



The Jungfrau region sits in the heart of Switzerland and is considered to be one of the most remarkable places for lovers of nature. Steamers on the crescent-shaped Lake Thun stop at dozens of small villages where you can go ashore for lunch, visit an ancient castle, and see what life was like for the rich and infamous in the bad old days. You can ride to the top of the Jungfraujoch and visit the highest railway station in Europe. You can look up at the Eiger where Clint Eastwood confronted a double agent in the Eiger Sanction.



The area is an international center for mountaineering and attracts climbers with various skill levels. There are masters of the massif who come here from all over the world to test their abilities and there are beginners like me.

The three most famous mountains in the Jungfrau region are the Eiger, the Monch and the Jungfrau. The Jungfrau is the highest at 13,500 feet. In 1896, the Swiss started building a railway to the top. It took them 15 years to complete and it's quite a trip.

I got on the train at Interlaken's East Station, which is a short walk from the center of town. During the first part of the trip the train runs on standard wheels, slowly increasing its elevation as it travels past wooded mountains and small villages. After about 30 minutes you arrive in the town of Lauterbrunnen where you change to a cogwheel railway which takes you up to the Kleine Scheidegg station. At Kleine Scheidegg you change trains. The next part of the trip is on the Jungfraubahn which tunnels straight into the rock face of the Eiger. There are two stops on the Jungfrau line. The first is the North Wall Station at 9,400 feet above sea level where the trains stop for five minutes so you can view the Grindelwald Valley, the Kleine Scheidegg, and Lake Thun.

The second stop is called the Sea of Ice because very often everything you see here is covered with ice. At 10,368 feet above sea level you begin to feel the effects of the reduced



oxygen—deeper breathing helps and don't try rushing around.

About two hours after getting on the train at Interlaken,



you arrive at the Jungfrau terminus where you can take a ski lesson, trek through the glacier, or ride on a dogsled. Just above the terminus is an observation deck, known as the

Sphinx Terrace—it has a 360-degree view of the surrounding area.

## TRUMMELBACH FALLS

About 500 million years ago, give or take a week, Ice Age glaciers filled the valleys of the Jungfrau Region and as they moved about they carved the walls that surround the valleys. The smooth rocky surface of the mountains bear witness to the power of that shifting ice. As the snow and ice melted, water poured off the glaciers and set in motion a mill effect. For thousand of years the water wore away the rock creating a spiral path to the valley below.

The most spectacular example of this process are the Trummelbach Falls. Trummelbach means "the stream that sounds like a drum" which is a perfect description for this confluence of ten glacial waterfalls that are hidden deep inside the granite and limestone at the base of the Jungfrau.

Originally, you could only see the bottom of the falls where the water entered the valley. The main falls were hidden but throughout the 1800s the lower falls were sufficiently dramatic to attract tourists from as far away as England. That changed in 1913 when members of the Von Almen family built a tunnel and a lift so visitors could walk into the mountain and along the path of the falls. At the height of its flow almost 20,000 liters a second come tumbling over these rocks.



The Trummelbach has been thundering through these rocks for at least 15,000 years and as the glaciers melted and drained into the rivers, their waters created some of the most beautiful lakes in Europe.

## LAKE THUN

A good example is Lake Thun—surrounded by green hills and snow covered mountains. The thing to do on Lake Thun is take a ride on one of the steamers that crisscross the waters on an hourly schedule. I took the boat from Interlaken to the town of Thun, which takes about two hours.

I traveled on the “Blümlisalp” which means flower of the Alps. It was built in 1906 and is in great shape for its age. By the end of the Second World War, the golden age of lake steamers was drawing to a close and the owners of the boat slowly withdrew it from service. But the local lovers of lake steamers



banded together and forced the government to have a public vote on the issue—as a result the Blümlisalp was restored to its original glory.

The steamers are fun for tourists but they are also a part of the local transportation system and people living along the lake use them to get from one town to another. You can get on and off and visit the small villages and in some cases, the village castle.

The Jungfrau region is dotted with old castles and five of them are on the edge of the lake. Many of the castles are still owned by the ancestors of the people who built them, which may sound like fun until you think about redecorating and you find out that the chair you hate has been in your family for a thousand years and you’re stuck with it.

The town of Thun is the gateway to the Jungfrau region and was originally built on an island in the River Aare. The word “Thun” comes from the ancient Celtic language and means a settlement with a protective palisade. Archeologists believe that people have been living in this area for over 4,500 years. These days Thun is busy protecting its history and its culture. Its major tourist attraction is the Castle of Thun. The original tower was built in 1186.



## GERBER CHEESE

The castle may be Thun’s major contribution to culture but Thun’s Gerber Company has made a major contribution to gastronomy. Gerber got started in 1836 as a distributor of spices and dairy products and after a while added wine and liquor and wool, but for some strange reason the people who were into wine and liquor and dairy products weren’t interested in wool and so they down-sized and decided to concentrate on milking the dairy business. And lucky thing they did too.

During the middle of the 1800s, every Swiss male upon reaching the age of 20 spent 17 weeks in his initial military training. He then returned to the trenches for two or three weeks each year until the age of 45. This was serious male



## WHAT TO DO IN THE JUNGFRAU REGION

### LAKES THUN & BRIENZ STEAMERS

BLS SHIPPING COMPANY  
LACHENWEG 19, PO Box 165  
CH-3602 THUN  
+41 (0)33 334 52 11  
[WWW.BLS.CH](http://WWW.BLS.CH)

### JUNGFRAU RAILWAYS

HARDERSTRASSE 14  
CH-3800 INTERLAKEN  
+41 (0)33 828 71 11  
[WWW.JUNGFRAUBAHN.CH](http://WWW.JUNGFRAUBAHN.CH)

### PETER BRUHIN -- ACCORDIAN MAKER

HARDERSTRASSE 40  
CH-3800 INTERLAKEN  
TEL: +41 (0)33 823 21 37

### TIN FIGURE EXHIBITION

INTERLAKEN CASTLE  
PROPSTEL, SCHLOSS 9  
CH-3800 INTERLAKEN  
TEL: +41 (0)33 823 13 32

### TRUMMELBACH FALLS

LAUTERBRUNNEN VALLEY  
20 KM FROM INTERLAKEN  
CH-3822 TRUMMELBACH-LAUTERBRUNNEN  
TEL: +41 (0)33 855 32 32

### WILLIAM TELL - OPEN-AIR THEATRE

POSTFACH, CH-3800 INTERLAKEN  
TEL: +41 (0)33 826 53 01 (RESERVATIONS)  
[WWW.TELLSPIELE.CH](http://WWW.TELLSPIELE.CH)

bonding and during these periods of bondage a common meal was cheese fondue.

A pot is placed over a fire, cheese is melted, pieces of crusty bread are stuck on the tip of a long fork and dipped into the melted cheese. The guys loved these impromptu gatherings and brought home the ritual and the recipe. In opposition to the tradition of the time where housewives did the cooking,



fondue was made by the male head of family. It appears that in Switzerland real men melt cheese.

During the early years of the 20th century, people began exporting cheese from one country to another but since there was no refrigerated transportation the cheese often arrived at its destination in a state of over-maturity. Walter Gerber and his partner Fritz Stettler found this unacceptable and spent six years trying to create a cheese that would keep longer.

Today Gerber makes dozens of different cheese products including a ready to heat-and-eat fondue. Giant rounds of Emmental and Gruyere cheese sit in an aging room and like so many things they get better as they age.

At the proper moment of ripeness they remove the rind with a piece of equipment that looks like a giant old-time record player. Then the cheese is cut and grated and moved into tanks where it's blended with wine, spices and flour. At this point, the mixture is heated to a temperature that destroys the enzymes that would spoil the cheese thereby extending its life.

## INTERLAKEN

Interlaken means "between the lakes" and the lakes that Interlaken is between are Lake Brienz and Lake Thun. The original village was built by monks in the 1100s and for the first 800 years of its existence it was a quiet farming community, but

when steamboats starting sailing along the lake during the 1830s, tourists from all over Europe came to town to look at the landscape, and since then Interlaken has been attracting tourists from all over the world—Lord Byron, Felix Mendelssohn, even Mark Twain visited Interlaken. Most of the tourists who come here are interested in the natural beauty of the environment.



## THE VICTORIA JUNGFRAU HOTEL

While I was in the Jungfrau region I stayed at the Victoria-Jungfrau Grand Hotel & Spa. Originally, they were two inns, the Jungfrau and the Chalet Victoria. In 1895, they were merged together and expanded. The late 19th century was a glorious period for the hotel and for Interlaken and the hotel has made a point of preserving the look and atmosphere of the 19th



## WHERE TO EAT IN THE JUNGFRAU REGION

### GUESTHOUSE HIRSCHEN RESTAURANT

CH-3800 INTERLAKEN

TEL: +41 (0)33 822 15 45

[WWW.HIRSCHEN-INTERLAKEN.CH](http://WWW.HIRSCHEN-INTERLAKEN.CH)

### LA TERRASSE RESTAURANT

#### PASTATECA

### JUNGFRAU BRASSERIE

VICTORIA-JUNGFRAU GRAND HOTEL & SPA

CH-3800 INTERLAKEN/SCHWEIZ

TEL: +41 (0)33 828 28 28

[WWW.VICTORIA-JUNGFRAU.COM](http://WWW.VICTORIA-JUNGFRAU.COM)

### RESTAURANT HECHT

CH-3705 FAULENSEE

TEL: +41 (0)33 654 63 78

[WWW.HECHT-FAULENSEE.CH](http://WWW.HECHT-FAULENSEE.CH)

century while adding modern comforts.

The hotel has three restaurants—La Terrasse which serves elegant French cuisine and two restaurants that are more laid back, Pastateca, which serves pastas from around the world and has a great antipasto bar, and the Jungfrau Brasserie, which serves excellent Swiss food.

The hotel has an impressive wine collection. Just the red wines are worth over half a million dollars. They're kept in a room that has not changed since the hotel was built. But my favorite part of the Victoria Jungfrau was the view from my room.

## THE TIN FIGURE MUSEUM

Just down the street from the hotel is the Tin Figure Museum, which, as you might expect is a collection of tin figures. Erich Reber was a newspaper owner who started collecting tin





## WHERE TO STAY IN THE JUNGFRAU REGION

**VICTORIA-JUNGFRAU GRAND HOTEL & SPA**

TEL: +41 33 828 2828

[WWW.VICTORIA-JUNGFRAU.CH](http://WWW.VICTORIA-JUNGFRAU.CH)

figures when he was a child. These days his collection is on display in Interlaken's old monastery. There're 150 exhibits that deal with different periods and different events in history.

The first production of toys like these began in the mid-1600s. Manufacturers in Germany started producing flat tin



figures in cast metal which illustrate daily life and military exploits. The most popular figures were the soldiers.

During the 1600s Europe was in constant conflict and the toy soldiers gave children an opportunity to interact with reality through their toys. During the Second World War when I was growing up, my toy soldiers allowed me to interact with what was going on in the newspapers—they also gave me a great sense of security because my guys always beat the bad guys. The collection starts with the dinosaurs and ends up with the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II of England.

### THE ACCORDIAN MAKER

As I was walking around Interlaken getting a feel for the city, I heard the sound of an accordion coming out of a small shop. Inside I found Peter Bruhin. For thirty years, Mr. Bruhin was a schoolteacher. When he retired he turned to accordion making.

The accordion was developed in the 1820s and is actually a patented instrument. It's portable, it's hand operated and it uses a piano-style keyboard and buttons for its base range. You

pull the air in and push the music out. To build an accordion you need the skills of a carpenter, a bookbinder, a mechanic and a musical tuner and it doesn't hurt to have the patience of a saint.

Mr. Bruhin and his son play traditional Swiss folk music in a folk band. Mr. Bruhin plays the accordion and his son plays the clarinet or the saxophone. Typically folk music is like a form of literature. It's a story originally written by one person then carried on in an oral tradition in which it is constantly modified.

The song Mr. Bruhin and his son played for me was written in the 1950's and tells the true story of a man who went skiing near Interlaken. After skiing, he went to a friend's house for a drink. As he was leaving he fell and broke a leg, and as his leg was sitting in its cast, he wrote this song to commemorate the event. Today it is actually one of the most popular folk songs in Switzerland.



### WHAT'S COOKING

So what's cooking in the Jungfrau region? Probably the one thing you wouldn't want to miss is the fresh perch or white fish from Lake Thun. They come either deep-fried in oil or pan-fried in butter and there's always a side of tartar sauce and some boiled potatoes. I recommend the Restaurant Hecht in a village called Faulensee. Good food and great views to dine by.

I also enjoyed the guesthouse Hirschen. In 1242 a tavern was built on the edge of Interlaken. It had the right to sell wine but overnight guests were not allowed. After 300 years of loyal service to the local drinkers, the governor, one Christian Sterchi had the old tavern torn down and replaced with a guesthouse.

He was told by the local bailiff that he could serve wine but not run a guesthouse at the same time. In true Swiss tradition, he told the bailiff precisely what he could do with his alp horn—same thing that William Tell had told him when the bailiff tried to tax him unfairly. Eventually, Sterchi like Tell triumphed over oppressive government regulation and don't we know what that's all about.

Today Marianne Graf Sterchi, a descendant of the governor, owns the guesthouse. It still serves wine but it's added an excellent menu. If you end up here during the fall, I suggest you try the wild game—sautéed scallop of venison with mushrooms and plum sauce, chestnuts, asparagus and red cabbage. And if you're game for it, try the sautéed breast of pheasant with berry sauce, grape tomatoes, chestnuts, poached pear and pumpkin.

I also took the opportunity to taste the local brew. It's an apple and pear cider with a low-alcohol content. It's called Mountain Twister and it comes in a twisted bottle and it's served in a twisted glass. It's quite good.



## THE STORY OF WILLIAM TELL

Each summer in Interlaken, 250 people who consider themselves amateur actors come together to perform the story of William Tell, which is undoubtedly the centerpiece of Swiss legend.

The story deals with William Tell, who, in 1307 rose up against an oppressive government that was only interested in making its members wealthy and cared nothing for the needs of its people. Once again, taxation without representation. Tell was arrested by the local bailiff and forced to shoot an apple off his son's head. After which, he shot the bailiff. The story became popular throughout the world when it was turned into a play in the early 1800s by Friedrich Von Schiller.



In Interlaken, the play is performed in a huge amphitheater. The stage is actually a recreation of a 13th century village, and even though it's performed in German, it's easy to follow—lots of action, galloping horses, stampeding cows, flaming bonfires and the never to be forgotten apple shooting scene. In the end, Tell triumphs over incompetent federal officials and becomes a leading authority on tax reform.

## SWISS INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES

Having tested Swiss International Airlines on the way into Switzerland, I thought it was only fair to see what they had to offer on the way out. First of all there are a number of options for checking in and dealing with your luggage.



You can start your trip in any one of 125 Swiss cities by checking your bags at the railroad station or the postbus station. The service is called Fly-Rail-Baggage and it's provided in conjunction with the Swiss Travel System. They'll get your bags to the airport and on to your flight and you can take the train or the bus hands free. This service also works well when you are coming to Switzerland. You check your baggage at the airport and Swiss will deliver it to the nearest station to where you're staying.

If you're traveling First Class out of Zurich they have a First-Class Island at curbside. You hand over your luggage, give your car keys to the attendant who parks it for you, walk into the check-in room, sit down and get checked in. And just in case you find flying stressful they give you a glass of champagne or a bar of chocolate or both.

If you are traveling with one piece of luggage to check, you can check in using an automated machine. They're located in the corridors between the train station, the parking lot and the airport. Slip in your credit card—the one you used to pay for your ticket. The machine can read the magnetic back and out pops your luggage tag and your boarding pass. Put the

baggage tag on your luggage and hand it over to the Swiss representative. You're checked in.

If you're traveling with children there's a separate check-in counter for families. There's also a supervised playroom and a frequent flyer program for children 2 years old and up. The first class lounge is excellent. The part I like the best is the relaxation room. Go in and stretch out on comfortable lounge chairs. Close your eyes and in the privacy of your own little room think about whatever you want to think about. It's like going into therapy without having someone ask you annoying personal questions.

On board, the first class seat is pretty amazing. There's one position for take off and landing, one for lounging, reading and watching movies. A third position is reached by pushing the dining icon. Your seat turns into a table for two. Push the bed icon and your seat stretches out into a bed. You're given a down pillow and a sleeping bag. I founded it to be the most restful night I have ever spent on a plane.



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TEL: 877-794-8037

[www.MYSWITZERLAND.COM](http://www.MYSWITZERLAND.COM)

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TEL: 877-359-7947

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