

SWITZERLAND

Gigi Griffis

100
LOCALS

TELL YOU
WHERE TO GO,
WHAT TO HIKE,
& HOW TO FIT IN



Unconventional Travel Guides

CONTENTS

About This Book	4
On Traveling Like a Local	6
An Introduction to Swiss Food	8
Tips for Budget Travelers	12
Plan By Interest	14
The Great Outdoors	15
<i>Hiking, biking, air sports, & snow sports</i>	
Food & Wine	36
<i>Chocolate, cheese, fondue, & food tours</i>	
History	53
Plan By Place	59
Bern & the Bernese Oberland	60
<i>Bern, Interlaken, Thun, Mürren, & More</i>	
Zürich & Surrounds	112
<i>Zürich, Winterthur, Zug, Lucerne, & More</i>	
Basel & Surrounds	150
<i>Basel, Aarau, & Olten</i>	
Lake Geneva & Surrounds	171
<i>Geneva, Gruyères, Montreux, & More</i>	
Northwestern Switzerland & the Jura	218
<i>Neuchâtel, Fribourg, Biel/Bienne, & More</i>	
Valais Canton	253
<i>Zermatt, Saas-Fee, Verbier, Sion, & More</i>	
Ticino: Italian-Speaking Switzerland	288
<i>Lugano, Locarno, Lavertezzo, & Melide</i>	
Eastern Switzerland & Romansch Country	311
<i>St. Moritz, Davos, Chur, Appenzell, & More</i>	
About the Author	350
Acknowledgements	351

ABOUT THIS BOOK

This book is for people who want to see another side of Switzerland.

To stroll past the main attractions, yes, but also to find the hidden-away mountain path leading to a quiet glacial lake with a view of the Jungfrau peak (page 83). To learn that the world's first dining in the dark restaurant—with a blind waitstaff and a light-free eating experience—is in Zürich. Or to discover places like Thun (page 68)—a lesser-known lakeside town whose charm and beauty rivals the more popular Lucerne.

In other words, this book is for people who want to get under the skin of another culture. Who want to rent apartments and live in local neighborhoods. Who want to eat in tiny restaurants without English menus. Who want to deepen their experience of this wild, beautiful country.

Think of this as a supplement to your traditional guidebooks.

Use those for their handy place histories, lists of local hotels (if that's your style), restaurant pricing charts, and basic language lessons. And then use this to go deeper—to find the most colorful neighborhood markets, the most delicious restaurants in the city center, and that pretty forested hiking trail that leads to a chalet-laden car-free ski town.

Now, a little orientation:

This book is split into 100 interviews with people who live all over Switzerland. Many have lived in their cities and towns for decades. Some were born and raised in the region. Others are expats who have fallen in love with their new country. And all of them love talking about the best their towns have to offer.

Below each person's name, you'll see a short bio designed to help you understand his or her background. If you are passionate about food, look for someone whose short bio includes "foodie" or "chef." If you're a culture lover, look for a culture lover. If you love to hike, look for hikers. And so on.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Many of the interviewees are also tour guides, artists, business owners, or bloggers. Watch for web addresses below their interviews if you'd like to learn more about their art, blogs, businesses, or tours.

Finally, a few notes about Switzerland and the book:

On hiking: Hiking trails in Switzerland are extremely well marked. So if someone recommends hiking from Wengen to Kleine Scheidegg, just look for the yellow signs marking the way. Many of the interviewees don't give detailed trail directions and this is why. It's easy to find your way.

On mountain huts: A few interviewees suggest spending the night in a mountain hut. You can find contact information for the huts at myswitzerland.com. Just choose Accommodation > Other in the navigation, check the box marked Alpine Huts, and choose your region on the map.

On language: There are some common German suffixes that will help you understand what you're reading both while reading this book and while in Switzerland. The most important of these are: *weg*, which means "way" (and thus a *wanderweg* is a walkway and a *bergweg* is a mountain way); *brücke*, which means bridge (thus *Kappelbrücke* means Chapel Bridge); and *see*, which means lake (thus *Thunersee* is Lake Thun and *Brienzersee* is Lake Brienz). Similarly, in French, you'll often notice the word *pont*, which means bridge.

On websites: While American websites often end in *.com*, Swiss websites often end in *.ch*. You'll notice many URLs throughout this book with that ending. There's no need to add a *.com* to these—just type them in as you see them.

Finally, you'll notice this book doesn't have photos or maps. This is for length and printing reasons. That said, most tourist offices in Switzerland offer free maps and you can find photos of each featured place at gigigriffis.com/switzerland.

Now, then, into the book...



THE INTERVIEWS: PLAN BY PLACE

BERN & THE BERNESE OBERLAND

BERN

A capitol bursting with architecture, markets, festivals, & character.

FIND WI-FI HERE: Starbucks, Wartsaal Kaffee, & the local library.

LANGUAGE: German

CANTON: Bern



Patrick Bolzli

Tour Guide. Musician. Traveler.

About Patrick

I was born and raised in Bern and have been here 34 years and counting. I am a software developer but use my free time to play in several orchestras (trumpet, cornet, flugelhorn) and to host free walking tours. I also travel as often as I can.

What to Do In Bern (The Basics)

The old town was founded in 1191 and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site today. Explore the 11 fountains from the 16th century with their beautiful statues, the minster (the tallest church in Switzerland), and the clock tower (with its astronomical clockwork and moving figures). Watch the bears at the bear park (a sort of mini zoo near the center). Have a coffee in front of the parliament building. Visit the Einstein exhibition in the history museum. And enjoy the sunset from Rosengarten (rose garden).

If you come in the summer, bring your swimsuit and join the locals for a refreshing swim in the crystal clear (but chilly) water of the Aare River.

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And nightlife in Bern might not be the most exciting in Switzerland, but there are a lot of small bars, theaters, and the like hidden in the cellars of the old town. It's very fun to explore them.

Hidden Gems for Seasoned Travelers

For something special, take a stroll through the Matte quarter—the old working-class area from medieval times. Or take in a concert at Reitschule (the old riding school), the most controversial place in town, which began with an illegal occupation in the '80s and is currently a graffiti-covered building that strikes some as art and others as an eye-sore.

Day Trips

As Switzerland is pretty small, you can reach all the bigger cities (Zürich, Geneva, Basel, Lucerne) in less than two hours. Thun, a beautiful city on a lake, known as the “gate to the Bernese Oberland,” is only 20 minutes away.

Another good option is a visit to the region of Emmental with its hilly landscape. Come learn how the famous cheese is made.

Where to Hike

Climb Gurten—the mountain in Bern's backyard—and enjoy a fantastic view of the city and the Alps. Or visit the “glass fountain” in the middle of Bremgartenwald (Bremgarten forest). According to an old legend, its water has healing powers!

What to Eat & Drink

Aside from the typical Swiss specialties you've read about on page 8, there is also the haselnusslebkuchen—a special type of gingerbread made with hazelnut.

Where to Eat & Drink (Favorite Restaurants & Bars)

Kornhauskeller (at Kornhausplatz 18) is a beautiful restaurant and bar in the basement of the old granary. The Rock Garden restaurant and bar (at Christoffelunterführung 2) is right in the middle of the remaining foundations of the old city walls. Turnhalle Bar (at Speichergasse 4) offers live music in a former

BERN & THE BERNESE OBERLAND

gym hall only a few minutes from the train station. And, finally, Altes Tramdepot (located next to the bear park) has great food and is famous for its home-brewed beer.

How to Fit In

Yes, Switzerland is an expensive place, but we don't like people to mention it all the time. In general, it's a good idea not to talk about money. And don't ever say (or try to say) *grüezi*. Bernese people would never use that term. Use *grües-sech* (pronounced groo-sah) instead.

How to Meet Locals & Make Friends

Most Swiss are a bit shy. The best way to start a friendship is to approach us; don't wait until we make the first move.

Best Places to Take a Photo

Try the Rosengarten (rose garden). You get a perfect view over the old town, especially during the blue hour before sunset... Another good option is Gurten. There is a train to take you up.

Find Patrick at freewalkingtoursbern.ch.



Tatiana Warkentin

Typist. Blogger. Traveler. Expat.

About Tatiana

I am originally from Canada and now live in Bern with my husband. I work as an assistant typist in the English Language Typing Pool at the Universal Postal Union (a special department of the UN).

What to Do In Bern (The Basics)

Bern is an incredibly pretty city. There's something interesting to see everywhere you look. I highly recommend checking out the Rose Garden, which always has something in bloom and has the most amazing view of the city. The Bear Pit (where

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