

# TRAVEL+ LEISURE

SOUTHEAST ASIA

FEBRUARY 2015

## SWITZERLAND 2015

YEARN TO BE IN BERN

IF THERE'S  
SNOW, YOU  
MUST GO

INTERLAKEN,  
THE OUTDOOR  
PLAYGROUND

MADE IN ZURICH  
THE CITY'S STYLISH  
DESIGN SENSE



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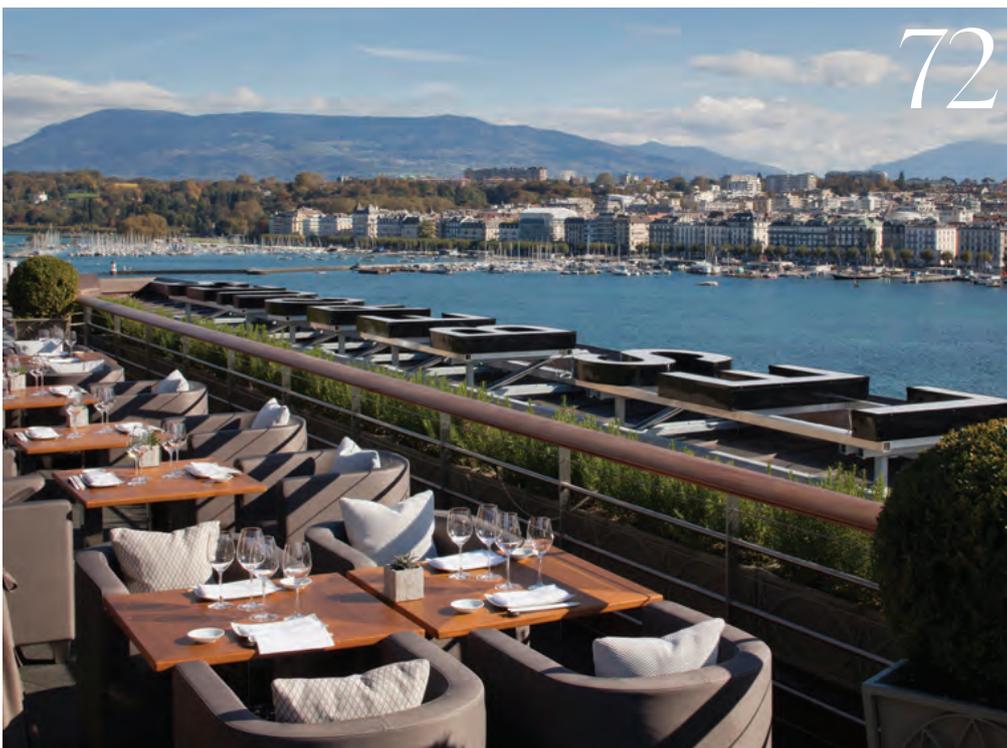
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Photographed by  
Lauryn Ishak.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: LAURYN ISHAK; COURTESY OF CHEDI ANDERMATT; LAURYN ISHAK; COURTESY OF FOUR SEASONS GENEVA; LAURYN ISHAK



## Don't forget Ticino

Where else in the world can you take in sun, snow and palm trees? This often-overlooked region in south, central Switzerland offers an Italian flair while still being distinctly Swiss. For those in the know, it is well worth exploring for a day, a week, or even your entire vacation. Sip espressos in the sun and enjoy downhill ski runs with sweeping views of Lakes Maggiore and Lugano during the winter. The region's nearby valleys are buried deep in snow, which slows life down to a manageable pace. Come summer, Ticino's mix of nature and culture, mountains and plains, the past and the future is on display at its fullest. Balmy chestnut forests give way at higher elevations to the ice and rock of the mountains, while subtropical gardens lure locals and visitors alike at the lower elevations. Of the man-made attractions, piazzas and churches compete for your attention with those Alps and the sweep of valleys that twist down to pristine lakes. Ticino: it should definitely be on your itinerary.

## #Switzerlandbyrail

Visiting the country by train is one route to a laid-back vacation.

[instagram.com/travelandleisureasia](https://www.instagram.com/travelandleisureasia)



1. **Glacier Express** A 7.5-hour journey from Engadine to the Matterhorn
2. **Palm Express** A great way to see the winding roads of Ticino
3. **Grand Train Tour** One ticket takes in Zurich, St. Gallen, Lucerne and many more stops

For more information on Swiss train journeys or about a memorable vacation in Ticino, please visit [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com)

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# Radar

Rhaetian Railway driving over Solis Viaduct, Solis-

News. Finds. Opinions. Obsessions.

## OBSESSION

# A TICKET TO RIDE

Diana Hubbell soaks in Switzerland's impossibly photogenic countryside on a winding rail journey past lush meadows and snow-capped peaks.

Whoever came up with the old "It's about the journey, not the destination" must have been talking about a train trip. As much as we love planes for their efficiency and cruises for their over-the-top extravagance, there really is no substitute for the romance of a cross-country rail journey. And no one, absolutely no one, has combined that vaguely nostalgic allure with contemporary convenience better than the Swiss. All of the engines, from the vintage

cogwheel trains that scale the heights of the Bernese Alps to the eco-friendly electric street trams of Geneva run with—dare we say it?—watch-like precision. The 240-kilometer **Rhaetian Railway** ([rhb.ch](http://rhb.ch)) from Thusis, Switzerland to Tirano, Italy, even boasts UNESCO World Heritage status. It's a route most tourists ignore, which is a shame, since there are few sights more poetic than these fire engine-red cars whistling along limestone cliffs and over 383 bridges.

Equally worthy of admiration is the **GoldenPass Line** ([goldenpass.ch](http://goldenpass.ch)), a fleet of gorgeously appointed trains that traverse some of the country's most scenic spots. These rails whisk passengers from Interlaken's peaks to Montreux's vineyards and beyond. For a day trip, hop aboard the whimsically named Chocolate or Cheese lines for a guided tour focusing on Switzerland's most famous culinary exports. The Panoramic Trains, with their gigantic glass

panels along the walls and ceilings, are the visual equivalent of a high-definition IMAX screen. The show is best enjoyed with the properly buttery pain au chocolat and cappuccinos—or, for the decadent, flutes of champagne—offered on board. For sheer retro glamour though, it's hard to top the line's Classic Trains. Lauren Bacall or Ingrid Bergman would look right at home in these 1930's Belle Epoque-style engines. With dark wood, velvety upholstery and



It may be the capital of a country famed for its efficiency, punctuality and enviable work ethic, but Bern is all about laid-back charm. In the warmer months, its archedways hide covert bookparties, while localisdon swimsuits and head to the city center's pristine river for a dip.

**Because the past is alive and well and literally everywhere.**

History is all but inescapable in this gracefully aging city. The entire downtown, a twisting labyrinth of cobblestone alleys, was declared a UNESCO World

## WHY GO BEAUTIFUL BERN

Often overlooked in favor of Switzerland's bigger metropolises, this culturally rich center deserves to be on every traveler's hit list. Here are four reasons why.  
By Diana Hubbell



Clockwise from above: Sunset in Bern from the Kornhausbrücke; Patrons enjoying the sun at Adriano's Kaffeebörsterei; A bartender at Kornhauskeller making a drink



**Because the coffee culture is infectious.**

Coffee breaks in Bern are long, lazy and frequent, and with cafes this good, it's easy to see why. Across the square from one another, **Adriano's** (*Theaterplatz 2: 41-31/318-8831; adrianos.ch; coffee for two CHF10*) and **Lorenzini** (*Hofeigasse 10-11-31/318-5067; lorenzini.ch; coffee for two CHF10*), both Italian owned and run, are in

fierce competition for the distinction of the city's best espresso. The latter also has an extensive food menu, while the former's single origin brews with a flaw less crema are the stuff of java junkie dreams. Meanwhile, the modern **Kaffee Montag** (*Gerechtigkeitsgasse 27-41-31/31-307; kaffee montag.ch; coffee for two CHF8*) has homemade desserts and, curiously, a glass-floored bathroom that gives

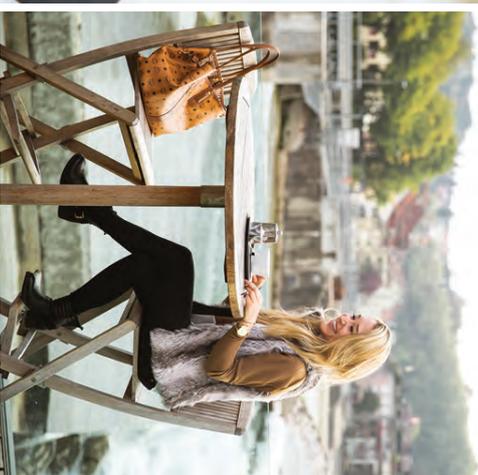
you a view of the city's old network of underground pipes. For a little history with your latte, slip into **Kaffee Einstein** (*Kornhausgasse 49-41-31/312-2828*;

*einstein-kaffee.ch; coffee for two CHF9*). Once the address where a certain German scribbled down his famous E=mc<sup>2</sup>, it's now a magnet for local hipsters.

**Because you might just have the best Wiener Schnitzel—or meal—of your life. At Jack's**

**Braserie** (*Bahnhofplatz 11; 41-31/326-8080; schweizert Hof.bern.ch; dinner for two CHF40*), a bastion of Old World grandeur resplendent in gleaming wood and brass, contemporary entrees and classics are treated with equal reverence. A pink-craze venison entrée cele with braised black salisbury arrives beaded in truffle jus; a duck breast confit in cacao butter; and frothy pumpkin soup is poured, tabside, from a miniature cauldron over a still life of garbanos. Best of all,

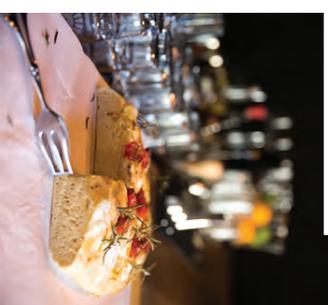
though is the Platonic ideal of the Wiener Schnitzel: a friskie-size piece of tender veal, gressless, crisp and finer than any you've ever had. For a lighter bite, head to



Enjoying the view and a cup of tea at Restaurant Schwellemnatteli; Pippo a la Gallega at Bar Volver; left. Below: Homemade Clabatta at Bar Volver.

**Schwellemnatteli** (*Dalmaziquai 11; 41-31/350-5006; schwellemnatteli.ch; dinner for two CHF100*), a gorgeous river-terrace restaurant where the city's beautiful people sip Aperol spritzes and nibble on Mediterranean fare.

**Because there's more nightlife in these historic halls than you might guess.** Make no mistake: Bern is a living, breathing city, not a museum. Start your bar crawl through these ancient streets at the funky **Tredipercento Wein Keller** (*Rathausgasse 25; 41-31/3118031; tredipercento.ch; drinks for two CHF28*), where there's only one menu of rotating small plates to go with the spritzing wine list. Your next stop is **Kornhauskeller** (*Kornhausplatz 8; 41-31/327-7272; bindela.ch/de/kornhauskeller.html; drinks for two CHF40*). Once the city's signatory, this underground haven with its high, vaulted ceilings and baroque paintings now has an excellent selection of whiskeys and ambiance to spare. Finally, end with the inventive tapas—think elderflower-pear gnocchi—with sage—and a custom-tized nightcap at trendy **Volver** (*Rathausplatz 8; 41-31/312-0404; bornvolver.ch; drinks for two CHF30*).



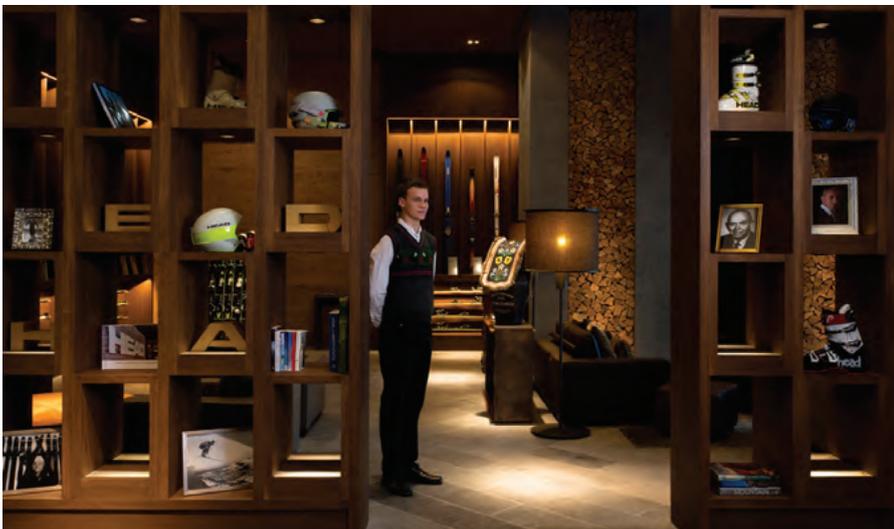
**Because there are contemporary works of art just as gawk-worthy as the ancient ones.** Located on the outskirts of town, past the family of bears the Bernese still keeps as local mascots, the impressive **Zentrum Paul Klee** shows off an impressive collection of more than 4,000 works of art by its namesake artist. Worth keeping in mind is that the undulating 1,750-square-meter facility also plays host to a variety of theater and musical performances throughout the year, as well as rotating exhibitions by other contemporary artists. **Zentrum Paul Klee Monument im Fruchthaus 3; 41-31/359-0106; zpk1.org** +

**SPOTLIGHT**

# WINTER WONDERLAND

A luxe new resort has plucked the low-key chalet town of Andermatt from obscurity and put it squarely on the map.

By Diana Hubbell



For years, the plush resort towns of Verbier and St. Moritz lured Europe's glitterati with their flashy après-ski parties, while tiny Andermatt drew skiers looking to steer clear of the limelight. Considering its ample dusting of fresh powder and idyllic setting, it's a wonder that it stayed a secret for so long. With the December 2013 arrival of a serious luxury resort, the word was officially out. Thanks to Japanese SPIN Design Studio **The Chedi Andermatt**, is a study in understated opulence, imbuing the once sleepy spot with a touch of glamour while melting harmoniously into the area's quiet charm. The place has all the elements of your dream chalet—more than 200 fireplaces, wood panelling, fur, leather, imported Belgian slate and huge terraces overlooking alpine vistas—with the added bonus of cutting-edge amenities like iPad controls in each room, plus a 2,400-square-meter spa. With its location cradled between the Oberalp, St. Gotthard and Furka mountain passes, it also offers unparalleled access to those snowy slopes, plus personal “ski butlers” dressed in impeccably stylish Nordic sweaters to lend a hand. With sleek touches like that, it's only a matter of time before the A-listers start flocking. *The Chedi Andermatt*; Gotthardstrasse 4, 6490 Andermatt; 41-41/888-7488; ghmhotels.com; doubles from CHF700. +

**From top:** Hotel overview xxxxxx; Ski living room xxxxxx xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.

COURTESY OF THE CHEDI-ANDERMATT (2)

WEEKENDER

## RICH LANDS

The lush terroir surrounding Lake Geneva is home to rolling vineyards, historic towns and enough Michelin stars to light up the night's sky. Diana Hubbell sets off for a glorious weekend of eating.



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**W**ith his puffed, rosy cheeks and rotund figure, Domenico Boy looks every bit like the tea-totaling friar of so many medieval tales. Yet, the man knows his wine. He's leading me through what could loosely be called a

tasting, although I've never in my life been to one wasso generous or so personal. As the afternoon winds on, Domenico has several tables in stitches telling stories from the region's past, gesturing broadly to the sweeping panorama of glacial valley slopes and Lake Geneva's placid waters.

The wines here aged steps from my table in 50-year-old oak barrels, each hand-painted with a whimsical set of caricatures by Domenico's grandfather Maurice. Although diverse, they all come from grapes that grow on these vertiginous lands. Thanks to the ancient blocks of ice that once carved this region, the 10,000-plus terraces spread across 14 kilometers between Montreux and Vevey have eight distinct terroirs. Two identical chasselas vines growing 20 meters apart can produce two different wines.

Welcome to Lavaux, a UNESCO World Heritage cultural landscape and Switzerland's second biggest wine-producing region, a land that's been growing grapes since monks first tamed it in the 11th century. The area's spectacular scenery has made it a preferred destination for the global elite for decades. With verdant terraced inclines, bedecked cottages, and that dreamy vision of the Alps in the distance, it's easy to see why. Writers including Voltaire and Tolstoy came here to seek inspiration; composers Tchaikovsky and Stravinsky set up residence; and A-listers from Audrey Hepburn to Coco Chanel have owned houses here.

Me? I'm just here for the food. Oh, and the wine, of course. People around here like to say that Lake Geneva's vineyards flourish in the heat of three suns: the direct sunlight and its reflections off of the lake waters and stone terraces. Practically everyone here is or knows someone involved in winemaking and the way of life is still as tethered to growing cycles as it was three generations ago. Despite the fact that vines from more than 200 independent growers cover just about every piece of land, most of the wine never travels more than a few kilometers down the road. The vertical terrain that renders the vitages so varied also makes industrial farming and large yields impossible.

Not that anyone here seems to mind. Each year's crop is just more to share with friends, family and whoever else happens to be passing through. Lausanne is the urban equivalent of an iceberg: three- or four-story restaurants, bars and shopping centers hunk below the surface, leaving the hilly, cobblestone alleys, sandstone buildings and contemporary art installations above undisturbed. A quick stroll through these picturesque streets on a Saturday morning reveals that Lavaux is just as passionate about its food as its wine. As the sun rises, vendors crowd the streets hawking autumn's finest. There are fat figs, plump chestnuts, interlocking curves of Hokkaido pumpkins and a whole rainbow of the season's final heirloom tomatoes. It's a farmers' market plucked straight from Alice Waters' imagination.

### STAY

**Lausanne Palace & Spa**  
Rue du Grand-Chêne 7,  
1003 Lausanne;  
41-21/331-3131;  
lausanne-palace.com;  
doubles from CHFxxx.

**Grand Hotel du Lac**  
Rue d'Italie 1, 1800 Vevey;  
41-21/925-0606;  
hoteldulac-vevey.ch;  
doubles from CHFxxx.

**EAT + DRINK**  
The Côté Jardin Rue du Grand-Chêne 7, 1003 Lausanne; 41-21/331-3131; lausanne-palace.com; dinner for two CHF180.

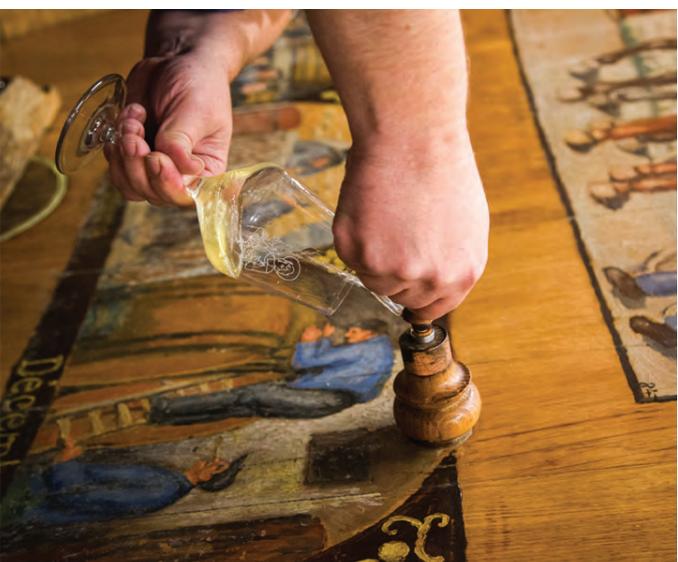
La Pemme de Pin The placeais may be paper, but the food is as good today as it was when Winston Churchill used to frequent the place. Rue Cité Dernière 11-13, 1005 Lausanne; 41-21/323-4656; lapemmedepin.ch; dinner for two CHF160.

**Auberge de l'Onde**  
Centre du Village, Chemin Neuf, 1071 Sant-Saphorin; 41-21/925-4900; onde.ch; dinner for two CHFxxx.

**La Veranda Rue d'Italie 1**, 1800 Vevey; 41-21/925-0606; hoteldulac-vevey.ch; dinner for two CHF180.

**Domaine Bovvy** Rue du Bourg de Pail 15, 1071 Chevannes; 41-21/946-5125; domainebovy.ch.

**Lavaux Vinorama** Highly informative showcase of more than 260 wines from the region's vineyards, 20 of which are always available for tastings. Route du lac 2, 1071 Rivaz; 41-21/946-3131.



Those same perfect ingredients appear later in my lunch at Auberge de l'Onde, an old favorite of Charlie Chaplin's, where I sample a porcini risotto wrapped in raw-cured ham. They no doubt have something to do with my dinner at Le Côté Jardin, where the plank-grilled seabass rests on a bed of locally foraged chanterelles and fried zucchini blossoms so light they practically levitate.

The restaurants in this speck of land boast a collective 19 Michelin stars and 1,434 points in the Gault & Millau guides, all from chefs striving to find ever more ingenious ways to use the local embarrassment of culinary riches. All that competition means that Small wonder then that that I still think wistfully

**Clockwise from right:** Shopping and dining are still central at Zurich's airport; take a tour of the facility with your kids; there's space for quiet time.



**AIRPORTS**

# LINGER LONGER

Long-touted as a playground of brand names and duty-free, Zurich Airport also has lots of fun for the smallest jetsetters. *By Jeninne Lee-St. John*

If you're anything like me, you want to spend as little time in the airport as possible. Check-in, security, departure, done with minutes to spare. The real destination awaits, right? Well, in line with the airport-as-destination trend sweeping the flight map, Flughafen Zurich is making it their mission to give everyone a reason to linger a little longer. Naturally, there's great shopping (Tiffany; Gucci; high-end department store Globus), but kids couldn't care less about brand names. Luckily, here, even the antsy-prone, hardest-to-entertain frequent fliers have a few places to frolic.

Take them to Observation Deck B, the world's first open-air airport walkway that lets you look down in the cockpits of planes at their gates. They'll be engrossed in the "airportsopes"—multimedia binoculars that display fun facts about the airport. There's a mini-airport where these jetsetters can

playact the lives of pilots, or, for more structured edutainment, fill out the pages of a coloring book based on the play-stations they complete. Got 90 minutes to spare? Take a bus tour of the entire airport, hitting up hangars, tunnels, the fire station and even the runway intersection.

Or, if you're in departures areas A or E, just bring them to the vibrant playrooms, free for all, that are stocked with toys, PlayStations, foosball tables and arts-and-crafts-making stations. Multilingual professional child-care-givers preside over the fun. So mommy and daddy might be forgiven for sneaking off to Center Bar to partake of Caviar House & Prunier seafood delights and toast to their kid-savvy travel planning. *zurich-airport.com; Observation Deck B admission CHF5 for adults, CHF2 for kids aged 10-16 CHF2; Guided Bus Tours CHF8 for adults, CHF4 for kids 6-16. +*

**SPAS**

# SOOTHING SWISS WATERS

Don't let its industrious and efficient reputation fool you. Relaxing in this country is a serious business indeed. By Jeninne Lee-St. John and Diana Hubbell



L+P spa terrace.

With bubbling natural springs, pristine mountain air and the prettiest surroundings you ever did see, Switzerland is the perfect place for a healing retreat. There's no need to head for the countryside to find that sense of serenity. These three urban spas offer a little soothing something for everyone.

**Thermalbad & Spa, Zurich**  
 Bear with us. We are about to suggest you take the water cure at an Irish-Roman bath

in Switzerland. We know it sounds continent-oriented complicated, but spa tourism is an old tradition, with healers passing techniques among themselves across borders. Back in the middle of the 19th century, Dr. Richard Barter of County Cork became enamored of the water cure and built a bathhouse near Blarney, which tweaked the dry-air model of ancient Rome to incorporate flues pumping heated air under the floors and within the walls.

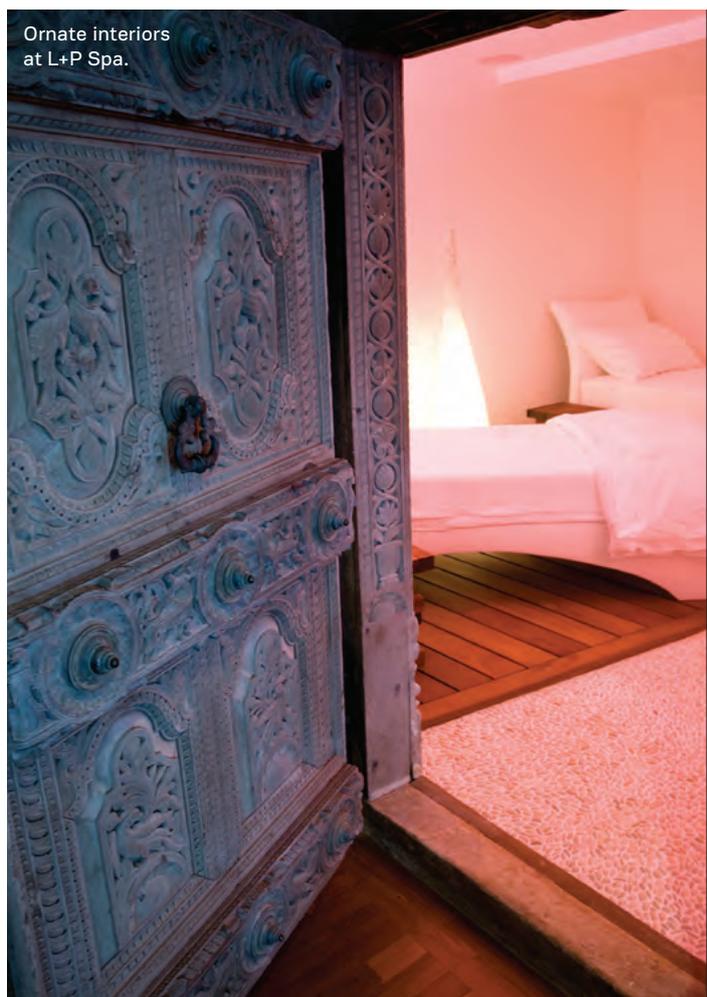
Combine Dr. Barter's patented space with the multi-stage process of warming the body, soaping it down, applying massage and then cooling, and you get the Irish-Roman bath. Plop it all into a renovated brewery in the middle of Zurich, and you get a stunning, new-world-meets-old haven. **The Thermalbad & Spa** takes you from the aged depths of the b2 boutique hotel to its modern heights. The vaulted-ceilinged grottoes with three giant connected

bathing barrels filled with water from the city's subterranean Aquis Spring evoke the space's original use: it was where Hurlimann filled their barrels with beer as far back as 150 years ago. Down in these depths is where you also may indulge in your 10-step Irish-Roman rinse-down. But be sure to complete the circuit in the afternoon, because you'll want to be up in the rooftop pool by dusk. Alternating among the various jets and sprays in a bubbling →

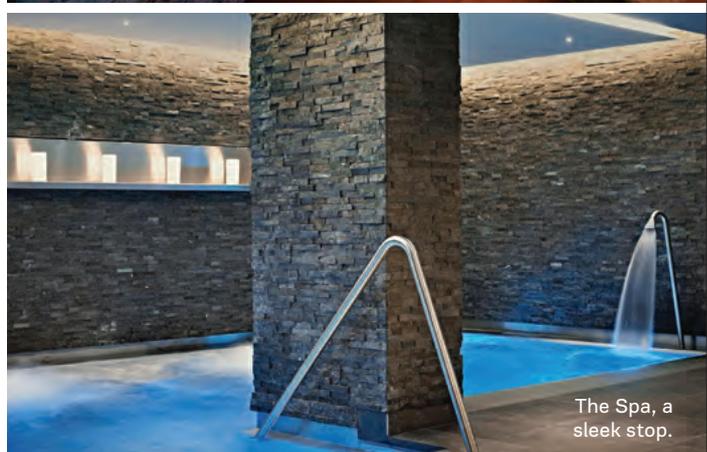
COURTESY OF L+P SPA



Enjoying the waters at Thermalbad.



Ornate interiors at L+P Spa.



The Spa, a sleek stop.

cauldron of ahhh as the sun sets over the parklands and the roofs of Zurich is the only way we ever want to round out our day. [thermalbad-zeurich.ch](http://thermalbad-zeurich.ch); baths admission from CHF34, Irish-Roman ritual CHF58.

### CBE Concept Spa, Lausanne

With its pristine backdrop of snowcapped mountains and rolling vineyards, it's no wonder that Lausanne long has been a healing getaway of choice. For nearly a century, this is where the world's well-to-do have gone for some much-needed R&R. More than a dozen health clinics, rehabilitation facilities and wellness centers dot the surrounding area.

That doesn't mean that you should wait until it's time for a check-up to take advantage of this region's therapeutic benefits though. Instead, we'd suggest you check-in to the Ayurvedic-oriented **CBE Concept Spa** to ease all that stress away. This sprawling 2,100-meter-oasis in the elegant Lausanne Palace & Spa is a luxurious cocoon even more serene than its surroundings. You could easily idle the days away here just drifting between the terrace overlooking Lake Geneva, the indoor heated pool, Jacuzzi, therapeutic

baths and multiple varieties of saunas. Thanks to the Yogi Booster café, with its virtuous selection of organic smoothies, juices and veg-heavy dishes—all developed with the help of the spa's in-house naturopath, of course—you might be tempted never to leave. While there, round out your rejuvenation with a detoxifying Abhyanga treatment, where copious amounts of herb-infused oils are drizzled and kneaded all over the body. Just what the doctor ordered. [lausanne-palace.com](http://lausanne-palace.com); day access to spa facilities CHF95; 50-minute Abhyanga Massage CHF150.

### The Spa, Bern

When the Hotel Schweizerhof, reopened its doors after a head-to-toe refurbishment a couple of years ago, it offered a new take on a stay in the capital. In place of the old stuffy baroque decor, the hotel sported **The Spa**, a sleek urban haven with everything that the steady influx of high-flying business travelers and politicians need to unwind fast. Make a beeline from the train station directly to this 500-square-meter subterranean wonder world and let the complete relaxation begin.

Start your journey by sweating out the toxins in the 85-degree-Celsius Finnish sauna. Follow all that scorching dry heat with a trip to the hammam, or head straight for the fountain of crushed ice for a shock to hit your restart button. After that jolt, plus maybe a soak in the pamper pool, indulge in a little

cross-cultural recuperation with a Hanakasumi treatment. Perfumed with lotus and cherry blossoms, this Japanese-inspired ritual gently exfoliates the body, paying extra attention to travel-sore feet. [schweizerhof-bern.ch](http://schweizerhof-bern.ch); day access to spa facilities CHF68; 75-minute Hanakasumi treatment CHF200. +

## DISCOVERY

## STORYBOOK ST. GALLEN

In the northeast, Jeninne Lee-St. John skips through a candy-colored UNESCO-listed village where ancient legends have given way to modern design.

Once upon a time, a Celtic hermit befriended a bear, spurned a bishopric and ended up founding, despite his best efforts, what would become—way off in a wooded valley of eastern Switzerland—both a major center for learning and the global embroidery capital.

Our yarn, if you will, begins with the birth of Gallus in 550 A.D., who became a missionary so renowned for his

persuasive preaching that legend has it he wooed a bear into fetching him firewood. Church leaders repeatedly tried to lure him out of his self-imposed solitary confinement; they failed during his lengthy lifetime, but after his death they established in his homestead the **Abbey of St. Gall** (*Klosterhof 6A; 41-71/227-3381*), where a sun-kissed blue-and-white-interior Baroque

cathedral and a UNESCO World Heritage-listed Carolingian monastery now sit. The Benedictine monks who congregated here evolved into a community of enlightenment. The manuscripts they wrote, copied and obtained—including the Plan of St. Gall, the only surviving architectural drawing from the early Middle Ages; and some 2,100 handwritten books, →

Thermalbad, L+P  
Spa; The Spa  
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**Clockwise from top:** St. Gallen, Schweiz  
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 xxxxxxx xxxxxx  
 xxxxxx; xxxx xxxx xx  
 xxxx xxxxxxx  
 xxxxxxx.

400 of which are more than a century old—are housed at the **Stiftsbibliothek** (*stibi.ch*; admission CHF12). Talk about a bibliophile’s dream come true: you have to don slippers to pad into this remarkable Abbey Library, Switzerland’s oldest, but the reward is a polished-wood, fresco-ceilinged, golden-hued Rococo trove of parchment documents and some of the world’s most valuable bibles. Keep your vows to a whisper, please.

Outside in the main square of this fairytale village, look skyward. You’ll see several representatives of the 111 well-preserved, ornate (often kooky) **bay windows**, added by merchants from the 1800’s to their homes as they grew rich off the skyrocketing textile industry. By 1910, at its economic peak,

St. Gallen was producing half of the embroidery in the world—learn about this sartorial history at the **Textile Museum** (*textilmuseum.ch*; admission CHF12), or the showrooms of some of its latter day inheritors.

For example, run your fingers through the fabrics at **Jakob Schläepfer** (*Furstenlandstrasse 99*; 41-71/274-9292), known for designing bedazzling textiles for Louis Vuitton and Chanel, or prepare to open your wallet at **Akris** (*Felsenstrasse 40*; 41-71/227-7722), which takes women’s “basics” to such perfectly cut, fanciful heights that Michelle Obama and Nicole Kidman are among its most famous fans.

In that context, the **red carpet-coated City Lounge**, several downtown blocks of benches, a car, a fountain and

all, is a logical living art example of St. Gallen’s cultural evolution. Speaking of art, pop over to **Forum Würth** in neighboring Rorschach (*Churerstrasse 10, Rorschach*; 41-71/225-1000), where a small but impressive collection of modernist and contemporary works (count Picasso and Munch among the most popular draws) await on the banks of Lake Constance. On a clear day, you might make out the edges of distant Germany and Austria across the water. If you return by local tram, disembark at bucolic **St. Georgen**, a green ridge on St. Gallen’s southeastern edge where you’ll find sweeping valley views, two of the town’s most popular swimming holes and free-roaming cows. No bears, alas, but they’ll be back with that firewood any minute now. +

THE MOMENT

# VALLE VERZASCA, TICINO

2:24 p.m.

Take a step back in time into a valley that dictates the day, while you simply enjoy a quiet hike in the wilderness. The Valle Verzasca in Ticino, due north of Milan but firmly Swiss, is an excellent rural area to explore on foot. Largely untouched by the modern world, its steep inclines and waterfalls are dotted with picturesque stone structures. As you come across the Ponti dei Salti, also known as the Roman

bridge, at Lavertezzo you'll realize that you're world's away from the familiar. The 17th-century, double arched bridge crosses an emerald-hued River Verzasca and natural rock formations polished smooth over the centuries.

Sheltered by high mountains and at a relatively low altitude of 545 meters, the valley is a thriving home for vines, palm trees and chestnut plantations. ✦



The double arch stone bridge of Lavertezzo, Ticino, Switzerland.

At the hotel's Rive Gauche Terrace.

THE CLASSIC

# LAKESHORE LIFE

With another lofty overhaul, the Baur au Lac proves that icons never stop reinventing themselves.

These days, it's practically impossible to imagine the banks of Lake Zurich bare. But that's what Johannes Baur was working with in 1844 when he envisioned what was to become his family legacy. Despite having been preceded by the luxe Baur en Ville a few blocks away, the **Baur au Lac** quickly became Zurich's grande dame,

with its sweeping lake views, private parkland, reputation for discretion and continual upgrades. A guest garage added in 1905 houses a Rolls Royce Phantom. The Terrasse Bar, though only opened in 2009, is already a Zurich institution for cocktails among the smart set. The Pavillon restaurant, centered on a lavender-

banqueted, towering, flowering rotunda, might be the prettiest dining room in town, and is definitely standing tall with its new Michelin star. Now, a secretive Pierre-Yves Rochon-led overhaul of the main lobby—with a shiny glass dome and a fireplace—is primed to usher in the hotel's next incarnation.

From its origins as, not long after opening, one of the first hotels in the area to offer vintages from Bordeaux, the Baur au Lac has become a premier Swiss distributor, testifying to an enduring dedication to quality wines. Likewise, European kings and queens gave way to Haile Selassie, and Richard

Wagner was followed by the likes of Alfred Hitchcock, Audrey Hepburn and, more recently, Peter Fonda, further evidence of its enduring status as an icon. At 170 years old, the Baur au Lac has never looked younger. Here's to many more happy returns. [bauraulac.ch](http://bauraulac.ch).  
—JENINNE LEE-ST. JOHN

TRAVEL+LEISURE

# February 2015

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On the trails high  
above Lucerne,  
page 58.

LAURYN ISHAK

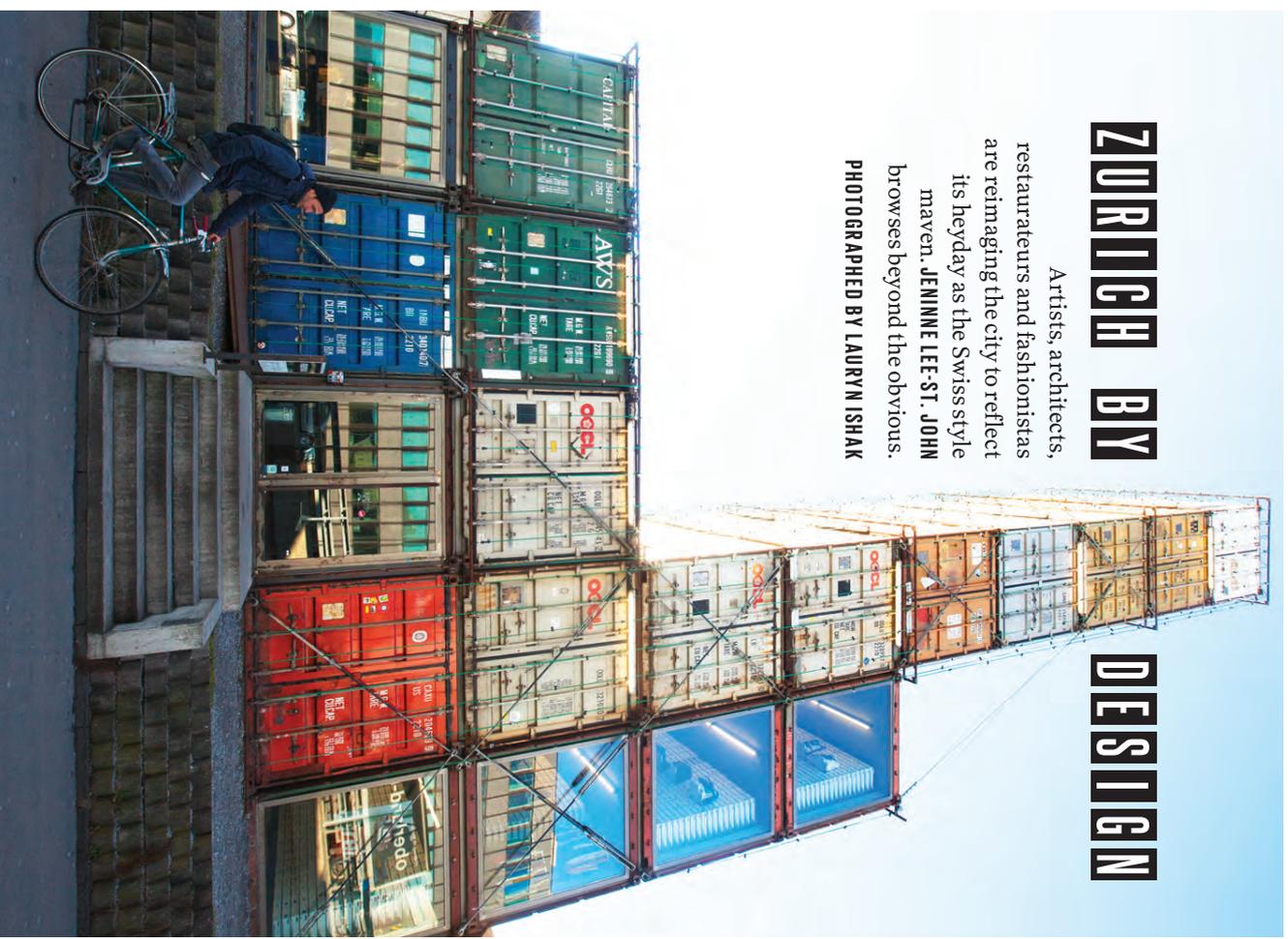


An night out in Zurich West's, Oppositer. Also in Zurich West, the Freitag store made from old containers,

# ZURICH BY

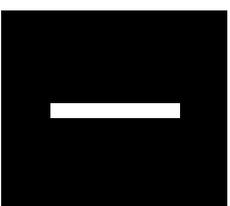
Artists, architects, restaurateurs and fashionistas are reimagining the city to reflect its heyday as the Swiss style maven. **JENNINE LEE-ST. JOHN** browses beyond the obvious. **PHOTOGRAPHED BY LAURYN ISHAK**

# DESIGN





**Clockwise from left:** A fruit tart not to be missed; one of the funky stores in Zurich West; shade from the summer sun; atop Cloud restaurant; local fashion for sale; sailboats in Zurich.



If you've never heard of Ulrich Zwingli, please smooth your tie or straighten those ribbons in your hair. Give thanks to this xenophobic, anti-mercenary, unlikely leader of the Swiss Reformation for his unwitting role in making Zurich an essential link in the global silk route—and subsequently the design capital of Switzerland that it is today. Though essentially lost to history in the shadow of Luther and Calvin, Zwingli was a fiery, controversial preacher who got local leaders on his side (and was eventually elected to join their ranks) with, among other things, his leading role in *The Affair of the Sausages*, in which he and like-minded pastors handed out, yes, sausages on the first Sunday of Lent, 1522, in blatant violation of Catholic fasting rules.

Obviously, after that it was only a matter of time before the city and several of its neighbors jumped on the Protestant pork wagon. Religious refugees from Italian-speaking Locarno, in Ticino at the foot of the Alps, flocked to Zurich seeking safe haven. They, and the Huguenots who came after 1685 and were welcomed despite being French, brought with them a zeal for weaving textiles, silk in particular, and skill for building and—important—improving looms. The city's direct route to Italy only boosted this sartorial trade, and reams of silks and cottons flowed out of Zurich like so much crisp, clean Swiss water until World War I.

A staid city known for banking isn't necessarily the first place you'd think of as a design capital, but to this end the textile industry had a two-fold effect: by first, over the centuries, imbuing Zurich with a strong style sensibility, and by, second, eventually fading out, leaving some of its factories and warehouses among those in the west now being repurposed as the city's coolest-looking boutiques, restaurants, bars, galleries and theaters.

**ZURICH WEST ISN'T ACTUALLY NEW TO THE ROLE** OF the city's it-spot. Creative types started moving in, gutting and remodeling back in the 1990s. But it's spreading to neighboring no-man's lands so that one wonders if soon shipping containers—cum-fairy lit bars will be abutting 500-year-old stone buildings on the other side of town. Frau Gerolds Garten, on the far southeastern edge, is made up of two shipping containers holding a bar and kitchen, sweeping outdoor marquee and a mural-wrapped

wooden-crate garden for the locavore in all of us, all topped by twinkling Christmas lights.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Because the first thing you notice about Zurich West is the Prime Tower. Particularly to those of us in skyscraper-happy Asia, the fact that this 36-story building is the tallest in the entire country seems hilarious (from my desk in Bangkok, I can see at least 11 that are taller—and that's only because it's dark out). However, this all-glass, angular oddball towers above anything else in the city and you can understand why the developers were forced to erect it in Zurich West.

It has two great things going for it. One is the ultra-classy Clouds, up on the top floor, whose bistrot, smoking room and bar—as well as Hered, white-tablecloth dining room (in which I enjoyed, during the year's brief hunting season, fresh and bloody venison)—together take in the panorama of the cobblestoned, leafy city, stretching all the way down to shimmering Lake Zurich. The other is Hotel Rivington & Sons on the backside of the tower's ground level. The Art Deco lines, white-tile walls and banker's lights, among other period accents, make it an impeccable reproduction of an old New York tavern. I was cozy on a black leather banquette and felt like I was at home. If I hadn't just had that venison upstairs, I would have ordered pancakes and hash browns.

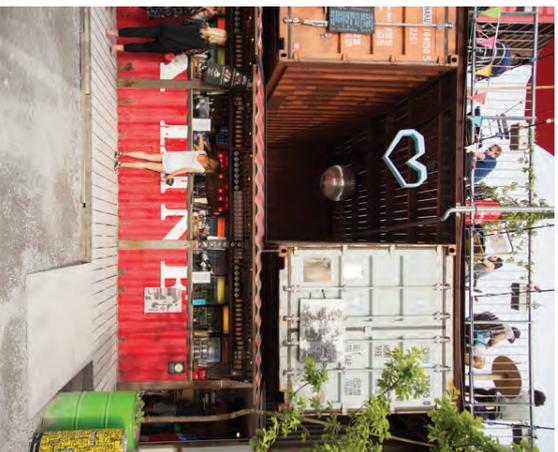
Radiating from the Prime Tower is, I suppose, the real Zurich West: warehouses, mills, factories all housing some of the hippest places to be in the city. Naturally, this is where they put Swiss Argentine designer Alfredo Häberli's 25 Hours Hotel, a super playful, polychrome adult romper room made for mingling. In the neighborhood, there's also the ingenious Shiffbau, a performance space housing three different theaters, including one in the old loading dock.

There are industrial chic restaurants (skyhit LaSalle) and dark-fairytale eateries (Gnusserei, making playful use of its origins as a foundry). There are bars, oh so many bars you wish you had several summer nights to wallow in the divey, wonderful urban trendiness of them all. A particular favorite is the also retro-designed ostensible jazz club Moods, which hosts international musicians of everything from Afro-soul to indie-pop to polka.

There's also the Viaductmarkt. Built within the arches of the old viaduct are boutiques and cafes as notable for the designs and eats they peddle as their clever location, the very definition of architectural upcycling. What a logical progression from that trendiest of Swiss exports, the truck tarps-into-satchels Freitag, whose flagship shipping container tower looms over Zurich West.

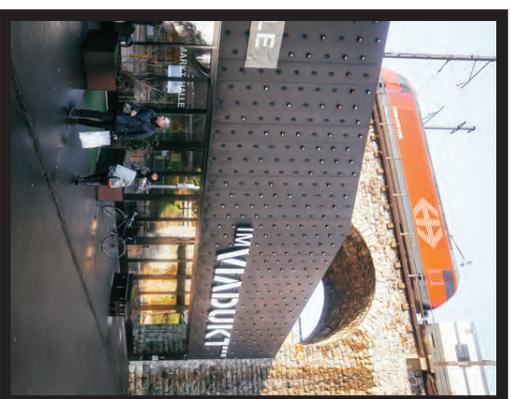
The newest neighborhood, however, by no means has a monopoly on style. Even a wander through Altstadt, Old Town, uncovers a treasure trove of modern ideas.

Limmetsquai and the hive of windy streets leading up the hill away from it house a clutch of boutiques that feel like mini-Urban Outfitters fit only carried quirky Made-in-Switzerland designs. On the left bank of the Limmet River, sandwiched between the water and the Bahnhofstrasse is



## THERE ARE BARS, OH SO MANY BARS, YOU NEED SEVERAL NIGHTS

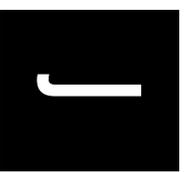
From top: Ordering drinks on a late-summer night; outside in Viadukt, a market hall underneath the railway; Opposite: Along the romantic streets of the old town.



Lindenhof, the core of the city. Here, among the Fraumünster a church built on the remains of a nunery that ruled the city for 500 years (that's right, an abbess, a woman held the purse strings and the power in Zurich as far back as 856 AD—maybe they don't need help modernizing after all) and the sundry remains of the pre-Roman era, you'll find an embankment full of cute shops, including Lederladen, where a former finance guy Adrian Zurcher hand-crafts leather satchels and other accessories in a fishbowl shop and, closer to town, the worthwhile Widdler Hotel.

This 42-room boutique is nothing short of a marvel. It's within the renovated interior of nine buildings that date to the Middle Ages and were owned variously by noblemen, artisans, merchants and guildmasters—including the Guild of the Ram, the butchers' association, which bought its house in 1401. The buildings are connected as seamlessly as possible. Which is to say: not very seamlessly but very cool. The rooms are each different, done in rich woods, bright whites, whatever, with a unifying element being gorgeous exposed beams. Also, there's a Warhol (*Widdler* or *Ram*, naturally), along with an open cache of other paintings and objects that with which to interact. Think hotel as sculpture garden.

Another high-design accommodation that succeeds at both maintaining the past in its present and being two things at once is the new b2 boutique hotel and connected Terrimalba Irish-Roman bathhouse that was once the Hurlimann Brewery. In some ways they've simply preserved the old; for example, an event space that was the brewing room still has steel tanks and a brewmaster's hidey-hole. In others, they've recycled—green beer bottles make up the spectacular chandeliers in the library bar—and re-imagined (the basement barrel-filling grooves are again filled with barrels, but barrels containing massive swimming pools and spas). And in still others, they've reinterpreted the space to fit current times: an earthquake-proofing glaw led to the zigzag-reinforced chimney of sorts that both grounds the building and, snaking its way up to a skylight that emerges in the center of the rooftop pool, acts as its central design element.



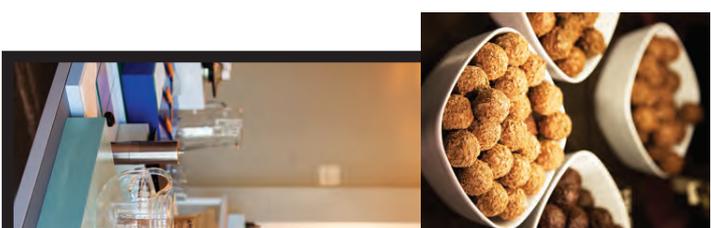
**OSEFWEIFE IS LITERALLY THE** wrong side of the tracks. From downtown Zurich and the glittering Bahnhofstrasse, you have to go all the way around the thick serpent of train lines that feeds the Hauptbahnhof (incidentally, center of the efficient Swiss train system and yet another reason why Zurich was so good at trade). It's a small town, but that's kind of far. That's probably why a slew of edgy boutiques, designers and second-hand shops have colonized the neighborhood. It was here that I found Barakanst, an organic café, wine bar and independent art gallery. I also stumbled across the

fashion-forward lifestyle shop The Gloss and bespoke Barcelona designer Javier Alsamendi. Then there's the French Concept Store, purveyor of limited-edition, local-workshop-made fashions and jewelry, and Mann Propria handcrafted eyewear (people in Zurich love wearing glasses, even, especially, when they don't need them). In that quiet, gritty grid of streets that feels like Manhattan's Lower East Side that I found the decidedly ungritty Little Black Dress, and one of its designers, the utterly adorable Eliane Diethelm, dashing out the door to a meeting, Zurich Fashion Days was six weeks away.

Thirty-ish Diethelm and partner Joanna Skoczylas specialize in that item of clothing that is every girl's must-have, often making only one design per size: the versatile, flattering pieces in their ready-to-wear lines might be available 15 per size, if you're lucky. The small scale is partly because of the women's dedication to high-quality, fair-condition production within Europe (some pieces are made in Ticino, others Bosnia), and partly because in a town of only 370,000 people all consumed with fashion, who wants to be seen in someone else's dress?

Or, if Andrea Hinnen has any say, who wants to be dressed just like everyone else? "I hate these black-and-gray-and-white-dressed people!" Yeah, no kidding. Hinnen, who studied and worked as a textile designer in New York for seven years spends part of every winter practicing Ayurveda in Sri Lanka, and it shows loud and clear in her clothes. Walking into her shop is a shock to the system: hot pinks and lime greens everywhere, neon mermaids on leery bikinis and more tunics and other resort wear than a boutique in Bali. I hadn't realized the sensory deficit I'd been experiencing in Zurich—someone who loves colors and patterns, who lives in Technicolor Bangkok—until that moment: everyone here wears black. "This is a bank city," Hinnen sniffs. (This fact influences more than just the fashion. When the tatted-up bartender at sweet-as-pie-yet-tongue-in-check brunch spot Zum Guten Glueck told me "I would very much like to give you this beer," my friend, an American expat, cooed that it was the first time he'd seen anyone get anything for free in five years living in Zurich.) "The bankers are all in black. The people like colors but they're shy about wearing it," Hinnen tells me. Still, people are not only starting to get the hang of it, they're diving headlong into Hinnen's hand-painted patterns, which she has produced in Spain.

It makes sense that if someone who usually wears black is going to spend up to CHF400 on a single item of clothing from not-a-huge-n-name designer, they might want something as loud and against-type as possible. Hinnen agrees—"When I do the crazy colors and bold patterns, I do better"—then proceeds to sell me a pair of her Aquaboot brand giant elephant-print swim trunks. "I want to give color to the people," she says. Or, rather, sell it to them for a small fortune. But I guess that's Zurich since the days of Zwingli and his inadvertent immigrants: fashion and finance... and sausages. +



Clockwise from far left: Andrea Hinnen and Aquaboot; chocolate truffles; Modern and local designs for sale; a lifestyle shop built into an old arch.



## 'PEOPLE LIKE COLORS BUT ARE SHY ABOUT WEARING THEM'

### T+L Guide

#### STAY

- 25 Hours Zurich West**  
Pfingstweidstrasse 102, 41-9082, hotel@livingfromandsons.ch; 44/577-2255; 25hours-hotels.com; doubles from CHF160.
- Widdler Hotel**  
Renweg 7, 41-44/224-2526; widdlerhotel.ch; doubles from CHF795.
- B2 Boutique Hotel and Thermalbad Spa**  
Hurlimann Areal, Brändschelkestrasse 152, 41-44/267-6767; b2boutique-hotels.com; doubles from CHF310.
- Freu Gerolds Garten**  
Geroldstrasse 23; frau@gerold.ch; dinner for two CHF70.
- Clouds**  
Prime Tower, Maagplatz 5, 41-44/404-3000; clouds.ch; prix fixe CHF210.

#### Hotel Rivington & Sons

- Horststrasse 201, 41-83/366-9082, hotel@livingfromandsons.ch; dinner for two CHF80.
- LaSalle**  
Schiffhausstrasse 4, 41-44/258-7071; lasalle-restaurant.ch; dinner for two CHF130.
- Gnusserei**  
Gessenerstrasse 18, Im Pils 5, 41-44/440-0001; gnusserei.ch; dinner for two CHF160.
- Moods**  
Schiffhausstrasse 6, 41-44/276-8000; moods.ch.
- Barakanst**  
Josefstrasse 27, 41-43/243-8310; barakanst.ch; set menus from CHF21.50.
- Zum Guten Glueck**  
Stationsstrasse 7, 41-43/540-43/540-7299; zumgutenglueck.ch; set lunch from CHF16.50.

#### SHOP

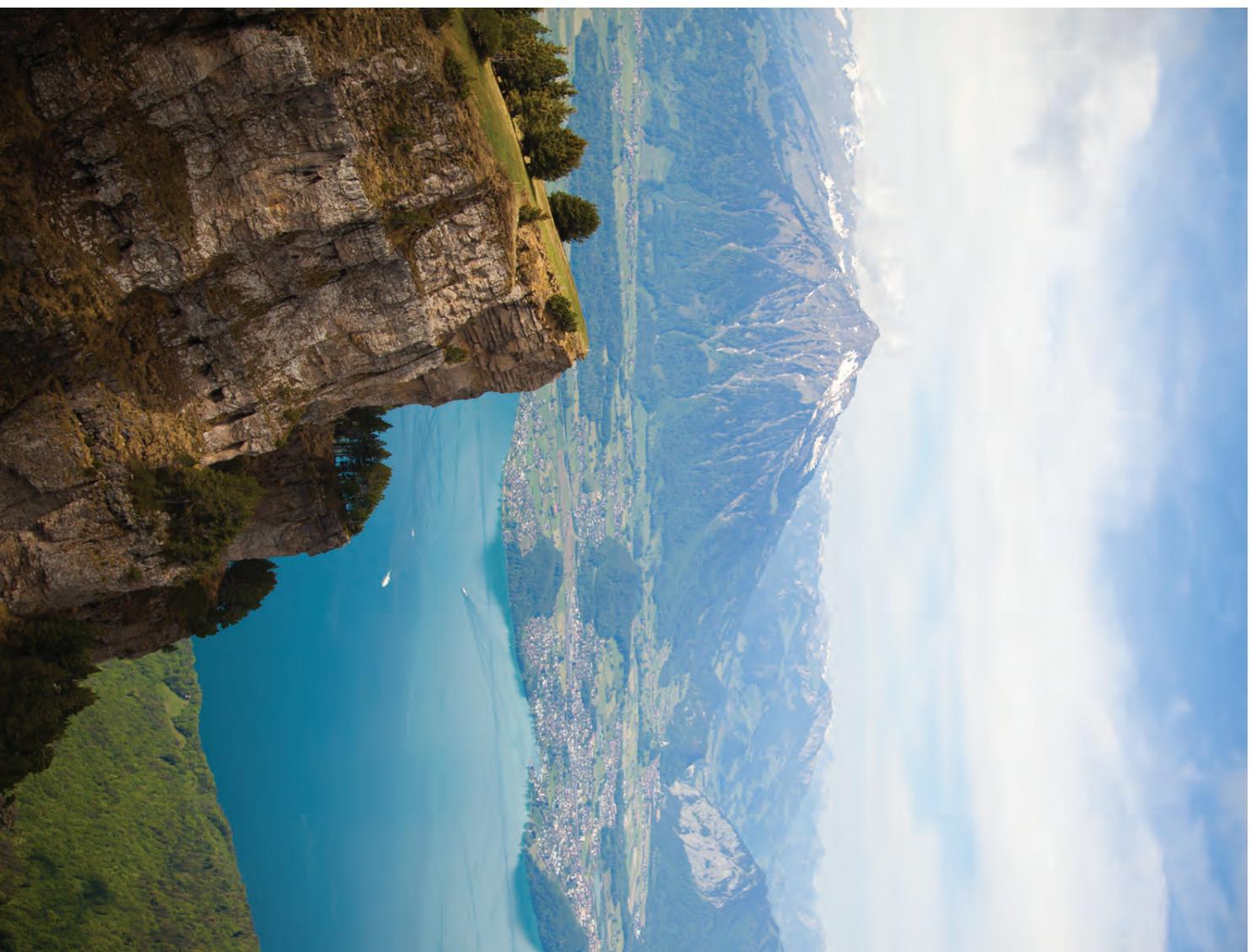
- Viaductmarkt**  
Im Viadukt, Lederladen Schiffler 29, 41-44/221-1954; lederladen.ch.
- Freitag**  
Geroldstrasse 17, 41-43/366-9920; freitag.ch.
- The Gloss**  
Horststrasse 312, 41-44/271-3806; thegloss.ch.
- Javier Alsamendi**  
Limmatstrasse 215; dis@amendi.com; Josefstrasse 48, 41-44/271-2020; freulen@freuch.com.
- Mann Propria**  
Josefstrasse 50, 41-44/271-0444; mannpropria.ch.
- Little Black Dress**  
Josefstrasse 45, 41-43/540-1670; littleblackdress.ch.
- Andrea Hinnen and Aquaboot**  
Rotwandstrasse 55, 41-44/240-0212; andrea@hinnen.com.



# THE ALPSON ADRENALINE

THRILL-SEEKERS, OUTDOOR  
JUNKIES AND NATURE-LOVERS  
HAVE BEEN DRAWN TO INTERLAKEN  
FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY.  
**DIANA HUBBELL** LOOKS INTO THIS  
ALPINE LAND'S ENIGMATIC ALLURE.

Opposite: Outside-Quant-Ur-Ur-ode-to-the-ohk-ajicy-burgen-gfht.



# HOW WILL I KNOW WHEN TO JUMP? I ASK, BETTER TRYING TO SOUND BRAVER THAN I FEEL.

"You don't jump, you sit," Werner, my guide and lifeline for the day says in his thick Swiss-German accent. He has a grizzled, sun-scorched face and wisps of hair bleached blonde from so much time aloft. This is a man who has been paragliding his whole life, who has made that fateful leap more than 5,000 times. On his days off, he packs his parachute in a backpack, straps on crampons and scales the higher slopes solo to jump from where most don't dare venture.

Yet, as I watch him methodically arranging our rainbow-hued chute I feel my stomach twist. The grass drops off sharply just steps from where we stand and beyond it is the valley with its twin glassy lakes, green meadows and red-roofed houses a thousand meters below. Towering over all of this are the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau.

The Ogre, the Monk and the Virgin. Sheer rock faces and capped with gleaming blue ice, they are as forboding as they are beautiful. It is easy to see how they inspired poetic names and how they have become an obsession for so many. The 1,800-meter north face of Eiger, the highest on the Continent, is one of the greatest climbing challenges in the world. Nicknamed Mordwand, or "Murder Wall," it has claimed more than 64 lives since the foolish and the fearless began attempting to scale its slopes in 1935. The final stretch is a web of deadly crevasses and unstable chasms ominously known as "The White Spider."

In spite of the danger, or perhaps because of it, people continue to come. Like local legend Takio Kato, the first person to lead a team up the north face's most difficult direct route in 1969; like Ueli Steck, who first free-climbed it alone in 2008; or Dani Arnold who then broke Steck's speed record in 2011 by clamoring up in two hours and 28 minutes, at times sprinting through the freezing, thin oxygen.

These mountains were what drew me here, just as they attracted wealthy Victorians to the area more than a century ago. They're the



ANDREA CAVALLINI/GETTY IMAGES



Natural beauty is around every corner when hiking. **Opposite:** At lower levels, summer colors abound.



# FLORA AND FAUNA GIVE WAY TO ROCK AND SNOW

reason for Europe's highest railroad and the graceful colonial-style hotels dotting the landscape. Without these haunting, hostile, geological obelisks the town of Interlaken would be nothing but a speck on the map. Without them, I wouldn't be standing here, heart in my throat, waiting for a rush into the void.

"Are you worried?" Werner asks with a devilish grin. "Don't be. You're flying luxury—first class all the way, baby. A couple weeks ago, I went paragliding from there." He points to the sharp, white point of Jungfrau, 4,158 meters above sea level.

I want to protest that my version of first class usually comes with soft pillows and free champagne, but before I can open my mouth we're racing forward. Down, down we go on the increasingly vertiginous slope, until my legs are wheeling about like Willie Coyote. There is no way to go forward. Instead, I sit back.

Wind rushes into our sails and buoys us. We are weightless, floating feather light and free above it all. My luxury seat is a whole lot more comfortable than it looks and suddenly the experience goes from terrifying to thrilling. We plunge and swoop, diving perilously fast, then rising back up again as we catch a thermal off the side of an intimidating rock face. We curve in great arcs, rushing up into the deep blue sky.

*The Jungfrau* *bahn* was built more than a century ago, back when a train that could climb more than 2,000 meters into the heavens must have been a mechanical marvel. It took 14 years of blasting through solid granite to construct it.

The rail workers spent so long in these remote alpine landscapes that they brought their families from Italy to live with them. A glimpse into the sepia-toned photographs of the era shows pale-faced, unsmiling women in oversized hats and small, serious children dwelling high above the clouds.

You'd never guess the age of the route by looking at these smartly outfitted machines though. Their bright paint jobs have a certain retro charm and they purr along with modern efficiency. Hybrid technology renders them ecologically sensible as well. Hydroelectricity from torrents of melting glacial water powers these little engines that could, and the reserved brake energy from each two trains trips is enough to power a third.

DAVID TOMLINSON/GETTY IMAGES

PERMANENT TOURIST/GETTY IMAGES

Today, these sleek, metallic workhorses ferry 5,000 visitors a day to Jungfraujoch, appropriately dubbed the Top of Europe thanks to its 3,454-meter elevation. The journey is an impossibly scenic one. As we ascend, we pass vast meadows where doe-eyed cows stare at us through long lashes. Gradually, the flora and fauna give way to barren rock and patches of snow. The 22-kilometer Aletsch Glacier glistens in the near-blinding sunlight.

On the way up, my guide Yuki Dymann regales me with tales of local icons. Most of her friends are second- or third-generation climbers, part of ongoing dynasties who trace their lineage back to Interlaken's earliest daredevils. Two in particular, a brother and a sister, lost their mother while she was free-climbing on the Mordwand. Instead of running away, the siblings remain inexorably drawn to the mountain, fearlessly snowboarding off-piste on Eiger's precipitous slopes.

Yuki herself hails from Japan, though she now calls the nearby town of Grindelwald home. A slender woman with unruly waves of dark hair, she barely comes up to my shoulder yet hauls her bulging backpack as if it weighs nothing. She's swished down powdery slopes from Niseko to Colorado with her husband and three kids, and climbed back up them with her bear of a Bernese mountain dog. For a wedding present, she received heliskiing tickets. The day before she met me, she ran Interlaken's infamous marathon—43 kilometers and more than a thousand meters of elevation climb over dirt alpine trails. I ask her if it was tough and she shrugs. No big deal.

*You've been eating* the wrong fondue. It's cool. I didn't know any better either. The simple fact of the matter is that this glorious cauldron of molten dairy is a different beast in its native land. It's richer, creamier and boozy enough to induce a swoon. As a waiter one evening tells me in his raucous Parisian accent, "I am from France, yes? But even in France, I do not order fondue because it is crap. Once you have had the real Swiss fondue, all others are crap."

It all comes down to the ingredients, the list of which is succinct and fiercely debated. Wild mushrooms, tomato sauce, chilies, heavy cream, truffles and various liquors may be added, but in its purest

form, this dish consists of two cheeses, a dry white and a whisper of garlic. Most outsiders are familiar with *neuchâtelaise*, that classic blend of Gruyère and Emmental, but during my journey I became a fast convert to the *moitié-moitié* way of doing things. By swapping out Emmental for unctuous Fribourg Vacherin, a mountain cheese with hints of the wild flowers, this elemental dish reaches a nearly transcendent state.

It's also rather well, odiferous, shall we say, which is why more than a few restaurants in Interlaken insist that aficionados savor their fondue al fresco. On golden autumnal days, the streets line up with hikers fueling up on hearty Swiss fare. They dine on slabs of raclette garnished with cornichons to live piano at the grand old Café Schuh or head to the trendier OX Restaurant & Grill for locally raised steaks served with miniature cast-iron skilletlets of rösti. The well-heeled frequent The Victoria Jungfrau Grand Hotel & Spa for high tea. The place was bastion of luxury long before the rest of the town's mushroomed into an alpine hot spot and it still bears the gracious British-style service it has maintained for generations.

All of my meals on the ground though, delicious though they may have been, could never quite equal the one at the end of my train journey to Jungfrauoch. At the end of more than two hours of near-continuous climbing, of being propelled through the dark heart of the Eiger, Yuki and I emerge into an unreal world of endless winter. After several silent, stunned minutes of inhaling brittle, frigid air and struggling to completely absorb one of the world's greatest panoramas, we head inside.

We cross through the Ice Palace, a tunnel 30 meters through the glacier where translucent sculptures of eagles and bears watch passing visitors. We hurry through to Crystal Restaurant and snag one of the coveted window seats.

Maybe it's the lack of oxygen, or maybe it's the shot of surprisingly smooth glacial whiskey—aged in barrels up in Jungfrau's icy passageways—but after a few minutes, I'm feeling woozy. The white landscape outside softens and takes on an even more surreal quality.

Yuki can see me staring, slack-jawed, at the scene she passes by almost daily. She understands.

"You see what I mean? Once you've lived here, it's hard to live any where else. How do you give this up?" she asks softly.

### Captain Phil is disappointed in me.

"I can't believe you're not going canyoning!" he says, shaking his scruffy, bearded face. He reaches over the side of the boat with a plastic cup, scoops up some lake water and passes it to me to drink. I'm no longer surprised that it tastes better than anything I ever drank from a bottle. "The canyoning here is unblievable!"

The problem is, so are too many other things. Visitors are spoiled for choice. It's easy to see how so many end up staying on months or years after they had planned to leave.

At the moment, I'm sitting in a motor boat on Lake Brienz, gapping at a the 500-meter waterfalls and thickly forested shores. In a few days, I've trekked to Kleine Scheidegg at the foot of Eiger's North Wall. I've taken in the scenery from up on Harder Kulm. I've wandered the medieval streets of the nearby city of Thun. Yet it's still not enough.

"Don't worry. You'll make it next time. There's always a next time. People come back, or they just stay, like me," my captain says, as he prepares to head back to town. Looking up at the Ogre, Monk and Virgin, I don't need to ask why. ★



### T+L Guide

#### STAY

##### Metropole Hotel

Interlaken The only high-rise in the area with impressive views of the mountains. Höhweg 37, Interlaken; 41-33/828-6666; metropole-interlaken.ch; doubles from CHF109.

##### Victoria Jungfrau Grand Hotel & Spa

Interlaken's original grande dame still sports colonial opulence. Höhweg 41, Interlaken; 41-33/828-2828; victoria-jungfrau.ch; doubles from CHF382.

#### EAT

##### OX Restaurant & Grill

Am Markplatz, Interlaken; 41-33/828-1220; ox-interlaken.ch; dinner for two CHF70.

##### Restaurant Taverne

Höhweg 74, Interlaken; 41-33/828-6868; hotelinterlaken.ch; dinner for two CHF90.

##### Café Schuh

Don't be dissuaded by the international scope of this menu, which includes

#### Lebanese and Thai

dishes—it serves one of the best fondues in town. Dinners in the evening are accompanied by live piano music. Höhweg 56, 3800 Interlaken; 41-33/888-8050; schuh-interlaken.ch; dinner for two CHF60.

##### Hüsi Bierhaus

Popular craft brew house with more than 50 lagers, ales and ciders, including 12 on tap. Postgasse 3, Interlaken; 41-33/823-2332; husesi-interlaken.ch; drinks for two CHF13.

##### Crystal Restaurant

Jungfrauoch; 41-33/828-7888; gletscherrestaurant.ch; dinner for two CHF80.

#### SEE + DO

##### Jetboat Interlaken

Rugenparkstrasse 11, Interlaken; 41-78/845-5699; jetboat.ch; individual boat tours from CHF99 per person.

##### Star Paragliding

Hohenmatte, 3800 Sundlauenen; 41-79/354-5251; flystar.ch; tandem flights from CHF170.

MAYBE IT'S THE  
LACK OF OXYGEN OR  
THE SHOT OF GLACIAL  
WHISKY, BUT I'M  
FEELING WOZZY

Outside: Quan-Utt  
ode to Right-entry  
btrgen—Opposite:  
Xxxxx xxxxx xxxxxxx.

AIMIN TANG /GETTY IMAGES. OPPOSITE: LAURYN ISHAK

A remote valley  
view near Davos.



ALTRENDO TRAVE/GETTY IMAGES

# BIG LITTLE COUNTRY

Swiss icons might have a different meaning than they did two centuries ago, but the idea of a Grand Tour is just as relevant and a much easier journey to pull off. **BY PETER MORGAN**



Clockwise from left, Grand Tours once meant train travel; the banks of the Rhine in Basel; a ticket taker from the past.



In August 1766, a 10-year-old Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart played a series of concerts in Geneva, Lausanne and Zurich. Along with his family, the musical genius—he was already composing pieces, some of which have been lost to time—was approaching the end of a three-year Grand Tour of Europe, and nearing their Salzburg home. The notion of Grand Tours started in the mid-17th century but flourished with rail travel in the 1840s. In the manner that Mozart and his family showed, Grand Tours were meant to take in the cultural icons of the Continent, whether through architecture, works of art or concerts. These journeys, which often lasted years, represented the first form of group travel. Today, the Alpine nation has become much easier to visit with the Grand Tour of Switzerland travel program. Launching this spring, it's a 1,600-kilometer route north to south and east to west that reveals the best the country has to offer visitors touring by car or public transport.

The suggested route navigates dynamic cities, towering Alpine peaks, picturesque half-timbered villages, vineyard-carpeted hill country, pristine lakes and historical sites. With a nod to drama, the program's designers have built in at least one sightseeing highlight per day.

Switzerland's here-to-there infrastructure, from the ribbons of highways crisscrossing the country to city streets and extensive rail and coach systems, is designed to facilitate the ease of mobility for visitors. While the Grand Tour of Switzerland itinerary is intended for both private and public transport, its length and the remoteness of some of the sights make it particularly suitable for self-drive holiday makers. This is good news because Switzerland is perhaps the easiest and safest country for an extended self-drive road trip.

With typical Swiss efficiency, the roads and transit points on the tour route are clearly sign-posted with brightly lit plaques, and there are fuel stations and clean rest areas at regular intervals. The circuit has been carefully planned to avoid, when possible, high-speed motorways and favors scenic back roads with the best views.

Those who choose the public transport option over self-drive will cover much of the same ground by train, ferries and coach. The Swiss Travel System is in the process of developing a train tour to be called the Grand Train Tour of Switzerland and is also working with Eurorubs to design a tour on luxury coach.

Whichever way you choose to explore—self-drive or public transport—the experience will leave you with memories that will last for years.

The suggested starting points for tours are the entry-point cities of Basel, Geneva and Lugano, but you can pick it up almost anywhere. The itinerary is flexible and its length can be tailored to meet individual interests, schedules and

## “SWITZERLAND WOULD BE A MIGHTY BIG PLACE IF IT WERE IRONED FLAT.”

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF SWITZERLAND TOURISM ARCHIVES; DANIEL SCHOENEN/GETTY IMAGES

budgets. The best time to visit is during the warmer months (May to October) to ensure all mountain passes are open and car-to-rail transfers are operating.

The most relevant reason to travel from one place to another is to see what's in between, and the tour takes great pleasure in doing just that. The itinerary covers all 23 Cantons and—as in Mozart's day—showcases the best of Swiss art, culture, architecture and natural beauty. In all, it guides visitors to 37 tourist highlights, seven cities, eight outstanding nature spots, through five alpine passes, alongside 22 lakes and 13 UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Switzerland Tourism's web site ([MySwitzerland.com](http://MySwitzerland.com)) has all the tools and modern-day icons an intrepid traveler needs to organize their own, unique journey. The site has options for side trips, links to hotels and car-rental companies, and offers travel packages. When connecting, you are automatically logged into a real-time chat session with a travel specialist. My helper, “Heidi,” messaged me with “Hello and welcome to Switzerland Tourism. We remain at your disposal for any questions.”

The site has an easy-to-use interactive map that indicates the location of hotels, major attractions, lakes and even swimming pools across the country. Choosing a hotel and booking a room is just clicks away. Simply follow your proposed route on the map and hotels are displayed. Hover over the hotel icon and a photo and the name of the hotel appears. Want more? Click the hotel name for a comprehensive information page with description, star rating, availability, location, a booking link and much more.

The navigation allows you to pre-filter the type of accommodation you want (hotel, apartment, camp site, or group and youth hosted) and its star rating. Those traveling in groups can specify that only hotels with a set number of rooms be displayed.

Checking out the major tourist sights is just as simple. Icons on the map indicate the location of an attraction. Hover above it and a photo and name appears. Click and be taken to a page with full details. For example, a click on the Baur Collection in Geneva takes you to a page with a full description of the museum, its history, location, opening hours, contact numbers and so on. The technology will go along way in ending a traveler's frustration on arriving at a museum or landmark only to discover it's closed that day or under renovation.

The site also has dozens of useful free travel apps for downloading. For example, the “Make My Switzerland” app provides recommendations from local ambassadors on hidden gems and attractions in Basel, Bern, Geneva, Lausanne, Lucerne, Lugano and Zurich. The “Tales of the City” app for iPads lists cultural attractions, sightseeing tips and helps to plan the perfect weekend in 23 Swiss cities.

The “Best Swiss Hotels” app (available for Smartphones and iPads) is a mobile version of the online hotel-booking program. You simply pick your preferences using the filters for the type and quality of hotel, add your location and the app searches a pool of 500 hotels to provide the best matches. You can then book directly from the mobile device.

American writer Mark Twain once quipped, “Switzerland would be a mighty big place if we ironed flat.” That sentiment still holds true. The Grand Tour of Switzerland program takes the “biggest” out of Switzerland and makes planning to explore this country's high Alpine meadows, serene lakes, and charming towns and cities as easy as clicking a button.



# Storybook Lucerne

IN THE SERENE SWISS HEARTLAND, A SHORT STROLL CAN TAKE YOU BACK 1,000 YEARS. FROM MOUNTAINTOP AND RIVER BEND, JEMINNE LEE-ST. JOHN DRINKS IN THE TRADITIONS.

A chapel sits atop  
Mount Pilatus.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY LAURYN SHAK

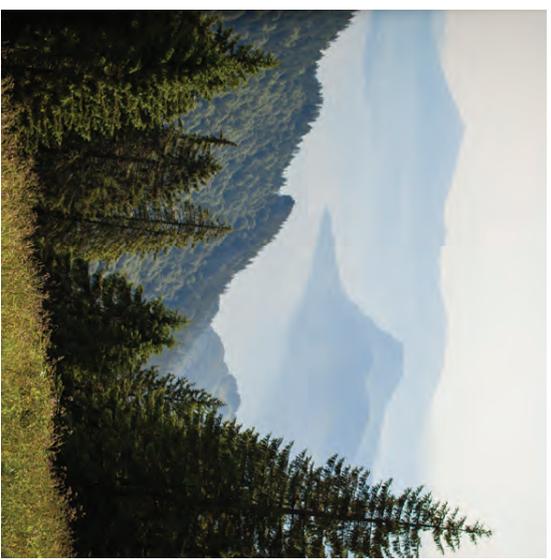


Want a pleasant discovery to visit Lucerne and find it as wholesome in the flesh and sometimes in its 1,700-year-old stones as

the brand of milk by the same name I drank growing up. The storybook town of medieval churches and crooked squares, fresco facades, covered bridges and a line of lookout turrets is ringed by green hills and towering mountains. These inform, ironically, Lucerne's historic role as a trading center; but also, of course, its more recent one as tourist magnet.

It's Mount Rigi, a 25-minute train ride away, that best encapsulates this wholesome Swiss heartland. On an unseasonably warm September afternoon, I took a nostalgia-inducing cogwheel train (Europe's first, having opened in 1871) from the tiny lakeside town of Vitznau climbing through farmlands, around A-frame houses, past brooks, up 1,798 meters to the summit, Rigi Kulm, where the most spectacular panorama awaited. From the top, it felt like the mountain was melting down into the three glassy lakes—Lucerne, Zuger and Lanzerz—below. It felt like Rigi's 120-odd kilometers of walking trails were all conquerable, with the right walking stick and a little gumption. It felt like someone had taken a glass dome and placed it on top of the entire region, leaving us tourists in the world's biggest and most beautiful snow globe.

My walk from the peak was dotted by wildflowers. I ran up little hillocks and tumbled down the other side. I passed more than a few couples sunning and snuggling in their own slices of heaven, hidden by high grasses and the sheer vastness of the space. I spent an inordinate amount of time contemplating three cows munching in a meadow, the brass bells around their necks tinkling with every bob of the head while I wondered how, and more importantly, why a cow would amble that high. (The one who held my gaze for a full minute was probably thinking the same thing about me.) I stopped in



Lake Lucerne through the trees. Opposite: iconic Chapel Bridge.

at the Chaserenholtz dairy, a working farm where you slip on blue booties to visit the salvation-inducing-scented cheese making facility. I had a beer on a terrace while watching little kids fling themselves down a slide built into a cliffside. I wished I'd had more time with Rigi, had perhaps booked a night at one of the 14 inns on the mountain, such as that of Famille Flury-Mehr, where you can sleep on old-school straw beds. Sure, "a bed of straw" probably only sounds good through a rustic-romantic prism. But I doubt I was alone in that line of thinking: the descent to the station at Arth-Goldau was marked by a sense of weariness and pining. It felt like the proverbial gray cloud hovered over the entire train. What a lovely day, everyone seemed to be thinking. Why did it have to end so soon?

**THROU'GHOUT MY SEVERAL SUN KISSES** autumn days in and around Lucerne, everyone marveled at the weather—August had been unrelentingly rainy and the whole city was bummed at the prospect of entering the long, dark winter without having bathed in a proper summer. Bathed is the perfect word for this city on the lake, where a five-minute sail from the inner harbor area takes you past coastlines full of people swimming off little docks, public beaches, anywhere the mood strikes, for their morning constitutions or after-work refreshers, even as the air was taking on a chill. I was there in a bridge season, and lucky me. The Swiss were packing in their last summer fun, so the lake was filled with sailboats, the sidewalk cafe culture inherited from their Italian trade partners was in full swing (sit on

the Reuss River at Hotel les Balances' classy-cool restaurant and toast the sunshine with a local Riesling), the shorelines were rimmed with people joggling and drinking and playing boules.

This is the land of water, water everywhere, and so many drops to drink. Go on, put your empty bottle into the stream of any city fountain; they're all perfectly potable. Speaking of streams, Lake Lucerne flows into the Reuss, and its old hedge dam is ingenious in its simplicity. Standing like soldiers on the line, porous wooden paddles hold back the water flow, and are inserted or removed by hand to maintain the level of the lake. This "technology" is 150 years old and I'm not sure whether they've kept it more because it still does the job or because it's so beautiful.

St. Leodegar, whose two-pointy-witch-hat spires stretch to the clouds, sits on the site of the eighth-century monastery founded near the town's original Roman settlement. A thousand years ago, a bridge was needed to connect the priests with the market; now it's pretty a 10-minute stroll along the landfilled lakefront. Bridges remain integral to the cities' identity, though straddling as does both banks of the Reuss. Strrolling across the two covered bridges—Chapel Bridge, built in 1333 and the oldest covered bridge in Europe; and Mill Bridge—is transporting. Clopping along the wooden planks below, watching taller folks duck slightly when passing the historic, triangular-shaped oil paintings wedged into the rafters above, you wonder if the city and the lake are paintings themselves, since in every direction you can spy them only between hand-rail and roof-eave.

Catholic holdout Lucerne resisted the Protestant reformation by importing Jesuits to take charge of educating the young. Their efforts were rewarded with the large, lovely, waterside baroque church built in 1666. Hope that you happen to wander in when the organist is practicing, have a seat in a pew and look up: the pinks and golds and baby blues on the white, light-filled ceiling and walls make you feel like you're sitting in an inverted wedding cake.

In a way, that's apt, for it was on the banks of Lake Lucerne where the cantons of Schwyz, Unterwalden and Uri made their vows for forming the original Swiss union back in 1291, inducting the city of Lucerne into the pact soon after. Residents of this region are fiercely proud of their role in birthing Switzerland, in defense against the Hapsburgs, those cruel oppressors who made William Tell shoot that apple off his son's head. I took a beautiful old paddle steamer through a shroud of morning mist, past castles and around headlands, to the park-encircled

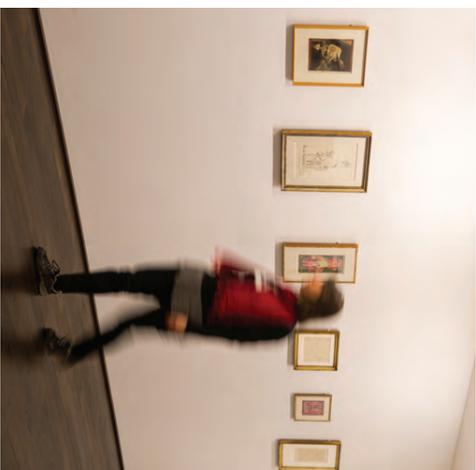
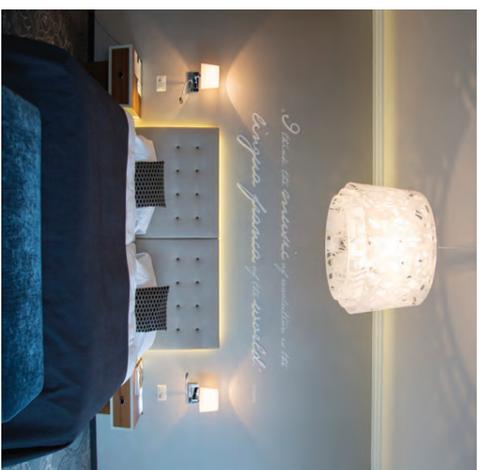
town of Brunnen to visit the Victorinox company. After I assembled my own Swiss Army Knife, my guide and I talked history and topography. She was simply agast when I suggested that the 1848 adoption of its federal constitution marked the founding of modern Switzerland. "Who told you that? This country was founded here," she pointed out on the map a bank not far across the lake from Brunnen, "six hundred years before that!"

Fair enough. A defensive alliance wasn't the country's only innovation by far. For evidence, just stop by the Swiss Museum of Transport. Actually, don't "stop by"—allot about six hours to take in all the technological genius recounted in this sprawling complex dedicated to the stellar train system, as well as all other mode of movement. It's all interactive: walk beneath undercarriages, climb into cockpits. There's a planetarium, and a Disney-esque ride through the history of the country's chocolate making. And in the center of everything, an educational playground full of scooters, trucks and sailboats meant to teach the kids about everything from wind speed to types of asphalt (which is much more interesting than it sounds).

And what if the terrain you want to traverse is inhospitable to any form of transport? That would've been a great question to ask the guys who built the railroad up Mount Pilatus. Back at the beginning of the tourism boom, in 1868 Queen Victoria was carried up the 48-percent-gradient cliff face on a pallet and mules—and it became clear that there must be a better way. Engineers redesigned the standard two-wheel cog track, to a single, more stable one beneath the center of the train. The world's most steeply tilted trains, these iconic red cars still cling up the mountain today, through hand-dynamated rock tunnels and past tboxes, albeit propelled now by electricity not steam. They also chug back down, but at a slower pace due to all the braking. And thank goodness. Try to sit in the front row, behind the conductor; it's like staring death in the face.

From the location of the hotel where Victoria holidayed, my guide for the day, Colette Richter, pointed across a clear cerulean sky this way to the Alps and the road to Italy, that way to France, thither to Germany. It was easy to see how here in the clouds, 2,119 meters up between earth and heaven, a queen might find solace and recovery from her beloved husband's death. It was enough to make a girl need a drink.

ON THE HOTEL PLATYS KULM STATION TERRACE, over a local white as crisp as the air ("It just like with men," Richter quipped when the waiter



Opposite, clockwise from top left: The changing seasons in Lucerne; a modern room at Hotel Schweizerhof; the dome of Jesuit Church; fondue is popular in Lucerne; a Paul Klee exhibit in the city; and the Lowendental monument.

## These iconic red cars chug up the mountain through hand-dynamited tunnels and past iberes

asked her to approve the wine bottle. “You choose them by looks, but the inside is more important,” we watched paragliders jump off the cliff, their rainbow sails improbably buoying them on the skyline, to the soundtrack of lederhosen-wearing old-timers playing alpenhorns while tourists posed next to them for photos. Talk about good, clean, wholesome fun. It was an aerial, aural confluence of past and present, historic and modern. It was a perfect metaphor for Lucerne.

Richter kindly offered to drive me back to town in her convertible. The road wound along the lakeshore, past swimming holes and the Richard Wagner Museum, the manor on a bluff where the composer created *The Ring Cycle*, *Tristan und Isolde*, however, was written during Wagner’s days living in the city’s grande dame, the Hotel Schweizerhof. This stately, 170-year-old property with its wood-paneled antique elevator, coverable alfresco seating just off the sidewalk and away from the hot pollen—an old-world spot if ever there was one—looks across the neck of the lake at the resolutely contemporary Luzern Culture and Congress Centre, under whose dramatic apron roof lives a concert hall, a gallery, restaurants, bars and a vast waterside patio—the very embodiment of today’s conception of public space.

The contradictions continue. Cobblestones and cubism do not miss the Museum Sammlung Rosengart, brimming with Picassos, including several in a glorious sunlit center room). The Lion Monument, dedicated in memory of the nearly 1,000 Swiss Guards who died defending Louis XIV’s palace during the French Revolution, now trafficked by Asian visitors who



Lucerne is a great city for a stroll. Opposite: The steep train ride up to Mount Pilatus.

### T+L Guide

#### 📍 STAY

**Hotel Schweizerhof Luzern**

Schweizerhofquai, 41-41/41.0-0410, schweizerhof.luzern.ch;

doubles from CHF302.

**Hotel des Balances** Weinmarkt,

41-41/418-2828; balances.ch;

doubles from CHF220.

**Hotel Montana**

Adligenswilerstrasse 22; 41-41/419-0000; hotel-montana.ch;

doubles from CHF245.

**Hotel Pilatus-Kulm** Pilatus-

Bahnen AG, Schlossweg 1, Kriens;

41-41/329-1111; pilatus.ch;

doubles from CHF390 including

four-course dinner and breakfast.

#### ✂️ EAT

**Restaurant Lapin** Musegg

strasse 2; 41-41/418-8000;

de-la-paix.ch; dinner for two CHF100.

**Stadtkeller Swiss Folklore**

Stadtkeller Sternplatz 3;

41-41/410-4733; stadtkeller.ch;

three- or four-course dinners

including Swiss folklore show

from CHF72.

**Spycher Fondue House**

Eiseneggse 15; 41-41/412-3737;

41-41/417-3541; hotel-montana.ch;

dinner for two CHF160.

**Restaurant RED** KKL

Convention Center, Europaplatz

1; 41-41/226-7110; kkl-luzern.ch;

tasting menus from CHF120

for seven courses.

believe in the king of the jungle’s mythic powers of protection, power and prestige. And, in this country known for precision timing, the town is lorded over by the Zyt Tower Clock, hand-wound by an official timekeeper since 1535 to chime the hour one minute in advance, and before all the other clocks in the city.

If that seems a little bit cuckoo, reserve judgment. It’s simply the loudest reminder of all the ways in which this lake region maintains its old traditions while molding itself to the new world. It’s quaint and quirky, and every thing I was looking for in Lucerne. +

#### 👁️ SEE + DO

**Mount Rigi** Two cogwheel

railways and seven cableways

from Kusnacht, Weggis,

Vitznau, Gerisau/Obergsäwend,

Burnnen and Goldblau, rigi.ch

**Mount Pilatus** A brand-new

cableway joins the cogwheel rail

and gondolas as transport

options; there’s also a toboggan

run, ropes course, playground,

two hotels, four restaurants and

innumerable hiking trails.

pilatus.ch

**Victoria’s Visitors Center**

Bohnhofstrasse 3, Burnnen; 41-

41/325-6020; swissknifefactory.com;

admission free, build your own knife CHF30.

**Museum Sammlung Rosengart** Pilatusstrasse 10;

rosengart.ch; adult admission CHF18.

**Richard Wagner Museum**

Richard Wagner, Weg 27,

Trisbähen; 41-41/360-2370;

richard-wagner-museum.ch

**Swiss Museum of Transport**

Lidostrasse 5; 41-41/370-4444;

verkehrs.ch; adult admission CHF30,

with additional costs for

planetarium, chocolate

Adventure and film showings.

**Boat cruises on Lake Lucerne**

Boat restored paddle steamers,

the panoramic Saphir yacht, and

a fleet of other vessels for

lightseeing tours, dinner cruises

or scenic transport to the towns

and mountains dotting the lake. lke.lu.ch; fares from Lucerne start at CHF16.40.

The laid-back life at the top of a run. **Opposite:** An après-ski scene with a view.



# LET IT SNOW



Set off on a course of winter sports in the country that does them best. In Switzerland, there's a winter sport for everyone. **ADAM H. GRAHAM** highlights where to find the best skiing, snowboarding and winter hiking, plus special gear and ski snow gear. **PHOTOGRAPHED BY AURKYN ISHAK**



## ZERMATT

Hands down the most popular mountain resort in Switzerland, car-free Zermatt is located at the base of the iconic 4,478-meter-high Matterhorn whose north face and hooked massif covered in snow is framed by an implausibly blue Alpine sky. The best way to experience it is to slalom down its slopes. Because of this, Zermatt is crammed full of winter sports amenities and teems with tourists shopping on its picturesque main thoroughfare. This sometimes translates to crowded slopes. Fortunately, this is Switzerland and where efficiency is king and most gridlock is avoided by a system of 63 mountain railways capable of moving 50,000 skiers per hour. There are also 73 lifts that lead to 360 kilometers of well-groomed pistes in three ski areas all linked by cable cars and catwalk slopes: the Sunnegga-Rothorn, Gornergrat-Stockhorn, Schwarzsee and Matterhorn Glacier Paradise. If that weren't enough, visitors can ski to Italy's Breuil-Cervinia (via the Theodulpass) for a pizza lunch and come back to Switzerland via cable car for a fondue supper.

But there's more to Zermatt than skiing and the Matterhorn. Freeriders and freestylers come for the Swatch Skiers Cup ([swatchskierscup.com](http://swatchskierscup.com)) and Gravity Park, known for its challenging pipes, kickers and rails. There's also curling, winter paragliding, off-piste heli-skiing, snow hikes and toboggan runs. This year, Zermatt celebrates two milestones: the 150th anniversary of Alpinist Edward Whymper's ascent of the Matterhorn and its 200th birthday with a series of events, including a choreographed bonfire lightshow performed atop 26 different summits and a new self-sufficient hotel cube that will move to 52 sites throughout 2015. ([zermatt.ch/en/150](http://zermatt.ch/en/150); [zermatt.ch/en/Skiing](http://zermatt.ch/en/Skiing); [liftpass.com/CHF79](http://liftpass.com/CHF79))

**APRES-SKI:** The 30-room Cervo ([cervo.ch](http://cervo.ch)), *four-night packages for two from CHF2,500* offers some of the best Matterhorn views around. Its plaid wallpaper and modernist mountain décor provides an ideal hideaway for design-minded skiers. Cervo's wellness facilities include private chalets with hot tubs, while homemade massage oils come from botanicals grown in their own organic garden. After a few runs, kick off your skis at Les Marmottes ([lesmarmottes.ch](http://lesmarmottes.ch)), *doubles from CHF250*, a cozy wood-lined stubei perched just above the Furi gondola. It specializes in wild game dishes like venison in thyme confit or chamouis in cowberry sauce. Keep your body warm well into the night with a nightcap at Hexen Bar ([grampis.ch](http://grampis.ch)), *open until 2 a.m.* on the village's main strip and known for its extensive selection of *glühwein*, whiskies, and spiced teas and coffees.



## SAAS-FEE

Like Zermatt, Saas-Fee is another winter resort town that forbids cars and boasts a plethora of winter sports options, but is decidedly less touristy and generally offers skiers a bit more maneuvering room on the slopes. Through the 1980s and 1990s, Saas-Fee was a favorite of Swiss families with excellent but limited skiing. But it has begun to lure boarders and extreme winter sports enthusiasts who come for tobogganing, ice climbing and a death-defying glacial downhill bike competition. Today, the gorgeous and isolated Saas Valley is home to 22 lifts and more than 150 kilometers of downhill pistes. Saas-Fee's Spilboden ski area is the centerpiece of this network and is accessible by the world's highest metro train, Metro Alpin, which bores directly through



**From far left:** The imposing Matterhorn; the Getzard Palace hotel; nowhere to go but downhill and fast; straight to the top.

**Saas Fee has begun to lure boarders and extreme winter sports enthusiasts who come for ice climbing and an death-defying glacial downhill bike competition**

LEFT: JAKOB HELBIG/GETTY IMAGES

the mountain. Above it are a few more piste networks, including two highlights: Langfluh Glacier and Kreuzboden-Hochsaas. The Langfluh Glacier opened to skiing in 1984 and remains a favorite of snowboarders looking to carve fresh powder in the slippery shadow of the mighty Mischabel Massif. The 2,869-meter-high perch is also home to the world's highest revolving restaurant and a subterranean ice Pavillon ([saas-fee.ch/bergbahn](http://saas-fee.ch/bergbahn)), where visitors can explore a warren of frosty tunnels and cavernous ice grottos that double as galleries for geology exhibits explaining—sometimes in painfully erudite detail—the history of the ancient glacier. Kreuzboden-Hochsaas is perched high above Saas-Grund on

the opposite side of the valley and home to 20 kilometers of winter walking trails, 8 kilometers of cross-country ski trails and various other winter sports draws. Like an illuminated 11-kilometer-long Toboggan run with a thrilling 55-degree incline that stretches from Kreuzboden to Saas-Grund, [saas-fee.ch](http://saas-fee.ch); *daily lift pass from CHF59*.

**APRES-SKI:** Waldhotel Fletschhorn ([fletschhorn.ch](http://fletschhorn.ch)), *doubles from CHF350* is a cozy inn at the end of a woody lane just a 25-minute walk from the center of Saas-Fee village. Its 12 modern, sunlit rooms are bathed in natural wood and white textiles. Saas-Fee has seen a huge upgrade of food quality in the last five years, but Fletschhorn's excellent Michelin-starred Restaurant and Vinotek Fletschhorn, manned by Chef Markus Neff, remains one of the best. It dishes out hearty mountain fare like roasted Alpine lamb chops, truffle "Wellington" poached in white Marsanne, and oven-baked winter apple on vanilla-bean sable and peppered caramel ice cream. Its wine cellars contain 45,000 bottles, many of them local from the canton of Valais and available by the glass.

## GSTAAD

Gstaad is the epitome of power powder. The quaint but moneyed ski resort has all the charm of an alpine village—think weathered barns and fondue-steamed stubei ceilings—with a whopping dollop of glamour: cozy chalets converted to Ralph Lauren and Cartier shops. It also has a decidedly French flair, despite being located on the German-speaking side of Switzerland and's *Pöstli*, the invisible line that separates Switzerland's German and French speaking sides. Nationalities and languages aside,



Gstaad's historic docket of celebrity visitors. Most recently it's seen notables like Ann Hathaway and Kofi Annan, while Madonna—rumored to have bought a chalet here in 2014—has been a fixture on Gstaad's slopes.

Fortunately for winter sports enthusiasts, Gstaad delivers excellent skiing terrain and the massive resort is as expansive as it is expensive.

Gstaad Saanenland boasts 220 kilometers of pistes at up to 3,000 meters. There are 57 lifts that span a wide 19-kilometer swath of majestic Bernese Oberland alpine terrain from Zweismann in the east to Châtaud'Oex in the west and another 32 kilometers to the Diablerets Glacier. Away from the skis, there are 200 kilometers of dedicated winter

walking trails that only require a pair of boots.

Popular with locals, they lead you on quiet strolls past frozen waterfalls and snow-dusted pine boughs that make a great diversion from flashy Gstaad.

Atop it all is Glacier 3000

(*glacier3000.ch*), a sometimes rowdy snow park with toboggan runs, a dog-sledding run, romantic winter sleigh rides and a well-equipped, upgraded Snow park, beloved by freestylers and professional riders. *gstaad.ch*; *daily lift pass* from CHF66.

**APRES-SKI.** The 104-room Gstaad Palace (*palace.ch*; *doubles* from CHF592) is housed in a Gilded-Age palace that looms over the tiny village like a big out-of-place chess rook. Rooms, which come in 13 categories, feature wood-paneled ceilings, cozy plaid loungers, and oversized terraces that offer inspiring views of the toothy 1,800-meter-high Wassengrat. The staff at the 6,000-square-meter spa are ready to coddle you with a bevy of treatments including papaya scrubs, hammam steam and Sisley and Cinq Monde facials. But this is no stuffy, old grand dame hotel. It's Switzerland's definitive party palace, home to the infamous Green Go Bar (*greengocba*) a swank lounge with its own sprawling

indoor pool and a retro '70s-era vibe that recalls design elements from Stud to 54 replete with A-list guests. Be sure to book your table at Die Chesery (*chesery.ch*; *five-course menu* CHF165 *per person*), a cozy and elegant chalet that's become the Gstaad go-to for creative fare and often fills up fast.

Dishes include wild duck with green lentils, cheeseravioli with chirole mushrooms and lobster cappuccino.

## ST. MORITZ

St. Moritz is located in the heart of Switzerland's Romansch-speaking region and like Gstaad, gets its fair share of snow queens and celebrities. Historically, its celebrity culture has veered to the more literary and

**If you can arrive in St. Moritz from the south via the roller coaster 19th-century Bernina Express, one of only five railways with UNESCO World Heritage status**

cultural. Repeat visitors like Hermann Hesse, Thomas Mann, Rilke, Nietzsche, Wagner, Toscanini and Strauss helped make St. Moritz the chic go-to for German speakers that it continues to be today, alongside moneyed Americans, Russians, English, Indians and Italians. But most eyes here in the majestic Engadina Valley are fixed on the twinkling and crystalline Alpine light, which it is renowned for, not the stars who frequent it. Because much of St. Moritz is also on the same sunnier, steeper side of the Alps as Italy, it's an easy drive from Milan. The valley sees plenty of blue-sky days, which are best

enjoyed from its well-known peaks like Piz Bernina, Piz Palù, Corvatsch, Corviglia and Diavolezza. If you can, arrive from the south via the roller-coaster 19th-century Bernina Express train (*bb.ch*; *tickets* from CHF19), one of only five railways in the world's that's been given UNESCO World Heritage status. The train starts in Tirano, Italy before chugging up above the tree line before plunging down cavernous mountain tunnels and over ancient azure glaciers and 19th-century viaducts, all in a feat of

spectacular Swiss Alpine engineering that's as exciting as any mountain run. Just outside St. Moritz is an exceptional winter wonderland with—take a deep breath—horse-drawn sleighs circling a lakeside promenade, an ice-skating rink, 350 kilometers of piste, the steepest start Wall with its 100 percent vertiginous drop), 150 kilometers of winter walking trails, a 200-kilometer network of woody cross-country ski trails, and a half-pipe for snow boarders. It may not have the cozy quaintness of the other stops, but there's a reason St. Moritz lures the glitterati and twice hosted the Winter Olympics (in 1928 and 1948, in case anyone asks); the Engadin Valley is breathtaking.

## Nearby are rustic Alpine chapels decorated with colorful hand-painted Sgraffito—a sort of ancient Alpine graffiti.

Nearby are rustic Alpine chapels decorated with colorful hand-painted Sgraffito—a sort of ancient Alpine graffiti.

**APRES-SKI.** Badrut's Palace

(*badrutspalace.com*; *doubles* from CHF935) is one of the swankiest hotels in Europe with all the trimmings of a typical Swiss Palace hotel including a grand hall, oversized fireplaces, marble tubs, an opulent spa, and even a few modern extras like 2014's new Nobu restaurant to prove its mettle with the cosmopolitan jetset. For something easier on the pocketbook, try the ski-in, ski-out, Nirx Alpina (*nirxalpina.com*; *three-night packages* from CHF440 *for two*), home to an especially modern spa and sauna complex. It's 5 kilometers from glitzy St. Moritz and its 70 rooms feature soft down-topped beds, spruce paneling and striking views of Lake Silvaplana. It's affordable restaurant is one of Switzerland's best hotel eateries; think dishes like house-smoked ribs with mal den pepper sauce and prawns with tandoori spices. Breakfast, with sharp alpine cheeses, homemade fruit preserves, and local honeys, is not to be missed. (*smoritz.ch*; *day pass* from CHF46) +

spectacular Swiss Alpine engineering that's as exciting as any mountain run. Just outside St. Moritz is an exceptional winter wonderland with—take a deep breath—horse-drawn sleighs circling a lakeside promenade, an ice-skating rink, 350 kilometers of piste, the steepest start Wall with its 100 percent vertiginous drop), 150 kilometers of winter walking trails, a 200-kilometer network of woody cross-country ski trails, and a half-pipe for snow boarders. It may not have the cozy quaintness of the other stops, but there's a reason St. Moritz lures the glitterati and twice hosted the Winter Olympics (in 1928 and 1948, in case anyone asks); the Engadin Valley is breathtaking.

THOMAS STANKIEWICZ/GETTY IMAGES



Snowboarding solo in the Swiss Alps.

T+L DECODER

Our Definitive Guide to

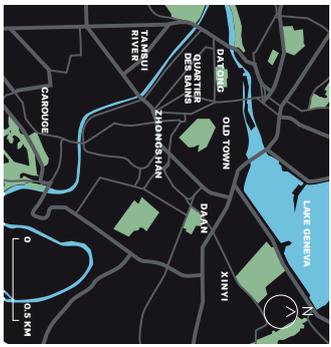
# Geneva

Lakeside in Geneva.

The City of Peace and Calvin is also a cultural hotspot brimming with local art, unbeatable cuisine and an irrepressible joie de vivre—all against a backdrop of distant, snow-capped mountains. **By Diana Hubbell**



STAY  
—  
SHOP  
—  
SEE+DO  
—  
EAT  
—  
LOCAL TAKE



Room with a view at the Four Seasons. Below: At the Mandarin Oriental Geneva.

# Stay

## Geneva's design-oriented hotels and some grand classics

### HOTEL N+V

This design darling owes much of its striking style to artist-in-residence Triny Prada and street graffiti master Veras One, whose original murals decorate both the downstairs lobby and the rooms. Bold, mod furnishings add to the edgy aesthetic. *hotelnvgeneva.com*; doubles from CHF180.

### FOUR SEASONS HOTEL DES BERGUES

Though this grande dame has graded the Right Bank since 1834, it feels fresh thanks to a 2009 overhaul. Much of the old Belle Époque style endures, though it's now complemented by modern luxuries, including a 1,200-square-meter rooftop spa with a dazzling panorama of the Alps. *fourseasons.com*; doubles from CHF700.

### SWISSOTEL METROPOLÉ GENEVA

Slickly designed and still shining



from a complete refurbishment finished in 2014, the only five-star on the Left Bank offers easy access to the city's central shopping and business districts. All of the 127 rooms and suites offer amenities such as an extensive pillow menu and local Favarger chocolates, while the upper-tier options include extras such as a personal hammam shower or Jacuzzi. *swissotel.com*; doubles from CHF510.

### GRAND HOTEL KEMPINSKI GENEVA

The view of Geneva's famous Jet d'Eau's 140-meter water plume from the glass-encased FloorTwo Lounge at this grande dame is nothing short of spectacular. Also home to the city's largest indoor pool, a sprawling spa, three restaurants and a nightclub. *kempinski.com*;

### MANDARIN ORIENTAL GENEVA

From the Michelin-starred Indian restaurant Rasoi to Café Calla with more than 1,500 different wines in its cellar, this elegant number on the Rhone offers plenty of places to meet and mingle. Sophisticated rooms and

doubles from CHF460.

### HOTEL EDELWEISS GENEVA

If you can't make it out to the slopes of Verbier, this inner-city chalet might just be the next best thing. Cute but never kitsch, the 42 rooms are tastefully done up in fragrant pine wood while the signature restaurant features traditional Swiss dishes made with locally sourced products. *hoteldedelweissgeneva.com*; doubles from CHF155.

# Shop

## Five local links to modern shopping.

**1 L'Adresse (Eaux-Vives)** Lunch on organic dishes at the store's restaurant, then shop for eco-friendly cosmetics and the latest collections from designers such as Diane von Furstenberg and Isabel Marant Etolie. *laddress.ch*.

**2 Le Bal des Créateurs** The Quartier des Bains houses a full-fledged beauty salon, as well as an exhibition space and range of upscale accessories for purchase. *lebaldescreateurs.com*.

**3 Little Nemo** Kitsch art and comics cover every bit of this charming gallery in Carouge. Pick up a tongue-in-cheek superhero print or an original watercolor book



**4 Theodora** It may be not quite as famed for its perfumes as it is for its watches, but Geneva is a city that knows its scents. Track down rare fragrances as this elegant parfumerie.

**5 Meubles et Cie** A carefully curated, eclectic mix of furnishings makes this design haven a must for anyone with an eye for interior decorating. Established & SONS, Geneva's 1882 and Moooi are just a few of the labels you'll find here. *meubles-cie.ch*.



Clockwise from top left: At Le Bal des Créateurs; Kitschy Little Nemo; eco-friendly L'Adresse.

# See+Do

**EMBARK ON A CRUISE** There's no better way to take in the sights of this aquatically centered city than by boat. Tours of varying lengths depart almost hourly and pass by the picturesque river banks, the mermaid statue and, of course, the beloved "Jeddou," as Genevans affectionately call



their iconic fountain. *swissboat.com*.

**TAKE IN THE MUSEUMS** Scroll through the experimental multimedia installations at Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (*mmc.ch*); explore the world's humanitarian efforts at the interactive Red

Cross Museum (*redcrossmuseum.ch*); or delve into the proud history of Swiss watchmaking at the Patek Philippe Museum (*patekmuseum.com*), which showcases more than a thousand antique timepieces decorated with gold, jewels and hand-painted lacquer.

**HUNT FOR TREASURE AT THE MARKETS** Original works of art, antiques and vintage gems are all display at the Saturday morning flea market on the Plaine de Plainpalais. On Sunday, the same space transforms into a foodie frenzy, with stalls hawking everything from Peruvian ceviche to Sicilian seafood salads to entire roasted suckling pigs. Wednesday and Saturday mornings bring a similar wealth of gourmet goodies to the Place du Marche in lovely, leafy Carouge.

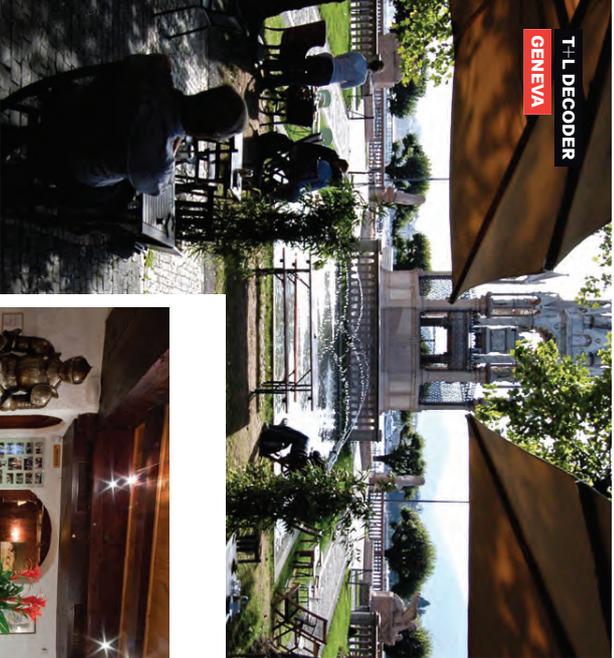
**ROOFTOP VIEWING** Haul your camera up to the north tower in Cathedral St.—Piere to take in the rooftops of Calvin's

Leave time for some local culture, both old and new.

**GO FOR A WALK IN A NEARBY PARK** It's almost impossible not to stop and linger by the giant dress boards in the shady Parc des Bastions. Dive into a game or order a coffee at the stunningly restored Le Café Restaurant du Parc des Bastions and watch the day go by through the giant floor-to-ceiling windows.

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF FOUR SEASONS; COURTESY OF MANDARIN ORIENTAL

CREDIT: XXXXXXXXX



Clockwise from left: Popular Geneva menus at Cottage Café, Le Thermomètre and Restaurant Les Armures.



# Eat

When in Geneva, dine like the locals.



## LE THERMOMETRE

You may have to claw your way inside this popular lunchtime spot, but the generous portions of classics such as salmon tartar and steak with rich potatoes *doughnouse* are worth the wait. Rue Neuve-du-Molard 22; CHF60.

## CAFE PAGON

Tucked away in an atmospheric nook in Geneva's old town, the café's braised lamb shank melts with the gentle tug of a fork and the classic soupe de poisson is richly aromatic and reddent of the sea. Expect friendly service and smartly updated classics. *cafe-pagon.com*; CHF100.

## BRASSERIE LIPP

From the butter-bathed escargot to the North African-inflected seafood couscous perfumed with saffron, everything is spot-on. *brasserie-lipp.com*; CHF140.

## COTTAGE CAFE

This fairytale wooden cottage is a little piece of the countryside in the the Right Bank. A concise menu of rotating lunch specials—try the quinoa salad—offers light tites and a chance to kick back. *cottagecafe.ch*; lunch for two CHF60.

## RESTAURANT LES ARMURES

Boasting what many consider to be the best fondue in town, this gem in a refurbished 17th-century boutique hotel shouldn't be missed. The signature dish gets its unctuous creaminess from a blend of Vechernin and Gruyère cheeses, plus a little extra oomph from a healthy slug of Cognac. Don't forget to try the seasonal specials, such as the fig carpaccio with burrata mozzarella, toasted hazelnuts and artisanally cured ham. *hotel-les-armures.ch*; CHF100.

## CAFE DU CENTRE

The Meut flows fast and freely at this decadent brunch spot, where the Benedictines are good and the people-watching even better. Book a table outside and order a round of crisp potato rosti or go all out and with plates of oysters and whole grilled lobsters. *cafeduceentre.ch*; brunch for two CHF60.

## CAFE DU MARCHÉ

On a sun-drenched square in Carouge, this bistro serves a short, daily menu with a welcome side of charm. Come on a Saturday, when the local food market outside is in full swing, order a perfect café au lait and soak in the ambience. *cafe-du-marche.ch*; CHF90.

Restaurant prices represent approximate cost for dinner for two, unless otherwise noted.

## Drink

**Le Verre À Montique**  
This speakeasy-style joint in the artsy Quartier des Bains is where mixologists and cocktail connoisseurs go for potent elixirs. *verremontique.ch*.

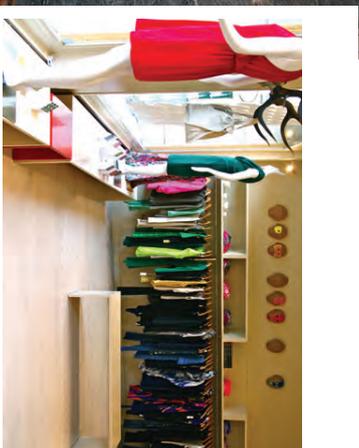
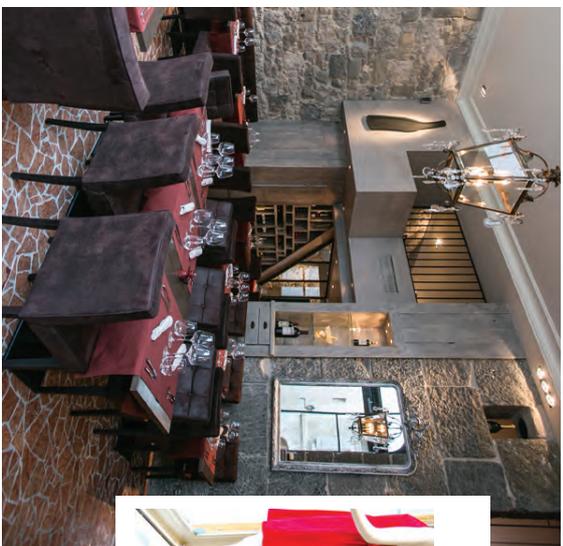
**Le Bateau-Lavoir**  
Once an old laundry-washing boat, this barge has been transformed into a trendy spot for tapas and drinks on the river. *bateau-lavoir.ch*.

**Le Rouge et le Blanc**  
At this classic wine bar on the banks of the Rhone, the duck foie gras, Brie and tapas are all made in-house from scratch. *lerougeblanc.ch*.

**Rooftop 42**  
"Cocktails with a view" is an understatement at this sleek, eight-story spot where pretty young things go to preen and sip iced-inflused saketinis. Come in the evening or spend the whole Sunday at one of the city's most over-the-top brunch spreads. *rooftop42.com*.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF COTTAGE CAFE; COURTESY OF LE THERMOMETRE; COURTESY OF RESTAURANT LES ARMURES

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF LE FLACON; COURTESY OF SEPTIEME ETAGE; COURTESY OF CAFE DE LA PAIX. ILLUSTRATIONS BY WASINEE CHANTAKORN



Clockwise from far left: Le Flacon; Septieme Etage; the comfortable Le Café de la Paix.

## Local Take

Three insiders share their favorite places in Geneva.



**ADRIANO VENTURINI**  
Chef at Swissotel Metropole Geneva

The chef at **Le Flacon** (*leflacon.ch*; dinner for two CHF80) is a friend of mine. The restaurant recently picked up a Michelin star, but is still reasonably priced for the quality of the food. **Le Trois Verres** (*lestroisverres.ch*; dinner for two CHF140) is very different than other Italian places. I think that this is the most interesting restaurant in Geneva right now. **Le Chat Noir** (*chatnoir.ch*; drinks for two CHF20) has tapas and cocktails in an artsy area. Finally, **5** (*swissotel.com*; drinks for two CHF40) bar is one of the best in town. It has an amazing terrace overlooking the city.



**PHILLIP CRAMER**  
Designer

**Luigia** (*luigia.ch*; dinner for two CHF110) is a buzzing pizzeria with a twist. A plus is that it's super central, so there's no need to drive after all of the vino rosso. **Auberge du Cheval Blanc** (*cheval-blanc-du-carré.com*; dinner for two CHF20) is for summer only. It's a bit far from the center, but it's worth it. When you are seated in the garden, surrounded by vineyards, you are on vacation as long as your dinner lasts. **Tschin Ta Ni** (*tschin-ta-ni.ch*) is a funny little shop that sells all kinds of Chinese tea. It really belongs in a Woody Allen movie. **Septieme Etage** (*septieme.com*) is the best place to get dollied up.



**VINCENT DEBERGE**  
Sommelier at Hôtel Beau Rivage Genève

For its size, Geneva offers a surprising number of restaurants and bars. For a nice meal, go to **Le Café de la Paix** (*cafe-de-la-paix.ch*; dinner for two CHF20), the new eatery of Sylvain Le Boutec, formerly owner of L'Archiataut. Same food, but larger premises. For a delicious hamburger in a lively environment try **Ingledwood** (*ingledwood.ch*; dinner for two CHF30), not far from the Jet d'Eau. Those looking for a more gastronomic experience should head to **La Réunion** (*restaurant-reunion.ch*; dinner for two CHF20) in the village of Vesvrier. It's about 10 minutes from downtown and at the foot of the Salève mountain.

