

STEAMING SWITZERLAND FACT SHEET



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Walks-4-U

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Switzerland was one of the first countries in Europe if not the world to have been discovered by tourism. Already during the 19th century, people from all over Europe – and particularly from Britain – travelled to the heart of Europe, to visit this small country and to discover the unspoilt, pristine beauty of the Alps. Tourists were and still are drawn to and spell-bound by the awe-inspiring, breathtaking sight of mighty, snow covered summits, the vertical world of enormous rock faces and the eternal ice of the longest glaciers Europe has to offer. The world has changed a lot since tourism started to discover Switzerland but the mountains of the Swiss Alps have lost nothing of their magnificence, splendour and fascination. The mixture of the French, German and Italian influences as well as being surrounded by Alpine mountains has formed Switzerland's unique people and culture. Switzerland hosts about 20% of the Alps, and approximately 100 peaks are close to or higher than 4000 meters.

But Switzerland offers not only splendid mountains, tranquil meadows and a wonderful landscape to marvel at, the country is also well known for its public transport system which is considered to be among the best in the world. The construction of this public transport system – mainly the railways of course – has started more than 150 years ago. The electrification of the railway lines was initiated in the early 20th century already, but fortunately, in spite of this early switch to electric propulsion, a number of steam locomotives have been preserved and have been brought back to active life during the past few years and decades and are now offering a marvellous way to travel through the mountainous scenery of Switzerland. The same is true for the many lakes the country has to offer. More than 15 steamboats still ply the waves of the Swiss inland waters and continue to offer regular, scheduled service for everyone to enjoy.

Our tour "Steaming Switzerland" has been designed to include as many trips on steamboats and steam trains possible during one week. The tour can be started any day by groups of at least two persons, but we can also arrange the same tour for single travellers against a surcharge. Please ask for details.



1. Day to Day Programme

Day 1: Interlaken. Travel from the U.K. to Geneva Airport by your own arrangement or with the assistance of any travel agency you like. Travel from Geneva Airport to Interlaken on one of the comfortable, frequent Swiss trains. Depending on your exact time of arrival, you have the option of stopping in Thun on the shore of Lake Thun. Store your luggage at the station of Thun and board the steamer "Blüemlisalp" which is berthed only a stone throw away from the station building. Optionally – and against a surcharge – we can book an evening dinner cruise on the lake onboard the "Blüemlisalp" for you. This evening dinner cruise leaves Thun at 18.38 h and returns at 21.15 h – allowing you to travel onward to Interlaken with an arrival there and subsequent check-in at your hotel before 22.00 h. If you arrive early enough at the airport of Geneva, you may want to check in at your hotel in Interlaken first, before returning by train to Thun for the evening cruise. The steamer "Blüemlisalp" was built 1906 at the Escher Wyss works in Zurich (far away from any lake!), has a length of 63.45 m, width of 13.30 m and displaces 390 tons. Her passenger capacity is 720 persons and she is powered by a 2 cylinder Escher Wyss engine that allows a travel speed of 25 km/h (13.5 knots).

Day 2: Interlaken - Brienz. This morning, you may want to get up for a late breakfast or perhaps you prefer to explore the streets of Interlaken, the well known little city between the lakes, i.e. between the Lake of Thun and the lake of Brienz, both of which may mirror the dramatic and awe-inspiring panorama of the mighty trio Eiger, Mönch and the Jungfrau. Leave your luggage in any case at the hotel - it will be forwarded to your next overnight stop in Brienz.

At 11.10 h, board the second steamer of your holiday, the "Lötschberg" which is unique among the fleet of Swiss steamers in respect to her colouring. You soon will find out why, since her hull is painted a very light green, making her a very distinguished and unmistakably individual old lady. During a short cruise of approx. 1 ½ hours, the "Lötschberg" will bring you to the lakehead, to a small town called Brienz, famous for its wood carvers, its romantic setting on the lake shore - and for yet another steam attraction, already waiting for you only a few steps from the boat lading!

Your attention will now fully belong to the steam train with its engine that is unmistakably a mountain railway design, as the locomotive is tilted forward - a surprising but practical invention as the main structure of the engine becomes more or less even once it starts to push its train steeply uphill. It's slow motion, but from the dark red carriages, you will be spell-bound by the view and certainly will not miss any chance to take a picture of the steaming engine at the rear of your train.



© Photo: Brienz Rothorn Bahn

Arriving at the top station of the Brienz Rothorn, a short walk brings you to the summit of this mountain, which offers superb views over the peaks of the Bernese Oberland and down to the two lakes of Thun and Brienz. Return with the same train or wait for another one - if you are sportive, you may also spend the afternoon on a splendid walk along the mountain ridge leading you over to the Brünig Pass (approx 4 hours walk), from where you can return by train to Brienz. Whether on foot or by train, once you are back at Brienz, you will look forward to the cosy hotel room, that has been

booked for you and your luggage is already waiting for you in the hotel.

Day 3: Brienz - Lucerne. You leave Brienz in the morning and get on one of the red trains of the „Zentralbahn“. The railway line of this company, which connects Interlaken with Lucerne and also operates a branch line from Lucerne to Engelberg, is narrow gauge (1000 mm width) and the line also climbs a number of steep ascents. To overcome these steep parts, the engines rely on the support of a rack rail, as you soon find out, once your trains leaves the station of Meiringen and starts its slow ascent to the line's culmination point on the Brünig Pass, 1002 metres above sea level. The descent from the pass towards



© Photo: SGV Luzern

the East includes also a number of sections, where the engine is aided by the rack rail again. After the stop at Giswil, its flat terrain again and the train speeds towards Lake Lucerne and the city of Lucerne itself. The train ride from Brienz to Lucerne takes 1 ½ hours, giving you plenty of time for a cruise on Lake Lucerne in the afternoon. Check in at your hotel, situated in the heart of Lucerne's traffic free old nucleus. Of course, you can spend the afternoon exploring Lucerne with its world famous, covered wooden bridge spanning the river Reuss or visit the highly interesting traffic museum, but most certainly, you will be drawn to the landing stage, situated right next to the railway station, and take a cruise on Lake Lucerne, perhaps going as far as Flüelen at the lake head of Fjord-like Urnersee, southern part of the lake, and you certainly will not be disappointed by the scenery on your voyage. The trip from Lucerne to Flüelen and return takes about 6 hours 15 minutes and we'll of course indicate in your personal itinerary, which trips are operated by a steamer on the day you arrive at Lucerne. There are also shorter

roundtrips available or you only sail to Brunnen, returning on a different steamer to Lucerne, or you may choose the afternoon cruise heading for a different arm of the lake, the Alpnachersee – the choice is yours! In the evening, you'll find a vast selection of good and cosy restaurants to choose from in Lucerne, but why not have dinner on the steamer "Wilhelm Tell" which is not in operation anymore but is preserved as a floating restaurant in the centre of Lucerne.

Day 4: Lucerne. This morning, you get on one of the frequent, very modern double-deck trains which brings you to the city of Zurich in a little less than an hour. From the main station of Zurich, you get either on a tram or walk down the Bahnhofstrasse, a famous shopping mile to the shore of Lake Zurich, where one of the two lake steamers "Stadt Rapperswil" or "Stadt Zürich" wait for you. Take a cruise on the long and narrow Lake of Zurich which has a totally different character than the lakes you already know, as its shores are lined with hills only rather than mountains and the area is also more densely populated. You are sure to enjoy this trip as well, watching the lovely landscape and the numerous other ships on the lake, including the five ferries that shuttle back and forth between Horgen and Meilen, about halfway between Zurich and Rapperswil. Unless it's a Sunday, the steamer turns round in Rapperswil, on a Sunday, you have the chance of going as far as Schmerikon on the very head of the Upper Lake. Once in Rapperswil, you may want to return on "your" steamer back to Zurich and return home to Lucerne the same way you came. You can also go ashore in Rapperswil, explore this pretty little town and then board the "Voralpenexpress", a train that takes you through lovely countryside, along the northern edge of the Alps, back to Lucerne for a second night in this attractive city.

Day 5: Lucerne – Realp. Board one of Lake Lucerne's steamers again to sail for Flüelen at the very upper end of the lake. The journey to Flüelen takes about 3 hours and leads you through magnificent scenery of impressive mountains that engulf the lake, particularly the southern lake arm called Urnersee. Believe it or not, this part of the lake is feared during storms that rage when winds from the south pound the waves of the lake and make any boat trip to Flüelen a minor adventure. Since you carry your luggage with you on the trip, please report to the crew of the board upon boarding – they will take care of your luggage and store it in a safe place for your journey to Flüelen.

In Flüelen, you change to the railway station just a few steps away from the landing stage and board the next train bound for Göschenen, where you change to the cogwheel train of the Matterhorn-



Gotthardbahn, which takes you up the Schöllenen Schlucht, a narrow gorge, to Andermatt and further on to the very small village of Realp. Enjoy the tranquillity and the slow pace of this place and take the chance for a walk in the vicinity to enjoy the views of this Alpine region.



© Photo: Dampfbahn Furka-Bergstrecke AG

Day 6: Realp – Lausanne. The railway line over the Furka Pass, between the villages of Realp and Oberwald used to be summer only. During the winter season, bridges and electricity masts were removed to make sure that this part of the railway line was not destroyed by avalanches. There was simply no way to keep this line open during winter with avalanches thundering down from the steep slopes onto the rails. Several years ago, after many years of construction, a tunnel was opened between these two places and the Matterhorn – Gotthard railway company now operates year round and runs direct trains between St. Moritz and Zermatt. The old line across the Furka pass however became obsolete after the opening of the tunnel and thus, a private organisation was created with the aim of running steam trains on the old line. The dream came through and the association, which later became a Limited Company, even found an original old engine which had to be taken back from Vietnam to Switzerland!






The train ride from Realp (1420 above sea level) is an unforgettable trip in one of the carefully restored old-timer trains. The more than 80 years old steam engine climbs uphill along the wild waters of the River Reuss (which you had already met at Lucerne...), across old bridges, including a folding bridge and through several tunnels, to Tiefenbach where water needs to be filled. Boiler full again, the journey continues past Alpine meadows full of flowers and after crossing the Steinstafel viaduct, the highest point at the Furka station at 2160 m is reached. The true saddle of the pass is a little higher up but the engineers who constructed the line have chosen the solution of a 1874 metres long tunnel below the summit. Next comes a stop at Muttbach-Belvédère, famous for its view of the mighty (albeit nowadays much smaller) Rhone Glacier, which train passengers however cannot yet see. Now the rail starts a steep descent with a gradient of up to 118 pro mille. During this descent, the Rhone Glacier finally comes into view and you will be spell-bound by this enormous frozen river with the backdrop of impressive peaks that are covered under eternal snow. The trip across the Furka ends in Gletsch (1760 m). The rest of the old line between Gletsch and Oberwald is still being restored but it is hoped that the steam trains soon can continue their journey to Oberwald, thus completing the original, historic Furka railway line. After a stop of 1 ½ hours (perfect for having lunch), the train starts its return journey to Realp, that you reach at 15.45 h.

Get your luggage and then board one of the regular trains of the Matterhorn – Gotthard Bahn and look forward to another enjoyable ride through wonderful scenery to Brig, where you spend the night.

Day 7: Brig – Lausanne. Take one of the early trains from Brig to Lausanne and check in at your hotel in Lausanne which is a fairly large city at the shores of Lake Geneva. There is ample time during the afternoon to take a last cruise on a lake, or perhaps even two cruises, taking you on one of Lake Geneva's steamboats to St. Gingolph and return and if you have not had enough yet, you may even continue to Geneva and have dinner on the boat or in the city of Geneva, from where you return to Lausanne by train for your final night.



Day 8: Return. From Lausanne, it's only a short train ride to Geneva Airport from where you return home to the U.K.

	Daily from End of June through end of September. See below remark regarding the Furka Steam Train.
	7 x Hotel
	7 x Breakfast
	All train/boat trips as per itinerary; Reservation on the Furka Steam-Train; Luggage Transfer from Interlaken to Brienz.
	CHF 1'475/UK£ 675 per person, based on 2 persons sharing, from/to Geneva Airport. Surcharge for 1st class travel on trains (except Brienz-Rothorn Bahn) and boats: CHF 215/UK£ 95; dinner cruise on Lake Thun: CHF 105/UK£ 45 per person.

2. Good to Know

- On this tour you are supplied with a "Swiss Pass" valid for 8 days. This ticket allows you unlimited travel on most trains, busses and boats in Switzerland. Upon booking, we need your personal details such as full name and address, as well as your passport number so that we can get the Swiss Pass for you. The Pass will then be sent to your home address on time before you leave for Switzerland.
- The steam trains over the "Furka" operate daily from July 10 through August 20, 2006 and on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from June 24 through October 1, 2006. Should you choose to travel in the period, when these steam trains operate only on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, it would be best for you to Start your journey on a Sunday, making sure that day 6 of the above itinerary is a Friday. Should this not be possible, please get in touch with us. We'll try to re-design the schedule for you to make sure that you can enjoy the experience of a steam-train ride over the Furka Pass!
- Upon booking, you will get with your documentation a number of suggestions for trips on the lakes, indicating the ship that is scheduled to operate each tour and you will also get a short description of every of the steamboats you are likely to travel on.
- All operators reserve the right to replace a steamboat (or steam-train) with a motor boat respectively a diesel engine for operational/technical or for economical reasons!

3. About the Country

Geography

Switzerland's capital city is Bern, but its largest city is Zürich has almost triple the population. Situated in the middle of Europe and the Alps most of the country is mountainous. Its highest mountain is the Monte Rosa (4636 meters) on the border of Italy. Lac Léman (Lake Geneva), which covers an area of 584 km² is only half in Switzerland but is by far the largest lake in the area. Switzerland has a population of 7.3 million, although 11 million tourists visit every year. Expect mountains, lakes, lush green meadows, trees, wooden chalets and clean air.

Climate The alps divide Switzerland in two different zones: North of the alps, the climate is almost continental, but the area still receives a lot of precipitation from the Atlantic ocean; south of the alps, the climate is more Mediterranean. July and August are usually dry and hot (30°C). Autumn is dry but cooler than summer and can be the best time to go to the mountains.



Language Even though Switzerland is a small country, its people do speak no less than four different languages, French, German, Italian and Swiss-German.

The so called "German speaking" Swiss don't speak the same German as the Germans or the Austrians do, but what is known as "Swiss-German". To make it even worse, each state has its own dialect, but there is no written "Swiss-German" at all! Fortunately, the Germans, the Austrians and the Swiss-Germans use the same written German language which in turn is close to the so called "high German", a "quasi-standard" of the German languages.

4. How to get there

All major Swiss airports (Geneva, Basle, Zurich) are possible gateways for this tour, even though Geneva certainly is the closest airport and the most convenient one for this tour. Airlines such as British Airways or Swiss International Airlines operate frequent daily flights between London and the Swiss Airports and also direct flights from many other airports in the U.K. to Switzerland are available. Easy Jet also operates several connections from British airports to Geneva and Basle. Please feel free to contact your favourite travel agency to select the best flight for you, but of course we will also be happy to be of assistance.

5. Practical Information

Passports and visas British Citizens do not need a visa, however they do need a valid passport.

Vaccinations and medical precautions No vaccinations are necessary for Switzerland and health problems in the area we visit are quite rare. The only "medical precaution" that you might like to take is a small first aid kit to cater for blisters, headaches, coughs, colds, etc. However it is always advisable to be up-to-date with your tetanus jabs. A high factor sun protection lotion is essential, as sunburn can be severe on hot days. Water is safe to drink.

Customs The usual customs restrictions apply when entering Switzerland.

Currency Swiss Franc (CHF) All major travellers' cheques and credit cards are accepted. Commission is not charged for changing cash or cheques, but shop around for the best rates (hotels usually have the worst rates). Tipping is rarely necessary as hotels, restaurants and bars are required by law to include a 15% service charge. Even taxi fares normally have a service charge included.

Electricity 220 volts AC, 50 Hz. As the socket outlets require continental plugs it is advisable to carry an adapter if you intend to bring any electrical items with British plugs.

Time Switzerland is one hour ahead of Greenwich Time (GMT+1). Daylight saving time starts in early spring and ends in late autumn.

Tipping The usual courtesy tips can be left in restaurants as anywhere in Europe.

Things to buy Cheese with holes, irresistible chocolates, clocks and watches and cowbells.

Maps The best maps to get are the National Maps of Switzerland by the Federal Office of Topography, which are available at The Map Shop, 15 High Street, Upton-on-Severn, Worcs WR8 0HJ (Tel: 01684 593146) www.themapshop.co.uk or Stanfords at 12-14 Long Acre, London WC2E 9LP (Tel: 0207 836 1321) www.stanfords.co.uk. Maps are also in plentiful supply in Switzerland.



Should you have any further questions about this tour, please get in touch with us. We'll do our best to answer your questions. We would be most delighted to welcome you on a unforgettable journey through Steaming Switzerland!

Best Regards

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