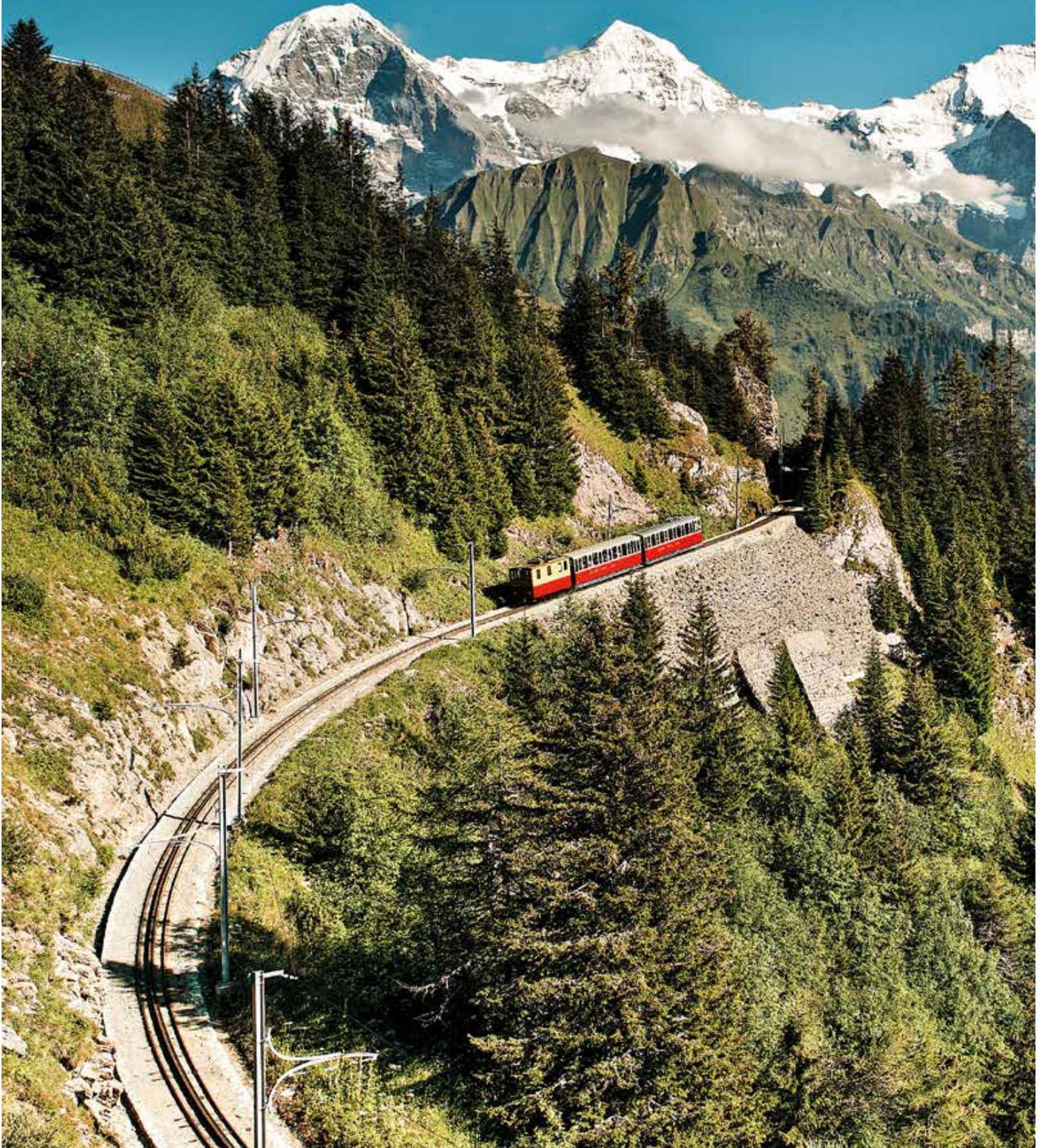


SWISS JOURNEYS

YOUR WATCHLIST FOR A PERFECT HOLIDAY

THE PEAK



FOREWORD

SWISS SOJOURNS

Switzerland is much, much more than quality chocolates, pristine mountains and multi-functional pocket knives. While the world has become a smaller place thanks to connections and networks, there are still misconceptions about this beautiful place we call home.

This special collaboration between the Swiss National Tourism Board and *The Peak* magazine celebrates the Swissness of our country. Some aspects you may already be familiar with – we hope to share others that you might have had an inkling of but were afraid to ask.

Travel with us as we go on a journey that covers the usual, but beloved, suspects – Geneva, Zurich, Lucerne. Then, by boat, train, bus, bicycle or even skis, we check out the lesser-known aspects of this multi-faceted destination – from Schilthorn and Ticino to Lavaux, St Gallen, Appenzell and more.

And if you've always wanted to make your own watch, Swiss knife or even fondue fork, you've come to the right place. Speaking of which, our three suave personalities – actor Max Loong, Indonesian celebrity chef Juna Rorimpandey and actor-host Danny Yeo – spill on their personal favourite places to go and why they feel right at home, everytime they visit.

We hope you enjoy reading this very special issue and embark on a Swiss journey with us soon!

IVAN BREITER

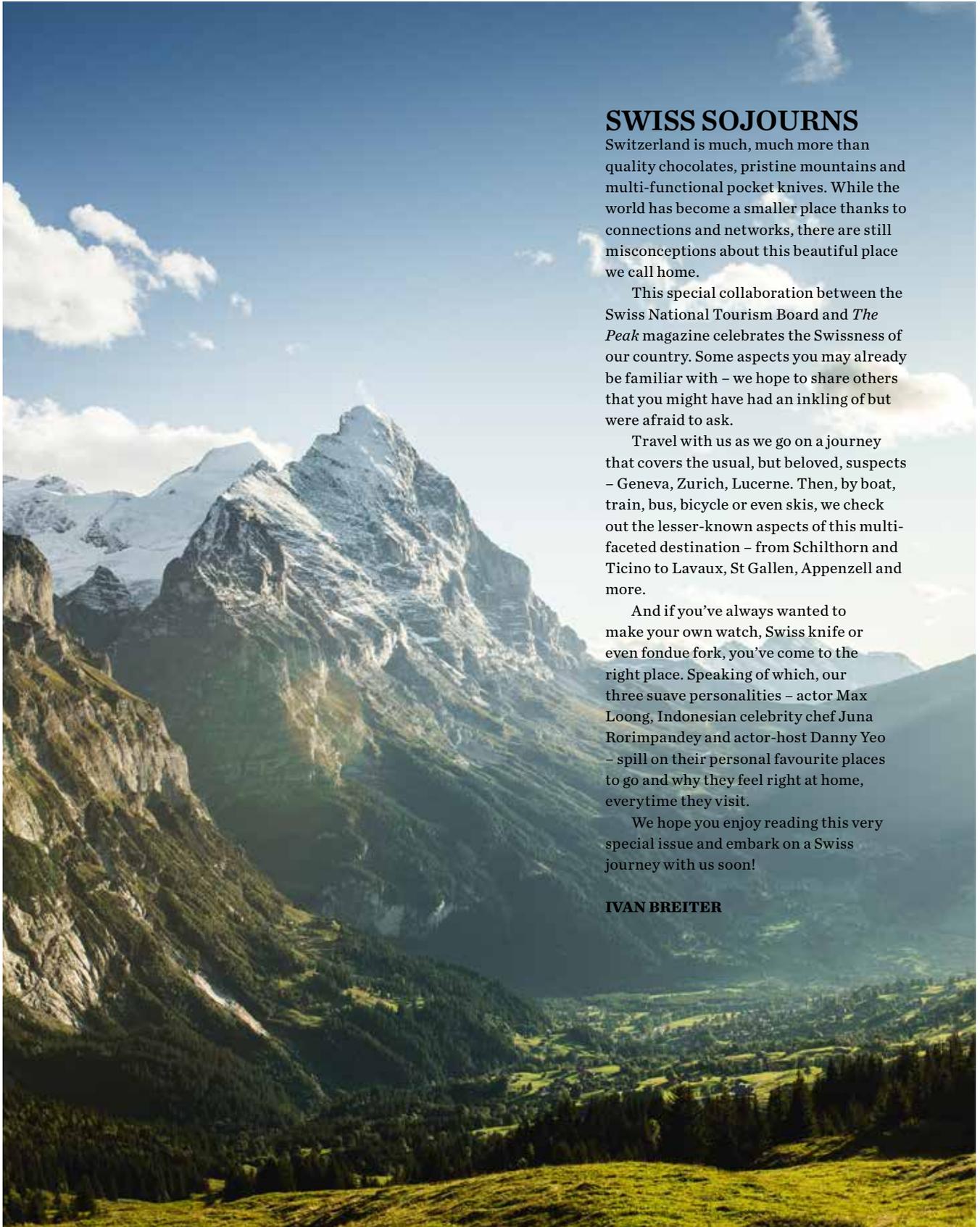
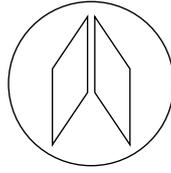


PHOTO SWISS-IMAGE.CH



CONTENTS



08

08 AN URBANITE'S GUIDE TO ZURICH

Our highlights of the many-faceted city and all the sights you shouldn't miss – from fashion and food to flea markets.

16 THE SWISS CONNECTION

You don't have to be Swiss to form a strong attachment to the country, as these celebrities prove. Max Loong, Juna Rorimpandey and Danny Yeo share their personal must-dos and must-sees when in Switzerland.

20 ENJOYING LA DOLCE VITA IN TICINO

Almost entirely surrounded by neighbour Italy, the region of Ticino, located in southern Switzerland, offers everything from palm-lined lakes to Alpine peaks.

28 A BIKER'S GUIDE TO THE BEST OF SWITZERLAND

We highlight six of the country's best routes, catering to all levels of cycling expertise, and incorporating much of Switzerland's beautiful and varied landscapes.

36 IT'S GOT YOUR NAME ON IT

From casting fondue forks and swiss bells to assembling watches and pocket knives, Switzerland's hands-on workshops ensure visitors take home more than just memories.

44 SWITZERLAND BY TRAIN, BUS AND BOAT

Whether you travel by rail, road, water or mountain railway during your visit, public transport will never be the same again.

52 TOP OF THE LAKE

With dazzling five-star hotels, plenty of VIP visitors and an orchestral fanfare of mountains, the lakeside city of Lucerne is hotting up just in time for the season.

Whether you pedal for leisure or fitness, you'll want to check out these bike routes.

All the reasons... and more to visit Zurich.



36

Why go store-bought when you can make your own mementoes?



28



CONTENTS



68

Thrillseekers are spoiled for choice when it comes to winter options in Schilthorn.

60

GENEVA: AT THE HEART OF TIME

When it comes to handcrafted watches, 'Made in Switzerland' is more than just a label for the place of origin – it is a seal of approval and mark of quality that is recognised the world over.

68

ALPINE ADVENTURES

The Schilthorn region is a dream come true for fans of winter sports and adrenalin junkies, from steep slopes and downhill runs in alpine landscapes to following in the footsteps of agent 007, James Bond.

74

HOT PURSUITS

As the oldest and most popular resort town in the Bernese Oberland, Interlaken combines picture-perfect scenery and lakeside idyll with endless possibilities for active travellers, from climbing, biking and hiking to water sports.

80

OF WINE, HISTORY AND SONG

A destination for all seasons, the Lake Geneva Region teems with culture, heritage and yes, energy.

84

EAST OF EDEN

Beyond its uber-cool cities, the Switzerland of your imagination runs riot the farther east you travel.



80

The Lake Geneva region for history, culture and jazz.

PHOTOS SWISS-IMAGE.CH

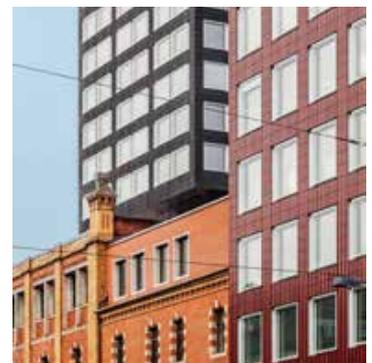
AN URBANITE'S GUIDE TO ZÜRICH



GO WEST

The gentrification of Zurich's western quarter has made it the city's trendiest district.

Once an industrial quarter and home to the working class, the old warehouses and factories in Zurich-West have been reclaimed by the city's creative force: New start-ups have set up shop here alongside restaurants, cafes, rooftop bars and concert halls. Thanks to a strong, palpable community vibe and the transition from industrial to creative quarter, Zurich-West brims with urban progress – and it does so from dusk till dawn. Travellers can visit the Löwenbräu complex (right), a brewery-turned-art centre, and the Museum of Digital Art, or spend some time at Frau Gerolds Garten (above), an oasis in the middle of the city with its own garden, restaurant and murals on the walls. ☺



TEXT: KATRIN FIGGE



ARCH ANGLES

The Viadukt Arches definitely rank as one of the highlights of the district. An architectural marvel and a magnet for shopping enthusiasts, a colourful mix of design shops, restaurants and clubs reside under the 36 viaduct arches of the railway. The market hall, the centrepiece of the Viadukt, brings together numerous farmers and food vendors from Zurich and beyond to offer local products.



LIFE OF THE PARTY

In the evening, there are plays, live music and concerts to enjoy – as well as letting loose and dancing at one of the clubs until the sun comes up. In fact, Zurich-West was the most happening party district of the city in the 1990s. To this day, its reputation as a party hub remains.



CLUB NIGHTS

From “techno capital”, Zurich-West has segued into an “electro mecca”. While Zurich is host of Street Parade, the biggest techno party worldwide, electro fans meet at two of the most popular clubs, Supermarket (top) and Hive. Lovers of jazz, funk, soul and blues get their money’s worth at Moods (above) and Mehrspur.



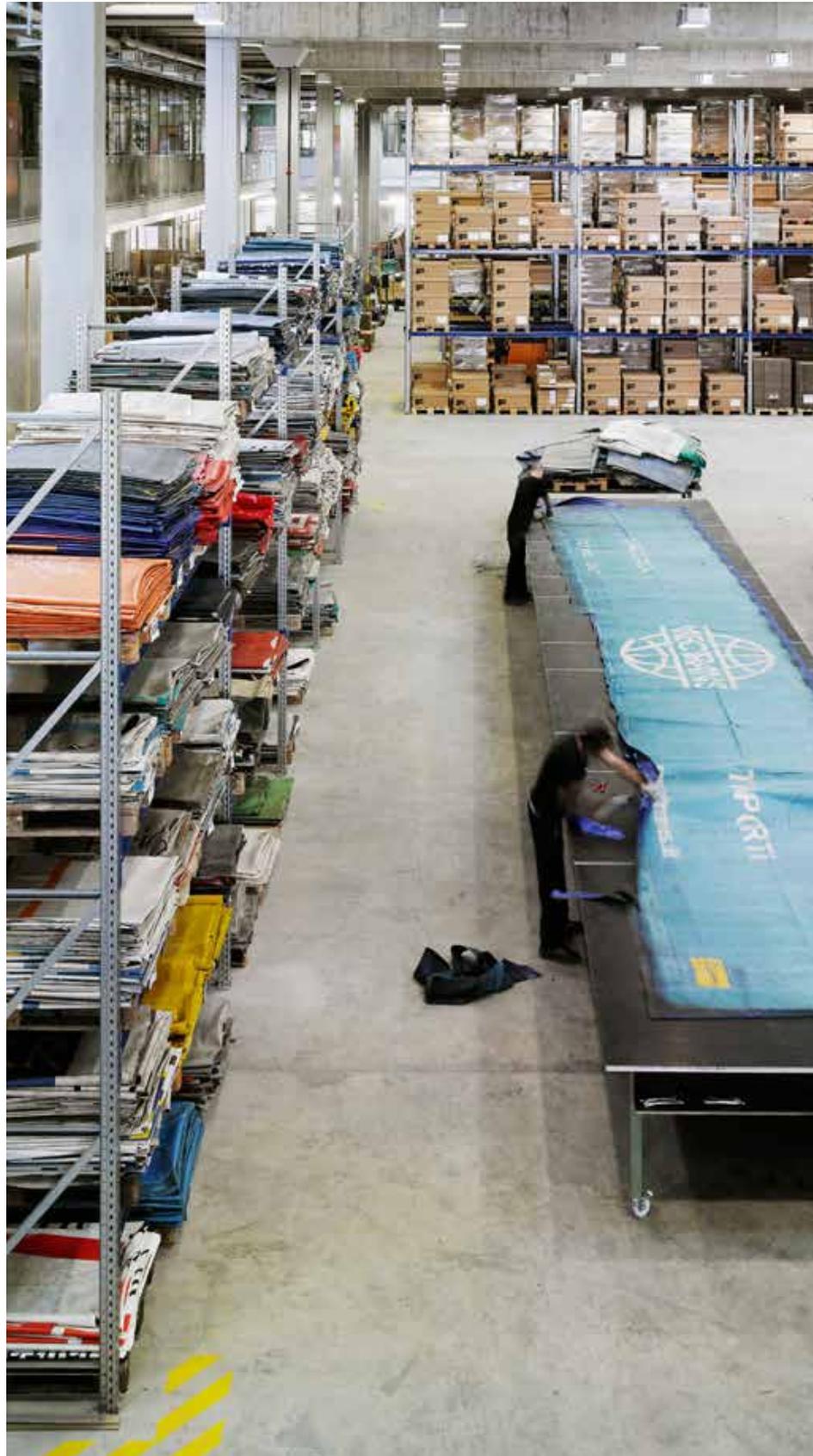
When visiting Zurich, a stroll by the lake or through the Old Town and getting an Instagram moment in front of the city’s **Grossmünster Church** are on everyone’s to-do list.

ICONIC FABRICATION

An iconic Swiss brand is Freitag, with its colourful, trendy bags made out of recycled goods, which comes straight from Zurich-West. According to its official website, in the early 1990s, its founders – graphic design duo Markus and Daniel Freitag – were looking for a functional and robust bag to hold their creative work. Inspired by the multicoloured heavy traffic that rumbled through the Zurich transit intersection in front of their flat, they developed a messenger bag from used truck tarpaulins, discarded bicycle inner tubes and car seat belts. Thus did the first Freitag bags take shape – and they have since found their way into shops across Europe and Asia.



Still in the same district, **Fabric Frontline**, an internationally known luxury brand, offers high-quality silk or cashmere accessories such as foulards, scarves and ties. For almost 40 years, its unique designs have been developed and designed by hand (above) in Zurich, combining top-quality materials with traditional craftsmanship and effortlessly continuing the city's silk tradition.





01 Who would have imagined that industrial tarpaulin could be a fashion statement?

02 Freitag made recycling fashionable before it became a buzzword for today's eco-warriors.

03 Designing brothers Markus and Daniel founded Freitag out of necessity: They needed something robust to hold their creative work.





01 Visit Kanzlei Flohmarkt, Switzerland's largest flea market which opens year-round.

02 Bag some boho chic buys at Maimarkt at Frau Gerolds Garten.

03 Fresh fruits, vegetables and local produce at Bürkliplatz.



HIGH AND LOW

Home to luxurious, international brands, small boutiques and hip local labels, Zurich is by all accounts a true shopping paradise.

The internationally acclaimed shopping street Bahnhofstrasse sees the largest assembly of luxury stores in the city, while Zurich's Old Town charms with artisans, antiques, bookstores and other specialist shops. On the opposite bank of the River Limmat lies Schipfe. It is not only one of Zurich's oldest districts, but houses many traditional craftsmen, from goldsmiths to woodcarvers. Marktlücke Zurich sells handcrafted products and gifts – with staff comprising mainly formerly unemployed women who have since been given a chance to reintegrate into the workforce.

Then, of course, there are various markets held across the city on a weekly basis. The BahnhofMarkt is a treasure trove for delicacies from all over the world. Those looking for fresh vegetables and colourful flowers should head either to Bürkliplatz, Marktplatz in Oerlikon or Helvetiaplatz. Bargain hunters might get lucky at one of the flea markets, most notably the Kanzlei flea market and Maimarkt at Frau Gerolds Garten. 📍

AD



ZÜRCHER GESCHNETZELTES

Fancy dinners at elegant restaurants are every bit as available as pop-up eateries and more traditional establishments serving local fare. As the name suggests, the most famous dish to originate from the city is Zürcher Geschnetzeltes (above), a traditional meat meal. It was first mentioned in a cookbook in 1947, but its origins most probably date further back. Zürcher Geschnetzeltes consists of diced veal, white wine and cream, complemented by mushrooms and veal kidneys. It is usually served with Röstli – flat cakes of pan-fried potato, another Swiss specialty. Raclette and cheese fondue also belong to the list of Swiss culinary classics. Sample these iconic eats at restaurants and cafes across the city.



SWEET TOOTH

Switzerland is world-famous for its chocolate, and as the country's largest city, Zurich offers plenty of choices.

Confiserie Sprüngli, a Swiss luxury confectionery manufacturer founded in 1836 and internationally renowned for its macarons called "Luxemburgerli" (above), is based in Zurich. Its café on Paradeplatz has traditionally been a popular meeting place for the city's upper crust, particularly its ladies who lunch.

Another made-in-Zurich delicacy to take home as a gift is the Tirggel, a crispy cookie made from honey, flour and spices, adorned with scenic or coat-of-arms motifs.



Zurich can also claim to be home to the first vegetarian restaurant in the world. **Haus Hiltl** first opened in 1898 and whips up vegetarian and vegan dishes from all over the globe.

AD

THE SWISS CONNECTION

You don't have to be Swiss to form a strong attachment to the country, as these celebrities prove. Max Loong, Juna Rorimpandey and Danny Yeo share their personal must-dos and must-sees when in Switzerland.



TEXT: SASHIA GONZALES PHOTOS: SWISS-CH.COM

CHEF JUNA

Founder and Owner,
Correlate

Indonesian-born Chef Juna Rorimpandey is the founder and owner of Correlate, a popular restaurant in South Jakarta. The 42-year-old rose to fame as the host of *MasterChef Indonesia* in 2011 and 2012.

In 2014, Chef Rorimpandey spent around a month in Switzerland. He had a cooking show on Indonesian TV and was given the opportunity to travel to Switzerland to film his show, while at the same time promote that country to his Indonesian viewers.

MY SWITZERLAND IS...
foodie heaven.

WHICH CITIES DID YOU VISIT WHILE IN SWITZERLAND?

I went to Zurich, St Gallen, Geneva, Montreux, Bern, Lucerne, Zermatt, Villars, Interlaken, Appenzell, Vevey, Lugano and Gruyeres, just to name a few places.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE MEMORY OF SWITZERLAND THAT'S NOT FOOD-RELATED?

When I was in Interlaken, I had fun walking in the snow and along the scary suspension bridge [Titlis Cliff Walk] on Mt Titlis.

DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE SWISS DISH?

I like rosti, a crispy fritter made from grated potatoes. And when I was in Switzerland, I tried ostrich meat, which was interesting – we went to a farm and cooked the meat there.

WHAT'S YOUR BEST FOOD MEMORY OF SWITZERLAND?

That's got to be my time at Peppino, a restaurant in Villars-

sur-Ollon. Head chef Joel Quentin was my host – he's famous for his wild alpine garden, which is full of herbs, flowers and plants that he cooks with. We picked a few different ingredients and I used them to make some Indonesian dishes for our lunch that afternoon.

DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE SWISS CHEF?

Chef Franz W Faeh, from the hotel Gstaad Palace. I got to spend half a day with him, during which we visited the farmers' markets, went fishing on a boat, and cooked some great meals in his kitchen. He's fun to be around, but more importantly, he is well-known in the industry, has a great attitude, and is extremely knowledgeable about food. I learnt so much hanging out with him.



IF YOU WANT TO BE IN A CITY, GO TO GENEVA. IF YOU PREFER THE COUNTRYSIDE, VILLARS-SUR-OLLON IS GORGEOUS. AND OF COURSE YOU MUST MAKE A TRIP TO INTERLAKEN.



MAX LOONG

Actor, Producer, Host

Born in Malaysia and raised in Switzerland, the actor, host and producer is one of Singapore's most recognisable faces. Max Loong, who has a Swiss mother and a Malaysian-Chinese father, has worked for VIVA Schweiz (a Swiss music channel) and MTV Asia, and has starred in Singapore TV shows *After Hours* and *First Class*.

MY SWITZERLAND IS...
memories of home.

MY EARLIEST MEMORY OF SWITZERLAND

Spending time with my parents at their apartment in Zurich, riding in my push-car, and playing with my friends in the courtyard.

MY FAVOURITE CITY IN SWITZERLAND

Zurich, where I lived between the ages of three and 24. Singapore may be home for me now but I consider Zurich my "original" home.

MY FAVOURITE SWISS DISH IS...

Can I pick two dishes? I have to go with cheese fondue and Swiss sausages. Of course, I don't think you can go wrong when it comes to Swiss food. Everything tastes great!



MY FAVOURITE THINGS TO DO IN SWITZERLAND

Skiing with close friends whom I've known for over 30 years. We'll rent an old wooden chalet in the ski resort of Arosa, high up in the Swiss Alps, sit by the fireplace, play cards and – guess what? – eat cheese fondue.

MY FAVOURITE SWISS ROAD TRIP

My family used to have a holiday house in Hilterfingen by Lake Thun. From there, we'd drive our rental car by villages like Hilterfingen, Oberhofen and Gunten. The view of the Swiss Alps and the famous Niesen mountain is simply breathtaking.

MY FAVOURITE SWISS CELEBRITY

Chef Daniel Humm. We were good friends long before he became famous – we used to hang out before we moved overseas and dreamed about making it big. Today, he's a restaurant owner, a James Beard Foundation Award winner and, I think, the best chef in the world.

EXPLORE THE GERMAN-, FRENCH- AND ITALIAN-SPEAKING AREAS. GO TO THE CITIES AS WELL AS THE COUNTRYSIDE – THE CITIES ARE CHARMING AND FULL OF HISTORY, AND THE COUNTRYSIDE IS TRANQUIL AND PICTURESQUE.



DANNY YEO

Host, Theatre Director



HOTEL PALACE LUZERN ITSELF IS LIKE A WORK OF ART. IT TURNS 112 THIS YEAR, SO IT'S DEFINITELY A SPECIAL BUILDING. I ALSO LOVED ITS SUNDAY BRUNCH – I WOULD GET THERE EARLY AND ASK FOR A TABLE FACING THE LAKE.

Danny Yeo counts Switzerland as one of his favourite holiday destinations. The Singaporean host and theatre director is also an avid traveller and photographer.

MY SWITZERLAND IS...
naturally beautiful and full of history.

I LAST VISITED SWITZERLAND...
in December 2015. A friend who's a concert pianist invited me to go skiing with her in the French Alps, and I decided to extend my stay. I stayed in Lucerne, in the German-speaking region of Switzerland, for a few days. Everything about the city, especially the old buildings, was beautiful. As someone who loves architecture and design, Lucerne definitely made an impression on me. The people of

Lucerne were also lovely – polite, respectful, and proud of their efficient and organised city.

MY FAVOURITE CITY
Lucerne is like something out of a postcard or glossy coffee-table book. Wherever you turn, you see the Alps, which, in my opinion, is the highlight of Switzerland. It's surreal and real at the same time. You can take all the photos you want but they'll never do justice to the captivating beauty of the natural landscape.

SHARE AN AMAZING MEMORY
I stayed at the Hotel Palace Luzern, which is right by Lake Lucerne and has amazing views of the mountains. I made it a point to wake up early every morning to watch the sun rise. It was an almost spiritual experience, observing the sky slowly change colour, witnessing Mount Pilatus come to life in the morning light, and following the sun as it is emerging from behind the mountain and casting light onto the lake.

SKIING IN SWITZERLAND...
one of the most obvious to-dos while you're there, and why not? The Alps, with their snow-capped mountains, are made for people who love to ski. But if I had a chance to visit Switzerland again, I'd go in the summer so that I can experience camping the way the locals do. I would leave the city and head to the woods for a couple of days, stay at a cottage by the lake, and go swimming, cycling and kayaking. And after all that, I'd visit one of those famous Swiss spas to relax.



Almost entirely surrounded by neighbour Italy, the region of Ticino, located in southern Switzerland, offers everything from palm-lined lakes to Alpine peaks.

ENJOYING LA DOLCE VITA IN **TICINO**



A magnificent
view of Lake
Maggiore.



A leisurely afternoon stroll by a picturesque lake; an exquisite dinner at a rustic grotto serving authentic local cuisine and fine wine; exploring culturally rich towns with scenic piazzas, old churches and medieval castle – the Italian-speaking region of Ticino, located in southern Switzerland, offers everything from palm-lined lakes to Alpine peaks. Almost entirely surrounded by neighbour Italy, *la dolce vita* – the Italian term for the sweet life, filled with pleasure and indulgence – is palpable at every street corner in Ticino. The climate is milder than in other parts of Switzerland, resulting in more sunny days and warmer temperatures. It often feels like time stands still here, while the laid-back atmosphere and friendliness of the people invite guests to meander and linger.

Ticino's must-see attractions include the Three Castles of



01 Glimpse over Lake Lugano from the staircase bringing visitors from The Morcote Centre to Santa Maria del Sasso Church.

02 A quick refresh in the clear, cool waters of the Verzasca river during a cycling excursion.

03 Bellinzona walls built in medieval times for protection still stand, offering good acoustics, it appears.



Bellinzona, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2000. The castles and their fortress walls were built in medieval times to protect the citizens of Bellinzona due to its strategic location, where several routes that pass through the Alps come together.

The oldest among the three castles, Castelgrande, sits atop a hill and once offered shelter to the surrounding communities. While some historians note that the first mention of Castelgrande dates as far back as 590, the most extensive work on the castle – walls, towers, residential buildings, a courtyard and churches – was done in the 13th century. The two towers, Torre Nera (black tower) and Torre Bianca (white tower), dominate the cityscape of Bellinzona. Both Castello Montebello and Castle Sasso Corbaro, the smallest, newest and highest of the trio, are said to be among the best-preserved medieval castles in Switzerland.

A newer addition to Ticino's attractions is the Splash & Spa Tamaro, a water park in Rivera-

Monteceneri that promises both fun and relaxation for young and old: The exciting Splash area features indoor and outdoor pools as well as spectacular slides and funnels. "The Gravity Killer", "The Tunnel of Horror", "The Black Night" and "The Wash Machine" will surely satisfy every adrenaline junkie. The Spa area, on the other hand, dedicated to well-being and rejuvenation, includes a hammam, saunas, steam baths, a snowroom and aromatic showers. Cosy deck chairs on the terrace come with a staggering view of the Alps and Monte Tamaro.

Thrill-seeking adventurers also frequent Valle Verzasca. The valley in the Locarno district of Ticino attracts mountain hikers, rafting enthusiasts, canoeists and divers who want to test the waters of Verzasca river. The Verzasca Dam, at 220m, is one of the highest bungee jumps worldwide. It gained fame when it was featured in the James Bond movie *GoldenEye* in 1995.

Adrenalin aside, the valley is





A quiet morning in the Morcote area of Lake Lugano.

also known for its rustici (farm houses) in grey stone and its many chapels.

Nestled on the shores of Lake Lugano, named after the largest city in Ticino, lies the quiet hamlet of Morcote. Winning the coveted title of “Most Beautiful Village of Switzerland 2016”, it is a sleepy former fishing village with pretty cobblestone streets, lush gardens and architectural gems like the Church of Santa Maria del Sasso, the Paleari House and the Tower of Capitano.

Known among locals as “the Pearl of Ceresio”, Morcote is the perfect escape for those who seek solitude, tranquillity and a little peace of mind. It is also home to Scherrer Park, which was established by Hermann Arthur Scherrer and officially opened for public use in 1965. The textile merchant and ardent gardener had originally bought an old house and its surrounding property at the

foot of Mount Arbostora in 1930, and then turned it into a labour of love: First, he transformed the house from a humble abode into a stunning residence. Then he tended to the garden with great dedication and meticulous detail.

Having travelled all over the world, Scherrer was fond of exotic plants, and brought them back home to Morcote so he could take pleasure in their allure every day.

In Scherrer Park, Asia meets the Mediterranean: bamboo forests, oriental sculptures as well as Siamese, Arab and Indian buildings have found a place here, as well as the gardens in Renaissance or Baroque style.

Scherrer passed away in 1956, and nine years later, his wife Amalia left the property to the council of Morcote, and it has attracted numerous visitors since. Today, the park belongs to the “Great Italian Gardens” and is also part of “The Gardens of

The James Bond “GoldenEye” leap from the dam at Verzasca sets a world record as the highest jump (220m).



AD

TO GET A TASTE OF TICINO'S DAILY LIFE, VISITORS TO THE REGION MUST DINE AT LEAST ONCE AT THE GROTTO

Switzerland”, an initiative that promotes the most distinguished public and private gardens of the country.

A similarly enchanting botanical garden awaits on the Brissago Islands. Thanks to the mild climate at Lake Maggiore, subtropical plants can grow and flourish here. Home to around 1,700 species from Asia, South Africa, the Americas, Australia and the islands of Oceania sprawled over 2.5 hectares, visitors can admire lotus blossoms, banana plants, sequoias and eucalyptus trees.

Monte Generoso offers a more rugged yet equally stunning natural landscape. The summit of the mountain, which is located between Lake Lugano and Lake Como, can be reached with a rack railway. From here, at an altitude of 1704m, one can take in uninterrupted panoramic views of the surroundings. The summit station's latest addition is “Fiore di Pietra” (Stone Flower), a restaurant housed in a limestone-clad



05 Mount Generoso, accessible by a cogwheel railway, rewards visitors with scenic views and fine grub.

06 A typical grotto with a panoramic view of Lake Maggiore.

building designed by renowned architect Mario Botta.

To get a taste of Ticino's daily life, visitors to the region must dine at least once at the grotto. A grotto is a small and simple yet unique tavern, typically found in hidden places. It normally consists of a kitchen and a large garden area with rustic tables and benches, where visitors can try authentic Ticino cuisine: from salami and mortadella, minestrone soup and risotto, roast beef and polenta to a fine selection of cheeses. Most of these hearty dishes are made from local produce and are best savoured with a bottle of local red wine.

There are a couple of popular grottos in Ticino that despite being en vogue have lost none of their laid-back vibe and charm. “Grotto dei Due Ponti” (Two Bridges Grotto), for instance, is situated on an island on the river Ticino. Linked

to the mainland by two Roman bridges, this grotto captivates visitors with its romantic location and dishes that combine tradition and creativity. Along the way to Monte Generoso, one passes a pair of buildings that seem to protrude from the rocky wall, as if they were guarding the plain below and the opposite hills, where small villages are surrounded by thick woods. The small church is the oratory of San Nicolao, whereas the other building houses a grotto that serves traditional Ticino cuisine.

Eremo San Nicolao's biggest asset is the splendid terrace offering a panoramic view from Monte San Giorgio to Monte Rosa. Lastly, near Monte Generoso lies Grotto Eguaglianza, a Michelin-star restaurant where the flavourful dishes and regional specialties get an added personal touch by the chef, such as beef stew cooked in red wine, served with polenta. ☺



AD

To the uninitiated, Switzerland may not immediately resonate as a cycling hotspot, as its natural charms are often overshadowed by the country's stellar reputation for chocolate, watchmaking and skiing.

To the informed, however, the nation ranks as one of Europe's best kept cycling secrets, where in sublime Swiss fashion, majestic scenery combines with world-class infrastructure to form an undeniably appealing biking destination.

We highlight six of the country's best routes, catering to all levels of cycling expertise, and incorporating much of Switzerland's beautiful and varied landscapes.

A BIKER'S GUIDE TO THE



DID YOU KNOW?

At over 215 sq km, Lake Neuchâtel is the largest of Switzerland's lakes to be located entirely within the country's borders. The famous 11th century castle found along the lake's southern tip in the municipality of Grandson is another highlight of this route. An additional loop highlight, the Grande Cariçaie wetlands, houses a whopping quarter of Switzerland's flora and fauna, with 8,000 plant and 10,000 animal species.



TEXT SAUL LIPCHIK PHOTOS SWISS-CH.COM

LAKE NEUCHÂTEL LOOP

LOCATION: Romandy, Western Switzerland

RATING: Easy

ALTITUDE/ELEVATION: 429m

DISTANCE: 107km

BEST TIME TO GO: Throughout the year, though summer is ideal

Close to Switzerland's border with France lies Lake Neuchâtel, which if circled, provides an accessible road cycling adventure. With its relatively flat terrain, this route is ideal for novice cyclists. It's often recommended to begin the Lake Neuchâtel Loop in the lakeside town and capital, Neuchâtel, or Neuenburg in German. The town oozes medieval charm and boasts impressive architectural delights, including a 12th century castle and collegiate church.

Leaving the town, ride through a collection of vineyards and viticultural villages. The next big town encountered is Yverdon-les-Bains, renowned for its thermal pools and ancient Celtic heritage. Another highlight is the biodiverse Grande Cariçaie marshlands.

Continuing along the eastern edge of the lake, the next major stop in Estavayer-le-Lac reveals historic sites and inviting lakeside beaches for a scenic pitstop or picnic. Thereafter, the route curves back to the starting point of Neuchâtel.

For the adventurous, consider adding a detour at about the 75km mark, towards the summit of Mount Vully, which at 653m offers uninterrupted views of the region's three big lakes (Morat, Neuchâtel and Biennne), as well as the beautiful wine estates and villages lining its slopes.

BEST OF SWITZERLAND

JOURNEY THROUGH THE JOUX VALLEY

LOCATION: Joux Valley, Canton Vaud
RATING: Moderate
ALTITUDE/ELEVATION: 1000m – 1447m
DISTANCE: 56km
BEST TIME TO GO: June – October

The undulating slopes of Western Switzerland's Jura Mountains – and in particular the range's Joux Valley – provide a stunning setting for this moderately challenging yet no less striking cycling route. For the most part, the route circles Lake Joux, the largest lake in Switzerland to sit entirely above 1000m.

Starting in the lake's northeast in Le Pont, the route follows the lakeshore, giving way to verdant slopes on one side and quiet blue waters on the other. Upon reaching the small village of Le Brassus, the rise towards the route's highest mountain pass begins. The so-called Marchairuz Pass is well known in the cycling world, as it frequently features in the Tour de Romandie.

Upon completing this 1447m-high pass, one descends among marvellous mountain peaks until eventually passing the village and municipality of Montricher, near the Swiss Jura's highest summit, Mont Tendre. Past Montricher awaits the route's final high-altitude mountain pass, the Mollendruz, reaching 1180m in elevation. Thereafter, it's a relatively short twisted snake back down towards Le Pont.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Swiss Jura is well known as the country's premier watchmaking hub, often colloquially referred to as Watch Valley. Upon completing this exhilarating cycling loop through the Joux Valley, a highly recommended restorative post-cycle activity would be the taking of a meal of freshly caught Lake Joux fish in Le Pont.

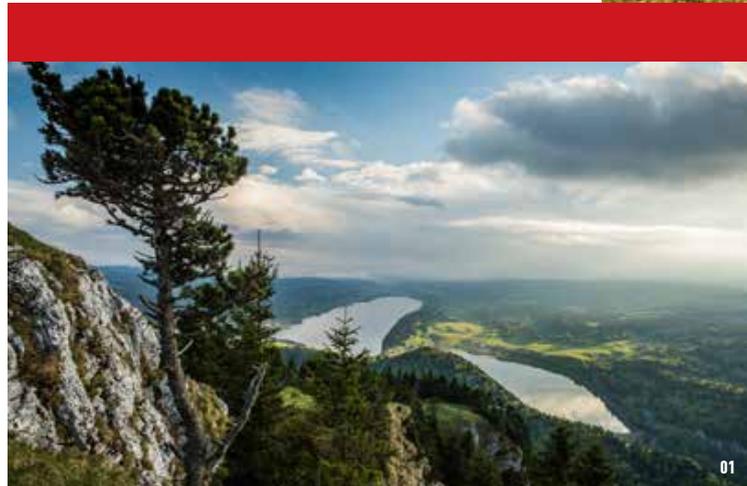
THE MÄNNLICHEN

LOCATION: Canton Berne (Grindelwald to the Männlichen)
RATING: Expert (Extremely Challenging)
ALTITUDE/ELEVATION: 951m – 2229m
DISTANCE: 13,5km
BEST TIME TO GO: June – October

The mighty Bernese Alps are not only where some of Switzerland's most awe-inspiring mountain scenes can be found, it also contains one of the country's most physically demanding cycling routes – the formidable ascent up the Männlichen.

The route's starting point is the postcard-worthy village of Grindelwald, a quintessential Swiss town dominated by Alpine peaks. The spectacular views famously accompanying this relentless uphill ascent are immediate, evident even with the first pedal.

Leading up the dominating mountain that is the Männlichen, the 13km trail is by most accounts brutal, effectively forcing the intrepid cyclist to climb some 1270m up a narrow and winding road. Backbreaking though the ascent may be, the reward for its conquest is priceless – namely the panoramic views over the Alps with the dramatic inclusion of three of its most noteworthy peaks, the Eiger, Jungfrau and Mönch.



01 The view of Lake Joux in the distance, which in winter freezes over to become an open-air ice-skating rink.

02 Free-wheeling on the road to Grindelwald.



DID YOU KNOW?

This area of the Bernese Alps is home to the Alps' most massive glacier, the great Aletsch Glacier, spanning an area of more than 80 sq km. Due to its surrounding scenery, the town of Grindelwald has seen several major movies and TV shows being filmed there, including *The Golden Compass* and *Star Wars: Episode III - Revenge of the Sith*.

02

THE ROUTE'S STARTING POINT IS THE POSTCARD-WORTHY VILLAGE OF GRINDELWALD, A QUINTESSENTIAL SWISS TOWN DOMINATED BY ALPINE PEAKS.

ESSENTIAL SWITZERLAND: LAKE GENEVA TO LAKE CONSTANCE

LOCATION: Lake Geneva to Lake Constance

RATING: Moderate – Difficult

ALTITUDE/ELEVATION: 370m - 1280m

DISTANCE: 340km

BEST TIME TO GO: Summer months

Looking for an epic ride through classic Swiss countryside? The multi-day trek from Lake Geneva to Lake Constance may well be your best bet. This route takes several days to complete, and as it stretches from the country's southwestern corner (at Lake Geneva) to its northeastern border (at Lake Constance), it provides a sweeping glance at Switzerland's famously beautiful landscapes.

Sparkling glacial and mountain lakes, snow-capped peaks and photogenic Swiss villages define the scenery with which cyclists along this route are confronted. The route's major highlights include the idyllic village of Gstaad (a worthwhile stop indeed) and the two large Alpine lakes – Lakes Thun and Brienz.

Additionally, along this route, two gruelling mountain passes will be met, namely the Saanenmöser and the Brünig. For those not keen on attempting the arduous ascents of either of these passes, it's possible to enjoy the convenience of taking local transportation uphill and riding downhill by bike.



DID YOU KNOW?

The famous town of Gstaad is currently and has over the years been home to several high-profile personalities and celebrities, including businessman George Soros, and actresses Elizabeth Taylor and Julie Andrews.

Lake Constance at the northeastern end of this route sits at the confluence of three countries: Switzerland, Germany and Austria.

A major tourist and adventure sport hub, the area is also one of the only places on the planet where tourists can enjoy a trip on a modern Zeppelin airship, which cruises above the lake and its various sites and attractions, like the Rhine Falls, Switzerland's largest waterfall.

THE ROUTE'S MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE THE IDYLIC VILLAGE OF GSTAAD (A WORTHWHILE STOP INDEED) AND THE TWO LARGE ALPINE LAKES - LAKES THUN AND BRIENZ.



03 Riders taking the Lake Thun route will have their fill of pretty towns, Romanesque churches and castle houses.

04 & 05 Make time for a pitstop at any of the vineyards along Southern Switzerland's meandering wine-producing routes.



VALAIS VINEYARD ROUTE

LOCATION: Valais canton (Martigny to Leuk)

RATING: Moderate

ALTITUDE/ELEVATION: 471m – 731m

DISTANCE: 57km

BEST TIME TO GO: April – October

Discover the best of the Southern Swiss winelands by embarking on the Valais vineyard trail starting in the charming and historic town of Martigny and ending in the small town of Leuk, a national Swiss Heritage Site. Riding along the meandering wine-producing route, one is rewarded for the exertion with magnificent views of the Rhone Valley and the many wineries that line its flanks.

Because such a vast number of wineries can be found dotting this route – many offering wine tastings without appointment – a journey on this biking trail is arguably one of the finest ways to explore this Swiss wine-growing region.

Chamoson, Fully and Sierre are just some of the top-rated spots to visit and sample the glorious grapes grown in the area. Another worthy stop along this route would have to be the Saillon thermal pools, a rejuvenating and indulgent rest stop where luxuriant spa and thermal treatments abound.

DID YOU KNOW?

The canton of Valais is Switzerland's largest wine-producing area, responsible for some 50 percent of the nation's entire wine production. Valais is also home to one of the country's most iconic attractions, namely the Matterhorn, the most recognisable peak in the Alps and easily one of the world's most famous mountains.



THE GOTTHARD

LOCATION: Uri canton
RATING: Difficult
ALTITUDE/ELEVATION: 1437m – 2478m
DISTANCE: 106km
BEST TIME TO GO: June – October

The legendary Alpine pass known as the Gotthard sets the scene for this challenging route, featuring dramatic Swiss landscapes, quaint mountain villages and, among a host of other fascinating attractions, three punishing mountain passes.

For those daring enough to tackle it, a recommended starting (and finishing) point would be the tranquil town of Andermatt.

Leaving Andermatt in a south-westerly direction, the first pass encountered is the Furka, a winding course that demands some 11km of ascent before reaching the summit. Nearby the summit, the iconic Hotel Belvédère can be visited and from there a short hike will lead adventurers to a most impressive natural attraction, the

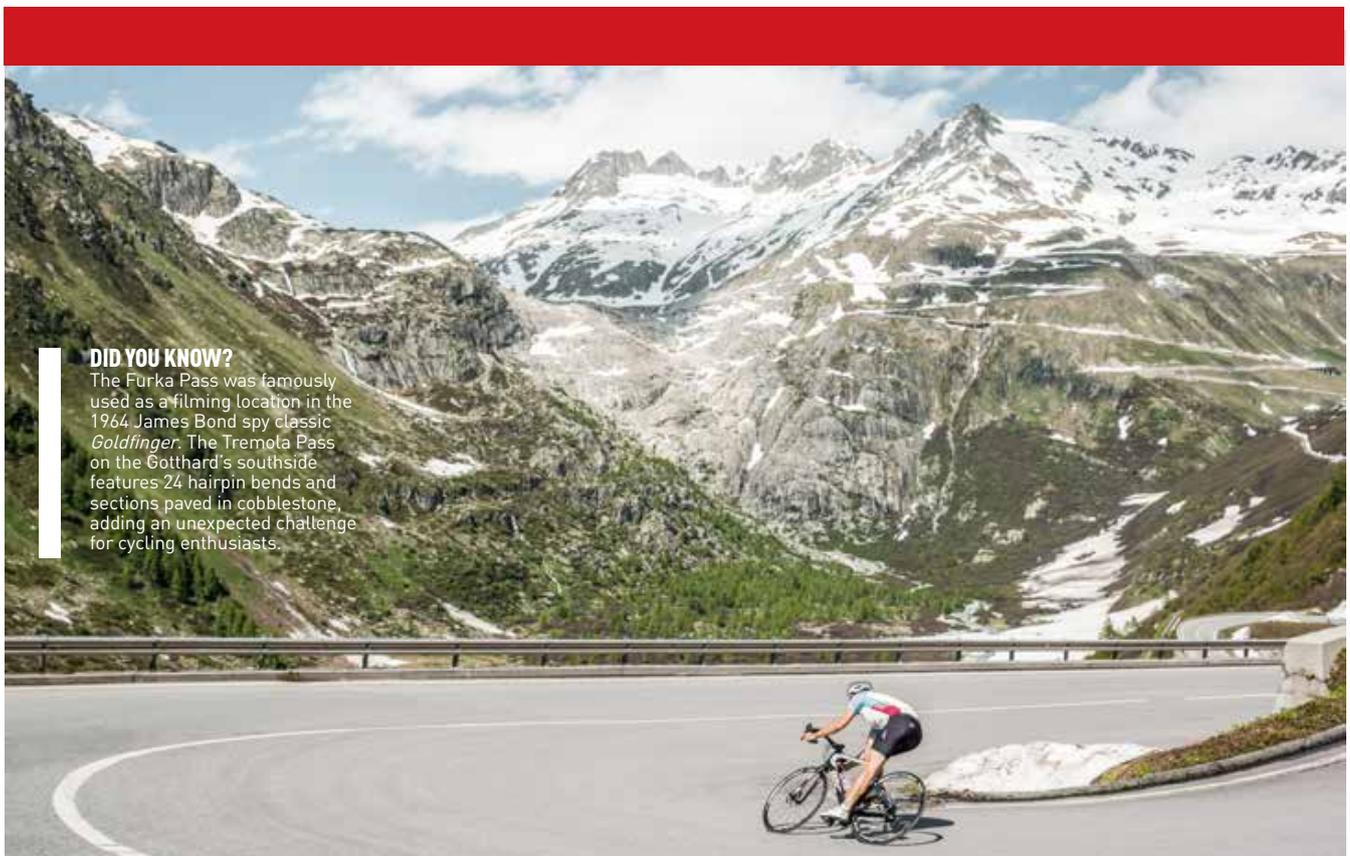
Rhone Glacier Ice Cave.

Once on the other side of the Furka, the descent to Obergoms begins. From this historic municipality, the route continues until reaching the second and highest of the passes, the Nufenen. At a mammoth 2478m, the Nufenen is Switzerland's second highest paved mountain pass, second only to the renowned Umbrail.

After conquering the giant that is Nufenen, the downhill through Italian-speaking Switzerland provides a welcome reward for the efforts on the previous pass. Thereafter, it's time to face the climb up the route's third and final pass, the serpentine Tremola, which majestically rises some 2100m through towering peaks.

Descending from Tremola back towards Andermatt is possibly the route's most gratifying section, as the relatively short downhill gives unrivalled opportunities to take in the glorious surrounds. 🚲

For more about cycling in Switzerland, visit www.myswitzerland.com/cycling.



DID YOU KNOW?

The Furka Pass was famously used as a filming location in the 1964 James Bond spy classic *Goldfinger*. The Tremola Pass on the Gotthard's southside features 24 hairpin bends and sections paved in cobblestone, adding an unexpected challenge for cycling enthusiasts.

AD

IT'S GOTT YOUR NAME ON IT

FROM CASTING FONDUUE FORKS AND SWISS BELLS TO ASSEMBLING WATCHES AND POCKET KNIVES, SWITZERLAND'S HANDS-ON WORKSHOPS ENSURE VISITORS TAKE HOME MORE THAN JUST MEMORIES.

TEXT PENNY WATSON PHOTOS SWISS-IMAGE.CH & ISTOCK



WATCHMAKING



CATCH UP TIME Switzerland has long been renowned as the go-to hub for horology, but it wasn't always so. When mechanical timekeeping started back in the 16th century, it lagged, somewhat ironically, behind the times. They caught up in the second half of the 16th century, when Huguenot refugees brought the manufacture of portable timepieces to Geneva.

Horologist wannabes take heed, the Swiss are famed watch and clock-makers and there's no better place to learn the trade. Enthusiasts can join a three-hour watchmaking initiation workshop in the historic salon of Geneva's Palais de l'Horlogerie, hosted by The Fondation de la Haute Horlogerie (hautehorlogerie.org/en/) ([trainings/#formationshorlogers](https://www.instagram.com/trainingsformationshorlogers/)), which was established in Geneva in 2005. You'll become acquainted with basic watchmaking skills by assembling and dismantling a simple watch mechanism. Similarly, in Le Noirmont, in the heart of the Jura mountains, the master watchmaker at Initium (initium.ch/) invites guests into the fascinating world of miniaturised mechanisms with a watchmaking course. Armed with screwdriver and tweezers, guests can choose a simple three-hour introduction to watchmaking or a full-day full watch assembly course with participants choosing components, including high-quality housings, dials, hands and watch straps.



COW BELL

In the town of Berger in Bâle in the Emmental region, visitors can get involved in a tradition that is as much a part of Swiss identity as gruyère cheese – bell casting. Farmers began using cowbells centuries ago to locate their roaming cattle. Today, the sound of cowbells rings through local festivities and sporting events.

The Berger Swissbell Foundry has been casting bells since 1730 and the tradition has withstood time. The company “only uses first class materials in its foundry”. The foundry sand, for example, has to withstand extreme temperatures during casting to produce the required metal alloys. Visitors to the foundry can try their hand at casting a bell in the foundry’s half-day workshops. Participants will fill the sand moulds that are then heated to 1,100 deg C. The finished bell, with matching strap, can then be delivered home for those travelling light. www.swissbells.com



RING MY BELL

Whether you choose a cowbell, horse bell, sheep bell, goat bell, house bell, hand bell, ship’s bell or small souvenir bell (the list goes on), the hand-cast bell will be uniquely yours.



CYBER TOOL

This iconic accessory might be more than 120 years old but the Victorinox design has been fully re-engineered for the digital age. Meet the revolutionary artisan cyber tool, developed for the geek in all of us. It’s ideal for opening, repairing and then closing a wide range of IT hardware devices, but it is also fully equipped to handle analogue projects and, if needed, peeling an orange.

SWISS ARMY KNIFE

At the visitor centre (swissknifevalley.ch/en/visitor-center/manual-knife-assembly/) in Brunnlen, in the aptly named Swiss Knife Valley – the home of Swiss Army Knives in the Ob- und Nid-Schwyz region – visitors can manually assemble their own Spartan pocket knife. Guided by a professional, attendees will be given 27 individual knife parts and shown how to intricately piece them together layer by steady layer to create their own little piece of history. To mark the occasion, names can be engraved on the side to create a lasting keepsake. Classes take 15 minutes per knife per person, but there is only one assembly bench, so plan your trip accordingly. Swiss Army buffs will also appreciate the Victorinox Museum.



SWISS

CHEESE

There are more than 450 different specialty cheeses in Switzerland – Gruyère, Raclette and Emmental being the most well known. If you're keen on these, you'll love the immersive experience of a hands-on cheese-making workshop.

At Sherry's Kitchen (sherryskitchen.com/swiss-cheese/) in Zurich, qualified cheese sommelier Sherry Cho hosts a half-day Swiss cheese 101. Guests will learn how cheeses are made, the best way to cut, serve and sample cheese, and how to wine match. The small group will also bake "Chäschiechtli", a famed Swiss cheese cake.

For something a little more rustic, master cheesemaker Werner Knöpfli, from Chäs-Paradies (chaes-paradies.ch) in Weiningen in the country's north, runs a mobile dairy where traditionalists can learn to make the aromatic, semi-hard cheeses that the country is known for. According to Knöpfli, "[My] cheese-making class offers the possibility to make cheese according to age-old tradition." The mobile classes can be held amid picture-postcard scenery where "thinks aperto's" and fondues can be organised as part of the experience. In the Glaralpine region in the heart of the country, family-run Schindler Dairy processes more than 2,000 litres of milk each day to make spicy Sprinz, Alp and goat cheese. Visitors to the dairy during summer can sign up for a day-long cheese-making course to make their own 12kg cheese round.

Some travelers might find it difficult to find the right cheese, when there are strict rules about food products. The next best thing? Fondue forks. In Appenzel in the country's north-east, visitors can parlay their cheese-making passion into casting their own fondue forks. At the 90-minute artisanal classes – run throughout the year – participants will cast their own fondue forks with their own product. The finished product will bear the traditional cattle drive motif.

myswitzerland.com/en-au/fondue-forks.html





CHOCOLATE / TRUFFLE

TRUFFLE
Unlike chocolate, the dairy content in a Swiss truffle means it has a much shorter shelf life than chocolate. Your French Swiss truffle, like the French truffles, needs to be eaten within a few days of being made. Most truffles, of course, don't need any encouragement.

Nine out of 10 people like chocolate. The 10th is yv'ing. So goes the old saying, and it's not far from the truth in Switzerland, where Swiss chocolate and truffles have a reputation as some of the world's finest. At Chocolaterie Durig (www.facebook.com/durig.chocolaterie/) in Lausanne, visitors can indulge in a half-day chocolate-making workshop that begins with a simple demo and tasting of rare origin chocolate and praline. Attendees can then opt for a chocolate moulding class or a chocolate and praline creation class. Master chocolatier Dan Durig will explain the journey from bean to praline and the importance of using the finest cocoa – "principally the South American Criollo bean" – along with pure cocoa butter and entirely natural ingredients.

Confiserie Isler (myswitzerland.com/en-au/chocolate-making-workshop.html), in the little town of Safra on Lake Zurich, also offers visitors the chance to make and decorate chocolates, mould Easter bunnies and taste-test different chocolate varieties. Nearby Maison Truffe (myswitzerland.com/en-au/maison-truffe.html) is a culinary and homewares store that hosts half-day truffle making classes. Visitors will learn the finer points of combining melted chocolate with cream and butter before pouring the mix into a mould. It's then sprinkled with cocoa powder, ready to take home.



AD

SWITZERLAND BY TRAIN, BUS AND BOAT

WHETHER YOU TRAVEL

BY RAIL, ROAD, WATER

OR MOUNTAIN RAILWAY

DURING YOUR VISIT,

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

WILL NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN.

TEXT KATRIN FIGGE PHOTOS SWISS-CH.COM

The Swiss Travel System (STS) ranks among the best and safest in the world. In Switzerland, trains, buses and boats are more than just a means of transportation, they're a highly efficient and interconnected web of different transportation modes – making the whole country easily accessible. On public transportation, visitors can travel comfortably while enjoying stunning scenery along the way.

The STS organisation, subsidised by Swiss Federal Railways, launched an impressive marketing campaign many years ago – to great success. Since then, the four-day Swiss Travel Pass has been a bestseller among tourists from Asia and the US. It offers travellers unlimited travel by train, bus and boat within Switzerland and allows them to use public transportation for free in over 90 towns and cities on four consecutive days. This all-in-one ticket includes free entrance to more than 500 museums across the country as well as a 50 percent discount on most mountain railways. The Swiss Travel Pass can be purchased by tourists through a distribution channel in their home country, but is also available at airports and train stations in Switzerland.

Travellers who would like to travel like the locals should try the Grand Train Tour of Switzerland, a rail journey of a lifetime. A unique experience, this train ride is one for the books as it allows passengers to discover the most beautiful panoramic routes across the country, passing by the four different language regions.

Divided into several route sections, the Grand Train Tour of Switzerland offers four- or eight-

A HIGHLY EFFICIENT AND INTERCONNECTED WEB OF DIFFERENT TRANSPORTATION MODES MAKES THE WHOLE COUNTRY EASILY ACCESSIBLE.





day tours, which can start from any point along the route. Each route highlights specific sights, attractions and opportunities to explore further.

The tour will take travellers through bustling cities and remote villages, over majestic mountains and by lakes, rivers and glaciers. These spectacular train tours require only one ticket, the Swiss Travel Pass. With the Swiss Family Card, children between the ages of six and 16 travel free if accompanied by at least one parent holding a Swiss Travel Pass.

In operation since 1930, the Glacier Express is another Swiss tourist train of worldwide renown.

Despite its name, it doesn't travel at high speed – in fact, it is often referred to as the “slowest express train in the world”, and the name merely implied that it was a one-seater for an impressive journey.

The Glacier Express connects two major mountain resorts – Zermatt and St. Moritz. Thanks to state-of-the-art technology and successful marketing campaigns, the Glacier Express became a distinctive first-class Swiss tourism product during the 1980s and 1990s and has been in high demand since.

Travellers praise its ability to combine tradition with modern features and contemporary comfort: The journey not only

includes panoramic windows but also impeccable dining service and audio guidance in six languages.

One of the most popular mountain excursions, fully covered by the Swiss Travel Pass, is for Mount Rigi. Centrally located between Lake Lucerne and Lake Zug, it is easily accessible from every direction, whether by train, bus or boat. Right here, in 1871, Europe's very first mountain railway made it to the prominent viewpoint of Rigi Kulm. Up to this day, the two cog railways – from Vitznau and Arth-Goldau – serve the routes to the top with its summit hotel. Visitors also have the option to comfortably glide upwards by cableway. Mount Rigi, dubbed “Queen of the mountains”, captivates guests with a breathtaking 360-degree panorama, the view of no fewer than 13 lakes and the Alpine mountain chain.

While taking the train may be the most popular mode of transportation in Switzerland, it is worth noting that travelling by boat or bus is also a more than viable option – in fact, going on a cruise can be a charming alternative to explore the country from a different perspective.

Lake Lucerne cruises let tourists travel in style, whether it's on a traditional steamboat or a luxurious yacht. The Lake Lucerne Navigation Company has a wide range of boat cruises that take passengers through clear blue waters to idyllic coves and

01 Aboard the Glacier Express.

02 Passengers on boat cruises can expect their fill of idyllic coves and mountain peaks.

AD

dramatic slopes, with mountain peaks as a stunning backdrop – all year round.

Meanwhile, Alpine enthusiasts all can hop on the PostBus, which tackles four of the most impressive Swiss Alpine passes in a single day and a total altitude of 10,366m. Operating between June and October, the nearly nine-hour ride takes passengers past Grimsel to Nufenen, which is Switzerland's highest Alpine transition negotiable by vehicle – it's definitely not for the faint-hearted! The bus then continues to the Gotthard, also known as "King of Mountain Passes" due to its importance as a trans-Alpine connection between the North and the South dating back to the Roman Empire. The whole journey takes travellers over 25 bridges and through just as many tunnels.

To further ease travelling across Switzerland, STS recently launched its first public transport app for tourists, available in English and for free download from the Apple App Store and Google Play Store. Seeing how digitalisation has changed the way many people plan their holidays – from online booking to looking up main attractions and lesser-known places online and sharing moments on social media – the



03 Pristine waterways, coupled with postcard-perfect backdrops, make the cruise experience memorable.

04 From the rocky windows of the PostBus, travellers can view four Alpine passes in a single day.

Swiss Travel Guide app is ideal for modern and independent travellers.

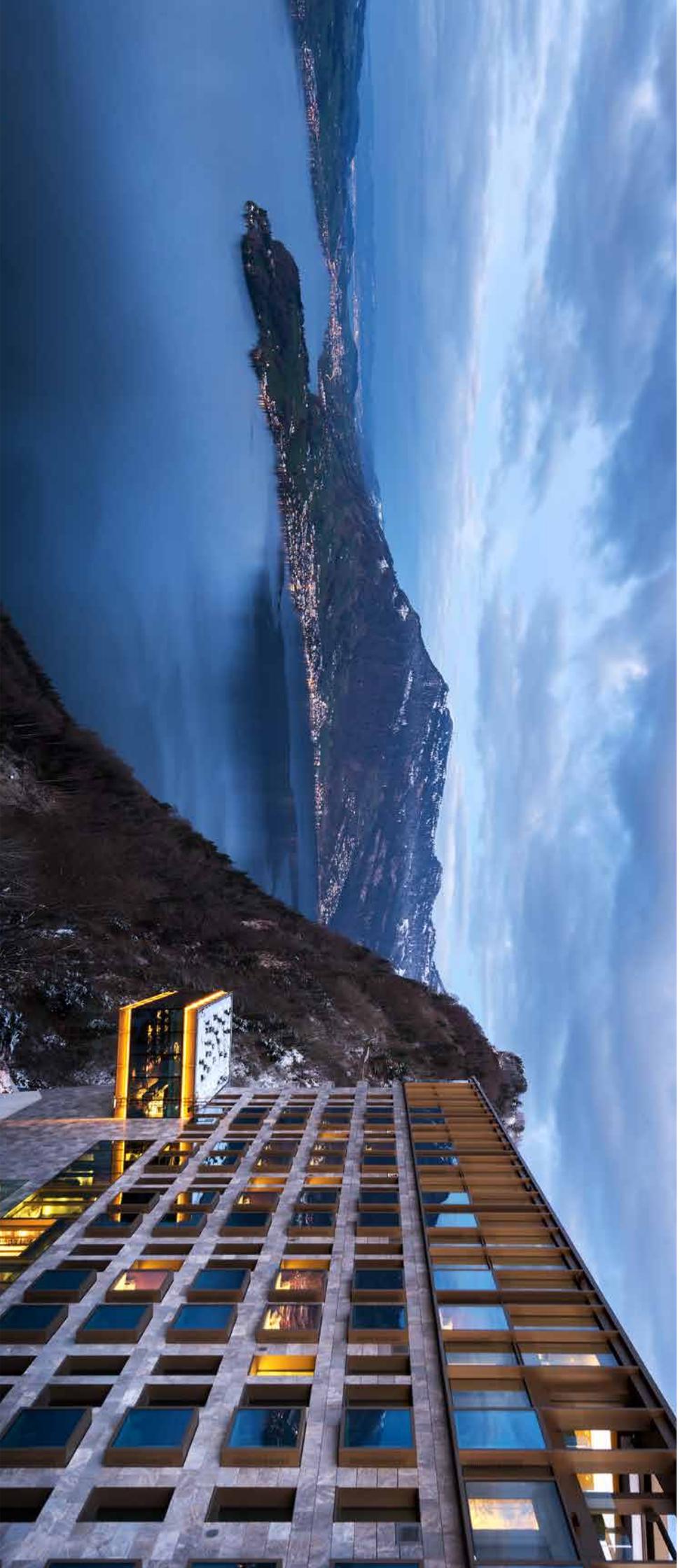
What's more, the Swiss Travel Guide app offers real added value through integrated digital coupons, ranging from discounts at restaurants and selected travel destinations to exclusive presents. Last but not least, at a time when social media keeps growing and almost everyone has an "online presence", the app allows users to share their travel statistics. 

Visit MySwitzerland.com/swisstravelsystem for more information.



Eddie, the edelweiss, leads us through the Swiss Travel Guide app, whether they want to go on a boat cruise on Lake Zurich, a shopping spree in Geneva or wine and dine at a grotto in Ticino. He shares useful facts and information on local highlights and provides a digital validity map as well as the local SBB timetable.

AD



TOP OF THE LAKE

With dazzling five-star hotels, plenty of VIP visitors and an orchestral fanfare of mountains, the lakeside city of Lucerne is hotting up just in time for the season.

All shimmering glass, smart lines and cliffhugging spa, the Bürgenstock Resort sounds like something out of a new-age science-fiction novel. It's primed with four outstanding hotels, a 10,000 sqm glass-clad spa, a dozen restaurants and Europe's highest outdoor elevator: the heavenly-sounding Hammeschwand. But it's no fantasy. It's a real Place, located high up on the Bürgenberg, about 20 minutes east of Lucerne in Central Switzerland. The good news is that it's even more out-of-this-world in person.

Ask anyone and they'll say you can't come to Switzerland and not head into the mountains. Wealthy visitors and VIPs have traditionally been flown up to

TEXT MIKE MACEACHERAN PHOTOS SWISS-CH.COM

the chi-chi resorts of St. Moritz, Gstaad, Zermatt or Verbier; but perhaps not for longer. Geography has helped preserve the perfect Swiss way of life in Lucerne and its neighbouring valleys, and a sleeper sort of life has bubbled by here for centuries. That it's located out of arm's reach of Geneva and Zurich helps, too. But with splashy new hotels and plenty of VIP flourishes, Lucerne now has plenty to say about where you should plan your next trip.

Today, its trump card is the nine-years-in-the-making US\$500m Bürgenstock Resort unveiled last summer. Once the hideaway of Sophia Loren and the wedding venue for Audrey Hepburn and Mel Ferrer, it's

Perched 500m above Lake Lucerne, the Bürgenstock Resort comprises four hotels, a stupendous spa and a dozen restaurants, among others.

the largest luxury retreat in Western Europe, a project on a scale Switzerland had never seen before. You might have seen private island villas in the Maldives, floating bear lodges in Alaska and even a high-tech ryokan in Tokyo, but you've likely never heard of a place as ambitious as this. When first-timers gaze upon the lobby – and a polished view of the pristine lake below – the expressions on their faces are those of newly-minted lottery winners.

It's first reached by boat transfer – you glide from Pier 3 near the city's main train station over deep blue Lake Lucerne, a journey undertaken by Queen Victoria some 150 years ago when she was still grieving for her



01

late husband Albert. She spent six weeks in the lakes and mountains in the shadow of the majestic fig and Platanus. Really, it's no surprise. They offer comfort and satisfaction in equal measure.

After following in the wake of royalty, you complete the ride on the fairground-like Burgersstock funicular, which dates back to 1888. You plump into the flashy mountain cableway and are zoomed 500m above the lake directly into the lobby of the sweeping Burgersstock Hotel. Despite this hullabaloo, it's invigoratingly calm and soothing. Every bathtub has a panoramic view, and the whole caboodle recasts Lucerne as an Alpine Shangri-la.

So if you are one of those people who fall into raptures over utopian mountains, fresh air and spa time, you should listen to the advice of the resort's general manager Robert Herr: "The views are captivating, with 360-degree views across Lake Lucerne, the rolling Alpine valley and snow-capped mountains beyond," he tells me. "The beauty of the resort is that the landscapes are framed in so many ways – there is always another breathtaking view around each corner." This, to put it bluntly, is a place for those with wandering eyes.

It may also be easy to think a resort this size could have been limited in terms of growth by the



02

“THE BEAUTY OF THE RESORT IS THAT THE LANDSCAPES ARE FRAMED IN SO MANY WAYS - THERE IS ALWAYS ANOTHER BREATHTAKING VIEW AROUND EACH CORNER.”



03

01-03 Lucerne's trump card that's been nine years in the making. Burgersstock – nestled in splendidly built-up areas, as well as an outdoor lifestyle that's far from shabby.

surrounding lake and mountains. Yet that's missing the point, says Herr. The resort totals 60 hectares. There are 70km of walking trails. There is a nine-hole golf course. And – unusual for such a resort – it's completely car-free. So it's not for lazybones either. Visitors are surprised by the outdoor lifestyle at the resort," he says. "The air is so clean and fresh high above the lake. It's vital we don't pollute it with additional or unnecessary car traffic." There's something glorious about the idea of bringing the mountains closer to the city.

To see where else Lucerne is going – and it is moving at pace, don't doubt it – take a cruise courtesy



04



05

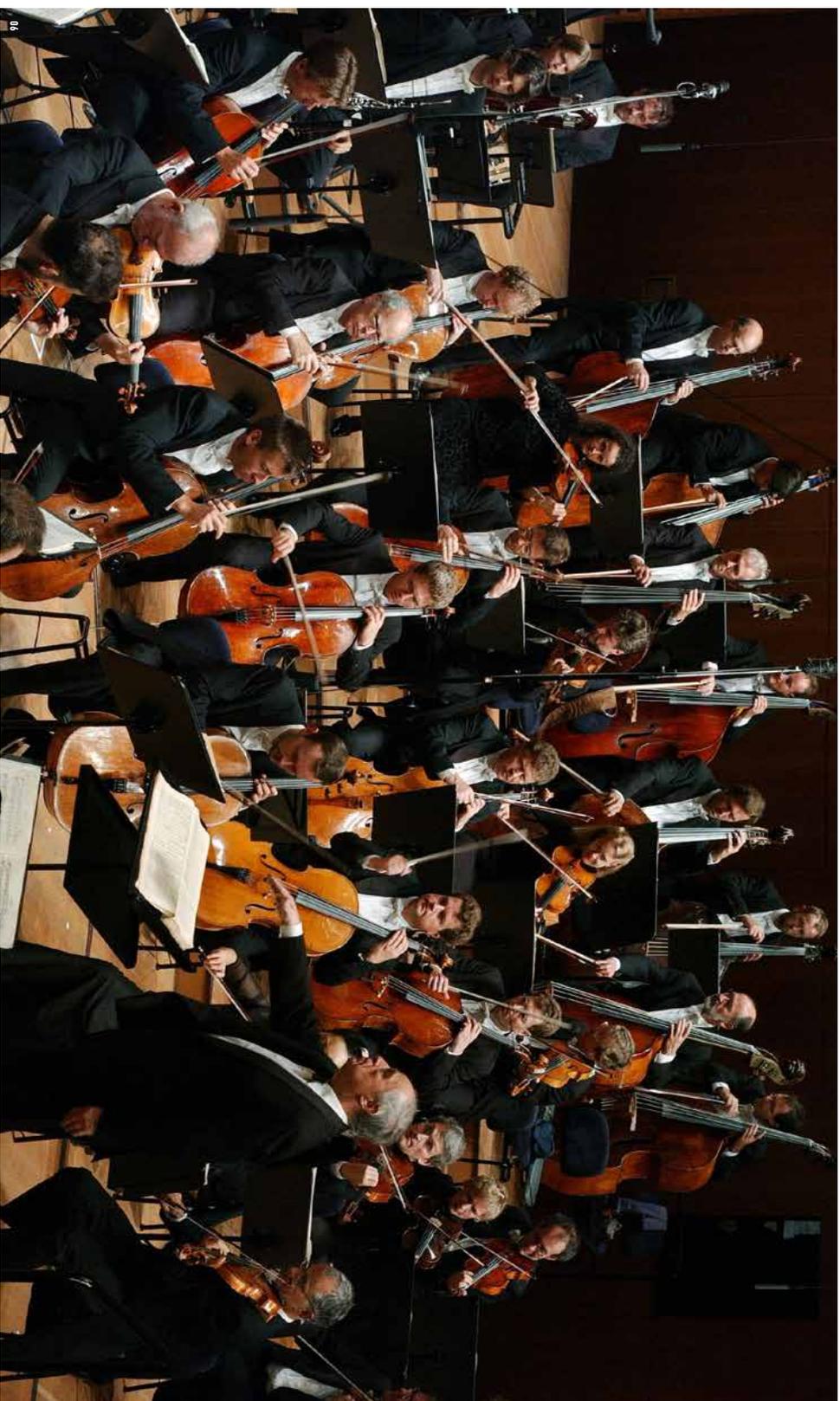
of MS Birgenstock, the lake's new spindle-shaped luxury catamaran. The first-class cruiser began service in May, providing an hourly service from Lucerne to Kehrsiten-Birgenstock across what locals refer to as the Verwaldstättersee, the Lake of the Four Forested Settlements. Not since Beethoven's water-inspired *Moonlight Sonata* – an ode to the light gleaming across its wobbly surface – has the lake kicked up such a fuss.

Back towards the city itself, there is plenty of sparkle, particularly at the 113-year-old Palace Luzern, downtown's most luxurious hotel. The Belle Époque-era property has been closed since November 2017, but is set for a grand carnival reopening following a

04 Old Town Lucerne is easy to explore on foot.

05 To get closer to downtown action, stay at the 113-year-old Palace Luzern.

06 Orchestras like the Berlin Philharmonic have played at the city's annual Lucerne Festival.



06

top-to-tail reboot by Chinese hotelier Gao Yunteng. That it's a pet project to the tune of US\$100 million is also welcome news for foodies and music lovers. Three new lakefront restaurants will debut, offering Swiss specialties from traditional backfäschtli (meatballs) to just-hatched fish from Lake Lucerne. It'll also remain ground zero for one of the city's crowning glories, the annual Lucerne Festival. Every summer, it brings orchestras, soloists and conductors to the lake, and this year you can expect superstars, including Chinese pianist Lang Lang.

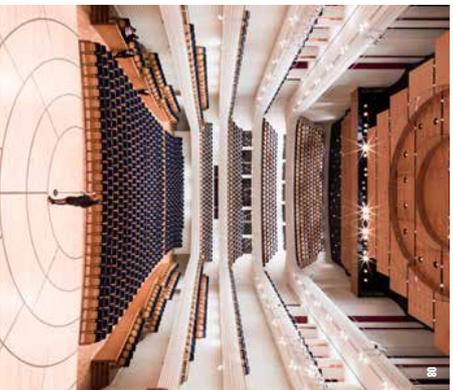
To take a true reading of the city, a walk through the historic old town is in order. Lucerne feels

IT'LL ALSO REMAIN GROUND ZERO FOR ONE OF THE CITY'S CROWNING GLORIES, THE ANNUAL LUCERNE FESTIVAL. EVERY SUMMER, IT BRINGS ORCHESTRAS, SOLOISTS AND CONDUCTORS TO THE LAKE, AND THIS YEAR YOU CAN EXPECT SUPERSTARS, INCLUDING CHINESE PIANIST LANG LANG.



07 Sunset with the Chapel Bridge and Water Tower in silhouette.

08-09 The Culture and Congress Centre, designed by star architect Jean Nouvel.



specifically built for sightseers. Easy to explore on foot, its cobbled alleys reveal cheesemakers, chocolatiers and bijou ateliers that celebrate what's local, renewable and homemade. Buildings like the 17th-century Rathaus Spuerwirticke and St. Peter's Chapel on Kapellplatz collaborate with the mountains on the horizon to create the perfect fairy-tale eye candy. Fabulous museums hide inside old banks. Then there are stopped-clock cafes with swelling terraces, where one experiences nothing but kindness from the often buttoned-down Swiss.

As you pad across the medieval covered Chapel Bridge to the futuristic Culture and Congress Centre, designed by star French architect Jean Nouvel, you are

always in intimate contact with the water of the lake and Reuss River. It feels like a muted conversation.

For me, the only problem with Lucerne is this: From now on, each time someone suggests a trip to the lakeside, I'll instantly think back to when I skimmed across its lake on a catamaran. Or when I first saw Lake Lucerne from afar on the grassy shoulder of the Blüemlienberg. Or, perhaps, while I was dipping my toes in and taking lungfuls of crisp Alpine air between snacking on cheese at its waterfront restaurants. All this will soon make me want to go back again.

Now that's a first-world problem in a nutshell. 🌐

For more information on Lucerne, visit luzern.com

GENEVA: AT THE HEART OF TIME

When it comes to handcrafted watches, "Made in Switzerland" is more than just a label for the place of origin – it is a seal of approval and mark of quality that is recognised the world over.

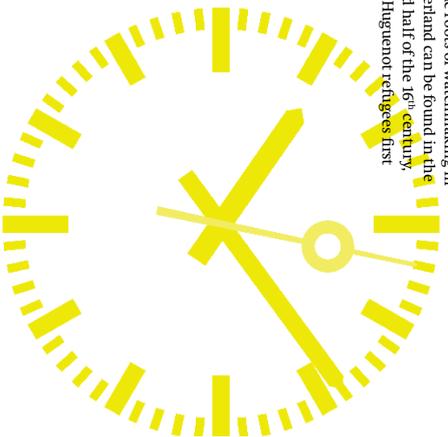
Swiss watches are renowned for their precision and pedigree and have become synonymous with luxury. In fact, more than half of all luxury watches are lovingly and meticulously made in Switzerland.

Geneva, the second-most populous city in Switzerland, is also often referred to as the cradle of watchmaking. On the city's famous Rue du Rhône, visitors will find a luxury shoppers' paradise, where the most prestigious brands – including 80 jewellery and watch boutiques – have set up shop in elegance and style.

The roots of watchmaking in Switzerland can be found in the second half of the 16th century, when Huguenot refugees first

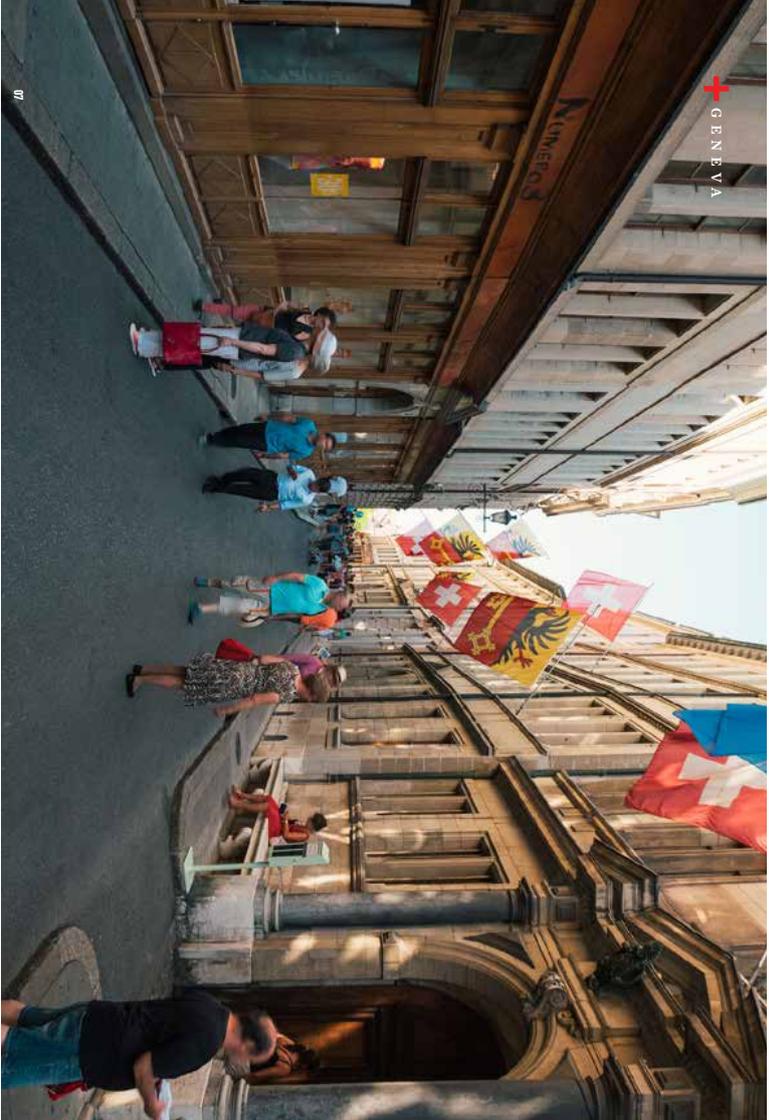


- 01 Geneva canton's coat of arms.
- 02 & 04 The medicinal art of watchmaking in Switzerland harks back to the 1500s.
- 03 Those shopping for a true-blue Swiss timepiece make a beeline for the Rue du Rhône.
- 04 Timely reminders of Geneva as the cradle of watchmaking are everywhere.
- 05 Geneva's cityscape, recognisable by the St Pierre Cathedral in the background.



TEXT KATRIN FIGGE PHOTOS ©GENEVETOURISME, SWITZERLAND TOURISM, ISTOCK





07

THE GENEVA SEAL, OR POINÇON DE GENEVE IN FRENCH, IS THE ULTIMATE EMBLEM OF THE CITY'S WATCHMAKING EXPERTISE

brought the manufacture of portable timepieces to Geneva. At the time, it was John Calvin, the founder of Calvinism, who was the spiritual leader of the city. Under his rule, any display of wealth was banned – which in turn led jewelry makers to look elsewhere to put their creativity and talent to good use. This was when they discovered watchmaking.

While Geneva is the cradle of watchmaking in Switzerland, the tradition soon spread to other regions in the country. The watch industry flourished, and by the mid 19th century, the Swiss had

overtaken the English as the world's most important watch manufacturers. However, it is still the city of Geneva that leads the country in horology when it comes to excellence and craftsmanship.

Here, companies like Patek Philippe, Rolex, Piaget, Baume & Mercier, Frederique Constant, Alpina and Vacheron Constantin effortlessly combine century-long skills with computer-aided design and state-of-the-art machinery.

The Geneva Seal, or Poinçon de Genève in French, is the ultimate emblem of the city's watchmaking expertise. First

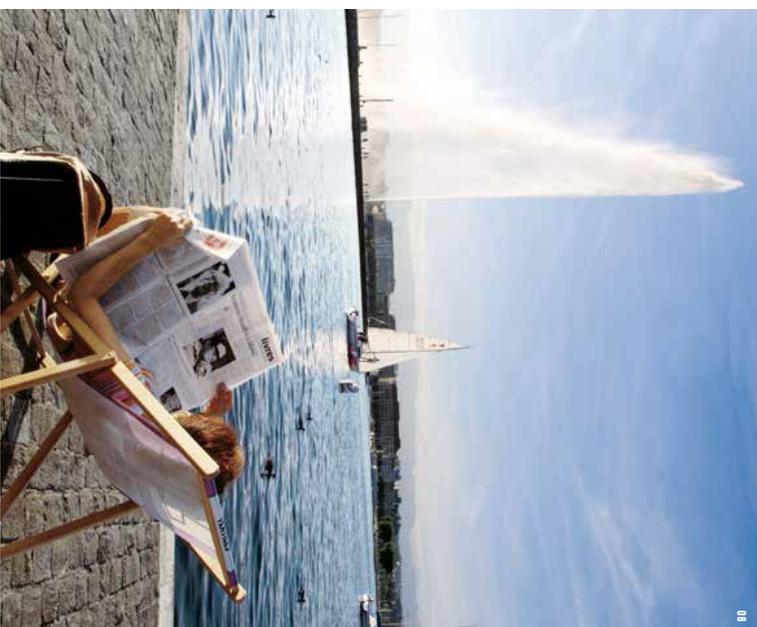


proposed in November 1886 by the Grand Council of the Republic and Canton of Geneva, the Geneva Seal was introduced as a way to certify a high level of quality. The seal proved the origin and quality of the watch. At the same time, it encouraged watchmakers to stay in the city instead of taking their expertise elsewhere. Even so, there are only a few watchmakers and manufacturers that have been bestowed this guarantee of authenticity, a testament to its exclusivity – because the Seal of Geneva is more than just an instrument to measure time. Instead, it is a true work of art.

In the meantime, there are other strict certifications competing with the Geneva Seal, but the latter is the only one indicating that a timepiece is coming from Geneva, the watch

metropolis and epicentre of Swiss watchmaking. As one can imagine, it is quite a labour-intensive process to obtain permission to use the Geneva Seal – in return, a watch that is eventually certified guarantees provenance, reliability and precision.

In Geneva, one comes across many traces and links to the watchmaking industry. One of Geneva's most famous landmarks, for instance, is the Jet d'Eau, a large fountain that is visible throughout the city and jets water to a height of 140 metres. Its history dates back to 1886 when the hydraulic factory that supplied the watchmakers of Geneva with water had to install a safety valve. It was designed in a way that helped to relieve pressure by letting the water escape, which jetted high into the sky – incidentally creating the Jet d'Eau.



08

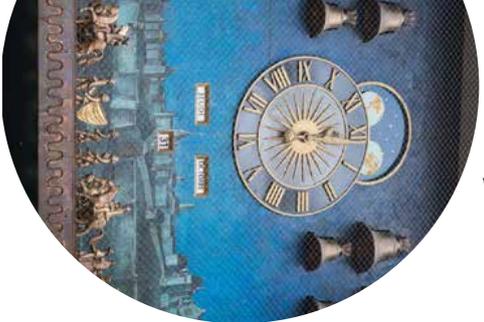
About 6,500 flowers and plants make up the city's iconic Flower Clock which, incidentally, tells time accurately.



07 The Old Town is a maze of small streets and picturesque squares.

08 The Jet d'Eau, which shoots water to a height of 140m, is visible throughout the city.

Edward Wirth's miniature musical display was created to commemorate the city's victory over invading troops in 1602.



09 Close to the Place des Nations, where the sculpture, *Huge Broken Chair*, can be viewed, an international organization like WHO, UN, UNicef and WTO.

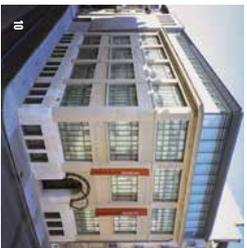
Geneva is also home to the *Flower Clock*, or *Horloge fleurie*. Located on the western side of the *Jardin Anglais* park, the clock was created in 1955 to pay tribute to the city of watchmakers, using about 6,500 flowers and plants to fill the clock face. Depending on the season, the *Flower Clock* looks different: in spring, summer, autumn and winter. More than just a beautiful landmark to adorn the city, the *Flower Clock* accurately



tells time, which is transmitted by satellite – how else could it be in a country that is known worldwide for precision?

The *Passage Malbuisson* is a small shopping passage and gallery between the old town and Lake Geneva. Since 1962, an impressive miniature musical display entertains visitors and passersby every hour. Designed by Edward Wirth, 42 bronze figures march to the chimes of 16 clocks that play a traditional Genevan song. This creation was inspired by the *Escalade*, a key event in the city's history, when Geneva celebrated victory over the Duke of Savoy's invading troops in 1602.

Watch enthusiasts should pay a visit to the *Patrick Philippe Museum*. Located in an early 20th century building set over four levels, the museum houses the creations of the Geneva-based firm of master watchmakers, founded in 1839. The well-curated museum is the perfect place to learn more about



10



ALSO KNOWN AS THE CITY OF PEACE, GENEVA IS HOME TO THE EUROPEAN HEADQUARTERS OF THE UNITED NATIONS AS WELL AS THE RED CROSS.

the history and process of Swiss watchmaking. Moreover, the Patek Philippe Museum is home to a unique library that is entirely dedicated to horology.

On display in the Antiques Collection are clocks and timepieces, enamels and musical automata, and portrait miniatures from the 16th to the 19th century, illustrating the evolution of horology. The Patek Philippe Collection, from 1839 to the present, showcases watches designed and created by Patek Philippe since its establishment until today – a tribute to almost

180 years of creativity in the production of pocket watches and wristwatches.

While Geneva is famous for its watchmaking industry, the city has much more to offer: also known as the City of Peace, Geneva is home to the European headquarters of the United Nations as well as the Red Cross – and around 20,000 other international organisations.

A global hub for diplomacy and banking, visitors who are tired of “keeping watch” can easily explore other parts and corners of the city – the clock is ticking! ⌚

11 As proof of its status as a center for diplomacy, the European HQ of the United Nations is housed right here in Geneva.

12 Rue Basses, Geneva's most famous shopping district.



12

AD

ALPINE ADVENTURES

The Schilthorn region is a dream come true for fans of winter sports and adrenaline junkies, from steep slopes and downhill runs in Alpine landscapes to following in the footsteps of Agent 007, James Bond.

The Schilthorn, a summit with an altitude of 2970m located in the Bernese Alps, offers uninterrupted panoramic views of the UNESCO World Heritage site, including the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau peaks, the Bernese and Valais Alps, and if the weather holds, even as far as the Black Forest in Germany and Mont Blanc in France. A revolving restaurant invites tourists to take in the spectacular views from the comfort of their seat, while having a light meal or a coffee.

Movie buffs will fondly remember the Schilthorn summit as a film location for a James Bond film, *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*. For a few months in the late 1960s, the revolving restaurant was transformed into Piz Gloria, the headquarters of the movie's villain,

Blofeld. The interactive exhibition, "Bond World", that first opened in 2013, allows visitors to relive the key scenes of the film, including our intrepid spy's memorable escape from assassins down the mountains after uncovering dubious activities in Blofeld's laboratory. Those who are too young to remember that instalment can get their background information and trivia on the secret agent and the movie franchise here – they can even find out if they are skilful enough to become the next James Bond and head for an undercover mission in the simulated chopper, an activity that is as popular with children as it is with adults. The 007 Walk of Fame honours the actors, producers and film crew who were involved in the movie-making process.



01

TEXT KATRIN FIGGE PHOTOS SWISS-CH.COM



MOVIE BUFFS WILL FONDLY REMEMBER THE SCHILTHORN SUMMIT AS A FILM LOCATION FOR ONE OF THE JAMES BOND FILMS, ON HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE.



03

01 Even adventure-seekers need a place to rest: Cue the cosy huts dotted around Müren.

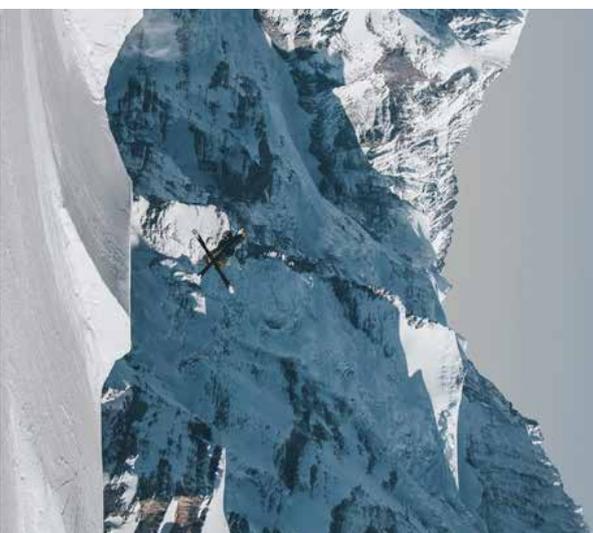
02 The revolving restaurant atop the Schilthorn summit played a major role in an early James Bond film.

03 An efficient transport system enables skiers of all abilities to enjoy both gentle slopes and trickier ones.

To reach Schilthorn, visitors first must travel by cable car from Stechelberg to Gimnethal, past fulminant waterfalls and onwards to the walking-only village of Müren. The village is known for its annual International Inferno Race – during this notorious event, 1,800 participants launch themselves down the mountain.

The first International Inferno Race took place in 1928, when a group of ski-crazy Englishmen dared to tackle the grueling course. It has been altered over the years to maximise the experience for intrepid skiers, yet the International Inferno Race's popularity is unwavering. Earlier this year, the race celebrated its 75th edition. Müren is the highest-altitude ski resort in the area, where snow is guaranteed all year. Around the resort, there are numerous possibilities for runs on gentle slopes for beginners and more tricky ones for the advanced, easily accessible thanks to an efficient transport system. Since the beginning of this year, ski enthusiasts with an appetite for adventure can try out the Direskisima, which is the steepest slope in the Jungfrau ski region: 400m long, 50m wide and

SNOWBOARDERS AND FREESKIERS CAN SHOW OFF THEIR SKILLS AND TRICKS AT THE SKYLINE SNOWPARK, WHERE A NUMBER OF RAILS, BOXES AND KICKERS ENSURE FANTASTIC JUMPS.



04

04 It's easy to see why Mürren is affectionately known as the "cradle of alpine skiing".

05 Apply called the Thrill Walk, a 200m steel and glass bridge in Schilthorn, with sections that require the visitor to walk, climb or crawl through.

06 From picking up the finer points of freeriding to gravity-defying snowboarding, snow-loving visitors can just about do it all in Schilthorn.

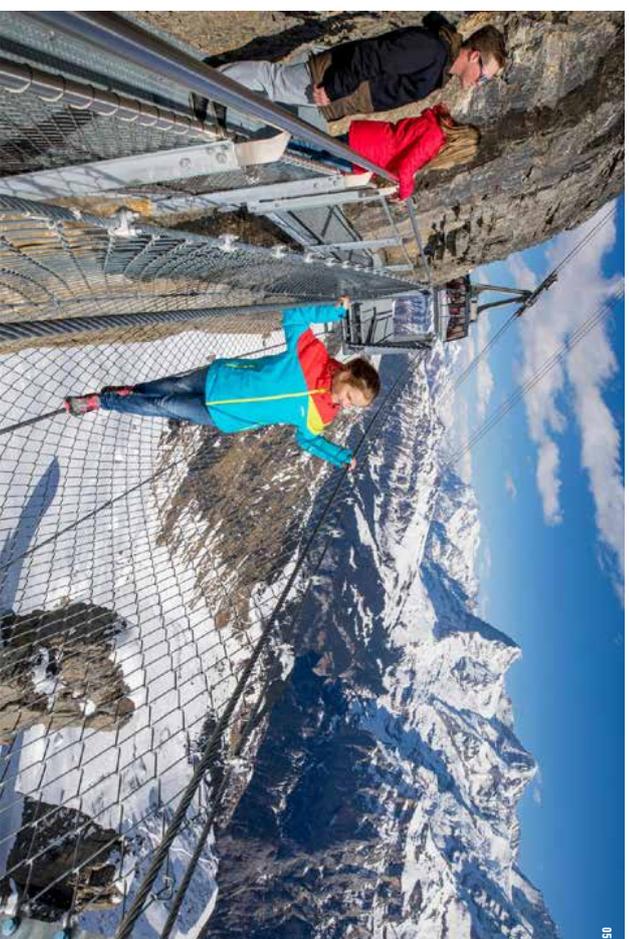
at an 88-degree incline!

From Mürren, visitors on their way to Schilthorn summit take another cable car to Bigg Station before continuing upwards to the summit. Many travellers, however, sjourm on Bigg, as the intermediate cableway station offers a couple of attractions of its own, most notably the Thrill Walk, a 200m-long dramatic steel and glass bridge clinging to the side of the rock in Schilthorn before swinging under the observation deck and ending below Bigg Station. To enhance this heart-stopping experience, architects have included sections in the cliff path where visitors need to walk, climb or crawl through, including a tunnel area above a 250m drop. The Thrill Walk is everything its name promises, and definitely not for the faint-hearted.

The winter adventure in the Schilthorn area doesn't stop here. Snowboarders and freeskiers can show off their skills and tricks at the Skyline Snowpark, where a number of rails, boxes and kickers ensure fantastic jumps. The Avalanche Training Center caters to freeriders: Here, they can get recommendations, updated information about weather conditions in the area, and are equipped with a map to make their freeriding tour as safe and enjoyable as possible. In collaboration with local freerider Sascha Schmid, the Schilthorn area is working on promoting the region as one of the top destinations among freeriders by setting up training sessions and joint appearances.

Extensive winter trails attract hikers to the area, who venture deep into landscape through snow-covered fields and enchanting forests. Meanwhile, fans of sledging can run riot on several sledge routes. One of the most popular is the Apollo sledge run from Schilgrat Station past Gimmeh to Mürren, while the sledge safari is a wide and sunny descent over Schilalp and Gimmeh back to the valley.

More than just a paradise for



05



06

MORE THAN JUST A PARADISE FOR DAREDEVILS, SCHILTHORN IS ALSO A WELCOME OPPORTUNITY FOR FUN FAMILY ACTIVITIES.



07

daredevils, Schilthorn is also a welcome opportunity for fun family activities. Children are especially welcome. Kids under 16 are allowed to ski for free on Saturdays during the winter season, and an additional three complimentary children's day tickets are provided when purchasing a day ticket for an adult. Moreover, partners of Intersport Rent let you borrow children's skiing gear for free.

Sports enthusiasts eager to keep track can register online to get an overview of their personal winter season statistics, which includes distance covered, locations and run times, complemented by a daily summary displayed on a panoramic map. The slope in Mauthöbel even features automatic video cameras that capture the skiers' entire run, giving them the opportunity to analyse their form afterwards. In line with making the best use of modern technology, the Schilthorn Explore App provides further assistance, acting as a personalised travel companion.

Engaging in so many different fun-filled activities is bound to leave tourists hungry – thankfully, there are plenty of options for a hearty meal or light snack in the Schilthorn area. The aforementioned revolving restaurant Piz Gloria is famous for its James Bond 007 breakfast buffet and tasty 007 burger, complete with the Bond to go. The restaurant is also a popular choice for special events and functions, as is the Skyline Take Away on the same level, and Birg Bistro at Big Station. However, the area boasts more traditional slope-side restaurants and cosy huts with spacious terraces as well, where you can either have a proper sit-down meal or – for the overly enthusiastic – make a quick pit stop before doing what you love most: get back into the snow! ❄️

07 Sleep slopes, long downhill runs – it's the stuff of dreams for serious skiers.

08 From children's sleds to free rental of Junior's skiing gear, it's a kid's world in Schilthorn.

09 Opportunities for fun family activities at every turn.



08



09

HOT PURSUITS

As the oldest and most popular resort town in the Bernese Oberland, Interlaken combines picture-perfect scenery and lakeside idyll with endless possibilities for active travellers, from climbing, hiking and hiking to water sports.

TEXT: KATRIN FIGGE PHOTOS: SWISS-CH.COM

11 River rafting on the Aare between Thun and Berne – made more exciting with a DIY raft.

12 Interlaken scores high on vintage points from which to catch its magnificent landscape.

TO GET A BETTER OVERVIEW OF THE REGION, VISITORS SHOULD HEAD TO HARDER KULM, A VIEWPOINT AT 1,321M OVERLOOKING THE TOWNS OF INTERLAKEN AND UNTERSEEN, ACCESSIBLE VIA A FUNICULAR.

The first tourists discovered Interlaken in the 17th century, swept away by the magnificent landscape and its beautiful location between the emerald-coloured Lake Thun and Lake Brienz, surrounded by mountain summits. With the improvement of transportation facilities and the arrival of the railroad, boat services on the lakes and the expressway, Interlaken quickly developed into a major tourist destination in the Bernese Oberland. As composer Felix Mendelssohn once wrote: "If you haven't seen the Interlaken countryside, you haven't seen Switzerland."

To get a better overview of the region, visitors should head to Harder Kulm, a viewpoint at 1,321m overlooking the towns of Interlaken and Unterseen, accessible via a funicular. In addition to enjoying

the view from the stunning Two Lakes Bridge, which is particularly breathtaking during sunset, there are also live folklore shows on Harder Kulm.

The five splendid castles on the shores of Lake Thun could well be a fairy-tale world, bearing silent witness to an eventful past: Here, visitors can again step back in time and take a look at original furnishings and historical documents of past centuries. On the knight's trail, pageboys and valets can learn how to be knights and ladies.

Festivals and other cultural events during summertime attract visitors from all over the world to the area – such as the Greenfield Festival, Interlaken Classics and the Thun Bach Weeks, to name a few. Both Interlaken and Thun feature art museums, highlighting

03 Hang-gliders and paragliders gravitate towards Niederhorn-Breitenberg.

04 Views like these are par for the course in Interlaken.

05 A farmhouse, complete with living exhibits, forms part of the Ballenberg Open-Air Museum.

local artists or those who have been inspired by the breathtaking surroundings of the area. Classics in world literature from Friedrich Schiller to William Shakespeare are regularly brought to life on the region's many stages. When the Swiss celebrate National Day on 1 August, Interlaken shows its best side with a grand parade, paragliders, folklore events and fireworks in the evening over the lakes.

The Interlaken holiday region is steeped in tradition and century-old customs. The sight of herdsmen tending to their cows or the cattle drive down the Alps is as common here as watching craftsmen in the village of Breinz carefully making violins, sharpening knives and carving wood. A visit to remote valleys and chalet villages is like being transported into the past and experiencing real rustic life in Switzerland.

The Ballenberg Open-Air Museum presents the country's past and full diversity on its premises:

Over 100 rural houses and farm buildings from all over Switzerland are scattered across the museum's 66 hectares of land. From magnificent farmhouses to humble workers' quarters, Alpine huts and stalls, barns, store-houses, wash-houses and drying ovens – the museum provides a fascinating glimpse into the everyday life and pastoral culture of the past.

It would be easy to spend your holidays in Interlaken by simply relaxing, but the region is equally renowned for its sporting possibilities. The two lakes are perfect for water sports, from swimming, sailing and windsurfing to scuba-diving, canoeing and



01



02



03



IN AND AROUND INTERLAKEN, HIKERS CAN DISCOVER THE REGION THROUGH AN EXTENSIVE NETWORK OF HIKING TRAILS, PAST GORGEOUS HANGING BRIDGES TOWARDS SUMMITS WITH UNPARALLELED VIEWS.

kyaking, while the rivers in the region offer adventurous rafting and canyoning tours.

The Interlaken Ropes Park is a forest adventure of wooden bridges, tarzan swings and zip lines. The nine different courses vary in difficulty and height, making the park a popular spot for both beginners and the more advanced. Going one step further on the options for adrenalin and thrill seekers, there's plenty of skydiving, bungee and canyon jumps where daredevils plunge into the depths. Niederhorn-Beatenberg, a mere 10km from Interlaken, is considered a paradise for hang-gliders and paragliders.

In and around Interlaken, hikers can discover the region through an extensive network of hiking trails, past gorgeous hanging bridges towards summits with unparalleled views. Grindelwald makes an excellent starting point for hikers, as there are about 300km of walking trails around the village. For a more measured walk, visitors are encouraged to explore the area around Lake Brienz on the Three Waterfalls Trail, where they will come across thundering waterfalls and a number of secluded beaches and bays. This tour is made in three stages - on foot, by boat and public transport.

Every year, the Lake Brienz Run attracts runners from all over the world who join the 38km race around the lake, starting in the small village of Bönigen. The oldest long-distance run in Switzerland celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2016 and is still growing strong. The event also includes a half-marathon, relays, as well as activities for kids and youth, so the whole family can participate and have fun.

06 Don't miss the train ride to Jungfrau, an alpine gem 3,456m will be nothing short of breathtaking.

07 Hikers and bikers have the luxury of stopping for an impressive snack anywhere in Interlaken's extensive network of trails and routes.

Cyclists and bikers are equally fond of the Interlaken region. They can choose from a plethora of routes, from easy to demanding - be it a leisurely ride alongside the lakes or a daring and challenging mountain pass tour. In biking circles, it is said that a ride from Lake Thun over the Gröbe to Beatenberg ranks among the loveliest bike tours in all of Switzerland.

Also situated in the Bernese Alps is the famous Jungfrauoch, a glacier saddle connecting the peaks Jungfrau and Mönch. Since the early 20th century, the Jungfrauoch has been accessible through the Jungfrau Railway. The construction of the railway was a groundbreaking and pioneering project in the development of the Alps and the branchchild of Swiss entrepreneur Adolf Guyer-Zeller, who proposed

to reach the saddle through a tunnel with several stops along the way.

Construction started in 1896, and it was only 12 years later that the first decorated train with tourists travelled up the route of 9.3km. The train into the mountain leaves from Kleine Scheidegg, making its first stop in Eigerwand, where a huge window built into the mountainside lets passengers enjoy the view. This very window was also used in the 1975 Clint Eastwood spy movie, *The Tiger Sanction*, for one of the final scenes.

A second stopoverbook the Bismeer (sea of ice) before the train continues to the Jungfrauoch. The entire journey takes approximately 50 minutes including the stops, and the final destination - Jungfrauoch, at the top of Europe with an altitude of 3,454m - is certainly worth it! 08



OF WINE, HISTORY AND SONG

A destination for all seasons, the Lake Geneva Region teems with culture, heritage and yes, energy.

Glorious though its nature may be, Switzerland's cultural and historic heritage is just as rich and diverse, affording travellers a most fascinating and memorable cultural adventure.

In the country's southwest, the Lake Geneva Region (Canton of Vaud) boasts a particularly abundant array of historic and cultural attractions simply bound to delight and intrigue.

MONTREUX

On the lakes northeastern banks lies Montreux. A charming municipality found within Canton Vaud, Montreux's history stretches back millennia, with evidence pointing to human settlement in at least the late Bronze Age.

Over the years, Montreux has been home to an impressive list of famous residents and celebrities, including musicians David Bowie and Freddie Mercury,

and playwright Noel Coward to name but a few. Indeed, Freddie Mercury bought a recording studio within the Montreux casino where Queen recorded a handful of their greatest albums. Today Queen fans can tour this studio, which has since been rebranded as the Queen Studio Experience. Furthermore, because of Mercury's deep connection to the place, a massive 3-metre Freddie Mercury statue now stands in Montreux, gazing over the lake below, an act that Mercury himself no doubt enjoyed on countless occasions.

Montreux is also home to some notable castles, the most stunning of which is the lakeside Chillon Castle, an iconic fortress that resembles something straight out of a fairy tale. Hugging the lakeshore beneath a snow-capped backdrop, Chillon is a true medieval marvel, making it a

photographer's dream subject. It's frequently cited as being the most visited Swiss historical monument.

While the Chillon Castle may be the region's most visited cultural monument, Montreux is in fact home to several other sites of National Swiss Significance. Chaplin's World in Vevey is an

homage to the late, great Charlie Chaplin who brought laughter and joy to millions as the lovable tramp. Take a walk through the fully furnished mansion and view his bedroom, living areas and a newly-added wing filled with entire Hollywood scenes from his famous movies.

Also attracting hordes of visitors to Montreux is the annual world-famous jazz festival. This year's instalment saw a diverse musical spirit – with jazz musicians rubbing shoulders with artists from rock, folk, hip-hop and electro genres.

TEXT SAUL LIPCHIK PHOTOS SWISS-CH.COM

Montreux is home to stunning structures, including the iconic Chillon Castle.

LAVAUX UNESCO HERITAGE REGION

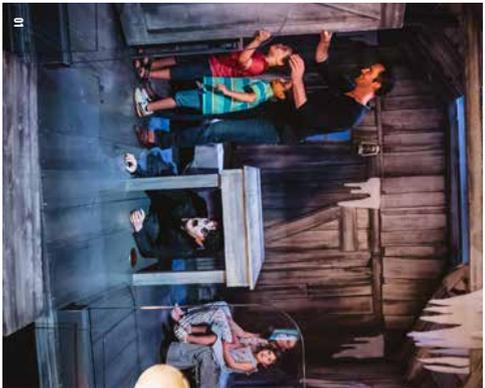
Perched along the northern section of Lake Geneva is the Lavaux, a wine-producing region so significant to Switzerland's historic and cultural legacy that in 2007 it was granted UNESCO World Heritage Status. Characterised by over 800 hectares of spectacular terraced vineyards, the Lavaux is an absolute must on any Swiss travel itinerary, especially for wine lovers and history aficionados.

The famous viticultural terraces that are the Lavaux's greatest attraction and claim to fame can be traced back to the 11th century; although there's firm evidence to suggest there was wine production here as far back as the Roman era. What makes the Lavaux so special, besides its almost magical appearance, is that it superbly demonstrates the marvellous results of a multi-generational synergy between man and nature. After century upon century of local oenophiles working the land, Lavaux has come to produce some of the world's finest vino. In fact, the quality of the Lavaux grapes is so supreme that the region has garnered three appellations, a perfectly appetising example of which would be the Calamin Grand Cru.

Ambling through this most picturesque wine-producing region, one immediately notices the many informative signs directing tourists and describing Lavaux's history and culture. Make sure to stop every now and then as you stroll through the vineyards, not only to enjoy Lavaux's phenomenal wine, but also to appreciate the stunning lake and mountain views afforded by the terraces.

GLACIER 3000

At an altitude of 3,000m, Glacier 3000 is a unique destination unto itself with myriad highlights



01



02



03

for both active and laidback travellers. Husky rides, an alpine rollercoaster, dome hike, and fun park call out to the sporty visitor while those in search of more serene pursuits can soak in the panoramic viewpoint, do a leisurely Peak Walk, catch a ride on the snow bus or down a hot cocoa at the Restaurant Botta.

LAUSANNE, OLYMPIC CAPITAL

Adjacent to the Lavaux is the Vaudois capital and largest city, Lausanne, a true Swiss cultural mecca. Steeped in rich history, boasting some of the world's finest dining establishments and home to over 40 heritage sites of

national Swiss significance, the lakeside city has much to offer visitors, especially from a cultural perspective.

The vast collection of museums and art galleries located in and around Lausanne perfectly illustrate this. Some of her most fascinating museum offerings include the Musée de l'Élysée, a museum dedicated to the art of photography and the Museum of Contemporary Design and Applied Arts.

However, due to the city's being home to the IOC, International Olympic Committee, one of her most famous and popular museums is the Olympic Museum.

There's much humour and playfulness in Chaplin's World - in tribute to the comedic genius of Charlie Chaplin.

The Olympic Museum, one of the world's greatest collections of Olympic memorabilia.

The Peak Walk at Glacier 3000, where spectacular sights are de rigueur.

Founded in 1993, the Olympic Museum houses the world's greatest collection of artefacts, memorabilia and exhibits (both permanent and temporary) related to the Olympic Games. It is in fact Lausanne's most visited museum complex, attracting some 250,000 visitors annually.

The museum's permanent exhibition covers three primary themes, namely Olympic World (all about the history of the ancient games and their 19th Century rebirth), Olympic Games (all about the sports that make up the games) and Olympic Spirit (all about the unity-promoting character of the games). Throughout the

complex are various high-tech and interactive displays to entertain and delight museum-goers.

In addition to its exhibits, the Olympic Park that surrounds the precinct is of matching appeal. The park's prime position, sandwiched between the museum and Lake Geneva herself, presents an unquestionably scenic setting for a post-museum meander. Walking through her manicured lawns, one is immediately impressed by the many sculptures, statues and art pieces dotted throughout the park. Of the most recognisable pieces, Niki de Saint Phalle's vibrant and motive Les Footballeurs is a most eye-catching example. 

LITTLE-KNOWN FACTS ABOUT THE REGION

- Freddie Mercury often said of his adopted hometown of Montreux, "If you want peace of mind, come to Montreux."
- Since the inaugural Montreux Jazz Festival, over 10,000 jazz compositions over 5,000 hours of concert recordings have been made and are currently stored at the Art'Lab centre at Lausanne's EPFL, Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne.
- One of the factors contributing to the overwhelming success of the Lavaux grapes and wine is the unique microclimate locals affectionately refer to as the "three sun" effect. This refers to the specific layout and orientation of the terraced vineyards, which effectively result in the vines being warmed by the sun's rays thrice. Firstly, by the sunshine itself, then by the rays that reflect off the lake's surface, and finally by the warmth emanating from the stone walls in the terrace's stone walls. This extraordinary combination of factors has moreover caused the region to enjoy a far milder winter climate.
- Lausanne, and indeed the entire Canton of Vaud, is a gastronomic hub of the region. Firing dining is a big deal here, with a total of 12 restaurants in the region having garnered a combined 17 Michelin stars.
- The Cathedral in Lausanne is considered to be one of Europe's greatest examples of Gothic architecture.

Visit www.lake-geneva-region.ch for more information.

EAST OF EDEN

Beyond its uber-cool cities, the Switzerland of your imagination runs riot, the farther east you travel.



01 St Gallen's baroque library contains an awe-inspiring 170,000 books.

02 The abbey district of St Gallen, with its baroque cathedral.

"Tud! -Ay- Wee- -Hooooo!" It's the silent yodel I make as my St Gallen-bound train departs from Zürich Hauptbahnhof and it soon becomes apparent the Switzerland of my storybooks, cartoons and tea towels is alive in the east. Pantomime cows pose with oversized bronze bells. Dairy farmers wobble across Alpine pastures. Tobblerone-shaped spikes strike towards the sky in the midday sun. It's as pleasing a sight as any, and by the time I reach my destination, I know I'm heading in the right direction.

To ride the trails in Switzerland is to see one of the world's most beautiful countries from the most efficient of angles. And today, I'm on the hunt for the Switzerland that's been printed in my imagination since I was a child.

Not the Bern. Basel or Geneva many people come to see. I want the Heidi version. The one with the bell-jangling heifers, edelweiss flowers and early-morning rises to hike meadows and hills. I have turned my back on Zurich's Dadaist art and Montreux's experimental jazz. And I'm skipping the watches, the chocolate and the Matterhorn.

too. I'm looking for something more abstract, a notion of Swissness that we all know exists, but find harder to pin down. I like to call it a head full of rolling grassland and big skies.

Leaving the pretzel sellers and sausage grillers of the station behind, one hour later I arrive in St Gallen, the pealing bells of the city's UNESCO World Heritage Abbey welcoming my carriage with a veritable Alpine symphony. It sends pigeons skyward, and soon I am ogling at the foot of the medieval complex's bell-towered monastery, learning of its rich traditions. Inside, silence falls and I nose around its rococo interior, once home to Benedictine monks, then stop dead in my tracks at its baroque library, which contains a head-spinning 170,000 books. Some are more than 1,000 years old. Others, handwritten from the Middle Ages, are preserved for the ages. It is a wonder, and even after walking round it all afternoon, it still leaves me speechless. Everything is as if the monks have just left.

While St Gallen is known for the abbey's books and bells, it's



TEXT MIKE MAGEHEIMAN PHOTOS SWISS-CHIC.COM

THE ROLLING GRASSES, THE CRAGGY PEAKS, THE JINGLE-BUSTING JANGLE COWS, THE LUNG-BUSTING VIEWS, THE LIQUID REFRESHMENT.

also known for textiles. The city remains a honeypot for high-quality linen and cotton garments, with the likes of Chanel, Christian Dior and Giorgio Armani still working hand-in-hand with the city's embroidery and lace producers. It's an unequivocal measure of the city's deeply-rooted love of all things timeless.

While few reminders of the textile industry remain, one family still going strong is clothing giant Akris. In business since 1922, it takes an almost architectural approach to its uncomplicated designs, creating haute couture that's been described as "spectacularly unspectacular". More imagination-tinging designs can be seen on a visit to the Appenzel Folklore Museum in nearby Stein and in the city's Textile Museum on Vadnanstrasse. The next day, I hop onto a train winding south into the depths of Appenzel Aemterboden on a transition from beautiful motifs to awe-inspiring outlines.

The farther south I travel, the more apparent it is that Appenzellers are happy with their lot. Particularly so when hiking in the Alps, an elevated cradle of rock and snow that counts as one of the most storied ranges in the Alps. Here, cultural roots run as deep as the valleys.

I decide to join them on the trail the next day, and by the afternoon I'm standing beside the vermilion-coloured Stealpssee Lake, peering up at the spectacular Berggasthaus Aeschler-Wildkirchli, an almost impossibly-beautiful medieval hut that clings to the side of an abrupt face. It's a

mirror image of what I've been searching for.

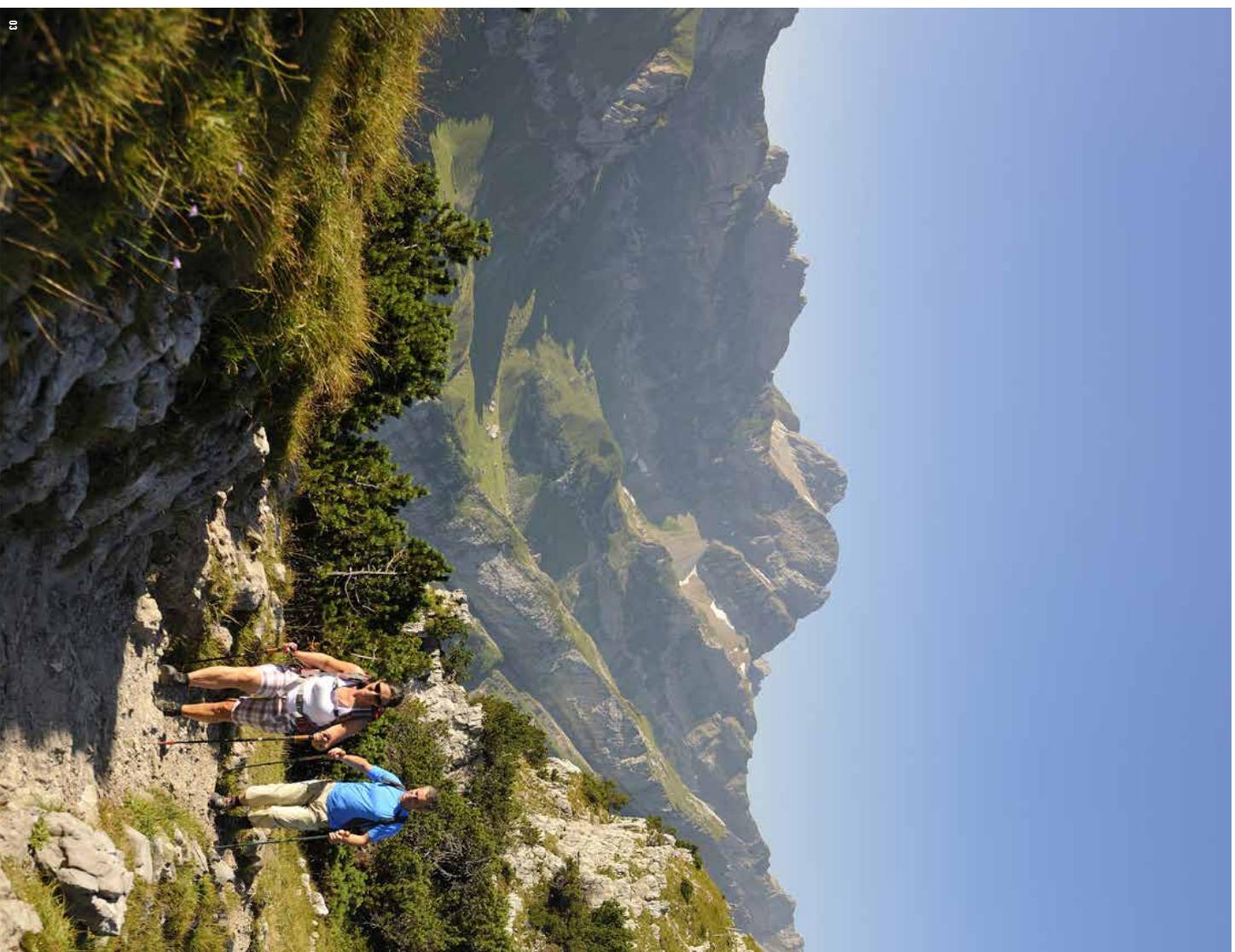
Refuges like the Aeschler, as it's known, with interiors unchanged since the last century, still serve simple, no-frills Swiss cuisine. There is rackete, boiled pork sausage, potato salad, and grilled bratwurst bathed in sweet apple mousse – all delicious heart-cloggers on a plate. Other options include abundant varieties of Appenzeler beer brewed in the valley below – pale Quodlfrisch is a particular favourite.

While the food is a tangible culinary heritage, an ode to the farmers who inhabit the mountains in summer, it is the views and the huts themselves that drive folk deeper into the mountains. So up, up, up! go, fuelled by bratwurst and beer to one last ridge, to arrive at the door of the Berggasthaus Schaller, within breathing distance of the 2,502m summit of Santis. Inside, I sit at a wooden table, beneath walls hung with giant floral-engraved cowbells and sepia prints of extraordinary Alpine endeavours, and drink a cold beer. It's hard not to be swept up by the infectious nostalgia of it all.

This is the Switzerland I have been looking for. The rolling grasses, the craggy peaks, the jingle-jangle cows, the long lunches, the lung-busting views, the liquid refreshment.

As I turn in for the night, I know this small pocket of Switzerland will echo in my ears and eyes long after I am gone. Really, it's enough to make me want to yodel. ☺

H Hiking in Appenzel, backpacked by the Saentis Mountain.



For more information, visit www.appenzel.ch or www.myswitzerland.com

WHISKY, ON THE ROCKS

In the foothills of Appenzel, the air is heavy with whisky. It lingers across the river from the painted houses on the square to where the air is thin, high above the mountains. In 1886, Brauerel Locher, a family-run brewery and distillery that's been in business since 1886. Of late, it's become a pioneer of Swiss whisky, using soft spring water gushing from the mountains and barley grown at high altitude to formulate an unlikely, if exquisite, single malt.

The story goes that after the bar grain was lifted by Swiss authorities, master brewer Karl Locher started to make whisky in beer casks seeped in the brewery's traditions. The result was a spirit that's won dozens of awards, putting Swiss whisky in the same breath as Scotch.

For connoisseurs, the Brauerel Locher so dubbed the 27-step mountain hut, four with each stop, it was complicated to set up, but ultimately saw a series of diversely-aged casks of Santis Malt transported uphill from Brauerel Locher to isolated farmsteads and ridge-hugging refuges. The result is an unlikely marriage of Alsatian and alcohol if ever there was one. Still, it's proving more popular than anticipated. To date, 45,000 bottles have been sold along the route (at US\$21 a pop) and the interest from an increasing number of hikers has seen the trek extended to October next year.

For more information, visit <http://www.santismalt.com/en/whisky trek.html>