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LOVELY LAKE GENEVA

Alpine chalets and majestic mountains may define the landscape of Switzerland, but uniquely picturesque views abound along its serene and scenic lakeshores

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While the mighty snow-covered Alps often get top billing, Switzerland is home to more than 1,500 postcard-perfect lakes. Carved and fed by glacier water, these sparkling clear lakes attract swimmers, boaters and beauty seekers.

Crescent-shaped Lake Geneva, known as Lac Léman, is the largest of the Swiss lakes with busy Geneva on one end and Montreux of summer jazz festival fame at the other.

In summer, Belle Epoque paddle steamers offer transport from another era, passing medieval castles and grand hotels while gracefully cutting through the glistening waters between ports of call. Sidewalk cafés are filled with diners taking in the view; cyclists climb shoreline roads; hikers walk trails past fields of wildflowers; and wine growers work on hilly lakeside vineyards.

The UNESCO World Heritage Lavaux vineyards on Lake Geneva welcome visitors with tasting rooms and winery tours. The principal grape grown is Chasselas, which makes a range of white wines from delicate and floral to rich and full-bodied. It pairs beautifully with fresh fish caught in the lake, such as the tiny perch served at local bistro Le Major Davel, among others, in the quaint village of Cully.

Wine lovers take special note: The spectacular monthlong winegrowers festival called Fête des Vignerons 2019 takes place in Vevey this summer and happens only once every 20 years.

Historically, Lake Geneva's "Swiss Riviera" has attracted the rich and famous. Richard Burton, Audrey Hepburn, David Bowie and Freddie Mercury had homes here, and Charlie Chaplin spent his final years in Vevey where there is a much-photographed statue of him along the lakeside promenade. Fans can visit Chaplin's World museum and buy chocolates in the shape of the shoes of "The Little Tramp" at Swiss chocolate maker Läderach.

A different walk or run through history is presented at The Olympic Museum in Lausanne, headquarters of the International Olympic Committee. You'll even find artifacts from the 1996 Olympic games held in Atlanta. If eating and drinking are your preferred sports, there's a uniquely fascinating museum in Vevey called the Alimentarium, where exhibits include an interactive trip through the digestive tract.

Luxurious hotels in the region have defined the meaning of elegance for over 100 years. Now beautifully renovated with state-of-the-art spas, fitness facilities and in-room technology, the Lausanne Palace and Beau-Rivage Palace (Coco Chanel's favorite) in Lausanne, as well as the charming Grand Hotel du Lac in Vevey, are among the finest hotels in the region. This is Switzerland, so you can set your watch by referring to any of the beautiful clocks in the hotel lobby.

Cuisine shines brightly at area restaurants including the chef Edgard Bovier's one-star Michelin La Table d'Edgard in Lausanne and chef Franck Giovannini's restaurant Hotel de Ville in nearby Crissier, awarded three Michelin stars.

Still craving an Alpine adventure and some cheese fondue? Hop onto the MOB (Montreux Oberland Bernois Railway) for a day trip via panoramic railcars to take in breathtaking views as the train climbs into the chalet-filled mountain scenery.

geneva-region.ch; fetedesvignerons.ch



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