

The French Soul of Switzerland

A Journey of Discovery



YOUR JOURNEY

Day 1 ■ Le Locle - Neuchâtel

Le Locle is a small town of ancient origins and the birthplace of the watchmaking industry, back in the 17th century. Today, with La Chaux-de-Fonds, it is part of the UNESCO World Heritage site of watchmaking town planning. We explore on foot the exquisite historical centre of Neuchâtel. On the shores of the homonymous lake, the largest lake entirely in Switzerland, the town is framed by the serene environment of the Jura Mountains and is a marvel of architectural styles, spanning from the Middle Ages and Renaissance to Louis XV and Belle Époque styles. Neuchâtel is a lively town, renowned internationally as an innovative hub, thanks to its university and a variety of year-around activities, such as theatre, concerts, and museums. It houses an archaeological park and museum, winner of the European Council's Museum Prize. The area, in fact, is a UNESCO World Heritage site for the remains of prehistoric pile-dwelling settlements found along the shores of the lake.

Accommodations – Historic hotel in Le Locle. www.fleur-de-lis.ch

Meals – Lunch, Dinner.

Day 2 ■ La Chaux-de-Fonds - Watchmaking Architecture

La Chaux-de-Fonds is an exceptional example of organic urban ensemble dedicated to a single industry: watchmaking, which created a remarkable and specific type of architecture. This unique town was the birthplace of Louis Chevrolet, founder of the famous car company, and Charles-Édouard Jeanneret-Gris, the famous architect known worldwide as Le Corbusier. Influenced by the surrounding natural environment and by the watchmaking industry, Jeanneret became a creative pocket-watch designer and a painter, and his work reflected his love for Nature. Later in life, he began his career as an architect. On an explorative walk, we admire the unique architecture of the town and Le Corbusier's world. We come to appreciate the art of watchmaking and Le Corbusier's architectural vision. At a watchmaking workshop, we have the opportunity to assemble and disassemble a watch, and understand what this precision work requires.

Accommodations – Historic hotel in Le Locle. www.fleur-de-lis.ch

Meals - Breakfast, Lunch.

Day 3 ■ Jura and Absinthe

Astounding natural beauty, multitude of landscapes, extended forests, endless dry-stone walls, serene pastures, fossils, river gorges. This is the natural environment of the Jura Mountains, which span from the outskirts of Geneva to Basel, sharing the border with France, and include five natural regional parks. Ancient small towns and villages dot isolated valleys, first settled by farmers, many of whom were escaping religious persecution in France. We take a spectacular hike in one of the iconic places in the Jura Mountains, enjoying a 360° panorama over the nearby lakes, the Alps and neighbouring France. A nature paradise enveloped in sheer magic thanks to its varied flora and exceptional fauna: ibex, chamois, lynx and marmots. We visit the birthplace of absinthe, also known as “the green fairy”. In 1910, the legendary alcoholic spirit was banned in Switzerland, under the belief that it induced madness and it was a hazard to public health. In 2005 the ban was lifted, the legal production has successfully resumed, and we can enjoy a tasting of this controversial drink. All travel by private vehicle with driver.

Accommodations – Historic hotel in Le Locle. www.fleur-de-lis.ch

Meals - Breakfast, Lunch (picnic or other), Dinner.

Day 4 ■ From Lake Neuchâtel to Gruyères

We hike on a gentle hill, with views of Lake Neuchâtel and Lake Morat. Approximately 150 ha/375 acres of vineyards cover its south-eastern slopes, making it the smallest of the great Swiss wine regions. Despite its size, it produces excellent wines. We hike through vineyards and serene pastures, past a Celtic defensive site, and WWI military installations. Across the lake is the town of Morat where, in 1476, a great battle ensued between Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, and a Swiss Confederate army. The result was a crushing defeat for the Burgundians at the hands of the Swiss. We take a pleasant afternoon walk in one of the most important archaeological sites in Switzerland. Roman thermal baths, a theatre, an amphitheatre, which could sit 16.000 people, the remains of a temple and ancient walls, immersed in the countryside, and surrounded by tranquillity. We end our day in Gruyères, an enchanting fortified town, where you have the opportunity to enjoy the famous meringues with “*crème double*” (very thick, delicious cream) of Gruyères. Transfers by public and private transports.

Accommodations – Family-run hotel, Gruyères. <https://www.gruyereshotels.ch>

Meals - Breakfast, Lunch.

Day 5 ■ Gruyères

The region of Gruyères is famous worldwide for its cheese, produced during summer, while cows graze freely in the green pastures, and feed on fresh grass and wildflowers growing profusely everywhere. However, Gruyères is not just about cheese. An absolute serene environment of verdant hills, high mountains, breathtaking panoramas, silence, interrupted only by cowbells, and tranquillity awaits us. Here, we can still admire the art of “tavillonnage”, the skill of covering the roofs of farms and barns with wooden tiles, an art that dates back to the 13th century. Our hike today takes us into a valley called, with good reason, Valsainte, the “holy valley”, home to the Charterhouse of Valsainte, where the Carthusian lives in solitude and absolute silence. Our day ends in charming town of Gruyères, where we savour a fabulous “*moitié-moitié*” cheese fondue at a typical restaurant, overlooking the ancient ramparts. Transfers by private transport.

Accommodations – Family-run hotel, Gruyères. <https://www.gruyereshotels.ch>

Meals - Breakfast, Picnic Lunch, Dinner.

Day 6 ■ Gruyères - Vevey

Our spectacular, pleasant hike leads us to an elevation of 2002 m/6568 ft., spectacular vantage point dominating the entire Gruyères region. We hike through grazing pastures, past typical farmhouses, and along a ridgeline, with superb views all along. Idyllic landscapes to our feet, the Jura Mountains in the West, the rugged peaks of Gruyères to the East and, finally, the chain of the Alps, spanning from the Bernese Oberland to Mont Blanc. Situated on the shores of Lake Geneva, and considered one of the “pearls” of the Swiss Riviera, Vevey came into fame during the Belle Époque. It is a lively town, with a beautiful lakeshore promenade lined with flowers and palm trees. Charlie Chaplin chose it as his residence for the last twenty-five years of his life. It is home to the famous Fête des Vignerons, a festival unique in the world. Recognized by UNESCO on its list of intangible cultural heritage, the Fête des Vignerons takes place once every twenty to twenty-five years, and it is a hymn and tribute to the hard work of the vineyard workers of the region. Transfers by public and private transport.

Accommodations – Luxury Hotel, Vevey. www.ghdl.ch

Meals - Breakfast, Picnic Lunch, Dinner.

Day 7 ■ Lavaux Vineyards Terraces - Montreux

Our hike today takes us into the heart of the Lavaux vineyards, an extraordinary landscape rolling steeply to the shores of Lake Geneva, and a UNESCO World Heritage site. A cultural landscape representing evolution and development, which took place, over a thousand years span, thanks to a balanced interaction between the local inhabitants and their environment. 400 km/249 miles of stone walls, ten thousand terraces spread over forty levels, encompassing fourteen enchanting villages. They are one of the largest areas cultivated with vineyards in Switzerland, and one of the most impressive in the world. We hike through a mesmerizing environment, with a sublime open panorama over the lake, and the Swiss and French Alps. We visit Montreux, a popular destination during the Belle Époque, just like Vevey, blessed with a Mediterranean climate. Today it is famous for its jazz festival, which takes place in July. All transfers by public transport.

Accommodations – Luxury Hotel, Vevey. www.ghdl.ch

Meals - Breakfast, Lunch (picnic or other).

Day 8 ▪ Lake Geneva and Swiss Riviera

High above the Swiss Riviera is a hiker's paradise, on the watershed between the Rhone and the Rhine, with trails for all tastes and fitness levels, offering extraordinary views over the Swiss and French Alps. From an altitude of 2042 m/6700 ft., the panorama spans from the Eiger to the Matterhorn and from the giants of the Bernese Oberland to Mont Blanc. Lake Geneva, at our feet, will be a constant backdrop. We hike in forests, along ridgelines, across summer grazing pastures, on the watershed between the Rhone and the Rhine. Travel today is by public transport. It is a glorious way to conclude our week with time left, still, to take a swim in the lake.

Accommodations – Luxury Hotel, Vevey. www.ghdl.ch

Meals - Breakfast, Picnic Lunch, Dinner.

Day 9 ▪ Departure

The tour ends after breakfast. Depart on your own for your next destination.

Meals - Breakfast.

COST OF 9-DAY TOUR

SFr. 3990 p/p (10-12 participants)

SFr. 4290 p/p (7-9 participants)

SFr. 4890 p/p (4-6 participants)

SFr. 5390 p/p (2-3 participants)

SFr. 750 Single Supplement

Price are in Swiss Francs and based on double occupancy.

If you wish to have a single accommodation, a single supplement applies.

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE PRICE OF THE TRIP

Private vehicle transport as per itinerary • airport transfer at the beginning of tour • all public transportation as per itinerary • luggage transfers • all accommodations as per itinerary • tourist taxes • gratuities for porters • meals as per itinerary • water, coffee/tea with included lunches and dinners • English-speaking guide for the duration of the trip • guide's expenses • activities, entrance fees to museums and other points of interest as mentioned in the itinerary • watchmaking workshop • English-speaking, licensed tour guide in La Chaux-de-Fonds • rescue insurance.

WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE PRICE OF THE TRIP

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Any insurance, except for rescue • meals not mentioned in the itinerary • personal expenses (sodas/alcoholic beverages, telephone calls, etc.) • additional expenses due to unexpected changes to the itinerary or added activities • anything else not mentioned in “What is Included in the Price of the Trip”.

TRIP DIFFICULTY

This is an easy to moderate trip, with a maximum of 5 hours of hiking on Day 3, and we cover a variety of terrain. We will be on a combination of small paved roads, gravel paths and well-maintained mountain trails. There is elevation gain and loss, although it is not extreme. The hikes are pleasant and take us through beautiful environments. We will send you a detailed equipment list once you have signed up on the tour.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

PLEASE NOTE: due to the COVID-19, currently our Terms and Conditions are very flexible. You can safely book the tour with us. In the event of imposed governmental travel restrictions during the tour dates, you will not lose your non-refundable deposit or any cancellation fees, if applicable.

For a complete detailed itinerary and Terms & Conditions, contact us at

tours@alpsandbeyond.com