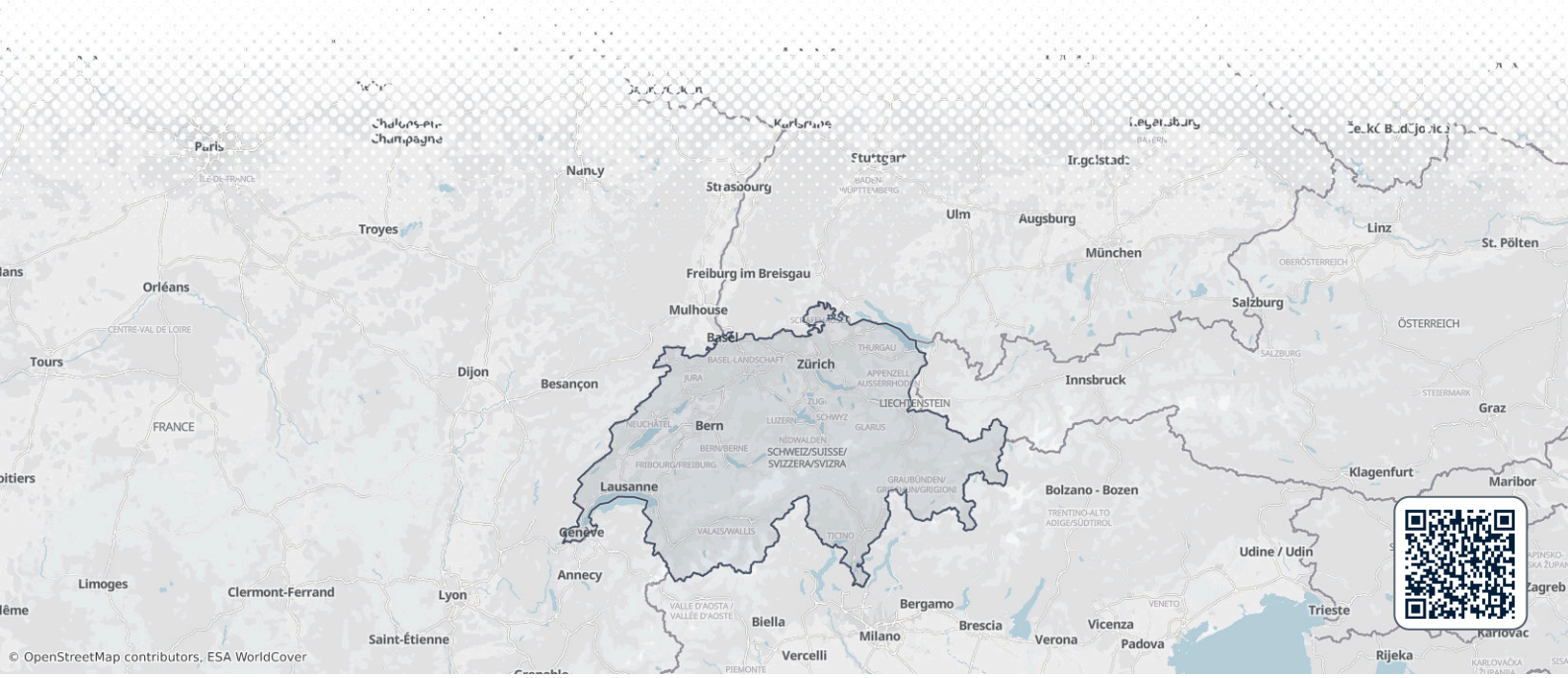


Switzerland

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Switzerland is a small, mountainous country in the heart of Europe, known for the Alps, precise trains, and four national languages. It ranges from the glass towers of Zurich to car-free Alpine villages like Zermatt. The landscape and culture shift by region: German-speaking cities in the north and center, French-speaking cities such as Geneva and Lausanne in the west, and Italian-speaking Lugano in the south.

Switzerland suits hikers, skiers, and travelers who want an easy, well-organized trip. **Landlocked** in the center of the continent, it connects easily by train to neighboring countries, so it works well as part of a wider European trip.

Money & payments

Switzerland uses the Swiss franc, not the euro — it is one of the few countries in Western Europe outside the eurozone.

Currency

CURRENCY	1 CHF	1 CHF
CHF	**1.082 EUR**	**1.191 USD**
CHF	1 EUR = 0.924 CHF	1 USD = 0.8394 CHF

Cards widely accepted

Contactless card and mobile payment work almost everywhere, including on buses and at parking meters. Carry some cash for small mountain huts, farm shops, and a few rural ticket machines that only take coins. ATMs are common in every town. Switzerland is one of the most expensive countries in Europe for food and lodging.

Typical costs

Rough prices in touristic areas, per person

Hotel (double room, per night) mid-range hotel, room for two per night	150 – 280 CHF €162 – €303
Dinner (mid-range restaurant) mid-range restaurant, one person, no drinks	30 – 55 CHF €32 – €60
Inexpensive meal bakery, sausage stand, or self-service cafeteria	18 – 25 CHF €19 – €27
Local beer 0.5L in a bar	6 – 9 CHF €6 – €10
Coffee espresso or café crème at a café counter	4 – 6 CHF €4 – €6
Water 0.5L bottle, shop	2.5 – 3.5 CHF €3 – €4
Transit ticket single, city zone	3 – 4.6 CHF €3 – €5
Taxi (per km) per km, standard daytime rate	3 – 4.5 CHF €3 – €5

Tipping

Restaurant and bar prices have included service by law since 1974, so tipping is not expected the way it is in North America. Rounding up the bill or leaving small change for good service is a common, appreciated gesture, not a requirement. Taxi drivers and hotel porters appreciate the same kind of small rounding-up rather than a fixed percentage.

Restaurant included by law; round up if you like	Optional
Bar round up	Optional
Taxi round up	Optional
Hotel a couple of francs	Optional
Tour guide a few francs	Optional

Electricity

Switzerland uses Type C and Type J plugs at 230 V / 50 Hz. Type J is unique to Switzerland and Liechtenstein: it fits ungrounded Type C Europlugs, but a German or French Type F "Schuko" plug is too wide for the recessed Swiss socket and needs an adapter.

ELECTRICITY



Type C

ELECTRICITY



Type J

230 V · 50 Hz

Language

Switzerland has four official languages: German, French, Italian, and Romansh. Which one is spoken depends on the region — German in the north, east, and center, French in the west, Italian in the south (**Ticino**), and Romansh only in parts of eastern Graubünden. English is widely understood in cities and tourist areas, less so in small villages and among older residents.

Useful phrases

DE	
Hello	Grüezi
Thank you	Merci / Danke
Please	Bitte
Excuse me	Entschuldigung
Yes	Ja
No	Nein
How much?	Wie viel kostet das?
Cheers	Prost!
Help	Hilfe!
Goodbye	Uf Wiederluege
Do you speak English?	Sprechen Sie Englisch?
Sorry	Entschuldigung
Where is...?	Wo ist...?
I don't understand	Ich verstehe nicht
The menu, please	Die Karte, bitte
The bill, please	Zahlen, bitte

FR

Hello	Bonjour
Thank you	Merci
Please	S'il vous plaît
Excuse me	Excusez-moi
Yes	Oui
No	Non
How much?	Combien ça coûte ?
Cheers	Santé !
Help	Au secours !
Goodbye	Au revoir
Do you speak English?	Parlez-vous anglais ?
Sorry	Désolé
Where is...?	Où est...?
I don't understand	Je ne comprends pas
The menu, please	La carte, s'il vous plaît
The bill, please	L'addition, s'il vous plaît

IT

Hello	Buongiorno
Thank you	Grazie
Please	Per favore
Excuse me	Scusi
Yes	Sì
No	No
How much?	Quanto costa?
Cheers	Salute!
Help	Aiuto!
Goodbye	Arrivederci
Do you speak English?	Parla inglese?
Sorry	Mi dispiace
Where is...?	Dov'è...?
I don't understand	Non capisco
The menu, please	Il menu, per favore
The bill, please	Il conto, per favore

Staying connected

Prepaid SIM and eSIM plans from Swisscom, Sunrise, or Salt are easy to buy at airports and phone shops. Mobile coverage is excellent even in high mountain valleys and ski areas.

Safety & emergencies

Switzerland is one of the safest countries in Europe for tourists. The main risks are pickpocketing in crowded train stations and at tourist sites, and opportunistic theft from parked cars or unattended bags at mountain resorts. Mountain sports carry real risk: check conditions before hiking or skiing off marked routes, and hire a certified guide for glacier travel.

Emergency numbers

GENERAL EMERGENCY	POLICE	AMBULANCE	FIRE BRIGADE
112	117	144	118

Health

Tap water is safe to drink everywhere in Switzerland, including most public fountains in towns and cities (a sign reading "Kein Trinkwasser" / "eau non potable" marks the rare fountain that is not drinkable). Pharmacies ("Apotheke" / "pharmacie" / "farmacia") are well-stocked, and a rotating pharmacy stays open outside normal hours in most towns. No special vaccinations are required for entry.

Visas & entry

Switzerland is part of the Schengen Area, though not part of the European Union. Citizens of the EU/EFTA, the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and many other countries can enter for tourism without a visa for stays of up to 90 days within a 180-day period. Travelers from countries without a visa-waiver agreement need a Schengen visa, applied for through a Swiss embassy or consulate before travel.

Visa and entry requirements change frequently. Verify current requirements with the official immigration authority or your country's embassy before travel.

Etiquette

Swiss culture values punctuality — arrive on time for trains, tours, and reservations. Greet shopkeepers with a simple "Grüezi" (German-speaking areas), "Bonjour" (French-speaking areas), or "Buongiorno" (Italian-speaking areas) when entering a small shop; walking in silently can come across as rude. Quiet hours matter, especially on Sundays, when loud activities like mowing the lawn or running a washing machine are frowned upon. Keeping public space clean and sorting recycling correctly are both taken seriously.

Holidays & opening hours

Public holidays vary somewhat by canton, but the dates below apply nationwide. Many shops close on Sundays and on public holidays, and some smaller towns still keep a midday lunch break.

Public holidays

Jan 1	New Year's Day
movable — Mar/Apr; observed in 24 of 26 cantons (not Ticino or Valais)	Good Friday
movable — Mar/Apr; observed in 22 of 26 cantons (not Neuchâtel, Solothurn, Valais, or Zug)	Easter Monday
Aug 1	Swiss National Day
movable — May; the only holiday besides National Day observed in all 26 cantons	Ascension Day
movable — May/Jun, 50 days after Easter; observed in most cantons (not Neuchâtel, Solothurn, Valais, or Zug)	Whit Monday
Dec 25	Christmas Day
Dec 26	St. Stephen's Day

Getting around

- **By train**: The network, run mainly by SBB/CFF/FFS, is fast, frequent, and famously punctual, reaching even small Alpine villages. A Swiss Travel Pass covers unlimited trains, buses, and boats for a set number of days; book tickets and check timetables at SBB.
- **By boat**: Scenic lake steamers connect towns on Lake Geneva, Lake Lucerne, and Lake Zurich — a relaxing alternative to the train for short hops.
- **By bus**: Yellow Postbuses, recognizable by their three-note horn, extend the rail network into mountain valleys and villages with no train station.
- **By air**: Domestic flights are rarely worth it. The country is small, and trains are usually faster city to city.

Driving

- **Vignette**: All motorways and expressways require an annual vignette sticker (or e-vignette), sold at the border, gas stations, post offices, and online; it is not sold for shorter periods.
- **Winter driving**: Winter tyres are strongly recommended, though not legally mandatory, from November to April. Some high mountain passes close completely in winter.
- **Parking**: Blue zones require a paper parking disc showing arrival time; white zones are metered; many town centers have paid underground garages.
- **Fuel**: Stations are self-service. Pumps are labeled "Bleifrei" / "Sans plomb" / "Senza piombo" for petrol and "Diesel" for diesel; card payment at the pump is standard.
- **Electric vehicles**: Charging stations are common along motorways and in city parking garages, covering most of the country's driving routes.

URBAN	RURAL	MOTORWAY
50 km/h	80 km/h	120 km/h

PETROL	DIESEL
Bleifrei 95, Bleifrei 98	Diesel

Drive on the right

Motorway vignette required

An annual vignette sticker (CHF 40) is mandatory for all motorways and expressways; buy it at the border, gas stations, post offices, or online before driving on the highway network. It is not sold for shorter periods. A couple of mountain tunnels, such as the Great St Bernard, charge a separate one-time toll.

Food & drink

Swiss meals tend to follow a light breakfast, a proper hot lunch that is still the main meal of the day for many workers, and a lighter dinner. Cheese and potatoes anchor much of the classic cooking: fondue (melted cheese with bread), raclette (melted cheese scraped over potatoes and pickles), and rösti (a fried potato cake) are the dishes most associated with the country, alongside Zürcher Geschnetzeltes (veal in cream sauce) in the German-speaking regions.

Chocolate and pastries are a serious local specialty — look for meringues with double cream around Gruyère, or a slice of spiced Basler Läckerli. A mid-morning or afternoon coffee break is a normal part of the day. Restaurants range from simple mountain huts to formal dining rooms; markets and bakeries are cheaper, good options for a quick lunch.

What to eat & drink

BREAKFAST

Birchermüesli
A raw-oat, fruit, and yogurt breakfast invented by a Zurich doctor around 1900, now standard on breakfast buffets.

LUNCH

Rösti
A fried, shredded-potato cake, originally a Bernese farmer's breakfast, now a national side dish.

DINNER

Cheese Fondue · Fondue
Melted Gruyère and Vacherin cheese in a shared pot, eaten by dipping bread cubes on long forks.

Raclette
Cheese melted tableside or under a grill and scraped over boiled potatoes, pickles, and onions.

Zürcher Geschnetzeltes
Sliced veal and mushrooms in a creamy white-wine sauce, traditionally served with rösti.

Älplermagronen
Alpine herder's macaroni gratin with potatoes, cheese, and cream, often topped with fried onions and served with apple sauce.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Cervelat
Switzerland's best-known sausage, usually grilled and often called the country's unofficial national dish.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Swiss Chocolate · Schweizer Schokolade
Switzerland pioneered milk chocolate in the 19th century; look for small-batch chocolatiers alongside the big national brands.

Basler Läckerli
A dense, spiced honey-and-candied-fruit biscuit from Basel, traditional around Christmas.

DRINKS

Swiss Wine · Vin Suisse
Mostly consumed domestically rather than exported; Valais and Vaud, along Lake Geneva, produce the best-known Chasselas whites.

Switzerland – Plan Your Trip

Turn the places from this guide into a real itinerary, with smart routing, time estimates, and everything you need for a perfect trip.

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Where to explore

Switzerland's most-visited destinations cluster around its cities and lakes. Zurich is the country's largest city and financial center, with a compact old town on the river Limmat. The capital, Bern, has a UNESCO-listed medieval center built on a bend in the river Aare.

In French-speaking Switzerland, Geneva sits on Lake Geneva and hosts many international organizations, while Lausanne nearby is known for its Olympic heritage and hillside old town. Montreux, further along the lake, is known for its jazz festival and mild lakeside climate.

Lucerne, on Lake Lucerne, is a classic base for exploring the mountains of central Switzerland, and Basel in the north is known for its art museums and easy access to Germany and France. In the south, Italian-speaking Lugano sits on a lake ringed by palm trees.

For mountain scenery, Interlaken is the main gateway to the Jungfrau region, Zermatt is a car-free village beneath the Matterhorn, and St. Moritz is a high-Alpine resort town in the Engadin valley.

Editor's Choice Highlights

This curated selection highlights Switzerland's most distinguished destinations, including Lucerne's medieval covered wooden bridges adorned with historic paintings, the expansive Kunsthaus Zürich art museum with renowned collections from masters like Monet and Picasso, panoramic mountain viewpoints such as Harder Kulm overlooking Interlaken, the underground Jungfraujoch Railway Station near the Valais border, and the tranquil alpine lake Lej da Staz in the Engadin valley.





A Chapel Bridge

Historic covered wooden bridge built in 1332, known as Europe's oldest of its kind, featuring medieval paintings and a water tower.

Kapellbrücke, 6004 Lucerne Switzerland (47.05159, 8.30741)

+41412271717



B Spreuer Bridge

The Spreuer Bridge is one of two extant covered wooden footbridges in the city of Lucerne, Switzerland.

Spreuerbrücke, 6004 Lucerne, Switzerland (47.05199, 8.30226)



C Kunsthaus Zürich

The Kunsthaus Zürich is in terms of area the biggest art museum of Switzerland and houses one of the most important art collections in...

Heimplatz 1, 8001 Zürich, CH (47.37021, 8.54800)

Tu–We	10:00–18:00
Th	10:00–20:00
Fr–Su	10:00–18:00

kunsthaus.ch, +41 44 253 84 84



D Harder Kulm

The Harderkulm is a funicular station at 1,322 metres in the Berner Oberland region of Switzerland, overlooking the towns of Interlaken and...

3800, Switzerland (46.69689, 7.85291)



E Jungfraujoch Railway Station

Jungfraujoch is an underground railway station situated near the Jungfraujoch, in the canton of Valais, a few metres from the border with...

3801, Switzerland (46.54750, 7.98271)

+41 33 828 72 33



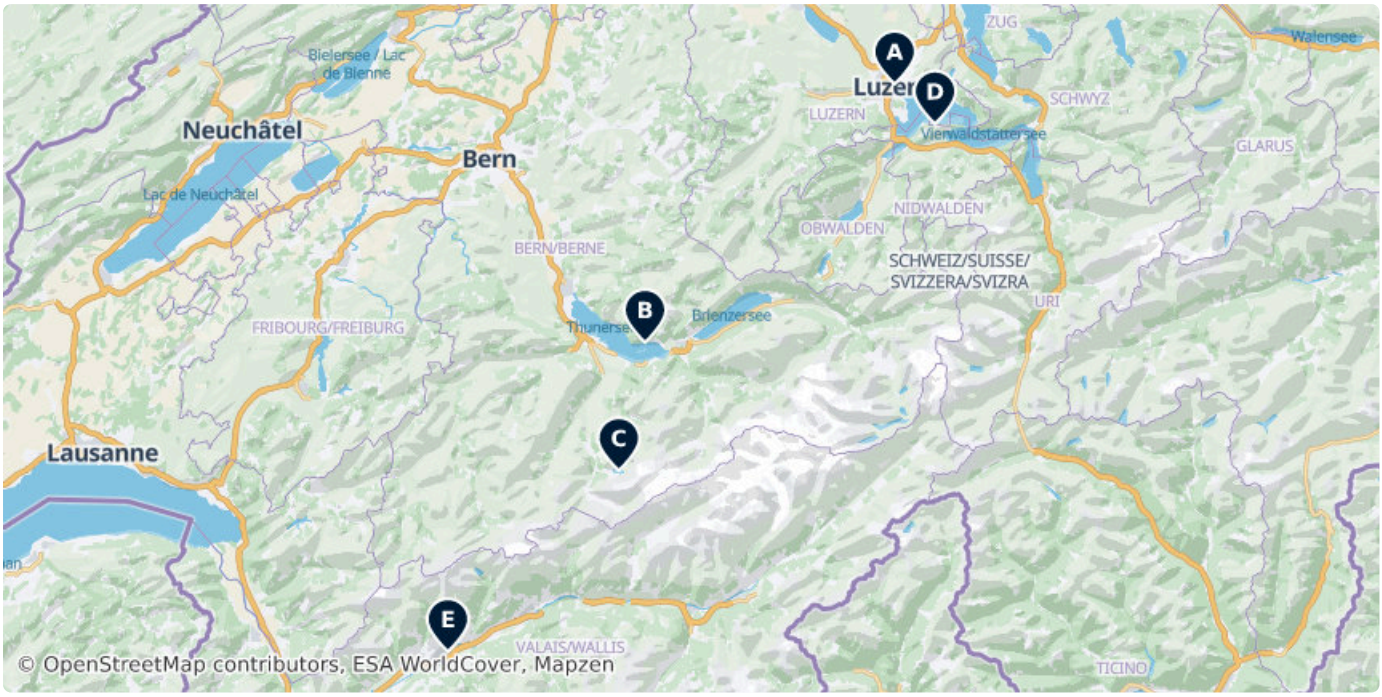
F Lej da Staz

Lej da Staz is a lake in the Engadin valley, Grisons, Switzerland. Close to Lake St.

7500, Switzerland (46.49621, 9.86869)

Swiss Hidden Gems

Discover Switzerland's hidden gems showcasing remarkable natural and cultural landmarks. Explore the intricate dripstone formations of the St. Beatus Caves near Interlaken, the serene alpine waters of Oeschinen Lake in the Bernese Oberland, the evocative Lion Monument in Lucerne, the fortified Valère Basilica in Sion, and the Hammetschwand Lift, Europe's highest outdoor elevator.





A Lion Monument

The Lion Monument, or the Lion of Lucerne, is a rock relief in Lucerne, Switzerland, designed by Bertel Thorvaldsen and hewn in 1820–21 by...

Denkmalstrasse 15, 6006 Lucerne, Switzerland
(47.05844, 8.31087)

+410 41 227 17 17



B St. Beatus Caves

A network of limestone dripstone caves beneath Beatenberg near Interlaken, featuring stalactites and stalagmites formed over millennia.

St.Beatushöhlen, Beatenberg 3803, Switzerland
(46.68467, 7.78231)

Mo–Su 09:30–17:00

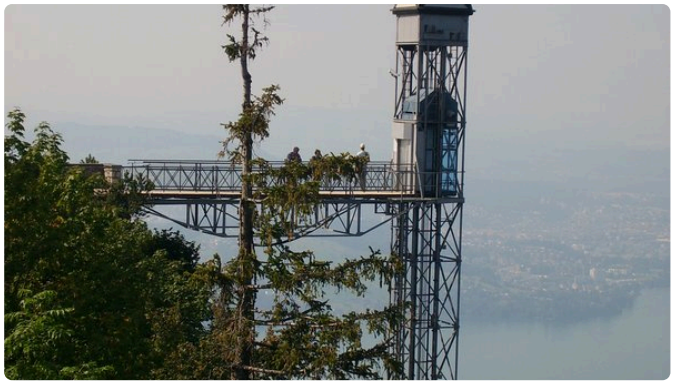
beatushoehlen.ch, +41 33 841 16 43



C Oeschinen Lake

Oeschinen Lake is a lake in the Bernese Oberland, Switzerland, 4 kilometres east of Kandersteg in the Oeschinen valley.

3718, Switzerland (46.49838, 7.72648)



D Bürgenstock – Hammetschwand Lift

The Hammetschwand Lift in Switzerland is the highest exterior elevator in Europe.

6353, Switzerland (47.00094, 8.39635)

Mo–Su 09:30–18:00

de.buergenstock.ch/entdecken/hamme..., +41 41 612 90 90



E Valère Basilica

The Valère Basilica, also called Valère castle, is a fortified church situated in Sion in the canton of Valais in Switzerland.

Rue du Scex 33, 1950 Sion, Switzerland (46.23379, 7.36467)

Iconic Swiss Castles

Explore Switzerland's most iconic castles, showcasing a range of architectural styles from medieval fortresses like the island-based Chillon Castle to the Baroque grandeur of Stockalper Palace. These castles highlight Swiss heritage through their historical roles, strategic locations, and cultural significance, including government functions at Château Saint-Maire.





A Chillon Castle

Chillon Castle is an island medieval castle located on Lake Geneva, south of Veytaux in the canton of Vaud.

Avenue de Chillon 21, 1820 Veytaux, Switzerland
(46.41424, 6.92760)

Jan-Mar Mo–Su	10:00–16:00
Apr-May Mo–Su	09:00–17:00
Jun-Aug Mo–Su	09:00–18:00
Sep-Oct Mo–Su	09:00–17:00
Nov-Dec Mo–Su	10:00–16:00

chillon.ch, +41 21 966 89 10



B Neuchâtel Castle

Neuchâtel Castle is a castle in the municipality of Neuchâtel of the Canton of Neuchâtel in Switzerland.

Rue de la Collégiale, Neuchâtel 2000, Switzerland
(46.99223, 6.92692)



C Château Saint-Maire

Château Saint-Maire is a castle in Lausanne, Switzerland, that serves as the seat of the cantonal government, the Council of State of Vaud.

Esplanade du Château, 1014 Lausanne, Switzerland (46.52478, 6.63571)



D Art Brut Museum

The Collection de l'art brut is a museum dedicated to outsider art located in Lausanne, Switzerland.

Avenue des Bergières 11, 1004 Lausanne (46.52732, 6.62469)

Tu–Su 11:00–18:00

artbrut.ch, +41 21 315 25 70



E Coppet Castle

Coppet Castle is a château in the municipality of Coppet of the Canton of Vaud in Switzerland.

Rue du Greny, 1296 Coppet, Switzerland (46.31711, 6.19190)

Tu–Su 14:00–18:00

chateaudecoppet.ch



F Castle of Prangins

Prangins Castle is a castle in the municipality of Prangins of the Canton of Vaud in Switzerland.

Musée National Suisse, 1197 Prangins, Switzerland (46.39414, 6.25183)

chateaudeprangins.ch/de, +41 22 994 88 90



G Morges Castle

Morges Castle is a medieval castle in the Swiss municipality of Morges in the canton of Vaud.

1110 Morges, Switzerland (46.50669, 6.49670)

chateau-morges.ch/le-chateau/, +41 (0) 21 316 09 90

H Château de Miécourt

A historic castle located in the Jura region of Switzerland.

62B Route d'Alle, Miécourt 2946, Switzerland (47.42769, 7.17241)

facmi.ch



I Châtelard Castle, Vaud

Châtelard Castle is a castle in the municipality of Montreux of the Canton of Vaud in Switzerland.

1 Chemin de Planchamp-Dessous, Montreux 1815, Switzerland (46.44749, 6.89915)



J Aile Castle

Aile Castle is a castle in the municipality of Vevey of the Canton of Vaud in Switzerland.

Grande Place, 1800 Vevey, Switzerland (46.45929, 6.84106)



K Stockalper Palace

The Stockalper Palace is a castle in Brig-Glis, Switzerland. It was built between 1658 and 1678 by Kaspar Stockalper, a silk merchant of...

28 Alte Simplonstrasse, Brig-Glis 3900, Switzerland (46.31515, 7.99084)

brig-simplon.ch/schloss/index.php



L Saint-Maurice Castle

Saint-Maurice Castle is a castle in the municipality of Saint-Maurice of the Canton of Valais in Switzerland.

1 Route du Chablais, 1890, Switzerland (46.22336, 7.00288)



M Castle Vaumarcus

This castle built in a fairytale-like style has been entirely put to a new use. How about shopping for clothes here?

Le Château 9, 2028 Vaumarcus, Switzerland (46.87915, 6.75574)

chateauvaumarcus.ch

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