

21 HIDDEN GEMS OF SWITZERLAND

BY PRAGATI SIDDHANTI





DEDICATED TO NIYATI,
MY EVER GROWING, EVER WONDERFUL DAUGHTER...

Dear Explorer,

Thanks for downloading our e-book – 21 Hidden Gems of Switzerland. In this book, we plan to unravel Switzerland’s best-kept travel secrets. If I already have your attention, then you’re going to love what the next pages have to offer. If not, hang around for a little bit longer – this is a travel resource that is meant to come in handy!

“21 Hidden gems of Switzerland” is a collaborative travel project where 21 locals have come together to present their unique discoveries in this beautiful country. Each destination is one of a kind, and each chapter will give you a complete lowdown on related subjects like making your way, things to do, food, costs and more. All the experiences covered are first hand, and I hope you will appreciate the Genuity of each piece.

Our book is for you – if you’ve been here several times or if you haven’t, if you’re travelling with your family or are going solo, if you’re a local, tourist or an expat, if you’re planning a day trip or a longer vacation. In totality, summer or winter, autumn or spring – this travel resource has something for everyone who intends to explore the hidden beauty of Switzerland.

Destinations

Each destination is handpicked, gorgeous and offers a variety of facets in culture, natural beauty and scenic views. Are we saying this is everything that there is? – No, not at all, Switzerland is a small yet beautiful country, and there is enough and more for us to write subsequent parts.

Authors

Some of our authors are entrepreneurs, some of them are travel bloggers, some of them are Instagrammers, and some of them are expats. While we all come from diverse backgrounds and works, we all have something in common – our love for travel and our love affair with this country!



About the Editor

My love affair with Switzerland started a little over 3 years ago when I moved from Bangalore to Basel in 2016. This was my first move abroad, I experienced a roller coaster ride in my first year – the culture, the language, the serenity and just everything “Swiss”. I have always loved to write, and since there were so many new experiences, I joined my sister on her blog with a section dedicated to expat living, travelogues (Click to head to our “**Swiss Blog**” section).

After putting the usual tick marks on my Swiss travel bucket list, I would always be all ears when people would tell me about places that the locals liked to frequent. I need to admit that a full life does not allow me to travel as much as I would want to – but, whenever I do, I look for untouched hidden gems. The idea of this book grew out of this want – the want to discover these hidden gems. When I came up with the idea of doing this book, I realized it would be best to collaborate with seasoned travelers to help our readers discover offbeat locations in Switzerland.

I wish you an enjoyable experience in Switzerland and hope that I can influence some part of your travel plan.

Cheers!



Pragati Siddhanti is an IT Manager (by day) at an MNC by profession, she is a computer science engineer with a master’s degree in business and information systems. Be for beauty is her second baby where she and her sister **Manavi Siddhanti @manavisiddhanti** talk about various lifestyle topics such as beauty, fashion, events, travel, social media and expat living. She lives in Basel with her adorable 8-year-old daughter and husband.



Founders

BE FOR BEAUTY

A lifestyle blog and a social media agency

<https://www.beforbeauty.com/>

Run by sister duo, Manavi Siddhanti and Pragati Siddhanti, Be For Beauty is both a product as well as a service. The team writes relatable high-quality content in the lifestyle segment on their **blog** alongside which they help brands grow with their **content creation and marketing services**.

Their venture is based out of India and Switzerland.

Manavi has been a part of Indian media for a decade now.

“

I started with extensive tv production at India Today TV. Years went by, and I worked as a writer and editor at India's leading magazines including Prevention, Women's Health, Harper's Bazaar and Millionaire Asia amongst others. Off late, I have worked with digital brands like Popxo and Tripoto.

”

When the blog started to take shape, she was approached by smaller brands who were trying to establish an online identity and needed someone who understood the content: strategy, creation and marketing. And that's how the digital marketing services came into being!

Currently she works as a writer, editor, columnist for media houses in India and supports brands shape their online presence. Her expertise lies in beauty, fashion and lifestyle segment.



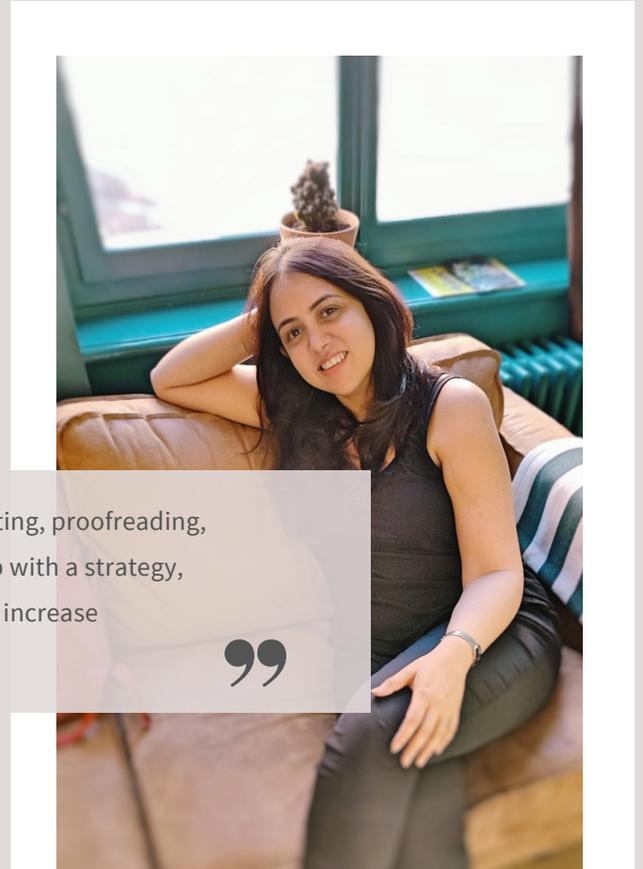
Pragati comes from a completely different background and the blog to her was a delightful accident.

Pragati is now a co-founder and partner at Be for Beauty. Earlier in 2016, she relocated to the picturesque city of Basel, Switzerland with her family. She ditched her 6-figure salary of an IT manager and decided it was time to take a leap of faith and dedicate this time to grow and hone their baby, Be for Beauty.

“We strive to create quality-driven content with plenty of tips and great insights for anybody who’s kind enough to stop by.” Her stories on the blog mostly cover travel and expat living.

“ We’re content **creating geniuses**. Adept in writing, proofreading, creating social media content and coming up with a strategy, we’ve helped unique brands find their niche, increase engagement, and lead to sales.

We have unique proposals for start-ups, medium as well as large companies and would be happy to manage your content.



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Appenzell

Cheese, mountains, lakes and everything Swiss | By Ipsita Barua



“In the supermarkets of Switzerland, Appenzell draws your attention to cheese and beer. But few know that the most popular, photographed mountain restaurants - Äscher (hanging precariously on a cliff, patronized by Ashton Kutcher) is right here in Appenzell. While on your way up there, the picturesque Seealpsee lake will undoubtedly delay your schedule for all the right reasons. Have I mentioned the bacon and egg-topped Röstli yet?”

So, there are more reasons than one to make time for this picture-perfect region that summarizes everything Swiss in landscape and leisure.



Getting there

Start at Zurich Hauptbahnhof (HB - the central train station) and get your tickets for Wasserauen, from where you can either hike or take the cable car to Ebenalp for the Äscher mountain restaurant. The train to Wasserauen takes about 2 hours from Zurich HB. The Wasserauen station has a charming garden café to fill and fuel up on food and beverages especially useful if you are planning to hike.



Things To Do

- **CITY TOUR** The Appenzell town is a walker's delight with free-standing houses, a parish church with a Gothic choir, monasteries and historical buildings. A stroll down the car-free street leads you to quaint cafés and craft shops housed in bright yellow, red and green buildings.
- **CHEESE FACTORY** Appenzeller cheese is known to be the strongest this country produces both in texture and taste. Hop over to **Appenzeller Schaukäserei** and discover the ingredients and traditions that go into making this iconic cheese.
- **HIKE** The medium-level hike to Äscher mountain restaurant takes about 3 hours from Wasserauen station with rewarding views of the Santis over Seealpsee and breathtaking mountain vistas.
- **CATTLE WALK** Appenzell hosts the yearly alpine ascent and descent of cattle at the beginning of spring (May). At the end of summer, (September/October) farmers in colourful traditional garb lead their cattle either up the mountains or down into the valley. The colourful ceremonial processions are a festive occasion with farmers singing, cowbells clanging and local beverages flowing.



Food

If you can make it up to **Äscher restaurant**, either by hiking or the cable car, the rösti (pan-fried grated potatoes with cheese, topped with eggs and bacon/veg option available too) is your reward. Wash it down with the local beer with the appetite of an Appenzeller. In the town centre, you can find a lot of options for dining-in and takeaway from pizzerias and multi-cuisine restaurants to bakeries and kiosks. But keep in mind that most eateries close by 10 pm.



Stay

Simon's B&B in Urnäsch was our base for exploring the region. The young family hosts guests in their cosy home, just a few hundred yards from the train station with direct connections to the town centre and Wasserauen. The guest room is tastefully done and stocked with all the essentials. The hosts also provide guests with tips and recommendations from a local's perspective.



Costs

Expenses entirely depend on whether you choose to make a day trip from Zurich or stay over to explore the region at leisure. In peak season (June to August) expect to spend around CHF 80 to CHF 90 per night on accommodation. The train fare one way per person comes to around CHF 45, lesser if you are a resident with a half-fare card. The trick is to plan and book in advance if you expect a more extended stay to avoid seasonal highs and booked-out disappointments. Appenzell is all this and more. Often overlooked in favour of westward tourist destinations like Interlaken and the Geneva region, this gem of a place can easily find its spot in anybody's repeat itinerary. If you are feeling too adventurous, explore the whisky trail high up in the Santis. You can also choose to extend your hike on one of the many marked trails. Because as soon as you reach, a platter of Appenzeller cheese and sizzling rösti would always be at hand for comfort.



Writer by interest, photographer by passion and wanderer at heart, that's what defines Ipsita. After moving to Zurich, a little over a year ago, she confesses she's still in awe of this beautiful country and spends most of her time discovering walking trails that make for Instagram-worthy photos.

Caumasee and Crestasee

Hidden turquoise gems in Switzerland | By Samiksha Mahajan



“Switzerland is one country that never fails to impress. I am always looking out for offbeat summer destinations in the country, places that would promise vivid memories that usually last a lifetime! We visited Flims in 2017 and it was well worth the visit completely because of the two lakes - Caumasee and Crestasee each flaunting its splendour. The great news is that you can visit both of them on the same day and I highly recommend the mornings for a splendid experience.”

Caumasee

Lake Cauma in the Grisons Mountains near Flims in Graubunden is the ideal one-day summer destination for families, bikers and mountaineers. It is also known as the ‘Caribbean of Switzerland’ due to its bright clear turquoise waters. As a matter of fact, the shades of blue are even more significant in winter.



Getting there

You can drive up there or choose to take the train. As a family, we took the train (ICE or IC3) which connects both Basel/Zurich up until Chur. A quick 2-minute walk to the Chur Post Autostation connects you to bus #81 towards Laax GR, be sure to get down at the stop - Flims Waldhaus, Caumasee.



Things to Do

- A circular hike starts in Flims Waldhaus, where the most romantic path through the forest leads you to Lake Cauma; a wood-carved Neptune signpost will guide you to the lake. The path is accessible by both the pushchair and wheelchair and hence is an ideal walk for both the young and the old. In summer and during restaurant opening hours, it is possible to shorten the route via the lift.
- You do need to purchase the entry tickets at the counter; cyclists usually make their way from Staderas or Flims Waldhaus and can cycle comfortably through the Films forest. At the end of the lake (where the roads meet) you can make your way up to Conn where you find a local restaurant which entices you for a stopover. This walk (from Caumasee to Conn) takes approximately 40 minutes. You will find an observation deck namely "Il Spir" which offers impressive views of the Rhine canyon.
- In the summer months, Lake Cauma remains in between 20 and 24 degrees Celsius making it an ideal bathing lake on the mountains. You can even hire Pedalos and Stand Up Paddles or play beach volleyball on the shores. For children, as expected – there is a play area and a large sandpit.



Food

There is a local restaurant “**Caumasee**”, which gives you all the "beach feels" in the middle of the Grisons mountains. The self-service restaurant has a large sun terrace and a botanic lounge. The other option is to eat at the other local restaurant “**Conn**” which is 40 minutes away from Caumasee.



Stay

Caumasee is an ideal spot for a day trip, however, if you are planning on staying, here are a few options:

- Luxury accommodation choice:
Grand Hotel by Waldhaus Flims
- Budget accommodation option:
Ferienwohnung Crap Ner



Costs

During summers (from mid-May to mid-September) admission to the Caumasee costs CHF 15.00 for adults and CHF 7.50 for children (6–16 years of age). After mid-September, the admission to the beach is free.



Crestasee

Lake Cresta is beautifully embedded in the forest between Flims and Trin and is famous for its clear water, emerald shades and natural beauty.



Getting there

If you're combining the two, then after enjoying Caumasee and "Il Spir", return to Flims Waldhaus, Caumasee and again take bus no. 81 towards Chur Post Autostation and get down at a stop, Flims Dorf, Auas sparsas. This lake is situated high above the Rhine gorge and is only accessible by foot. Whether travelling by public transport or car, you will need to walk for around 15-30 minutes to reach the lake.



Things to Do

Crestasse is an incredible summer experience – swimming in the lake or just dipping your feet in the water, the scenic views all around are visuals that will remain etched in my memory forever. During summers, since it's a well-known swimming spot – there are a ton of facilities available such as kiosks, toilets, changing rooms and boats to rent.

TIP! Do not take the main trail but follow the forest trail right by the clear water, this is a 15-minute walk and the entrance to the lake has to be paid at the restaurant.



Food

You can carry your own picnic or eat at the only option available which is a local restaurant situated near the lake.



Stay

Cretasee is an ideal spot for a day trip, however, if you are planning on staying, here are a few options:

- Luxury accommodation choice:
Grand Hotel by Waldhaus Flims
- Budget accommodation option:
Ferienwohnung Crap Ner



Costs

During summers (from mid-May to mid-September), admission to the natural pool costs CHF 7.00 for adults and CHF 3.00 for children. In the other months, admission to the lake is free.

*Samiksha has a masters degree in computer science and philosophy, after she moved to Switzerland she finally found the time to nurture her passion for travel, photography, nature and art. She is very drawn to lesser known destinations across the world, check out her **IG page** to follow her adventures.*

Stoos-Fronalpstock

Breath-taking panoramic views of the Alpine region with a touch of Swiss history | By Varsha Nagpal



“After having lived in Switzerland for a while now and covering the most popular places – I am on a mission of discovering the lesser-known spots. My preferred destination is usually one of the mountains in the Swiss Alps or even a lake. After all, this country has the most pristine places to discover with excellent connectivity.

Just recently, over a long weekend in May, I decided to visit Stoos and Fronalpstock. It was interesting as I had been in the Lucerne region several times admiring the beautiful lake surrounded by the mighty mountains and the city’s medieval architecture but had not yet made my way to this enchanting place.”



Getting there

From Lucerne, one must head to Schwyz station with the SBB train and then hop on to bus NFB 1 (direction Muothathal, Hoelloch) to arrive at the Schwyz, Stoosbahn stop. Here, the world’s steepest funicular railway brings you to the car-free mountain village of Stoos. Dubbed as a “technical wonder” the Stoosbahn has an inclination of 110% in maximum. The cabins are barrel-shaped and operate in a way that maintains a horizontal floor surface for the passengers.



Things to Do

Stoos offers stunning landscapes throughout the year and it serves as a ski-resort during winter. It is also the birthplace of Swiss Olympic Skier, Hedi Beeler.

Walkthrough the village and indulge yourself in the mesmerizing landscape. A chapel stands tall in the centre of the village and you can pay a short visit to it as I did. After about 12 minutes you will reach the Sesselbahn station which will take you to Fronalpstock at 1922 metres above sea level. Enjoy your 20 minutes ride in the weatherproof comfortable chairlift whilst seeing a bunch of adventurous hikers making their way up the summit.

On reaching the summit of Fronalpstock, you can relish the 360-degree panoramic view of more than 10 lakes including the scenic Lake of Lucerne, numerous mountain peaks, stunning views towards Black Forest of Germany, and the most important historical place in Switzerland - the Rütli. The confederation of Switzerland was originally founded here in 1291. You can take nice pictures from the dedicated viewing platform. The view is a true delight to any traveller's heart. There is also a small play area for the children at the summit. Special attractions in the months of summer (July and August) include sunset rides wherein the chairlifts are open until 10 in the evening. If you are lucky, you can even spot the alphorn players on an evening with fine weather. It cannot get more traditional than this, I was fortunate enough to witness it during my visit to Mt. Pilatus and it was surely an experience to remember. In wintertime, you can do a variety of sports – skiing, sledging, snowshoeing. If you are surefooted and have a head for heights, you could hike the Klingenstock-Fronalpstock ridge trail.

After spending half a day on the summit, I began my descent. On reaching the village, I walked to the Stoos-Seeli (“small lake”). It is a very serene place which offers a fireplace for a BBQ, a children’s play area and restroom facilities. If you are hungry, you could also taste some Swiss delicacies in the cosy restaurants at the Stoos village. You could cover the remaining way back via Stoosbahn as earlier or take the alternative route via cable car until Morschach and then a bus to Brunnen. If time permits, your journey can be rounded off with a visit to the Husky-camp in Muotathal or the Victorinox Visitor Center in Brunnen.



Food

Eat and drink at the **Gipfelrestaurant Fronalpstock** which has a large sun terrace where you can even relax for a longer time.



Costs

For people living in Switzerland, this is a good day trip while for international visitors, I recommend an overnight stay in Lucerne. An all-inclusive round-trip cost for an adult from Lucerne would be approx. CHF 75. Please note that this price is without any offers. You should check out super saver tickets or other offers from SBB which are normally turn out to be more cost-effective. Last but not least, the most important hint for planning your visits to the mountains: always check out the weather before you travel (including the day of travel). It's okay to have a single-digit degree for temperature with the sun as opposed to days with clouds or heavy winds.

Varsha Nagpal is a Finance professional with a passion for travel and photography. When travelling, she likes to experience the local life and explore the hidden jewels as opposed to the most populous tourist spots. Check out the photos from this travel enthusiast's adventures on her [Instagram page](#).

Verbier

A Paradise for All Seasons | By Jessica Gaines



“The first time I visited Verbier, I knew I had found a unique oasis. Though a small town, it offers a wide panorama of entertainment, natural beauty, summer and winter sports and diverse dining and relaxation options. After my first trip here, I knew I would be back. True to this prediction, I have found myself returning to Verbier time and again!”

The journey to the town feels like an adventure in itself. Whether you are arriving via train and then taking the funicular, or arriving via car on the switch-back drive up the mountain - the combination of altitude, breathtaking views, and magnificent scenery makes you instantly forget the “real world” below. Stress disappears as you reach the heart of town and meander along the main street.



Getting there

The closest airport is Geneva. From here, there are two main options – car or train.

Via car - Verbier is 167km from Geneva International Airport. It takes about 2 hours and 20 minutes to drive, with a few opportunities for rest stops along the way.

Via train – check the Swiss train timetables on www.sbb.ch. Simply enter your destination as “Verbier – Station Poste.” You will change once in Martigny and then in Le Chable. Changing trains is not an inconvenience – simply a chance to stretch your legs! Then, in Le Chable, you can take the Telecabine up – which lets you off at the centre of town – or take the post bus. The bus is coordinated to depart a bit after a train arrives, so you will have time to catch it.



Things to Do

Winter Highlights

Verbier is a mecca of off-piste skiing. During winters you can experience pure exhilaration when making your own tracks in off-piste descents.

- **Heliskiing** – ready for some **adrenaline**? Ascending in a helicopter to find your own personal routes down the mountain is an experience like no other. The guides have an impressive amount of experience and can assure a thrilling day.
- **Snowshoeing** – For a lesser intense winter sport, try strapping on snowshoes and trekking to elevate your heart rate, see vistas and enjoy the area. The “**Snowshoe Hike Verbier Savoleyres**” is a one-way walk from “Verbier Route de Golf “ to “Route des Planards” which ends at “Savoleyres.”

A distance of 3.9 km lasting about 2 hours allows most ages and abilities to take part.

Summer Highlights

This hidden gem is also known worldwide for hosting the renowned Verbier Festival. Renowned classical musicians from around the globe perform. Be sure to book tickets early; top orchestras and performances usually book out early.

- **e-Biking** – Verbier has recently introduced an **August festival** to welcome enthusiasts of e-biking. Those who enjoy the sport, or those who are interested but have never taken part, will descend on the Swiss mountain resort to take part in the special festival.
- **Hiking** – The area has more than 500 km of **marked trails**, themed paths, and even treks lasting several days. Easy hiking trails run alongside the valley and are perfect for family walks.
- **Paragliding** – Interested in soaring through the skies over the Swiss alps? Several groups offer **paragliding** training, paragliding courses, paragliding holidays & tandem flights.



Stay

Here are a few of my recommendations:

- Hôtel Bristol Verbier - this **3-star hotel** offers an excellent location and value for money. The newly built rooms and common spaces are clean and modern.
- Hôtel Montpellier - a **3-star hotel**, with a pool and beautiful ambience. It is easily reachable from the main centre of town.
- Hotel les Touristes - one of the most affordable **options**, a few bus stops down from the main town. The rooms are very basic and similar to college dorms, but the staff and overall atmosphere is friendly.

Food

For a morning indulgence, follow your nose to the local bakeries and indulge in French-inspired treats! Some choices:

- Pâtisserie de la Poste, Route de Verbier Station 61 - This **small shop** is a few bus stops down the hill. Take the bus down, then walk up to enjoy the fresh air (and burn off the calories you will consume in the Pâtisserie) Their strawberry pies, tarts, and croissants are as beautiful to the palette as to the eye!
- **Boulangerie Michellod**, Route de Verbier 132 - Open even on Sundays and holidays, Boulangerie Michellod offers local specialties. Be sure to try the “Carac” – a tart-like Swiss dessert pastry traditionally made of chocolate, cream, fondant, and shortbread pie crust.

Lunches can be spent in leisurely indulgence, enjoying delicacies with a glass (or bottle) of rosé and gorgeous views. Some choices:

- Chez Dany - Walk up or ski down to this **restaurant**, which is located mid-way up the mountain. The panoramic views and tasty food options make for an Instagram-worthy meal.
- Le Rouge - The outdoor and indoor tables have an ambiance of posh, relaxed elegance. Many celebrities linger **here** for a cozy lunch in the sun. Arrive early or make a reservation.

Dinners in Verbier can be an elaborate ritual. Dress accordingly and be prepared to indulge. Here are a few preferred options:

- Vieux Verbier - Offers a variety of Swiss specialties and local produce on the menu, the **restaurant** gives a good overview of alpine cuisine.
- Pizzeria La Pergola - This is a relaxed **option**, where small children and all ages also feel welcome.
- Shed, owned by Swedes - These **busy joint** offers burgers, veggie burgers, and salads. The quality is top notch and the location could not be more convenient.

Costs

The costs of Verbier can range depending upon your taste and budget. Dinners out can easily run up to 150 CHF for two persons. Activities with guides range from 150 a day to much more for various high-end activities.

Lastly, remember the pronunciation of the town's name is "Ver-bee-yay". The "r" at the end is silent. Why embark on a journey up a mountain to visit a difficult-to-pronounce little village? Because, in addition to the beauty, the conversations you will have with the locals and the visitors will leave an indelible impression. Those who visit Verbier are genuinely excited about life, adventure, music, and nature. To connect with the vibe of Verbier is truly to feel you are living life at its best.



Jessica Gaines revels in gaining insights through travel and work abroad. Though originally from the United States, she has lived previously in Italy and Switzerland, and is currently based in the UK.

Hallwilersee

A Must-See Gem in Canton Aargau | By Angela Warm



“Lake Hallwyl (aka Hallwilersee) is a beautiful lake located in Canton Aargau, just 40 minutes west of Zurich. Nestled between high protected hills, with incredible views of the Alps, this area happens to be one of my favourite places for family day trips.” Lake Hallwyl is located in what is known as the Seetal, a north-south valley that leads from the Lucerne hinterland to Lenzburg (which we call home).

The 300 meter high hills on both sides of the lake are mostly untouched, allowing for an attractive 20km walking trail around the lake. On your journey around the lake, you will encounter gorgeous vineyards, natural low lying wetland areas, idyllic swiss towns, and various bathing spots. Hallwilersee is home to one of the most impressive, moated Castles in Switzerland, Schloss Hallwyl. This over 800-year-old castle is

located at the northern end of Lake Hallwil. It is family-friendly and hosts many fun festivals and events throughout the year.



Getting there

Hallwilersee is about a 45-minute train ride from Zurich Flughafen Airport (Flughafen - Zurich HB and then Zurich HB to Lenzburg). The train ride from Lenzburg to Lucerne is a scenic journey stopping at several of the towns on the west side of the lake. If you are looking to access the east side, the bus from Lenzburg provides easy access to these towns. A great starting point on your journey is Schloss Hallwyl, which conveniently has a bus stop right in front of the castle. Schloss Hallwyl, along with the towns of Meisterschwanden and Tennwil all have parking access which provides access to the trail.



Things to Do

A trip to Hallwilersee should include a tour of the castle, followed by a walk around part of the lake. A favourite among locals and visitors alike is to hop on the local ferry that takes you to one of the many local towns dotted around the lake and then walk or ride back. If the day is warm, there are several bathing spots, to dip your toes in and cool off. So don't forget to pack your bathing suit.

The water is refreshingly cool even in the summer months, so you will often find these bathing areas full of people sunbathing, swimming, playing games or grilling (a favourite Swiss pastime).

This area is also a favourite amongst bicyclists, as the views are incredible and the hills remain challenging for all levels of cycle enthusiasts. Dotted around the lake are several local farms where seasonal produce, cheese, meat and süssmost (apple juice) should not be missed.



Costs

Costs to visit Hallwilersee vary widely depending on how many days and where you are staying. For those not native to Switzerland, you may get a shock by the high cost of food and hotels. This is something us locals have grown to accept. The high-end hotels and restaurants can easily set you back a couple of hundred bucks. But you can also visit this idyllic setting for very little by bringing your picnic, grilling, or having a casual bite like the locals.

Hallwilersee is well worth a stop if you are visiting from afar, but especially shouldn't be missed if you are local to the country. It takes you back to a time when life was simple and gorgeous views were everywhere you turned. We have watched our kids grow up on this lake, from riding on the back of our bikes to being able to navigate the trail on their own now. We hope you enjoy it as much as we do!

*Angela Warm is an expat from the US who has truly fallen in love with Switzerland and now calls it home. When she is not helping women reach their **health goals naturally**, she is busy raising two amazing kids, travelling, and teaching others on how to protect this planet we call home.*



Food

If the hike around the lake has left you parched, you are in for a treat as there are several fine and casual restaurants to choose from. In the town of Seengen, close to Schloss Hallwyl is the local favourite, the **Studler** bakery. Here you can grab a coffee, pastry or ice cream, as well as a sandwich or sit down meal in a very casual atmosphere. It also happens to be one of the few restaurants open on Sunday. This is a must stop for glace (aka ice cream) on a hot day.

For an incredible view, check out **Eichberg Restaurant** in Egliswil - while not technically on the lake, it has one of the best views of the surrounding areas (lake and the Alps) along with food and a playground for the kids. For an amazing sunset dinner, enjoy the fantastic evening atmosphere in Meisterschwanden on the eastern lakeshore. You can celebrate the romantic mood over dinner at the **Seerose** or Delphin restaurants. **Schifflande** sits right on the lake and is accessible by the local ferry boat as well.

TIP! Their french toast is amazing and is a breakfast favourite.



Stay

If you are looking to make a multiple day excursion out of this part of Aargau, there are several amenities from basic campgrounds to high-end resort hotels to choose from. For camping, **Tennwil** at the northeast end of Meisterschwanden happens to be both bathing and a camping location, along with **Seeblick** at the south end of the lake. Both the Shifflander and Seerose restaurants mentioned above have accommodations, including one of these boasting of a luxurious spa.

La Gruyère

The region and its magnificence | By Agnieszka 'Aggie' Wajs



I lived in Zermatt from 2010 up until 2016 when my boyfriend decided to move back to his home town - La Gruyère. Everyone (even the people who haven't visited Switzerland) have heard of Zermatt and the Matterhorn! So, moving to Gruyere, I can't say I wasn't sceptical – but today, I can confidently say that this was one of the best decisions of my life.



Getting there

If you're flying into Geneva, then Gruyère is about a 1.5-hour drive from the airport. In case you're planning to travel by train (this is the most preferred mode of travel in Switzerland) – then a train to Bulle which is the capital of La Gruyère region takes about 2 hours from the airport. From Bulle to Gruyère or any other villages in the region, the easiest option is busses and trains.



Things to Do

La Gruyère is not a huge region but it has a lot to offer – there is a bit of everything for everyone.

HIKING Hiking is a big deal in Switzerland and that is no revelation, but the good part of this region is that it is for everyone. If you're looking for an easy hike, you can walk from Gruyères (which a breathtaking medieval village) to Broc or through Gorges of the Jogne up to Montsalvens lake where you will find yourself next to a dam. If you would like a longer option, then continue your hike from 'Tour du Lac' up to the village of Charmey. The views are spectacular, once you reach there I recommend just taking the time to soak up the fresh mountain air. As it goes for easy hikes you can also walk next to the river Sarine (starting in Broc for example), stop in Grandvillard in restaurant **Pic Vert** which also has a large playground for the little ones. This is an easy hike and remains quite straight for the most part. For more advanced hikers, a hike around the mighty Swiss Dolomites – Gastlosen is a must-do! And hiking up Moleson a mountain that rises above Gruyères village is also quite lovely. The hike is quite demanding and for beginners riding the funicular is a better option.

- **WATER SPORTS** Head up to the Corbières and rent a kayak or a stand-up paddle, you can take an entire day on the Lake of Gruyères. Don't forget to visit the Ogoz Island for its ruins and restored chapel. There are also possibilities for rafting and canyoning.
- **PARAGLIDING** If you are not scared of heights, then this might be the perfect place to tick off this bucket list item! The villages of Charmey, Jaun, Grandvillard can be the starting point for this lifetime experience and the views and experience is exemplary.
- **TROUT FISHING** In Neirivue you can go trout fishing without any special licence.
- **FOR THE CHEESE & CHOCOLATE LOVERS** Well, Gruyère and cheese are synonymous, in the village of Pringy, there is a cheese factory that is open to tourists. Another option is to check with the tourist

office in Charmey as they organize hikes to the chalet d'alpage' where cheese is made the 'old-school' way. Callier? Of course, you have heard of the chocolate. The factory at Broc is well worth the visit – the tour takes you through the history of the factory as well as the step by step process of chocolate making. At the end of the tour, you can sample and buy chocolates.

VILLAGES & TOWNS - *The Notables*

- **Bulle** - the capital of the region. If you're interested in the local history, tradition and art then visit Musée gruérien. Take a walk around Grand Rue- do some shopping, sit on one of the terraces and have a look at the castle. Every Thursday there's a market on the Market Square.
- **Gruyères**- A stunning medieval village on the hill with a castle and a romantic atmosphere. What makes it even more interesting is a Giger museum. You've seen the movie 'Alien'? Giger is a man who is behind it. A true artist with a bit of a twisted vision. Next, to the museum have a drink in the Giger bar.
- **Charmey** – a little village next to the lake that is nice to walk around in. Have a bite here or visit the thermal baths especially if it's raining.



Food

Gruyère has some specialties which just should not be missed. Bénichon is one of the traditions which is still alive in the region. A religious tradition which was meant to say 'merci' to God for the harvest each year, where you eat, drink and dance. A traditional Bénichon menu is high on cholesterol but is delicious. It consists of:

- Cuchaule (plaited bread seasoned with saffron) and moutarde de Bénichon (sweet-sour-spicy mustard)
- Broth and crouton
- Bouilli, cabbage soup with vegetables
- Sheep stew with grapes and mashed potatoes
- Jambon de la borne (delicious ham), sausage, veal



tongue, bacon, cabbage, carrots and potatoes

- Leg of lamb or cabri, mashed potatoes and poires à Botzi (caramelized pears that come from the region)
- Cheese platter of the region
- Meringues and double cream
- Fruit basket
- Bricelets (thin crisp waffles), beignets (apple fritters), coquettes (flaky pastry) etc.

The menu changes a bit depending upon the restaurant, village and the time of the year. Other notables to try:

- Soupe de chalet- soup with wild mountain herbs, milk, potatoes, macaroni, double cream and Gruyère
- Macaroni de chalet – macaroni with onions, double cream and once again cheese – all that goodness on one plate.
- Fondue – that’s a no brainer. Go for a fondue Vacherin if you’re not scared of a stronger taste.

Restaurants worth trying: **Auberge du Chamois** in Botterens, **La Couronne** in Sâles, Le Gruyérien in Morlon, **Hotel zur Hochmatt** in Im Fang and L’Abri des Marches in Broc.

During winter and summer (mostly in summer though) there are a lot of ‘buvettes’ open which offer nice and easy dishes that are perfect after your hikes. These are charming and cost-effective options.

Stay

In Bulle, **Hotel du Cheval Blanc** is located right in the middle of the town and is about 70 CHF per night or **Hotel Rallye** which is a more luxurious option. In Charmey, **Hotel Cailler** is a 4-star option with a spa and is expensive on the pocket. There are a multitude of options depending upon your budget – be sure to check the weather and book your hotel in advance.

Costs

Well, the costs in Switzerland are always hard to estimate – it all depends on the hotel you choose, the restaurants you eat at and the experiences you decide to indulge in. You could end up spending around 200 CHF per person on an average, but it does depend on the choices you make.

The La Gruyère region stole my heart (even after living in Zermatt!). The tradition that is still alive here, green fields and majestic mountains. It offers much more than I have written about and there’s always something new to explore and is right around the corner. Happy exploring!

*Note: While planning your trip don’t forget to check **La Gruyère region website** for info on local events.*

Agnieszka ‘Aggie’ Wajs is an ex music agency owner (RIP Vintage Beats) and has worked in many fields: advertising, medical centers, camping, restaurants, radio and language schools. She has been living in Switzerland since 2010 and is a mountain lover.

Valle Verzasca

A precious pearl in the Ticino Alps | By Seraina Zellweger



I don't go to the Canton of Ticino, the sunny south of Switzerland, as often as I'd like. But when I do, I never leave without visiting my absolute favourite spot in the area - The Verzasca Valley or more specifically, the ancient stone bridge in Lavertezzo.

Like most children, I was never too impressed with cultural or natural beauty. Instead, my entire

sphere of interest would centre around two questions during our family holidays. "Are we there yet" and "When can I have ice cream". (Mostly the latter though, to be honest.)

So, the fact that this particular bridge and the crystal clear River Verzasca have left their mark on me at a young age truly speaks for itself.



Getting there

Making your way up the Verzasca Valley to Lavertezzo takes a bit of time. But thanks to the reliable institution that is the Swiss public transport system, it's fairly easy. Wherever you find yourself in Switzerland, make your way to Locarno. The easiest starting points for this journey are Basel, Lucerne and Zurich, but any other city works as well with one or two extra transfers. From Locarno, regular buses take you on a 40-minute ride up the valley. And there it is, right in front of you as you get off the bus in Lavertezzo, Paese.

The ancient stone bridge that carries the poetic name Ponte dei Salti, which literally translates to *Bridge of Jumps*.



Things To Do

- PICNIC in front of the Lavertezzo stone bridge - Most of all, this beautiful bridge is a fantastic place to take a break. Plenty of spots invite you to enjoy a picnic, relax in the sun or even go for a swim. The river is freezing cold all year round, so expect to feel refreshed afterwards. To honour the name of the bridge, you're more than welcome to bungee jump from this stone construction like the other daredevils. It's not a rare sight and even if you're not doing it – plenty of others will be with go-pros on their heads! Once you've spent enough time up here, there are several options to explore this stunning valley.

A LITTLE WORD OF CAUTION: The peace and quiet in the Valle Verzasca can be deceiving. As soon as it starts raining, this peaceful river turns into a dangerous force of nature. It's always a good idea in Switzerland to check the weather before you arrive and keeping a safe distance from the river during rains is advised.

- HIKE UPSTREAM to Sonogno - The hiking trail goes on for miles, following the River Verzasca through forests and past waterfalls. You can walk upstream as far as Sonogno, your final spot to catch the bus back to Locarno. This easy hike takes between three and four hours to complete. In case that's too much hiking, you can get on the bus anywhere along the way. Buses back to Locarno leave every hour and since the trail is never far from the road, you can terminate your hike at any bus stop between Lavertezzo and Sonogno.
- HIKE DOWNSTREAM to Diga Verzasca - Alternatively, follow the river downstream from Lavertezzo. The best opportunity to get back on the bus is in Diga Verzasca which is right next to a dam which you might recognize from the movies.
- TAKE A 220-METRE PLUNGE like a special agent - Adrenaline junkies will love the Diga Della Verzasca dam in Gordola. You can throw yourself off this 220-metre-high wall and dive to the ground - as James Bond did in the Golden Eye. From experience, I can say that there is nothing more liberating than screaming your lungs out whilst seeing the ground rush closer at breakneck speed.



Food

After a scenery and an action-packed day like this, you'll probably need a hearty meal. Fortunately, the Italian part of Switzerland is a culinary paradise.

Pizza and ice cream, anyone? (Some things just never change) You've probably had your fair share of pizza and ice cream in your life. But eating exactly those two things in Locarno, or anywhere else in Ticino, is a must. The area's proximity to Italy shows in its cuisine and every pizza I've ever had here was beyond delicious. Ice creameries are available in abundance too! My favourite place for pizza and ice cream is the picturesque village of Ascona, a short ride from Locarno right by Lake Maggiore.



Stay

Accommodation options in the Canton of Ticino are not reasonable, prices vary throughout the year. Budget travellers will prefer the campsites or the **HI Hostel** in Locarno. But if your budget allows it, I recommend finding a hotel or an Airbnb either in Ascona or Bellinzona or around the lively **Piazza Grande** in Locarno.

Costs

Here's some good news - Visiting the stone bridge in Lavertezzo, going for a swim and a hike along the River Verzasca doesn't cost anything. All you need to cover is your ticket fare to get there. Without a travel pass, the ride from Locarno to Lavertezzo and back will be around 20 CHF, depending on the distance and direction you decide to hike. The Swiss Travel Passes cover the whole journey, while Interrail and

Eurail Passes only include the train to Locarno. Your main expenses will be accommodation and food.

Depending upon the time of the year, a night at the HI Hostel for members is around 45 CHF, while sleeping at a campsite costs anywhere between 35 and 45 CHF. Hotels and Airbnbs can cost as little as 35 CHF and as much as 300 CHF per night.

A delicious pizza at a restaurant with two follow-up scoops of ice cream will set you back around 30 CHF. And in case you're tempted: the 007-jump is priced between 200 and 250 CHF.

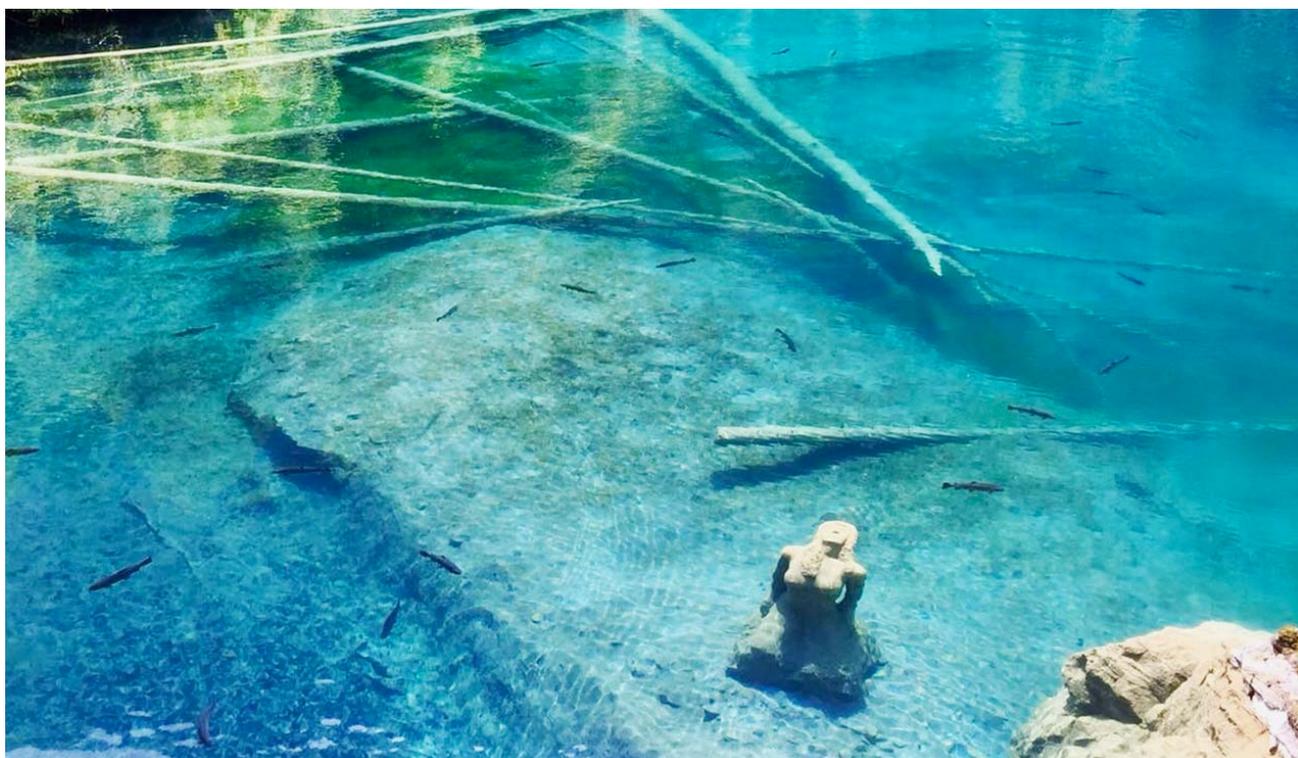
UNWRAP THE PEARL

It's entirely understandable if you're itching for ice cream, pizza, stone bridges and cold rivers right now. And maybe even to jump off dams... I know I am. So, grab your picnic, your camera, your swimsuit and off you go. Chances are you're going to understand why I keep coming back here.

*Seraina is a devoted budget traveller who's travelled around the world. With her blog **Lost in Switzerland**, she's made it her mission to put Switzerland on the map for backpackers by giving tips on how to visit her expensive home country on a budget.*

Blausee

A Blue Sapphire Beauty | By Valeria Harlay



“I had been impatient to visit the famous Blue Lake in the Bernese Oberland for a long time and I had my jaw-dropping moment when I finally did.”

Blausee is a blue sapphire, crystal clear lake hidden in a mystic forest, only 17 meters away from the wild streams of the river Kander. The groundwater streams of this river feeds the lake and gives it a glorious blue colour. Even though it is a small lake, it is one of the most famous, easily accessible and family-friendly mountain lakes in Switzerland.



Getting there

This idyllic lake, located in the Kander valley, in the middle of a natural park which is around 20 hectares, has an area of 0.64 hectares. It can be reached by bus from the train stations of Frutigen or Kandersteg. (Bus #230 from Kandersteg)

At the entrance of the park, there is the parking; a local tourist shop and the main entrance to the lake where you can buy the tickets. A 200m-path through a magical forest with erratic stone blocks and green moss leads you to the lake.



Things to Do

The moment you sense the blue water through the trees you will have your own “wow” moments, I know I did. Once you reach the lake; you can either ride the glass-bottom rowboat or just stroll around the lake. The glass-bottom boat carried by a professional rower gives you a 15 minutes trip around the lake which allows a fresh perspective – different snapshots, colours of the lake and the fish approaching the boat.

The walk instead (not more than 10 minutes) is an absolute joy, there are views of the lake, the restaurant and the forest trails. There is a playground for children around the lake with swing sets and slides. If you enjoy picnics, then there are fireplaces and tables around the lake offering great views. During summers a big screen is put up over a lake for open-air cinema nights for both visitors and guests of the hotel.

Other things to do:

- Blausee museum located near the lake; is small and noteworthy.
- The park is delimited by the river Kander and by the bridge that crosses it. From here the more active ones can walk to Frutigen or Kandersteg, the villages located nearby.
- At only 5 minutes by car, you can visit the Tropenhaus in Frutigen, a green paradise with tropical gardens, interactive exhibitions, exotic restaurants, caviar shop, and Siberian sturgeon fish farming, what can make of your day trip a journey full of enriching activities!
- You can also visit the organic trout farm (Bio Suisse label), where you can walk the narrow paths all around the pond, where waters vibrate fully of trout
- .There’s an animal farm to visit, a classic for the little (and not-so-little) ones. I had a close encounter with some curious llamas.

NOTE: Fishing is forbidden, the walkways are stroller-friendly, and dogs on a leash are welcome inside the park.



Food

While carrying a picnic or considering a barbeque is fun and cost-effective I can recommend the **GaultMillau** 13 points evening menu that serves excellent quality local trout and a bill of over 30 CHF person provides you with an entrance voucher for your next visit. Another option could be the **pizzeria** which offers wood stove pizzas and pasta dishes, this is located just at the entrance of the park next to the car parking space.



Stay

The **Hotel Blausee** is a three-star unique hotel, has 17 rooms, two restaurants, a big terrace and a little spa (sauna, samarium, steamed grotto, hotpot and bathtub garden) with a lake view.



Costs

Blausee is an ideal destination for a day trip, but if you plan to stay overnight then expect hotel costs to be around 200 CHF per night for a standard room. The nature park is open year-round from 9 am until 9 pm.

ENTRY FROM 16 NOVEMBER TO 15 MARCH 2019

Adults: CHF 5.00 / 6 to 15 years: CHF 2.00 / Children up to 5 years enter for free

Free entrance from 5 pm

ENTRY FROM 28 MARCH TO 15 NOVEMBER 18

Adults: CHF 8.00 / 6 to 15 years: CHF 4.00 / Children up to 5 years enter for free

Reduced entry fees from 5 pm (adults CHF 5, Children CHF 2.00)

While Blausee has a lot of tales around it, the most interesting one is the romantic tale which states that the lake got its blue colour owing to the love story between a young maiden and a shepherd. The shepherd fell from a cliff which left the lady broken-hearted. One of the mornings, the maiden and a boat were found at

the bottom of the lake. The once ordinary lake had turned blue that night. It is said that the tears from her blue eyes had filled the lake and turned it blue.

The sculpture of the lady is quite visible if you take the boat ride or are just walking around the lake. Blausee is a place to visit during every season, the colours of the forest and blue waters are pure magic!



***Valeria Harlay** is a communication expert and an author specialized in intercultural and integration affairs. She works with international organizations and local governmental entities to welcome newcomers, helping them settle painlessly into the region.*

Region Wasserfallen

A view of the unique sun-kissed Jura countryside | By Pragati Siddhanti



“ If there was an idea of the perfect family day trip, then this is it. I live in Basel and getting to Wasserfallen is very convenient and there is always enough and more to do any given the time of the year. “

So, the first time I visited Wasserfallen I was expecting waterfalls the moment I reached there – but don't be disappointed when you find no waterfalls! What you find is : A magnificent view of the mountains and a wealth of flora and fauna coupled with adventure sports which makes the region an ideal family excursion. Between the Basel Area and Solothurn lies the Passwang range of hills and you can reach the Jura heights from the plains in just about 45 minutes making it an ideal spot for a day trip especially if you're visiting/staying in Basel or the surrounding region.



Getting there

Getting to the region is very easy and is covered in the TNW pass up until the Gondola/Cable Car ride you take to reach the mountains. If you're coming from Basel, then the easiest way is to take the train (S3, IR27, IC61) up to Liestal which comes under Basel Land, from Liestal you take the yellow bus (#70) to Reigoldswil Dorfplatz and from there is a small 10-minute hike/walk to the cable car station where you need to buy the tickets to go up to Wasserfallen.

If you're travelling by car, then you can take up the car till the Reigoldswil cable car station which has enough parking, it takes about 45 minutes from Basel to get here.



Things to Do

There is enough and more to do over here, but my absolute favourite thing to do here is: take the cable car just 1-way up to the mountain range and capture the stunning views on the way up. On your way down, either hike or take the scooter down the mountains to reach the cable car station. Going down on foot or by the scooter is a fantastic experience! It's relatively easy to manage the scooter once you do get the hang of it. There are several hikes that you can plan based on the difficulty level: one example for a medium-level hike is to explore the rolling hills between Wasserfallen and the Passwang region. More details on that [here](#).

Apart from that other attractions include just soaking up in nature, the serenity of the place leaves an impression. In summers, you have the opportunity to use the **Forest high wire park**, trails as well as sledging/snowshoeing.



Food

There aren't a ton of restaurants on top of the mountain range, however the **Restaurant Heidi-Stübli** is right next to the cable car station and has an inner restaurant area along with a sun terrace. There is an option to organize a special brunch or swiss fondue meal with reservations in advance. There is always an option to pick up snacks or croissants if you arrive in between meal hours.

There is also the **Hintere Wasserfallen** which is a guest house as well, with barbeque and fondue specialities. Warm food is available round the clock and there are possibilities to stay overnight. A lot of people eat/stay in Liestal which has many more options, I highly recommend the patisserie called "**Finkbeiner Bäckerei Konditorei**" located close to the station. The coffee and dessert over here is to die for.



Stay

Personally, this region is perfect for a day trip but if you plan to stay then there are options like **Hintere Wasserfallen**, Obere Wechten mountain guesthouse or other options that you could find right [here](#).



Costs

The train tickets from Basel SBB to Liestal is round about 7 CHF one way (children below 6 go free), the TNW day pass is the most practical option when planning this trip. The ride on the gondola is not included in the TNW pass or the half fare card, expect to spend 17 CHF for adults and 10.20 CHF for children between 6 and 16 years.

The scooter rent one way is 12 CHF for adults and 7.20 CHF for children. A usual meal in Switzerland is around 40 CHF per person and your stay will depend upon the type of hotel you choose.

Lastly, this is a trip worth doing – it is never too crowded, and it is perfect to experience the beauty and essence of Switzerland in a very short time! I wish you an exciting scooter ride down the hill!



The Aiguilles de Baulmes

A hiking spot which has been the locals best kept secret
By Charlaine Jannerfeldt



“When I first arrived in Switzerland I was a university exchange student from Canada living on a shoestring budget. But that didn’t stop me from travelling; or exploring the country, hiking became my way of keeping it low cost. I would often pack a picnic, wear my hiking boots, hitch a ride and explore the amazing and diverse mountain regions this country had to offer.”

Many years later and I can tell you that I am still exploring, however, some places draw you back to their beauty just time and again. While the swiss mountains see high numbers of hikers every year, there are still some spots that the locals have managed to keep secret. One such spot is the Aiguilles de Baulmes.



Getting there

The Aiguilles de Baulmes is located 30 minutes away from Yverdon-Les-Bains in the canton of Vaud. You can reach them either by starting in the villages of Baulmes, Saint-Croix or from La Gittaz Dessous. The latter is not accessible by public transport.



Things to Do

The Aiguilles de Baulmes is part of the lesser-known Jura mountain range. This Franco-Swiss mountain range covers just over 340km between Zurich and Voreppe (F) following the curve of the alpine arc. The Aiguilles de Baulmes culminate at 1559 m offering not only incredible views over the Alps, Mont-Blanc, Lake Neuchâtel and Lake Geneva but also offers vantage points over the western part of the Jura mountain chain, from La Dôle to the Chasseral.



The spot is known for rock climbing owing to its accessible cliffs, the uniqueness of Aiguilles de Baulmes isn't only reserved to its impressive limestone towers on the south-west but to several Swiss mountain pines growing precariously on the cliff edges and to its hidden cave which one can safely explore.

There are several trail routes options giving you the choice of making it a half-day or a full day hike. The routes are well marked by the Swiss Hiking Trail Network (yellow panels) and are considered demanding due to the quantity of ascent and descent they involve. This doesn't mean you can't enjoy the splendour of the Aiguilles de Baulmes if you are less mobile. The alternative is to drive up to the Mont-de-Baulmes Restaurant and enjoy a short stroll to the belvedere from where you can admire the beautiful panorama of the Jura mountain range.

Half-day hike recommendation: Starting from Gittaz-Dessous, the trail climbs towards Croix des Aiguilles and continues along the crests that dominate the plain to the Mont-de-Baulmes chalet. A few metres from there, enjoy the viewpoint and check out the plaque pointing out all the peaks before you. The way back follows a forest trail that leads to the football ground and the end of the loop circuit at La Gittaz.

Distance: 12km

The difference in altitude +/- 600m

Walking time: 4 hrs.

Various resources to plan your hikes are namely, the **Yverdon-les-Bains Region website** , **SwitzerlandMobility** and **Swiss Maps**.

KEEP IN MIND that the Aiguilles de Baulmes is part of a forest reserve and restrictions and limitations to access to some areas to protect the flora and fauna can be imposed.



Food

Mont-de-Baulmes Restaurant which is famous for its cheese fritters remains open from May to October and does not accept payments by cards.



Stay

Some of my recommendations for hotels are, **Grand Hôtel des Rasses** which is situated at an altitude of 1200m, offers panoramic views of the alps right from Mont-Blanc to the Jungfrau. Another option could be **L'Auberge Martin et Gander** which is a small country inn in the quaint village of Baulmes. The inn has only 4 rooms and prior reservation is a must!



Costs

The hotel costs range anywhere in between 120-250 CHF based upon the type and the season. Budget accommodations like the **Gîte du Mont des Cerfs** which is a dormitory cost around CHF 35 with breakfast.

Before signing off, the Aiguilles de Baulmes is well-known by climbers and offers a thrilling experience for both advanced and entry level hikers.



*Charlaine is an outdoor enthusiast and the founder of **SHEzone.ch** - an outdoor community for women in Switzerland. She loves all things green, is a mother and an explorer!*

St. Leonard

UNDERGROUND LAKE

Natural tectonic and hydrological phenomenon forming the largest underground lake of Europe | By Manish Choudhary



“If there is magic on this planet, it is contained in water” ~Loren Easley

I visited the lake back in 2014, with my friends, after I heard a lot about it, one of the facts being that it was the largest underground lake in Europe, almost 300 meters in length. It's surrounded by beautiful vineyards and is situated in the canton of Valais, which is known for its ski resort and Matterhorn, the famous unique pyramid-shaped

‘Toblerone Chocolate’ mountain in Zermatt, between the two regions of Sion and Sierre.

The water in the lake is from different sources: a tiny part from Vineyards and a major chunk from the rain and melted snow. The lake is surrounded by 3 rocks, the southern wall is made up of marble is known as the St. Leonard stone, the northern wall is black and was formed a million years ago and the third section covering the lake is a sedimentary and porous deposit.



Getting there

Saint Leonard underground lake (also known as Lac Souterrain de Saint-Leonard) can be easily reached by train from all the major cities of Switzerland with a change in Visp. Train station name: Saint-Léonard. The best time to visit the lake is in between March and August.



Things to Do

The cave and the underground lake were opened to the public 60 years ago. It is well illuminated and is accessible via several guided boat tours throughout the day. There are dedicated spots at the end of the cave where musicians from various academies from Sion organize **concerts** from time to time giving tourists a chance to enjoy the music in parked boats. With unusual acoustics and being seated over sparkling water – the experience of a concert is etched in my memory forever. (Be sure to make bookings for this experience!)

Other things to do – hiking through the surrounding **vineyards** or the famous 7 km hike to the **chateau de tourbillon** for amazing views of the Sion city. An idea could also be a visit to the golf club (**De Sierre/De Sion**) which is about 50 minutes away from the St. Leonard train station.

The visit can also be combined with a day trip to **Glacier 3000 (Le Diablerets)** which is 2.5 hours from the station or **Saas Fee** (which is a car-free paradise) around 2 hours away from the station.

NOTE: Since the water is crystal clear anyone would be tempted to jump right in – but swimming and diving here is prohibited.

Manish Choudhary is an IT professional who specializes in R&D, life sciences and healthcare. He has been living in Basel, Switzerland since 2010 and loves travelling, photography, exploring new places, hiking and spending time with family and friends.



Food

The lake has a restaurant with a sunny terrace where tourists can have a snack and a drink. Since the lake is in the canton of Valais – it is worth trying out the authentic regional food. You cannot miss the wine, after all, you are in the largest **winemaking region** in Switzerland, other specialities to try is the Raclette or fondue cheese which is a Swiss melted cheese served with bread, vegetables or potatoes. To finish off your meal try the special dessert made of apricots and pears from Valais.



Stay

If you're looking for luxury accommodation, stay at the charming, 4-star hotel, **Hotel des Vignes** located in Sion, which is also known as the sunniest city of Switzerland. The location is both romantic and ideal for families and is surrounded by vineyards. It provides great access to the golf courses and pathways for bike rides. The lake is just a few minutes walk from the hotel.



Costs

The guided tour of the lake usually lasts 30 minutes costs 10 CHF for adults and around 5 CHF for children between 5 and 15 years of age. The hotel costs vary between 150-250 CHF/day based on the time of the year. Point to point tickets from Basel to the St. Leonard station costs around 45 CHF per person with a half fare card.

TIP! Keep an eye out on the travel day pass offers from Coop/Die Post. This could save you a fortune if you are travelling from the North-West region of Switzerland. There are also super saver tickets that can be purchased from SBB Mobile app, vending machines or at the counter.

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Juf

Stepping up to the highest village in Europe | By April Remfrey



“Juf is the highest village in Europe that is occupied year-round, clocking in at 2126 meters above sea level. This quiet little village is nestled among the mountain range separating Switzerland and Italy where about 30 inhabitants brave the frosty winters. While researching, the

photographs of the views were so stunning that I could already picture my family triumphantly reaching one of the many trail peaks and posing for photos. Soon after these visions of conquest, I booked a trip and I have to say, Juf lived up to the hype.”



Getting there

Just two and a half hours Southeast from Zürich by car and 3.5 hours by train, this tiny village transports you into another world. From Zurich HB take the train till Chur, from the Bahnhof Chur take the yellow busses (#171 followed by #552) to reach Avers, Juf. Always make sure that you are using the maps as well as the SBB App on your phone, especially when travelling to destinations for the first time.



Things to Do

From the moment you arrive, it's clear Juf is a place to immerse yourself in nature.

During the summer months, hiking is the most popular option for filling your days. Start your adventure at The Post: the post office as well as the only town store. Here you can find local meats, cheeses and pastries especially useful if you need to fill up your backpack with sustenance to keep you going. The iconic yellow hiking signposts can be found just behind "The Post" pointing the way to adventure.

There are two good options for hiking that I can recommend depending on what you are looking for. The first is a leisure hike that takes you Southeast from Juf along the valley. Follow the signs to Fuorcla de la Valletta along a snaking river and look out for a canvas-covered tipi along the way. The second hiking option is uphill, but worth the effort. The 400-meter ascent takes you toward Stallerberg which points you to a view over Switzerland and into Italy. This stunning hike runs next to and over a bubbling creek meandering its way down to the valley. Allow about an hour and a half to two hours to reach the top. You'll be greeted by a large cairn which is fun for everyone to add to the stone tower.

During winters, starting from Avers Juf, winter sports fans discover numerous possible ski tours - and in Avers-Juppa you will find two drag lifts and a pony lift for ski and snowboarders. A particularly special experience is night skiing, on a run lined with torches that lead the way and is nicely rounded up to some delicious and warming Raclette. Winter hikers also enjoy the bliss of peaceful hikes over the Avers winter landscape, where a total of 10 kilometres of well-prepared paths await being trodden.

Experiences: Marmot Trail (natural habitat), Natureisfeld Avers-Juppa (Ice rink) and Survival experience in Parc Ela





Food

During our first of many visits, I decided to take one of our three dinners with the gentlemen running the **Airbnb** and instantly became smitten! The meals are quite simple but tasty and hearty. Alistair was so generous with his time that he offered to show us around the 200-year-old church where he volunteers and even took us to a local festival. The second proprietor, Bruno, handcrafts model trains and has built a beautiful train route that encircles and traverses their house.



Stay

Juf and the surrounding areas are not about luxurious hotels and Michelin starred food. This area is about enjoying nature with simple living quarters and meals. There are a few good self-catering options right in the centre of Juf and Hotel Bergala is right up the road which has its own restaurant. But our family's favourite residence is just a 5-minute drive (or 9-minute bus ride) from Juf in Am Bach. This very affordable **Airbnb** (that I mentioned above) is run by a Scottish Catholic monk and his partner. The cost per person starts at CHF 30. This residence has the option of taking meals with the proprietors or using the kitchen provided on the second floor of their home.



Costs

The cost of spending a day including train fare could be upwards of CHF 100.

It takes a special traveller to enjoy exploring the off-beaten path. Sure, a pre-packaged tour takes less thought and planning, but the rewards of stepping outside of the travel book and seeing the true magic and beauty of Switzerland's nature cannot be matched.

*April Remfrey is an American special needs **consultant** living and loving life in Switzerland. April helps globally mobile families when they have a child with special needs and they are transitioning between schools.*

Augusta Raurica

A Roman archaeological site and an open-air museum in Switzerland | By Sanchi Mujal



Augusta Raurica near Augst (a municipality in Switzerland) is a 200-year-old settlement on the southern bank of the Rhine. “I visited Augusta Raurica last summer with my family and could easily relate to people who lived there and the kind of life they led.”



Getting there

For international tourists, first, get to Basel SBB by train and then take a train to Kaiseraugst. From the station, the museum and the sights are a 10-minute walk. The opening hours are in between 10 AM and 5 PM.



Things To Do

On entering **Augusta Raurica**, we first saw a Museum, which had a huge collection of silver. It contained many artefacts (well explained with detailed information). Silver Artefacts gave an indication of how Romans used to live and the kind of food they ate. I also learnt a great deal about Roman town planning, construction of houses, ceramics, casting, forging of metals etc.

Next, we took a walk to the remains of an amphitheatre. The walk is a little rough for families with strollers due to the pathway but what you see ahead is worth it! The amphitheatre is not as big as the Colosseum in Rome but it is magical.

Afterwards, we walked around on the streets for some time and came across an underground cave, which the Romans used for their work. Since there are a ton of dark tunnels in the cave, it can be a little bit daunting for the ones with a faint heart.

Post the caves, we continued our walk through the Roman ruins scattered throughout the city. There is also a big bath for both men and women. Amongst the ruins, you will spot a big bakery, washing areas and other routine activities. Signs along the way clearly explain the site and toilets can be found every few meters.

There is always an option to explore the ruins on your own or through **guided tours**.



Food

It's a good idea to pack a small snack/picnic especially if you are travelling with children – there are places to eat and relax in the shade. There are also options to barbeque near the amphitheatre. If you're looking for restaurants there are many choices - like **Romerhof**, **Ruhrberger hof restaurant** and **Bio Restaurant Landhof** which offers vegan options as well.

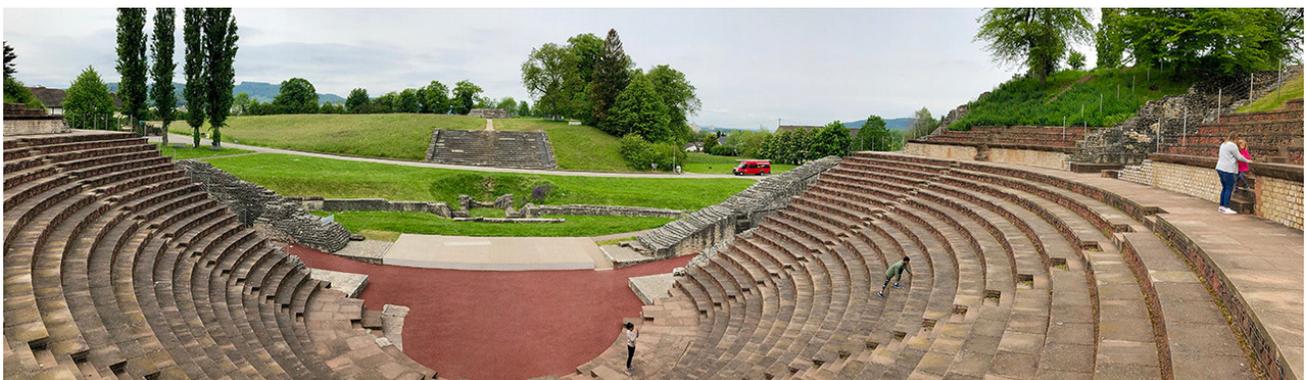


Stay & Costs

For budget options (in between 60-80 CHF), you can consider - **Augusta Raurica studio** or **Hotel Schutzen in Rheinfelden**. For a luxury hotel (140-180 CHF), the **Courtyard by Marriott** is a good option. It would also be an idea to stay in Basel and visit the ruins as a day trip.

If history and the roman empire fascinated you, then you would love visiting Augusta Raurica. I particularly enjoyed the museum and the ruins. You can spend anywhere between 4 hours to an entire day and this is a popular day-trip destination for families and schools in the surrounding areas.

The entry tickets for the Museum and Roman House is 8 CHF per adult and 6 CHF for children. The day ticket from Basel which costs around 10 CHF per adult will suffice.



Sanchi Mujal is a post graduate in Science and loves travelling and exploring different places and learning about their culture.

Rapperswil

A Rosy Medieval Town By Lake Zurich | By Barkha Govil



Rapperswil is a beautiful scenic town, situated on the upper part of Lake Zurich.

“When I visited Switzerland for the first time as a tourist in 2016, I went after the most sought after places like the Alps and the busy cities. Little did I know that I would get an opportunity to visit this beautiful country again – and this time not as a tourist but as a local. Our family moved here recently and a chance visit from my in-laws prompted us to visit Rapperswil – it was beautiful and convenient.” Rapperswil is known as the city of roses and its pebbly streets are a plus point for those who like to experience a city on foot.



Getting there

Rapperswil is easily accessible by car, train or the ferry boat. The ferry takes about 2 hours from Zurich and can be boarded from the ferry dock named Burkliplatz to Rapperswil. The ferry is open from April to October, [click here for the schedule](#). If travelling by car, it would take around 30 minutes to reach Rapperswil from Zurich. Several well-marked parking garages are available in the old town area of Rapperswil. And if you're taking the train ride, it takes around 40 minutes from Zurich and runs all year round.



Things To Do

Apart from being called as the town of roses, Rapperswil has a lot of other attractions to offer:

- The castle, Schloss Rapperswil in this pebbly stoned car-free medieval town offers mesmerizing views. The world's largest wooden bridge (Holzbrücke Rapperswil-Hurden) from the castle over the lake connects the two towns of Rapperswil and Hurden.
- There are several museums inside the town offering history lessons; with one right inside the castle called the Polish National Museum.
- During summers you can lounge around the lake and admire the stunning views of the mountains from Zurich to the Glarus region.
- Other attractions include Europe's largest water park, Rapperswil Rose garden, Bier factory Rapperswil, Knies Kinderzoo, alongside a lot of churches and monasteries (such as Parish church of St. John).
- Rapperswil is a perfect location for a day trip and a good way to go back is from the other train station at Hurden after walking across the wooden bridge as mentioned above.
- TOURS. Several thematic guided walking tours (which are multilingua) such as terrifying tales/love in the rosy town/walk for the children/food tasting tour Schmerikon are available. For more information, visit the **official website**.



Food

There are a ton of cafes alongside the lake near the ferry dock.

For a quick bite, handy kebabs from Istanbul or burgers from McDonalds could be a great option while exploring the city. Another option could be **Pizza Dieci**,

but be sure to book a table as it fills up fast during the weekends and holidays. Another notable is the Bottega a swiss Mediterranean restaurant which offers central European cuisine and has decent ambience and a friendly staff. For Spanish cuisine and seafood -

Restaurant La Fuente is worth trying.



Stay

We went for a day trip, however if you are planning to stay Rapperswil offers wide range of accommodations from a 4 star hotel "**Sorell Hotel Speer**" to an economical Youth hostel. Other mid range (3 star hotels) include Bed & Breakfast **oasee** and Gasthof Frohberg. Depending on your choice, it can range between 100 CHF and 250 CHF per night for two people.



Costs

ZVV Zone tickets are available on every bus, tram and train stop. (Adult CHF 26, Child CHF 13, free for children under 6 years of age.)

Barkha Govil is a financial planner by profession. Currently, she has a full time job as a mother raising an 8 month old! In her spare time she loves to bake, travel and write.

Scuol

A Guide To The Lower Engadin Breathtaking Village | By Kristin Reinhard



“Located in the lower Engadin valley in the south-eastern corner of Switzerland, Scuol is one of those rare gems our entire family returns to year after year. Each February, with my husband and our three kids, we visit Scuol for its winter sports and fresh mountain air.

And since my Swiss in-laws prefer summers; I can highly recommend it for hiking as well as soaking in the mineral waters which is what it is famous for. So, no matter when you choose to visit, be prepared to be astounded by one of the most glorious regions of Switzerland.”



Getting there

Scuol is easily reachable both by train and car. The nearly 3-hour train journey (from Zurich Airport) allows visitors to sit back and enjoy the jaw-dropping scenes of the Alps without having to worry about navigating the winding alpine roads. For those who prefer to travel by car, the travel time is almost the same as by the train other than a trip on the Vereina Car Tunnel (an exciting but expensive experience that starts from 33CHF one way). Please note that there might be a wait time of up to 2 hours at this tunnel during peak hours – so arrive early or bring in plenty of patience. The car tunnel is avoidable once the snow has melted and the Flüela mountain pass opens up late spring. Once there, travelling around the whole Engadin area is made easy by train or Post Auto (the bright yellow mountain buses).



Things to Do

Sitting at 1290m above sea level, Scuol is surrounded by mountains in every direction and is worth a visit in summers and winters. Its house mountain, Motta Naluns, enjoys sunshine almost all day and is home to 70km of family-friendly ski pistes and a ton of hiking paths. For those wanting more of a stroll can wander down into Scuol's Old Town where you will discover traditional Engadin homes with their thick cement walls beautifully decorated with "Scgraffti." The local tourist office puts together a varied seasonal programme including cooking classes, village tours—and you can even try out Scgraffti on a smaller scale for yourself if you want.

Scuol is most famous for its thermal baths. No matter what season, one can enjoy the mineral waters to relax those muscles in one of 6 pools. Children are welcome to join after 10.30am.

For day trips out of the village, consider visiting the enclaved Swiss village of Samnau which is engulfed on each side by Austria. You could also visit the castle in the neighbouring town of Tarasp or just wander your way through the storybook town of Guarda. The most famous village of the region, St. Moritz, is also just a train ride away.



Food

When your tummy starts to grumble on the mountain, head straight to **La Motta** and try the local speciality of Capuns, a favourite regional dish, finish off your meal with something sweet on their terrace which offers breathtaking views. Back down in the village, our kids always enjoy a pizza at **Pizzeria Allegra**, which also serves up a beautiful panorama with local specialities. For those looking for a special meal, dine in at the **Hotel Belvedere**. No matter what, don't leave without trying a piece of Engadin Nusstorte which is best served at the local bakery—and makes for a great souvenir to bring back.

Stay

Scuol covers stay options across budgets.

- There is a modern youth hostel with family rooms as well as a family holiday village REKA. “We usually stick to either self-catered apartments, booked through the local site **E-dominzil**, or a hotel.”
- Our favourite hotels include **Belvair**, a family-run 3-star hotel and its fancier sister Belvedere. Both hotels have direct access to the thermal baths which are included in the hotel tariffs.



Costs

During the peak season such as at Christmas or in February (which is ski season), a minimum stay is often seven nights with a self-catering apartment starting at around 1400 CHF a week. The price does not include the cost of the ski passes or food, so budget accordingly. Most hotels offer half-board which includes breakfast and dinner, and in winter often include ski passes in their all-inclusive price, so it is worth looking around.

Scuol is both worth the cost and the journey! Thanks to the emphasis placed on maintaining its cultural traditions and architecture, Scuol (and the entire Engadin region) is one of Switzerland's gems worthy of a visit.

*Kristin is a photographer, writer and blogger who has called Switzerland home for the past 18 years. She combines her passions on her **blog Swiss Family Travel**, sharing family-friendly swiss travel with her readers.*

Delémont

Why you should never judge a book by it's cover... | By Catherine Zimmer



“I only knew Delémont as a passer-by, as a matter of fact, I would cross it every time on my way to our vacation house in the Jura mountains. I always imagined it as this ugly 70s bunker city until about 3 years back when I had a date with a guy from there. On our date, he took me around Delémont and we had dinner together. While the guy was a flop, Delémont had made a surprisingly positive impression.”

Delémont (German: Delsberg), the capital of the Jura canton, lies between the towns of Basel and Biel in the north-west of Switzerland, near the French border. This historic town is embedded in the densely forested, hilly Jurassic landscape.

Medieval buildings, neat house facades and attractive museums form the townscape of the old town.



Getting there

From Basel, it takes around 35 mins by train/car to get there. In case you are going from Biel/Bienne, it is even faster with the train. Since, Delémont is more suitable as a day trip, wherever you are coming from – take the train. It offers scenic views as opposed to feeling car sick on the curvy roads. Right at the train station, you will find the tourist office where you can find the city map and advice – mind you, Delémont is quite small.



Things to Do

As soon as you arrive in Delemont, right at the train station in Spring or Summer time you will be greeted with a ton of Cafés on the Boulevard and a jumping fountain which is a kid magnet.

(Side Note: If travelling with children carry an extra pair of clothing – they are going to be soaked!)

Walking past all these Cafés you will also see many shops; be sure to check out the Shop of Wenger knives, the original Swiss Military knives which are produced in Delémont under the name of Victorinox. You can also book a knife production tour with the tourist office. (Victorinox Group Delémont)

The two town gates of the medieval old town, the ‘Porte au Loup’ and the ‘Porte de Porrentruy’, and parts of the former city wall are still in good condition. The squares of the old town are decorated by five monumental Renaissance-style figure fountains dating from the 16th century. The old town is home to the Jurassic Museum of Art and History, the parliament building of the cantonal government as well as the Episcopal Palace.

This tiny city has a lot of local shops where you can buy homemade specialities from the whole Canton of Jura, we even spotted a little Chocolatier. If you happen to go to Delémont on a Saturday morning; the local market with fresh produce and handicrafts must not be missed!

Notables: Musée jurassien d'art et d'histoire, Chapelle du Vorbourg, Prince-Bishops' Castle and Fontaine des Pestiférés

Experiences and Activities: Basel–Franches-Montagnes, Three-Lake-Country (highly recommended) and **Jura Paragliding**



Food

There are a lot of lovely restaurants in Delémont and my personal favourite is “**La Croix**” which offers Swiss and Italian Cuisine, their Pizzas are as delicious as their Shrimp Tartar. The service was prompt and the staff were friendly.



Stay

While I recommend Delémont as a day trip, there is an **IBIS** which is usually nice and budget-friendly. Other options: **Hotel Le National** (3-star hotel), Centre Saint-François and Jugendherberge Delémont have great reviews and could be fantastic options!



Costs

A day trip inclusive of train tickets from Basel or Biel, a delicious meal and a coffee or 2 costs around CHF. 100.- per person.

“Delémont is worth a visit even if it’s just a stopover while heading to the Jura Alps just because you should never judge a book by it’s cover.”

Catherine is a travel enthusiast from Basel, Switzerland and is only getting to know her country more since the past few months, she loves exploring bigger countries which you can see from her Instagram feed. She feels that the best way to explore Switzerland is through short- and sweet-day trips like these.

Solothurn

Step into The Baroque Ambassador City | By Douglas Drake and Catalina Escalante



Solothurn is baroque, ambassador city of elevens and home to the Bishop of Basel settled along the Aare river as it flows north from Bern toward the Rhein. Solothurn was a Roman settlement which is also the origin of its name.

The Bishop of Basel has been in exile from his actual Bishop city since the early 1500s but is now at home in Solothurn so the region is largely Roman Catholic. Solothurn was also home to the French Ambassador from the 16th to 18th centuries so

centre to many trade alliances between the early Swiss confederation and France.



Getting there

Solothurn is easily a day trip from Basel, Bern or Zurich. From Basel, it is less than an hour in an ICE train with a transfer in Olten to IC5 direction Geneve. From Zurich, it is also less than an hour on IC5 direction Geneve. From Bern, Solothurn is north and 37 minutes on a RE (regional train).



Things to Do

My sense is that there's something for everyone in Solothurn.

I sense that there's something for everyone in Solothurn.

Solothurn offers some of the best examples of French Baroque architecture with German flavours in Switzerland. The old town leads down along the river from **St. Ursus cathedral** with a farmer's market on Wednesday and Saturdays. The views from the cathedral tower of the city, river and countryside are panoramic and inside, from a black 11th stone one can see 11 alters. By the way, within Solothurn, there are 11 museums, 11 fountains, chapels and churches, a beer called Öufi (swiss eleven) and a clock by the Bieltor gate with only 11 hours – a bit of middle-aged French, German-Swiss version of Spinal Tap is my only explanation.

The central market features a 12th-century clock tower or Zytglogge with moving elements that mark the passing of time and the circle of life. Spend your day walking along with the old town, either by the high road or the low road since they both unite along with the Aare river. The bridges across Old town offer a spectacular panoramic view of the city that was built hugging the river.

Solothurn is also famous for several castles close by, **Waldegg Castle** is 3 kilometers from the Old Town and is now a renovated museum illustrating the lifestyle and nobility of both French and Italian influences in the 16th through 18 hundred. Also, within Solothurn are museums such as the Old Arsenal, exhibiting firearms as well as 400 pieces of armour, the museum of dolls and toys, a hair and comb museum in a former comb factory, a computer museum with most pieces still working, a natural history museum and the museum of “sentimental literary trivia” (women's literature, art and other items) – definitely not my naming.



Food

The **Zunfthaus zu Wirthen** nearby is a beautiful restaurant and hotel with extensive woodwork panelling and ornate ceilings. The **Brasserie Federale** also on the square is very good. Also find St. George Brunnen, a colourful fountain located conveniently between confectionery and an ice cream shop on Stalden – that was a hard decision!



Stay

As a family we took a day trip to this ambassador city of 11s. However, if you do plan to stay over - **H4 Hotel Solothurn** or **La Couronne Hotel** could be good options in terms of location and service.



Costs

The cost per night in a hotel can average at 150 CHF per night and the ticket from Basel SBB to Solothurn costs around 28 CHF per adult without a half fare card. Keep a lookout on the SBB Mobile App for super saver tickets and if you're local to Switzerland then a half fare card is almost a normal way of living!

The Hauptbahnhof or main train station is an 11 minutes (there is that number again) walk across the Kreuzackerbrücke to St. Ursen Cathedral at the high end of the old town. Ein Guete!

Douglas Drake, Catalina Escalante and their two daughters have backpacks always by the door to step out on the next adventure. Their lives and families are spread across 3 continents and 9 time zones with work and curiosity taking always taking them further. They enjoy sharing tips and memories from their wanderings and getting hints and suggestions for their next endeavour.

St. Beatus Höhlen Caves

Extraordinary Hidden Historical Treasure in a million year old cave
around Lake Thun region | By Manish Choudhary



“The cave you fear to enter holds the treasure you seek.” ~Joseph Campbell

“I visited this million-year-old marvellous limestone cave in 2017, with my wife, for our pre-wedding photoshoot. St Beatus caves are a hidden treasure in the Beatenberg’s area of the Niederhorn’s region which is known as a summer paradise. The cave has around a kilometre of well-illuminated stalactites

formation with railings to hold while walking to avoid slippages. Located in the heart of the Bernese Oberland, it’s a gem to visit just after the rains, with beautiful formation of waterfalls passing through the wooden footbridges. A terrifying dragon was known to have lived in these caves until St Beat an Irish monk succeeded in releasing him and making way for tourists like us to visit this naturally formed structure.”



Getting there

St. Beatus caves can be reached by bus, car and the boat. By bus #21 which runs between Thun and Interlaken with stop named (Beatushöhlen). By Boat (pier stop named: Beatushöhlen-Sundlauenen) which is a few minutes' walk from the caves, either from Interlaken West (See) Boat station, Spiez or Thun See Boat station. There is also a possibility to buy a combined ticket which includes a boat ride, visit to the cave and a museum at the BLS stations (Boat stations in Thun, Spiez and Interlaken). Car parking is also available for visitors (parking costs around 5 CHF), but in peak seasons it's difficult to find a place to park. The cheapest and easiest option to reach here is by bus.



Things to Do

Since the cave is a marvel, it is any photographer's delight – so take tons of pictures here and get to know about the history and formation of the cave whilst taking a stroll inside. Relax at the restaurant with a view of Thunersee or visit the cave museum for deeper insights on cave formation.

Tickets to the caves and museum can be bought at the main ticket counter. It is advisable to combine these tickets with your train passes for budget-friendly options. It is possible to have a guided tour arranged which runs every 30 minutes. There are also options available for self-guided tours using a mobile app – however, be prepared to lose the Bluetooth connection from time to time while inside the caves.

For hikers and nature lovers, there are tremendous opportunities for hiking in the Niederhorn region, especially the panorama trail, which is accessible all year round starting from Neiderhorn and following through Flosch, Vorsass, Bodenalp until the Beatenberg cable car station.



Food

There is only one **restaurant** option (St. Beatus Caves Panoramic restaurant) over here serving both swiss and fast food choices - while the staff and the service are nothing to rave about; the stunning views of Thunersee make up for it. For more choices, it's worth heading to Interlaken West where you could find ample choices and cuisines.



Stay

I would recommend staying in Interlaken, which is easily accessible by Bus number 21. Interlaken offers a variety of options from Bed and Breakfast, Hostels, 3 to 5-star hotels. Interlaken is also central to travel to the Jungfrau region which includes Grindelwald, Lauterbrunnen, Schillthorn, Wengen, Murren and other known Swiss Mountains.



Costs

If you're planning to spend a night here, try **Hotel Des Vignes**. A night here would cost at least 150 CHF. A visit to the caves along with the museum would cost roughly 20 CHF.

TIP! Arrive at the caves with comfortable shoes and appropriate clothing even during summer because it does get a little bit cold inside the caves.



The cave visit could last anywhere between 60-90 minutes, but my advice would be to explore the surrounding areas and relax by the lake. The caves are open until 5 pm and best times to visit is between March and October. This place is also great for barbeques and is kid-friendly with dragon slides.

Visiting the caves via boat would give you a panoramic experience of the wonderful Bernese Oberland alpine mountains. So go ahead and pass by waterfalls and impressive stalactites and stalagmite formation. Your journey awaits ahead a mystical experience.



Manish Choudhary is an IT professional who specializes in R&D, life sciences and healthcare. He has been living in Basel, Switzerland since 2010 and loves travelling, photography, exploring new places, hiking and spending time with family and friends.

Stein Am Rhine

Here's Why You Should Visit this Rustic & Charming town | By Keelin Howard



Whilst enjoying a coffee with a friend who has lived in Switzerland for many years, she asked me if I had ever visited Stein am Rhein? I made a mental note and, on my way back home I casually Googled the place and I immediately knew I was going to this beautiful historical old Swiss town.



Getting there

From Zurich, the train takes approximately 70 mins with a stop in either Schaffhausen or Winterthur, both of which are also towns worthy of a visit. If you're going by car, then it takes around 45 minutes from Zurich airport. Another option could be to take a scenic boat ride from Schaffhausen or even from Konstanz in Germany.



Things to Do

Stein am Rhein is a beautiful small town and is perfect for a day trip. You can spend the afternoon exploring the Old Town, visiting local shops and eateries on the side streets. During summers, the whole town comes alive with beautiful flowers and the stunning backdrop of the medieval houses adds to the charm.

If travelling with children it would be worthwhile visiting the Schwimmbad Espi badi (swimming pool) – be sure to also visit the new playground next to the main car park (west of the town) and ride on the miniature train that runs during summers.

If you're a museum lover, **Krippenwelt** is a great option – it also has a cosy bistro with friendly staff.

Tip: A good idea for the day would be to combine your trip with the world-famous Rhine Falls.



Food

Burg Hohenklingen restaurant serves traditional Swiss cuisine in a beautiful castle overlooking the town. It's the best-rated restaurant in the town and both the price and the quality match up! To reach the

castle is a small walk or a car ride. For a treat, try the cosy and chic little restaurant **La'tite Creperie** serving both sweet and savoury delicious crepes. Another option could be to head towards the boat stop and check out Uferlos - an der Schifflande this modern deli serves brunch, sandwich platters and good coffee.

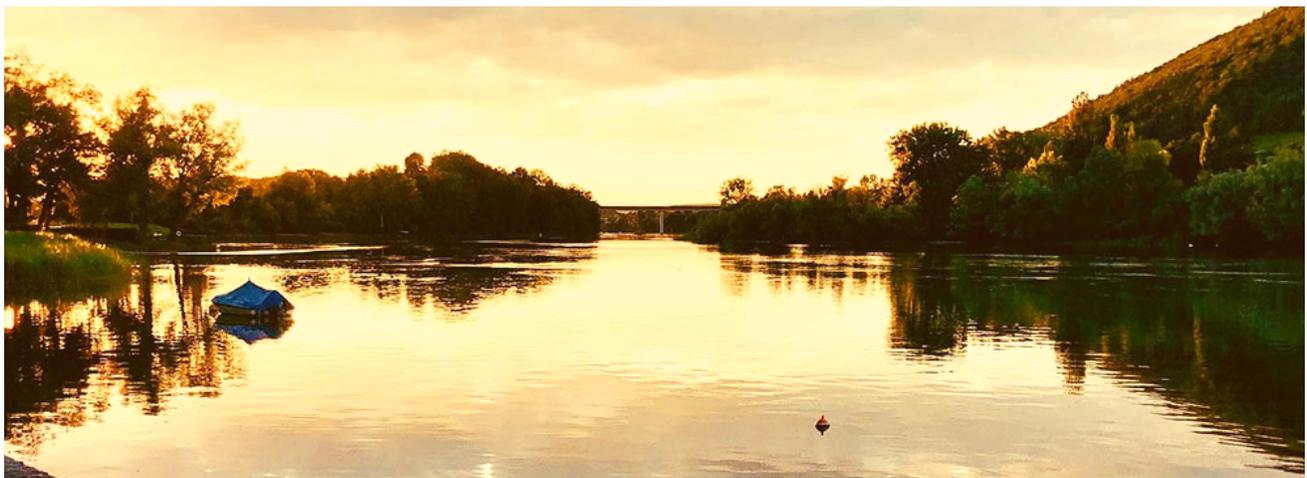


Stay & Costs

Last year we stayed at **Camping Wagenhausen** (or as I prefer to think Glamping) just outside of Stein and hired a circus caravan which allows up to four people. Each Caravan has an outside seating area and BBQ pits. The site itself hosts a lovely little grocery store, hotel, restaurant, swimming pool, park and access the beach area on the Rhein. We paid around 400CHF for a 2-night stay but prices vary depending on the season.

If you plan to stay in a standard hotel, then a double room averages out to 90 CHF a night.

I often take visitors to Stein am Rhein and it is always a hit! On the banks of the river, one often forgets the usual hustle and bustle of city life! And before I wrap up this post I have to say the Marlistadt (Christmas market) is a must-do!



Keelin Howard is a British expat living in Switzerland with a passion for exploring, photography and sharing her experiences. She is always on the lookout for new locations which offer family friendly experiences.

Valais

A Summer Guide from Anzere to Zermatt | By Angharad Elliott



The canton of Valais runs along the south-western border of Switzerland starting at Lake Geneva. It rises to form the Pennine Alps backing onto France and Switzerland. At the base of the mountains, the River Rhone meanders through this fertile valley. Its glacial waters feed an agriculturally rich region. Producer of mountain cheeses, the tarest apricots and wine grapes filled with sunshine, our visit to Valais is all about sharing foods and hidden gems amongst friends.



Getting there

One of the easiest ways to reach the Valais is by train. Arriving in Geneva, the train will take you from one end of the valley to the other allowing you to stop off along the way. It is also possible to fly into Sion, the capital of Valais. Although commercial flights are becoming more popular, I recommend **Connectjets** to fly in and out.



Things To Do

Valais is great to visit all round the year – although most of the tourists are found lugging around their skies in the winter months, the warmth of spring melts away the white blanket to reveal green pastures. Stretching out across the steep slopes, pathways reveal themselves crisscrossing the mountain faces offering possibilities of beautiful hikes and bike rides.

As the summer heat rises, the local farmers in-alp (bring up to the mountains) their cattle. These precious beasts are the source of liquid gold. Valaisan milk is the basis of the many delectable local kinds of cheese.

At the far end of the Valais is Zermatt. There are numerous options to get there, including the train. Another new offering is the power-assisted bikes which make this high-altitude trip much more accessible.

Visiting the Valais Floor – While returning from Zermatt or either way, be sure to visit the villages up and down the mountain. Anzère is particularly kind to both the body and soul. Re-balance with a Lomi-Lomi massage as you take in the views of the Dent Blanch on the other side of the Rhone. With its excellent native wines, resulting from its dry, sunny climate, Anzere is a unique jewel.

There is also the possibility to make a quick trip across the valley to Evolène just under the Dent Blanch. Here, you will find one of the most beautiful villages in Switzerland. As you cover the “Hamman of Switzerland”, spend an afternoon soaking up the sulphurous waters in the hot springs of Val d’Illiez. Feeling refreshed and invigorated, sleep deeply in the lap of luxury in the igloo pods of Choëx under the gaze of the Dent de Midi. You will awaken with the promise of a stunning view of the Rhone Valley which meets Lake Geneva.

To arrange the same agenda as above or for a variety of bespoke tours, get in touch with our team at the **DnA Affair**.



Food

Bagnes, my home region, is the home of Raclette. Depending on whether the cows find pasture in sunny Verbier or on the other Bruson side of the mountain, the taste of this cheese varies. Melted over potatoes and served with locally-dried meats and cornichon, Bagnes celebrates their Raclette at the end of September every year. Plenty of Fendant and Johannisberg wine helps not only the celebration but also the digestion.

Also, in my mind, the greatest motivator for this trip along the top of the world is not the Toblerone views of the Matterhorn, but champagne fondue when you arrive in Zermatt. The lightest, smoothest way to indulge in this cheese-fest.



Stay

Hotel Bellerive in Zermatt is a good family choice and good facilities to offer. To see the top hotels in the canton of Valais, click **here**.



Costs

For bespoke experiences the costs can go up, so be sure to choose wisely. The hotel stay can be anywhere between 150-400 CHF per night for a family in this area and it all depends on your choice and the time of your booking.

*A **DnA Affair** started as a love affair between Angharad Elliott and her husband on their wedding day. Now a love affair with Switzerland, Italy and France, their adventures take you from the mountains to the Mediterranean.*

Vevey

A gem on the Swiss Riviera | By Pragati Siddhanti



“Vevey with its lakeside side location and breathtaking views of the Alps had me wrapped around it’s a little finger (or fork) the first time I visited it. A chance visit to the town, for a job interview, resulted in the most unexpected twist to my “expat life” in Switzerland. To cut the story short, I ended up living in this picturesque town for almost a year and hence, I cannot end this book without talking about one of the most underestimated gems that is Vevey.”



Getting there

If you’re coming from Geneva airport, then your best bet is to take the train (IR90) which will get you to Vevey in 1 hour, if you’re travelling by road the journey still takes about an hour. The train journey is very scenic, and this was my preferred mode of travel. If you’re coming from the German side (like I usually did), it takes over 2 hours and 2 train changes where you can see stark differences in the landscape as you move from the German to the French part of Switzerland.



Things to Do

Vevey has some fun things to do inside the town along with numerous excursion destinations within the region.

Chilling by the lakeside is obviously the most exciting and easiest things to do. During summers the entire promenade is crowded with people from all over – there are picnics, tons of options to swim in the lake and restaurants right by the lake offering small eats. It's just the best view and the vibe in summers is the same or probably even better than of a beach!

At the lake is the famous fork of Vevey which is made of stainless steel and is 8-metre-tall and 1.3 metres wide. Fork of Vevey is part of the Alimentarium, a Vevey-based museum with a permanent exhibition on food and Nestlé's history. Along with this, right opposite the fork is a famous statue of Charlie Chaplin, these two are the most photographed objects in Vevey of course after the panoramic views of Lake Geneva. Since Charlie Chaplin spent a significant part of his life in this sleepy town, there is also the famous **Chaplin's world** which is worth a visit. It is his former home with some other interactive displays.

The **Chillon Castle** is another marvellous place on an island on Lake Geneva, some would say it is in Montreux but not too far from Vevey. If you're interested in art and culture then Vevey has a lot to offer as it has a lot of museums including Alimentarium, Vevey photography museum, Museum nest Vevey, Musée Jenisch and more.

Also, plan to include Mont Pèlerin a mountain with beautiful views and connects Vevey and Chardonne by a funicular worth trying. Another mountain to visit is the Les Pléiades which can be reached by train and has spectacular views and traditional swiss meals. Also, one of the wineries to visit is **Lavaux Vinorama** which is registered as a UNESCO World Heritage Site located in Lavaux, Rivaz.

During winters the gentle slopes of the Les Pléiades are ideally suited for families for skiing as well as snowshoeing. During summers, there are tons of options to hike, swim and cycle to explore various circular routes.

For more information on things to do, click **here**.



Food

You can find all types of food in the city, seafood is particularly popular due to obvious reasons. **Ze Fork**, **Molino** or even the restaurant at **Hotel Astra** are good choices.



Stay

Depending upon your budget, the hotels during peak season range from 150 CHF to 400 CHF on an average. It's always a good idea to book in advance, some of the hotels I have tried are the **vision apartments**, **hotel le leman** as a budget option or **Hotel Astra** right by the station for a more extravagant choice.



Costs

If you're making a day trip, then the train costs to Vevey (from Geneva) are 28 CHF one-way on a full fare ticket. A good meal can range between 50 to 120 CHF per person based on the choice of the restaurant. Hotel costs as above, to make your trip economical as well as fun – buy super saver tickets from the SBB app in advance, pick a moderately priced restaurant for lunch and mix it up with a fine dining option for tea/coffee.

I was fortunate enough to live close to the lake, I could hop, skip and jump to get to the most magical lakeside which has its own essence any time of the year. Vevey has a lot to offer, it is best to combine it with the very popular adjacent town Montreux, or the cities: Lausanne and Geneva.

SWITZERLAND TRAVEL

Tips and Info

In our last section of the book, here are some tips and info that have been tested time and again that make your trip to Switzerland time-effective, fun and enjoyable. We've got you covered!

TRANSPORT

Public transport, Tickets and Cars

- The most convenient means of transport are fast and comfortable public transport services such as trains, buses and boats. I have never seen any significant delays since the time I have been here.
- The most affordable and straight forward way of travelling across Switzerland is with public transport.
- Link to public transport in Switzerland – <https://www.sbb.ch/en/home.html>
- You can download the SBB app on the phone, available on both the App Store and Play store.
- You don't need to carry heavy luggage along with you, most of the train stations offer luggage compartments at a nominal fee.
- You can take your bike with you on the train. "With a bike ticket, you can load your bicycle or bike trailer (unladen/empty) onto most SBB and private railway trains as well as PostBuses yourself."
- Travelling in class 1 on the train is more expensive – it has more legroom, is less crowded and is, in general, more spacious.
- Your dogs can travel with you, buy an additional half-fare ticket for your dog or a 1-day-travel pass for dogs.
- **Swiss Travel Pass** – covers all buses, trains and boats. It also includes unique railways such as Glacier Express and offers some great discounts.
- Most boat journeys are included in the Swiss Travel Pass. **(Click here for timetable and offers)**
- Children from the age of 6 to 16 travel free with a "junior Karte" which costs 30 CHF for a whole year.
- The Swiss Half Fare Card is also suitable for guests planning short trips and excursions in Switzerland. It is a way of living for everyone local to Switzerland.
- Keep a lookout on super saver tickets which are available only on the SBB mobile app.
- "Tageskarte" or Day tickets are released time, and again during the year, they are usually available at Coop or the Post office, the day ticket is valid for 24 hours on all modes of transport and is very nominally priced. These are your best (and most economical) options when planning day trips.
- Some day tickets are valid only if you have a half-fare card and some are valid without any other pass.
- All Swiss Travel System tickets are personal, non-transferable and valid only with an official ID or passport.
- All major train stations have an SBB office for purchases and queries alongside a tourist information office which offers guidance, tickets and brochures.
- You can hire a car from services such as mobility available at all major train stations and drive a vehicle within Switzerland with a valid driving license.
- If you're confused, walk into an SBB office – you will find the right information even if the person at the counter might seem a little bit rude! (Not kidding)
- Taxis: Ubers are now becoming common in Switzerland, but due to the great PT system, the use of taxis is rare. The other taxis found at major train stations and airports are rather expensive, and I would avoid them unless it is an emergency.

SWITZERLAND TRAVEL

Things to do

SUMMER, WINTER AND EVENTS

Here are some general activities that can be enjoyed across the country. In summer, people hike and swim, in winters people ski and visit the thermal baths. For a detailed outlook on winter sports, **access the winter sports report**. During winters, skiing, sledging, snowshoeing attracts a lot of tourists to the country. Children as well as adults go skiing schools during winters, make sure you reserve **ski lessons** in time. It is also possible to ski in summers in Zermatt for instance. To find various hiking routes by place, use this **link**. All types of **adventure sports** such as canyoning, paragliding, bungee jumping, parachute jumping, via ferrata, rafting, hydrospeeding, kayaking and canoeing, windsurfing and water-skiing are possible, it depends on the place and the time of year. There are tons of spa and wellness facilities in Switzerland, **use the link to explore**.

THE 8 MOST FAMOUS EVENTS IN THE COUNTRY ARE :

(BY THE WAY THERE ARE SO MANY MORE)

1. Ski World Cup, Wengen (January)
2. White Turf, St. Moritz (February)
3. Art Basel (June)
4. Montreux Jazz Festival (July)
5. Locarno Film Festival (August)
6. Lucerne Festival (August)
7. World Class Zurich, track and field event (September)
8. Omega European Masters, Crans-Montana (September)
9. Christmas markets in Switzerland during the advent period are a major attraction.

GENERAL INFORMATION

WEATHER, MONEY, VISA AND TELEPHONE

Switzerland has 4 distinct seasons, and each one of them has its own distinct charm. The peak season, however, is during the summer break (July, August and September).

Access **climate charts** and **weather forecasts** to get an overview of the weather in general in Switzerland. It's always wise to carry a jacket and umbrella in your backpack when roaming around, even in summer. In winters, thick jackets do not work as much as layering. A winter hat, gloves and scarves are most useful. In summer, the sun is very harsh, so a sunscreen, shades and summer hats are a must-have.

If your country of origin is within the Schengen Area, you do not need a visa to enter Switzerland as a tourist.

Different visa regulations apply to all other countries. If you need a visa, it is essential to plan your visa application sufficiently ahead of time. The currency of Switzerland is Francs, not Euros. However, euros are accepted at all major shops, stores and hotels.

A Switzerland Tourism survey shows that visitors spend an average of CHF 100 to 200 per day on meals and accommodation in Switzerland (excluding outbound and return travel). You can buy a sim card at the airport/railway station kiosks or at supermarkets. The person behind the counter can give you a suggestion; also, your hotel usually comes with a WiFi.

SWITZERLAND TRAVEL

Things to do

LIVING

ACCOMMODATION, FOOD AND CULTURE

Watch out for closing times: Lunchtime is from 12 to 2, and the kitchen is closed after 2 in most of the restaurants; hence arrive in time. Dinner is available from 5 pm onwards. Shops close between 6 and 8 on weekdays and earlier on Saturday. Everything is closed on Sundays – it is a no shopping day!

In most countries, the spoken language is singular; however, in Switzerland, there are 4 official languages - German, French, Italian and Romansh. It is good to know a few essential words in Swiss German to integrate with the locals. English in general works just fine.

Swiss souvenirs', cheese and chocolates area popular gift to go back with – try the supermarkets for better rates. (You could probably end up paying half!)

You don't need to buy water in Switzerland, just drink from the tap.

Carry a universal power adaptor if you're coming from a country out of the EU.

All the supermarkets (Coop and Migros) have freshly prepared quick meals during breakfast, lunch and dinner. If you're trying to save up – pick up a croissant and coffee for breakfast, or a lunch box from the smallish hot buffet with a drink, for instance. This is very easy on the pocket; all 3 meals cannot be gourmet meals!

Do not expect too much warmth from the locals; the Swiss in general are friendly but not overtly.

Book hotels directly on the hotel websites and in advance. There are also youth hostels and Airbnb's which are budget options. All kinds of cuisines are available in Switzerland, i.e. traditional swiss, Italian, Indian, Mexican or Asian.

The most famous Swiss specialities include cheese fondue, raclette, Alpine shepherd's macaroni, rösti potatoes, Bircher muesli, chocolate and cheese. Not the most extensive list, for more details, visit the **Help Center of Myswitzerland.com** where I found most of my information for this section.



I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO THANK ALL 19
AUTHORS FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THIS BOOK. I GENUINELY
HOPE OUR JOINT EFFORT HELPS PEOPLE EXPLORE THESE BEAUTIFUL
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21 HIDDEN GEMS OF SWITZERLAND IS A COLLABORATIVE ATTEMPT TO UNRAVEL SWITZERLAND'S BEST KEPT TRAVEL SECRETS. READING THIS BOOK WILL NOT ONLY HELP ADD A NEW DESTINATION TO YOUR BUCKET LIST BUT ALSO HELP YOU PLAN YOUR TRIP RIGHT DOWN TO THE DETAILS. ALL EXPERIENCES ARE WRITTEN IN FIRST HAND BY THOSE OF US WHO LOVE EXPLORING SWITZERLAND.

AUTHOR BIO



PRAGATI SIDDHANTI IS AN IT MANAGER (BY DAY) AT AN MNC BY PROFESSION, SHE IS A COMPUTER SCIENCE ENGINEER WITH A MASTER'S DEGREE IN BUSINESS AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS. BE FOR BEAUTY, A LIFESTYLE BLOG BASED OUT OF INDIA AND SWITZERLAND IS HER SECOND BABY WHICH SHE RUNS WITH HER SISTER MANAVI SIDDHANTI. PRAGATI LIVES IN BASEL, SWITZERLAND WITH HER ADORABLE 8-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER AND HUSBAND.

BE FOR BEAUTY