



Hiking Tour in Ticino

The Sunny Side of Switzerland

Trip Length	8 days, 7 nights
Difficulty	Moderate
Starting Point	Zurich city train station
Finishing Point	Locarno

Our guided hiking tour takes us to Ticino, the Italian-speaking region in the south of Switzerland, one of the country's most spectacular, least explored territories. Once under the rule of the Dukes of Milan, this area became a Swiss district in the early 1500 and, officially, part of the confederation, in 1803. The result is a perfect blend of Italian atmosphere, reflected in the warmth of its people, and Swiss efficiency. This extraordinary region enjoys a warmer climate and, on average, more sunny days than the rest of Switzerland. Stretching from the snow-capped mountains of the Alps to the Mediterranean climate of Lake Maggiore and Lake Lugano, it has it all: emerald-green rivers, crystal clear alpine lakes, mountains, impressive waterfalls, colourful carpets of wildflowers, splendid panoramas. The famous German writer, Hermann Hesse, fell in love with Ticino and made it his permanent home. Here, one can experience the splendour of the natural environment, feel the rich history and century-old traditions, explore the culture and charming stone hamlets, and enjoy a serenity rarely found elsewhere. It is home to two UNESCO World Heritage Sites, out of Switzerland's twelve: the three Castles of Bellinzona, fine example of medieval defensive architecture, and Monte San Giorgio, the best single fossil record of Triassic marine life worldwide. Vineyards blanket the side of the mountains and the exceptional and famous Merlot wine of Ticino is a regular companion to the traditional, exquisite, local cuisine.

YOUR JOURNEY

Day 1, 2 ■ Arrival – Airolo - Bedretto Valley

Airolo is a hiking paradise at the northern end of Ticino, the southernmost canton in Switzerland. The Swiss Confederation consists of 26 cantons, which function like individual states, with their own government and representatives. Switzerland has four official languages: German, French, Italian and Romansh. In Ticino, the official language is Italian. Airolo is strategically located in a long, scenic gash in the Swiss Alps that ends near rich farmland by Lake Maggiore. A location of historical importance, today it is the gateway to many hiking trails in one of the most beautiful areas in the Alps. Afternoon hike.

The Bedretto valley is one of the most remote and pristine alpine valleys of the region. Here, the Ticino River starts its forty-mile journey to Lake Maggiore. It is renowned amongst minerals enthusiasts. In fact, the mountains hide the most superb specimen of quartz crystals, hematite and many other spectacular alpine minerals. We explore this extraordinary natural environment, particularly beautiful due to its wild landscape and richness of colours. An alpine lake at the foot of sheer rock cliffs, splendid views of the surrounding mountains and grandiose landscape, and cheese produced in the high alpine pastures are just some of the highlights. Transfers by public transport.

Accommodations – Hotel Forni, Airolo. www.forni.ch

Day 3 ■ Alpine Lakes, Colourful Wildflowers

We spend the day hiking in a spectacular alpine area and a national nature conservation area of considerable beauty and scientific interest. We ride one of the steepest funiculars (cable car) in Europe, originally built for the construction and maintenance of a dam. This extraordinary environment is home to a couple of dozen alpine lakes, diverse fauna, and over three hundred species of wildflowers, blooming in perfect harmony from the mid-June to the end of August. The biology department of Zurich University has converted an old farmhouse into a research station on the shore of one of the alpine lakes, where they study a rare phenomenon that affects very few alpine lakes in the world. Our sublime and panoramic hike touches several emerald-green alpine lakes. A delicious lunch at a mountain hut tops the day. Transfers by private and public transport.

Accommodations – Hotel Internazionale, Bellinzona. www.hotel-internazionale.ch

Day 4 & 5 ■ Between Lake Maggiore & Lake Lugano – Tibetan Bridge

At altitudes between 1600-1750 m/5250-5750 ft, and along the border between Italy and Switzerland, we hike on a ridge traverse framed by breath-taking and mesmerizing panoramas stretching across the Alps, from the peaks above Lake Como to Monte Rosa (at 4634 m/15203 ft., the second highest mountain in Western Europe) and the Apennines, by the Italian Riviera; at our feet is Lake Maggiore, the remote valleys and the small hamlets, the city of Lugano, and its lake. Transfers by public transport.

Ancient churches and mountains create a harmonious symbiotic relationship. We hike amongst vineyards and stone houses to the beautiful medieval church of San Bernardo, a monument of national importance built between the 11th and 12th century and perched in a splendid position overlooking the plains leading to Lake Maggiore. Its interior houses precious frescoes dating as far back as the early 15th century. We cross a dumbfounding Tibetan-style suspension bridge, the second longest in Switzerland, and a feat of engineering.

Superb views, spanning from the valley floor to the surrounding mountains. A visit to a local producer allows us to taste some of the exceptional wines of the region. Transfers by public and private transport.

Accommodations – Hotel Internazionale, Bellinzona. www.hotel-internazionale.ch; Hotel Belvedere, Locarno. www.belvedere-locarno.com

Day 6 & 7 ▪ Valle Bavona - Birds-Eye Views Above Locarno

Valle Bavona is an integral part of the history and culture of Ticino. In fact, it saw many young and able men emigrate to the rolling hills of Northern and Central California, as well as to Australia, in search for work and a better life. Due to the harshness of its natural environment, this "living museum" is inhabited only for part of the year. The valley has no electricity, and the stone houses, clustered together, throw us back into a different time and place. We hike on a historical path past impressive waterfalls, through stone hamlets. We admire the typical architecture and clever, makeshift shelters for the animals under the side of the mountain. We venture into a glacial valley, where caves and stone structures stand in testimony of the hardship of times past.

High in the mountains above Locarno and Lake Maggiore, we have the opportunity to enjoy the unobstructed views of Lake Maggiore and the Alps, spanning from the deltas of the Ticino and Maggia Rivers (the lowest point in Switzerland), to Italy and the Western Alps. At a mountain "rifugio" and typical restaurant we enjoy a light lunch. Through a spectacular, pristine environment, dotted by stone structures, standing in testimony of summer grazing pastures, we make our way back to Locarno.

Accommodations – Hotel Belvedere, Locarno. www.belvedere-locarno.com

Day 8 ▪ Departure

The trip ends in Locarno. After breakfast, transfer on your own to your next destination.

TRIP PRICE

SFr. 3790 p/p (6-12 participants)

SFr. 4090 p/p (4-5 participants)

SFr. 4590 p/p (4-5 participants)

SFr. 590 single supplement

Prices are quoted per person, in Swiss Francs, and based on shared, double accommodations. If you wish a single accommodation, the single supplement will apply.

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE PRICE OF THE TRIP

Train transfer from Zurich to Airolo, Day 1 • English-speaking, local guide for the duration of the trip • guide's expenses while with clients • clients' accommodations as per itinerary • tourist taxes • seven breakfasts, seven

lunches, four dinners • water, coffee/tea with meals included • rescue and evacuation insurance • private and public transportation as per itinerary • luggage transfers.

WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE PRICE OF THE TRIP

Any transfer from Locarno, at the end of the trip, Day 8 • any insurance (trip cancellation, baggage loss, medical, etc.) other than rescue and evacuation • one lunch and two dinners • 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”.

Unused transportation during the tour will not be reimbursed.

TRIP DIFFICULTY

This is the perfect trip for those who like to hike an average of 3 to 5 hrs per day in a varied environment. The hikes are quite varied but they are not very strenuous, and they go through magnificent scenery. The trails can be rocky (typical topography of the Alps) with some ascents and descents. However, they are well maintained. You need to be in good health and physical condition to enjoy this trip, with adequate muscular strength, cardiovascular endurance, and good balance. Weather can affect the difficulty of any trip. In the Alps, weather is unpredictable, and you need to be prepared for warm sunny days as well as rainy, cool conditions. In addition, we will hike in two different regions of Ticino: the alpine area to the north, at elevations between 1800-2500 m/6,000-8300 ft., and the milder, “Mediterranean” region to the south, at elevations anywhere between 1100-1900 m/3600-6000 ft. Sudden changes in weather and rainstorms, while you are out on the trail, are possible, and they could drop the temperature up to 5-8° Celsius. Please note that hiking times mentioned at the end of each day do not include breaks or lunch stops.

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 governmental travel restrictions during our tour dates, you will not lose your non-refundable deposit or any cancellation fees. We will transfer the money you already paid to the same tour as soon as travel is permitted again, and we have secured new dates. However, if travel is permitted and you choose to cancel the tour for other reasons, the above does not apply.

For a detailed itinerary and our Terms & Conditions, please contact us at
tours@alpsandbeyond.com