



Switzerland

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Best Places to Eat

- » Druck Punkt, Basel (p1257)
- » Lötschberg AOC, Bern (p1243)
- » Al Lido, Lugano (p1245)

Best Places to Stay

- » Pension für Dich, Zürich (p1250)
- » Hôme St-Pierre, Geneva (p1237)
- » Mountain Hostel, Gimmelwald (p1255)

Why Go?

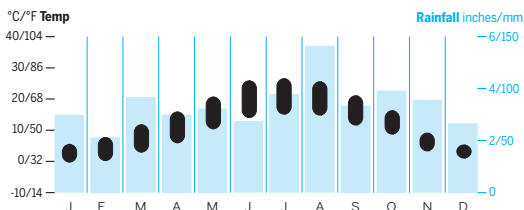
What giddy romance Zermatt, St Moritz and other glitterati-encrusted names evoke. This is *Sonderfall Schweiz* ('special case Switzerland'), a privileged neutral country set apart from others, proudly idiosyncratic, insular and unique. Blessed with gargantuan cultural diversity, its four official languages alone say it all.

The Swiss don't do half-measures: Zürich, their most gregarious urban centre, has cutting-edge art, legendary nightlife and one of the world's highest living standards. The national passion for sweat, stamina and clingy Lycra takes 65-year-olds across 2500m-high mountain passes for Sunday strolls, sees giggly three-year-olds skiing rings around grown-ups, prompts locals done with 'ordinary' marathons to sprint backwards up mountains – all in the name of fun.

Join tourists comparing memories of Bern's chocolate-box architecture, the Matterhorn, the thundering Rheinfall et al, but understand that Switzerland is a place so outrageously beautiful it simply has to be seen to be believed.

When to Go

Geneva



Dec–early Apr
Carve through powder and drink glühwein at an Alpine resort.

Aug Celebrate Swiss National Day on 1 August and witness Swiss national pride in full force.

May–Sep Hike in the shadow of the Matterhorn and be wowed by its mesmerising presence.

AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** Swiss franc (Sfr)
- » **Language** French, German, Italian, Romansch
- » **Money** ATMs are readily available
- » **Visas** Schengen rules apply; see p1319

Fast Facts

- » **Area** 41,285 sq km
- » **Capital** Bern
- » **Country code** 41
- » **Emergency** 117

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	Sfr0.94
Canada	C\$1	Sfr0.95
euro zone	€1	Sfr1.28
Japan	¥100	Sfr1.13
New Zealand	NZ\$1	Sfr0.69
UK	UK£1	Sfr1.50
USA	US\$1	Sfr0.92

Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel room** Sfr80-100
- » **Two-course evening meal** Sfr20-30
- » **Beer** Sfr5 for a glass
- » **Zurich one-day public transport ticket** Sfr8.20

Resources

- » **Geneva Tourism** (www.geneve-tourisme.ch)
- » **Swiss Tourism Board** (www.myswitzerland.com)
Links to all regional and city tourism board sites
- » **Swissinfo.ch** (www.swissinfo.ch) Swiss news

Connections

Landlocked between France, Germany, Austria, Liechtenstein and Italy, Switzerland's a doddle to move on from. Geneva city buses run as far as the French border (a couple cross into France, continuing along the southern shore of Lake Geneva) and there are plenty of direct train connections from Geneva to Paris, as well as Hamburg, Milan and Barcelona. New rail lines mean it's now only 3½ hours from Paris to Geneva.

Cosmopolitan Zürich enjoys many international rail connections, including daily trains to/from Stuttgart, Munich and Innsbruck. In northern Switzerland, Basel is a major European rail hub, with separate train stations serving France and Germany. Then, of course, there is Italy, a mere hop and a skip from Locarno in Italianate Ticino.

ITINERARIES

One Week

Start in vibrant Zürich. Shop famous Bahnhofstrasse and hit the bars of Züri-West. Next, head to the Jungfrau region to explore some kick-ass (think James Bond racing an avalanche down a sheer, snowy rock face) Alpine scenery. Take a pit stop in beautiful Lucerne before finishing up in the capital, Bern.

Two Weeks

As above, then head west for French immersion lessons. Check out Geneva's Jet d'Eau (aka 140km tall skyrocketing bolt of water) and head to Montreux to get a dose of lakeside style flanked by alpine peaks in the Swiss Riviera Zip to Zermatt or across to St Moritz to frolic in snow or green meadows then loop east to taste the Italian side of Switzerland.

Essential Food & Drink

- » **Fondue** Switzerland's best-known dish, in which melted Emmental and Gruyère cheese are combined with white wine in a large pot and eaten with bread cubes.
- » **Raclette** Another popular artery-hardener of melted cheese served with potatoes.
- » **Rösti** German Switzerland's national dish of fried shredded potatoes is served with everything.
- » **Veal** Highly rated throughout the country; in Zürich veal is thinly sliced and served in a cream sauce (*gschnetzeltes kalbsfleisch*).
- » **Bündnerfleisch** Dried beef, smoked and thinly sliced.
- » **Wurst** Like their northern neighbours, the Swiss also munch on a wide variety of sausages.