

Scenic Railways in The Swiss Alps and Italy's Lake District

8 DAYS / 7 NIGHTS | GROUP TRAVEL

SUGGESTED ITINERARY | CAN BE CUSTOMIZED



This 7-night itinerary kicks off with an unforgettable rail journey through the heart of the Swiss Alps on the legendary Bernina Express. After enjoying incredible views of glaciers, dramatic mountain passes, verdant valleys, pristine lakes, and magnificently-constructed bridges, your group will arrive to the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland for a healthy dose of Mediterranean temperatures, interesting sightseeing, and relaxation on Lake Lugano. From there you will continue into Italy and spend three nights on the shores of Lake Como before finishing up in Milan, the fashion capital of Italy.



DAY 1 • ARRIVE ZURICH - CHUR

Welcome to Switzerland!

Upon arrival a local assistant will meet your group inside the arrivals hall and accompany it to the train station inside Zurich Airport. Your group will then travel by train to the city of Chur, the journey should take roughly 90 minutes. As the oldest city in Switzerland, it is believed that Chur was already inhabited over 5,000 years ago; long before the Romans established the city in 15 B.C. Not only is Chur's Old Town like something out of a storybook, but the Alpine scenery that surrounds it is indescribably beautiful.

Upon arrival to the rail station in Chur, a local guide will meet your group on the platform and accompany it to the hotel in Chur where your group can either check-in (presuming rooms are available as official check-in times are generally 3:00 pm) or store baggage with the hotel staff. You will then set off on an exciting, 90-minute walking tour of Chur's Old Town during which your group will see the Bishop's Court, the 800-year old Cathedral, St. Martin's Church, and the Town Hall. After the tour has finished, the remainder of the day is free for you to relax and continue

exploring Chur on your own. For dining suggestions, please feel free to ask your guide.



DAY 2 • CHUR - BERNINA EXPRESS - LUGANO

After breakfast, check-out, and a short walk to the Chur rail station; prepare yourself for what surely will be the highlight of your entire trip to Switzerland. Today your group will take the legendary Bernina Express scenic train, traveling south through breathtaking Alpine scenery. You are about to enter a stretch of unbelievably picturesque land graced with glaciers, lakes, tunnels, viaducts, valleys and incredible mountain bridges. And as you relax during your 4-hour, picture-perfect journey from Chur through St. Moritz and Poschiavo to Tirano, your views will gradually change from mountain-capped glaciers to palm tree lined lakes. This historic railway and the surrounding landscapes constitute an official UNESCO World Heritage Site.

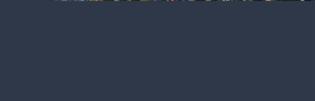
After the panoramic train ride of your life, your group will take a scenic bus ride from Tirano along the shores of Lake Como to the Swiss town of Lugano, which is located on beautiful Lake Lugano. Lugano is the largest city in Ticino, the Italian-speaking part of

INCLUSIONS

- Accommodations: Chur 1 night, Lugano 2 nights, Como 3 nights, Milan 1 night
- Meals: Continental breakfast daily, lunch and dinner as noted in itinerary
- Air-conditioned, private coaching
- English-speaking assistants and guides (although not presently included, your group may decide to use a tour escort with this itinerary)
- Admission tickets and sightseeing as outlined in the itinerary

HIGHLIGHTS

- Guided tour of Chur, the oldest town in Switzerland
- Discover Alpine landscapes on the Bernina Express, a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Free time to explore Lake Lugano and its beautiful environs
- Enjoy winetasting and a cooking class near Lake Como
- Visit Bellagio after an invigorating day of hiking
- Panoramic sightseeing tour and free time in Milan



Switzerland. Despite its size (just a tad smaller than a combined New Hampshire and Vermont), Switzerland has four official languages: German, French, Italian and Romansh. During your stay in Lugano, you will undoubtedly notice not only linguistic differences from the northern part of Switzerland but also cultural and gastronomic differences.

Upon arrival, check in to the hotel in Lugano and enjoy the evening at leisure in “Mediterranean” Switzerland.



DAY 3 • LUGANO – MORNING TOUR – FREE AFTERNOON & EVENING

After breakfast in the hotel, your group will set out on a morning sightseeing tour of Lugano, a city which is home to pleasant Mediterranean temperatures, superb natural beauty, pretty architecture and tasty Italian cuisine. The tour will feature the city’s lovely Parco Civico, which lines Lake Lugano; the Church of St. Mary of the Angels, which is known for its 16th-century frescoes by Bernardino Luini; and the St. Lawrence Cathedral.

Your guided tour of Lugano will finish just before lunchtime. At its conclusion, the remainder of the day is free for you to explore Lugano on your own. For group members interested in spending the afternoon on Lake Lugano, it is a paradise for water sports fans. Windsurfing, water skiing, sailing, scuba diving, and swimming are all popular water sports in the area. Another fantastic option is to rent a bicycle and explore the tiny villages in Lugano’s vicinity. This area is home to more biking paths than anywhere else in Switzerland. It is easy to rent a bike at the railway station in Lugano. Possible villages to consider visiting include Ponte Capriasca, Tesserete, Colla, Sonvico, Dino and Ponte di Valle. And should you prefer to stay and simply relax in Lugano, there is plenty of shopping to be had; check

out Via Nassa if interested. No matter what you decide to do today, you really cannot err as the entire area is beautiful, invigorating and relaxing!



DAY 4 • LUGANO – MORCOTE – COMO

After breakfast and check-out, your group will travel a short distance south along the shores of Lake Lugano to the village of Morcote, which is often called the “Pearl of Lugano” because of its truly spectacular lakefront position and baroque architecture. You will have a couple of hours to wander through Morcote. Consider visiting the historic church of Santa Maria del Sasso, which dates back to the 13th century, Scherrer Park, and the Chapel of Sant’Antonio Abata. After time for lunch, your group will re-board its coach and cross over the border into Italy. Your destination is the nearby city of Como, which is located on Lake Como (part of Italy’s famed Lake District). Writers from Hemingway to Goethe have immortalized the ethereal beauty of this area, and even their words cannot seem to do it justice!

Before arriving to Como, your group will visit a villa for a tasting of locally-produced wine and olive oil. After checking in to the hotel in Como, take some time to relax and freshen up before tonight’s group dinner.



DAY 5 • LAKE COMO

Today your group will spend the day exploring Lake Como and the pretty villages that surround it. While it is certainly true that Lake Como (much like Lake Lugano, Lake Maggiore and Lake Garda) is a favorite retreat for the rich and famous, it is also a paradise for nature lovers. This is a day to get outside and experience the beautiful surroundings of Italy’s northern landscape!



Following breakfast, strap on your walking shoes and travel by private coach to an area of beautiful hiking trails. You are in for some truly gorgeous views of mountains unfolding into low woodlands and sparkling lakeshore.

After soaking up the natural beauty and fresh air, transfer to the town of Bellagio where you have time on your own to enjoy a well-deserved lunch at a local cafe. Many consider this the most beautiful part of the lake. After lunch spend the afternoon exploring Bellagio before returning to Como by private coach with your group members. (Alternatively, should someone want to leave earlier or stay longer, there are ferry boats that run across the lake as well as public buses).

Enjoy an evening at leisure in Como.



DAY 6 • COMO – COOKING CLASS

After breakfast in the hotel, today your group will learn all about Northern Italian cuisine during a private cooking class in a local restaurant. Although you can find delicious Italian specialties like pizza and lasagna all over the country, you will discover there is a wide array of local dishes worth sampling! Follow along as your chef-instructor shares the subtleties of how to prepare Northern Italian cuisine, and try to wait until the end of your demonstration before devouring this tasty feast.

Note: Regarding cooking classes, small groups can generally include these quite easily on itineraries. Simply because of classroom space, larger groups should either divide into two smaller groups; or elect to have a cooking demonstration instead (which is still very interesting).

Depending on what time the cooking class

finishes, if your group has time this afternoon; we recommend visiting either the town of Varenna or Menaggio with your private bus. Alternatively, if you prefer to hang around and relax in Como, you could always ride the funicular to the village of Brunate for some amazing views of Lake Como.

Your last evening on the lake is yours to enjoy as you see fit.



DAY 7 • COMO - MILAN

After breakfast and check-out, your group will travel south to Milan, the financial and fashion capital of Italy. Upon arrival to the city center, a local guide will meet your group and lead it on a 2-hour panoramic tour of Milan. Afterwards, the afternoon is yours to soak up Milanese culture. If you are an art fan; consider paying a visit to the Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie. This UNESCO World Heritage Site houses Leonardo di Vinci's 15th-century mural *The Last Supper*. Alternatively, you could visit the Pinacoteca di Brera, one of the finest art museums in all of Italy. Inside you can see medieval and renaissance masterpieces by Raphael, Caravaggio and Piero della Francesca. History buffs should check out the Castello Sforzesco, and opera lovers can visit the museum of Milan's La Scala Opera House. Last but not least, shoppers can bargain hunt for great designer deals in one of Milan's discount outlets!

By early evening, all group members will meet in a pre-designated meeting point in Milan and board its private coach to travel to the hotel near Milan's Malpensa Airport. Upon arrival to the hotel, your group will check in and have time to freshen up before tonight's farewell dinner in the hotel's restaurant.

Enjoy your last meal in Italy.



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DAY 8 • MILAN

After breakfast and check-out, take the hotel's shuttle bus to Milan's Malpensa

Airport for your return flight to the USA or Canada. (Note: The suggestion to stay nearer Milan's Malpensa Airport comes from the fact that the airport is located 30 miles from the city center; and that traffic in Milan is notoriously bad. That being said, if your group has a late-morning flight and prefers to spend its last night in the city center of Milan, this can certainly be arranged).

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