



Alpine Splendor: Switzerland and Austria

The towering peaks of the Alps serve as the stunning backdrop for our Swiss and Austrian exploration. As our small group discovers mountain villages and European cities, rides the famed Glacier Express, cruises on glassine lakes, and ascends snowcapped summits, borders disappear and the region's history – and beauty – enchant one and all.

Itinerary

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Day-by-Day Itinerary

DAY 1: Depart U.S. for Zurich, Switzerland

DAY 2: Arrive Zurich/Lake Lucerne

We arrive in Zurich and transfer to our hotel on the shores of Lake Lucerne. After checking in, we meet for a briefing about the journey ahead, followed by dinner at our hotel.

Meals: Dinner

DAY 3: Lake Lucerne/Mt. Pilatus

On this morning's walking tour, we encounter historic and alluring Lucerne, surrounded by mountains and sitting on its namesake lake. We visit the medieval Old Town and cross treasured *Kapellbrücke* (Chapel Bridge), the oldest covered bridge in Europe. Then we ride the world's steepest cogwheel train to the summit of nearby Mt. Pilatus for stunning views across the surrounding countryside. Next we enjoy a ferry ride on scenic Lake Lucerne, arriving back in Lucerne late this afternoon. We cap the day with dinner at a local restaurant.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 4: Lake Lucerne/Zermatt

We transfer to Chur this morning where we board the celebrated *Glacier Express* train, renowned for its panoramic views as it sweeps through striking valleys, past mountain hamlets, and follows the course of the fabled Rhône. We enjoy lunch on board as we cross the Oberalp Pass, at almost 7,000 feet above sea level, the highest point on the train's route. After this scenic overload, we reach Zermatt, gateway to the Swiss Alps in the shadow of the Matterhorn. Dinner tonight is on our own.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 5: Zermatt/Gornergrat

Sitting in a low-slung notch, Zermatt is surrounded on all sides by towering slopes. We get a unique view of the spectacular scenery this morning as we ride the *Gornergratbahn*, to the summit of the Gornergrat. Atop this rocky ridge, a dramatic tapestry unfolds all around us: 29 Alpine peaks, each over 13,000 feet, including the majestic Matterhorn standing alone at nearly 15,000 feet. After admiring the jaw-dropping scenery, we begin our descent by train to Zermatt, where the remainder of the day is free to explore this very walkable village as we wish.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 6: Zermatt/Stresa, Italy/Lugano

We travel by coach today through more superb Swiss scenery and cross into northern Italy via the legendary Simplon Pass through the Alps. Late this morning we arrive in Stresa, Italy, along the shores of lovely Lake Maggiore, where we have time to explore and enjoy lunch on our own. Then we drive back into Switzerland and arrive at our hotel in lakeside Lugano.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 7: Lugano/Bellinzona/Ascona

This morning we travel to medieval Bellinzona with its three feudal castles, all UNESCO sites. Here we visit Castelgrande, the iconic central castle where we explore the ramparts and expansive grounds. Then we enjoy regional fare as we lunch alfresco at a local grotto restaurant built around mountain caves. This afternoon we explore Ascona on the shores of Lake Maggiore. We take a walking tour of this charming town known for its pastel lakefront façades and an early 20th-century artists' colony.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 8: Lake Lugano

This morning we board a motorboat for a private half-day cruise around Lake Lugano. We put ashore at Morcote, a town barely a mile square whose cobbled streets, terraced gardens, and Mediterranean charm led Swiss citizens in 2016 to name it the nation's loveliest village. After lunch together and time to explore, we return to Lugano and in the late afternoon enjoy a winery tour and tasting.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 9: Lugano/Vaduz, Liechtenstein/Seefeld, Austria

Leaving the Lake District today, we're bound for Austria by way of the tiny sovereign nation of Liechtenstein. We travel north to Liechtenstein, reaching the country's capital of Vaduz, where we have free time to explore and have lunch on our own. We continue on to Austria, reaching our hotel in the mountain village of Seefeld early this evening. We dine together tonight at a local restaurant.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 10: Seefeld/Innsbruck

This morning we coach to nearby Innsbruck, host of the 1964 and 1976 Winter Olympics. A walking tour highlights the postcard-worthy sights, including the many pedestrian squares surrounded by pastel-colored façades. Then we take a cable car to a lookout in the Nordkette, the "mountain at the heart of Innsbruck," where we enjoy panoramic views of the city and the surrounding Alps. We have time on our own in Innsbruck before we return to Seefeld.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 11: Seefeld/Tyrol/Salzburg

Today we travel through Tyrol, a crossroads of Western Europe, en route to Salzburg. We stop to visit the Museum of Tyrolean Farms, an interactive outdoor exhibit featuring dozens of preserved farmhouses dating from the 15th century onwards. Then we continue on to Salzburg, Austria's riverside jewel and city of Mozart and *The Sound of Music*. Following dinner together, we attend a classical music concert in the Marble Room of famed Mirabell Palace.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 12: Salzburg

Our walking tour this morning features the geometrically-styled Mirabell Gardens, dating to the 17th century; the Baroque Old Town, now a UNESCO site; and visits to Salzburg Cathedral and medieval Hohensalzburg Fortress, one of Europe's largest and best-preserved castles. Then the remainder of the day is free for independent exploration.

Meals: Breakfast

DAY 13: Salzburg/Eagle's Nest/Berchtesgaden

We travel today to the Bavarian resort town of Berchtesgaden, site of the clifftop *Kehlsteinhaus* (Eagle's Nest), the Nazi Party's alpine retreat. Arriving by the original 1930s brass elevator, we tour the chalet where Hitler paid multiple visits before it was captured by the Allies in the closing days of WWII. In the event Eagle's Nest is closed because of unseasonal weather, we'll visit the nearby Berchtesgaden Salt Mine, which has operated continuously for more than 500 years. Then we return to Salzburg for an afternoon at leisure before tonight's farewell dinner.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 14: Depart for U.S.

We transfer today to the Munich airport for our return flight to the U.S.

Meals: Breakfast

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