here. It's a great place to go on stage because it's so relaxed.



### WHERE TO DRINK IN BASEL

#### Cargo Bar

Arty, often with music, and outdoor seating in summer on the Rhine riverbank.

#### Das Viertel

Summer sun-drenched rooftop terrace, food if you wish, and a club with mostly house beats.

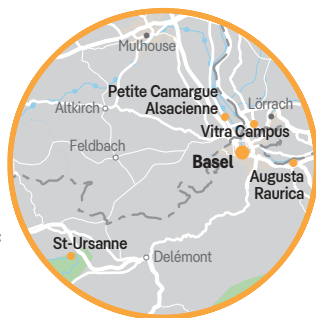
#### Kulturbeiz 113

Stupendous views across town from terraces in the former Wardeck brewery, reached via an external iron staircase.



# Beyond Basel

The region around Basel offers the best of three countries, great walks and a trip out to an atmospheric medieval town.



## Places

**Petite Camargue  
Alsacienne** p186

**Vitra Campus  
& Augusta Raurica** p186

**St Ursanne** p187



## GETTING AROUND

You can easily reach St Ursanne in an hour by taking the S3 train towards Porrentruy. Trains and trams serve the tri-national region, with convenient trams running to Weil am Rhein and trains to Lörach, both in Germany.

Switzerland, France and Germany may be three countries, but in this region they are closely tied culturally to each other. The three meet at an invisible point in the middle of the Rhine River, just a couple of kilometres from Basel's old town. A walk or bike ride downriver on the left-bank path takes you to Huningue (Huningen in German) in France, where a pedestrian bridge crosses to Weil am Rhein in Germany. From there, a border winds and zigzags through suburbs, across fields and through forest to – yes, you guessed it – the Rhine, before the river takes its knee-bend into Basel. An hour southwest in the Jura canton lies the enchanting village of St Ursanne.

## Petite Camargue Alsacienne

TIME FROM BASEL: **30 MINS**

### Soak up a Rhine wetland

Situated about 5km downriver from Basel in France, the **Petite Camargue Alsacienne** (Little Camargue of Alsace) wetland is a paradise for nature photographers and bird-watchers. A modest network of walking trails takes you through the wetland past willow-lined ponds (fish are bred here too), meadows, grasslands and dense stands of oak and other deciduous species. Wooden bird-watching towers dot the reserve. The wetland is fringed on one side by the Canal de Huningue, part of the larger Canal du Rhône au Rhin, and beyond that the **Île du Rhin** (Rhine Island), which you can reach from the French side by taking a trail along the canal to Loch No 4 (all the lochs are identified by numbers). The main section of the nature reserve begins at Loch No 2 (Maison Eclésièr; Loch House). While out here, cross the **Passerelle des Trois Pays** (Three Countries' Bridge), relax on seats on the foreshore, or drop into **La Huninguoise** at the bridge for a snack and glass of delicious wine.

## Vitra Campus & Augusta Raurica

TIME FROM BASEL: **90 MINS**

### Out-of-town museums

Two places that couldn't be more different from each other – one is all about ultra-modern furniture, the other takes you back into antiquity – make for a pleasant excursion from Basel.

## TOP TIP

Public transport is excellent but in good weather consider cycling or walking to sights outside Basel, packing a picnic lunch.



## GREAT EATING BEYOND BASEL

### Peja

Delicious Spanish dishes in the centre of Lörrach in Germany. Book ahead, it's popular. €€

### Tenmanja

Lörrach's bustling pan-Asian place with excellent all-you-can-eat buffet or dishes from the menu. €€

### Afghan chez Madar joon

Near the canal in Hünningue (France), with indoor and some outdoor tables, and genuine, delicious Afghan dishes. €€

### Boulangerie Leyes

Top address in the region for pastries and bread, on Rue de Mulhouse in St Louis, France. €

### Pastaverne

In St Ursanne's medieval old town, serving delicious salads, pasta, red meats, poultry and fish. €€

Situated in Weil am Rhein in Germany, the Vitra Campus is a must for those seriously into design furniture. It comprises the dazzling **Vitra Design Museum** (of Guggenheim Bilbao architect Frank Gehry fame), **Vitra Haus** and **Vitra Schauderpot** (both by Basel's Herzog & De Meuron firm), and an ever-expanding range of installations by cutting-edge architects and designers, including Carsten Höller's whimsical, cork-screwing 30m-high **Vitra Slide**. A nice way of getting here is to follow the **Rehberger-Weg**, a pleasant 5km walking path from the Fondation Beyeler cutting across the countryside and featuring 24 colourful and unique public art installations by Tobias Rehberger. You can download an app and find out more from the website 24stops.info.

Cycle or take a 12-minute train ride to Kaiseraugst/Augst, about 17km upriver from Basel, and you reach Switzerland's largest Roman ruins – **Augusta Raurica**, the last remnants of a colony founded in 43 BCE. At the entrance to the site, the **Römermuseum** (Roman Museum) is in an authentically reconstructed Roman house with an unparalleled collection of antique silver.

## St Ursanne

TIME FROM BASEL: 60 MINS 

### Magnificent medieval village and church

Situated some 60km southwest of Basel, St Ursanne is an intact medieval village with an attractive, arched stone bridge built in 1729 that spans the Doubs River. The historic old town stretches along the river, backed by forests and a meadow, with an escarpment forming a dramatic backdrop. After strolling through the quiet streets to the bridge, backtrack to the 12th-century **Église Collégiale**. This grand early Gothic church marks the transition from Romanesque architecture to the Gothic style, retaining a strong sense of symmetry, especially in the crypt. One feature is the splendid Romanesque portal on the southern flank, with a figure of Christ, St Peter and St Paul, angels and kneeling figures, one thought to be Ursicinus of Saint-Ursanne. The arcaded cloister is magnificent. The tourist office has lots of information on walks; local outfit **Flotnature** can take you kayaking in the warmer months on the Doubs River.



## WHERE TO DRINK BEYOND BASEL

### La Huningnoise

Wine bar serving gourmet snacks, with outside seating, at the Three Countries' Bridge in France.

### Brauhaus Lasser Lörrach

Run by the local brewery, with a large outdoor seating area and serving pub grub in a large beer-hall-style atmosphere.

### Zum Wilden Mann

Set just off Marktplatz in Lörrach, with outdoor seating, this place is popular for people-watching.



# Aarau & the Castles



FAIRYTALE CASTLES | MEDIEVAL ARCHITECTURE | HOT SPRINGS



## GETTING AROUND

If you're driving, setting off from Baden and travelling south makes good sense. If you're using public transport, it takes planning (see sbb.ch), but from Aarau you can easily travel north by train to Wildegg. It's a 30-minute hike from the train station at Schinznach Bad to Schloss Habsburg, or a 10-minute walk using train-bus connections via Brugg. Both Schloss Lenzburg and Wasserschloss Hallwyl also have train-bus connections from Aarau.

## TOP TIP

Pick up a copy of the Aargau Outdoors free map from the tourist office in Aarau. This topographic map shows the vast network of walking and cycling trails (great for going between the castles). Velostation Aarau at the train station rents out city and mountain bikes (closed on Sundays).

The canton of Aargau begins just a few kilometres upstream from Basel, although its capital, Aarau, is located around 60km southeast in a region of rolling hills and open countryside. It's a pleasant, rural and quite provincial region to explore, with lots of walking and cycling trails for fresh-air fiends to enjoy on a warm day.

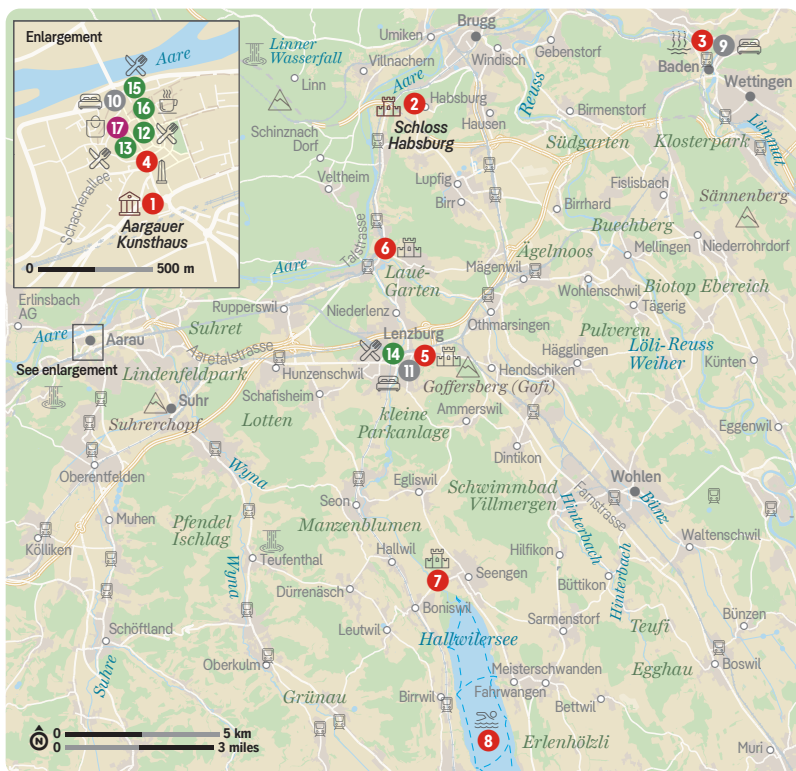
One of the main reasons to come here is to visit the region's abundant castles, including the ancestral home of the Habsburg dynasty, which ruled most of Europe (and more) throughout the Middle Ages until its decline in 1806. The other three interesting and attractive castles are Schloss Wildegg, which is set among orchards on a hilltop meadow, Schloss Lenzburg and Wasserschloss Hallwyl. The town of Lenzburg has a medieval atmosphere, but Aarau itself is also very pretty and has an excellent art museum.

## Strolling Through Aarau Old Town

### Colourful gables and medieval mood

Aarau's backstory begins in the mid-13th century when it was founded by counts from the Kyburg dynastic family. But the various Kyburg lineages seemed to have an unfortunate habit of lacking suitable heirs, and when one couldn't be found in 1264, the town slipped into the ambitious hands of the Habsburg family, at that time a dynasty on a steep political ascendancy.

Today, Aarau's small and intact medieval centre has a charm of its own, draped on a spur of land overlooking the broad flow of the Aare River. Strolling through town, the most prominent landmark is its **Obertor** (Upper Gate) and tower rising up to over 60m, making it Switzerland's highest medieval city tower. Beyond the tower, you'll find the heart of the old town, with historic houses adorned by magnificently decorated gables hanging out over the streets. Once your neck becomes stiff from walking the streets and looking up, a nice thing to do is to retire to **Metzgergasse**, which has a couple of good places to eat and sip a coffee or drink, day and night.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- 1 Aargauer Kunsthau
  - 2 Schloss Habsburg
- SIGHTS**
- 3 Fortyseven° Wellness Therme
  - 4 Obertor
  - 5 Schloss Lenzburg

- 6 Schloss Wildegg
- 7 Wasserschloss Hallwyl

**ACTIVITIES**

- 8 Hallwilersee

**SLEEPING**

- 9 Atrium-Hotel Blume

- 10 Hotel Kettenbrücke
- 11 Ochsen Lenzburg

**EATING**

- 12 Metzgergasse
- 13 Sevilla
- 14 Skin's
- 15 Zollhuus

**DRINKING & NIGHTLIFE**

- 16 Tuchlaube Café Bar

**SHOPPING**

- 17 Al Solito Posto

**WHERE TO STAY AROUND AARAU****Hotel Kettenbrücke**

Four-star hotel in the center of Aarau, with sleek, contemporary furnishings and the Zollhuus restaurant. €€

**Atrium-Hotel Blume**

Excellent hotel in Baden with balconies, inner courtyard and fountain, thermal pool, and close to the thermal spa. €€

**Ochsen Lenzburg**

Central to the castle, this friendly boutique hotel is perfect if you want to base yourself in Lenzburg. €



## GREAT FOOD & DRINK NEAR AARAU

### Tuchlaube Café Bar

Light dishes, coffee and a good selection of teas, often attracting a theatre crowd. €

### Sevilla

Delicious tapas with a good selection of Spanish wines in a comfortable, Mediterranean atmosphere. €€

### Al Solito Posto

Italian delicatessen for picnic provisions; down below, the wine shop sells a wide range of Italian labels. €

### Zollhuus

Well-priced meats and noble burgers, but also some vegetarian and vegan choices; at Hotel Kettenbrücke. €€

### Skin's

Highly acclaimed for its five- and seven-course seasonal menus, with contemporary fusion cuisine and cooking events. Located in Lenzburg. €€€



Aargauer Kunsthaus

## Swiss Art Through the Ages

### Aarau's art museum

Aarau is home to the **Aargauer Kunsthaus**, which puts on changing exhibitions based on its strong collection of Swiss art (avoid Mondays, as it's closed). The collection includes some 20,000 works, and these are curated into exhibitions which are simply given numbers – eg Collection 23.

Considering the sheer number of works of art to choose from, what's on show may seem a little sparse, though. But impressive the collection certainly is, so make the most of the interactive section of the gallery. This is a



### LENZBURG'S OLD TOWN

Aarau has a colourful and beautiful centre, but less well known is **Lenzburg**. Ignore Lenzburg's outer sprawl and walk around its old town at the foot of the castle.

downstairs area where you stand in an empty room at a media terminal and curate your own collection, selecting pictures, arranging them together into themes or contrasting their features, and projecting them one by one onto the walls of the room, creating your own personal gallery. It's a great idea, and if you're into this sort of thing, incredibly enjoyable.

## Four Castles in One Day

### Back to medieval roots

If you love fairy tales or the medieval vibe, consider exploring these four robust, authentic castles found in the countryside between Baden and Aarau. Most are open during the months of April to October, but Schloss Habsburg is also open during winter months and easily reached by train and bus from both Baden and Aarau.

Perched at 510m on a hilltop just outside the town of Brugg (a 50-minute walking trail leads up here), **Schloss Habsburg** is the ancestral home of the Habsburg dynasty. It was here that the dynasty rose to power, and a visit to the castle tells the Habsburg story at multilingual audio stations and on boards. From here, a walking trail continues to **Schloss Wildegg** (1¼ hours); alternatively, it's 8km south by road. Crowning a hilltop, amid a working farm with gardens and orchards, the castle is chock-full of antiquities.

Before climbing up to **Schloss Lenzburg** and visiting its dungeon and museum on everyday life in this castle, take a walk around the wonderfully intact Lenzburg old town. Finally, **Wasserschloss Hallwyl**, 10km south of Lenzburg, has two castle sections joined by a bridge. From here, it's a pleasant 10-minute stroll to the **Hallwilersee** (Lake Hallwil), where you can follow an easy 22km walking and cycling track around the lake and swim, making a day of it.



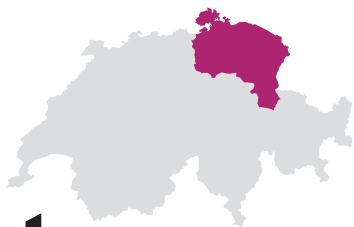
### SPLASHY ROMANS IN BADEN

The Romans were the first to indulge in Baden's 18 mineral-rich thermal springs, which bubble from the earth at a scalding 47°C.

They called Baden, which is located 25km from Aarau, *Aquæ Helveticæ* (Swiss Waters). By and large, Baden's springs have been channelled into a number of expensive-to-overpriced thermal-spa hotels, and for some time things went downhill in terms of thermal baths.

But the city is undergoing a thermal rejuvenation since the opening of the **Fortyseven° Wellness-Therme**, designed by Swiss architect Mario Botta. The name harks back to the temperature, in a complex with all the indoor, outdoor and steam-filled frills you can expect from a thermal spa.

# Zürich & Northeastern Switzerland



## POST-INDUSTRIAL EDGE AND EPIC NATURE

Culturally rich and beautifully located, Zürich is the jumping-off point for adventures along the Rhine, around Lake Constance and in the Glarus Alps.

With a killer location at the meeting of river and lake, Zürich is one of the world's most livable cities.

Long recognised as a savvy and hardworking financial centre, Switzerland's largest and wealthiest metropolis has emerged in the 21st century as one of Central Europe's most happening and culturally interesting destinations. Its artsy, postindustrial edge is epitomised by the transformation of the formerly industrial Züri-West district.

From Zürich there is easy access to superb swathes of beautiful Swiss countryside and mountains. This northeastern corner of the country is the place to get back to nature and that calls for slow touring. Cycle through cornfields and apple orchards on a cloudless

summer's day, walk through Klettgau's gold-tinged vineyards in the diffused light of autumn, and take a winter stroll beside the placid waters of Lake Constance.

From the thunderous Rheinfall to the panoramas from atop jagged Säntis, the vistas here are on a grand scale.

Old castle-topped towns, such as Stein am Rhein and Schaffhausen, present a fairy-tale illustration of building facades adorned with frescos and oriel windows.

In graceful St Gallen, the abbey library will take your breath away with its rococo splendour. Country lanes unravel like spools of thread, weaving through Appenzell's patchwork meadows, past the steel-blue waters of Walensee and south to remote hamlets engulfed by the glacier-licked peaks of the Glarus Alps.



YUESTOCK/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

## THE MAIN AREAS

### ZÜRICH

Urban perfection, gorgeous lakeside location. **p196**

### LAKE CONSTANCE

Sublime lake bordered by three countries. **p212**





FOR PETER STEIN/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Above: Oberblegisee, Braunwald (p211); Left: Church amid the vineyards of Klettgau (p211)

# Find Your Way

Zürich is well connected to its neighbouring cantons. Thanks to superb travel infrastructure it's possible to tour the entire region easily by public transport in around two weeks. A car or bicycle will give you more flexibility.

## Lake Constance, p212

Relax beside Central and Western Europe's third-largest lake, where there are beaches, cyclepaths and interesting cultural sites.



### CAR

From Zürich the A1 connects to Winterthur, St Gallen and Lake Constance. The A3 rims the southern shore of Lake Zürich before heading east all the way to the Liechtenstein border.

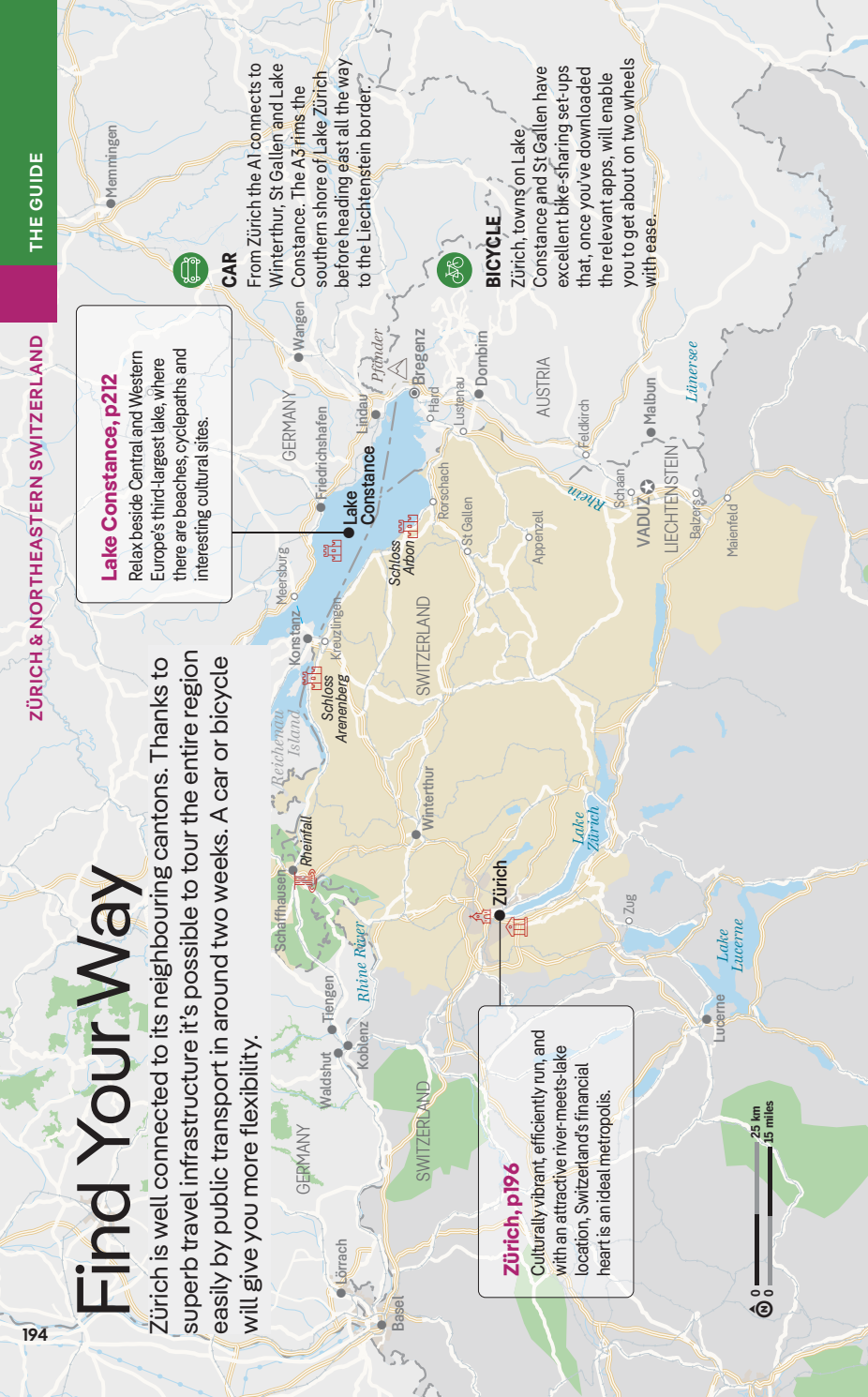


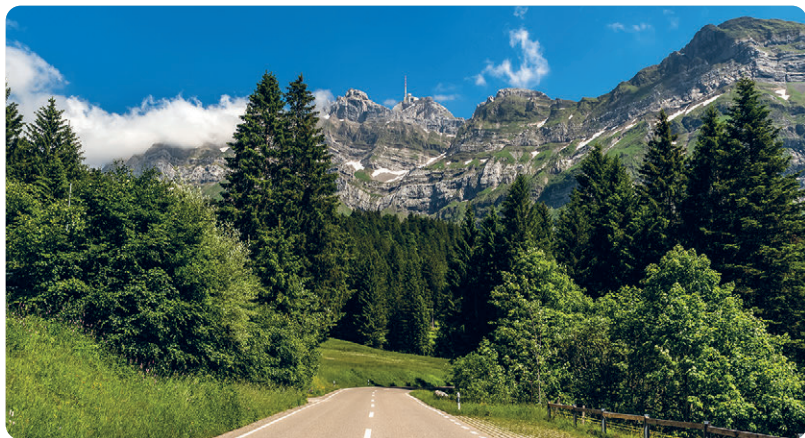
### BICYCLE

Zürich, towns on Lake Constance and St Gallen have excellent bike-sharing set-ups that, once you've downloaded the relevant apps, will enable you to get about on two wheels with ease.

## Zürich, p196

Culturally vibrant, efficiently run, and with an attractive river-meets-lake location, Switzerland's financial heart is an ideal metropolis.





Mt Säntis (p221)

# Plan Your Time

From Zürich, take your pick from a host of day trips or linger for a few days in the Glarus Alps or along the shore of Lake Constance.

## A Weeklong Stay

Spend four days in Zürich taking in the **old town** (p200), checking out hip **Züri-West** (p204) and visiting cultural highlights like **Schweizerisches Landesmuseum** (p201) and **Kunsthaus** (p196). Head up **Uetliberg** (p205) for panoramic views and then to Lake Zürich for a swim. Make a trip to **Rapperswil** (p206) and the island **Ufenau** (p206), and arty **Winterthur** (p207).

## A Couple of Weeks or More

Enjoy **Schaffhausen** (p208) and visit the impressive **Rheinfall** (p208) and chocolate-box town of **Stein am Rhein** (p216). From **St Gallen** (p217), an appealing city with a glorious abbey, travel to the charming town of **Appenzell** (p219). Get active with hikes around **Säntis** (p221) and **Ebenalp** (p221), then relax beside **Lake Constance** (p212).

## SEASONAL HIGHLIGHTS

### SPRING

The highlight of Zürich's **Sechseläuten** spring festival in April is the ignition of a fireworks-filled effigy, the Böög.

### SUMMER

On the second Saturday in August, get ready to party at Zürich's **Street Parade**, one of Europe's largest street parties.

### AUTUMN

Vintners in the Klettgau wine region throw open their doors for tastings at Osterfingen's **Trottenfest** in October.

### WINTER

Winter's arrival brings twinkling **Christmas markets** to the region's towns, and skiers to its slopes.



# Zürich

MUSEUMS | LITERARY HISTORY | ART & DESIGN



## GETTING AROUND

Free and inexpensive bicycle-rental schemes make cycling one of the best ways of getting around Zürich. Trams are the quickest and most efficient way of getting from A to B in the city centre, while S-Bahn trains cover the wider Zürich area and are handy for reaching the outskirts. Filling in the gaps are extensive bus routes. All these means of public transport are operated by ZVV (zvv.ch): download its app to check the timetable and buy tickets.

## TOP TIP

Buy a Zürich Card (valid either for 24 or 72 hours) from the tourist offices at the airport and train station. It covers all public transport around the city (including short river and lake cruises), offers free or discounted admission to a host of sights, and discounts at some shops/attractions.

With roots that go back to the Romans, Zürich has evolved into an ideal city for the 21st century. It's a vibrant, brilliantly organised town of 443,000 (1.6 million in the wider metro area) that wears its history with pride, is packed with superb cultural offerings and knows how to live the good life.

Much of the historic centre, with its winding lanes and soaring church steeples, has been kept lovingly intact. Yet Zürich has also wholeheartedly embraced contemporary trends, with the conversion of old factories into cultural centres and creative new living spaces. Nowhere is that clearer than in Züri-West and Europaallee beside the main train station.

From May to September, official swimming areas, known as *badi*, open around the Zürichsee and along the Limmat River. At any time of year a stroll through the city's leafy lakeside parks or along the mountain ridge of Uetliberg are other outdoor pleasures.

## Explore Switzerland's Largest Art Museum

### Perusing the Kunsthaus collection

For over a century Zürich's **Kunsthaus** has been one of Europe's leading art museums. It has an unparalleled collection of the works by Augusto and Alberto Giacometti, titans of the Swiss art world, as well as pieces by the likes of Ferdinand Hodler, Edvard Munch and Édouard Vuillard. Wander the handsome halls of the 1910 **Moser Building** and you'll encounter everything from Middle Ages religious icons to installations by Bruce Nauman.

With the opening of the **Chipperfield Building** in 2021 the Kunsthaus now houses Switzerland's largest art collection. Designed by British architect David Chipperfield, the sleek concrete-and-brass-accented building is linked to the Moser by a marble-clad underground tunnel with an Ólafur Elíasson sculptural artwork on its ceiling. Highlights include the Emil Bührle collection of principally Impressionist art (don't miss the room with three of Monet's *Waterlily* paintings), the



Fraumünster Church

colourful Merzbacher collection of 19th- and 20th-century paintings, and the mesmerising light-and-sound installation *Pixel Forest* by Swiss artist Pipilotti Rist.

## Be Transfixed by Stained-Glass Art

### Two historic churches

Founded in 853 as a Benedictine convent, the **Fraumünster** is most famous for its luminous stained-glass windows, designed by Marc Chagall. The series of five vibrantly coloured windows were installed in Zürich in 1970 in the presence of the artist who was 83 at that time. Eight years later Chagall designed the rose window in the southern transept, which depicts the stages of Genesis around the edge and Noah's Ark in the centre. The 9m-tall 'heavenly paradise' window in the northern transept was created by Augusto Giacometti and installed in 1945.

A series of Giacometti's stained-glass windows also take pride of place in the **Grossmünster**, the twin-towered landmark cathedral that was founded by Charlemagne in the 9th century



### GIACOMETTI FRESCOES

Swiss artist Augusto Giacometti (1877–1947) designed stained-glass windows for the Fraumünster, Grossmünster and Wasserkirche.

He also has several monumental paintings in the Kunsthaus' Moser Building. However, his most famous Zürich commission was designing the frescos for the **entrance hall of Amtshaus**, a building that today houses the city's police station.

In 1922, Giacometti won the competition to paint the Amtshaus's dark entrance hall. His floral design in luminous red-and-ochre tones is known as *Blüemlihalle* (Hall of Little Flowers), and it completely covers the vaulted ceiling and the walls.

To enter the building to see the frescos (open daily 9am to 11am and 2pm to 4pm), bring some form of ID.



## WHERE TO STAY IN ZÜRICH'S OLD TOWN

### Widder Hotel

Comprising eight townhouses, the super-stylish Widder fuses 12th-century charm with 21st-century luxury. €€€

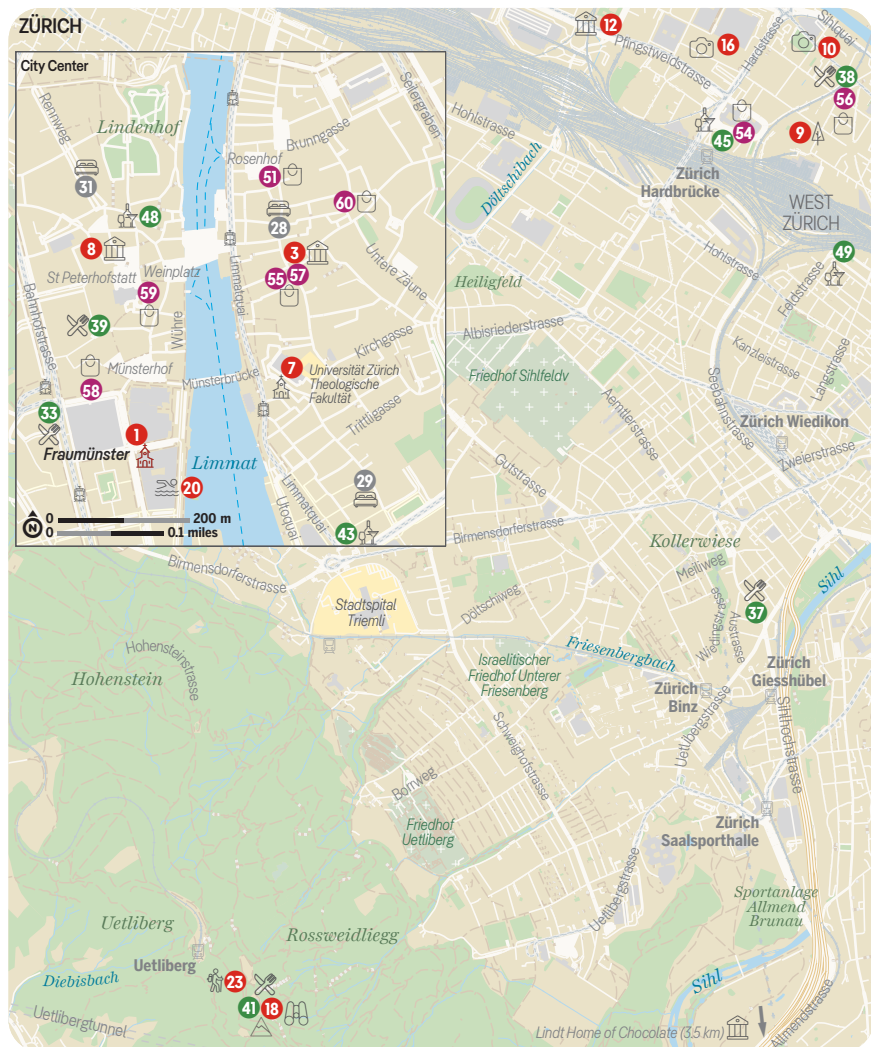
### Marktgasse Hotel

Boutique hotel in a 1425 building. Stucco, tiled ovens, and wood panelling with modern design. €€€

### Oldtown Hostel Otter

Former hotel transformed into a colourfully painted hostel on a relatively quiet Niederdorf backstreet. €



**HIGHLIGHTS**

- 1 Fraumünster
- 2 Kunsthaus

**SIGHTS**

- 3 Cabaret Voltaire
- 4 Chinese Garden
- 5 Europaallee
- 6 Fluntern Cemetery
- 7 Grossmünster
- 8 James Joyce Foundation
- 9 Josefswiese

- 10 Löwenbräukunst Areal
- 11 Museum für Gestaltung

- 12 Museum für Gestaltung Zürich

- (Toni-Areal)
- 13 Museum Haus Konstruktiv

- 14 Negrellisteg
- 15 Pavillon Le Corbusier

- 16 Schiffbau

- 17 Schweizerisches Landesmuseum
- 18 Uetliberg Aussichtsturm

- 19 Zürichhorn

- 20 Frauenbad
- 21 Letten

- 22 Männerbad
- 23 Planetenweg

- 24 Seebad Enge

**ACTIVITIES**

- 25 Seebad Utoquai

- 26 25hours Hotel Zürich Langstrasse
- 27 Helvetia Zurich

- 28 Marktgasse Hotel
- 29 Oldtown Hostel Otter

- 30 Ruby Mimi
- 31 Widder Hotel

- 32 Seebad Utoquai

**SLEEPING**

- 33 25hours Hotel Zürich Langstrasse
- 34 Helvetia Zurich

- 35 Marktgasse Hotel
- 36 Oldtown Hostel Otter

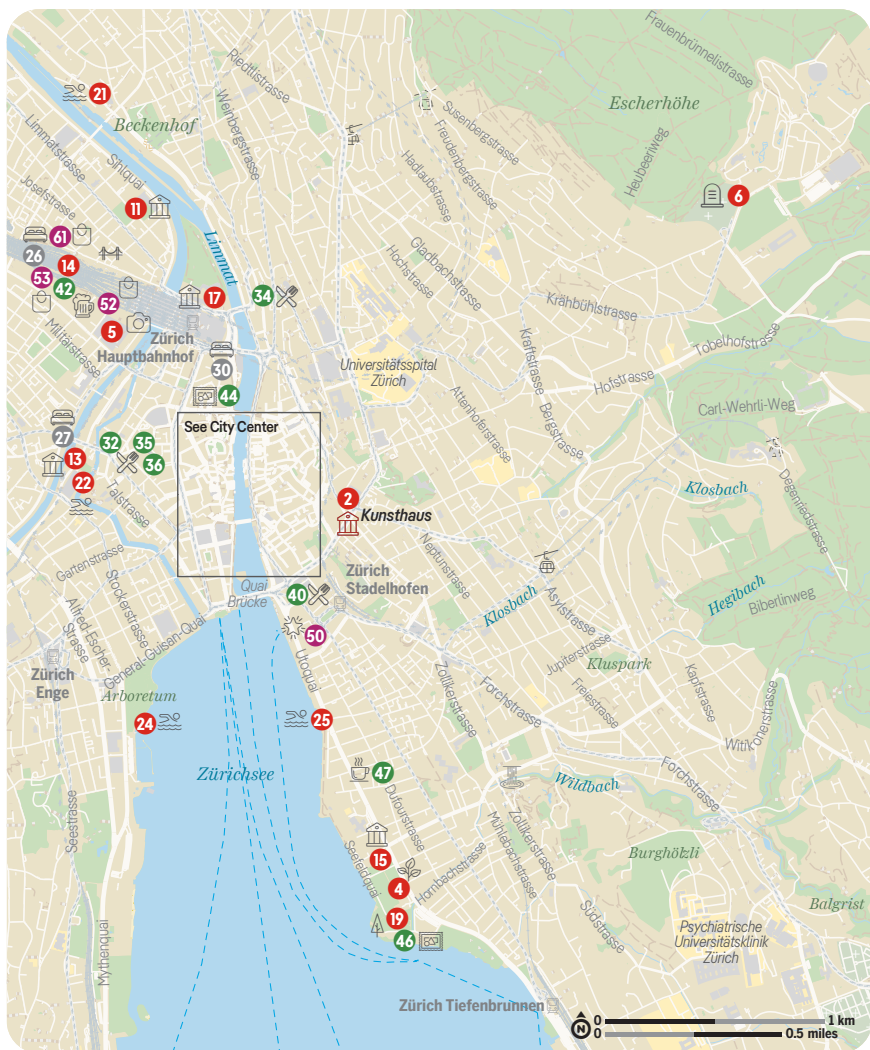
- 37 Ruby Mimi
- 38 Widder Hotel

- 39 Seebad Utoquai

- 40 25hours Hotel Zürich Langstrasse
- 41 Helvetia Zurich

- 42 Marktgasse Hotel
- 43 Oldtown Hostel Otter

- 44 Ruby Mimi
- 45 Widder Hotel

**EATING**

- 32 Babu's Bakery & Coffeehouse
- 33 Café Sprüngli
- 34 Didi's Frieden
- 35 Haus Hittl
- 36 James Joyce
- 37 Maison Manesse
- 38 Markthalle Im Viadukt

- 39 Rest Zum Kropf

- 40 Sternen Grill
- 41 UTO KULM

**DRINKING & NIGHTLIFE**

- 42 Bierwerk Züri
- 43 Café Odeon
- 44 Entrance Hall of Amtshaus
- 45 Frau Gerolds Garten

- 46 Heureka

- 47 Monocle Shop & Café
- 48 Old Crow
- 49 Schnupf

**ENTERTAINMENT**

- 50 Opernhaus

**SHOPPING**

- 51 Berg & Tal

**BRIDGE**

- 52 Die Macherei
- 53 Freitag
- 54 H Schwarzenbach
- 55 Im Viadukt
- 56 La Flor
- 57 Landolt-Arbenz
- 58 Max Chocolatier
- 59 Travel Book Shop
- 60 Zürcher Brockenhaus

## EXPLORING THE OLD TOWN ON FOOT

Begin at the southwest corner of the **1 Rudolf-Brun Brücke**, a bridge named after Zurich's first mayor who held the post from 1336 to 1360. Take the metal walkway along the Limmat, merging onto the cobbled street Schipfe. Along here you'll pass **2 Schipfe 16**, a city-owned restaurant and local products shop that's also a social project.

Climb up Fortunagasse to **3 Lindenhof**, a tree-shaded hilltop park with spectacular views. Watch the boules and chessplayers, then make your way to Schlüsselgasse, heading south to reach St Peterhofstatt, a lovely cobbled square on one side of which is **4 St Peterskirche**. The 13th-century tower of this church has Europe's largest clock face, 8.7m in diameter.

Thread your way through narrow Thermen-gasse to reach **5 Rathausbrücke**, a pedestrian bridge named after the nearby town hall –

it provides pleasant views up and down the Limmat. Cross the tram lines on Limmatquai and walk up cobbled Markt-gasse, past **6 Urs Bergmann**, a florist based in a picturesque old pharmacy. Turn right at the top of Markt-gasse onto pedestrian Niederdorf; on the right is **7 Cabaret Voltaire**, birthplace of Dada (p204).

A little further on, take your pick between two historic and photogenic cafes: **8 Café & Conditorei 1842**, based in the old Schober Confiserie, or the coffee-roasters **9 H Schwarzenbach**, in business since 1864.

With a caffeinated spring in your step, continue to **10 Grossmünster**. Having admired the cathedral's stained-glass art, climb the 190 steps of the southern tower, the Karlsturm, to take in the cityscape. Back at ground level and from the terrace behind the cathedral, there's a splendid view across to the slender glaucous spire of **11 Fraumünster** (p197).



(but heavily reworked since). In 2009 the German artist Sigmar Polkes added to the nave seven agate and five stained-glass windows in striking designs.

## Learn About Swiss History & Culture

### View emblems of national identity

As befitting a country famous for the quality of its design (p276), the history of Switzerland is imaginatively presented in engaging detail across the many halls of the **Schweizerisches Landesmuseum** (Swiss National Museum). The permanent collection has exhibits ranging from elaborately carved and painted sleds to national costumes and Swatch watches. A highlight is the series of reconstructed historical rooms.

When the museum opened in 1898, there was already too many items to be displayed. After much wrangling, in 2016, a starkly modern concrete extension was added to the original whimsical château-style building. Among the new halls here are ones devoted to archaeology, the history of Zürich and ideas of national identity. To fully do the collection justice you could easily spend the best part of a day here – the cafe is a good one and the gift shop has a superb choice of souvenirs.

## A Chocoholic's Dream Destination

### World's largest chocolate fountain

Lindt & Sprüngli have been producing chocolate in Kilchberg since 1899, and a delicious aroma perfumes the air around the factory. Next door is the contemporary designed **Lindt Home of Chocolate**. Built from concrete and marble, with a 9m chocolate fountain as its centrepiece, this is a sleek Willy Wonka experience, but also an educational one. Learn how cocoa was first imported to Europe from Central America and how Switzerland cornered the market on commercial chocolate production (p000). Book ahead for the popular interactive tour and chocolate-making courses.

## Stroll along Europaallee

### Old freight terminal transformed

Developed in stages since 2009, **Europaallee** is one of Zurich's newest neighbourhoods, crafted from the old freight terminal next to Zürich main station and extending from the Sihlpost building to Langstrasse. It's a well-designed mixed-use site with plenty of retail shops and places to eat and drink.

One of the most popular locations is **BRIDGE**, a slick food



### TOP CHOCOLATE SHOPS

#### Café Sprüngli

Try its pralines, Luxemburgerli macarons and Grand Cru Absolu, a chocolate made only with cocoa beans and cocoa pulp.

#### Max Chocolatier

Stylishly packaged bars, truffles and pralines, made with 100% natural ingredients. Check its website for details on tasting workshops.

#### Berg & Tal

Stocks several brands of locally produced bean-to-bar chocolates, including Taucherli and Garçoa.

#### H. Schwarzenbach

Pick from over 350 chocolate bars from small, bean-to-bar manufacturers from Switzerland and around the world.

#### La Flor

Boutique operation specialising in single-origin bars made from sustainably grown cacao sourced directly from the farmers.



## WHERE TO STAY IN CENTRAL ZÜRICH

### 25hours Hotel Zürich Langstrasse

Arty, ultra-slick, playful. Edgily designed rooms, free bikes and even Mini cars to get around. €€

### Helvetia Zürich

Beside the Sihl river, small boutique hotel offering simple, stylish rooms, fine restaurant and bar. €€

### Ruby Mimi

Former cinema with brilliant white minimalist rooms, touches of velvet and Art Deco Hollywood glamour. €€





## WHAT IS DADA?

In February 1916 Hugo Ball, Tristan Tzara and Emmy Hennings launched a short-lived series of raucous cabaret and performance-art events in Zürich's Cabaret Voltaire.

The name Dada was allegedly randomly chosen by stabbing a knife through a French-German dictionary. This rebellious, nihilistic and deliberately nonsensical art movement grew out of revulsion to WWI and the mechanisation of modern life.

It paved the way for nearly every form of contemporary art by using collage, extracting influences from indigenous art, applying abstract notions to writing, film and performance, and taking manufactured objects and redefining them as art. Its spirit lived on in the works of George Grosz, Hans Arp and Max Ernst.



VADISLAV GAJIC/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Lindt Home of Chocolate (p201)

hall and supermarket (a fancy Migros) – there's wonderful urban views from the multiple levels inside here. Alternatively, go trainspotting from **Negrellisteg**, the pedestrian bridge over the train tracks.

Another choice Europaallee hangout is **Bierwerk Züri**, a microbrewery run by sisters Lidia and Valeria and their friend Max. Five of their own beers are on tap along with guest beers, other drinks and focaccia sandwiches made with their own sourdough.

## The Best of Swiss Design

### Experience the art of visual communication

Showcasing everything from Albrecht Dürer's *Apocalypse* to a pair of On running shoes, **Museum für Gestaltung** is Switzerland's premier design and visual communication museum. It's particularly strong on graphic art, with an incredible collection of posters from around the world.



## WHERE TO EAT ON A BUDGET IN ZÜRICH

### Babu's Bakery & Coffeehouse

Bakes and pastries with great cappuccinos, smoothies and fruit juices. €

### Haus Hiltl

Offers an astounding smorgasbord of meatless delights. Its buffet is charged per 100g. €

### Sternen Grill

The best bratwursts in a soft bread roll in the city. Also has vegetarian versions. €



To view key works from the permanent collection – and to sit on the iconic chairs and sofas displayed in the Swiss Design Lounge – head to the main building on **Ausstellungsstrasse**. Here you can also see impressive temporary exhibitions, as well as at the museum's annex in the **Toni-Areal**, once Europe's largest yoghurt factory and now the campus of Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK). Design-wonks should check online to sign up for a guided tour of the collection archive here.

One more must-see for design lovers is **Museum Haus Konstruktiv**, showcasing conceptual art. It occupies part of the old Selnau electrical substation and is worth visiting alone for its permanent exhibit of Fritz Glarner's 'Rockefeller Dining Room'.

## In the Footsteps of James Joyce

### And Zürich's Dada origins

In Tom Stoppard's play *Travesties*, James Joyce, the Dadaist Tristan Tzara, and Vladimir Lenin collide in WWI Zürich. This celebrated trio were all in the city at that time, and it's fun to imagine that they may have crossed paths while having a morning coffee at **Café Odeon**, or over a glass of schnapps at **Cabaret Voltaire**, birthplace of Dada.

To separate Joyce facts from fiction, head to the **James Joyce Foundation**, which houses Europe's largest collection of books, papers and other items related to the Irish giant of 20th-century literature – including a death mask of the writer. The foundation hosts English-language readings of his work on Thursday evenings. Nearby is the restaurant and bar **James Joyce**, an authentic transplant from the former Jury's Hotel on Dame St in Dublin. Joyce frequented this bar in his youth, and it's mentioned in *Ulysses*. In the 1970s when the historic hotel was about to be demolished, its Victorian wood-panelled bar was auctioned off. This is how it came to be resurrected on Zürich's Pelikanstrasse.

Joyce is buried at **Flntern Cemetery**, near the Zoo (he died of a perforated duodenal ulcer while in Zürich in 1941), his grave marked by a statue by the American artist Milton Hebal.

Cabaret Voltaire continues to fly the flag for Dada with exhibitions and events. Its Artists' Bar is an atmospheric spot for a drink while exploring the old town. Café Odeon retains its early 20th-century glamour and is a great choice for lunch, dinner or a drink.



### ZÜRICH'S BEST INDEPENDENT SHOPS

#### Die Macherei

Fashion, accessories and unique gifts from a collective of (mainly) Zürich-based designers.

#### Landolt-Arbenz

Distinguished old stationery shop with a mind-boggling collection of fine pens, inks and art supplies across its two well-stocked floors.

#### Markthalle

##### Im Viadukt

Superior food hall, including a delicious spread of Swiss cheeses from Tritt Käse.

#### Travel Book Shop

Carries everything from Lonely Planet guides (some in English) to Alpine hiking maps.

#### Zürcher

##### Brockenhaus

Three-floor treasure house offering a cornucopia of used goods – from clothing, books and vinyl records, to pieces of designer furniture.



### WHERE TO EAT IN STYLE IN ZÜRICH

#### Didi's Frieden

Enjoy flavour-packed food at this classy restaurant with wood floors, white tablecloths and chandeliers. €€

#### Maison Manesse

Unpretentious gourmet spot serving inventive dishes, such as deer tartare. Also committed to sustainability. €€

#### Restaurant Zum Kropf

Favoured since 1888 for hearty Swiss staples, served in an ornate interior with ceiling murals. €€



## BEST BATHING SPOTS

### Frauenbad

Women-only Art Nouveau pool. In the evening its trendy bar opens to both sexes.

### Letten

Swim, skateboard, play volleyball, or have a drink at this *badi*'s riverside bars.

### Männerbad

A peaceful, tree-shaded pool on the Schanzengraben canal. Men only by day, but its hip Rimini Bar welcomes both sexes at night.

### Seebad Utoquai

Classy Moorish-style wooden bathing pavilion that has been a hit since its first opening in 1890.

### Seebad Enge

At this happening bath, the bar stays open until midnight when the weather is good. Also offers massage, yoga, stand-up paddleboarding and a winter sauna.



HALAM/SHUTTERS TOOK ©

Chinese Garden, Zürichhorn

## Visit a Revitalised Industrial Neighbourhood

### Hang out in Züri-West

In formerly industrial Züri-West once-mighty factories such as the **Schiffbau** – which churned out lake steamers and turbine-engine parts into the early 1990s – and the old brewery **Löwenbräukunst Areal**, have been reconfigured as dynamic cultural centres for the visual and performing arts.

The **Im Viadukt** retail and dining complex has been crafted beneath the old stone railway bridges. Stroll the viaduct's three-block length between Limmatstrasse and Geroldstrasse and see what catches your eye among the numerous locally owned shops (selling clothes, furniture etc), restaurants and cafes. Sort yourself a picnic from **Markthalle Im Viadukt** and



## WHERE TO GET A COCKTAIL IN ZÜRICH

### Kronenhalle Bar

Handsome bar of famed city brasserie, hung with original works by the likes of Picasso.

### Old Crow

Old town bar stacked with 1600 spirits, including many rarities. Cocktails from classics to mocktails.

### Schnupf

Fine cocktails, beers and a short menu of food, including succulent steak and fries.

enjoy it in **Josefwiese**, the neighbourhood park. A pile of shipping containers that has been dubbed Kreis 5's first skyscraper is the flagship store of **Freitag**. Every item, from wallets to backpacks, is an original made from recycled colourful truck tarps. Its rooftop terrace offers spectacular city views. Next door, and also largely made up of shipping containers, is **Frau Gerolds Garten**. Amid this blooming urban garden are bars, street-eat vendors and small boutiques. It's a focal point of Zürich's summer drinking scene and one of the best grownup playgrounds in Europe.

## Picnic in a Lakeside Park

### Explore Zürichhorn and Seefeld

Bordering the northeastern shore of the Zürichsee is the upmarket neighbourhood of Seefeld. The district's long and leafy lung is **Zürichhorn**, a park that's home to the primary-coloured **Pavillon Le Corbusier**, a must-see for architecture buffs. Also here is a sublime **Chinese Garden**. Pass through a yellow-tiled main gate into a walled sanctuary of colourful pavilions, limpid ponds and artfully positioned rocks.

The huge kinetic sculpture **Heureka** by Jean Tinguely is another feature of Zürichhorn. From April to mid-October, it goes into operation every day at 11am, 3pm, and 7pm.

The opulent neoclassical **Opernhaus** stages top-drawer concerts, opera and ballet productions. Window-shop along Dufourstrasse and grab a seat outside **Monocle Shop and Café** to take in Seefeld's pulse over a perfectly made espresso or spritz.

## Hike the Solar System Atop Uetliberg

### Explore Zürich's mountain playground

At just 871m Uetliberg is a pimple compared with other Swiss peaks. However, as it's on Zürich's doorstep, it's a popular exercise spot for locals. Hiking and mountain-biking trails crisscross the upland woods and countryside, ablaze with wildflowers in spring and daubed with russets and golds in autumn.

Topping Uetliberg is the hotel and restaurant **UTO KULM** and the nearby **Uetliberg Aussichtsturm**, a steel lattice observation tower with far-reaching views over Lake Zürich and the city. If you're an early riser, this is the best place to see sunrise. If not, it's pretty cool at sunset, too.

From Uetliberg top station, reached on the S10 train, follow the **Planetenweg**, a 6km hiking route along the at-times heavily wooded mountain ridge as it gently dips and rises en route to Felsenegg and Buchenegg vantage points. You'll pass 1:1 billion scale models of the sun and planets and enjoy lake views along the way. At Felsenegg, a cable car descends to the town of Adliswil, from where frequent S4 trains return to Zürich.



### WHY I LOVE ZÜRICH

**Simon Richmond,**  
writer

Zürich is a city blessed by angels, from Chagall's ethereal stained-glass windows in Fraumünster to Niki de Saint Phalle's golden-winged guardian hovering over Zürich Hauptbahnhof's concourse.

It's also a winner in terms of lakeside location, smooth-working infrastructure and cultural offerings.

The city's museums are uniformly excellent, with the Chipperfield Building extension to the Kunsthau and its superbly curated galleries a particular standout.

But it's also Zürich's abundance of creative detail that makes my soul sing – public art is everywhere, from the sculpted water fountains that can be found practically every few metres to the mosaics on the 1929 Sihlpost building and the Giacometti frescos of the police station.



# Beyond Zürich

High-altitude hikes, picturesque old towns, awe-inspiring waterfalls and cool contemporary art museums are all possible day trips from Zürich.



## Places

**Rapperswil** p206

**Winterthur** p207

**Schaffhausen** p208

**Rheinfall** p208

**Walensee** p209

**Braunwald** p211



## GETTING AROUND

Plentiful trains and buses connect all these locations with Zürich. A great way of exploring the Rhine region around Schaffhausen is by hiring a bike. A number of well-marked trails shadow the river and weave through the surrounding countryside. Bicycles can be rented from railway stations. There are also regular boat services along the Rhine.

## TOP TIP

Pick up a Winterthur Museum Pass, valid for one or two days, which covers entry to almost all the town sights, plus local transport.

From lakeside Rapperswil it's a short ferry hop to the idyllic nature reserve island of Ufenau, while Schaffhausen is handy for the spectacle of the Rheinfall, Europe's biggest plain waterfall. Both have old towns that are right up there with the best of them.

Winterthur is home to a series of outstanding art collections (mostly bankrolled by art collector Oskar Reinhart), one of Europe's foremost photography museums, and a superb science museum. Surrounded by vertiginous mountains, Walensee is a long emerald finger of a lake into which Switzerland's tallest waterfall disgorges. Ride the funicular up into the Glarus Alps to the family-friendly resort of Braunwald, a base from which to organise thrilling hikes and mountain climbs.

## Rapperswil

TIME FROM ZÜRICH: 37 MINS 

### Explore the city of roses

On the northeastern shore of Lake Zürich, **Rapperswil** is known as the 'city of roses', thanks to the profusion of fragrant blooms neatly arranged in gardens around the Altstadt.

Lording it over the Altstadt is the late-12th-century castle **Schloss Rapperswil**. Walk up to the castle gate for the spectacular views over the lake and to look down on the slopes beneath to one of the oldest vineyards on Lake Zürich and a small herd of fallow deer.

For a fascinating insight into the town's 800-year history, drop by the **Stadtmuseum Rapperswil-Jona**. Here the atmospheric rooms of the 15th-century Breny House are connected to a 14th-century stone tower by the contemporary 'Janus' building, with its perforated bronze facade. A 10-minute walk away from the Altstadt, **Kunst(Zeug)Haus** is a fine gallery devoted to contemporary art exhibitions in a converted weapons arsenal.

### Sail out to an island nature reserve

A 13-minute ferry ride from Rapperswil, the small island Ufenau is a peaceful nature reserve that you can walk around in less than an hour, including visiting a medieval church and a nearby chapel. Each summer **Art Ufenau** sees new art exhibitions on the island, and year-round it's worth visiting for its restaurant in the 17th-century House of the Two Ravens.



## GREAT PLACES TO EAT IN RAPPERSWIL & UFENAU

### Insel Wirtschaft Ufnau

Sip local rosé wine with your meal at this rustic restaurant on the nature reserve island. €€

### Jakob

Classy boutique hotel and casual restaurant in the heart of the Altstadt. Plenty of veggie options. €€

### Dieci

Quality pizza and pasta with a view overlooking the lake. Also has a cafe-bar. €€

### La Fuente

Spanish joint in the Altstadt serving a tempting range of tapas as well as more substantial dishes. €€

### Seebadi Rapperswil

Enjoy a coffee and a light snack at this lakeside swimming pool. €



Technorama, Winterthur

## Winterthur

### City of art and science

TIME FROM ZÜRICH: 23 MINS

The small city of **Winterthur** owes much of its eminence as a cultural powerhouse to donations by the art collector Oskar Reinhart (1185–1965). Oskar's old home, a handsome early 20th-century villa overlooking the city from a hill to the north, houses the **Oskar Reinhart Collection 'Am Römerholz'**. On display are fine works that range from early 16th-century portraits by Lukas Cranach the Elder to paintings by Cézanne, Manet and Renoir: Reinhart was a fan of the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists. The villa's gardens are a gorgeous spot for a picnic.

More of Reinhart's collection can be seen in the impressive **Kunstmuseum**, which also has a large section devoted to contemporary art. Nearby, Oskar's gifts continue in the **Museum Oskar Reinhart am Stadtgarten**, which focuses mainly on Swiss, German and Austrian art from the 18th to the 20th centuries. Winterthur is also home to perhaps Switzerland's best collections of photography, housed in the neighbouring **Fotomuseum** (closed until 2025) and the **Fotostiftung Schweiz**. And it has a super-fun and educational science centre, **Technorama**.



## WHERE TO STAY IN WINTERTHUR

### Depot 195

Backpackers in a born-again factory. Dorms and private rooms, a good common kitchen, bike rental. €

### Hotel Loge

Behind the Gothic entrance are simply decorated rooms with parquet floors, a bar, restaurant and cinema. €€

### Sorell Hotel Krone

Sleep like a monarch with comfortable beds at this Altstadt-located hotel. Has a decent restaurant. €€





## BEST PLACES TO EAT IN WINTERTHUR

### Les Wagons

Based in three vintage wooden coaches, Wagon's has set menus of delicious small plates made from local produce. €€

### Nachbarsgarten

The creative menu here includes salads, pasta dishes, *tarte flambée*. €€

### Pizzeria Don Camillo

Serves delicious wood-fired oven pizzas that come with a great range of toppings. €

### National

Stylish spot for either Mediterranean dishes or Swiss classics in a handy location next to the train station. €€

### Brewhouse

The burgers, including a veggie version, go down very nicely with the craft beers. €

With four jampacked floors of exhibits, plus more outside in an attractive park, it offers over 500 interactive experiences guaranteed to fascinate kids and plenty of adults, too.

## Schaffhausen

TIME FROM ZÜRICH: 36 MINS 

### Marvellous oriel windows and frescoes

**Schaffhausen** is nicknamed the Erkerstadt because of the 171 *erker* (oriel bay windows) that decorate the buildings of its Altstadt.

The old market square **Fronwagplatz** is bookended by the **Mohrenbrunnen** (Moor's Fountain) at the north, and the **Metzgerbrunnen** (Butcher's Fountain) and a large clock tower at the south. Along **Vorstadt**, look out for the **Zum Goldenen Ochsen**, which has a frescoed facade displaying an eponymous Golden Ox; and the **Zum Grossen Käfig** decorated with a multicoloured tale of the parading of Turkish sultan Bayezid in a cage by the triumphant Mongol leader Tamerlane.

Detailing the town's 800 years of history, the fine **Museum zu Allerheiligen** is where the displays range from local archaeology to contemporary art. The museum is next to the 12th-century **Allerheiligen Münster**, a largely intact Romanesque-style cathedral. Take time out in its tranquil cloister and adjoining herb garden, which has been lovingly tended since the Middle Ages.

East of the Altstadt, stone steps lead up through terraced vineyards to the **Munot**. This circular fortress was built in the 16th century and conceals an extraordinary vaulted casemate. Climb the spiral staircase to the roof for spectacular views over the town to the Rhine and surrounding wooded hills.

Finish up with a dip in the river at the **Rhybadi**, an atmospheric 19th-century wooden bathhouse that also has a pleasant cafe.

## Rheinfall

TIME FROM ZÜRICH: 54 MINS 

### Europe's biggest plain waterfall

The thunderous **Rheinfall**, just 7 minutes by train from Schaffhausen, is awe-inspiring. Trails thread up and along the shores around Europe's largest plain waterfall – 23m high, 150m wide and with an even flow of 700 cubic metres per second of water in summer – with viewpoints providing abundant photo ops.

For a close-up encounter, stand beneath the medieval **Schloss Laufen**, now a restaurant. Buy a ticket at its souvenir shop to walk, or take the panoramic lift down to the Känzeli



## WHERE TO STAY IN SCHAFFHAUSEN

### Backpacker Federhut

Family-run hostel on edge of the Altstadt. Brightly painted, cosy, functional rooms above ground-floor cafe. €

### Hotel Kronenhof

Historic hotel; rooms feature dark wood floors, bold art and views of the Munot fortress. €€

### Hotel Promenade

Set in beautiful gardens. Offers large, immaculately kept rooms and a restaurant serving seasonal cuisine. €€



Boat dock, Rheinfall

viewing platform, where you can appreciate the full-on crash-bang spectacle amid a haze of spray. Between April and early November, the **Rhyfall Mändli** boats can get you even closer, as they flit in and out of the torrents of water at the bottom of the cascade. One of the short cruise options stops at the tall rock in the middle of the falls, from where you can climb to the top and watch the water rush all around you.

**Schlössli Wörth**, on the north bank of the Rheinfall waterfall, harbours a lounge-style restaurant with floor-to-ceiling windows affording magical views of the falls, which are strikingly illuminated after dark. Dine in style here on dishes such as venison carpaccio with rocket or baked trout with basil butter.

## Walensee

TIME FROM ZÜRICH: 60 MINS 

### Sail to Switzerland's highest waterfall

**Walensee** is a beautiful 9km-long, fjord-like lake, north of which the Churfirsten range rises like a set of jagged teeth.

About midway along the lake's northern flank is **Seerenbachfälle**, a series of three colossal waterfalls, thundering 585m from top to bottom. Fuelled by underground rivers running



## HAUS ZUM RITTER

The frescos that cover late 15th-century **Haus zum Ritter** on Schaffhausen's Vordergasse will stop you in your tracks.

They were created by local artist Tobias Stimmer between 1568 and 1570 and are considered a masterpiece of Renaissance facade painting.

Ritter means 'knight' and Stimmer places one at the top of his design, which also includes references to many civic virtues. Look out for two scenes from Homer's *Odyssey*.

What you see on the building today are mid-20th century recreations by Carl Roesch – Stimmer's original frescos were removed in 1935 to be conserved in the Museum zu Allerheiligen. A small portion of the original fresco is on display in the museum.



## WHERE TO EAT IN SCHAFFHAUSEN

### Café Vordergasse

Art Nouveau-style tearoom with flower-bedecked terrace. Serves sandwiches, salads, quiches, cakes. €

### D'Chuchi

Book ahead for this petite and popular bistro, where the chef uses regional, seasonal ingredients. €€

### Wirtschaft Zum Frieden

Cosy, wood-panelled inn, in business since 1445. Cheek-by-jowl tables, regional fare with a modern twist. €€



## BEST PLACES TO STAY IN BRAUNWALD

### Adrenalin Hostel

A 1970s hotel transformed into a chilled backpackers with dorms and private rooms. A hub of the snowboarding and adventure-sports community. €

### Hotel Tödblick

Chic pine-decorated rooms with good mattresses and superb views from private balconies. Also has an excellent restaurant. €€

### Ortstockhaus

It's a 1½-hour hike up the mountain from Braunwald to reach this historic chalet and restaurant – worth it for the views, pleasant ambiance and good food. €€



ALEXANDER CHAININ/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

### Braunwald

from as far away as the peak of Säntis (p223), the falls shoot over a sheer cliff face. The middle waterfall, a 305m single drop, is considered to be Switzerland's highest. A trail from the village of Betlis leads to the base of the middle falls where you can stand metres from the plunging water. Either drive to Betlis or take the boat to the Betlis landing – from both places the falls are around a 30-minute walk. You'll pass a ridiculously picturesque chapel on the way.

Uphill from Betlis, the high pasture plateau of **Amden** has wonderfully arresting lake and mountain views. There's some fine walking amid the marmot-burrow-dotted meadows and a bit of snow activity in winter.

**Schiffsbetrieb Walensee** boats regularly stop at the settlements that hug the shores, including Weesen, Murg, Quinten

## RHINE CRUISES

The **Untersee und Rhein** (urh.ch) cruise from Schaffhausen to **Kreuzlingen** (p212) covers a beautiful stretch of the Rhine in just under five hours. If you don't have time for that, take the two hour cruise to enchanting **Stein am Rhein** (p218).



## WHERE TO STAY AROUND WALENSEE

### Flyhof

Characterful family-run inn in Weesen with gardens sloping picturesquely down to the lake. Excellent restaurant. €

### Lofthotel

Former 19th-century cotton mill in Murg revamped as industrial-chic hotel, with artworks and lake views. €€

### Paradiesli Landgasthof

Charming old-world pension and restaurant in Betlis. Its terrace offers extraordinary lake views. €€

and Walenstadt. **Weesen** at Walensee's west end is a pretty little town with hillside vineyards, quirky public statues and a refined restaurant, **Fischerstube**, serving well-executed fish dishes.

## Braunwald

TIME FROM ZÜRICH: 2 HRS 

### Family-friendly mountain resort

From Linthal Braunwaldbahn a funicular climbs the hill at a 64% gradient to reach **Braunwald**. This pretty, car-free resort perches on the mountainside at 1256m, amid fir trees with incredible views down the valley. High peaks crowd the horizon to the south, dominated by the glaciated summit of Tödi (3614m). In winter there's moderate skiing and off-piste activities. But the resort really comes into its own in summer as a hiking and mountain-climbing base.

Braunwald plays up its fairy-tale vibes as a family friendly resort, especially so if you stay at the **Märchenhotel Bellevue**. Here, elegant modern rooms are combined with masses of child-pleasing fun – from alpacas, llamas and goats to slides and storytelling sessions. Parents can relax in the rooftop spa while kids romp around the supervised play area.

Get the little ones hiking along the child-friendly **Zwerg-Bartli Erlebnisweg** trails – ask at the tourist office opposite the funicular station for leaflets and maps detailing the routes. Also consider the three-hour trail through meadows and open forest to the vivid blue lake of **Oberblegisee**, a perfect picnic spot.

### A thrilling mountaintop traverse

You'll need a head for heights to tackle Braunwald's spectacular **via ferrata** routes. The shortest, from the Gumen cable-car station to Leiteregg, takes around 2½ hours. The route from Leiteregg to Mittler Eggstock takes four hours and includes the thrilling Charlotte rope bridge. The last section to Hinter Eggstock takes around six hours. Check on weather conditions before starting out. For equipment, reserve online with **Kessler Sport** (kesslersport.ch) and for more details on the routes see [klettersteige.ch](http://klettersteige.ch).



## PINOT NOIR WINE COUNTRY

German speakers know the grape as Blauburgunder. To the rest of the world it's called Pinot noir, a varietal that accounts for 80 percent of what is grown in the vineyards around Schaffhausen.

The prettiest grape-growing region to visit, along the German border, is Klettgau. On slopes above the villages of Hallau, Oberhallau, Trasadingen, Wilchingen and Wisental you'll find hills that are patterned like corduroy with neatly maintained vineyards.

It's best explored by cycling the 43km Klettgau Wine Route. Some of these slow-paced hamlets come to life in mid-October for wine festivals such as Trottenfest in Osterfingen when vintners throw open their doors for tastings.

# Lake Constance



WATERSPORTS | HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE | FOOD & DRINK



## GETTING AROUND

The main train stations along the Swiss side of the lake are Kreuzlingen Hafen, Arbon, Rorschach Hafen and Rorschach.

The N13 road shadows the trainline around the south of the lake. The A7 and A1 motorways link Swiss towns to the west. The Bodensee-Radweg cyclepath runs for 269km.

Ferry companies run services on the lake from mid-April to late October. A Swiss Pass is valid only on the Swiss side of the lake.

Offering sweeping landscapes, a mild climate and plenty of outdoor activities, the appeal of Lake Constance (Bodensee in German) is obvious. Bordered by Switzerland, Germany and Austria, the 536 sq-metre lake is Central Europe's third-largest body of water after Lake Geneva and Lake Balaton. Come here to swim, sail or canoe, or amble through flowery gardens and lakeside altstadts.

It's a lake in three parts: the main upper lake (Obersee), the smaller lower lake (Untersee) and the connecting stretch called Lake Rhine (Seerhein). The main towns along the lake's southern Swiss flank are Kreuzlingen, Arbon and Rorschach. Each is an attractive base from which to organise trips across the lake by a variety of craft, or rent bicycles to pedal along the shore or through the region's famed apple orchards. Alternatively, relax on sand or pebble beaches such as those fringing Kreuzlingen's Seeburgpark.

## A Rococo Masterpiece & Lakeside Relaxation

### Kreuzlingen's stunning church and park

**Kreuzlingen** tends to be eclipsed by its vivacious sister, Konstanz in Germany, just a few paces over the border. However, the largest Swiss town on Lake Constance has plenty to offer. Take the border itself: it's lined with 22 metal sculptures that are 8m high, designed by Johannes Dörflinger – making it the world's first 'art border'.

Don't miss the rococo splendour of **Pfarrkirche St Ulrich und St Afra**, a short walk inland from Kreuzlingen-Hafen station. This showstopper church, once part of Kreuzlingen Monastery, will leave you reeling from its riot of ceiling paintings, gilded plaster mouldings and elaborate carvings.

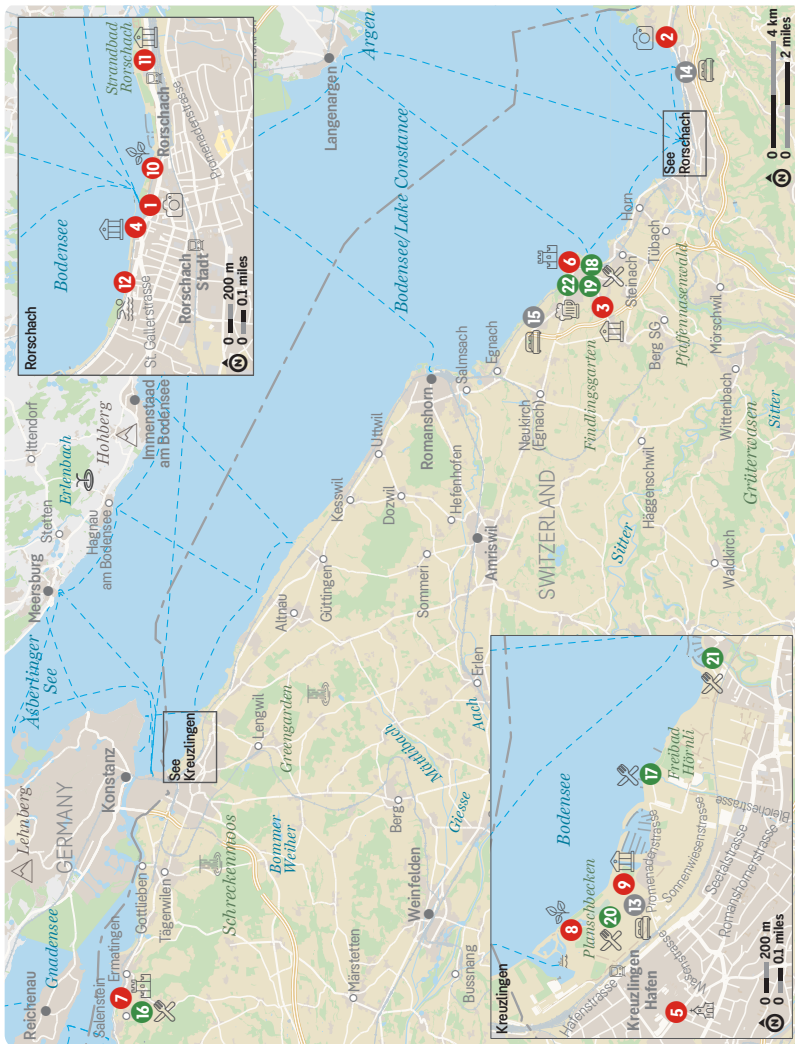
Calm your senses at **Seeburgpark**, which stretches for 2.5km along the lake. It offers superb natural areas, enclosures for rare breeds of farm animals and alpine goats, an observation tower, a fab kids' playground and the **Seemuseum**, with displays

## TOP TIP

If you're planning a lot of sightseeing around the Lake Constance area (including Lichtenstein) it's worth buying a Bodensee Card Plus (bodensee-card.eu).

Valid for three or seven selectable days in a year, the card covers entry to 160 attractions plus free travel on lake and Rhine liners.



**SIGHTS**

- 1** Hauptstrasse
- 2** Markthalle
- 3** Altenrhein
- 4** Museum im Kornhaus
- 5** Pfarrkirche St Ulrich und St Afra
- 6** Schloss Arbon

**ACTIVITIES**

- 12** Badtütte

**SLEEPING**

- 13** Kreuzlingen SYHA Hostel
- 14** Schloss Wartegg
- 15** Strothotel Bodensee

**EATING**

- 16** Bistro Louis Napoleon
- 17** Fischerhaus
- 18** Michélas l'île
- 19** Römerhof
- 20** Schloss Seeburg
- 21** Silo 5

**DRINKING & NIGHTLIFE**

- 22** Frohsinn



## WHERE TO EAT IN KREUZLINGEN & ARBON

### Fischerhaus

Chestnut-tree-shaded beer garden by the lake in Kreuzlingen with lederhosen-wearing waiters serving currywurst and salads in a jar. €

### Schloss Seeburg

Enjoy dishes such as steak in kimchi sauce at this whimsical castle within Kreuzlingen's Seeburgpark. €€

### Silo 5

Industrial-chic warehouse overlooking the marina at Bottighofen. Try the tasty beef quesadillas or the eggs Benedict. €

### Römerhof

Arbon's top dining spot impresses with its coffered ceiling, linen-draped tables and attentive service. €€€

### Michelas Ilge

Excellent homemade pasta and risotto is guaranteed at this tranquil farm, 2.5km west of Arbon in Frasnacht. €€

on fishing and shipping in the lake. **Schlossgut Arenenberg**, 11km east of Kreuzlingen, overlooks the Untersee. This handsome little 16th-century château was once the home of Hortense de Beauharnais, the stepdaughter of Napoleon I, and mother of Napoleon III, who grew up here. The estate has lovely grounds and includes a modern hotel and the **Bistro Louis Napoleon**, serving a good-value daily set lunch.

## Castle by the Lake

### Sample locally made cider

The Romans established a fort at Arbon. This period of the town's history and much more is covered at the historical museum inside the 16th-century **Schloss Arbon**. The lofty stone tower of the castle looks down on the pretty half-timbered houses of Arbon's compact Altstadt. The lakefront promenade is a popular spot to stroll, cycle or in-line skate.

Places to stay here include the refined hotel and restaurant **Römerhof** and **Frohsinn**, set in a pretty half-timbered house, which also houses a restaurant and microbrewery.

The countryside surrounding Arbon is covered in apple orchards. The Möhl family have been producing apple juices, ciders and spirits here for over 125 years – learn all about the process on tours at their well-designed museum and shop **MoMö**.

## Historic Bathhouse, Modern Art Gallery

### A ramble around Rorschach

Accessed from Rorschach Hafen train station, **Hauptstrasse** is lined with a handsome range of buildings, some sporting fine oriel windows – such as at Haus Eden at numbers 33/35. On the waterfront the 18th-century granary has been converted into the hands-on **Museum im Kornhaus**, showcasing science, technology, industry and local history.

Going west along the tree-lined lakefront promenade brings you to the **Badhütte**, a charming 1920s bathhouse and the only one of its type on the Swiss shore of the lake. It's a pleasant place for a refreshing dip and a drink or meal at its cafe.

Heading east, you'll encounter lush **Seepark**, dotted with sculptures. Further east, beside Rorschach train station, is **Würth Haus Rorschach**, a big art gallery in a glistening glass building. Exhibitions are curated from the 20,000-piece Würth Collection that focuses on mostly modern and contemporary art.



## WHERE TO STAY AROUND LAKE CONSTANCE

### Strohhotel Bodensee

Sleep in straw and sip home-pressed cider at this tranquil farm, 2.5km west of Arbon in Frasnacht. €

### Kreuzlingen SYHA Hostel

Hostel in an elegant Art Nouveau villa, beautifully situated in lakefront parkland. Canoe/kayak rental. €

### Schloss Wartegg

Former royal 16th-century Austrian castle turned modern hotel and restaurant. Extensive grounds with lake views. €€

## A DRIVE AROUND LAKE CONSTANCE

Start in **1 Kreuzlingen Hafen** near the lake-side Seeburg park. Hop across the German border to **2 Konstanz**, to view its Romanesque cathedral and attractive old town. Detour 10km west of Konstanz to the UNESCO-listed monastic island of **3 Reichenau**, then head back to **4 Insel Mainau**, home to 45 hectares of themed gardens that include dahlias, hydrangeas, roses and a large butterfly house.

Return to Konstanz to take the car ferry to **5 Meersburg** on the lake's northern shore. Here cobbled lanes thread past half-timbered houses up to the perkily turreted medieval castle, Germany's oldest inhabited fortress.

In Friedrichshafen, 19km east along the lake, the **6 Zeppelin Museum** traces the history of this ill-fated means of air transport. A further 24km southeast and still on German turf, the postcard-perfect

island town of **7 Lindau**, with its lavishly frescoed houses, palm-speckled promenade and harbour is watched over by a lighthouse and a Bavarian lion.

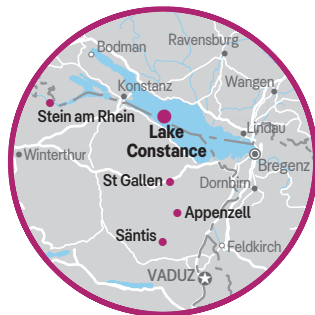
Rounding the southern end of the lake brings you into Austria and the town of **8 Bregenz**, which hosts the Bregenzer Festspiele from mid-July to mid-August, in which concerts are staged on a vast water-borne stage – you may recognise it from the Bond movie *Quantum of Solace*.

Rising dramatically above the town is the **9 Pfänder** (1064m); ride the cable car to the 1094m summit for panoramic views of Lake Constance and to see the Alps unfold. The Rhein marks the Austrian–Swiss border. Cross it and continue to **10 Markthalle Altenrhein** and the attractive town of **11 Rorschach**. From here it's 40km back to Kreuzlingen, hugging Lake Constance's southern shoreline all the way.





# Beyond Lake Constance



If altstadts are your thing, then you'll be in heaven in Stein am Rhein, St Gallen and Appenzell.

## Places

**Stein am Rhein** p218

**St Gallen** p219

**Appenzell** p221

**Sântis** p223



## GETTING AROUND

Public transport connects Zürich and Friedrichshafen (Germany) airports. Roads and rail link Zürich with Stein am Rhein, St Gallen and Linthal (for Braunwald). A ferry crosses the lake from Friedrichshafen to Romanshorn.

Several areas, such as the Bodensee region around Lake Constance and Appenzell, offer regional transport passes.

## TOP TIP

Public transport is excellent but in good weather consider cycling or walking to sights outside Basel, packing a picnic lunch.

West of Lake Constance, Stein am Rhein is a picturesque gem at the point where the lake reverts to the Rhine. With its hilltop castle, leafy promenade, soaring church spires and gingerbread houses, its Altstadt is drop-dead gorgeous.

South of the lake is handsome St Gallen, a city whose fortunes are intertwined with its production of quality textiles. The jewel of its Altstadt is the World Heritage-listed Abbey Library and baroque cathedral. Nearby, Appenzell offers yet another photogenic Altstadt. The Sitter River curves through the town and beyond to rolling meadows of velvet green that rise to mountains sheer and ragged. This is Swiss dairy country par excellence, marked by Sântis, the highest peak in the Alpstein.

## Stein am Rhein

TIME FROM LAKE CONSTANCE: 27 MINS 

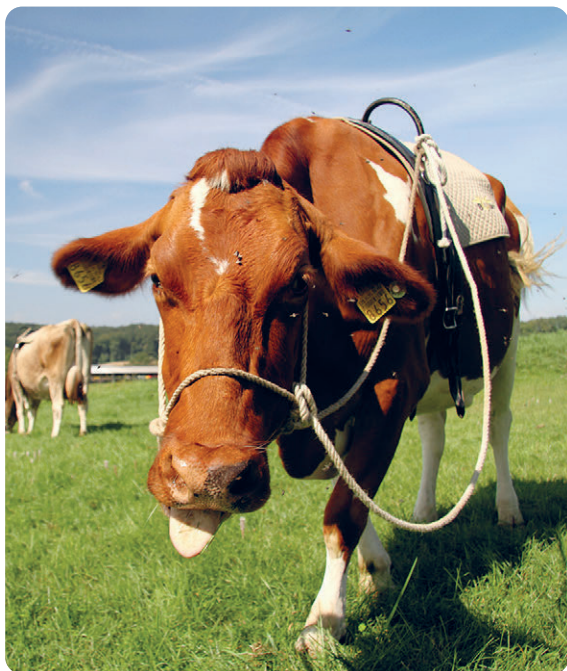
### Town of painted facades

When it comes to picturesque altstadts, few can compare to **Stein am Rhein**. Half-timbered houses with intricately carved oriel windows and billowing flower boxes are all in perfect harmony, especially around the elongated and astounding **Rathausplatz**.

The fresco-festooned **Rathaus** soars above the 16th-century houses named after their elaborate murals. A stand-out is the **Weisse Adler** (White Eagle), painted around 1520, making it the oldest preserved Renaissance mural in Switzerland. Pick up a map from the tourist office in the Bürgerasyl to learn about the other buildings. To get an idea of what these houses look like from the inside, drop by the **Museum Lindwurm**, where rooms replicate the conditions enjoyed in the mid-19th century by a bourgeois family. It takes some doing to trump this riot of facades, but the stunning murals and other decoration of the Banquet Hall in the **Museum Kloster Sankt Georgen**, do just that. They are the highlight of this 11th century Benedictine monastery.

### Cow trekking at Bolderhof

In Hemishofen, 3km west of Stein am Rhein, is the family-run farm Bolderhof, where ambling down a trail with a cow is part of their experiential approach to organic dairy farming. Pick your cow, saddle up and ride slowly through bucolic countryside



Cow, Bolderhof farm

to the banks of the Rhine. Bolderhof also offers a range of accommodation options, from a night on the straw in the cow barn to sleeping atop a silo with a view of the stars.

## St Gallen

TIME FROM LAKE CONSTANCE: 16 MINS 

### The apothecary of the soul

St Gallen is another great base for this region. Its Altstadt is dominated by the Unesco-listed Benedictine **Abbey of St Gall**, founded by itinerant Irish monk Gallus in 612. It houses **Stiftsbibliothek**, one of the oldest and most beautifully monastic libraries in the world that holds many treasured items of European culture from the 8th century until the Abbey's dissolution in 1805.

To enter the library's showpiece **Baroque Hall**, dating from 1767 and lavishly decorated with frescos, stucco, cherubs and parquetry, you'll need to put on felt slippers to protect the floor.



## POPULAR STEIN AM RHEIN RESTAURANTS

### Burg Hohenklingen

Hike up to this 12th-century hilltop fortress that now houses an atmospheric and high-class restaurant serving Swiss classics. €€

### La P'tite Crêperie

Has outdoor tables on Unterstadt in the summer; feast here on tasty savoury and sweet crepes. €

### Uferlos an der Schiffflände

Beside the river, this popular cafe serves hearty sandwiches and meze plates. €

### Obere Stube

A classy restaurant with a contemporary-style courtyard and creative menu. €€

### Rhy Lounge

A favourite summertime hang-out for its chestnut-shaded terrace. Serves great homemade pizza and other decently made Italian classics. €€



## WHERE TO STAY IN STEIN AM RHEIN

### B&B Stein am Rhein

The kindly Keller family's chalet, with bright, well-kept rooms kitted out with pine furnishings. €

### Hotel Adler

Centrally located family hotel with simple, comfortable rooms and a pleasingly old-fashioned restaurant. €€

### SYHA Hostel

On the banks of the Rhine, neat and tidy hostel with gardens, barbecue area, playground. €





## ST GALLEN'S BEST ORIELS

### Kamelerker

(Spisergasse 22)  
The panel featuring the camel (hence its name) from the 1673 window now hangs in St Gallen's Ethnographic Museum.

### Kugelerker

(Kugelgasse 8)  
From 1680, featuring some of the labours of Hercules.

### Pelikanerker

(Schmiedgasse 15)  
Built in 1708, panels depict scenes from four continents. It's topped with a gilded pelican feeding its babies with its own blood!

### Greiferker

(Gallusstrasse 22)  
Carvings feature Biblical scenes. There's a painting of a griffin on the wall next to it.

### Schwanenerker

(Kugelgasse 10)  
Depicts the Greek myth of the love of Alpheus, son of the Ocean god and the maiden Arethusa.



PKU/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

St Gallen Cathedral, part of the Abbey of St Gallen complex

Of the library's 170,000 books and precious manuscripts, just a handful are on display in regularly changing exhibitions. Other curiosities include a magnificent 16th-century globe, replete with naturalistic detail, and an Egyptian mummy.

The architect Peter Thumb designed the library and, along with Johann Michael Beer, he also built St Gallen's twin-towered, mid-18th-century **cathedral**. The interior features dramatic frescos and mint-green stucco embellishments. The cupola is illustrated with a vision of paradise with the Holy Trinity at the centre. There's also a relief showing scenes from the life of Gallus.

The **Vaulted Cellar** houses the 'Gallus and his Monastery' exhibition on the Abbey's history. It includes a multimedia show about how the Irish missionary travelled to the Steinach valley, and pieces of Carolingian, Ottonian and Gothic sculpture from the former buildings on the site. Your ticket also includes entry to the **Exhibition Space**, where you can view the Plan of St Gall, one of the most important architectural drawings of the Middle Ages.



## WHERE TO STAY IN ST GALLEN

### Einstein St Gallen

Spacious rooms at the city's top hotel. Also has a Michelin-starred restaurant and a spa. €€€

### Hotel Dom

Startlingly modern hotel in old town. Rooms are decorated with bold colours and backlit walls. €€

### Hotel Vadian

In the heart of St Gallen. Varied rooms have nice touches, such as ceiling beams. €

## Textiles and eclectic architecture

For centuries the city has been an important hub of the Swiss textile industry and the **Textilmuseum** pays homage to that tradition. The collection brings together many centuries of textiles from all over the world – from fabrics taken from ancient Egyptian graves to medieval embroidery and impossibly intricate lace – and the machinery used to produce them. Browse historic pattern books and a fraction of the two million fabric samples in its handsome library.

Steps from the museum, the lipstick-red **Stadtlounge**, an astonishing art installation from 2005 by Pipilotti Rist and Carlos Martínez, will stop you in your tracks. Several streets are entirely covered in a rubberised red tennis-court coating, with in-situ outdoor-furniture-like chairs, sofas and tables – even a car – shaded by ginkgo trees. In this area you'll also find the 1881 **Synagogue**, still functioning for St Gallen's small Jewish community, and the oldest such building in the Lake Constance region.

The pedestrianised Altstadt is a pleasure to wander and includes several notable Art Nouveau buildings, such as **Haus zur Waage** on the corner of Neugasse and Multergasse, featuring facade sculptures of heads portraying people from the five continents.

St Gallen has 111 houses that feature elaborate *erker* (oriel windows). Many are huddled in the Altstadt, especially around Gallusplatz, Spisergasse, Schmiedgasse and Kugelgasse. Often decorated with extraordinary timber sculptures, they were a reflection of the wealth of their one-time owners, mostly textile barons.

While St Gallen's cathedral gets all the attention, the Protestant neogothic **St Laurenzen-Kirche** is also beautiful, with its mosaic-tiled roof, delicate floral frescos and star-studded ceiling resembling a night sky. Climb the tower for views over the town's terracotta rooftops and spires.

## Appenzell

TIME FROM LAKE CONSTANCE: 1 HR 

### Alpine folk traditions, local beer

Appenzell is the stuff of fairy tales. **Hauptgasse**, the town's main pedestrian drag, is a stunner, lined with lavishly muralled facades and shops selling everything from folk costumes to local cheese and antique cowbells. Look up and you'll notice plenty of little details on the pitched roofs and intricate shop signs. The centrepiece square is **Landsgemeindeplatz**, which is the backdrop for the Landsgemeinde cantonal assembly.



### CRAFT BREWERY BEER SCENE

#### Brüw

In 2016, Danish expat Ole Lind blazed the trail for brewpubs in St Gallen when he opened this casual bar. There's usually 12 taps flowing with a mix of Brüw's own ales and others from local microbreweries.

#### Hermann Bier Brauerei & Lokal

A combined microbrewery and pub in Lindebühl district. In what was once a brothel and porn cinema, you can now sup from up to a dozen different ales.

#### Restaurant Brauwerk

Major St Gallen brewery Schützengarten is behind this craft brewery and restaurant experimenting with new beer recipes. You can sign up for tasting guided by a beer sommelier.



### WHERE TO EAT VEAL SAUSAGES IN ST GALLEN

#### Drahtseilähnl

Appealing bistro on southern edge of old town. Great breakfasts, lunches and homemade cakes. €

#### Bratwurst & Bowls Gempferli

Eat in/take away Olma Bratwurst with bread/potato salad. Also good range of poké-style salad bowls. €

#### Wirtschaft Zur Alten Post

Upmarket, historical *erststock-beizli* (1st-floor tavern) serving fat veal sausages with rösti alongside original creations. €€



## MORE ALPINE ACTIVITIES

### Barfussweg

Tactile 5km family-friendly hike between Gontenbad and Jakobsbad.

### Kronberg

Glide to the 1663m peak of Kronberg on the longest cable car in Appenzellerland.

### Rent a cow

Take care of a cow for the day beside the beautiful Seealpsee, and try your hand at milking (kuehe-mieten.ch).

### Seealpchäs

Between June and the end of August, this family-run dairy by Seealpsee offers the chance to bathe outdoors in a wooden bathtub filled with fresh 40°C whey.

### Appenzeller Schaukäserei

Learn all about the cheesemaking process at this show dairy and restaurant complex in Stein, 9km northwest of Appenzell.



CONNOR POHORN/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

**Säntisbahn cable car**

A unique form of direct democracy, this open-air parliament is a tradition that has taken place on the last Sunday in April since 1403. Next to the tourist information office, **Museum Appenzell** gives the inside scoop on the region's rural life and folk traditions. Among the displays are beautifully painted wooden furniture with pastoral scenes in the local Bauernmalerei style, lacework, costumes, weapons, religious art, flags and banners, cheesemaking equipment and more.

Next door, **Pfarrkirche St Mauritius** is easily identified by its whopping great late-Gothic bell tower, embellished with a mural of the cantonal patron saint, St Maurice. The interior offers a dizzying display of frescos, stained glass and gilding.

## Visit a local brewery

Cross the Sitter River to find **Brauquöll Appenzell**, the tasting room, shop and visitor centre for the Appenzeller Brewery. The Locher family have been brewing here since 1886.



## WHERE TO STAY IN APPENZELL

### Cafe-Hotel Appenzell

Generously sized rooms in pinks and blues with frilly lace on picture windows; wooden beds. €€

### Gasthaus Hof

Nineteenth-century guesthouse. Spacious rooms with timber-clad walls, restaurant, and bowling alley. €

### Hotel Hof Weissbad

Resort-style luxury 3km south of Appenzell. Spa, indoor and outdoor pools, lovely herb garden. €€€

Quöllfrisch is their most popular lager, but the staff behind the taps will happily let you sample the big range of beers, Sántis malt whisky and other products – such as vinegars and grain chips made for brewing process byproducts. You can also have a close up look at the bottling plant.

## Sántis

TIME FROM LAKE CONSTANCE: 2 HRS  

### A day in the mountains

The jagged peak of **Sántis** (2503m) is the highest in eastern Switzerland. It offers a marvellous panorama encompassing Lake Constance, Zürichsee, the Alps and the Vorarlberg Mountains. The Sántisbahn cable car runs to the summit from Schwägalp, which is accessed by bus from Urnäsch. Beside the base station is the chic **Sántis – das Hotel**.

At the summit **Berggasthaus Alter Sántis** is a charming, down-to-earth, family-run hut with basic dorms, private rooms and a terrace commanding fabulous views. The restaurant serves hearty dishes like *gerstensuppe* (barley soup) and bratwurst with onion sauce and rösti.

From Sántis it's a breathtaking 2½-to-three-hour hike along the ridge to the neighbouring peak of **Ebenalp** (1640m) – don't underestimate how wobbly your legs may be after negotiating this undulating trail. From here the Ebenalpbahn cable car goes down to Wasserauen on the Appenzeller Railway.

However, before leaving Ebenalp, walk for 10 minutes beneath the upper cable-car station to find the **Wildkirchli Caves**, showing traces of Stone Age habitation, and a mountainside chapel. A little further on is **Aescher**, one of the most spectacularly located mountain guesthouses in Switzerland, here since 1860. It's a stunning location for lunch.

From Aescher the descent to the emerald-coloured **Seealpsee** on foot takes around one hour.



### APPENZELL CARD

For visitors who book three nights or more in one of the region's hotels, mountain guest houses, holiday apartments or B&Bs will receive what is billed as Switzerland's best visitor card.

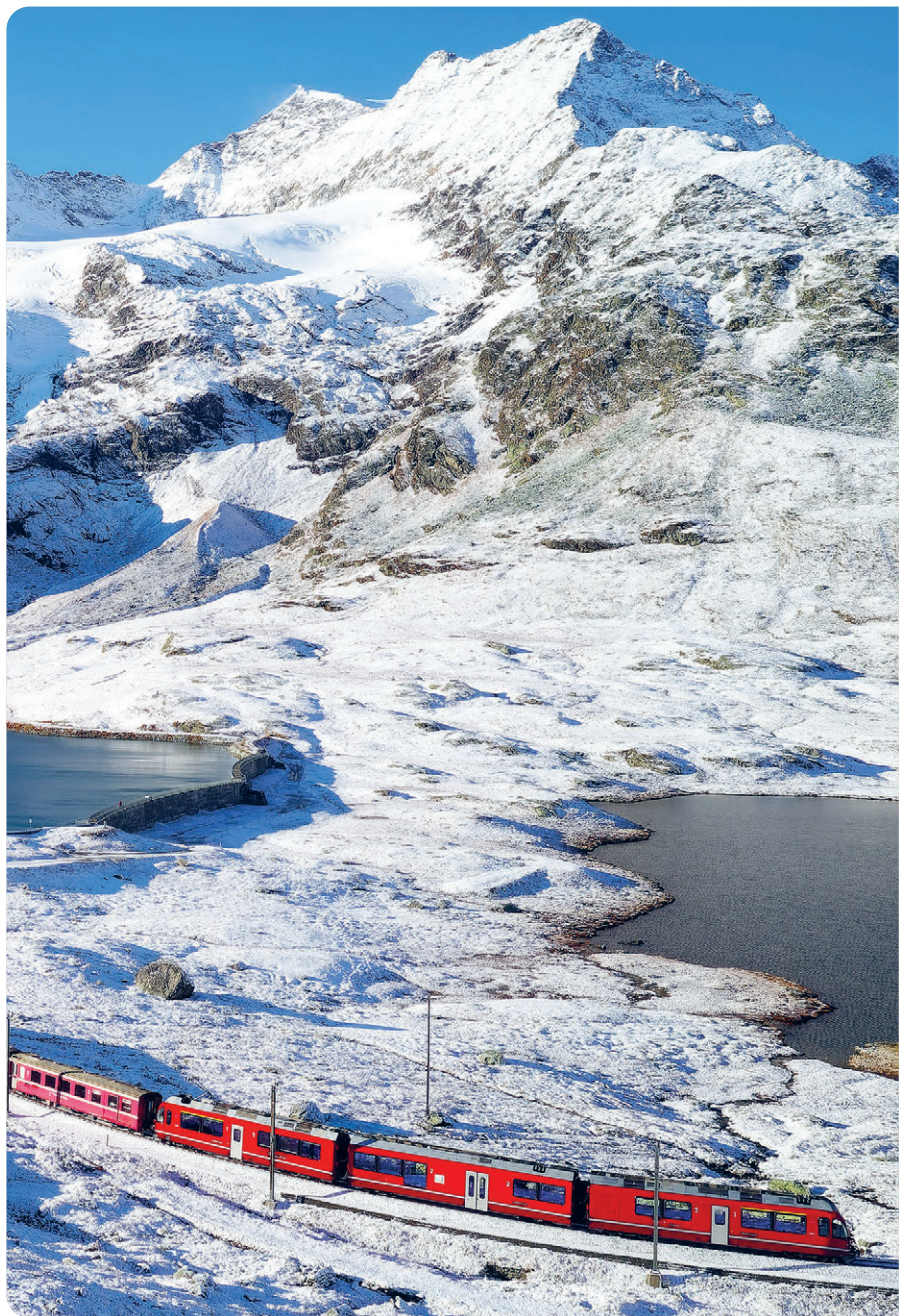
The Appenzell Card entitles you to free use of public transport and most cable cars as well as other discounts, such as free access to museums like Museum Appenzell and the Volkskunde Museum in Stein, 9km northwest of Appenzell.

In summer there's free bicycle rental, while in winter you get things like free sled, cross-country ski and ice-skate hire.

Scan the QR code to access the card, which is valid for a week – if you stay longer you get another card.







Above: Bernina Pass (p230), Lago Bianco; Right: Cycling, Corviglia (p240)





# Graubünden

## WILD ALPS AND ROMANTIC RAILS

With mountains rising sheer, rugged and glacier-topped, the Swiss Alps are at their wildest where they shoulder up to Austria and Italy in the country's southeast.

Standing out in a country with Switzerland's knockout looks is admittedly tough, but Graubünden seduces with raw natural beauty. It's wild out there. Follow helter-skelter roads up to wind-blasted passes, where clouds scud over pallid grey crags and glacier-topped peaks. Skip through flower-strewn pastures with Heidi-like glee. Or toss yourself into the foaming turquoise waters of the Rhine as you raft through a deeply forested gorge. Nature is writ large.

And my, what nature! Everyone raves about Davos' sensational downhill skiing and the ritzy alpine slopes of St Moritz, but they are just tip-of-the-iceberg stuff.

In truth, vast swathes of Graubünden remain under the radar and ripe for active

exploring – or just unplugging for a spell. Whack on your hiking boots or follow lonely roads spiralling ever higher into the Alps, where only the sound of footfall on rock, whistling marmots and your own muffled gasps of wonder break the silence.

To properly evade the crowds, tiptoe back to nature in the gargantuan mountains of the Swiss National Park and Parc Ela. And for a taste of how things were before the tourists rocked up, dive into the Lower Engadine's tiny, time-lost, Romansch-speaking mountain hamlets.

For the full-on drama of these cinematic landscapes, ride the rails. The views from the Glacier and Bernina Express are so beautifully dazzling, you'll rub your eyes to make sure they are for real.



AERIAL/ISTOCK.IT/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

### THE MAIN AREAS

#### CHUR

Historic heights in Switzerland's oldest city. **p226**

#### DAVOS & KLOSTERS

Alpine thrills in magic mountains. **p234**

#### ST MORITZ

Ritzy slopes, sparkling lakes, glacier skiing. **p238**

# Find Your Way

Graubünden takes up almost one-fifth of the country. While distances seem small on a map, reckon with a 90km (1½-hour) journey from Chur in the north to St Moritz, nudging the Italian border, in the south.

## Chur, p226

Straddling the Rhine and rimmed by the Alps, Graubünden's capital punches high historically and culturally. Beyond, ravishing nature parks, gorges and Heidi heaven beckon.

## Davos & Klosters, p234

Most hit Davos for colossal peaks and monster ski runs, but the romance of Thomas Mann's The Magic Mountain lingers. Klosters is its quieter, quieter sister.

## TRAIN

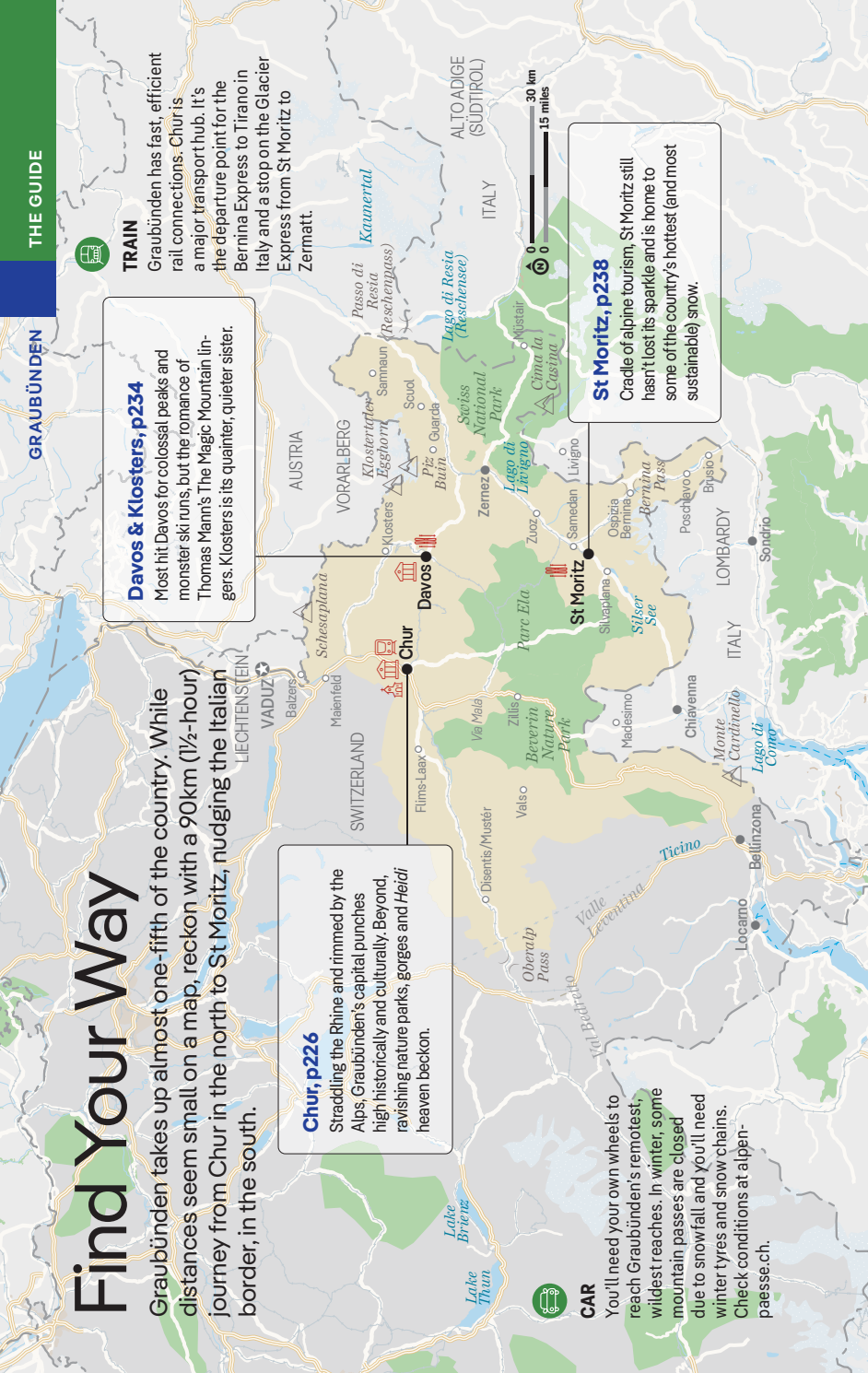
Graubünden has fast, efficient rail connections. Chur is a major transport hub. It's the departure point for the Bernina Express to Tirano in Italy and a stop on the Glacier Express from St Moritz to Zermatt.

## CAR

You'll need your own wheels to reach Graubünden's remotest, wildest reaches. In winter, some mountain passes are closed due to snowfall and you'll need winter tyres and snow chains. Check conditions at [alpen-paesse.ch](http://alpen-paesse.ch).

## St Moritz, p238

Cradle of alpine tourism, St Moritz still hasn't lost its sparkle and is home to some of the country's hottest (and most sustainable) snow.





Funicular, Parsenn slopes (p237)

# Plan Your Time

With big-shouldered mountains right on Chur's doorstep, going from city to slopes is a breeze. Train journeys are sensational, but you'll need your own wheels to reach the canton's remotest corners.

## A Long Weekend

Begin with a romp around Chur's alley-woven **Altstadt** (p226), ticking off **Martinskirche** with its dazzling stained-glass windows and the history-rammed **Rätisches Museum** (p226). For a taste of the Alps, hop on a train to **Bad Ragaz** (p230) for a bubble in the **Tamina Therme**, before skipping over to **Maienfeld** to taste Pinots and hike to **Heididorf** (p230).

## A Week or More

With a week, you can go more remote. Kick off in **Chur** (p226), then swing east to **Davos and Klosters** (p234) for a brush with magic mountains. From here, the turquoise Inn River unspools to the **Lower Engadine** (p237), necklaced with Romansch-speaking villages. Disappear in the nature-gone-wild **Swiss National Park** (p236), before diving south to **St Moritz** (p238) for alpine thrills and glacier encounters.

## SEASONAL HIGHLIGHTS

### SPRING

A calm time to visit, great for **walking, rafting** and **cycling** at lower elevations. Snow lingers on the highest peaks.

### SUMMER

Wildflowers carpet the slopes and huts are open – time for **hiking** the Alps. In August, party at Chur's **summer fest**.

### AUTUMN

With few crowds, crisp skies and **forests** touched gold, September and October are glorious months to visit.

### WINTER

Chur twinkles festively at its **Christkindlmarket**. Ski resorts open and pro **skiers** hit the slopes in St Moritz and Davos.

# Chur

NEOLITHIC ARTEFACTS | FESTIVALS | GIACOMETTI



## GETTING AROUND

On the south bank of the Rhine, Chur's compact, largely pedestrianised Altstadt is a pleasure to explore on foot.

Bring flat shoes for cobbles. If you're driving here, central car parks include those on Lindenquai in the Altstadt and on Bahnhofplatz (by the station). Local buses also depart from Bahnhofplatz. Stay overnight and you get a guest card, which gives you free use of local public transport, plus a 50% discount on the Brambrüesch cable car.

## TOP TIP

The Rhätische Bahn's two flagship routes, the Glacier Express and Bernina Express, chug out of Chur. The Half Fare, Swiss Card and Swiss Travel Pass give substantial discounts. Many regular trains ply the same route and are significantly cheaper. Visit [sbb.ch](http://sbb.ch) for details.

The pull of the Swiss Alps is so irresistible that many dash past Graubünden's capital and Switzerland's oldest city without so much as a passing nod. Oh, but don't. There's nowhere like Chur for a deep dive into the country's history – and history here goes back a long way. In 1998 archaeologists found treasure: Neolithic artefacts presumed to be 11,000 years old, making Chur as old as Jericho. The Romans adored its strategic location on the Rhine, right at the crossroads of many routes twisting over the Alps into Italy, and in the 5th century it became a bishopric.

Linger for a day or two and you'll find lots to like about this charismatic, high-spirited, festival-loving city, whether you're nosing around the lanes of the historic Altstadt (old town) or digging into Bündner specialities like *Capuns* (egg pasta and sausage wrapped in chard), *Maluns* (like rösti) and *Gerstensuppe* (barley soup) in the woody warmth of a medieval tavern.

## Rewinding Time in Chur

### Switzerland's historic heart

Strolling the cat's cradle of alleys in Chur's Altstadt is like time travel. With cobbles polished smooth by centuries of shoe leather, ornate frescoed facades, burbling fountains and hidden courtyards, it's a fast-track pass to the past. Much of what you see dates to the 15th century when the city was rebuilt after a devastating fire. The eye-catching **Obertor**, **Malteserturm** (once the munitions tower) and **Sennhofurm** are the medieval remains of the defensive walls.

On a historic romp through town, the unmissable stop is **Martinskirche** with its towering spire and giant clock face. The 8th-century church, rebuilt in late-Gothic style in 1491, is dramatically lit by a rainbow of Augusto Giacometti stained-glass windows. Nearby, the more austere 12th-century **Kathedrale St Maria Himmelfahrt** conceals a late-1400s Jakob Russ high altar containing a splendid triptych. Wander on to the **Rätisches Museum**, which spells out cantonal history in a baroque patrician residence with Bronze Age jewellery, Roman statuettes, weapons and agricultural tools.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- 1 Bernina Express
- 2 Bündner Kunstmuseum
- 3 Glacier Express
- 4 Martinskirche

**SIGHTS**

- 5 Kathedrale
- 6 Malteserturm
- 7 Obertor
- 8 Rätisches Museum
- 9 Sennhofsturm

**ACTIVITIES**

- 10 Alpenbikepark

**SLEEPING**

- 11 Hotel Freieck
- 12 Hotel Stern
- 13 Zunftthaus zur Rebleuten

**EATING**

- 14 Drei Bünde
- 15 Evviva Plankis
- 16 Veltliner Weinstuben zum Stern

**WHERE TO STAY IN CHUR****Zunftthaus zur Rebleuten**

Romantic pick housed in an imposing building in the old town, looking proudly back on 500 years of history. €€

**Hotel Stern**

Snooze in style at this delightful old-school hotel, with vaulted corridors and low ceilings. €€

**Hotel Freieck**

Lodged in a 16th-century building, this charmer has exposed stone, vaults, muted colours and clean lines. €€





## GIACOMETTI JEWELS

No artists have left their imprint on Graubünden more than the Giacometti family, hailing from Val Bregaglia, which nudges the Italian border in the canton's south.

Chur's beautiful domed Villa Planta at the **Bündner Kunstmuseum** displays some of their most outstanding work.

The gallery is a dazzling celebration of the artistic legacy of **Augusto Giacometti** (1877–1947), forefather of Swiss abstract art, whose vibrant paintings, murals and stained-glass windows swirl with life and colour.

Equally striking are works by his cousin, **Giovanni Giacometti** (1868–1933), master of colour in light, and his expressionist nephew, **Alberto Giacometti** (1901–66), whose epoch-defining sculptures, drawings and paintings sent Swiss art bounding into the 20th century.

## Peak Adventure at Brambrüesch

### City highs and alpine views

With mountains lifting the gaze skywards in Chur, you'll be eager to head up there pronto. Just a few minutes' walk from the Altstadt, a cable car sails up to 1595m Brambrüesch, with commanding views of the city, Rhine Valley and beyond. You get a proper hit of the Alps up here. In summer, hike the 12.4km, point-to-point trail to **Feldis**, past meadows, woods and glittering lake. Or notch up the thrills at the **Alpenbikpark**, tearing downhill on a scooter or 'summer snowboarding' with a dirt surfboard (a crazy riff on a skateboard). In winter, the summit lures adventure lovers with snowshoeing, sledging and winter hiking. The **AIS** sports school rents out equipment.

## Riding the Rails

### Epic train journeys

Nowhere on earth nails rail travel like Switzerland, where little red trains – polished and perfectly on time – breeze effortlessly from valley to snowy peak. Dwarfed by the colossal backdrop, they look like the toys of a particularly fastidious collector.

Some of Switzerland's most phenomenal railways harness Graubünden's rugged terrain and either begin or stop in Chur. The **Rhätische Bahn** is a staggering feat of early-20th-century engineering, jumping over viaducts, burrowing through tunnels and affording eyes-on-stalks views of forested slopes, glinting lakes and ragged mountains. Its two flagship routes are the Glacier Express and the Bernina Express.

Everyone raves about the **Glacier Express**, an eight-hour ride from Zermatt to St Moritz, which crosses over the Furka, Oberalp and Bernina passes, stopping off in Chur midway. You'll be glued to your window the whole way, cooing over views of forests, raging turquoise rivers and glacier-capped peaks from the comfort of your panoramic carriage. The journey is wondrous, but particularly unforgettable is the crazily photogenic, six-arched, curved limestone **Landwasser Viaduct** that vaults between Tiefencastel and Filisur, and the starkly wild, wind-beaten Oberalp Pass at 2033m.

One of Switzerland's classic trains, the **Bernina Express** connects the German- and Italian-speaking regions of Graubünden, climbing high into the glaciated realms of the Alps and traversing 55 tunnels and 196 bridges on its four-hour journey from Chur to Tirano. The Thusis–Tirano section is a Unesco World Heritage site.

Check out advance bookings, seat reservations and special deals on the Rhätische Bahn website (rhb.ch). If you want to save francs, regularly scheduled services on the same route can be just as enjoyable and significantly less expensive.

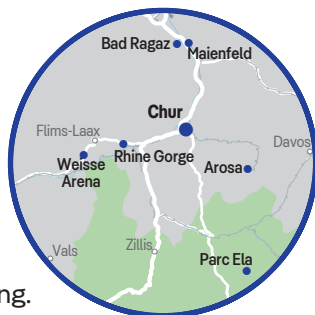


Landwasser Viaduct



# Beyond Chur

Chur is the drumroll for the mighty Alps of Graubünden, with outdoor pursuits from mountain hikes to rafting and off-piste skiing.



## Places

**Maienfeld** p230

**Bad Ragaz** p230

**Rhine Gorge** p231

**Weisse Arena** p232

**Arosa** p232

**Parc Ela** p234



## GETTING AROUND

From Chur, regional and S-Bahn trains speed to Maienfeld and Bad Ragaz in 15 minutes or less. Buses trundle west to Flims, Laax and Falera, while an astoundingly scenic hour-long train journey links Chur to Arosa.

Even remote Parc Ela can be reached by train, but your own wheels are recommended if you want to stray into the park's quieter reaches.

## TOP TIP

The Graubünden Pass is valid for two days in seven or five in 14, giving you unlimited use of all regional public transport.

A quick train hop north of Chur and you're immersed in the lovely, oft-overlooked Bündner Herrschaft, where grey peaks razor above vine-swaddled valleys and winegrowing hamlets. Here you can relish a Heidi meadow-skipping moment on trails threading into the heights, taste crisp local Rieslings in a *Torkel* (wine cellar), or go for a bubble in the spa waters of Bad Ragaz.

The Alps ramp up the drama as you push on south to Arosa, with gorgeous slopes to play on, snow or shine, and incredibly peaceful Parc Ela, where you can hang out with wildlife in Switzerland's biggest nature park. Go west for hiking and rafting in the Rhine Gorge or skiing and boarding in sustainably minded Flims, Laax and Falera.

## Maienfeld

TIME FROM CHUR: 10 MINS

### Heidi's Switzerland

If you've ever harboured a burning desire to skip Heidi-style down the slopes, head to Maienfeld. With cute timber chalets, bell-rattling cows and wildflower-freckled pastures, this village makes you want to yodel out loud. Apparently, these landscapes fired the imagination of Swiss author Johanna Spyri (1827–1901), who penned *Heidi* in 1881.

Sniffing big bucks, locals pounced on the idea and declared this bucolic village Heidi's own. The 2.4km, 1½-hour **Heidiweg** loop trail trots through valleys, forests, mountain meadows and vineyards to **Heididorf** (Heidi Village), where you'll find the rustic **Heidihaus** (Heidi House) where, of course, she never lived because she never existed. The scenery is glorious, however. And the shop sells Heidi-everything – dirndls, dolls, chocolate, wine, you name it.

## Bad Ragaz

TIME FROM CHUR: 15 MINS

### Thermal spas and mountain hikes

Shouldering up to rugged peaks and straddling the Rhine, graceful Bad Ragaz has drawn spa-goers since 1242 when Benedictine monks discovered its hot springs, said to boost the immune system and improve circulation. The miracle-working, 36.5°C thermal waters still bubble to the surface in the Tamina Gorge. Take a dip in the **Tamina Therme**, with thermal



## THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE

Bad Ragaz is but a cork pop away from **Bündner Herrschaft**. The wine country unravelling east of the Rhine River, **Fünf Dörfer** (Five Villages) – Fläsch, Maienfeld, Jenins, Malans and Zizers – produces cracking Pinot noir, Riesling and Sylvaner wines.

After swanning around the vines, pop into **Von Salis** wine bar in Maienfeld for tastings of plummy reds and peachy sparkling whites, or track down a wine cellar like **Alter Torken** in Jenins, which pairs creative regional cuisine with local wines. Go for lunch on the vine-rimmed terrace or a 30-minute, four-wine tasting.

Each September, Bündner Herrschaft celebrates the **Weinfest**, an autumnal wine festival that brings much drinking, eating and merrymaking to the normally quiet streets.



Grand Resort Bad Ragaz

pools for hot-cold dunking, or have a regal swim under marble columns in the palatial 19th-century **Helena Baths** at Grand Resort Bad Ragaz.

The region's fresh air and altitude are health-enhancing, too. One of the top day walks, the **Fünf Seen Wanderung** begins at Pizolhütte (2227m). The 11.5km, five-hour walk takes in a crest of limestone peaks, glaciers and five jewel-coloured lakes. The views of the Swiss and Austrian Alps really are quite something.

## Rhine Gorge

TIME FROM CHUR: 20 MINS 

### Gorge hikes and river rafting

On a particularly gorgeous bend in the Vorderrhein River, the glacier-gouged, 400m-deep Rhine Gorge is often hailed the 'Swiss Grand Canyon'. While the analogy is pretty tenuous, the wooded ravine has its own dramatic beauty, formed by the thundering Flimser landslide 10,000 years ago. Chuck on hiking boots to explore it on a 3½-hour trek. Beginning in **Trin**, 7km east of Flims, the path shadows the swiftly flowing, aquamarine river and unfurls past limestone cliffs that have been eroded into a forest of pinnacles and columns.



## WHERE TO STAY IN BÜNDNER HERRSCHAFT

### Schlaf-Fass

If you overindulged, sleep it off in one of two stylishly converted wine barrels in Jenins and Maienfeld. €€

### Hotel Schloss Ragaz

This small, turreted castle has quiet quarters with manicured gardens and a spa offering back-to-nature treatments. €€

### Grand Resort Bad Ragaz

With palatial thermal baths, this five-star stunner combines 19th-century flair with contemporary elegance. €€€





## GRAUBÜNDEN'S WILD WEST

Rising like a vision above Disentis in Graubünden's western pocket, Benedictine monastery **Kloster Disentis** wows with its lavishly stuccoed baroque church.

A monastery has stood here since the 8th century and its museum spells out the past. A dramatic drive further west, the hairpin-bend-riddled, 32km-long **Oberalp Pass** (2044m) drops over to Andermatt (1447m) in Central Switzerland.

The Alps never leave your rear-view mirror as the road corkscrews giddily up to **Lai da Tuma** (Tomasee), a glimmering mountain lake that's the official source of the Rhine; a high-level, 8.5km circular route leads here through a nature reserve.

The Oberalp Pass is closed to cars in winter (usually until mid-May), but the Glacier Express stops here year-round.

Prefer to see it from the water? The turbulent 17km stretch of the Vorderrhein between Ilanz and Reichenau is white-water-rafting heaven. **Swissraft** organises half- and full-day rafting trips, as well as canoeing and hydrospeeding.

## Weisse Arena

TIME FROM CHUR: 35 MINS 

### Clean-conscious skiing

They say that if the snow isn't falling elsewhere, you'll find some in **Flims, Laax** and **Falera**, a high-altitude trio forming the Weisse Arena (White Arena). Here you can pound some incredible powder, with skiing and boarding on 224km of slopes at giddy heights between 2000m and 3000m, plus fantastic off-piste touring and freeriding. And you can do so with a clean conscience: this is one of the country's greenest resorts, with solar-powered lifts, e-shuttles, eco-friendly buildings and artificial snow that is CO<sub>2</sub>-neutral.

Host of the **Laax Open** in January, Laax is heaven for boarders seeking big air, with some of Switzerland's best riding terrain, the world's largest half-pipe, five snow parks and an Olympic-sized kicker to play on. For the hottest post-piste parties, check into the **Riders Hotel**.

## Arosa

TIME FROM CHUR: 1HR 

### Sensational slopes

The beauty of Arosa is all in the approach: board the **Rhaetian Railway** in Chur for riveting views as the train curls up into steeply forested mountains, burrows through 19 tunnels and leaps across 41 dizzying bridges. The **Langwieser Viaduct** is the biggest attention-grabber, with the turquoise Plessur River roaring below.

Driving is no less spectacular: the road twists up from Chur in 365 hairpin bends. Gaining more than 1000m in elevation, the journey is an hour of wows. And all of this is but the drumroll for one of Switzerland's loveliest (and highest) alpine resorts, hemmed in by grey, moraine-streaked peaks, 1775m above sea level.

Come winter, there's powder to play on in Arosa and over-the-mountain Lenzerheide, with slopes rising up to Weisshorn (2653m). But it's in old-school romance that Arosa really shines. Hibernates in a timber chalet; take a horse-drawn sleigh through snowy woods; slip past frozen falls on cross-country trails at **Maran, La Isla** and **Ochsenalp**; or test your nerve and boost your dopamine levels ice bathing at the **Eisbadi**. On a crisp winter's night, haul a sled up to **Prätschli** to



## WHERE TO STAY & EAT IN FLIMS, LAAX & FALERA

### Riders Hotel

Sleep? Dream on. This boutique hotel in Laax draws party-goers to its strikingly lit, bare concrete spaces. €€

### Fidazerhof

Chalet with expansive alpine views, sunny rooms, a spa offering Ayurveda treatments, and a slow-food restaurant. €€

### Posta Veglia

This born-again 19th-century post office has cottage-style, timber-clad rooms, and Bündner classics on the menu. €€



bump down through twinkling forests on a floodlit toboggan run, stopping ruddy-cheeked for fondue and *Glühwein* in the woody warmth of **Burestübli**.

These Alps are just as exhilarating in summer. Hike over the mountain to serene lakeside **Lenzerheide** in the shadow of Parpaner Rothorn, or rent wheels for some of Switzerland's finest mountain biking, including the exhilarating, 113-bend **Hörnli Flowtrail**.

## Parc Ela

TIME FROM CHUR: 1HR 

### Slow-touring forgotten heights

If you want to unplug for a spell, Parc Ela hits the right escapist buttons. Never heard of it? That's because folk whisper quietly about Switzerland's biggest nature park. Spanning nearly 600 sq km, the park is a treasured glimpse of the Alps before the dawn of tourism. Nature runs riot here, with rocky, snow-frosted peaks whooshing above cottongrass-stippled moors, and turquoise lakes glimmering in flowery pastures.

Base yourself in one of the pin-drop-peaceful villages rimming the park, such as **Alvaschein**, **Tiefencastel** or **Filisur**, where you'll be blown away by the 65m-high curves of the gravity-defying **Landwasser Viaduct**, the showstopper of the Unesco-listed Albula line. Fairest of the lot, however, is **Bergün**, with its cobbled alleys, Romanesque church and historic houses embellished with sgraffito, frescos and oriel windows. Punching high above it, the dagger-shaped peak of Piz Ela (3339m) looks loveliest in the rosy glow of sundown.

Heading further south, you reach **Savognin**, famous for its sheep-shearing festival in October. It's a charismatic base for striking out to nearby **Alp Flix**, a spectacularly biodiverse wonderland of high moors, stone pine forests, flower meadows, peaks and jewel-like lakes. The plateau is best explored on the 5.5km circular trail (keep an eye out for resident marmots, chamois, ibex and bearded vultures).

You can swoon over the views on mood-lifting road trips over alpine passes (Albula, Julier and Septimer), but to throw yourself into the park's wilds, swap the wheel for muddy boots. Beginning in Preda above Bergün and ending in Savognin, the 22km, three-pass, nine-hour **Trans Parc Ela** reveals the park from its most flattering angles. Download the app from [parc-ela.ch](http://parc-ela.ch) for trail details.



## BEST SPA HOTELS IN AROSA

### Tschuggen

#### Grand Hotel

Mountain sails guide the way to this architecturally striking hotel, with sumptuous Carlo Rampazzi interiors and a modernist spa designed by Mario Botta. €€€

### Arosa Kulm Hotel

On the fringes of Arosa, this five-star beauty has an intimate spa with picture windows framing the sensational mountain backdrop. €€€

### Waldhotel

This insanely romantic forest hideaway was the first exile of Nobel Prize-winning German novelist Thomas Mann. The former sanatorium is now a luxe spa hotel. €€€



## WHERE TO EAT IN AROSA & LENZERHEIDE

### Sennerei Maran

Stock up on award-winning alpine cheese at this dairy for a picnic on the shores of mirror-like Schwellisee. €

### Burestübli

Forest-fringed chalet with magical over-treetop views; in winter, huddle over fondue and butter-soft steaks. €€

### La Brezza

Chef Marco Campanella seizes menu inspiration from the mountains at this two-Michelin-starred stunner. €€€

# Davos & Klosters

WINTER SPORTS | SOARING VIEWS | HIKING



## ✓ TOP TIP

Stay overnight in Davos or Klosters and you get a Premium Card, providing free use of public transport, discounted rates on mountain railways and reductions on outdoor and cultural activities, from mountain-biking technique workshops to paragliding taster days, museum tours and brewery visits. Download the digital version on your smartphone.

Bookended by the lofty peaks of Jakobshorn and Weissfluh in the Albula and Plessur Alps, Davos hits the skiing sweet spot, with monster runs and raucous après-ski parties. Its quieter, cuter sister, Klosters, is the Swiss dream, whether you're hiking in summer pastures or trotting past log chalets in a horse-drawn sleigh in winter.

Both have captured the world's attention big-time. The first visitors flocked to Davos in 1865, proclaiming its high-altitude climate a miracle cure for tuberculosis. Great minds descended upon the resort in the 1970s for the first World Economic Forum, which it has hosted ever since. Davos inspired Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (of Sherlock Holmes fame) to don skis and Thomas Mann to pen *The Magic Mountain*. Posh little Klosters also has star appeal, with gorgeous looks and paparazzi-free slopes that have attracted slaloming celebrities and royals from King Charles III to Bono, Johnny Depp and Julia Roberts.

## Magic Mountains in Davos

### High trails and fast runs

Peering up to the Silvretta Alps razoring above Davos, you can see why Thomas Mann found romance in these heights. When Mann first came to Davos in 1912 to visit his wife, Katia, who was recovering from tuberculosis in a sanatorium, he revelled in its pure air and soaring views. He later used them as inspiration for his seminal novel, *The Magic Mountain* (1924). Now you can walk in his footsteps on the 2.8km, one-hour



## WHERE TO STAY IN DAVOS & KLOSTERS

### Waldhotel Davos

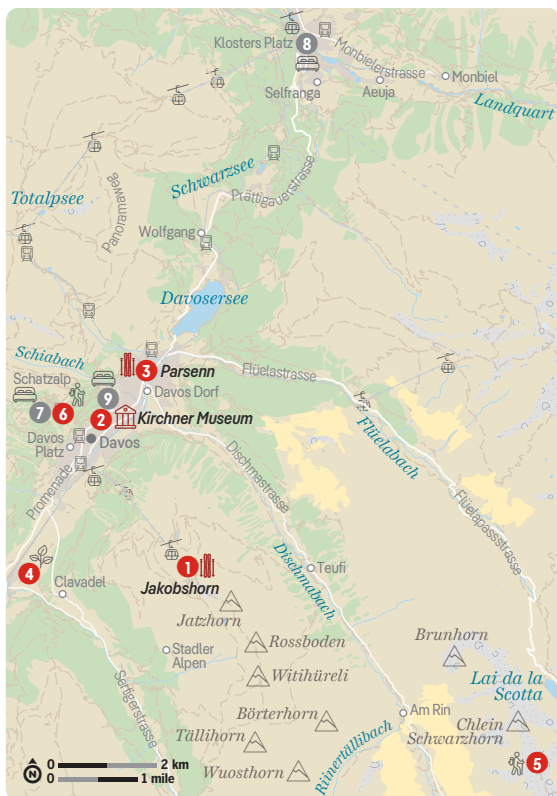
The sanatorium from Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* has been revamped as this chic spa escape. €€

### Chesa Grischuna

Dreamy Swiss chalet in Klosters has rooms with antiques and carved ceilings, and a lantern-lit restaurant. €€

### Berghotel Schatzalp

Reached by its own funicular and with hiking and sledding on its doorstep, this art nouveau hotel sits above Davos. €€€

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- 1 Jakobshorn
- 2 Kirchner Museum
- 3 Parsenn

**SIGHTS**

- 4 Waldfriedhof

**ACTIVITIES, COURSES & TOURS**

- 5 Flüela Schwarzhorn
- 6 Schatzalp

**SLEEPING**

- 7 Berghotel Schatzalp
- 8 Chesa Grischuna
- 9 Waldhotel Davos

**A SCENIC DRIVE OVER FLÜELA PASS**

Fourteen kilometres southeast of Davos, the road over the magnificent **Flüela Pass** (2384m) links Davos (1560m) with Susch (1438m) in the Lower Engadine (p239). The pass is marked by a beautiful alpine lake, a hospice and small restaurant. It generally opens in June and presents gorgeous mountain views.

Until 1999, efforts were made to keep the pass open in winter, but since the completion of the 19km-long Vereina Tunnel and its car-shuttle trains, Flüela has been closing during winter months.

**Thomas Mann Trail**, which starts at the Waldhotel and skips through woods and wildflower-freckled meadows to **Schatzalp** (1861m) and its botanical gardens.

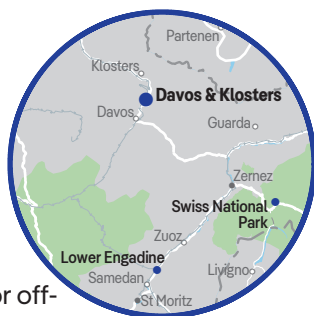
When the snow falls, Davos and Klosters are the real winter-wonderland deal. There are 320km of slopes to pound, with much action revolving around all-level **Parsenn** (for a challenge, ski the black run from Weissfluhjoch to Wolfgang) and **Jakobshorn**, where snowboarders and freestylers rave about the half-pipe, terrain park and off-piste powder.

For an alternative downhill rush, grab your sled. Davos is the cradle of Swiss tobogganing – sturdy wooden sleds have been handcrafted here since the first sled race from Davos to Klosters in 1883. Hire one at Schatzalp funicular station, ride to the top and dash down through snow-frosted woods to Davos Platz. Go by night for a starlight swish.

In summer, lake windsurfing, mountain biking and miles of hiking trails boost moods and raise pulses. Most enchanting of all is the 7.8km hike up to the knife-edge peak of **Flüela Schwarzhorn**, an ear-popping 3146m above sea level. Go at sunrise to see the peaks bathed in gold. The views are riveting, reaching all the way to Grossglockner and Mont Blanc when it's clear.



# Beyond Davos & Klosters



Davos and Klosters are the springboard for off-the-radar road trips and the resplendent Swiss National Park close by.

## Places

**Swiss National Park** p236

**Lower Engadine** p237



## GETTING AROUND

If you're up for a romantic road trip, a car is certainly handy for exploring the remote hamlets of the Lower Engadine (Lavin is a 40-minute spin east of Davos).

That said, the area is entirely doable by train, too, with an excellent service linking all the villages.

You can also reach the Swiss National Park by train (it's an hour's journey from Davos to Zerne).

You're bombarded with natural beauty as you push east of Davos, with flower-cloaked alpine meadows, snow-iced crags and silvery mountain streams forcing you to grind to a halt in wonder. Far from the ski-mad crowds, the silence-blanketed Lower Engadine has landscapes inspiring towards the poetic and profound. Hugging the banks of the Inn River, its traditional, pretty hamlets are filled with the lilt of Romansch.

You could spend weeks roaming here, but if you do just one thing, visit the Swiss National Park, a spectacle of alpine vistas, cloud-grazing trails and wildlife barely touched by humans. The gateway, Zerne, is linked to Davos via the steep, winding Flüela Pass (2383m), which snakes past a pair of sapphire-blue lakes.

## Swiss National Park

TIME FROM DAVOS & KLOSTERS: 40 MINS 

### Go hiking where nature rules

For a taste of the Alps before the tourists rocked up, the Swiss National Park in Graubünden's Lower Engadine valley is unbeatable. Here – where high, rugged, snowcapped mountains muscle their way into Italy – you'll find the backcountry dream in a 172-sq-km wilderness unscathed by development. Visually, it's a feast: streams rush through larch and pine forests, lakes sparkle on high moors, wildflowers carpet slopes and glaciers frost fin-shaped peaks. True to its founding principles in 1914, nature is left totally to its own devices: no trees are felled, no meadows are cut and no animals hunted.

The only way to really see the park is to chuck on hiking boots and head for its trail-laced heart. All on the train line, the quaint Engadine villages of **Lavin**, **Scuol**, **Zerne** and **S-chanf** are great jumping-off points.

If you have time for just one walk, make it the **Lakes of Macun**. Starting in Zerne, this corker of a 21km day hike treks up to a 2600m-high alpine plateau bejewelled with 23 lakes that shimmer turquoise, topaz and sapphire. If you prefer, hook onto a guided walk with a park ranger (bookable through the visitors centre in Zerne). With an expert on hand, you up your chances of spotting wildlife – ibex, cham-

## TOP TIP

Housed in Schloss Planta-Wildenberg, the Swiss National Park visitors centre in Zerne is a terrific primer on the park's wildlife and geology, with an interactive exhibition, maps, guides and binoculars for hire.

ois, golden eagles and bearded vultures – and elusive alpine flowers like edelweiss.

No camping is allowed but **Chamanna Cluozza**, a rustic hut, is reached on a moderately challenging 3½-hour uphill hike from Zernez. Bring your own sleeping bag liner.

## Lower Engadine TIME FROM DAVOS & KLOSTERS: 40 MINS

### Romance and Romansch road trip

Unravelling along the banks of the frothing Inn River and with the chiselled grey peaks of the Silvretta and Rhaetian Alps on the horizon, the Lower Engadine is so darned beautiful you'll pinch yourself to make sure it's real. But where are the crowds? In St Moritz, of course, leaving this remote, rugged corner of Graubünden for the smart few willing to go the extra mile.

On little-trafficked roads, you can tick off some of Switzerland's prettiest hamlets and villages. High on plateaus and plonked in cow-nibbled pastures, they move to a delightfully mellow beat. Lanes twist past Hobbit-like stone houses with massive wooden doors, sgraffito etchings and shutters that let the light spill in. Fountains burble on cobbled piazzas. This is one of the last remaining strongholds of Romansch, the sing-song Latin-rooted language spoken locally.

Start in lovely Italianate **Lavin**, which has pastel-painted, palazzo-like houses and a late-15th-century church with beautifully preserved frescos. Edging east, you reach **Guarda** in the shadow of the dagger of Piz Buin (3312m). The dinky hamlet is pure bedtime-story stuff, especially during **Chalandamarz** on 1 March, when children ring in spring with the clamour of giant cowbells. Nearby, 1000-year-old **Schloss Tarasp** grabs your attention with its turreted fairy-tale looks. Drive on east to **Scuol**, tucked into the forested folds of the mountains, which you can survey while bathing in its mineral-rich thermal waters.

For a break from the wheel or saddle, hook onto a leg of the high-altitude, 160km **Via Engiadina** trail, which skips over forests, peaks and pastures from Maloja to Vinadi.



## HOW TO EXPERIENCE THE SWISS NATIONAL PARK

**Hans Lozza**, Swiss National Park communications director, gives an inside take on the park.

### Val Trupchun

A wildlife hotspot, with chances to see deer, chamois, ibex, marmots and, with luck, bearded vultures or golden eagles. Overnight at Chamanna Cluozza and climb the saddle in the early morning to see chamois grazing.

### Munt la Schera

At 2586m, it offers fantastic park views. The contrast between the dry, steppe-like south and the mountainous, forested north couldn't be greater. Up here, you can see ptarmigans, snow hares and chamois.

### Autumn

During the late September red-deer rut, the roaring of stags resounds through the forest. October is also beautiful, with crisp light and larch forests in their mantle of gold.



## WHERE TO STAY IN THE LOWER ENGADINE

### Chamanna Cluozza

For a wild night at one with the elements, book a bed at this 1882m-high, off-grid dream of a log cabin. €

### Il Fuorn

Guesthouse in Swiss National Park with comfy rooms with pine trappings; fresh trout and game on the menu. €€

### Hotel Engiadina

Rooms are snugly clad in pine at this glorious 17th-century Engadine house in Scuol, full of warmth and character. €€



# St Moritz

YOGA PISTE | HEIDI'S HOME | WINTER SPORTS



## GETTING AROUND

Most folk arrive in St Moritz by train (it's the terminus of the Glacier Express route), but there are plenty of central car parks if you are driving. St Moritz-Bad is around 1.5km (a 15-minute stroll) south of the main town, St Moritz-Dorf, along Via dal Bagn. Local buses and postal buses shuttle between St Moritz-Bad and St Moritz-Dorf if you prefer not to walk.

Back in 1864, Johannes Badrutt – legendary Swiss hotelier and Kulm Hotel St Moritz founder – wagered with English summer guests that if they returned in winter, they would be amazed by the sunshine, invigorating mountain air and snow. If not, he would refund their expenses. His bet paid off and St Moritz became the world's first winter-sports resort.

More than 150 years down the line, St Moritz hasn't lost its touch. Sitting astride a sparkling aquamarine lake, rimmed by emerald forests and peering up to the snow-sprinkled heights of the Albula and Bernina Alps, the town looks a million dollars. The resort is beloved of piste-bashing celebrities and royals, but St Moritz isn't all show. The real riches lie deeper in the mountains.

The skis have progressed from the rudimentary wooden planks the Brits wore when they first rocked up, but the eccentricity has lingered in wacky sports from cricket to polo and horse riding on ice.

## Carving the Slopes at Corviglia

### Skiing and sun salutations

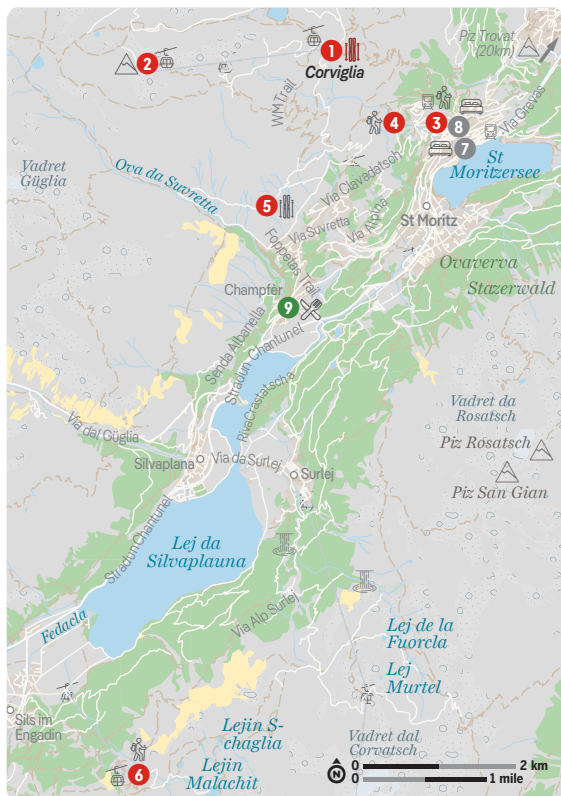
Ask St Moritz locals to divulge their favourite mountain and Corviglia is bound to make the grade. On the eastern flank of Piz Nair (3056m), the ski area's 155km of immaculately groomed slopes swing from sunny, cruisy red runs to knee-trembling black runs. No matter your level, you can ski with a clean conscience here: cannons use reclaimed water, making this some of Switzerland's most sustainable snow.

Off-piste lovers are in their element with plenty of downy powder to play on, while free-skiers and boarders gravitate towards the 400m giant slalom course and snow park. Most original of all is **Paradiso**, the world's first yoga piste, with four dedicated stops where you can practise your poses, with or without an instructor.

If you want pristine snow, catch the 7.45am Chantarella funicular or Marguns gondola for first dibs while everyone else is still at breakfast.

## TOP TIP

Mountain transport can cost a small fortune, but not in St Moritz. If you stay for more than two nights at one of 100 affiliated hotels, you get to ride the cable cars, funiculars and chairlifts for free during the summer season (May to October).

**HIGHLIGHTS****1** Corviglia**SIGHTS****2** Piz Nair**ACTIVITIES****3** Green Energy Tour**4** Heidi's Flower Trail**5** Paradiso**6** Wasserweg**SLEEPING****7** Badrutt's Palace**8** Hotel Eden**EATING****9** Ecco St Moritz**STAY & EAT  
IN ST MORITZ****Hotel Eden**

In the heart of town, this bijou family-run pick has an attractive central atrium, big mountain views and an antique-strewn lounge where a fire crackles in winter. €€

**Badrutt's Palace**

With a glam position on the lake, this poshly turreted pile is five-star all the way, with palatial suites, fine dining and a spa. €€€

**Ecco St Moritz**

The pinnacle of St Moritz' dining scene, two-Michelin-starred Ecco is where chef Rolf Fliegauf gives flight to culinary fantasy when the flakes fall in winter. €€€

## On the Trail in St Moritz

### Hiking highs

When the snow melts, St Moritz is hiking heaven. At Corvatsch, hook onto the **Wasserweg**, a family-friendly, 2½-hour trail knitting together six jewel-like mountain lakes. Alternatively, head up to Chantarella and **Heidi's Flower Trail**, a gentle 1km stroll that meanders through Swiss stone pine forests and meadows stippled with rare alpine blooms to the log chalet that appeared in the 1978 TV series *Heidi*.

For a glimpse of a greener future, walk the 2½-hour **Green Energy Tour**. Showcasing renewable energy in natural settings, it begins at Piz Nair and twists down to Norman Foster's eco-sound, wood-tiled Chesa Futura (House of the Future).

If you need more of a challenge, then clip onto the knuckle-whitening, above-the-glacier *via ferrata* on **Piz Trovat** at Diavolezza. Or for a memorable trail run, with a heart-pumping 1200m of ascent, dash up to **Piz Nair** on the Vertical Run in the gold-pink blaze of sunrise.



# Beyond St Moritz

With dark, craggy peaks punching way above the 3000m mark in every direction, St Moritz has a stirring beautiful backyard.



## Places

**Celerina** p240

**Lake Silvaplana** p240

**Diavolezza** p241



## GETTING AROUND

Postal buses run frequently in high season from St Moritz to Lake Silvaplana and Sils-Maria, and there are efficient rail connections to Celerina and Diavolezza, where the cable car departs.

While the Bernina Pass is perfectly doable by train, you might prefer to drive. The pass is open year-round, but you'll need snow tyres, chains and a lot of nerve to tackle it in the snowy depths of winter.

## TOP TIP

May to June and September to October, when crowds fizzle out and room rates plummet, are great months for hiking, cycling and slow touring the backcountry.

The Glacier Express grinds to a halt in St Moritz, but continue on foot, by car or bike and you'll reach cloud-shredding mountain passes like the Bernina, Julier and Maloja, where the wow never stops. The beauty here is off the charts and all the action is outdoors: from bobsledding in Celerina to wingfoiling across Lake Silvaplana and glacier hiking at Diavolezza, with the dark, snow-frosted fangs of Piz Bernina and Piz Palü on the horizon.

If it's silence you crave, sneak off to pretty alpine villages like Sils-Maria, where Nietzsche once summered; Vals, with its cutting-edge spa designed by Swiss architect Peter Zumthor; and gorgeous hamlets like Soglio and Stampa, with their cobbled alleys, palazzi and slender church spires.

## Celerina

TIME FROM ST MORITZ: 3 MINS 

### Bobsledding and tobogganing

For a buzz, nothing beats careering headfirst across glass-smooth ice at speeds of up to 135km/h. And in Celerina, you can. On the sunny side of St Moritz, the village is home to the **Olympic Bobrun**. Handcrafted from natural ice afresh each year, the 1722m-long ice channel is the world's oldest bobsleigh run, dating from 1904. If you're up for a thrill, book a hair-raising 75-second guest ride. Don't worry, you'll be safely squished between a pilot and a brakeman.

More speed? Take your daredevil self over to the **Cresta Run**, a heart-stopping, headfirst, human torpedo of a tobogganing course, created by British visitors in 1885. This terrifying 1km icy hurtle is different from the bobsleigh run. Here, you go solo in a lying position, skimming and skidding at cheek-wobbling speeds of up to 140km/h, and using rakes on special boots to brake and steer.

## Lake Silvaplana

TIME FROM ST MORITZ: 12 MINS 

### Catching lake breezes

Every day at 11am sharp, the Maloja wind rips down from the mountains, ruffling the turquoise, glacially cold waters of Lake Silvaplana. When it blows in a south or southwesterly direction, windsurfers and kitesurfers grab their boards. Host

of the June **Engadinwind** windsurfing and **Engadinwing** wingfoiling world championships, this lake is all about the breeze. Silvaplana's windsurfing and kitesurfing schools rent out gear and offer courses, from beginner sessions to private one-to-one classes for pros.

Stand-up paddleboarders are also in their element, drifting across the lake in the looking-glass calm of morning. And if there isn't much wind as the day progresses, try your hand at the hot sport of the moment: wingfoiling, which uses a hydrofoil as well as the board for added oomph. Winter is special here, too, with snow-kiting across the frozen lake and views of the pearly peaks of the Bernina Alps.

## Diavolezza

TIME FROM ST MORITZ: 1HR 

### Grandstand views and glaciers

Things take a serious turn for the wilder at Diavolezza, just south of St Moritz, where a cable car wings you up to the 2973m summit. Here you'll swoon over stupendous views of the eternal ice and **Piz Bernina** (4049m). The highest peak in the Eastern Alps, it flicks up like a great, dark, glacier-encrusted dagger above a sea of mountains.

For up-close encounters with the ice in summer, kip in a bunk at **Berghaus Diavolezza** with the karabiner-clattering mountaineers and rise with first light for a full-day guided glacier hike across the deeply crevassed Pers and Morteratsch glaciers with **Bergsteigerschule Pontresina**.

In winter, Diavolezza delivers deep powder thrills, with a mix of red and black ski runs (many with jaw-dropping descents), ski touring and freeriding. The big one is Switzerland's longest glacier run, a 10km ride over marked but unroomed terrain that takes you over the Pers and Morteratsch glaciers. Get a guide to ski tour 3900m-high **Palü** or the **Bernina Haute Route** (both best tackled in early spring). If you aren't quite ready yet, you can practise ski touring on the safe, signposted **Diavolezza Challenge** from valley to mountain station, involving a climb of 890m.

Time your visit right for a pinch of magic at **Glüna Plaina**, when you can ski by the shimmering light of the full moon on a silent winter night.



### NIETZSCHE'S MOUNTAIN ESCAPE

Clasped between Lake Sils and Lake Silvaplana, **Sils-Maria** is a peaceful enclave of slate-roofed chalets set against a dramatic backdrop of glacier-capped mountains.

The rumble of existential philosophy once reverberated around this serene lakeside village, courtesy of Friedrich Nietzsche who summered here from 1881 to 1888, writing texts about the travails of modern man, including *Thus Spake Zarathustra*.

Housed in the geranium-bedecked chalet where he sojourned, the **Nietzsche-Haus** showcases photos, memorabilia and letters that trace the philosopher's life, from childhood to mental breakdown. Rooms have been preserved in their original state. The house offers modest double rooms for rent; the minimum stay is three nights and you'll need to book ahead.



## WHERE TO STAY BEYOND ST MORITZ

### Hotel Fex

This 19th-century mountain retreat can be reached on foot or by horse-drawn carriage from Sils-Maria. €€

### Hotelio Petit Chalet

The welcome is heartfelt at this slopeside chalet in Celerina, with chic and modern alpine interiors. €€

### Conrad's Mountain Lodge

A nicely chilled vibe and glorious mountain views await at this rustic-cool lodge near Lake Silvaplana. €€



# Liechtenstein

## FAIRY TALES AND ALPINE TRAILS

Liechtenstein crushes the best of the Alps into one dinky land, with crag-top castles, knife-edge peaks, bike routes shadowing the Rhine and a nationwide hiking trail.

If you were to ask a child to draw a country, Liechtenstein would likely be it. This microscopic alpine nation (the world's sixth smallest with a population knocking 39,000) is ripe for a bedtime story, with pointy mountains, manicured meadows where doe-eyed cows swing bells, and a turreted medieval castle plonked on a hill above its capital, Vaduz, where a prince and princess live.

Squished between Switzerland to the west and Austria to the east, with the Rhine being the natural divide, this doubly landlocked country is influenced by its neighbours but has its own very distinct personality, which becomes apparent whether exploring Vaduz' museums or the far-away mountains of Malbun.



Take a good look around you, life here is prosperous and polished: neat-as-a-pin houses and gardens give way to beautifully kept landscapes that are a breeze to access on foot and by bike, and public transport runs like clockwork. If the towns and villages seem toy-town pretty, though, the backdrop is anything but.

There are wild peaks to hike, such as the jagged Drei Schwestern (Three Sisters) on the Fürstentstein trail. There's the Drei-Länder cycling tour dipping into three countries. There are winter-wonderland villages buried deep in the mountains, and hamlets where the medieval Walser culture still thrives. And there's the five-day Liechtenstein Trail, wrapping it all up into one long-weekend bundle.

POOHMAREL/SHUTTERSTOCK ©





PASCAL VOSJCK/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

# Find Your Way

Only 25km long by 12km wide, Liechtenstein has no international airport and access from Switzerland or Austria is by local bus. The west of the country is in the Rhine Valley and relatively flat; the east is mountainous.



## BUS

There are frequent bus connections both within Liechtenstein and from Buchs or Sargans in Switzerland, or Feldkirch in Austria. Vaduz is the major hub. Visit the website [liemobil.li](http://liemobil.li) for timetables, passes and tickets.



## CAR

Vaduz is only 1km from the Swiss border. It's quick to drive the length of Liechtenstein on the high-speed autobahn, but widthwise it takes significantly longer, as distances on paper don't account for the steep, twisty roads.







Hiking, Naafal Valley (p249)

# Plan Your Time

Use micro-capital Vaduz as your springboard, but tag on an extra couple of days for forays into the Alps. You can see plenty on a long weekend. This compact country is prime road-trip material.

## Pressed for Time

Begin in Vaduz at the historic **Landesmuseum** (p248) and avant-garde **Kunstmuseum** (p248), then trek up through vines to medieval castle **Schloss Vaduz** (p248). Squeeze in a wine tasting in princely cellars at the **Hofkellerei** (p249) and a special dinner at Michelin-starred **Torkel** in Vaduz. Or hike the five-hour **Fürstensteig** (p246) in the Rätikon mountains.

## A Long Weekend

Wise choice. Spend a day or two in **Vaduz** (p248), then hop south to **Triesenberg** (p249) for a fascinating insight into centuries-old Walser traditions at the **Walsermuseum** (p249). Climb higher into the mountains to the pin-drop-peaceful village of **Malbun** (p249), for winter skiing and cross-country skiing or summer hiking on the **Fürstin-Gina-Weg** (p249).

## SEASONAL HIGHLIGHTS

### SPRING

There's snow in the Alps, but milder weather in the Rhine Valley – perfect season for **cycling** in the flats.

### SUMMER

High-level trails and huts open. The prince hosts a **fireworks party** at Schloss Vaduz.

### AUTUMN

Colour-changing foliage and **wine festivals** in villages like Triesen make autumn terrific for hiking, cycling and quaffing.

### WINTER

Snow brings action to **mountain resorts**. **Carnival** parades enliven the tail end of winter.



## GETTING AROUND

Efficient, frequent buses arrive at the PostBus station in Vaduz from Buchs or Sargans in Switzerland or Feldkirch in Austria.

A limited rail service between Buchs (Switzerland) and Feldkirch (Austria) drops passengers off in Schaan, 3.5km outside Vaduz, a few times daily.

Once you are here, Liechtenstein is tiny and easy to get around. Bikes and e-bikes are a brilliant means of getting around on the flat western side.

## Hiking the Liechtenstein Trail

### Walk an entire country

The best way to acquaint yourself with this pocket-sized nation is by hitting the 75km Liechtenstein Trail which kicks off in castle-topped Balzers on the Swiss border in the south, and ends in Schaanwald snug against Austria in the north. Rambling through vineyards, meadows and forests, leaping over moor and mountain, and shadowing the Rhine River, this trail has moments to make your heart sing.

Nature takes centre stage. Bring binoculars for the wildlife-rich peatlands, marshes and moors of the **Ruggeller Riet** nature reserve, where storks flock en masse when the blue Siberian iris blooms in late May and early June. Scale the wooded mountain ridge of **Eschnerberg** for views of 2000m peaks and deep into the Rhine Valley. Or detour onto the vertiginous, hair-raisingly high **Fürstensteig** trail for close-up views of the razor-edge Drei Schwestern (Three Sisters) peaks.

There are castles to ignite medieval fantasies, from hilltop **Burg Gutenberg** in Balzers to the evocative ruins of **Schellenberg** and wildly romantic **Schalun**, reached on a zigzagging forest path. The deeply traditional village of Triesenberg (p251) seduces with its rich Walser heritage, while the capital, Vaduz, roughly midway on the trail, holds you captive with its perkily turreted 12th-century castle.

The route has been divided into five day-long stages, allowing plenty of time to dally. For a primer on the trail, download the experience-oriented Llistory app.

## Wine Tasting in Princely Cellars

### Pop a royal cork

The world's tiniest winemaking nation, Liechtenstein has been dabbling in viticulture for the past 600 years – long before it became a country. Sunny slopes, limey soils and warm föhn winds make grape-growing conditions ideal. Clamber up through the flower-draped vineyards of Vaduz and you reach the **Hofkellerei**, the Prince of Liechtenstein's wine cellars, in royal family hands since 1712. Delve down to the atmospherically vaulted cellar for a tasting of berry-forward Pinot noir reds and crisp, citrusy chardonnay whites.



## WHERE TO STAY IN VADUZ

### Landhaus am Giessen

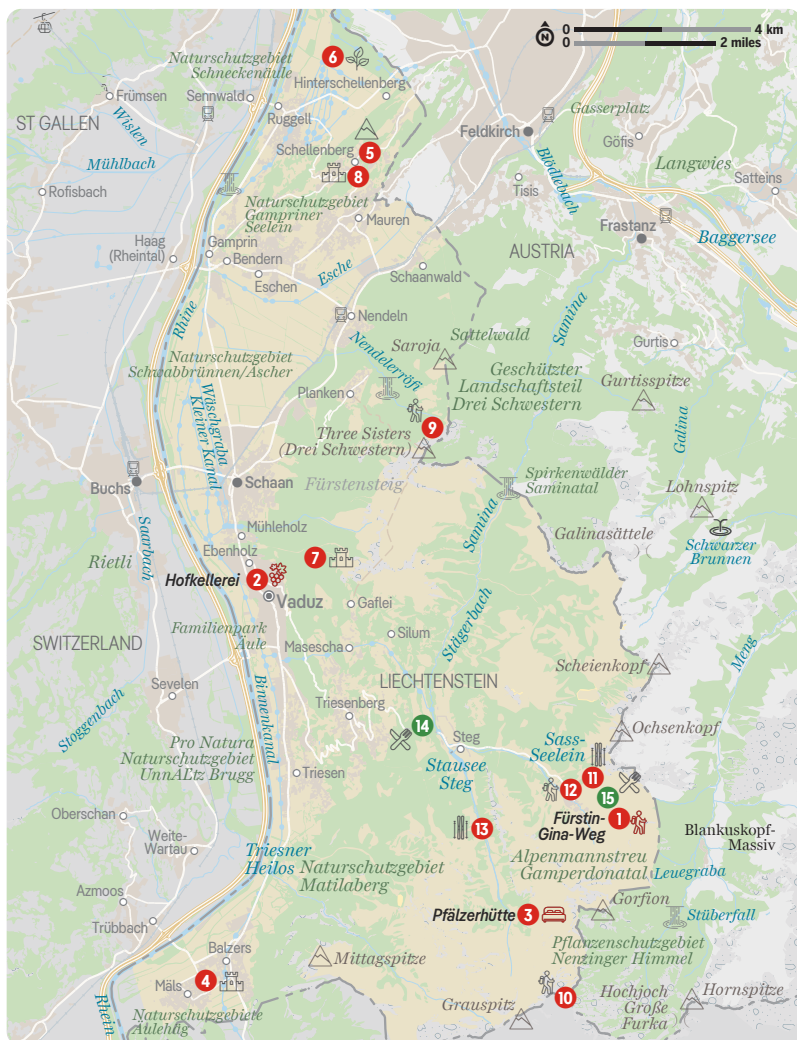
A calm, coolly modern, central B&B. The pick of the rooms have balconies with views of the castle. €€

### Gasthof Löwen

This 600-year-old charmer has antique-scattered rooms, a fine-dining restaurant and a terrace overlooking the vines. €€

### Parkhotel Sonnenhof

In landscaped gardens with alpine views, this boutique hotel piles on the luxury with its plush rooms, pool and spa. €€€

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- 1 Fürstin-Gina-Weg
- 2 Hofkellerei
- 3 Pfälzerhütte

**SIGHTS**

- 4 Burg Gutenberg
- 5 Eschnerberg
- 6 Ruggeller Riet
- 7 Schalun
- 8 Schellenberg

**ACTIVITIES**

- 9 Fürstensteig
- 10 Naafkopf
- 11 Sareis
- 12 Sassweg
- 13 Valüna Valley

**EATING**

- 14 Berggasthaus Stücka
- 15 Bergrestaurant
- Sareis



## DISCOVER HISTORIC VADUZ ON FOOT

A tiny capital for a tiny country, Vaduz has a ravishing alpine backdrop. Crouching at the foot of forested mountains, hugging the Rhine's banks and topped off by a turreted castle, it looks freshly minted for Hollywood.

Begin exploring at 19th-century, slender-spined **1 Kathedrale St Florin**, at the southern end of the pedestrianised centre. You're just steps from **2 Peter-Kaiser-Platz** and the stately **3 Government Building**, which harbours the state archives.

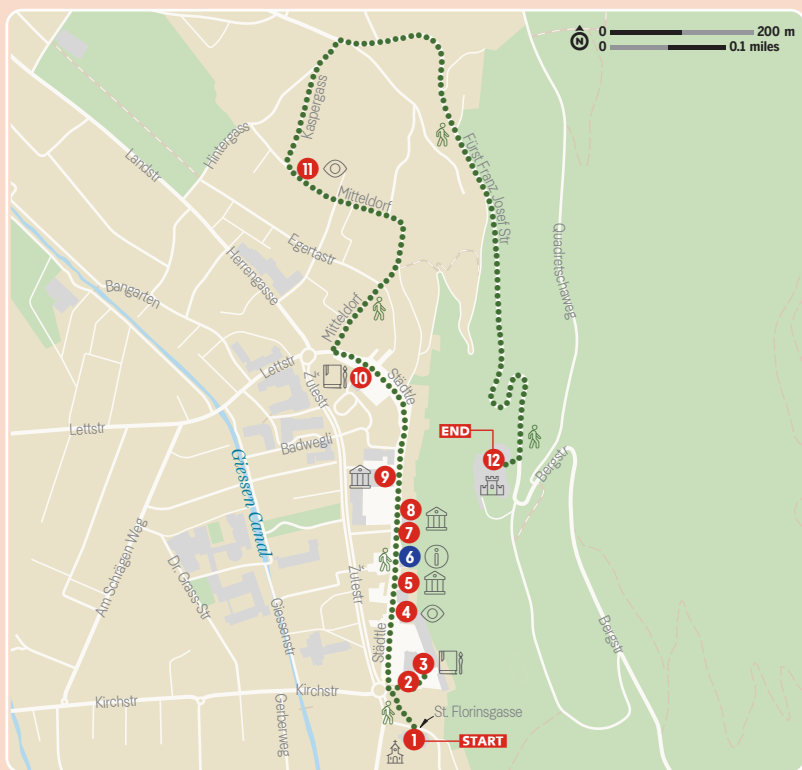
Swing onto Vaduz' main drag, Städtle, and you will find the **4 Landtag**. Liechtenstein's 25-member Parliament convenes in this startlingly modern building, which bears the imprint of Munich-based architect Hansjörg Göritz and is made up of the 'Long House', the 'High House' and the 'Joining House'. Next door is the **5 Landesmuseum**, which pings you through the principality's past,

heritage and natural history, from medieval witch trials to the manufacture of false teeth.

Push on to the **6 Liechtenstein Centre**, and get a souvenir passport stamp. Its neighbour is the **7 Schatzkammer**, stuffed with crown jewels, Fabergé eggs and other treasures. It sidles up to **8 Postmuseum Vaduz**, stuffed with all national stamps since 1912.

Opposite sits the shimmering black-concrete-and-basalt cube of **9 Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein**, hosting rotating exhibitions that spotlight its contemporary art collection, including Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Paul Klee and Joseph Beuys originals.

Pass arcaded **10 Rathaus Vaduz**, bearing right and uphill to **11 Mitteldorf**, an endearing quarter of traditional houses and rose-strewn gardens. A 10-minute toddle uphill is **12 Schloss Vaduz**, where the royal family live. The alpine views are astonishing.



## A Sky-High Sleep at Pfälzerhütte

### Snooze at the top

For views rippling across the Rätikon Alps, bed down in a bunk at Pfälzerhütte in the **Naafstal Valley**. On an eyrie-like perch atop 2108m-high Bettlerjoch saddle, the stone hut is terrific for striking out into the surrounding alpine wilderness, with high-level trails threading into the remote mountains, hard-core rock climbing on nearby peaks and eye-level encounters with wildlife, including whistling marmots and elusive ibex. Mountain bikers can tackle steep ascents and exhilarating descents on the 10km, two-hour **Pfälzerhütte Tour** to Steg.

## Alpine Escape Act: Malbun

### Get your mountain groove on

A big climb into the mountains from Vaduz, the 1600m-high resort of Malbun feels – in the nicest possible sense – like the end of the world. It's definitely the end of the road and the only way back is the way you came.

When the flakes fall on its dark timber chalets and the pearl-tipped peaks of the Rätikon Alps, it's pure winter wonderland. Chairlifts wing skiers and boarders up to **Sareis** at 2000m and 23km of slopes. Beyond the piste, there are pine-scented winter walking trails to crunch along – the prettiest and most popular being the 5km, two-hour **Sassweg**. Or glide in quiet exhilaration along cross-country trails in the **Valüna Valley**. For added romance, go for fondue at **Berggasthaus Stüčka**, then grab a toboggan and dash down through the snow under a brilliant frieze of stars.

In summer, Malbun is every bit as gorgeous, with bell-jangling cows grazing flowery meadows, marmots popping out of burrows to give a little whistle, and hiking trails swinging joyously into the heights. Top billing goes to the 12km, five-hour circular **Fürstin-Gina-Weg**, which leads up to the cross-topped summit of Augstenberg (2359m) and wows with arresting views over Austria, Switzerland and Liechtenstein.



### THE WALSER VILLAGE: TRIESENBERG

High above the great sweep of the Rhine Valley, Triesenberg is as pretty a mountain village you are likely to stumble across anywhere in the Alps, with its dark timber chalets and onion-domed church. But it's more unusual than it looks.

The Walser – a German-speaking 'tribe' of stockbreeders and farmers from the Swiss Valais – emigrated across Europe in the 13th century and settled in many places, including right here. This deeply traditional hamlet has preserved their culture and still speaks their dialect.

The **Walsermuseum** recounts their intriguing story and contains curious carvings of twisted tree trunks and branches, while the nearby **Walserhaus** (Hag 19) is a 400-year-old house furnished in 19th-century fashion.



### COUNTRY SLEEPS IN LIECHTENSTEIN

#### Gafadurahütte

On the Via Alpina, overlooking Planken village, this 1428m-high mountain hut was once a royal hunting lodge. €

#### Camping Mittagspitze

Pitch up under the stars at this campground in Triesen, with a pool, playground and trails heading to forest and peaks. €

#### Hotel Kulm

This powder-puff-pink chalet sits in the heart of Triesenberg, with knockout views of the Alps and Rhine Valley. €€



# TOOLKIT

The chapters in this section cover the most important topics you'll need to know about in Switzerland. They're full of nuts-and-bolts information and valuable insights to help you understand and navigate Switzerland and get the most out of your trip.



**Arriving**  
p252



**Getting Around**  
p253



**Special Trains**  
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**Accommodation**  
p255



**Family Travel**  
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**Money**  
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**Food, Drink  
& Nightlife**  
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**Responsible  
Travel**  
p260



**Accessible  
Travel**  
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**LGBTIQ+  
Travellers**  
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**Health & Safe  
Travel**  
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**Nuts & Bolts**  
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**Language**  
p266



# Arriving



Bordering France, Germany, Austria, Liechtenstein and Italy, Switzerland is at the heart of Europe and easily accessible by train and road. The most important international airports are in Zürich, Geneva, Basel and Bern. In addition to Swiss, the national airline, there are many budget or smaller airlines with connections to the country.



## Visas

Generally not required for stays of up to 90 days. From 2023 non-EU citizens will be required to apply for an ETIAS – see [schengenvisa.info](https://schengenvisa.info). For details on entry requirements, go to [sem.admin.ch](https://sem.admin.ch).



## SIM Cards

Prepaid local SIM cards are widely available, with Swisscom offering the best coverage. EU visitors can roam freely using the same package as at home; others should check with their provider about costs.



## Border Crossings

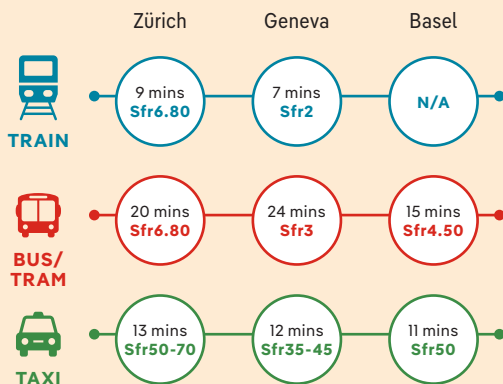
Formalities are minimal. EU residents entering the country can do so without showing a passport. Those from a non-EU country need to show their passport, and visa if required, to clear customs.



## Wi-Fi

Wi-Fi is available at the airports, on SBB trains and at over 80 stations. Swiss law requires users to register to access any public wi-fi network.

## Public Transport from Airport to City Centre



## INTERNATIONAL BOAT ROUTES

Switzerland may be landlocked but you can sail to the country aboard passenger boats and ships.

Companies shuttling across Lake Constance include Switzerland's **Bodensee Schifffahrt** ([bodensee-schiffe.ch](https://bodensee-schiffe.ch)), Austria's **Vorarlberg Lines** ([vorarlberg-lines.at/en](https://vorarlberg-lines.at/en)) and Germany's **BSB** ([bsb.de](https://bsb.de)). Services generally run from mid-April to late October.

**CGN** ([cgn.ch](https://cgn.ch)) has passenger boat services connecting the French towns of Évian and Thonon with Lausanne, and Yvoire with Nyon; there's also a Lausanne-Montreux-St Gingolph service.





# Getting Around

The Swiss Travel System ([myststnet.com](http://myststnet.com)) is an interconnected web of trains, boats, cable cars and postal buses that puts almost the entire country within easy car-free reach.

## TRAVEL COSTS



Rental  
**From Sfr60/day**



Petrol  
**Approx  
Sfr1.92/litre**



Short bus trip  
**Sfr2.70**



Motorway vignette  
**Sfr40**

## Car Sharing

If you do need your own set of wheels in Switzerland, consider the car-sharing scheme **Mobility** ([mobility.ch](http://mobility.ch)). You'll need to register for membership, then make a booking. Cars can be hired for as little time as an hour. Day packages include an allowance of 100km within 24 hours.

## Road Conditions

You'll generally find the country pleasant to drive, as Swiss roads are well built, well signposted and well maintained. Most major Alpine passes are negotiable year-round, depending on the weather. However, you will often have to use a tunnel instead at the Great St Bernard, St Gotthard and San Bernardino passes.



### TIP

Phone 163 for up-to-the-hour traffic conditions (recorded information in French, German, Italian and English).

## SCENIC CYCLING

Despite the mountain inclines, Switzerland is a fantastic country for cycling, with well-signposted and highly scenic routes. Visit [schweizmobil.ch](http://schweizmobil.ch) and click on 'Cycling in Switzerland'. SBB Rent-a-Bike ([rentabike.ch](http://rentabike.ch)) offers bicycle hire at 100-odd train stations. Wheels can be collected at one station and returned to another. Most train stations have e-bikes, tandems and trailers. Rates include helmets.



## DRIVING ESSENTIALS



Drive on the right.



Speed limit can be as low as 30km/h on most city streets, rising to 120km/h on dual-lane freeways.

**.05**

Blood alcohol limit is 0.05%.



## Rail Passes

Eurail and Interrail passes are valid on Swiss national railways. However, you cannot use these passes on postal buses, city transport, cable cars or private train lines, which makes a **Swiss Travel Pass** better for those travellers who wish to widely explore the country.



## Buses

Bright-yellow **PostBuses** supplement the rail network, following postal routes and linking towns to the mountain regions. Departures are synchronised with train arrivals, with the PostBus stops located next to the train stations. Fares are comparable to train fares.



## Lake Steamers

Switzerland's larger lakes are serviced by steamers operated by **Swiss Federal Railways** ([sbb.ch](http://sbb.ch)), or allied private companies. These include lakes Geneva, Constance, Lucerne, Lugano, Neuchâtel, Biel, Murten, Thun, Brienz and Zug, but not Lago Maggiore.



# Special Trains

Switzerland's famous tourist trains with big panorama windows are a travel experience to be savoured. Journeys on the following can be taken in either direction and require advance reservations. Cheaper regular scheduled services along the same routes can be just as enjoyable, plus have windows that open – great for photography.

## Glacier Express

Reservations for one of Europe's top train journeys ([glacierexpress.ch](http://glacierexpress.ch)), between Zermatt and St Moritz can be made up to 93 days in advance. The journey offers magnificent Alpine scenery along a nearly eight-hour route that includes 291 bridges and 91 tunnels. A highlight is the stretch from Disentis to Andermatt, across the Oberalp Pass (2033m). For an extra payment you can enjoy the dish of the day or a 3-course lunch in the dining car or at your seat. An Excellence Class ticket guarantees you a window seat and includes a 5-course meal with wine and exclusive access to the Glacier Bar for more drinks.

## Bernina Express

Another classic train, the Bernina Express connects the German- and Italian-speaking regions of Graubünden, climbing high into the glaciated realms of the Alps. On its 4½-hour, 156km journey from Chur to Tirano the train traverses 55 tunnels and 196 bridges. The Thusis–Tirano section is a Unesco World Heritage Site. Between May and October, continue from Tirano to Lugano by bus. In July and August, on good weather days, open carriages make scheduled runs between St Moritz and Poschiavo.

## Vigezzina-Centovalli Railway

To see the fantastic river gorges from Locarno to Domodossola, Italy in beautiful slow motion, hop aboard the Vigezzina-Centovalli Railway ([vigezzinacentovalli.com](http://vigezzinacentovalli.com)). The dinky train takes 1¼ hours to traverse 83 bridges and burrow through 34 tunnels, offering gasp-eliciting views of waterfalls shooting over cliff faces, vineyards, viaducts, deep ravines and sun-dappled chestnut forests, all against mountains that are often snowcapped.



## GOTTHARD PANORAMA EXPRESS

The five-hour Gotthard Panorama Express starts with a wonderful 2½-hour paddle-steamer cruise across Lake Lucerne to Flüelen, from where a train winds its way through ravines and past the mountains of the mighty St Gotthard range to Bellinzona/Lugano. There is also the option to travel by train only, starting or finishing in Arth-Goldau.

You can enjoy a meal on the paddle steamer and have refreshments served at your seat on the train. There's one departure a day in each direction between mid-April and October, Tuesday to Sunday.

## GOLDEN PASS EXPRESS

New since December 2022, the Golden Pass Express (gpx. [swiss](http://swiss)) is a single 3½-hour journey connecting the mountain resort of Interlaken and Montreux on Lake Geneva. In the past, a change of train was necessary because of differences in rail gauges along the route; the new train has variable-gauge bogies. Prestige Class offers comfy, heated seats that are raised higher to enable better views from the panorama windows.



# Accommodation

## Million Stars Hotels

Ranging from transparent igloos and converted feed silos to 'floating' tree tents and even, simply, a very comfortable bed alfresco in a field, Switzerland is taking **camping** and **glamping** to the next level. The common feature of the country's scattered 'Million Stars Hotels' are their unobstructed view of the night skies. See [myswitzerland.com](http://myswitzerland.com) for details.



## Hostels

Swiss hostels range from older, institutional affairs to dazzling designer accommodation, such as Saas Fee's WellnessHostel 4000 with pool and spa. Most are run by **Swiss Youth Hostels** ([youthhostel.ch](http://youthhostel.ch)), which celebrates its centenary in 2024. The hostels are run on sustainable principles, and are great places to meet people and also to eat well on a budget.

## B&Bs

Among Switzerland's most charming accommodation options is the B&B: a room in a private home (anything from castle to farm), which includes breakfast, often made from homemade produce. Some hosts will also, if you order in advance, cook up an evening meal. Tourist offices have lists of B&Bs – they're rare in cities, but plentiful in the countryside. Also check out **BnB** ([bnb.ch](http://bnb.ch)).

## Rentals

Switzerland is not short of mountain chalets and city apartments for short-term rental but, for peak periods, it's best to reserve at least six months ahead. A minimum stay of one week (usually Saturday to Saturday) in season is common. Useful resources include **REKA** ([reka.ch](http://reka.ch)), **Interhome** ([interhome.ch](http://interhome.ch)) and **Switzerland Tourism** ([myswitzerland.com](http://myswitzerland.com)). For self-catering in ski resorts – summer and winter – check out **Ski Suisse** ([en.ski-suisse.com](http://en.ski-suisse.com)).

### HOW MUCH FOR A NIGHT IN...



a midrange hotel  
**Sfr150-200**



a hostel dorm  
**Sfr50**



a farm barn  
**Sfr30**

### Holiday in a Monument

Check out the options offered under a Holiday in a Monument scheme run by the **Swiss Heritage Society** ([ferienimbaudenkmal.ch](http://ferienimbaudenkmal.ch)). The society has restored around 50 historic and culturally significant properties, often in remote, rural regions, and rents them out as holiday homes. They range from a half-timbered house by Lake Zürich to a lofty palazzo in Poschiavo.

## SLEEP ON STRAW

When the cows are out to pasture in summer, Swiss farmers make some money by allowing travellers to sleep on straw in their **hay barns** or **lofts**. Cotton undersheets are provided (to avoid straw pricks) and woolly blankets for extra warmth, but guests need their own sleeping bags and – strongly advisable – a pocket torch. Nightly rates include a farmhouse breakfast and a morning shower. Evening meals are usually available for an extra fee. Bookings can be made via **Agrotourismus Schweiz** ([myfarm.ch](http://myfarm.ch)), which also lists regular farm stays.



# Family Travel

Orderly, clean and safe, Switzerland is a dream family destination. Switzerland Tourism and local tourist offices offer mountains of information on family-friendly sights, activities, workshops and tours for all ages. They've also devised a 'Family Destination' label for places that offer child-friendly accommodation, theme trails, playgrounds and wonderful nature, among other attractions.

## Play Areas

Swiss cities and towns are packed with playgrounds – there are over 150 alone in Zürich. All long-distance InterCity double-decker trains include a family car with a playground in the middle of the upper deck, where your kids can let off steam.



### Facilities

Nappy-changing facilities are widespread. Most types of accommodation have cots, but check in advance as they may need to be reserved.

Some restaurants provide high chairs and special children's menus.

Major car-hire companies rent out child, baby and booster seats.

## Seasonal Fun

Swiss Family Fun ([swissfamilyfun.com](http://swissfamilyfun.com)) has tons of information on what to do with the kids in different seasons, where to eat and specific destinations. Also see [lonelyplanet.com/articles/switzerland-with-kids](http://lonelyplanet.com/articles/switzerland-with-kids).



### Getting Around

Family train travel with Swiss Railways is superb value. Kids under six travel free, and those aged six to 16 get free unlimited rail travel with an annual Junior Card or – should it be grandparents travelling with the kids – the Grandchild Travelcard. Otherwise, buy a one-day child's travelpass, which allows unlimited rail travel. Cards include travel on cable cars in mountain resorts.

## KID-FRIENDLY PICKS

**Vitra Design Museum** (p187)  
Zip down Carsten Höller's corkscrew slide.

**Matterhorn Glacier Paradise** (p135)  
Slide on ice in a glacial palace.

**Saas Fee** (p138)  
Shoot down the mountain on a scooter.

**Kindermuseum Creaviva** (p93)  
Interactive art exhibits and kids' workshops in Bern.

**Martigny** (p118)  
Go for a walk with a pack of cuddly St-Bernard dogs.

**Olympic Museum** (p54)  
Sprint against Usain Bolt in Lausanne.

**Verkehrshaus** (p166)  
An interactive whizz through transport history in Lucerne.

## FESTIVAL FUN

Keep in mind Switzerland's many festivals when deciding on what's the best time to take a family holiday in the country. These range from **Harder Pötschete** on 2 January in **Interlaken** (p96) when warty, ogre-like Pötschen run around town causing folkloric mischief, to cows battling for the title of bovine queen at the 10-day

**Foire du Valais** regional fair in **Martigny** (p118). For other options, see [kinderregion.ch](http://kinderregion.ch).

For older teens, reserve tickets online months in advance for the country's headline music festivals, such as **Zermatt Unplugged** ([zermatt-unplugged.ch](http://zermatt-unplugged.ch)), **Openair St Gallen** ([openairsg.ch](http://openairsg.ch)) and **Festi'neuch** ([festineuch.ch](http://festineuch.ch)).





# Money



CURRENCY: **SWISS FRANCS (SFR); ALSO KNOWN AS CHF**



## Credit Cards

Credit cards are widely accepted. Eurocard/Mastercard and Visa are the most popular. Many stores support contactless payments and Apple Pay.



## Euros

Businesses throughout Switzerland will accept payment in euros. Change will be given in Swiss francs at the rate of exchange calculated on the day.

## Tipping

Tipping is generally not necessary; hotels, restaurants, bars and even some taxis are legally required to include a 15% service charge in bills. At restaurants you can round up the bill after a meal for good service, as locals do. Hotel and railway porters expect a franc or two per bag.

## Taxes & Refunds

Standard value-added tax (VAT) is 7.7% in Switzerland and applies to most goods and services. There's a reduced rate for hotels (3.7%) and food and drink (2.5%). Non-Swiss nationals may claim a refund of the taxes they paid on goods with a minimum value of Sfr300. For details, see [estv.admin.ch](http://estv.admin.ch).

## SWISS BANKS

Switzerland manages over US\$2.5 trillion in international assets, making it the world's largest financial centre ahead of the UK and the US. However, the collapse of Credit

Suisse in March 2023 dealt a serious blow to the country's credentials. In a deal underwritten by the government, Credit Suisse was taken over by the nation's other banking giant UBS and, for now,

the markets are again stable. Swiss banks remain a favourite place for the wealthy to stash their cash, thanks to laws that oblige banks to protect many of their client details.

## HOW MUCH FOR...



Museum entry  
**Sfr10-25**



Cinema ticket  
**Sfr20**



Small fondue  
**Sfr40**



Heidi book  
**Sfr14**

## HOW TO...

## Save Some Money

Buy a **Swiss**

**Travel Pass**, which offers unlimited travel throughout Switzerland for a set number of days; different variants are available, and all include free admission to over 500 museums.

Also ask for a **Guest Card** when you check into a hotel – they let you travel for free on public transport. If you're a student, an **International Student Identity Card (ISIC)** will also get you some discounts.



## LOCAL TIP

Check with local tourist offices about free admission days for museums. For example, admission to Zürich's **Kunsthaus** is free on Wednesdays and, every August, admission to Bern's museums is free on Saturdays.





# Food, Drink & Nightlife

## When to Eat

**Breakfast** Between 7am to 10am. At weekends it's a more leisurely meal kicking off around 9am.

**Lunch** Anything from a sandwich to a full meal served between noon and 2pm.

**Dinner** Served from 6pm to 9.30pm (or later in summer). Often preceded by an *apéro* (aperitif). Many restaurants and pubs, especially in the cities, offer continuous (11am to 10pm) service.

## Where to Eat

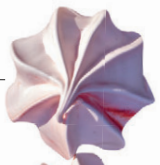
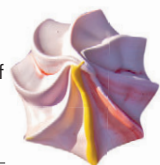
**Restaurants** Ranging from the bistros and brasseries of the French-speaking parts of the country to the trattorie and ristoranti of Italian-speaking Switzerland.

**Cafes** A wide range from bakery-cafes and *salons de thé* to organic delis.

**Hotels** Many of Switzerland's top restaurants are found in hotels; you don't need to be a guest to dine.

**Stübli** Cosy, timber-clad taverns serving fondue, raclette, rösti and other traditional Swiss treats.

**Confiserie/Konditoreien/Pâtisserie** Traditional cake shop-cafes; many do a sideline in chocolate and confectionery.



## MENU DECODER

**Carte** (French);

**speisekarte**

(German); **carta**

(Italian) Menu of

dishes available.

**Menu** (French) A two-

or three-course meal

at a fixed price.

**À la carte** (French)

Order random dishes

from the menu.

**Formule** (French) A

cheaper lunchtime

option to a menu.

**À la maison** (French);

**hausgemacht**

(German); **fatto**

**in casa** (Italian)

Homemade.

**Petit déjeuner**

(French); **zmorege**

(German); **colazione**

(Italian) Breakfast.

**Déjeuner** (French);

**zmittag** (German);

**pranzo** (Italian)

Lunch.

**Dîner** (French);

**znacht** (German);

**cena** (Italian) Dinner.

**Antipasto** (Italian)

Appetiser.

**Primo** (Italian) First

course, usually pasta,

risotto or zuppa (soup).

**Secondo** (Italian)

Second course, often

*pesce* (fish) or *carne*

(meat).

## HOW TO...

### Drink Swiss Spirits & Liqueurs

Locally produced fruit brandies are often served with or in coffee. Kirsch

is made from the juice of compressed cherry pits. Appenzeller Alpenbitter (Alpine Bitters) is a liqueur made from the essence of 67 flowers and roots. Damassine (most likely found in the French cantons) is made of small prunes and is a good digestive. A pear-based drop is the popular Williamine, and Pflümli is a typical plum-based schnapps in the German cantons.

Legend has it that absinthe – aka 'the green fairy' – an anise-flavoured spirit that also contains the leaves of wormwood, was first distilled in the 18th century in the Swiss canton of Neuchâtel. The inventor is said to be Pierre Ordinaire, a French doctor living in Couvet, who used it as a medicinal elixir. Major Dubied acquired the formula and opened the first absinthe distillery, named Dubied Père et Fils, in Couvet in 1797.

## HOW MUCH FOR...



a pastry  
**Sfr2.50**



a filter coffee  
**Sfr4**



a hot chocolate  
**Sfr6**



a sandwich  
**Sfr9**



a top-end dinner  
**Sfr120**



a scoop of ice cream  
**Sfr4**



a beer  
**Sfr7.50**



a glass of house wine  
**Sfr13.50**

## HOW TO...

### Taste Cheese

Switzerland is heaven for turophiles (cheese lovers), with the country producing over 450 different varieties – from the spicy Appenzeller to sweet-salty Gruyère riddled with its characteristic holes.

If the acronym AOP (standing for Appellation d'Origine Protégée) is part of the cheese name, it's a guarantee that the product comes from the region of origin. For example, the raw milk for Emmentaler AOP originates only from the cantons of Bern (excluding the district of Moutier), Aargau, Glarus, Lucerne, Schwyz, Solothurn, St Gallen, Thurgau, Zug, Zürich or parts of the Canton of Fribourg.

And if a cheese is labelled Alpkäse, you know it's made from milk from cows, goats or sheep who have grazed on alpine meadows.

The best way to discover more about the craft of Swiss cheesemaking is to visit one of the country's several show dairies. At the Appenzeller Schaukäserei in Stein the tour includes a peek in the cellar, where up to 12,500 rounds of cheese are regularly bathed in brine.

At the Emmentaler Schaukaeserei, guided by a master cheesemaker, you can make your own cheese from 200L of fresh raw milk, while at the Fromagerie Les Martel, you can sample the blue-veined cheese Bleuchâtel as well as Gruyère.



### Cheese Train

The Cheese Train runs on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday from January to the end of October. It travels from Montreux or Zweisimmen to Château-d'Oex, where you can watch cheesemaking and enjoy an organic fondue.

## NIGHTLIFE

Switzerland's nightlife swings from a relaxed *apéro* (aperitif) at a lakeside cafe with knockout views of the Alps to sipping local wines at bars with urban attitude, or sampling craft beer at cosy microbreweries. In summer, right across the country, informal, open-air bars pop up like wildflowers – these are brilliant for people watching. Meanwhile, as soon as winter snow starts to fall, you can be sure there'll be apres-ski partying up in the mountains.

In the big cities, you'll have to wait until at least 11pm and even later for the DJs to get spinning at dance clubs, which will then stay open until dawn. Zürich is generally considered to have Switzerland's best clubbing scene, but you'll also

find dance clubs in Bern and Geneva, too. When heading out to a club, generally dress well and expect to pay an admission fee. Be aware that men can only enter some clubs if they are 21 or older (ID will be requested). Otherwise, the cut-off age in most places is 18 for both sexes.

Most of Switzerland's big, dynamic entertainment venues – from alternative arts to theatre and opera – are concentrated in major cities like Zürich, Bern, Basel, Geneva and Lucerne. Gigs happen all over the country. In summer, jaunty Volksmusik (folk music) enlivens many a rustic shindig in the Alps. Tourist offices often have up-to-date event listings, making it easy for anyone to plug into the local scene.



# Responsible Travel

## Climate Change & Travel

It's impossible to ignore the impact we have when travelling, and the importance of making changes where we can. Lonely Planet urges all travellers to engage with their travel carbon footprint. There are many carbon calculators online that allow travellers to estimate the carbon emissions generated by their journey; try [resurgence.org/resources/carbon-calculator.html](https://resurgence.org/resources/carbon-calculator.html). Many airlines and booking sites offer travellers the option of offsetting the impact of greenhouse gas emissions by contributing to climate-friendly initiatives around the world. We continue to offset the carbon footprint of all Lonely Planet staff travel, while recognising this is a mitigation more than a solution.



## Recycling Rules

Up to 50% of Switzerland's municipal solid waste is recycled. The remaining waste is usually burned in incinerators to produce energy. For example, the KVA Thun energy-from-waste plant processes 100,000 tons of combustible waste every year.

## Too Good to Go

The Too Good to Go app allows you to purchase food that would otherwise have gone to waste at amazing discounts – over 5000 cafes, restaurants and supermarkets across Switzerland take part in the scheme.

## Take the Train

Swiss Federal Railways (SBB) generates the electricity for its trains, stations and offices from hydropower, and is 100% carbon neutral. The extensive rail network carries more than 1.1 million passengers per day.

## Europe's Water Tower

Switzerland holds about 6% of Europe's fresh water reserves and has plentiful groundwater. But, since 2018 the country has been suffering long periods of drought. In the Alps, farming communities are already suffering, especially in summer.



Braunwald (p210),  
Mürren (p107),  
Saas-Fee (p136)  
and Zermatt (p131)  
are all car-free  
mountain resorts.



Switzerland has  
20 parks and  
reserves (parks.  
swiss) protecting  
some 5839 sq km,  
one seventh of the  
country's surface  
area.

## GIVE A LITTLE BACK

Check [francpourleclimat.ch](https://francpourleclimat.ch) for a list of 'eco-restaurants', mainly based in French-speaking Switzerland, that donate 1Sfr to planting trees with every meal they serve. The Geneva City Pass also includes a 1Sfr donation to climate protection and sustainable tourism.

## VOLUNTEER IN THE MOUNTAINS

If you'd like to help out a Swiss mountain farming family in need, check out the volunteering opportunities with Caritas Mountain Mission ([bergeinsatz.ch](http://bergeinsatz.ch)). Jobs can include helping with haymaking or on a construction project.

### Holiday on a Farm

You can't get much closer to nature than taking a holiday on a farm. FeBa (bauernhof-ferien.ch), the Swiss holiday farms association, has around 100 members offering a variety of accommodation, such as Bolderhof (p216).

### Save the Forests

Bergwaldprojekt ([bergwaldprojekt.ch](http://bergwaldprojekt.ch)) is a nonprofit foundation based in Trin, Graubünden that helps preserve, care and protect Switzerland's forests. Check its website for details of free weeklong work camps run by this eco-aware initiative.

### Waste Water to Biogas

The ARA Bern waste-water treatment plant cleans 90 million litres of waste water per day at the same time as producing biogas from the sewage sludge. This gas is then used by public transport systems.

### Swisstainable

The Swiss tourism website has tips on travelling in the country more responsibly, such as staying in accommodation featuring the Swisstainable logo, as this means they are committed to environmental protection and social justice.



During the winter of 2020–2021, over half the ski slopes of the Swiss Alps were artificially covered with snow. Huge amounts of water and electricity are involved – a situation that is increasingly environmentally unsustainable.



Switzerland has some of the best air quality in Europe. Manure management and efficient livestock production have helped cut methane emissions, while particle filter regulations for diesel engines have slashed black carbon emissions.

## RESOURCES

### [pronatura.ch](http://pronatura.ch)

Switzerland's oldest nature preservation society.



### [bafu.admin.ch](http://bafu.admin.ch)

Federal Office for the Environment.



### [myclimate.org](http://myclimate.org)

Calculate CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and make offsetting donations.





# Accessible Travel

Switzerland ranks among the world's most easily navigable countries for travellers with physical disabilities. Most train stations have a mobile lift for boarding trains, city buses are equipped with ramps, and many hotels have very good access.

## bar8

Between early June and 1 September, bar8 on the roof of the **Bern Center for the Blind and Disabled** provides great views, good drinks, food and work for people with disabilities.



### Airport

All of Switzerland's main airports (Zürich, Geneva, Basel, Bern) offer assistance to travellers with a variety of different access needs. For any help you might require, contact the airports at least 48 hours in advance.



### Accommodation

At least 24 Swiss youth hostels offer barrier-free rooms. Claire & George Foundation ([claireundgeorge.ch](http://claireundgeorge.ch)), a Bern-based non-profit, lists some 80 accessible options on its website, from camping bungalows to five-star hotels.

## RESOURCES

### procap.ch

Offers support and advice to people living with a variety of disabilities.



### cerebral.ch

Supports children and their families who are affected by cerebral palsy.



### schweizmobil.ch

Accessible, beautiful trails in Switzerland and Liechtenstein.



## NO-HIKING VISTAS

Wonderful Swiss landscapes can be accessed without hiking or climbing. There are many scenic train and boat rides, as well as funiculars, cable cars and gondolas to the Alps.

## Old Towns

The charming Altstadts (old towns) of places such as Chur, Lucerne, Schaffhausen and Zürich have cobbled streets and buildings with narrow doorways and steep stairs – not ideal for those with mobility issues.

## On the Trains

If you are in need of assistance getting on or off a train, call SBB on 0800 007 102 at least one hour before your train is due to depart.

## ACCESSIBLE TREETOPS

**Treetop Walkway Neckertal** ([baumwipelpfad.ch](http://baumwipelpfad.ch)), about a 30-minute drive west of St Gallen, is a 500m accessible path for people with disabilities. On a gentle incline, the path winds from the forest floor into the treetops, 55m above the ground.

## WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Sexual harassment is much less common in Switzerland than in some neighbouring countries, such as Italy and France. Use common sense with regard to potentially dangerous situations, such as hitchhiking or walking alone at night.





# LGBTIQ+ Travellers

Switzerland is a tolerant country and has long been progressive on LGBTIQ+ rights. Homosexuality was decriminalised nationally in 1942, while in some cantons it had been legal since the late 18th century. Nevertheless, it wasn't until a national referendum in 2021 that laws were passed allowing same-sex marriage, same-sex adoption, and IVF access for queer couples.

## Film Festivals

The longest running and biggest of Switzerland's LGBTIQ+ film festivals is Zürich's **Pink Apple**, which runs for two weeks at the end of April and early May, followed by a few days in May in Frauenfeld. That town, in the 'apple canton' of Thurgau, is where the festival began in 1997, hence the name Pink Apple.

Basel's **Luststreifen Film Festival** in September has a focus on queer feminism. In Geneva check out **Everybody's Perfect** in October, while in November there's Lucerne's weeklong **Pink Panorama Film Festival** and Bern's **Queersicht**.



## PRIDE SEASON

**Geneva Pride** ([genevapride.ch](http://genevapride.ch)) kicks off Switzerland's season of Pride events in early June, followed swiftly in the same month by **Zürich Pride** ([zurichpridefestival.ch](http://zurichpridefestival.ch)), the country's biggest. **Martigny Pride** ([mypride.ch](http://mypride.ch)) is usually around the third week of July, while **Bern Pride** ([bernpride.ch](http://bernpride.ch)) is at the end of July. **Pride Zentralschweiz** ([pride-zentralschweiz.lgbt](http://pride-zentralschweiz.lgbt)) in Lucerne is held in late August.

## BERN & LUCERNE

In Bern, advocacy club **Hab** organises many events, including the 'queer eat and meet' at its base of Villa Bernau on the first Wednesday of the month.

Lucerne-based **Queer Lozärn** is a collective with projects including **Queerbad**, a meet-up every Tuesday at Neubad, and the monthly party **Queerspace** in Treibhaus.

## ZÜRICH, GENEVA & LAUSANNE

Zürich has Switzerland's liveliest LGBTIQ+ scene. In Kreis 4, **Daniel H** is a cruisy place to start the night. Popular late-night clubs include **Heaven** in Niederdorf.

**Le Déclic**, **Nathan Café** and **Le Phare** are established LGBTIQ+ bars in Geneva. In Lausanne, **GT's** and **Le Saxo** are classics, plus there are plenty of LGBTIQ+-friendly events at the city's biggest club, **MAD**.

## RESOURCES

For what's happening on the **LGBTIQ+ scene** in Zürich and surrounds, **gay.ch** has listings and features in German. For Switzerland's national umbrella organisation of gay and bisexual men, see **pinkcross.ch**. Also, try typing LGBTIQ+ into the search function of **myswitzerland.com**.



## Queer Weddings

Since July 2022 it has been possible for gay and lesbian couples to marry in Switzerland. Legally binding marriages take place in registry offices. **Swiss Queer Wedding Association** ([sqwa.ch](http://sqwa.ch)) can help couples with all the arrangements.



# Health & Safe Travel

## CRIME

Switzerland is generally a very safe country and street crime is relatively uncommon. However, do not be lulled into a false sense of security, as there are increased reports of theft (especially in larger cities), at Geneva airport and on trains to/from Geneva. Take precautions to avoid mugging, bag snatching and pickpocketing. The emergency number for the police is 117.



## Solo Travel

Minor sexual harassment (catcalls, etc) is much less common in Switzerland than in some neighbouring countries. Common sense is the best guide to dealing with potentially dangerous situations, such as hitching or walking alone at night. If you're hiking, mountain climbing or camping alone always tell someone about your plans.



## Health Care

Swiss health care is of very high quality, but it's expensive. An embassy, consulate or hotel can usually recommend a local doctor or clinic. A European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) enables European citizens to access state-provided health care at a reduced cost. Over-the-counter medications are available at a local Apotheke (pharmacy).



## TAP WATER

Carry your own water bottle, as Swiss tap water is pure, rich in minerals and perfectly safe to drink.

## TEMPERATURE RECORDS



**41.5°C**

The highest temperature recorded in Switzerland was 41.5°C in Grono on 11 August 2003.



**June 2023**

North of the Alps, June 2023 was the sunniest June in Switzerland since measurements began.



**-6.7°C**

The coldest place in the country is the Jungfrauoch, at 3571m above sea level with an average annual temperature of -6.7°C.

## Ticks

Ticks can be found throughout Switzerland up to an altitude of 1200m, and typically live in underbrush at the forest edge or beside walking tracks. Some carry tick-borne encephalitis (TBE) or Lyme disease, both of which can cause severe health problems. Always check carefully for tick bites after a hike.

## ALPINE HAZARDS

The Alps are beautiful but they can also be dangerous. Risks include avalanches, landslides, flooding and thunderstorms. Before heading into the mountains, always check weather reports and take local advice on the necessary precautions – [natural-hazards.ch](http://natural-hazards.ch) is a fine resource with up-to-date information. Make sure you have adequate travel insurance before taking part in any mountainous outdoor sports.



# Nuts & Bolts

## OPENING HOURS

Each Swiss canton determines its own opening hours. With the exception of stores at 24-hour service stations and shops at airports and train stations, businesses shut on Sunday.

**Banks** 8.30am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday

**Museums** 10am–5pm, many museums close Monday and stay open late Thursday.

**Restaurants** noon–2.30pm and 6pm–9.30pm; most restaurants close one or two days per week.

**Shops** 10am–6pm Monday to Friday, to 4pm Saturday.

## Police

Swiss police have wide-ranging powers of detention. If you're approached, you will be required to show your passport, so always carry it.

## Smoking

Smoking is illegal in all indoor public spaces, including restaurants, pubs, offices and public transport.

## GOOD TO KNOW



**Time zone**  
Central European  
Time (GMT/UTC  
plus one hour)



**Country code**  
+41



**Emergency  
number**  
117/144



**Population**  
8.7 million

## PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

**New Year's Day**  
1 January

**Berchtold's Day**  
2 January, observed in  
many cantons

**Good Friday**  
March/April

**Easter Sunday and  
Monday** March/April

**Ascension Day** 40th  
day after Easter

**Whit Sunday and  
Monday (Pentecost)**  
7th week after Easter

**May Day** 1 May;  
holiday in 11 cantons

**National Day** 1 August

**Christmas Day** 25  
December

**St Stephen's Day** 26  
December

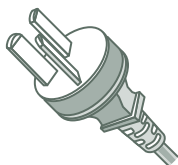
Some cantons observe their own special holidays and religious days, eg **Corpus Christi** (always a Thursday either at the end of May or early June), **Assumption** (15 August) and **All Saints' Day** (1 November).

## Electricity 230V/50Hz

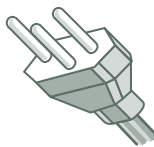


## Weights and Measures

The metric system is used. Decimals are indicated with commas, thousands with full stops.



Type H  
230V/50Hz



Type J  
230V/50Hz



# Language

No place inspires exploration quite like this tiny country whose four languages and cultural diversity create curiosity and beg discovery. Whether you're in German-, French-, Italian- or Romansh-speaking Switzerland, these words and phrases will help get you started.

## SWISS GERMAN

With Swiss capital Bern as its heart, Germanic Switzerland covers the Bernese Oberland, Graubünden and the Engadine Valley. Swiss German, or *Schweizerdeutsch*, is quite different from the high German spoken in Germany and Austria. You'll also hear many different dialects across the region.



### Basics

**Hello.** Grüezi. *grew-e-tsi*

**Goodbye.** Auf Wiedersehen. *owf vee-derzey-en*

**Yes.** Ja. *yaa*

**No.** Nein. *nain*

**Please.** Bitte. *bi-te*

**Thank you.** Danke. *dang-ke*

**Excuse me.** Entschuldigung. *ent-shul-di-gung*

**Sorry.** Entschuldigung. *ent-shul-di-gung*

**Help!** Hilfe! *hil-fe*

**Cheers!** Prost! *prawst*

**What's your name?** Wie ist Ihr Name? *vee ist eer naa-me*

**My name is ...** Mein Name ist ... *main naa-me ist ...*

**Do you speak English?** Sprechen Sie Englisch? *shpre-khen zee eng-lish*

**I don't understand.** Ich verstehe nicht. *ikh fer-shtey-e nikht*

**Where are the toilets?** Wo ist die Toilette? *vo ist dee to-a-le-te*

**Do you have vegetarian food?** Haben Sie vegetarisches Essen? *haa-ben zee ve-ge-taa-ri-shes e-sen*

**How much is it?** Wie viel kostet das? *vee feel kos-tet das*

**I'd like the bill, please.** Bitte bringen Sie die Rechnung. *bi-te bring-en zee dee rekh-nung*



### Signs

**Eingang** Entrance

**Ausgang** Exit

**Offen** Open

**Geschlossen** Closed

**Verboten** Prohibited

**Toiletten** Toilets

### NATIVE LANGUAGES BY PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION

~64%  
German

>20%  
French

8%  
Italian

<1%  
Romansh

## SPECIAL CASE SWITZERLAND

The Swiss see themselves as different, and they are. Take their country's overwhelming cultural diversity, eloquently expressed in four languages and attitudes; German-, French- and Italian-speaking Swiss all display similar characteristics to German, French and Italian people respectively, creating an instant line-up of reassuringly varied, diverse and oftentimes surprising psyches. Then there are those in Graubünden who speak Romansch. One cookie-cutter shape definitely does not fit *Sonderfall Schweiz* (literally 'special-case Switzerland') and its different inhabitants.

## FRENCH

The French-speaking wedge – *Suisse Romande* – embraces Switzerland's western fringe from Geneva to the Jura in the north and Valais in the east.



### Basics

**Hello.** Bonjour. **bon-zhoor**

**Goodbye.** Au revoir. **o-rer-vwa**

**Yes.** Oui. **wee**

**No.** Non. **non**

**Please.** S'il vous plaît. **seel voo play**

**Thank you.** Merci. **mair-see**

**Excuse me.** Excusez-moi. **ek-skew-zay-mwa**

**Sorry.** Pardon. **par-don**

**Help!** Au secours! **o skoor**

**Cheers!** Santé! **son-tay**

**What's your name?** Comment vous appelez-vous? **ko-mon voo-za-play voo**

**My name is ...** Je m'appelle ... **zher ma-pel ...**

**Do you speak English?** Parlez-vous anglais? **par-lay-voo ong-glai**

**I don't understand.** Je ne comprends pas. **zher ner kom-pron pa**

**Where are the toilets?** Où sont les toilettes? **oo son ley twa-let**

**Do you have vegetarian food?** Vous faites les repas végétariens? **voo fet ley re-pa vey-zhey-ta-ryun**

**How much is it?** C'est combien? **say kom-byun**

**I'd like the bill, please.** Je voudrais l'addition, s'il vous plaît. **zhe voo-drey la-dee-syon seel voo pley**



### Signs

**Entrée** Entrance

**Sortie** Exit

**Ouvert** Open

**Fermé** Closed

**Interdit** Prohibited

**Toilettes** Toilets

## ITALIAN

Ticino is the charismatic pocket of Italian-speaking passion and exuberance.



### Basics

**Hello.** Buongiorno. **bwon-jor-no**

**Goodbye.** Arrivederci.

**a-ree-ve-der-chee**

**Yes.** Sì. **see**

**No.** No. **no**

**Please.** Per favore. **per fa-vo-re**

**Thank you.** Grazie. **gra-tsye**

**Excuse me.** Mi scusi. **mee skoo-zee**

**Sorry.** Mi dispiace. **mee dees-pya-che**

**Help!** Aiuto! **ai-yoo-to**

**Cheers!** Salute! **sa-loo-te**

**What's your name?** Come si chiama? **ko-me see kya-ma**

**My name is ...** Mi chiamo ... **mee kya-mo ...**

**Do you speak English?** Parla inglese? **par-la een-gle-ze**

**I don't understand.** Non capisco. **non ka-pee-sko**

**Where are the toilets?** Dove sono i gabinetti? **do-ve so-no ee ga-bee-ne-tee**

**Do you have vegetarian food?** Avete piatti vegetariani? **a-ve-te pya-tee ve-je-ta-rya-nee**

**How much is it?** Quant'è? **kwan-te**  
**I'd like the bill, please.** Vorrei il conto, per favore. **vo-ray eel kon-to per fa-vo-re**



### Signs

**Entrata** Entrance

**Uscita** Exit

**Aperto** Open

**Chiuso** Closed

**Proibito** Prohibited

**Gabinetti** Toilets

## DON'T ASSUME EVERYONE IS MULTILINGUAL

While many Swiss are multilingual, don't assume that everyone speaks each other's language – many people are more likely to speak English than another Swiss national language.

## ROMANSH

Derived from Latin and part of the Rhaeto-Romanic language family, Romansh dialects tend to be restricted to their own particular mountain valley. Usage is gradually declining with German taking over as the lingua franca in the Romansh areas, which are mainly in the canton of Graubünden. Since 1996 it has enjoyed status as a semi-official federal language, with guarantees for its preservation and promotion.

**Hello** – Allegra  
**Goodbye** – Adieu/  
Abunansvair  
**Please** – Anzi  
**Thank you** –  
Grazia





# STORYBOOK

Our writers delve deep into different aspects of Swiss life

## **A History of Switzerland in 15 places**

Switzerland remains as singular  
as the day it was conceived.

*Nicola Williams*

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## **Meet the Swiss**

Prosperity, culture, scenery:  
fortune has smiled on the Swiss.

*Clare O'Dea*

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## **The Simple Beauty of Swiss Design**

Contemporary Swiss design  
has global influence.

*Simon Richmond*

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## **Swiss Transport Going Greener**

How Swiss transport is reacting  
to the climate emergency.

*Caroline Bishop*

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## **The Dark Side of the Alps**

They're universally loved, but  
what's really up in the Alps?

*Anthony Haywood*

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# A HISTORY OF SWITZERLAND IN 15 PLACES

The history of this neutral nation of 26 surprisingly autonomous cantons is a tale of ‘apple shot’ marksmen, medieval nationalists, madcap scientists and secret bankers. Not surprisingly, small landlocked Switzerland remains as insular, idiosyncratic and staunchly singular as the day it was conceived. By Nicola Williams.

**THAT POPE JULIUS II** hired Swiss mercenaries as bodyguards in the 16th century – thus spawning the world’s smallest army, aka the Swiss Guards who still guard the pope in Renaissance-era ruffs, feathers and striped red, blue and yellow tunics – is one of many whimsies shaping Switzerland’s story. In 58 BCE Julius Caesar defeated the Celtic tribe Helvetii and charged them with protecting the Rhine frontier between the Alps and the Jura. Roman colonies in Augusta Raurica (Basel), Noviodunum (Nyon) and Octodurus (Martigny) flourished. By 1032, clans in western Switzerland had been swallowed up by the Holy Roman Empire, but notably retained a large degree of autonomy.

Formed in 1291 from three states, ‘special case’ Switzerland has never been a run-of-the-mill nation. Popularised in the 19th century by the eponymous play by Friedrich Schiller, *William Tell* is its folkloric tour de force. During the medieval drive for independence from the Habsburg Empire, the Swiss peasant who shot an apple off his son’s head and killed the bailiff who issued the order symbolised the Swiss fight for freedom. With the Congress of Vienna peace treaty in 1815 formally guaranteeing Switzerland’s independence and neutrality for the first time, the tumultuous journey from three-pronged confetti confederation to polished 26-canton country was done.

## 1. Monte San Giorgio

### PREHISTORIC ROOTS

The tropical lagoon unearthed at Meride’s Fossil Museum feels like a 3D rendition of a biblical tale from the Old Testament. Fossils of the first creatures to inhabit southern Ticino take visitors back in time to the Middle Triassic Period (245 to 180 million years ago).

Unesco-listed Monte San Giorgio near Lago di Lugano was then a pool of water, separated from the sea by a reef. Marine life including ammonites, echinoderms and crustaceans flourished in this fertile prehistoric land, as did the saurian *Ticinosuchus* (‘Ticino dinosaur’), an imposing 2.5m-long reptile covered in thick, armour-plated scutes.

*For more on Monte San Giorgio, see p149.*

## 2. Col du Grand St Bernard

### ALPINE CHALLENGES

In 218 BCE during the Second Punic War, Carthaginian warrior and chief Hannibal Barca (b 247 BCE) set off from Spain to besiege Rome. To dodge Romans at sea, he led 38,000 foot soldiers, 8000 horses and 37 war elephants across the Alps to Italy. Not all historians are convinced Hannibal really did cross the Col du Grand St Bernard. To prove such a Herculean feat was possible, American adventurer Richard Halliburton (1900–39) trekked from



Martigny to Aosta in 1935 with Dally the elephant, traversing the perilous transalpine mountain pass at 3km/h.

*For more on Col du Grand St Bernard, see page p118*

### 3. Schloss Habsburg

#### HABSBURG HOMELAND

The clan that became one of Europe's greatest ruling dynasties – also leading the Holy Roman Empire for centuries – kick-started life in Aarau, in northwestern Switzerland. Imagining life in the cradle of a once-great empire is easy at Schloss Habsburg, a medieval fortress built by Werner, bishop of Strasbourg and Count Radbot in a forest outside Baden in 1020. The count called his castle Habichtsburg ('Hawk's Castle') – the views are eagle-eyed – and his grandson Otto II added 'von Habsburg' ('from Habsburg') to his name to reflect his castle address. The powerful House of Habsburg was born.

*For more on Schloss Habsburg, see page 191*

### 4. Bundesbriefmuseum, Schwyz

#### MODERN BEGINNINGS

Only in Switzerland could a country's founding charter be signed in a meadow, strewn no doubt with a panoply of wild

flowers and bell-clanging cows. When Habsburg ruler Rudolph I (1218–91) died, the Swiss made a grab for independence. On 1 August 1291, the forest communities of Uri, Schwyz and Nidwalden gathered on Rütli Meadow to sign an alliance vowing not to recognise any external judge or law. The prized relic, displayed at Schwyz's Bundesbriefmuseum, is deemed the founding act of the Swiss Confederation. Its Latin name (Confoederatio Helvetica) survives in Switzerland's 'CH' abbreviation.

*For more on Bundesbriefmuseum, Schwyz, see page 171*

### 5. Triesenberg, Liechtenstein

#### WALSER MIGRATION

Tiptoe into Liechtenstein from northeastern Switzerland in the footsteps of the Walsers, German-speaking cattle breeders and farmers from Switzerland's Upper Valais who left their homeland in the 12th and 13th century to settle elsewhere in Europe.

They left in small groups, at different times, travelling with their livestock to plains at higher altitude where they could mete out a living. In Liechtenstein, they settled on a rocky crag above the Rhine Valley to form the mountain hamlet of Triesenberg. Today, you can listen to the Walser dialect and relive the Walser story at Triesenberg's Walsermuseum.

*For more on Triesenberg, Liechtenstein, see page 249*

### 6. Castelgrande, Bellinzona

#### SWISS MERCENARIES

Every Swiss man aged 18 to 30 is obliged to do military service in Switzerland, but actually fighting a war is unthinkable in a country whose neutrality has been woven into its constitution since 1848. In the 15th century, Swiss mercenaries were highly prized by European armies, known for their precision on the battlefield.

Some 12,000 Swiss mercenaries fought for Louis XII against the Duchy of Milan in 1499. When the French king refused to pay his mercenaries, they seized Bellinzona with its fortress, Castelgrande – under Milan's control – forcing Louis XII to relinquish it to the Swiss in 1503.

*For more on Castelgrande, Bellinzona, see page 146*

Fossil Museum, Meride



AGF SRL/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO ©

## 7. Cathédrale St-Pierre, Geneva

### A NEUTRAL REFUGE

When the religious Thirty Years' War (1618–48) broke out in Europe, Switzerland's neutrality and diversity combined to give it some protection. While French theologian and zealous preacher Jean Calvin (1509–64) paved the way for the Protestant Reformation in Geneva, Central Switzerland remained Catholic.

Such was the internal division that the Swiss, unable to agree even among themselves as to which side to take in the Thirty Years' War, simply stuck to neutrality. Today, you can follow Jean Calvin from the cathedral to the Musée International de la Réforme in Geneva.

*For more on Cathédrale St-Pierre, Geneva, see page 48*

## 8. Bundeshaus, Bern

### THE RIGHT TO VOTE

Bloody 'Hare shoot' civil war between Protestants and Catholics in 1847 prompted the peace-loving Swiss to create a new federal constitution. They made Bern their capital city. Inside the Bundeshaus, the lower and upper national chambers of the Swiss Federal Assembly (Swiss Parliament) meet four times a year – anyone can watch sessions from the public gallery.

Since 1874 many federal laws can famously be approved by national referendum. Until 1971, when Swiss women won the right to vote, just 5% of the 200-person upper chamber were women; now it's 42%.

*For more on Bundeshaus, see page 92*

## 9. Cresta Run

### WORLD'S FIRST WINTER-SPORTS RESORT

British climbers began bagging Swiss alpine peaks in the 19th century, and in 1864 a St Moritz hotelier dared open his doors in winter. Overnight, the winter wonderland of St Moritz, with its intoxicating 'champagne climate', became the place to be among British aristocracy.

Hotels, railways, cable cars and the craziest of toboggan runs followed: Brits staying at St Moritz' Kulm Hotel invented the first steerable sled in the 1870s, and in 1885 the hotel had the terrifying 'head-first' Cresta Run carved in ice on St Moritz' northern fringe to amuse its guests.

*For more on Cresta Run, see page 240*

## 10. Musée International de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge, Geneva

### HUMANITARIAN GOLD

After witnessing slaughter and the untended wounded at the Battle of Solferino in northern Italy in 1859, Genevan businessman and pacifist Henri Dunant returned home to cofound the Red Cross movement in 1863. Geneva's International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum trawls through atrocities perpetuated by humanity, but Dunant's noble aims shine. The Geneva Convention he pioneered in 1864 to protect medical staff and the wounded on the battlefield during wartime (updated since then to include prisoners of war, civilians and victims of war) remains the cornerstone of international humanitarian law.

*For more on Musée International de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge, Geneva, see page 49*

## 11. Lake Uri

### CLAIMING SWISS SOIL

As was the case in WWI, Switzerland remained neutral during WWII. To show the world how determined the Swiss were to defend their own soil, Henri Guisan, general of the civilian army, invited top military personnel to Rütli Meadow – site of the 1291 Oath of Allegiance. Swiss politicians gather here every 1 August to celebrate Swiss National Day. You can walk to the meadow via the Swiss Path, a 35km loop around Lake Uri. Waymarkers denote the Swiss cantons by size: 5mm of track represents one Swiss resident.

*For more on Lake Uri, see page 171*

## 12. Zug

### STREETS PAVED IN GOLD

Switzerland's legendary era of secret Swiss bank accounts, which helped foster its prosperous reputation postwar as Sonderfall Schweiz (literally 'special-case Switzerland'), ended in 2018. In line with international transparency standards, new laws stated account details must be shared with other nations' tax authorities.

Yet Switzerland remained an attractive place to stash cash. Each canton sets its own tax rates, encouraging individuals and businesses to 'play' the canton market: with one of the lowest tax rates in Switzerland, the small town of Zug on the glittering





**Globe of Science and Innovation, CERN**

shore of Zugersee is tycoon central: one in eight residents are millionaires (at least).

*For more on Zug, see page 173*

### 13. CERN

#### DIGITAL REVOLUTION

When Tim Berners Lee, a British scientist working at Geneva's European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), developed a computer language in 1989 to automate sharing information between fellow scientists and academics around the world, he did not quite realise the global impact it would have. Using his new language, HTML, he prepared pages for the World Wide Web and could link text to graphics – all with the intention of creating a shared information system for the 17,000-plus scientists CERN worked with in 100 countries. By 1990, the world's first web server was functioning in Geneva.

*For more on CERN, see page 49*

### 14. Aletsch Glacier

#### WARMING CLIMES

There's no more visible sign of global warming than a melting glacier – and approximately half of Europe's glaciers are in Switzerland. Swiss glaciers lost half their volume between 1931 and 2016, another 12% between 2016 and 2021, and are feared to disappear completely within

70 years. This includes the country's iconic giant, the Unesco World Heritage-listed Aletsch Glacier in the Valais, which currently lures glacier curios onto its magnificent ice-sculpted tongue.

To add insult to injury, in August 2023 the zero-degree limit in Switzerland – measured daily since 1954 by weather balloons in Payerne – hit a record altitude of 5298m.

*For more on Aletsch Glacier, see page 140*

### 15. Sasso San Gottardo

#### BUNKER CULTURE

Neurotic or prepared for any eventuality? Since 2010, some of Switzerland's estimated 8000 underground bunkers have been decommissioned and revamped as wellness centres, no-star hotels, cryptocurrency storage facilities.

But in 2023, with the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war and shifting geopolitical threats, the Swiss army announced it was reassessing its bunker strategy. From 1937, with the growing threat of war in Europe, Switzerland built extensive fortifications in the Swiss Alps. On the St Gotthard Pass (2106m) at Sasso San Gottardo, subterranean tunnels extend for 2km underground – a vast fortress hidden inside a mountain.

*For more on Sasso San Gottardo, see page 177*

# MEET THE SWISS

With four different language communities living together in harmony, prosperous towns and cities running like clockwork and breathtaking scenery in every direction, there's no doubt that fortune has smiled on the Swiss. By Clare O'Dea.

**THE SWISS HAVE** the quiet confidence of people who feel they've made the right choices in life. This includes taking care to do things properly. A common word in French and German is *correct* and *korrekt* respectively. Meaning 'acceptable' or 'done properly', it is used in an approving way to describe a deal or service.

The Swiss care about things being 'correct' and the high standard of living in Switzerland has given the natives high expectations. Much attention is paid to the quality of everything. Public services are excellent and there is a strong emphasis on individual responsibility. If you pick up a product in a shop and then decide not to buy it, you put it back in the right place.

Newcomers to Switzerland enjoy all the benefits of everyone working together to ensure order, but they can also feel constrained by these norms. Over time, as I experienced, you adopt them because the social contract is worth it, and because the Swiss also enjoy their country to the full.

The Swiss love the outdoors and are constantly on the move in their spare time – hiking, skiing, running, cycling, swimming, playing ball games. They have one of the highest sport participation rates in the world, at 75%, and are in excellent shape, with long life expectancy and low obesity rates. They are joiners, with a choice of

clubs and associations for every imaginable activity. One thing visitors notice is that the locals are nonconfrontational, and tend not to speak loudly in public. This subdued behaviour has been labelled boring by commentators over the years, but politeness and mutual respect is harder to give up once you've grown accustomed to it. A key exception to this reserved behaviour is ice hockey games and the nationwide Carnival celebrations. That's when the Swiss show their wild side.

Thanks to the country's federalist past – and present – regional identities are embraced. If you get close to a Swiss person, you will hear a lot more about their canton than their country. For the Swiss Germans, the distinctiveness of their

cantonal dialect is a badge of honour. The 26 cantons have their own parliaments, police forces and character. Six are French-speaking, Ticino is Italian-speaking and the rest are Swiss German, with a pocket of Romansh in Graubünden.

Geography definitely imposes itself in Switzerland. This is a nation shaped by the mountains, both the inconvenience of them – taking up two-thirds of the country's land surface – and the enjoyment of them. The Swiss have great affection for their high-altitude playground, and regularly need their fix. Visitors tend to feel the same.

## High Altitude

*This is a nation shaped by the mountains, both the inconvenience of them – taking up two-thirds of the country's land surface – and the enjoyment of them.*



## NO SUCH THING AS TYPICALLY SWISS

Switzerland was never on my radar as a place to live, but I ended up moving here from Ireland two decades ago for love. Now that I've lived most of my adult life here, I have developed Swiss sensitivities. I, too, want things to be 'correct'!

One in four Swiss residents is foreign-born, like me. Despite some resistance to fully integrating the new Swiss, such

as high barriers to naturalisation, society is flexible enough to accommodate this diversity, and Switzerland benefits from the fresh ideas and the energy of its immigrants.

Outside politics and sports, there are few nationally recognised figures and it sometimes seems as if the different language groups are living in parallel societies inside

shared borders. Each group has its own media personalities, actors, artists and thinkers.

But the active nature of Swiss democracy has a unifying effect. Four times a year, voters get to decide on large and small matters, sometimes overturning years of work by parliament, sometimes introducing completely new laws suggested by their fellow citizens. I vote, therefore I am – Swiss.

# THE SIMPLE BEAUTY OF SWISS DESIGN

From typeface fonts to bags made from recycled materials, contemporary and modern Swiss design has global influence.

By Simon Richmond.

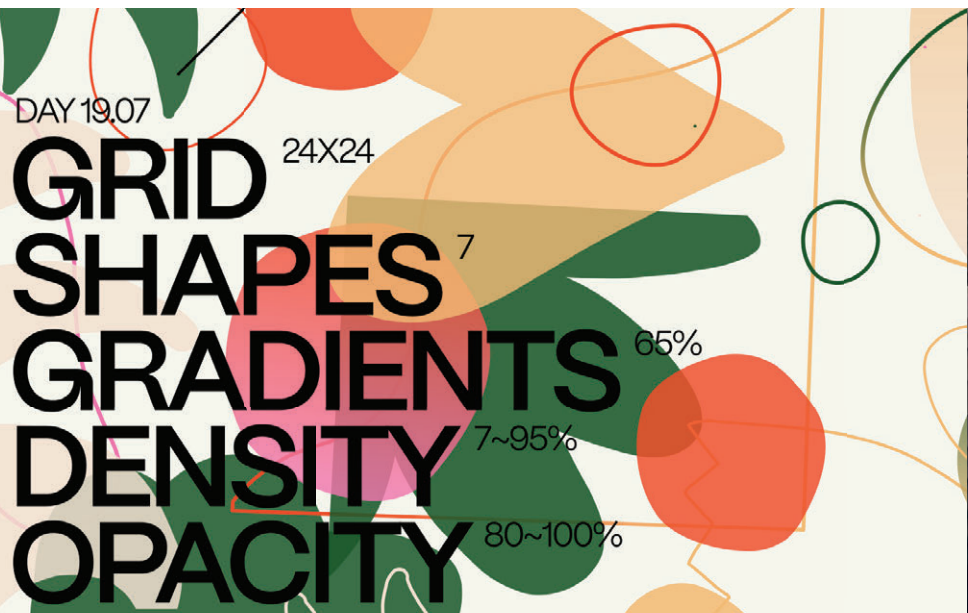
**WHAT LINKS AMERICAN** Apparel, Lufthansa and Skype? The answer is that they all use variants of the typeface Helvetica for their logos. Originally called Neue Haas Grotesk, and inspired by an earlier typeface Akzidenz-Grotesk, Helvetica was created in 1957 by Basel-based Max Miedinger and Eduard Hoffmann. In 1960, it was renamed Helvetica, a direct reference to Helvetia, the Latin name of Switzerland.

Over half a century later, Helvetica is one of the most famous and ubiquitous typefaces in the world, synonymous with the clean, mathematically precise lines,

functionality and elegant simplicity of what is known as Swiss Style (also called International Typographic Style). The 'new graphics' of Swiss creatives Josef Müller-Brockmann (1914–96) and Max Bill (1908–94) are still highly regarded, as is the branding work by Karl Gerstner (1930–2017) for IBM. Since 1995, the Bern-based Büro Destruct graphic design studio have created contemporary typefaces that have featured on many album covers, such as Mario Batkovic's *Introspectio*.

It's not just on product packaging, magazine pages or billboards that Swiss designers

Poster, Helvetica typography



DAY 19.07

24X24

7

65%

7~95%

80~100%



have had an effect. In the last century, product design has come to the fore. Swiss army knives, Swatch watches and, since 2010, On running shoes are all Swiss-designed items that have been global consumer hits.

Dominating the concourse of Zürich's Hauptbahnhof is a familiar-looking clock. This is the original location of the official Swiss Railways (SBB) clock, designed in the 1940s by railway engineer Hans Hilfiker and launched in its current form in 1955. The clock's most distinctive feature is the vivid red seconds hand with its circular end, which recalls the red signalling paddles used by train staff.

When the seconds hand reaches 12 it pauses for a second and a half before the minute hand leaps forward as it receives an electronic impulse from SBB's central master-clock. In this way, trains are perfectly synchronised. Swiss timepiece company Mondaine, which has held the production licence for the clock since 1986, produces a wristwatch version that has been selected by both the London Design Museum and New York's MoMA as one of the most noteworthy examples of 20th-century design. You don't have to

go far in Zürich to find other examples of enduring Swiss design. The Museum für Gestaltung (p202) is Switzerland's leading museum for design and visual communication. It has been gathering both utilitarian and sophisticated design objects since 1875 and has amassed a collection of over half a million pieces. Among them is the Rex vegetable peeler. Designed in 1935 by Alfred Neweczerzal in his Zürich garage,

the aluminium gadget's ergonomic form, ability to keep peelings thin (thus maximising each piece of food) and low price point made it an instant hit. It's something that you'll find in nearly every Swiss kitchen and

further afield, as over 70 million Rex peelers have been sold worldwide.

If you're looking for Swiss design on a larger scale, go no further than Pavillon Le Corbusier in Zürich. This was the Swiss-born architect Le Corbusier's final flourish, commissioned in the early 1960s by Heidi Weber, a gallerist who also successfully relaunched the production of iconic furniture, such as the LC2 armchair, created by Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeanneret and Charlotte Perriand in 1929.

Other notable Swiss architects since the 1980s include Mario Botta, whose distinctive buildings can be seen in the Ticino region; and Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron of Basel-based Herzog & de Meuron – their Roche Tower 2, which opened in 2022, is Switzerland's tallest building.

In the 21st century, sustainability can be added to the list of hallmarks of contemporary Swiss design. Slightly ahead of the curve were brothers Markus and Daniel Freitag. In 1993, Markus had an idea to recycle old truck tarpaulin, seatbelts and bicycle inner tubes into a waterproof bag modelled on those used by bicycle couriers. Today the brothers' FREITAG company sells around 400,000 bags and accessories a year, each one unique and made from recycled materials. Their original bag design is another Swiss product that's part of MoMA's permanent collection.

### SWISS DESIGNERS HAVE HAD AN EFFECT ON EVERYTHING FROM PRODUCT PACKAGING AND MAGAZINE PAGES TO BILLBOARDS.

Mondaine Swiss Railways clock



WIRESTOCK CREATORS/SHUTTERSTOCK ©; FAR LEFT: PRESSURBAU/GETTY IMAGES ©





Electric train, the Alps

# SWISS TRANSPORT GOING GREENER

Switzerland's transport network is reacting to the climate emergency with ever-greener ways to access the landscape. By Caroline Bishop.

**IF THERE'S ONE** thing everyone knows about Switzerland, it's that the public transport system is tip top, to borrow the Swiss-German vernacular. While a late Swiss train isn't unheard of, the country enjoys one of the best transport networks in the world, one that regularly breaks records. From Europe's oldest mountain railway (Rigibahn, 1871) and highest rail station (Jungfrauoch, 3454m) to the world's longest and deepest rail tunnel (Gotthard Base Tunnel, 57km) and steepest funicular (Stoosbahn, 110%), Switzerland has long risen to the challenge presented by its diverse topography.

But Switzerland is heating up. In 2022 the country experienced its hottest summer since records began, while Swiss glaciers lost a whopping 10 percent of their volume across the summers of 2022 and 2023, the

same as the volume of ice lost from 1960 to 1990. Winters are warmer, too, with many low-altitude ski resorts experiencing shorter seasons. The Institute for Snow and Avalanche Research (SLF) predicts that the Swiss snowpack could shrink by up to 70% by the end of the century.

As the climate emergency becomes more urgent, how to ensure this incredible transport network can mitigate damage to its beautiful countryside? In visiting Switzerland's mighty glaciers and skiing its peaks, we all contribute to this, but taking public transport instead of driving is one way we can minimise our impact, not least because this already sustainably minded way to travel is becoming ever greener, as low emission and energy-reducing transport innovations are implemented across the country.

## Hydropowered Travel

ROMAN MICHALLUK/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Switzerland's first ever railway line opened between Zürich and Baden in 1847. Known as the Spanisch Brötlibahn (because it enabled people in Zürich to eat the Spanish bun, a Baden speciality, fresh out of the oven), this steam train was the start of a network that was to develop into the backbone of Switzerland's transport system. Today, every Swiss resident takes around 53 train journeys a year, a world record in train usage. In doing so, they're using an inherently green method of transport.

While the country was late on the uptake to build railways, it was an early adopter of electricity to power its trains. The first electric rack railway, the Gornergrat Bahn, opened in 1898 and has been taking passengers from Zermatt up to a superlative view of the Matterhorn ever since. Rail company BLS launched the electrified Lötschberg line in 1913, and in 1920 the country's principal rail operator, SBB (Swiss Federal Railways) built its first electrified railway, the Gotthard line. Lacking sources of fossil fuels, Switzerland's electrification was fuelled by renewable hydropower, drawing on the meltwater thundering down its waterfalls and rivers.

These days, 90% of SBB's network is powered by hydroelectricity, expected to rise to 100% by 2025. As a result, trains account for just 0.2 percent of Switzerland's transport-derived CO2 emissions. SBB does rely on fossil fuels in other ways, but is aiming to halve its emissions by 2030.

Linking seamlessly with trains, the country's distinctive yellow PostBuses form another essential part of public transport, whisking passengers from mainline stations to the remotest mountain villages. The company already has a few electric buses in service, powered by renewable energy sources, as well as some fuel-reducing hybrid buses. If technology allows for batteries with sufficient range, it aims to run its entire fleet on renewable energy by 2040.

## Efficiency is Key

So far so good, but efficient use of this renewable energy is just as important. As glaciers retreat, the availability of Swiss hydropower may be affected, just one reason why energy-saving technology is vital to

any new transport project. In the car-free mountain village of Stoos, for example, waste heat from the engine room of the world's steepest funicular, built in 2017, heats the mountain station, shop and Stoos Lodge hotel, while hot water in the latter is heated using the funicular's recuperative braking energy.

Elsewhere, solar power is being adopted as an alternative to hydro. In Appenzellerland, the energy-neutral Frösens–Staubern gondola runs on a solar-powered battery and not only generates electricity but stores it, meaning it can run after dark. In Zermatt, the Matterhorn Glacier Ride II, which opened in 2023, has solar panels built into its mountain station, adding to the many photovoltaic systems already in use in the ski area, which benefits from 220 sunny days a year. Solar power is also harnessed in Verbier, at the Brunni-Ristis ski area in Engelberg, and at the Stanserhorn near Lucerne.

## Countdown to the Last Day

Another place prioritising sustainable transport is Flims-Laax-Falera in Graubünden. Weisse Arena Group, which runs the resort, introduced a 'greenstyle' strategy in 2010, with the aim of eventually running the whole area on locally produced renewables. As well as energy-efficient cable cars equipped with heat-recovery systems, and an e-shuttle run on renewables, its latest transport innovation is the FlemXpress, an on-demand cableway. Equipped with an innovative Ropetaxi system, the cable car can be summoned by passengers and instructed to take them directly to one of six stations. By cutting out unnecessary trips and never running when empty, it uses up to half the energy of conventional gondolas.

Just to ram home the point of all this, the resort has also created the Last Day Pass, a ski pass for the predicted last day of skiing on the Vorab Glacier above Laax, currently estimated to be 7 April 2056. Priced at Sfr80, it supports carbon compensation and tree-planting schemes, hopefully slowing down the glacier's melt rate and putting off that 'last day' just a little bit longer. It's an effective way to show that we must all play our part if we want to preserve Switzerland's glaciers and snowfields.

# THE DARK SIDE OF THE ALPS

They have a special place in Swiss hearts and minds, but what's really up in the Alps? By Anthony Haywood

**SWITZERLAND'S ALPS ARE** famed for their rugged peaks, carved valleys, high pastures and glaciers, and occupy a very special space in national consciousness. They are celebrated in literature, folklore, music, myth and legend, and the Alps even have their very own instrument – the alpenhorn, an upsized fingerless woodwind horn dating back to the Middle Ages. For the author and poet Eugène Rambert (1830–86), the Alps were a homeland, unchanging and eternal, and stood for valour and tradition. North Americans have the wilderness, Australians the outback, Argentineans the pampas, and the Swiss have the

Alps. Although, strictly speaking, it is a little on the low side to be alpine, the Rütliwiese (Rütli Meadow, p173) has an alpine whiff about it, and it was here, legend tells us, in 1291 that the founding cantons Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden got together and swore an oath, creating the germ of the Old Swiss Confederacy and a precursor of the Swiss nation.

And not to forget Heidi, Swiss author Johanna Spyri's young heroine, who is sent up to an alpine meadow and, despite a few teething problems, slips into an idyllic and pure life at one with nature, before being shunted off miserably



to Frankfurt am Main in Germany. But there is also a spooky, dark side of the Alps beyond all this horn-blowing, yodelling, cow-tending, bearded goat-herding national purity. Her name is Sennentuntschi, and as far as legends above the treeline and below the belt go, she's quite a ripping yarn. It has many different versions, and has been turned into a film, and a play by Hansjörg Schneider that shocked with its course language and explicitness.

In a production by the Bern Stadttheater in 2009, the audience watched the events voyeuristically through a mostly closed window.

A 'Senn' is an alpine herder who during the warmest part of summer drives cattle into the pastures of the alpine meadows. This 'Aufzug' and 'Abzug' (cattle drive to, and down from, alpine meadows) is celebrated in many different parts of Switzerland, but most famously in and around Appenzell (p221). Sometimes it is called the

**THERE IS ALSO  
A SPOOKY, DARK  
SIDE OF THE ALPS  
BEYOND ALL THIS  
HORN-BLOWING,  
YODELLING,  
COW-TENDING,  
BEARDED  
GOAT-HERDING  
NATIONAL PURITY**

'Alpauffahrt' and 'Alpabfahrt'. According to a version from Felix Rühl in his book *Schweizer Bergsagen* (Swiss Mountain Legends), the head herder creates a doll out of straw and wood, giving it large breasts, a mouth and ruby lips, hair and eyes. The herders, taking a liking to their new companion, dance with her, seat her at the table when they eat, and feed her.

In another version of this legend from the canton of Uri, Sennentuntschi is more like an overworked housewife who also helps out on the pastures, but in most versions of the legend the herders take their homemade doll to bed with them. All would be well and fine – if just a little kinky – but for the

fact that Sennentuntschi comes to life. Felix Rühl's version is embellished with some entertaining details about her greed at the breakfast table, where she hogs all the cheese and bread, and sits with legs splayed.

After the herders try unsuccessfully to dispose of her by tearing her apart, and another time by throwing her in a ravine, she turns up again to taunt them, laughing and flashing her naked backside. But as must happen in all good Sennentuntschi legends, the time arrives for the herders to come down from their summer pasture.

Obviously, they are ashamed of their secret and resolve to leave her there. This is where everything gets very messy. Our legendary Sennentuntschi is unhappy about being left alone, and demands that one of the herders remain to keep her company. The others can leave on the condition that they don't look back before reaching the treeline. They flee, but on looking back their blood curdles as they see their remaining herder, bloody and skinned alive by Sennentuntschi, his skin laid out on the roof of the meadow hut.

So while enjoying a rest on a bucolic meadow, allow your thoughts to wander to this legendary dark side of the Alps.

**Matterhorn (p135)**



BRILLIANT EYE/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



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