

Lucerne

The geographical heart of Switzerland, more poetically described by Alexandre Dumas as "a pearl in the world's most beautiful oyster", Lucerne is an undeniably magical city. A medieval but still modern town nestled in a uniquely beautiful landscape - that is Lucerne, the city of lights. It's striking profile faces the world-famous Lake Lucerne (Vierwaldstättersee) surrounded by the impressive panorama of the Alps.

Lucerne was a fishing village in the Middle Ages but the modest settlement soon became an important trading center after the St. Gotthard pass was opened and goods were transferred from ship to land transportation. The city was founded in 1178.

Dotted throughout with many Renaissance and Baroque fountains, colorful paintings on the gables and commanded by the two exquisite wooden bridges, the Mill Bridge (Spreuerbrücke) and the Chapel Bridge (Kapellbrücke) with the 13th century octagonal Water Tower (Wasserturm, photo page 1), Lucerne's character is pure charm.

The heritage of this historic locale and of Switzerland itself is palpable in every landmark. The Old Town Hall (Altes Rathaus) is a fine example of a Renaissance building whilst the City Wall (Museggmauer), built between 1350 and 1408 stands proud above the city.

A stroll along the quay takes the visitor past the modern Culture and Convention Center, the KKL (photo page 4) and onto the largest and most important Transport Museum (Verkehrshaus) in Europe, the only IMAX Film Theater and the only Planetarium in Switzerland.

The famous Lion Monument (Löwendenkmal, photo page 4) bears witness to the old tradition in Lucerne of mercenary soldiers. The nearby Glacier Garden, a geological phenomenon left over from the Ice Age with giant glacial potholes is a prove that Lucerne was once covered by glaciers.

Spectacular views and sights abound from almost every vantage point in and around Lucerne. Mt. Pilatus (photo page 4) with the world's steepest cogwheel railway, Mt. Rigi, the Queen of the mountains, with Europe's oldest cogwheel railway, Mt. Titlis, the highest peak of Central Switzerland, covered with eternal ice and snow all year round and Mt. Stanserhorn with its revolving restaurant offer spectacular views over one of the most breathtaking landscapes on earth.

A paddle steamer ride around Lake Lucerne (Vierwaldstättersee) takes in the majesty and scenery of this beautiful area. A short drive will take you to the nearby winter resorts and many more lakes. This is the alpine range in central Switzerland where you will find glaciers, lush forests, verdant valleys and so much more.

Museums

Museum of Art

Over an area of 2100 square meters there are temporary exhibitions, showing significant modern works of art, as well as exhibits from the museum's own collection with an emphasis on 19th and 20th century landscape painting and international art from 1960.

Rosengart Collection and Picasso Museum

The Collection comprises well over 200 works by 23 different "Classic Modernist" artists. These include over 100 works by Paul Klee and some 50 by Pablo Picasso. Other artists represented include (in alphabetical order) Bonnard, Braque, Cézanne, Chagall, Dufy, Kandinsky, Laurens, Léger, Marini, Matisse, Miró, Modigliani, Monet, Pissarro, Renoir, Rouault, Seurat, Signac, Soutine, Utrillo and Vuillard.

Richard Wagner Museum

Richard Wagner, the revolutionary of 19th century music, lived from 1866 until 1872 in a country house at Tribschen. The former residence of the great composer has become a Richard Wagner memorial with many original objects and curiosa from Wagner's time in Lucerne. The museum also houses an exhibition of ancient musical instruments from Europe, Africa and Asia, said to be one of the finest collections in Europe.

Bourbaki-Panorama

The huge round painting (over 1000 square meters) depicts the retreat of the defeated French Eastern Army in the winter of the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871) at Les Verrières in Switzerland.

Glacier Garden

The glacier mills and fossils discovered during building activities in 1872 form a splendid and now world-famous natural monument.

Swiss Transport Museum and IMAX film theatre

The Swiss Transport Museum is the largest and most popular transport museum in Europe. It is the only museum which shows the development and technical progress of all forms of transport on land, water and in the air, as well as in the fields of communication and the tourist trade.

History Museum

Although various alterations and renovations were made in succeeding centuries, the substance of the building as we see it today is essentially unaltered. The museum collections include among others things, sections on cantonal and municipal history, weapons, handicrafts, folk art, religious art, domestic and social culture and the fine arts.

Natural History Museum

The Natural History Museum of the Canton of Lucerne began modestly in the 1820s as a "Cabinet of Natural Curiosities". This natural history collection was primarily used for educational purposes (until 1845) and only gradually made accessible to the general public.

Annual Events

January

Lucerne Light Festival

Succumb to the enchantment of the luminous light installations in the city and discover Lucerne from a unique perspective. The luminescent festival is, of course, accompanied by a wonderful side programme. Whether your interest lies in the city's gastronomy or in its museums, you are in for a real treat at the first "Light Festival Lucerne – Lilu"

February

Carnival

Shortly before Ash Wednesday, includes 3 parades of musicians in whimsical costumes producing ear splitting sounds from trumpets, kettles and drums.

March and/or April

Lucerne Comics Festival

Lucerne "Stadtlauf"

Public run through the old town

June

Luzerner Fest

Last Friday/Saturday of June

To support charitable institutions

July

Blue Balls Festival

9 days, Blues, Rock, Funk and World Music

August/September

Lucerne Festival

Classical music, in August and September, one of the most important musical events in Europe
October

Swiss City Marathon - Lucerne

November

Blues Festival**Comedy Festival**

December

St. Nicholas Procession in Küssnacht (near Lucerne)

One of Europe's most impressive St. Nicholas tradition. The procession with around 200 elaborated "Iffelen" followed by St. Nicholas and the huge din of more than 1000 "Klaus Chasers" is spelling the 20'000 spectators.

Rich **Christmas decoration** in the old part of town starting at the end of November.
Christmas Markets

Carol Singers (Sternsinger)

The singers walk through the old town accompanied by the Holy Family, the shepherds with their animals and the Three Magi.

Other Events

Lucerne Theater, Opera and Ballet

Almost daily performances between August and June

Classical concerts, KKL

Lucerne Symphony Orchestra and guest orchestras

Swiss Folkloric Show

"Stadtkeller", between April and November, live music is performed twice a day

Casino

The classical building with its impressive rooms is a play ground for events, entertainment and laissez-faire. Thanks to its new gaming license, the Casino now offers American Roulette, Black Jack, Mini Punto Banco, Stud Poker, Craps and 217 Slot Machines.

Weekly Farmers Market along the river Reuss, every Tuesday and Saturday, 6 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Lucerne Arts and Crafts Market, Weinmarkt, first Saturday of each month, April to November (Christmas Market in December)

Flee Market along the river Reuss, every Saturday, May to October, 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.