



SWITZERLAND

TOP SIGHTS, AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES



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Welcome to Switzerland

Look beyond the chocolate, cuckoo clocks and yodelling – contemporary Switzerland, land of four languages, is all about once-in-a-lifetime journeys, heart-racing alpine pursuits, spectacular natural beauty and vibrant urban culture.

Switzerland's ravishing landscapes demand immediate action – grab boots, leap on board, ring bike bell and let spirits rip. In summer, hiking and biking trails invite exploration of Switzerland's glacier-encrusted mountains and deep green valleys, glittering lake-shores and terraced vineyards. View the grandeur from a hot-air balloon, parachute, or white-water raft, or seek out close-up encounters with Eiger's chiselled north face and Jungfrauoch's crevassed icy expanses (extraordinarily, you don't need to be a mountaineer to do it). Come winter, skiing and snowboarding in Graubünden, Valais, Bernese Oberland and Central Switzerland take centre stage.

The perfect counterpoint to Switzerland's rural beauty is its urban edge. A host of great cities awaits you here: Bern with its medieval old town and world-class modern art; chic Geneva astride Europe's largest lake; and ubercool Zürich with its riverside bars and reborn industrial districts.

Ever innovative, the Swiss have always embraced the new and the experimental. Capturing the zeitgeist throughout the country – even in back-of-beyond corners of the Alps – are cutting-edge cultural venues, avant-garde galleries, attention-grabbing architecture and fresh-faced design.

And then there's Swiss cuisine: a hearty and flavour-some celebration of gooey cheese desperate to be dipped in, comfort food favourites such as rösti and Spätzli (egg noodles), air-dried meats and autumnal game and, of course, velvety Swiss chocolate.

The perfect counterpoint to Switzerland's rural beauty is its urban edge.

View towards the Fraumünster (p165), from Limmat riverbank
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Plan Your Trip

Switzerland's Top Nine

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Geneva

Switzerland's international city by the lake

More than 150 nationalities jostle for a stool at the bar in this French-speaking cosmopolitan city (p32), where luxury watchmakers, chocolate gods, diplomats and artists come together around lovely Lake Geneva. Canary-yellow *mouettes* ('seagulls') ferry locals across the water and Mont Blanc looks over the action. Strolling Old Town streets, savouring the vibrant cafe and museum scene, paddleboarding on the lake and dashing beneath the iconic Jet d'Eau fountain is what life's about here.

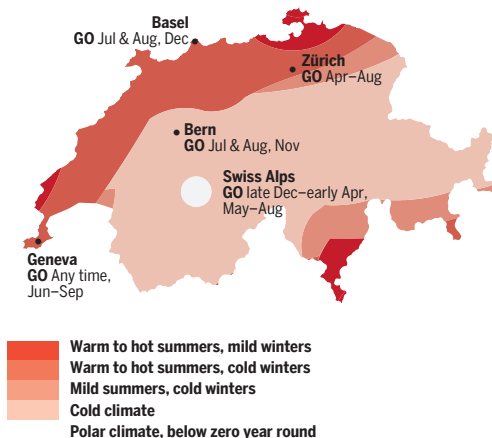
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Plan Your Trip

Need to Know



When to Go



High Season (Jul, Aug & Dec–Apr)

- In July and August walkers and cyclists hit high-altitude trails.
- Christmas and New Year see serious snow-sports action.
- Late December to early April is high season for skiing.

Shoulder (Apr–Jun & Sep)

- Get accommodation deals in ski resorts and hot spots.
- Spring is warm and idyllic, with flowers and local produce.
- Watch the grape harvest in autumn.

Low Season (Oct–Mar)

- Mountain resorts hibernate until early December.
- Prices are up to 50% lower than in high season.
- Sights and restaurants open for fewer days and shorter hours.

Currency

Swiss franc (officially CHF, also Sfr)

Language

German, French, Italian, Romansch

Visas

Generally not required for stays of up to 90 days. Some non-European citizens require a Schengen Visa.

Money

ATMs are at every airport, most train stations and on every second street corner in towns and cities; Visa, MasterCard and Amex widely accepted.

Mobile Phones

Most mobile (cell) phones brought from overseas will function in Switzerland; check with your provider about costs. Prepaid local SIM cards are widely available.

Time

GMT/UTC plus one hour. Daylight-saving time starts on the last Saturday in March; clocks go back again on the last Saturday in October.

Note that, in German, *halb* is used to indicate the half-hour before the hour, hence *halb acht* (half eight) means 7.30, not 8.30.