

# Switzerland

2020

**+** TOUR GUIDE

## Explore Switzerland's Religious Heritage

- Lucerne
- St. Gallen ■ Zurich

### A World of Outdoor Activities

Open-air enthusiasts love Switzerland's natural beauty

### Swiss Delights

A heavenly culinary scene attracts food lovers

### Seeing Switzerland by Train, Bus and Boat

The Swiss Travel System makes group travel a breeze



**Isabelle Minder**  
Trade Manager Eastern USA, Switzerland Tourism

# Welcome to Switzerland

Dear Group Leaders,

Would you like to conquer mountains like Mount Pilatus or Mount Titlis in the Lucerne region, dive bravely into the crystal-clear water of Lake Zurich or discover one of the 12 UNESCO World Heritage sites like the Abbey District in St. Gallen? Then we've got just what you need. The landscape of Switzerland is more varied than almost any other place on earth.

Switzerland is a hiking paradise. Leave the stress of everyday life behind, hike through alpine meadows, explore a forest, or ascend a peak. Thanks to over 40,000 miles (65,000 km) of waymarked trails, virtually every corner of Switzerland is waiting to be discovered. Switzerland offers excursions for groups of all activity levels and all year-round. From scenic trails and stunning views to enjoy in summer, to pillows of powder and perfectly groomed pistes to ride in the winter.

See Switzerland through the eyes of its citizens and use the seamless public transportation. Moving around the country by train, bus or boat is easy, convenient and an experience in itself. All you have to do is lean back and relax.

To relax even more – try yodeling, it's fun! Yodeling was developed in the Swiss Alps as a method of communication between mountain peaks, and it later became a part of the traditional music of the Alpine region.

We're currently yodeling a lot ourselves, as we're full of joy. Travel to Switzerland from North America is booming. In 2018, we celebrated record numbers and the double-digit percentage growth in terms of overnights has continued in the first half of 2019.

The Swiss like to celebrate and know how to put on a festival. From exquisite chocolate to melodious music to spectacular balloons ascending, Switzerland's festivals have something for everyone. It is no coincidence that Switzerland is one of earth's happiest countries. Facts show that eating chocolate makes you happy. Switzerland does not only produce the most chocolate in the world, Swiss people also consume the most chocolate per capita compared to any other country in the world.

At Switzerland Tourism, group travel is very important to us, and we're excited to partner with Leisure Group Travel on this Switzerland Tour Guide. In the guide, we present ideas for faith-based groups, outdoor lovers, train enthusiasts and winter visitors.

We're here to support you, the group leader, in creating and selling your programs. We offer you an eLearning program, Switzerland Travel Academy, with various modules depending on your specialty, bi-weekly webinars, study trips, maps and brochures and many other programs to support the travel trade.

We can promise that your group's tour will run as precisely as a Swiss watch and as smoothly as a Swiss train. Your travelers certainly won't be disappointed.

**Welcome to Switzerland!**

**Isabelle Minder**  
Trade Manager Eastern USA, Switzerland Tourism



# Switzerland <sup>2020</sup>

**TOUR GUIDE**

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# EXPLORE SWITZERLAND'S RELIGIOUS HERITAGE

**W**hen faith-based groups contemplate which European destination to visit, Switzerland typically surfaces as a top destination. Switzerland has a strong sense of family values and features a litany of religious traditions. The architectural majesty of centuries-old churches and monasteries, along with Switzerland's roots in the Reformation movement that cascaded across Europe 500 years ago, gives Christian groups ample reasons to visit. The following pages spotlight three majestic cities filled with religious history: **Lucerne**, **St. Gallen** and **Zurich**.





# CAPTIVATING LUCERNE

This lakeside city captures the essence of Switzerland

By Don Heimburger

**L**ucerne, with the magnificent Alps at its doorstep, nestles up to **Lake Lucerne**, which offers spectacular lake views, convenient boat transportation and numerous leisure activities.

Just a little over an hour away from Zurich Airport by rail, Lucerne, population 81,000, is an international draw for tourists, commanding important sites of religious significance as well as a beautiful setting.

Located on the River Reuss, the city lies on the **Way of St. James**, the popular pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela, Spain. The area was the 15th century home of **Brother Klaus**, a visionary, politician and Switzerland's only saint. A museum dedicated to the spiritual leader is in Sachseln, about 30 minutes from Lucerne.

A nexus of economics, transportation and culture, Lucerne is a lively community that presents a rich tapestry of religious life dating

back hundreds of years. The town began as the 8th century Benedictine monastery of St. Leodegar. Ornate wooden pews as well as simpler pews are a reminder of the different classes of worshippers who attended the **Church of St. Leodegar** centuries ago.

The landmark church, built in the 1630s, is renowned for its gilt statuary and altars and art from the German Late Renaissance. St. Leodegar is noted for introducing the



**Counter Reformation** to Switzerland.

Other important churches include the 13th century, Gothic-style **Franciscan Church**, which once doubled as Lucerne's city hall, and the **Jesuit Church**, the first large Baroque-style church built north of the Alps. The cornerstone of the Jesuit Church was laid in 1666; its twin onion-domed towers dominate the cityscape near the River Reuss.

**St. Paul's Church**, dating to 1912, features exquisite glass paintings, and **St. Matthew Church** was the first Protestant church in Lucerne, designed around 1860.


The 656-foot-long (200 m) **Chapel Bridge**, the world's oldest truss bridge and the symbol of Lucerne, is a must-see; thirty 14th century paintings depict historic events in the town's history. The adjacent tower predates the bridge itself.

One of the most visited museums in all of Switzerland is the large and multi-faceted **Swiss Museum of Transport**. The country's first diesel locomotive is on display, along with other historic trains, 30 aircrafts, a fleet of automobiles from all eras, ship exhibits and an IMAX theater.

In **Engelberg**, a 50-minute train ride from Lucerne, the 12th century Benedictine monastery

features Switzerland's largest church organ, an impressive collegiate library, a museum, a dairy and manor house. Engelberg, in the **Uri Alps**, is a mountain resort town known for its alpine character. **Mt. Titlis**, a 10,020-foot-high (3,200 m) peak near Engelberg, offers downhill skiing and boasts the highest suspension bridge in Europe. Also nearby is **Brunni**, another popular mountain that attracts families and the sports-minded in both in winter and summer.


Other Lucerne-area attractions include 6,982-foot-high (2,128 m) **Mt. Pilatus**, called the Dragon Mountain. The train to the top, the world's steepest cogwheel railway, has a gradient of 48 percent. At the top you can enjoy a meal or stay overnight in a hotel. The first run of the mountain railway was in 1871, and steam locomotives still operate today on occasion. Numerous hiking trails thread the mountainside.

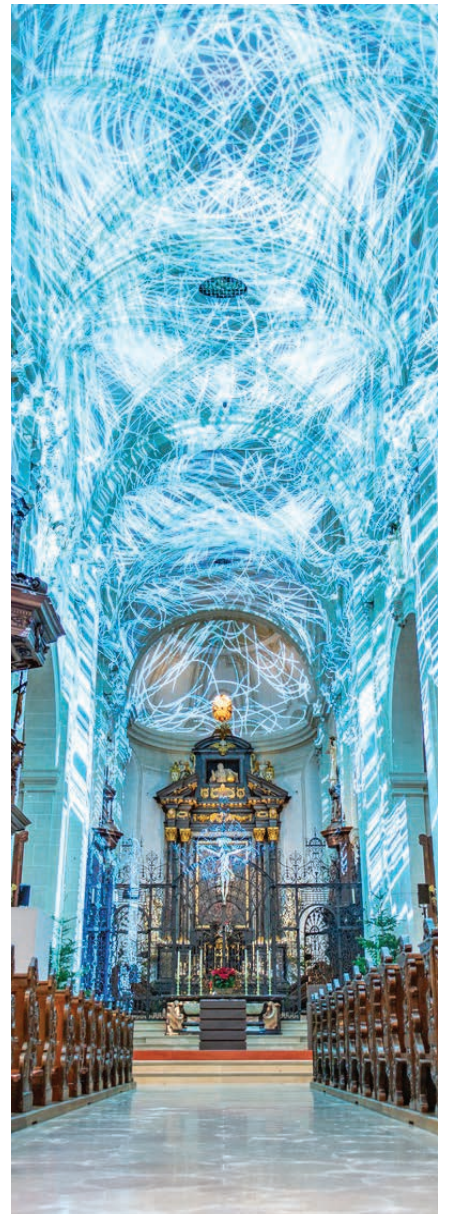
The boats of **Lake Lucerne Navigation Company**, including majestic paddlewheel steamships, serve 33 communities in the region. Regularly scheduled and special excursion boats, many offering beverages, snacks and complete meals, run daily all year round. 

## LUCERNE'S DAZZLING LIGHT SHOW

**S**ince the late Middle Ages, Lucerne has been known as the City of Lights, and the **Lilu Festival of Lights** celebrates that aspect of its heritage from January 9-19, 2020.

In January 2020, the popular city-wide festival will take place every evening between 6 and 10 p.m., with an array of Swiss and international artists showcasing light in all its fascinating facets. Residents and visitors will be enthralled by stunning luminous artworks in town squares, Old Town alleyways and various locations around Lucerne.

For information about events taking place in Lucerne, visit [www.luzern.com/topevents](http://www.luzern.com/topevents). 



*Genesis Light Show in the Hofkirche, the Church of St. Leodegar*

*LTAG/Elmar Bossard*

*The covered Chapel Bridge and its tower are symbols of Lucerne. Mt. Pilatus looms in the distance.*

*Switzerland Tourism*





# HISTORICAL TREASURES OF ST. GALLEN

The Abbey District preserves a rich religious heritage

By Don Heimburger

**J**ust 15 miles from the shores of Lake Constance and set in the verdant Steinach Valley, St. Gallen, a city of 76,000 with a traffic-free Old Town, has been inspiring the faithful for centuries.

The city's religious traditions revolve around the twin-tower **St. Gallen Cathedral** and the **Abbey District** with its stunning **Abbey Library**. Both the library—dating to 820 and containing

170,000 books, various historical documents and 2,000 invaluable medieval manuscripts—and the entire district have been UNESCO World Heritage sites since 1983.

The Baroque cathedral's remarkable white interior is adorned with green stucco ornamentation, rose marble altars and a gilded altar screen. Ceiling frescoes depict Biblical characters, and throngs of cherubs and

saints gaze upon the scene from the clouds of heaven. Thousands annually make the pilgrimage to St. Gallen to strengthen their spiritual faith and explore the Abbey District.

The oldest part of the cathedral (also known as the **Collegiate Church of St. Gallen**) is a small 9th century crypt that holds the graves of several abbots and bishops as well as Saint Othmar, the founder of the monastery. In 747





he introduced the Benedictine Rule, which set out the rules for medieval monks.

St. Gallen began as a hermitage by the Irish missionary Gallus, who established roots here around 612. During the Middle Ages the town evolved into an important center of culture and education. The Abbey of St. Gallen has existed since 719. It became an independent principality between the 9th and 13th centuries and was one of the chief Benedictine abbeys in Europe. The northern section of the abbey square consists of buildings from the 19th century and includes the ancient arsenal, **Children's and Guardian Angels' Chapel** and the former Catholic school.

The cathedral, completed in 1767, was designed by Peter Thumb, who also designed the Abbey Library. Among its rich decorations are frescoes painted by Josef Wannemacher and the most complete set of historic church bells in Switzerland.

An original monastery plan in parchment, probably created between 819 and 826, is now on display at the new exhibition hall in the Abbey District. The parchment is the earliest

known representation of a monastery district from the Middle Ages.

The city of St. Gallen itself, once a textile manufacturing town, is the economic and cultural capital of eastern Switzerland, and today hosts opera, hip-hop performances, art exhibitions, contemporary dance theater and poetry competitions. Its cozy restaurants, art museums, spacious green parks, busy shopping districts and intriguing alleys all attest to a lively, bustling city that is friendly and laid-back.

Other attractions in St. Gallen include the **Natural History Museum, Textile Museum, St. Laurenzen Protestant Church** (built for the citizens of St. Gallen's Old Town) and **Roter Platz** (Red Square), where benches, fountains, sculptures and a car are coated in red. The **Drei Weieren** consists of three pools that supplied the textile mills and previously were used by monks to cool off.

St. Gallen is also known as the **City of 700 Stars**, a spectacle that celebrates its 10th anniversary in 2019. These specially-made lighted stars will again illuminate the city's streets and squares during Advent. 🇨🇭

## ORIELS, OLD TOWN AND A PRIZED SAUSAGE

**T**hree unique aspects of St. Gallen are its unusual oriel windows, quaint Old Town and white "Bratwurst" (veal sausage).

As many as 111 elaborate oriels—small projecting bay windows—have been preserved and adorn house facades in the Old Town pedestrian area. These carved, beautifully decorated architectural features tell the history of the town's successful textile merchants. Most of the artistically cut oriels are to be found on four streets – Spisergasse, Marktgasse, Kugelgasse and Schmiedgasse.

St. Gallen experienced an oriel construction boom between 1650 and 1720. Some of the oriels have names such as **Camel Oriel, Pelican Oriel** and **Swan Oriel**. The oriels, which are typically seen on the second and third floors, are said to have been symbols of wealth. Residents often had these windows decorated with carvings of things they had seen on exotic journeys throughout the world.

As in many Swiss cities, St. Gallen's **Old Town** is a historic core that invites you to get immersed in its atmospheric, cobbled streets. Tempting cafes, bars and restaurants are housed in the colorful facades. Join a guided tour of the Old Town or just wander through the narrow, winding streets with boutiques, art galleries and bakeries. Restaurants feature a variety of cuisine, from Swiss, Spanish and American to Vietnamese and Thai. You can dine outdoors in good weather.

While in St. Gallen, sample the famous white veal sausage, a clear favorite at barbecues, fetes and festivals in the region. In 2007 it was awarded special recognition status, of which the city's butchers are proud. St. Gallen residents prefer their favorite sausage served crisp and brown from the grill, accompanied by a crunchy bread roll. 🇨🇭

*St. Gallen's twin-tower Baroque cathedral is part of its famous Abbey District.*

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*St. Gallen's Old Town*  
*Switzerland Tourism*



# DISCOVERING ZURICH

The city takes pride in its churches, museums and history

By Don Heimburger

**S**witzerland's largest city, with more than 400,000 inhabitants, is a magnet for thousands who flock to this international hub for business, pleasure and religious reasons. Located on the **Limmat River** and **Lake Zurich**, the city boasts large and influential financial, industrial and commercial sectors.

Zurich is a hub for railways, highways and air traffic. Both Zurich's airport and its railway

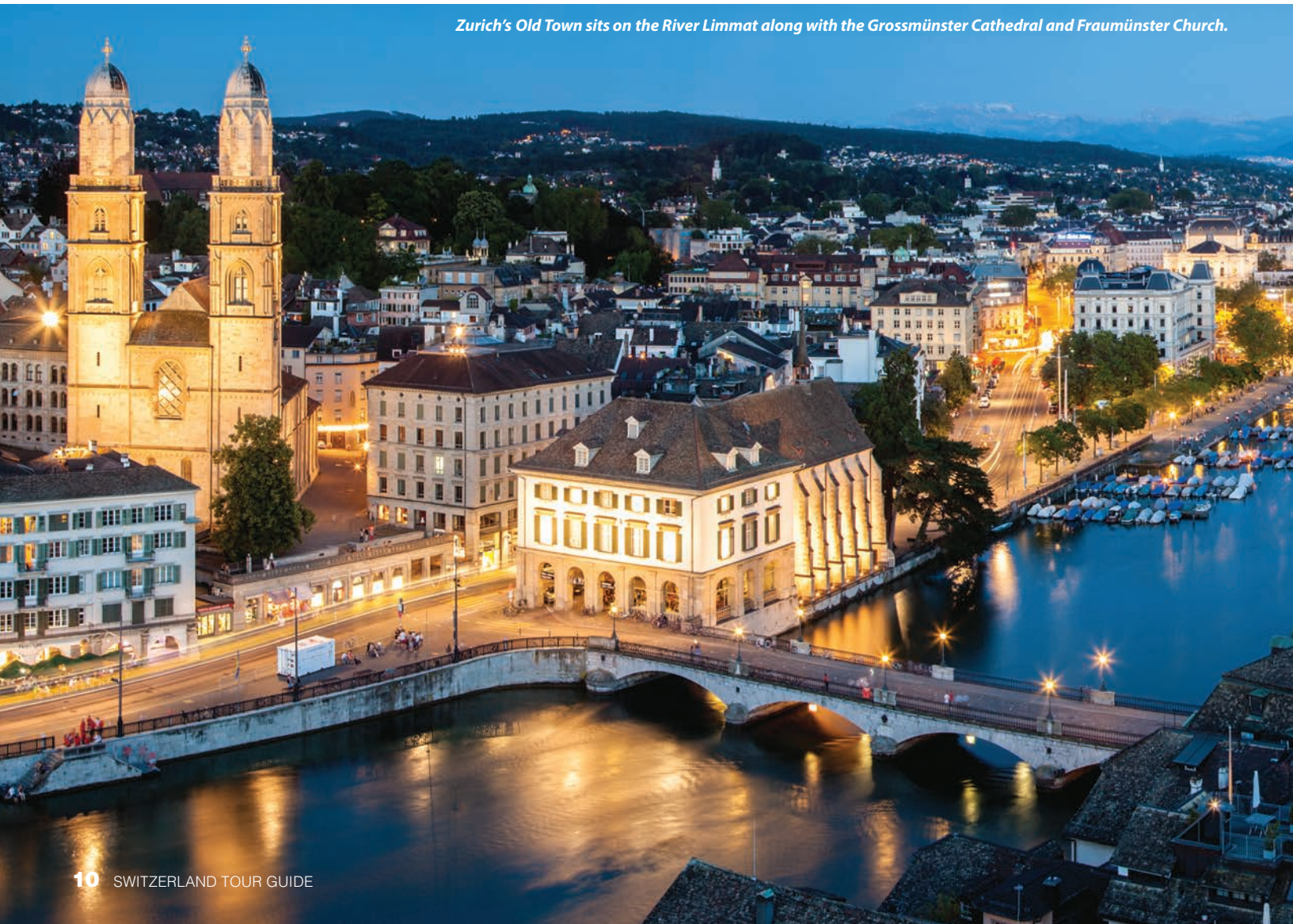
station (called the Hauptbahnhof) are the largest and busiest in the country. Numerous trains leave daily for France, Italy, Austria, Germany and beyond.

Founded by the Romans in 15 B.C., Zurich has been settled for more than 2,000 years, and even traces of civilization dating back 6,400 years have been found there. During the Middle Ages, Zurich gained the privileged status of

imperial immediacy, which freed it from the authority of local lords and placed it under the authority of the emperor. In 1519 Zurich emerged as a primary center of the **Protestant Reformation** in Europe under the leadership of **Huldrych Zwingli**.

Zwingli, one of several early church reformers, is regarded as the founder of Swiss Protestantism. In 1518 Zwingli's growing

*Zurich's Old Town sits on the River Limmat along with the Grossmünster Cathedral and Fraumünster Church.*



influence secured for him the office of “people’s priest” at the **Grossmünster** (Great Cathedral) in Zurich. Many churches and monuments can be seen on guided tours that trace the trail of Christianity and the Reformation. Tours also highlight the importance of **Heinrich Bullinger**, the Protestant theologian responsible for sustaining the Reformation in Zurich. Bearing witness to the Reformation are several places where early church reformers lived or preached.

The **Grossmünster**, **Fraumünster**, **Predigerkirche**, **Wasserkirche** and **St. Peter’s** churches, all played important roles in the Reformation, and Zurich continues to celebrate the anniversary of **500 Years of the Reformation**. The Grossmünster is said to have been founded by Charlemagne; legend says the church was built on the graves of the city’s patron saints, **Felix and Regula**.

To get around the city, the **Zurich Card**, available at the main train station or Zurich Airport, entitles users to free transportation, and offers a host of price reductions and even free admission to many museums and attractions,

including the **Swiss National Museum**, **Kunsthau Zurich**, **Archaeological Collection of the University of Zurich**, **Kunsthalle Zurich** for contemporary art and the **Zurich Tram Museum**. The Zurich Card also offers attractive discounts at selected stores and restaurants.

In 2019 and 2020, Zurich will be celebrating with special exhibits revolving around the theme “Art, Architecture, Culture and Design.” With its impressive list of art museums and collections, art galleries and art fairs, Zurich is internationally recognized as a leader in the field.

Shopping or simply walking the famous **Bahnhofstrasse**, one of Europe’s premier retail corridors, is a must-do. Each section of the city offers its own unique shopping experiences, from upscale to traditional stores in the **Old Town** to urban labels in trendy **Zurich West**. Fine chocolates, watches and jewelry top shoppers’ lists.


In summer, weekly markets in Zurich and the region sell flowers, vegetables, local specialties and second-hand treasures. In winter, visitors are enchanted by Zurich’s seasonal **Christmas markets**. 

## EXPLORING ZURICH BY FOOT

**W**hen in Zurich, be sure to “walk” Lake Zurich. The crescent-shaped lake curves past wooded peaks of the **Pfannenstiel** to the east and **Albis** mountain chain to the west. Take the scenic three-mile (4.8 km) promenade along the eastern shore within the **Seefeld Quarters**. From there you can see the **Uetliberg** mountain and boats crossing the lake. It’s a great excursion for the whole family.

Zurich’s historic center, called **District 1**, straddles the Limmat River. The quaint medieval streets of **Old Town** are bastions of culture, nightlife and shopping. It’s a fun place to explore, discover inviting restaurants and find quirky, one-of-a-kind shops. Be sure to see the medieval guild houses that represented trade and merchant associations.

A bit hard to find but worth the trouble to locate is the **Lindenhof**, a bluff on the west bank of the Limmat River in the center of the city. Shaded by lime trees, the former site of a Roman fortress affords an unbroken view of Zurich’s oldest quarters on the east bank, allowing you to pick out landmarks like **City Hall**, **Grossmünster Church** and the **University of Zurich**. In 1798 Zurich’s citizens swore the oath to the Helvetic Constitution here.

Old Town is the honeypot for tourists, but if you’d like to tap into Zurich’s creative and stylish side, a former industrial zone called **District 5** is the place to be. The showpiece in Zurich West is the **Viadukt**, a repurposed railway viaduct where the brick arches have been filled with stylish bars, restaurants and eclectic shops. Old factory buildings have been replaced with parks and leisure amenities like cinemas. Another symbol of the area’s renaissance is the **Prime Tower**, Switzerland’s second-tallest skyscraper. 



Zurich Tourism



Kunsthau Zurich  
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# A WORLD OF OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Switzerland is a four-season playground

By Vanessa Day



**T**hrill-seekers, outdoor enthusiasts and nature lovers from around the world find euphoria in Switzerland's dramatic peaks and sprawling valleys. This European adventure zone is packed with just that—adventure. From pillows of powder and steep pistes to ride in the winter, to technical trails and stunning views to enjoy in the summer, Switzerland is a mecca for adventure. But the excitement is not limited to hardcore outdoor types. People of all activity levels will find excursions that fit their interests.

Switzerland's ability to offer year-round excitement is due in large part to its striking and varied terrain. The country is admired for its mountains, with many groups looking to connect with nature in the Jura Mountains and Swiss Alps. Roughly 70 percent of the country is made up of mountains, and Switzerland counts more than 1,400 glaciers. With thousands of miles of marked trails, some 200 ski regions and more than 1,500 lakes, there's more than enough to keep outdoor fans satisfied.



*Ski touring in Engelberg  
against the backdrop of Mt. Titlis*

## EMBRACE THE COLD: WINTER ACTIVITIES IN SWITZERLAND

**S**witzerland's snow-capped peaks offer the perfect environment for tour groups to enjoy some cold-weather activities. No matter what kind of adventure groups are looking for, there's plenty of diversity in Switzerland's outdoor winter activities to keep your travelers entertained for days.

*A freerider maneuvers through deep snow in Davos Klosters' Parsenn ski area.*

### Skiing and Snowboarding in Switzerland

Did someone say skiing? This is the place for it. Switzerland has a long history with the sport, dating back to the mid-18th century. And more than a few winter Olympic athletes call Switzerland home. Naturally, there are dozens of world-renowned ski resorts here. But they aren't just reserved for the professionals. Skiers and snowboarders of all skill levels can experience the fresh powder and smooth corduroy on these famed slopes.

Nestled in the hills and sprinkled around the shores of Lake Lucerne are several acclaimed ski resorts perfect for any visiting group. Engelberg-Titlis, one of the largest winter (and summer) destinations in the country, is known as a top ski region. With nearly 50 miles (80 km) of skiing and riding terrain, Engelberg offers winter sports enthusiasts a diverse environment and freeride areas, as well as incredible views of the surrounding mountains. Advanced skiers should head to the challenging trails at the Stand Station on Titlis, while newbies to the sport can get schooled on the basics from seasoned ski and snowboard instructors.

Over in eastern Switzerland, near the city of St. Gallen, is Toggenburg, the region's largest winter sports area. Home to the resorts Alt St. Johann, Unterwasser and Wildhaus, Toggenburg boasts 17 ski lifts and over 35 miles (56 km) of pistes to explore. For a truly unique experience, groups can sign up for moonlight skiing on the Sellamatt, to enjoy the trails with the moon and stars to guide them.

One of the most famous—and highly sought-after—winter destinations in Switzerland is St. Moritz in the Graubünden region. Considered the birthplace of Alpine winter tourism, St. Moritz is home to one of the first ski lifts in the country and has hosted the Winter Olympics twice. With 217 miles (350 km) of skiable terrain and the steepest start slope in Switzerland, it's easy to see why this is a dream winter sports destination for so many groups.



Switzerland Tourism

Skiing enthusiasts congregate in **Zermatt**, a mountain resort in southern Switzerland that resides beneath the iconic Matterhorn mountain. Guests come to Zermatt to experience perfect skiing with miles of pistes, fantastic slopes, sun and snow. **Verbier**, an Alpine village, is home to ski resort 4 Vallées (four valleys), the biggest ski area in Switzerland. With almost 250 miles (410 km) of linked pistes accessed by 93 ski lifts, the terrain has an incredible array of skiing options.

**Davos**, a small town in the Swiss Alps, has an international appeal thanks to its excellent slopes and quality terrain parks. Davos Klosters contains almost 200 miles (300 km) of guaranteed snow pistes and 57 transport facilities. The resort village of **Saas Fee**, near the Italian border, is surrounded by 18 13,000-foot (4,000 m) peaks and features a breathtaking landscape of mountains and glaciers. **Laax** is home to a large skiing area with an efficient lift system, while **Andermatt**, **Sedrun** and **Oberalp** have 16 ski lifts, approximately 30 runs and more than 60 miles (100 km) of pistes. Skiers in **Crans-Montana** can savor an impressive view of the Matterhorn and the Mont Blanc mountains as they descend down the slopes. The Crans-Montana ski resort features a variety of slopes of all difficulty levels and is a perfect place for skiers of all abilities to have fun.

### **Snowshoeing, Sledding and Cross-Country Skiing**

Downhill ski action isn't for everyone. This is why Switzerland offers plenty of other winter activities for visitors to enjoy.

The village of Appenzell in eastern Switzerland is a quiet winter wonderland, but it still provides plenty of exciting adventures. The hilly landscape is perfect for cross-country skiing. And with a network of 124 miles (200 km) of trails, there's more than enough terrain to challenge any winter adventurer.

For those who want to unbuckle from the skis, but still crave some adrenaline, why not try sledding. It's essentially sledding, but with a little more intensity. Sattel-Hochstuckli and Beckenried-Klewenalp, both in the Lucerne region, offer some top-notch sledding runs. The former lets sledgers careen from the Mostelberg to Sattel, while the latter features the longest sledge run in central Switzerland at just over 5 miles (8 km).

Winter walking and snowshoeing are available at almost every mountain area in Switzerland. St. Gallen has dozens of snowshoe trails ranging in length and difficulty, giving groups of all fitness levels a heart-pumping adventure around the snowy landscape. Lungern-Schönbüel near Lucerne is a great spot for snowshoeing, offering an idyllic trail from the summit of the Brünig Pass down to Lungern.

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## SUN AND FUN: SUMMER ACTIVITIES IN SWITZERLAND

Switzerland's outdoor adventures are not limited to the cold-weather months. Summer delivers its own collection of exciting activities, ranging from low-key nature hikes to adrenaline-filled rafting rides.

### Hiking in Switzerland

With over 40,000 miles (65,000 km) of marked hiking trails, Switzerland has a perfect path for every group. One of the top scenic hikes for beginner-level adventurers is the Panorama Trail above Zurich. Starting from Uetliberg Mountain after a leisurely train ride to the top, the trail takes groups on a 3.7-mile (6 km) high-altitude hike to the Felsenegg. Along the way, hikers can stop to take selfies and group shots with Zurich, the Alps and lake views as backdrops.

For a slightly more challenging alpine route, groups can try the Walen Trail in the Lucerne region, running from Bannalp to Ristis. The roughly four-hour hike winds up and down high peaks and through meadows filled with wild flowers and even some grazing goats.

Switzerland's varied terrain allows groups to experience all kinds of hiking environments. From waterside strolls to intense uphill treks, there's truly a trail for everyone.

*Hikers pause to take in views of the Engstligen Falls near Adelboden in the Bernese Highlands.*



Adelboden Tourism





**E-bikers explore pretty Appenzeller Land in northeastern Switzerland.**

Martina Basista

### **Biking in Switzerland**

For those who feel more comfortable on two wheels, Switzerland has a plethora of biking options to enjoy—from traditional to electronic.

That's right, electronic bicycles, or e-bikes, have grown in popularity in recent years, and Switzerland has fully embraced them. The beauty of e-bikes is that they allow groups to tackle more strenuous routes and see more of the country than they would on a normal bike. Switzerland allows e-bikes on almost all cycling routes, so groups can use them in any region they plan to visit. There's even a route created specifically for e-bikes, called the *Herzroute*, which takes riders through the gently rolling hills and lush meadows of the Alps. With e-bikes, groups can enjoy the route at their own pace, spending a little extra time at scenic overlooks and small farmsteads before hopping back on their bikes and speeding to the next location.


Of course, traditional foot-powered bikes are still available for those who appreciate the classic form of transportation. Bike rentals are located in cities all over the country, and more than 7,400 miles (12,000 km) of paths are waiting to be explored. Enjoy a leisurely pedal along the pristine Swiss lakes and rivers or put your muscles to the test on a steady incline through mountainous areas.

No matter if groups go electric or classic, one of the best ways to soak in the country's scenery is from the seat of a bike.

### **Water Activities**

Switzerland may be landlocked, but with its abundance of lakes and rivers, there's more than enough water to provide groups with exciting aquatic adventures.

Tour groups can revel in a calm raft trip along the Rhine River, just north of Zurich, led by an experienced guide who can provide expertise on regional sights of interest. Or groups can grab a paddle and hop in a canoe to discover the waterways around St. Gallen. The Lake Lucerne Canoe Trail is another great option for visitors who want to take in the mountain views from the water. Groups can choose from three routes, each offering day tours for kayaking or canoeing.

Another outdoor activity visitors and locals love is swimming in Swiss rivers and lakes. Swiss locals say the water is so clean you can swim with your mouth open. Which is a good thing considering your mouth will be wide open as you stare in wonderment at Switzerland's incredible natural beauty. 



**Lake Lucerne is a beautiful place for kayaking and canoeing.**

Switzerland Tourism



*Fireworks are a common scene on Swiss National Day.*



# SWITZERLAND GETS FESTIVE

One of earth's happiest countries knows how to put on a festival

By Jason Paha

**A**ccording to the World Happiness Report, a landmark survey of the state of global happiness, Switzerland consistently ranks at or near the top of this planet's most joyful countries. Further evidence of Switzerland's bliss can be found in its numerous festivals, where its countrymen and women (and a myriad of tourists) embrace its many offerings. From exquisite chocolate to melodious music to spectacular balloons ascending against a clear blue sky, Switzerland's festivals have something for everyone. Here are some festivals to consider the next time you pay a visit.

## **Alpine Ascent and Descent (various regions)**

A one-of-a-kind event takes place in the Alpine regions each summer as farmers lead their cattle to higher elevations where they produce a delicious cheese made of raw milk. Around 270,000 cows are marched from their valley farms to mountain meadows at the start of every summer, while the descent takes place in late August and the beginning of September. On average, the cows climb about 1,900 feet (580 m) with some climbing almost four times that distance. The reason for this is from June to early September, Alpine pastures serve up a smorgasbord of hundreds of different grasses and herbs for the cows to graze on. That's compared with only a few dozen types lower down in the valley. Researchers say Alp cheese is much richer in omega-3 fatty acids, which is good for you.

One such example of this ascent is the cattle procession from the mountain village of Adelboden to Engstligenalp, a plateau of the western Alps, which draws a crowd that watches approximately 500 animals climbing a steep slope in orderly fashion. Some who attend the event wait for the cows on Engstligenalp while enjoying a sunrise, while others prefer to eat lunch on the plateau.



*Alpine Ascent*

*Switzerland Tourism*

### **Basler Fasnacht, Basel**

Switzerland's largest carnival, Basler Fasnacht takes place between late February and early March. This three-day event begins the Monday after Ash Wednesday at 4 a.m., as masked pipers and drummers march through the city's Old Town. Approximately 18,000 carnival participants dress up in costumes and march in parades accompanied by orchestras playing piccolos, drums and other musical instruments. Many restaurants and bars remain open during the fest, both day and night.

### **Festival da Jazz, St. Moritz**

The highest-altitude jazz festival in Europe (St. Moritz boasts an elevation of almost 6,000 feet (1,800 m) above sea level) is considered one of the finest jazz events in the world. Each year, the Festival da Jazz presents world-class musicians and memorable performances in the unique atmosphere of the private and world-famous Dracula Club, which opens its doors to the public for the event. The Festival da Jazz melds jazz sights and sounds with swing, bossa nova, mainstream, bebop, blues and gospel concerts. The intimate audience size of 150 gives guests the chance to enjoy the music in close proximity to the musicians.

### **Festichoc - Chocolate Festival, Lake Geneva**

This annual free event takes place in late March or early April and has become a must-attend for chocolate lovers. Nearly 40 Swiss chocolate artisans gather in the small town of Versoix, near Geneva, where they provide tastings, unveil chocolate sculpture exhibitions and feature food stands where guests can buy some of the finest chocolates in the world. Special chocolate workshops for children help make the festival popular with families.

### **Fête de L'Escalade, Geneva**

Geneva's biggest celebrated event, this festival takes place each December commemorating the city's victory against the Duke of Savoy's troops in 1602. Locals wear costumes and parade through Geneva's Old Town on foot or on horseback, armed with torch lights and drums. The festival features period costumes, country markets, folk music and traditional chocolate marmite cauldrons as well as a five-mile run that kicks off the celebrations.

### **International Balloon Festival, Vaud**

For nine days at the end of January, the village of Château-d'Oex hosts around 100 hot air balloons of all shapes, sizes and colors from more than 20 different countries. This festival got its start in 1979, when 12 balloons from five countries gathered to promote the village. It has grown significantly since then, as pilots from around the globe float their balloons over the Alps, creating a spectacular view in the sky. Along with the balloons, the festival hosts numerous events and contests, including a children's-themed day and its most popular event, the night glow, when the balloons illuminate against the evening sky thanks to the flames from their burners.

### **Lucerne Festival**

Famous orchestras, legendary conductors, and virtuoso soloists join together on the idyllic location of Lake Lucerne to celebrate the joy of music. In the concert hall, which is renowned for its phenomenal acoustics and its exquisite architecture, they encounter visitors from Switzerland, Europe and all around the world. The Summer Festival takes place annually from mid-August to mid-September. It opens every year with a performance by the Lucerne Festival Orchestra.

Along with cultivating the traditional repertoire, which is performed by leading international performers, Lucerne Festival is committed to the realm of contemporary music. It presents one or two composers-in-residence each year and gives their works a spotlight. Each summer is devoted to a specific theme that governs the choice of works on the program. As part of its new Festival strategy, Lucerne Festival will launch a new format starting in 2020. A weekend of concerts will take place each autumn and spring, respectively, which will feature artists from Lucerne Festival's in-house projects, including the Lucerne Festival Orchestra, the Lucerne Festival Academy and the Lucerne Festival Alumni.

The exact program will be announced in late autumn 2019. As part of this strategy, the Easter and Piano Festivals will be discontinued as of 2020. The 2019 Piano Festival will take place from November 16-24 as planned.

*Château-d'Oex hosts the International Balloon Festival.*



*Switzerland Tourism*

### Chestnut Festival, Ticino

Chestnut festivals are celebrated throughout Ticino in October. The one in Ascona is one of the most popular events. At this fest, visitors can enjoy the chestnut roasted over fire along with various chestnut-based delicacies such as jams, honeys, cakes, ice cream and a slew of the region's traditional food and wine products. Take a stroll, accompanied by music, past the market booths and discover a variety of culinary delights, arts and crafts.

### Montreux Jazz Festival

Founded in 1967, this event, which takes place over two weeks at the beginning of July, is Europe's biggest jazz festival. Originally a pure jazz fest, it opened up in the 1970s and today showcases artists of virtually every music style. More than 1,300 artists have performed at the fest, and a slew of live albums were recorded there, including recordings by Alice Cooper, Carlos Santana, Deep Purple, Jethro Tull, Run-D.M.C. and Van Morrison.

### Sechseläuten, Zurich

This traditional holiday takes place every April in Zurich and features a colorful parade attended by around 3,500 members of the guilds, 350 horsemen and 30 music corps in historical costumes and uniforms. The climax of the event occurs with the burning of the "Böögg", a figure of a snowman prepared with explosives. Popular tradition says the faster the head of the snowman explodes the better summer will be. In the evening, the biggest barbecue in Switzerland takes place as sausages are grilled in the "Böögg's" fire.

### Swiss National Day

Since 1891, August 1 has been celebrated as Swiss National Day. This date refers to an alliance formed in 1291 by the three cantons of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden, the center around which Switzerland was built. It is also the day Switzerland's residents join together to celebrate in towns and cities across the country. Each Swiss city offers a day of federal unity by organizing fireworks displays, concerts or presentations, and thousands attend festivities in the largest cities: Zurich, Basel, Geneva, Bern and Lucerne. The main celebrations, though, take place at the Rhine Falls near Schaffhausen and at Rütli Meadow above Lake Lucerne. Referred to as "fire on the rocks," the show at the Rhine Falls is one of the top Swiss National Day events as the falls are illuminated with fireworks and light effects. A representative celebration is also staged at Rütli Meadow. This is where Switzerland's historic oath marking the foundation of the Swiss Confederacy took place.

### Wine Festivals (various regions)

The largest wine fest in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, Winzerfest has been celebrated by the Zurich region for 68 years and takes place in October. Spiezer Laset-Sunntig is the only wine festival in the Bernese Oberland, the higher part of the canton of Bern, and celebrates its 50th anniversary in September 2019. The Russin Harvests Festival in the Geneva region has been running for 57 years and unfolds in September in the bucolic setting of Russin, in the heart of the Mandement vineyards.

### World Snow Festival, Grindelwald

A celebration of icy art in Grindelwald, this January festival has grown into one of Switzerland's most popular winter events. The six-day fest began in 1983 and today attracts international artists who design figures and sculptures out of blocks of snow. The streets of Grindelwald transform into a charming museum with ice sculptures adorning each corner. A jury of experts judges the giant snow sculptures and the public is welcome to give their impressions of the art. 



Approximately 18,000 dress up in costumes for Basler Fasnacht, Switzerland's largest carnival.

Switzerland Tourism



The Chestnut Festival in Ascona always draws a crowd.

Switzerland Tourism



# CHRISTMAS MARKETS

## BRING JOY TO THE WORLD

By Randy Mink

**L**ucky is the group that visits Switzerland during the Christmas season. In the weeks leading up to December 25, town squares across the land explode with festivities, beckoning visitors to shop, eat and share in the holiday cheer.


Starting in late November, Swiss cities and villages set up Christmas markets, a tradition that goes back centuries. Typically, these temporary marketplaces consist of clusters of wooden huts manned by artisans selling handcrafted wares. You may even see the makers at work, perhaps carving wood or decorating gingerbread. Adding to the festive atmosphere are special features like choral concerts, carnival rides and horse-carriage rides.

Christmas markets provide the perfect opportunity to get a head start on holiday shopping and bring back something uniquely Swiss for loved ones at home. Drifting from stall to stall, you'll find Advent wreaths, wooden toys and hand-blown glass ornaments. Perhaps a piece of pottery or jewelry will catch your eye. Take a rest from shopping and warm up over a cup of hot cider or a glass of fragrant *Glühwein* (hot wine laced with cinnamon and other spices). Market-goers also enjoy savoring roasted chestnuts, grilled sausages, and waffles and crepes hot off the griddle.

Other treats include breads with nuts and candied fruits, including *Stollen*, a Christmastime favorite in the German-speaking world. At yuletide markets in Appenzell and St. Gallen in eastern Switzerland, don't miss the *Biberli*, a pastry made of gingerbread dough and filled with almond paste. Try *Basler Lächerli*, a chewy biscuit made of honey, nuts and candied orange peel in the Rhine River Valley of Basel, where two Christmas markets in the Old Town take place, with a total of almost 200 rustic chalets, stretch over two squares.

In Zurich, Christmas Village, featuring an ice rink and 100 market stalls festooned with twinkling lights, takes over the square in front of the Zurich Opera House. Holiday revelers also flock to vendor stalls in the romantic Niederdorf Quarter of Zurich's Old Town and to the huge Christmas market at the main train station.

Cities in French-speaking Switzerland serve up holiday fun as well. Montreux Noel, for example, is a month-long celebration centered around a Christmas village right on the Lake Geneva waterfront.

Christmas is a magical time to be in Switzerland, where sparkling markets in towns big and small certainly make the season bright. 





*Christmas Village, with 100 market stalls and an ice rink, takes over Sechseläutenplatz in front of the Zurich Opera House.*

*Zurich Tourism*



# SWISS DELIGHTS

From chocolate to raclette,  
Switzerland's culinary scene is attracting  
foodies and wine lovers from across the globe

By Jason Paha





**W**ith its stunning mountainous landscape complementing a multitude of charming cities, Switzerland is an attractive destination for visitors of all ages. While its pastoral scenery is renowned, Switzerland's food culture also lures tourists thanks to its delectable dishes that range from Swiss-specific to those with French, German and Italian influences. Here are some enticing foods and beverages travelers can savor when visiting all corners of this lovely country.

### **Wine and beer**

Only one percent of Switzerland's wine is exported, which means lovers of Swiss whites and reds must visit the country to appreciate its offerings. Wine tastings are popular in Switzerland, as the country's picturesque vistas are an excellent backdrop for those enjoying a glass or two. One of the best ways to relish Switzerland's wine offerings is to partake in the famous Caves Ouvertes, which takes place during the spring, summer and autumn seasons. This event, which translates to "Open Cellars Day",

sees Switzerland's wine makers open their cellars and provide tastings for the public. For those who can't make it to Switzerland during the Caves Ouvertes, the country still has a variety of vineyard tour options, including the historic terraced Corniche Lavaux Vineyards near Montreux, featuring spectacular views of Lake Geneva; Terres de Lavaux in Lutry, which produces exceptional wines grown in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Lavaux; and La Cave de Geneve in Satigny, a millennium-old vineyard that invites guests to enjoy its range of wines

made from the finest grapes. Another excellent destination is Graubünden's Rhine Valley, home of a Wine Hiking Trail that leads visitors past idyllic villages and scenic locales.

Switzerland is also an impressive beer locale as it contains more breweries per capita than any other country. Fans of Swiss brews can visit the Zurich Beer Festival, where various breweries from across the world present more than 250 types of beer. Those seeking to visit a brewery can visit Monsteiner Bier, located in the Swiss Alps, which provides nine beer-tasting opportunities.



*There is nothing like  
enjoying Swiss food on a  
beautiful Switzerland day.*

*Giglio Pasqua*

## Cheese

Switzerland's cheese is nonpareil as the country produces more than 450 varieties, ranging from granito, a firm cheese that can be found in Vicosoprano, in eastern Switzerland, to unpasteurized buffalo mozzarella, which is made with organic buffalo milk and can be enjoyed in Ftan, also a town located in eastern Switzerland.

And, of course, the famous Gruyere cheese, which is endeared for its intricate layers of flavor. Those seeking a behind-the-scenes cheesemaking tour can visit the Appenzeller Schaukaeserei factory in Stein, where they can learn about the production of one of the strongest cheeses in Switzerland.

The Emmental Show Dairy in Affoltern has been open 365 days a year since 1989 and teaches visitors how 8,000 liters of milk are turned into cheese every day.

## Fondue

One of Switzerland's most famous dishes, *Fondue* is melted cheese served in a communal pot over a portable stove and enjoyed by dipping bread, meat, olives or pickles into the cheese. The earliest known recipe for the modern form of cheese Fondue reportedly comes from a 1699 book published in Zurich with the name *To Cook Cheese With Wine*. Thus, it makes sense some of the best Fondue restaurants can be found in Zurich, including Chässtube Rehalp and Le Dezaley. Another excellent location is Fondue Beizli in St. Gallen, which features an assortment of different types of Fondue with the most popular offering being the Swiss cheese option.

## Raclette

*Raclette* is as eye-catching as it is delicious, as this cheese is most commonly used for melting. Typically fashioned into a wheel, raclette cheese (whose name stems from the French word *racler*, meaning "to scrape") used to be melted in front of an open fire, however nowadays it is mostly heated under an electric table-top grill. Raclette is poured over boiled potatoes, onions, vegetables or meat. Some of the finest raclette dishes can be found in Geneva and Zermatt. In Zurich, groups can enjoy the dish at Chäsalp, a former farm where cheese is served in an ancient stable.

*A party of four enjoys Fondue on the sun terrace of the Glunetta Restaurant in Celerina-Marguns.*



*Christof Sonderegger*

## Rösti

This exemplary dish consists of thinly grated potatoes fried in butter or fat until crisp. *Rösti* was originally conceived as a breakfast food in Bern before spreading across Switzerland and becoming a food that can be eaten at any time of day. Regarded as a national delicacy, *Rösti* is sometimes flavored with cheese, onions and spices. An excellent version of *Rösti* can be found at Wirtshaus Taube in Lucerne, where Swiss dishes are prepared according to old original recipes.

## Zürcher Geschnetzeltes

A traditional dish from Zurich, *Zürcher Geschnetzeltes* consists of sliced veal (or veal liver), onions and mushrooms in a white wine cream sauce typically served with *Rösti*, rice or noodles. Some of the best spots to find this meal in Zurich include Kronenhalle, which has been entertaining guests since 1924 with an array of renowned paintings; Zunfthaus zur Waag, which treats gourmets to first-class traditional cuisine in a house dating from 1315; and Kindli, a restaurant that has been in operation for more than 500 years that combines fresh ingredients with the perfect wine.

## Äplermagronen

This delicious pasta dish that hails from the Swiss Alpine regions is created by layering pasta and potatoes with cheese, cream and onions. As an added bonus, *Äplermagronen* traditionally is served with stewed apple on the side.

*Äplermagronen* has some regional variations, as in some areas ham strips, roasted bacon cubes or cervelat is added. One of the best places to try this hearty and beloved dish is Pilatus-Kulm in Lucerne, which has been serving guests renowned meals since 1890.


## Chocolate

From milk and dark chocolate to truffles and ganache, some of the world's finest confections can be found in Switzerland. First created in Switzerland in the 17th century, chocolate began to grow in popularity in 1875 when Swiss chocolatier Daniel Peter created milk chocolate. To this day, the best chocolate in the country is fiercely debated, which means lovers of this sweet (and sometimes bitter) treat have a wide variety of options to choose from.

One such option is Max Chocolatier in Lucerne, a refined shop that offers hand-made chocolate bars and bonbons using natural ingredients and unique flavors. Confiserie Sprungli in Zurich was founded in 1836 and is internationally known for its signature macarons, while Auer Chocolatier in Geneva is a family-run business that serves hand-coated black truffles and ganaches.

Switzerland is also known for its chocolate factories, which offer informative and delicious tours. Among the locales that provide tours are the Frey Chocolate Factory in Buchs, near Aarau, where guests can create two chocolate bars of their own; the Maison Cailler Chocolate Factory in Broc, featuring a museum tour that offers a chocolate tasting; and the Camille Bloch Chocolate Factory in Courtelary, which allows groups to make gourmet chocolate with the help of a master chocolatier.

## Engadiner Nusstorte (nut tart)

This sweet, nut-filled pastry is commonly created by independent bakers throughout Graubünden. While there are a variety of recipes that make up this dessert, it usually consists of a short crust pastry, cream, caramelized sugar and chopped walnuts. One of the best places to enjoy *Engadiner Nusstorte* is the famous Café Hanselmann in St. Moritz, which has more than 115 years of tradition as a bakery, confectionery, coffee house and tea room. 



Visitors enjoy demonstrations at the Morteratsch Alpine cheese-making dairy.

Romano Salis



The chocolate at Max Chocolatier in Lucerne is second-to-none.

Andre Meier

Engadin St. Moritz



Engadiner Nusstorte (nut tart) is made from buttery pastry, creamy caramel and walnuts.



# SEEING SWITZERLAND BY **TRAIN, BUS AND BOAT**

The Swiss Travel System, one of the world's finest transportation networks, makes group travel a breeze

By Randy Mink



*For high-end groups, Excellence Class is just the ticket on the Glacier Express.*

Switzerland Tourism

**H**alf the fun of visiting Switzerland is getting from place to place—moving around the country effortlessly by train, bus and boat—in comfort and style. While the destination may be your goal, the ride there can be an adventure in itself and an integral part of your Swiss experience.

There are five big reasons why using the efficient Swiss Travel System enhances a group tour in this small European nation:



*Trains, buses and boats run like clockwork, so making connections is never complicated.*

Switzerland Tourism

**1 Panoramas.** Switzerland's scenery is second to none. From majestic mountain peaks and deep ravines to flower-dotted meadows, crystal-clear lakes and fairy-tale villages, wow moments abound. All this passing beauty is viewable through ceiling-high windows that ensure you won't miss a thing as you soak in the splendor.

**2 Comfort and Convenience.** All you have to do is lean back and relax. Train seats offer plenty of space to stretch your legs, and there's enough room for large pieces of luggage—unless you want to free yourself of luggage concerns by sending bags ahead via the travel system's door-to-door service. Restaurants on trains and lake boats are another plus.

**3 Simplicity.** Trains, buses and boats run like clockwork, so making connections is never complicated. The Swiss make it simple by synchronizing timetables—when the train comes in, the boat and postbus are waiting. There are no time-wasting intervals between trip segments—an amazing feat considering that Switzerland's dense public transport network totals almost 26,000 stops. The ease in connecting also holds true for travel to and from neighboring countries Italy, Germany, France, Austria and Liechtenstein.

**4 Swissness.** Whether commuting or on vacation, the locals like to travel by train, bus and boat, so using public transportation lets visitors see Switzerland through the eyes of its citizens. To experience the country at its most authentic, it makes sense to travel like the Swiss.

**5 Diversity.** Groups have many choices when it comes to public transport in Switzerland. Take a nostalgic funicular past grazing cows, enjoy dinner in the panoramic cabin of an aerial cableway, indulge on the Chocolate Train—the possibilities are endless.

### Grand Train Tour of Switzerland

The highlights of the Swiss transport system can be enjoyed on one special route that combines all premium panoramic train lines and covers every part of the country. It's called the Grand Train Tour of Switzerland.

Consisting of eight main sections, the epic route covers 795 miles (1,200 km) and can be started at any point—there is no prescribed direction or duration. The tour spotlights not only scenic mountain regions but also bustling cities like Zurich, Lucerne and St. Gallen. It features all four language regions of Switzerland and a variety of captivating scenery—from glaciers in the north to palm trees in the south. There are nine destinations to visit and eleven lakes to pass. Best of all, the Grand Train Tour can be experienced with one single ticket—the Swiss Travel Pass.

The route includes these five premium panoramic trains—*Luzern-Interlaken Express*, *GoldenPass MOB Panoramic*, *Glacier Express*, *Bernina Express* and *Gotthard Panorama Express*. Excursions on mountain cable cars, such as a trip to the Jungfrauoch or Schilthorn, can be incorporated into the itinerary.

### Glacier Express

The Glacier Express, one of the most famous train trips in Europe, travels through some of Switzerland's most exquisite Alpine scenery. The eye-popping journey between St. Moritz and Zermatt takes eight hours, earning it the distinction of being "the slowest express train in the world." Through panoramic windows guests experience 91 tunnels, 291 bridges and stunning landscapes from the Engadine Valley to the Matterhorn. The Matter Valley features meadows, vineyards, rugged rock faces and the Bies Glacier, the only glacier visible from the train. Other highlights include Oberalp Pass, the highest point on the route at 6,670 feet (2,000 m); Disentis Monastery, Switzerland's oldest Benedictine monastery, which dates from the late 17th century; Rhine Gorge, the "Swiss Grand Canyon," and castles in the Domleschg region, the largest being Schloss Ortenstein, situated on a rock overhang high above Tomlis.

Earphones provide route and historical information in six languages, and there are two channels with Swiss music. Swiss specialties, prepared by the onboard chef, are served at your seat.



*Lake Lucerne Navigation Company's vessels provide excursions that offer unique perspectives.*

Switzerland Tourism



Some of the most memorable rides are on the aerial cableways.

Switzerland Tourism

The Glacier Express's new *Excellence Class* (surcharge required) is a premium class in which each traveler enjoys a window seat. Limited to 20 seats per day and direction, this exclusive experience is just the ticket for high-end groups. *Excellence Class* amenities include concierge service, a five-course lunch with wine, a bar area, snacks throughout the day, a tablet for onboard entertainment and facts about the Glacier Express.

### Gotthard Panorama Express

The five-hour journey on the Gotthard Panorama Express, an equally impressive panoramic premium train, starts in the Italian-speaking Ticino region (towns of Lugano or Bellinzona) and ends in Lucerne (or vice versa), taking travelers from the Mediterranean-influenced south through the heart of Switzerland and over the Alps to the north. Travelers marvel at the 9.5-mile-long (15 km) Gotthard Tunnel (built in 1882) and the many loop tunnels, all tributes to Swiss engineering. They also enjoy special presentations about the history and legends of places along the way. The popular photography coach has windows that open. Arriving in Flüelen, passengers transfer seamlessly to a steamboat for a three-hour ride across Lake Lucerne.

The train (first-class only) offers snacks and beverages, with seat service available. Meals, as well as snacks and beverages, are available on the boat.

### Voralpen Express

The Voralpen Express route between St. Gallen and Lucerne (two hours) passes through a rolling pre-Alpine landscape of green hills, picturesque villages and lovely orchards, showcasing a gentler side of Switzerland. Offering a good way to travel

between the eastern and central parts of the country, the route also affords views of dramatic Alpine peaks like Mt. Rigi and passes through pretty countryside around Lake Zurich. The train crosses the Sitter Viaduct, the country's tallest railway bridge at 325 feet (100 m).

St. Gallen, famed for its historic Abbey District, appeals to religious travelers and makes a good jumping-off point for tour extensions featuring the Lake Constance region and the Bavarian village of Oberammergau, where local citizens will be staging the once-a-decade Passion Play in 2020.

### Lake Lucerne Cruises

Lake Lucerne Navigation Company's fleet of five nostalgic paddle steamers and 15 modern motor vessels provides a variety of

excursions that offer unique perspectives from the water. From Lucerne, you can travel to the origins of the Swiss Confederation at Rütli Meadow, connect to cog railways at Mt. Pilatus or Mt. Rigi, or enjoy a leisurely lunch or Sunday brunch cruise. Voyages range from a narrated one-hour tour of the Bay of Lucerne on the Panorama-Yacht Saphir to the 5½-hour Grand Lucerne Lake Cruise, a roundtrip that starts in Lucerne and goes to the other end of the lake at Flüelen in Canton Uri. Some of the vintage paddle steamers, with enchanting salons from another era, made their maiden voyages more than a century ago and are still going strong.

Lake Lucerne boats operate 365 days a year, and most scheduled boats have a restaurant.

### Mountain Excursions

Some of the most memorable rides on the Swiss Travel System are the gondola, aerial cableway and cog wheel train trips to the summits of mountains such as the Pilatus, Schilthorn, Titlis, Jungfrauoch and Rigi.

**Mt. Titlis**, near Engelberg, is central Switzerland's tallest mountain at 10,020 feet (3,200 m), has its only glacier and is reached by Rotair, the world's first revolving cable car. The journey to the summit starts with a gondola ride before boarding the Titlis Rotair for the final twirling ride over the deep crevasses of Titlis Glacier. Once at the summit station, you can tour the Ice Cave, an attraction sparkling with neon lights, and walk onto the terrace, where panoramas of glacier-capped peaks stretch to the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau in the Bernese Oberland.



Lake Lucerne boats operate 365 days a year.

Switzerland Tourism

**NO ONE ELSE GIVES YOU  
SO MUCH SWITZERLAND**

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**SWITZERLAND TRAVEL CENTRE**

Switzerland Travel Centre is the largest and official Swiss incoming operator with over 120 Swiss enthusiasts offering a wide range of services for groups and events: Scenic rail journeys, mountain excursions, personalized experiences and unique locations are only a few examples of what we do to create a memorable stay for your guests.



Switzerland Travel Centre is a company of Swiss Federal Railways, HotellerieSuisse and Switzerland Tourism. Proud member of NTA & USTOA

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For more thrills, step onto the adjacent Cliff Walk, a cable-supported swinging walkway that qualifies as Europe's highest suspension bridge. You can also take the Ice Flyer chairlift, hovering over crevasses 33 feet (10 m) deep as you glide down to Glacier Park, a free winter sports playground open even in midsummer. Swiss Travel Pass holders receive a 50 percent discount on Mt. Titlis rides.

The Swiss Travel Pass fully covers the trip up the **Schilthorn**, a 9,700-foot (2,970 m) peak reachable in four legs on the aerial cableway that starts at Stechelberg in the Lauterbrunnen Valley. Visitors are rewarded with 360-degree views of 200 peaks and vistas that extend to Titlis, Mt. Blanc and the German Black Forest. You can savor the Alpine splendor over lunch at the Piz Gloria revolving restaurant. The mountaintop's interactive exhibition Bond World harks back to the Schilthorn's role as a filming location for several scenes in the 1969 James Bond thriller *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*. The new 007 Walk of Fame also enthralles Bond fans. When changing cable cars at the Birg station, be sure to take the Skyline Walk for great views and test your nerves at the Thrill Walk, which offers bottomless perspectives via see-through platforms anchored to the cliff face.

### Themed Day Trips

Chocolate and cheese represent the pinnacle of Swiss culinary expertise, and these tasty treats highlight seasonal rail excursions from Montreux.

The full-day Chocolate Train package starts with coffee and chocolate bread served in the Belle Epoque railcars that make a spectacular climb above Lake Geneva. Shuttle buses in Montbovon transport passengers to the first stop—La Maison du Gruyere cheese factory—for touring and tasting. Free time for lunch and shopping in Gruyeres Village is followed by a shuttle to La Maison Cailler chocolate factory in Broc. The train returns to Montreux in late afternoon.

The Cheese Train, another all-day culinary adventure, departs Montreux or Zweisimmen for Chateau d'Oex for a close-up look at cheese production. Highlights include a visit to Chalet Bio show dairy, cheese fondue at Le Chalet restaurant, and admission to the Museum Vieux Pays-d-Enhaut (Swiss arts and crafts) or Espace Ballon house of hot air ballooning. Though the Cheese Train is scheduled only on Fridays to Sundays from early January to late April, groups of ten or more can request other dates throughout the year. Swiss Travel Pass holders receive a generous discount.

### Swiss Travel Pass

Exploring Switzerland is easy with the Swiss Travel Pass, an all-in-one ticket to the country's transportation network. Available to foreign visitors only, the pass is good for unlimited travel by train, bus and boat for 3, 4, 8 or 15 consecutive days. With the Swiss Travel Pass Flex it's also possible to freely select the days within a month. Pass holders get unlimited use of public transport in more than 90 cities and towns, plus free admission to more than 500 museums. Children under the age of 16 travel free if accompanied by at least one parent. The bargain even includes free or discounted rides on mountain cableways. Also the premium panoramic trains are included (only the seat reservation needs to be covered).

### Luggage Services

The Swiss Travel System's Express Door-to-Door Group Luggage plan takes the hassle out of transporting luggage for groups traveling through Switzerland by train, bus and boat. The program's aim is to encourage groups (from 10 to 50) to use Swiss public transport. Available for 200 Swiss francs (about \$200) per shipment, the plan offers pick-up and delivery the same day—bags picked up by 9 a.m. will be delivered to the hotel, station or any other Swiss address by 6 p.m. that evening. A similar plan, Express Foreign Airport-to-Door Group Luggage service, is available for groups arriving at Zurich Airport, with luggage transport available between any foreign airport and any Swiss address.

### Charters

For a special celebration or a meeting or seminar, your group can charter an entire train or book carriages attached to a scheduled train.

The Red Arrow "Churchill" can be chartered on the route of your choice. Accommodating up to 110 guests, it is named after British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who traveled across Switzerland on this train during his visit in 1946. The Red Arrow "Churchill" offers 28 tables, a fully stocked bar, an onboard kitchen for catering, a loudspeaker system and wireless handheld microphone.

The charter coach "Le Salon de Luxe," ideal for meetings, is a conference room on wheels. Consisting of two roomy saloon carriages, it offers armchairs, sofas, side tables and chairs, with configurations customized for the client's specific needs. Features include catering, custom lighting, a loudspeaker system, projectors and screens, and a wireless handheld microphone and headset. "Le Salon de Luxe" can be attached to a scheduled train or deployed as a special event train. 

## RAIL EUROPE – YOUR GROUP TRAVEL SOLUTION

Traveling by train, bus and boat in Switzerland adds an authentic Swiss experience and unforgettable moments to any group trip. Rail Europe, a Trusted Distributor for all Swiss Travel System rail products including the Swiss Travel Pass and Group Luggage services, takes pride in delivering quality service to all, no matter the number of travelers. If you have **10 or more people** who want to travel together, that's the best time to contact one of our Group Specialists to receive discounted pricing and personalized service. Rail Europe also can arrange for onboard catering or secure the use of special charters and exclusive carriages in Switzerland including on the "Le Salon de Luxe" or the Red Arrow (Churchill) to make it an even more unique experience – be sure to ask what is available. Our multilingual Group Travel Consultants are dedicated to your booking needs throughout the process, will work with you to secure space months in advance, and provide helpful information to ensure your client's journey is a success.

To book your next group trip, whether it's across Switzerland or the continent, contact the Rail Europe Groups Department at [RailEurope.com/Groups](http://RailEurope.com/Groups), or call 1-800-462-2577.



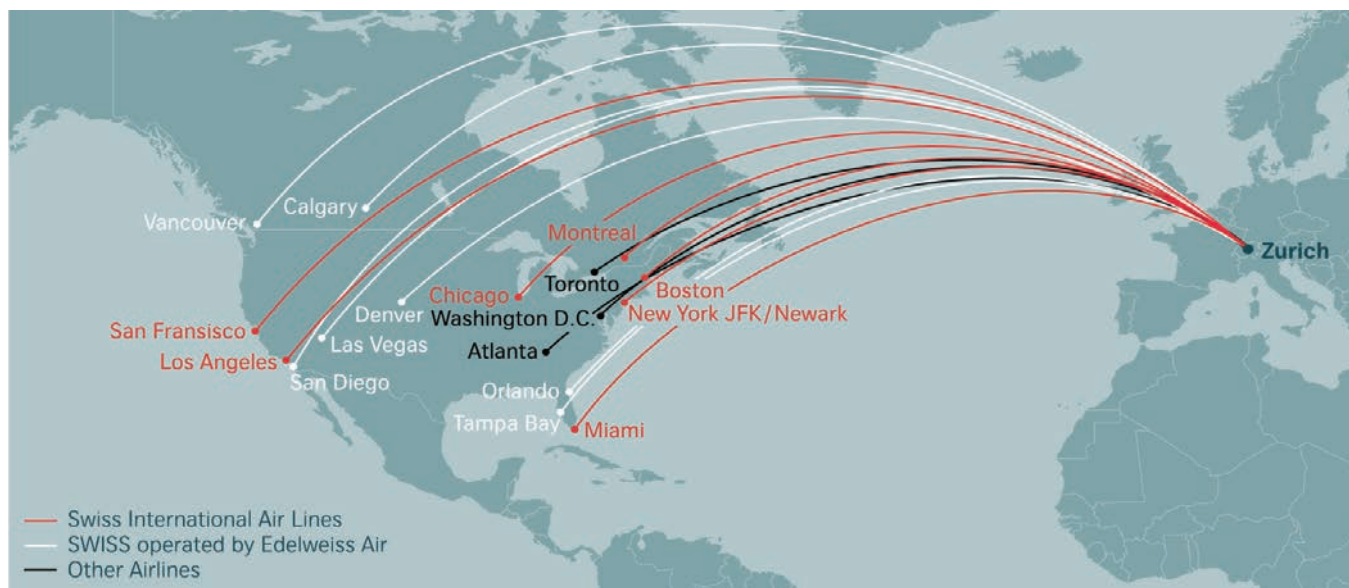
The Red Arrow "Churchill"

Switzerland Tourism





# SWITZERLAND FAST FACTS



## Location

Situated in **Central Europe**, Switzerland borders **France** to the west, **Germany** to the north, **Austria** and the principality of **Liechtenstein** to the east and **Italy** to the south. Smaller than West Virginia, it measures 137 miles from north to south and 217 miles from east to west.

## Getting There

Weekly, there are more than **130 direct flights** to Switzerland from North America. Airlines flying from North American cities to **Zurich Airport** include Swiss, Edelweiss, United, American, Delta and Air Canada. Zurich's city center is just a 10-minute train ride from the state-of-the-art airport, which offers more than **160 shops, bars and restaurants**. Smack in the heart of Europe, Zurich Airport is the gateway to the Alps.

## Getting Around

**Switzerland's public transport network**—safe, efficient and punctual—is one of the finest in the world. The **Swiss Travel Pass** provides unlimited travel on trains, buses, boats, urban transit systems and most scenic train routes. In addition, pass holders enjoy free entrance to more than **500 museums** in Switzerland and are entitled to a **50 percent discount** on most mountain excursions by cable car or cogwheel train.



Switzerland Tourism

# Languages

Switzerland has four national languages: **German, French, Italian** and **Romansch**. German, the most dominant, is spoken by **64 percent** of the population. English is widely spoken throughout the country.

# Religion

The majority of people living in Switzerland are **Christian**. Approximately **38 percent are Roman Catholic, 27 percent Protestant** (2017 figures). The number of people with no religious affiliation is 21 percent.

# Weather

In July and August the daytime temperature range is 65 to 82 degrees Fahrenheit (18 to 28 degrees Celsius); in spring and autumn 46° to 59°F (8° to 15°C). In January and February the range is 28° to 45°F (-2° to 7°C). There is no excessive heat and humidity in summer, so the air is always crisp. **Summer is the main travel season** with a share of 66 percent, but data over the last five years show that Switzerland is becoming increasingly important as a winter destination. **Peak ski season is December to March.**

# Money Matters

Switzerland's unit of currency is the Swiss franc (1:1 with the US dollar). Merchants may accept euros, but change most likely will be given back in Swiss francs. ATMs are commonly found, and credit cards are widely accepted. **Banks are open Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.**

# Shopping Hours

**Shops are generally open from 8.30 a.m. to 6.30 p.m. daily** (Saturday until 4 p.m.); closed Sunday. Shops in small towns may close an hour or two for lunch.

# Tipping

**Tips for restaurant wait staff are included in the price of the meal**, but it's common to round up to the nearest franc or round figure.

# Internet

Most hotels and many bars, cafes and restaurants provide **free Wi-Fi service**.



Switzerland Tourism



Switzerland Tourism

# Agent Training

Sign up for the **eLearning program, Switzerland Travel Academy**, and become a certified Switzerland travel expert in only three hours. You will get more leads and benefit from additional sales support. Sign up at: [northamerica.switzerlandtravelacademy.ch](http://northamerica.switzerlandtravelacademy.ch). Also learn about Switzerland in **bi-weekly webinars** featuring Swiss partners who provide insights about specific destinations and products. And keep up-to-date on the latest news and offers through Switzerland Tourism's **bi-monthly newsletter**. Sign up for webinars and the newsletter at: [MySwitzerland.com/trade](http://MySwitzerland.com/trade). **Switzerland Yodel** - Sales companion for travel professionals can be downloaded at [MySwitzerland.com/trade](http://MySwitzerland.com/trade) (Multimedia/Sales Manuals)

# Social Media

Share your love for Switzerland  
**#INLOVEWITHSWITZERLAND**

- **Facebook:** [facebook.com/myswitzerlandNA](https://facebook.com/myswitzerlandNA)
- **Instagram:** [@MySwitzerland](https://instagram.com/MySwitzerland)
- **Twitter:** [MySwitzerland\\_e](https://twitter.com/MySwitzerland_e)



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