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PLAN YOUR TRIP

YOUR PLANNING TOOL KIT

Photos, itineraries, lists and suggestions to help you put together your perfect trip

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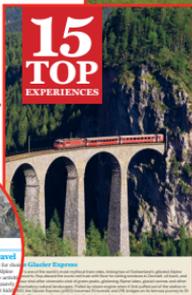
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Castles & Abbeys

Switzerland is home to a number of impressive castles and abbeys, many of which are still in use today. Some of the most famous include the Grossmünster in Zurich, the Minster in Lucerne, and the Chillon in Vevey.

Chocolate

Switzerland is famous for its high-quality chocolate, which is made from the finest cocoa beans. Some of the most popular brands include Lindt, Toblerone, and Nestlé.

Family Travel

Switzerland is a great destination for families, with a wide range of activities and attractions for all ages. From the Swiss Alps to the Swiss lakes, there is something for everyone.

Swiss Express

The Swiss Express is a luxury train service that offers a unique way to travel through the Swiss Alps. It is a great way to see the most beautiful scenery in Switzerland.

UNDERSTAND SWITZERLAND

GET MORE FROM YOUR TRIP

Learn about the big picture, so you can make sense of what you see

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Swiss Wine

Swiss wine is a unique and delicious product that is made from the finest grapes. It is a great way to experience the Swiss way of life and to enjoy the most beautiful scenery in Switzerland.

Switzerland Today

Switzerland is a country of many firsts, from the first watch to the first chocolate. It is a country that has managed to maintain its traditional values while embracing the modern world.





Look out for these icons:



Our author's recommendation



A green or sustainable option



No payment required

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Switzerland



Basel
World-class contemporary art and architecture (p238)

Jura
Rural area with forests, farms and slow vibe (p94)

Bern
Medieval Old Town and art in the capital (p98)

Jungfrau Region
Switzerland's epic outdoors (p122)

Lake Geneva
Paddle steamers, castles, villages and vineyards (p55)

Montreux
French-style romance, music and to-die-for château (p71)

Sion
Gourmet capital of the winegrowing region (p156)

Matterhorn
No mountain has more pulling power (p167)

Top Experiences >





OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Nicola Williams

Coordinating Author, Geneva, Lake Geneva & Vaud, Valais Ever since Nicola moved to a village on the southern side of Lake Geneva, she has never been able to shake off that uncanny feeling that she is on holiday – a garden tumbling down the hillside towards that same glittering lake and Switzerland's mysterious Jura mountains beyond is her wake-up call. Nicola has lived and worked in France since 1997 and when not flitting to Geneva, skiing or dipping into the Swiss countryside (or fondue), she can be found at her desk writing. She has worked on numerous titles for Lonely Planet. She blogs at tripalong.wordpress.com and tweets as @Tripalong.

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Kerry Christiani

Bernese Oberland, Ticino, Northeastern Switzerland, Graubünden, Liechtenstein Post-grad stints on a vegetable farm near Bern and snowbound winters in Arosa and Wengen sparked Kerry's passion for this boundlessly beautiful country.

Since then, she has returned to Switzerland as often as possible to hike in the Alps, sail on Lake Constance and dig out the craziest Alpine events. Kerry's wanderlust has taken her to six continents, inspiring numerous articles and some 20 guidebooks, including Lonely Planet's guides to Germany, Austria, Sardinia and France.

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Fribourg, Neuchâtel & Jura, Mitteland, Central Switzerland A Lonely Planet writer for over 10 years, Sally has called Vaud Canton home for the last five years. In the course of her research for this guidebook, she visited 11 of the confederation's 26 cantons and, most importantly, ate a whole lot of cheese.



Damien Simonis

Basel & Aargau, Zürich Having spent years shuttling back and forth between Switzerland and elsewhere – often to update this tome – fate finally took Damien to gentle Geneva, where he is now ensconced. That does not preclude the occasional foray across the Röstigraben, which is always a treat!

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Published by Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd

ABN 36 005 607 983

7th edition – June 2012

ISBN 978 1 74179 584 4

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10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in China

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itineraries

Whether you've got six days or 60, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to lonelyplanet.com/thorntree to chat with other travellers.



Two Weeks

Lost in Graubünden & Ticino

A circular route that can be picked up at any point. From **Chur**, head north for a detour to pretty **Maienfeld** and its vineyards. Spin east to ski queens **Klosters** and **Davos**, then surge into the Engadine Valley, with pretty towns like **Guarda** and **Scuol** (tempting thermal baths). The road then ribbons southeast to the Austrian border, which you cross to head south through a slice of Austria and Italy, before veering back into Switzerland to contemplate frescos at **Müstair**. Continue southwest through picture-postcard **Zuoz** to chic **St Moritz**. Climb the Julier Pass mountain road and drop down the **Via Mala** gorges to art stop **Zillis**.

The southbound road crosses into Ticino and **Bellinzona**. Steam on past lakeside **Locarno** and up the enchanting **Valle Maggia**. Backtracking to Bellinzona, the main route takes you along the Valle Leventina, with a stop in **Giornico**, before crossing the **St Gotthard Pass** to **Andermatt**. Nip into the monastery of **Disentis/Mustér** before plunging into designer spa waters in highly recommended **Vals**, the last stop before Chur.



One Day or Week

The Glacier Express

This mythical, 290km train journey has been a traveller-must ever since the birth of winter tourism in the Alps. Do it any time of the year – in one glorious 7½-hour stretch or as several sweet nuggets interspersed with overnights in Switzerland’s most glamorous Alpine mountain resorts.

Starting in **Zermatt**, the narrow-gauge railway winds north down the valley to **Visp** and **Brig**. From here it swings northeast along the pretty eastern stretch of the Rhône Valley through the attractive villages of **Betten** and **Fiesch**: hop off in Betten and catch a cable car up to car-free village **Bettmeralp** (and onwards up to Bettnerhorn) or Eggishorn for a peek at the Unesco-listed Aletsch Glacier.

Back in the valley, the Glacier Express trundles towards the **Furka Pass** (which it circumvents by tunnel) and descends on ski resort **Andermatt** before climbing up again to the **Oberalp Pass** (2033m), the literal high point of the journey.

From here it meanders alongside the Vorderrhein River, through **Disentis/Mustér** to **Chur**. The main line continues to **St. Moritz**, with a northeast branch to **Davos**.



One Month Grand Tour

The very best of Switzerland starts in **Geneva** with its vibrant museums and signature pencil fountain, from where a slow road leads east along the southern shore of the lake in France – stop for lunch in **Yvoire** – and a fast road (the A1) shadows the Swiss northern shore (lunch stops **Nyon**, **Vevey** or **Montreux**). The next port of call is art-rich **Martigny** and châteaux-crowned **Sion**, worth lingering in for its wealth of vineyards, wines and memorable Valaisian dining. Continue east along the Rhône Valley, nipping up to **Leukerbad** to drift in thermal waters beneath soaring mountain peaks. In **Visp**, head south to ogle at iconic Matterhorn from the hip streets, slopes and trails of chic, car-free **Zermatt**.

In the second week, get a taste of the Glacier Express with a train trip to **Oberwald**. Stop off in **Betten** for a side trip to **Bettmeralp** with its amazing vistas of the 23km-long Aletsch Glacier from atop Bettmerhorn. From Oberwald, drive north over the Grimsel Pass (2165m) to **Meiringen** (eat meringues!) and west into the magnificent Jungfrau Region with its once-in-a-lifetime train journey up to Europe's highest station; base yourself in **Interlaken** or **Grindelwald**. If you have a head more for Italian passion than hardcore Alpine extremes, stay on the Glacier Express as far as **Andermatt** instead, then motor south into Italianate Ticino for shimmering lake life in the glitzy and gorgeous towns of **Lugano** and **Locarno**.

The third week sees a trip north to **Lucerne** where you can cruise on a boat to lovely Lake Lucerne resorts such as **Weggis** and **Brunnen**. Feast on *Kirschtorte* (cherry cake) in rich old medieval **Zug**, then hit big-city **Zürich** to the north to taste urban Switzerland at its best (five days in all). Should you fancy some border-hopping, **Liechtenstein** is very close by. Unesco-listed **St Gallen** is the next stop from where you can spend a week lapping up Switzerland's north – see the Northern Treasures itinerary.

Ending up in the Jura, it's a quick and easy flit south to Neuchâtel on the northern shore of Lac de Neuchâtel, from where the motorway speeds to Lausanne on Lake Geneva and, eventually, Geneva.



Two Weeks City to City

➤ This Geneva-to-Zürich, 385km trip is for urbanites keen to mix metropolitan fire with small-town charm, eminently doable by car or public transport. Fly into one airport, out the other, or zip back to point A by train in 2¾ hours.

Landing in **Geneva**, explore Switzerland's most cosmopolitan big city then trundle along the shore of Europe's largest Alpine lake to bustling **Lausanne**, a hilly lakeside town with a lively bar and cafe scene and sweet old town. Continue along the same glorious route, aptly dubbed the Swiss Riviera, to the **Lavaux wine region** and beyond to **Montreux**. Then head north to **Gruyères**, land of chateaux, cheese, cream and meringues. Further north, you arrive in **Fribourg** on the French-German language frontier – cross it to pretty Swiss capital **Bern**. Later, drop down to the lakeside towns around **Interlaken** (plenty of top skiing, hiking and other outdoor options around here) then swing north to another bewitching lake lady, **Lucerne**. Rolling onwards to Switzerland's most hip 'n happening city **Zürich**, via tycoon-magnet **Zug**, the atmosphere changes completely.

One Week Northern Treasures

➤ In spite of all its natural wonders, Switzerland boasts overwhelming man-made beauty too, and there is no finer spot to appreciate this than in **St Gallen**, the seat of a grand abbey and church complex safeguarding one of the world's oldest libraries (hence its privileged Unesco World Heritage Site status). Say cheese in **Appenzell**, a 50-minute journey from St Gallen on a narrow-gauge railway, then bear west along the southern shore of **Lake Constance** (great summer outdoor action) or to **Winterthur** (art museums and a kid-friendly science centre). Both routes end up in **Schaffhausen**, a quaint medieval town that could easily be German. Don't miss standing in the middle of **Rheinfall**, Europe's largest waterfall.

Next up, continue further west to art-rich **Basel**, either direct or via a pretty south-west detour through **Baden** and **Aarau**, two picture-postcard addresses to get lost in cobbled old-town streets. From Basel, it is an easy drive west again into the deepest depths of Switzerland's unexplored **Jura**. Push west to **La Chaux-de-Fonds** to discover several early works by architect Le Corbusier who was born here.

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