

Glacier Express - Swiss Alps by Train

A postcard cannot capture the stunning, visual impact of the Alps. Nor can 4x6 inch pictures, digital photos online or giant oil paintings from accomplished Renaissance masters. To truly appreciate these colossal pieces of rock art, you must go up, down, around and through them, amazing feats that are best accomplished with ease and style in Switzerland.

The land of chocolate and army knives is a perfect base for Alp-spotting, for its infectious blend of German, French and Italian cultures creates a unique ethos Swiss people love. Understandably so, for they'd be crazy not to love a peaceful country set amongst some of the most dramatic alpine landscapes in the world. The glaciers that slid through Europe and shaped the Alps during the last ice age should be considered among the greatest artists in the history of the world for what they left behind.

The only thing more remarkable than the Alps themselves is how visitors enjoy them. Hiking, skiing and mountain climbing are popular ways to sink your teeth, crampons and ice axes into the mountains, but according to travel agents, there's definitely a more civilized means to conquer the Alps—by train. The Swiss train system is a comfortable, luxurious way for travelers of all ages to experience up close Switzerland's many treasures.



Photo: Glacier Express

So Efficient You Can Set Your Watch by Them

Clean, comfortable and extremely efficient, Swiss trains wind across high alpine passes, past small mountain villages and through dark spruce forests, supplying ample servings of both scenery and relaxation. Passengers behold everything from towering glaciers and jagged rock formations to rushing waterfalls and lush, flower-filled meadows, all at a leisurely pace that gives you time to breath deeply and marvel at the simple beauty of nature.

Trains connect the country's airports to its cities, its cities to its villages, and its villages to its ski slopes. Your travel agent can set it up where all you do is board a train at Zurich's airport and ride the rails straight to a quiet mountain village or lakeside resort. Along the way, the wide windows of the rail car will serve up better views than any bus or car.

'The Slowest Express Train in the World'

The pride of the Swiss train system is undoubtedly the Glacier Express. For 75 years the Glacier Express has taken passengers through the heart of the Swiss Alps, from St. Moritz to Zermatt and back again along a path lined with snow-capped peaks in every direction, vast alpine meadows that stretch all the way to Italy and chalets that look like giant cuckoo clocks.

Don't let the word 'express' worry you, for the Glacier Express prides itself on being "the slowest express train in the world," average 22 miles an hour during the trip. It leisurely and safely crawls up and down mountainsides at a pace akin to a hasty turtle, taking seven and a half hours to transverse the entire 169-mile route over the Oberalp Pass.

Along the way the train encounters 91 tunnels, and your eyes, after gaping so wide to take in all the scenery, will welcome the brief intermissions. Oftentimes the train will shoot out of a tunnel and seemingly into the sky, though in reality the train is simply on one of the 291 bridges that span the many gorges. Look down while on one of these bridges and you'll gain a new appreciation for the adjective 'breathtaking.'



Photo: Switzerland
Tourism

Between the tunnels and the bridges you'll meet a few of Switzerland's most charming mountain towns. The journey will bring you to Zermatt, in the shadow of the awe-inspiring Matterhorn; Brig, home to the magnificent Stockalper castle; Disentis, an idyllic monastic village founded in 765; and finally St. Moritz, a metropolis in a mountain setting this is internationally known as a world health resort.

The picture-perfect villages and scenery outside the train is matched only by the style inside the train. An elegant mix of old and new, the Glacier Express combines modern passenger cars with antique dining cars that feature brass fixtures, wood paneling and special tilted glasses designed for the steeper parts of the journey. Some trains provide first-class passengers with a narrated trip commentary in glass-roofed observation cars.

Whichever car you ride in on the Glacier Express, you will not simply stare at the mountains from a distance—you'll become part of them. And in turn, the experience of gliding so close to these rocky behemoths will become a part of you forever. That's the true test of a great vacation, and that's the goal every travel agent aims for when helping you plan your vacations.

Travel agents know how to make your Swiss vacation so pleasurable you'll be yodeling with joy. They can set up your Swiss Pass, a special ticket to board trains, buses and lake steamers for a specified time at a discounted price, or punctuate your Glacier Express trip with extended stays in scenic mountain villages. They can even set up, as a sweetened side trip, your chocolate tours. The Swiss claim to make the world's best chocolate, and the only way to find out is to tour their many chocolate shops, factories and museums.

Indulge your sweet tooth and experience the Swiss Alps with style and ease. Contact us... and get your ticket for the Glacier Express today. All aboard!

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