



SWITZERLAND

A REAL-LIFE FAIRY TALE IN THE SWISS ALPS

ALPINE SUMMER



THIS PAGE: Stroll the small streets and cafes of Old Town Zurich. OPPOSITE, FROM LEFT: Rest and relax while riding the Glacier Express. Be on the lookout for storybook characters amongst the Swiss sheep. Around every corner is a postcard-worthy landscape.



Hiking the Swiss Alps and experiencing its natural beauty is something that never leaves you. From the wildflowers in bloom and soaring peaks to goats and glaciers, there are so many opportunities for ah-ha moments in Switzerland that will take you to new heights. Get your hiking boots, cameras, and appetites ready for an awe-inspiring summer adventure to Switzerland.

Written by Heidi Sieffkas

ZURICH

Zurich is the perfect place to start and finish your Swiss journey. Whether you arrive by air or train to this global financial hub, you will witness how efficient the Swiss are—especially with transportation. In fact, it is said that you

can set your watch by the train and bus schedules. Switzerland is amazingly tidy and organized, making travel very easy and enjoyable. Most travelers decide to stay here and rest up a day on either end of travel to Switzerland. Some decide to explore the Old Town on foot,

grab a bite or an Aperol Spritz (citrus liquor and sparkling wine) at one of countless outdoor cafés, or visit the Fraumünster Church, built in 853 with beautiful Chagall stained-glass windows. If you thrive on the hip and trendy, head to the West Quarter to indulge in



Zurich's foodie and craft-beer scene as well as street art and design; Frau Gerolds Garten by the railway tracks is a good starting point.

ENGADINE REGION

By train, leave Zurich for St. Moritz whereby every passing quarter of an hour you see fewer homes and more pristine mountain streams and lakes. As you make your way to Engadine, the peaks continue to get higher until they are soaring above you. Within three-and-a-half hours, you arrive at Sils-Maria, a quaint cottage town at the foot of the Alps that is surrounded by aquamarine lakes and farmland. After checking in to a mountain lodge, settle in by the fireplace to refuel with a Swiss fondue or raclette.

Sils-Maria is a beautiful, yet easy-to-use base for summer hiking in Engadine. Repurposed ski resort chairlifts are used to transport hikers in the summer, thus taking the hard elevation gain out of the hikes and allowing you to cover more terrain and quickly reap the rewards of the alpine vistas. Be aware that all signs are written in hours not in kilometers and that weather is unpredictable. Although it is summer, you may experience sun, rain, snow, and wind all in one hike. At the higher elevations, you might catch a

glimpse of the national flower of Switzerland: the rare, white Edelweiss.

At most of the mountain hotels, you will have access to a spa. Take care of yourself post-hike for a better recovery of your muscles and joints by trying the hot saunas, both dry and wet. Then, enjoy a white wine from the Valais Region while watching the starry night sky unfold.

THE VALAIS REGION AND SAAS-FEE

Continue exploring Switzerland by boarding the Glacier Express train, which runs from St. Moritz to Zermatt. Relax in comfortable seats and take in the postcard setting, where around each bend is another epic mountain slope peppered with flocks of sheep and goats or surprising waterfalls and raging rivers.

Eventually, you'll arrive in Saas-Fee where there are, charmingly, no cars. Your accommodations may use a handcart or small scooter to carry your bags, providing you with the opportunity to meander Saas-Fee's small shops, cafés, bakeries, and more on your way to your cottage. Like Sils-Maria, almost all roads lead to the chairlifts. Grab some dried fruits from town and hit the trails for the most popular hike to the Britannia Hut.

ZERMATT AND MATTERHORN

Your next can't-miss stop is Zermatt: the most famous climbing and skiing town in the world. It is home to Matterhorn, one of Europe's highest peaks (14,691 feet). For the best view of Matterhorn without training for years or hiring a professional climbing guide and team, take the Gornergrat Railway. From the opposing mountainside, relish the majestic view from the outdoor café at the Kulmhotel Gornergrat while sipping on a Cardinal beer or a refreshing Panaché (a concoction of lemon soda and light beer, like a shandy).

Although Switzerland is famed for being the maker of the world's best watches, pocketknives, and—of course—chocolate, it also has some of the most remarkable alpine regions for unforgettable summer hiking. Your body will feel an aerobic high from your daily adventures. Your mind will be blown away by so many mesmerizing feats of nature. You may even feel like you are living in a fantasy where characters such as Heidi, Peter, and Grandfather walk alongside you. Experience the beauty of a real-life fairy tale in Switzerland. ■