

48 HOURS

LUCERNE

Tamara Hinson
shines a light on
Switzerland's
lakeside city

Legend states that Lucerne, which means lamp, was founded when an angel aimed a beam of light at a lakeside spot and instructed fishermen to build a town in honour of their patron saint, St Nicholas.

Today, a 45-minute train journey will whisk you from Zurich airport to Lucerne's main train station, where the building's original 19th-century archway frames a sleek terminal designed by Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava.

It's a fitting welcome to a destination that is both elegantly ancient and marvellously modern. Here's how to fill 48 hours in this lakeside city.

DAY ONE

09.00: Make like a local and grab a coffee and croissant at Heini Luzern, a Lucerne-based patisserie chain founded in 1957. The one in Falkenplatz, (in the old town) is worth trying, but visitors will be equally smitten with the Confiserie Bachmann in the Schwanenplatz, where the flowing wall of molten cocoa makes chocolate fountains look rather plain.

heini.ch

10.00: Work off that calorie-laden breakfast with a walk around the old town and its gabled, painted houses. One of the most famous examples is the Müllersche Apotheke, a pharmacy that dates

back to the 16th century. On its facade is written, in Latin, 'love sickness knows no cure'. If you work up a thirst, head to one of the city's fountains – there are more than 200, and most spout water directly from underground springs.

12.00: Time for lunch at the Rathaus Brauerei, housed in what was once the town hall. Huge copper brewing vats tower over diners, and footage of foaming, fermenting beer is projected onto the stone ceiling. Popular dishes include beer sausages and wheat beer soup. Make sure you sample the delicious pretzels, too. rathausbrauerei.ch

14.00: A boat tour of the lake, surrounded by four cantons (districts), provides a different perspective on the city. Sign up for one of the hour-long cruises aboard *Saphir*, modelled to resemble a super yacht. There are several each day and after being handed an audio set (and hand warmers, in colder weather), you'll learn about the lake's history, and how goods were once loaded onto wooden ships, floated to the end and carried over the mountains to Italy. Highlights include the grand lakeside villas once owned by silk merchants, and the Richard Wagner Museum Lucerne, the composer's former home. lakelucerne.ch



Time for lunch at the Rathaus Brauerei, where popular dishes include beer sausages and wheat beer soup

15.30: Check in to the five-star Hotel Schweizerhof Luzern, a glorious lakeside property that flung open its doors in 1845, making it Lucerne's first hotel. It's packed with original features, including the elevator, with its sliding door and sofa. The 101 rooms are named after former guests (including Keanu Reeves, Winston Churchill and Richard Wagner) and contain associated memorabilia, along with other subtle nods to their professions, such as cupboard handles shaped like music notes. schweizerhof-luzern.ch/en

17.00: Jump on the ferry and float over to the Bürgenstock Resort,

which has its own dock. From there it's a short but steep ride on a fully-restored 1888 funicular railway. This sprawling four-hotel resort recently had a huge £440 million makeover, courtesy of new Qatari owners. It dates back to 1873, when two sawmill owners purchased an alpine meadow and built a hotel. The entire resort is jaw-droppingly beautiful, whether it's the tennis courts, illuminated with chandeliers made from rackets, or the public spaces filled with faded photos from the hotel's heyday. Our advice? Start by raising a toast to the resort at the Lake View Lounge. buergenstock.ch

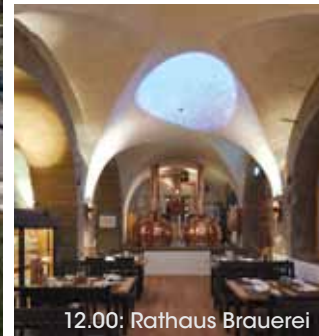




15.30: Hotel Schweizerhof Luzern



14.00: Saphir



12.00: Rathaus Brauerei



19.00: Spices Kitchen & Terrace



17.00: Bürgenstock Resort

PICTURES: AURA/EMANUEL AMMON; PAUL PACITTI; SWISSIMAGE/CH/LUCERNE TOURISM; HEINZ DAHNDEN; BÜRGENSTOCK HOTELS



Osprey Holidays offers a two-night break to Lucerne staying at the three-star Hotel Des Alpes on a bed and breakfast basis, including flights from Gatwick. Prices start from £315. ospreyholidays.com

Inghams offers a seven-night break at the Hotel Waldstaetterhof on a half-board basis, including flights from Gatwick, from £1,009. A guided walking tour and one-hour boat trip is included. ingham.co.uk

EasyJet flies from Gatwick to Zurich, with prices starting from £29 one way. easyjet.com

19.00: Head to dinner at the resort's Spices Kitchen & Terrace, where you'll find a row of open kitchens dishing up delicious, authentic cuisine from India, Thailand, China and Japan, as well as awesome views of Lake Lucerne. If possible, grab one of the seats that look in to the kitchens, home to duck ovens, tandoors and dim sum steamers.

21.00: Hop on the ferry back to Lucerne. There are now even more transfers, thanks to a new cat boat service, which reduces transfer time to about 30 minutes. Finish with a nightcap at the Astoria Hotel, just metres away from the ferry dock. The sleek Penthouse bar, with its 360-degree views over the city, is Lucerne's first rooftop watering hole. astoria-luzern.ch

DAY TWO

09.00: After a day of ferry journeys, opt for a different form of transport and head to the top of the Pilatus, a 6,994ft peak. You'll depart from Kriens, on Lucerne's outskirts, where you'll take a gondola, then swap to an aerial cableway. The view's breathtaking – on clear days, you'll be able to see well beyond Lucerne, although ha zier days can be equally stunning, especially when the cableway breaks through the cloud just before its arrival. During the summer, you can reach the top via the world's steepest cogwheel railway, which departs from Alpnachstad. pilatus.ch

10.00: At the top, you'll find two hotels and several restaurants. Multiple viewpoints provide outstanding views in all directions, so pull up a chair and

take time to gaze over the endless mountains. The two hotels can be accessed via the exterior viewing areas or an underground tunnel, which includes historic photos documenting the construction of the first property, Hotel Pilatus-Kulm, in 1890.

12.00: Head to the Cheminée Saal, one of three restaurants, for a luzerner chügelipastete, a local delicacy comprising mushrooms and chunks of veal inside a puff pastry shell. Afterwards, if you're feeling sporty, you can hike or cycle down the mountain, or in winter, go sledding instead.

14.00: Learn about Switzerland's other preferred modes of transport at the Swiss Museum of Transport, with its halls dedicated to rail, road and aviation. One of the most popular areas

is the section on motor sport. Inside, one wall is covered with neatly-stacked vehicles, ranging from Formula One cars to motorbikes. At a circular seating area, visitors can choose which vehicle they want to learn more about. A huge mechanical crane then brings it to the display area. Elsewhere in the museum, you can step inside a Swissair Convair 990A Coronado (once the world's fastest airliner), drive a virtual train and sit inside gondolas that once floated over Switzerland's ski resorts. verkehrshaus.ch

16.00: Time to learn more about the city's relationship with water. From the old town, wander across the 14th-century Kapellbrücke – the world's oldest footbridge, until it burned down in 1993 after someone dropped a cigarette onto boats moored below. Luckily, several original sections remain, along with beautifully illustrated roof panels depicting saints. Note the startling clarity of the water – fishermen recently complained that



20.00: La Madeleine

it's simply too clean, and that the underweight fish they catch are proof that there's not enough algae.

18.00: Enjoy some traditional Swiss cuisine at the Zunfthausrestaurant Pfistern. The restaurant is tucked inside a former bakers' guildhall that dates back to 1408. It's famous for its fondues and raclettes, and also has one of the city's best wine lists. restaurant-pfistern.ch

20.00: Raise a toast to Lucerne at La Madeleine, a bar that was once an adult cinema. It's now a popular hangout for writers and musicians (we're pretty sure Wagner would have been a local if he were still alive). Splashes of neon offer a reminder of the bar's past. There's also a pretty comprehensive cocktail menu, so what better place to reflect on your newfound love for this beautiful lakeside city, skinny fish and all? lamadeleine.ch



ASK THE EXPERT



Paul Cusack, owner, Cockermouth Travel

"Lucerne is a beautiful medieval town with a stunning mountain panorama. It's got amazing sightseeing opportunities, including the Rigi mountain railway. The superb Swiss rail links to airports and the rest of Switzerland make it a great base."



Inghams

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