

Grand Circle Travel[®]

THE LEADER IN VALUE AND WORLDWIDE DISCOVERY SINCE 1958

Your Grand Circle Travel Planning Guide



Romantic Villages of Alpine Europe 2026

Grand Circle Travel®

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

I am thrilled that you are considering exploring the world with Grand Circle Travel. There are so many wonderful destinations to discover, and the itinerary described inside is a perfect way to fulfill a travel dream.

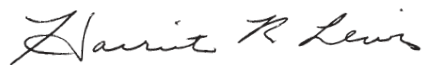
When you travel with us, you will enjoy a thoughtfully designed itinerary that balances unforgettable included discoveries with time for independent explorations. Your experience will be enriched by the company of like-minded American travelers and an **expert, local Program Director**. Assigned to a group of 30 travelers on average, these passionate leaders are ready and eager to share their homeland and insights as only a local can. Whether it is recommending their favorite restaurant, connecting travelers with people and culture, or providing the best regional maps to enhance your leisure time, your Program Director will be available to take care of all the details and ensure that you have a fun and carefree travel experience. You can also rely on the seasoned team at our regional office, who are ready to help 24/7 in case any unexpected circumstances arise.

Throughout your explorations, you will experience Exclusive Discovery Series events designed to connect you with local people and culture. From sharing traditional fare and lively conversation during Home-Hosted Visits, to discussing Controversial Topics impacting everyday life, you'll gain an intimate understanding of your destination, not just a superficial view. And if you choose to travel solo, you will enjoy all these cultural experiences at an unmatched value, with our FREE or low-cost Single Supplements—just one of the reasons we continue to be the leader in solo travel.

Plus, you can put your own personal stamp on your trip, like the **87% of our travelers who customize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to see more of your destination by adding an optional trip extension to your itinerary. You can also arrive a few days early to explore independently and get acclimated, customize your air itinerary, and more.

I hope you find this Travel Planning Guide helpful. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact one of our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-2610**.

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis
Chair
Grand Circle Travel

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Interlaken, Switzerland

Romantic Villages of Alpine Europe

Italy: Stresa | **Switzerland:** Interlaken | **Austria:** Seefeld
| **Germany:** Munich

16 days starting from \$5,295

including airfare

Single Supplement: **FREE**

For departure dates & prices, visit

www.gct.com/avs2026pricing

Tucked in the valleys of the Alps lie some of Europe's most charming villages, each with its own unique style. As you journey across international and cultural borders—from graceful Stresa, Italy; to Interlaken, a Swiss town surrounded by stunning Alpine peaks; to Seefeld, in Austrian Tyrol; and Munich, Germany, the capital of Bavaria—enjoy exclusive Discovery Series events including a Swiss woodcarving museum visit.

IT'S INCLUDED

- Choose to **purchase Grand Circle's airfare**, and your airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges are included. Or, make your own air arrangements
- **Accommodations** for 14 nights in comfortable rooms with private baths
- **27 meals:** 14 breakfasts, 6 lunches, and 7 dinners (including 1 Home-Hosted Dinner)
- **17 included features:** 9 guided tours and 8 exclusive Discovery Series events: Local produce tasting • Cross-border workers discussion • *Switzerland Today* discussion • Woodcarving museum • Swiss farm visit • Home-Hosted Dinner • Liechtenstein winery visit • *Women of World War II* discussion
- Exclusive services of a local **Grand Circle Program Director** (assigned to no more than 42 travelers)
- **Gratuities** on your main trip for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- **Personal headset** for all included and optional tours on your main trip
- Private motorcoach land travel
- Baggage handling for 1 piece of luggage per person, including tips
- **5% Frequent Traveler Credit** toward your next trip

Prices are accurate as of the date of this publishing and are subject to change.



ITINERARY SUMMARY

1 • Depart U.S.

2-5 • Stresa, Italy

Included Tours Stresa, Borromean Islands

6-9 • Interlaken, Switzerland

Included Tours Zermatt, Interlaken

10-14 • Seefeld, Austria

Included Tours Vaduz, Seefeld, Innsbruck, Mittenwald

15 • Munich, Germany

Included Tour Munich

16 • Return to U.S.

WHAT TO EXPECT

1 2 3 4 5 Easy

Group Size

- A maximum of 42 travelers, led by a local Grand Circle Program Director

Pacing

- 4 locations in 15 days, including 1 single-night stay

Physical Requirements

- Walk 1-2 miles unassisted and participate in 1-2 hours of physical activities daily, including stairs
- Three days of this trip may require 3 miles of walking and 3-5 hours of optional physical activity
- Not accessible for travelers using wheelchairs or scooters
- Travelers using walkers, crutches, or other mobility aids must travel with a companion to assist them
- We reserve the right for Program Directors to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send

travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience

Terrain & Transportation

- Several days at altitudes between 3,000-6,000 feet
- Uneven walking surfaces, including unpaved paths, hills, stairs, and cobblestones
- Travel by 51-seat motorcoach, public trains, and 50- to 200-seat boats

Climate

- Daytime temperatures range from 43-82°F during touring season
- June-August are the warmest months, with high humidity in Lake Maggiore
- April and October weather can be unpredictable and change quickly
- Alpine temperatures can drop suddenly with cold wind, rain, or snow year-round

MAXIMIZE YOUR DISCOVERIES & VALUE

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

all with FREE Single Supplements

Lake Como & Milan, Italy

PRE-TRIP: 4 nights from **\$1,495**

Munich, Germany & Salzburg, Austria

POST-TRIP: 5 nights from **\$1,995**

Romantic Villages of Alpine Europe

YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

BEGIN YOUR TRIP WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

4 nights in *Lake Como & Milan, Italy*

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Day 2 Arrive Milan, Italy • Como

Day 3 Explore Como

Day 4 Lake Como cruise • Visit Bellagio

Day 5 Como • Optional Bergamo tour

Day 6 Como • Visit Milan • Transfer to Stresa • Join main trip

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart today on your flight to Italy.

Day 2 Arrive Stresa, Italy

- Destination: Stresa
- Included Meals: Dinner
- Accommodations: La Palma Hotel or similar

Morning/Afternoon: Arrival times vary throughout the day, depending on your city of departure. You'll be met at the Milan airport and driven to your hotel in Stresa to begin your Alpine vacation. Meet your Program Director at your hotel and enjoy a Welcome Drink as you settle in to your accommodations and greet your fellow travelers—including those who took our *Lake Como & Milan, Italy* pre-trip extension.

Dinner: At your hotel.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 3 Explore Stresa • Local produce tasting

- Destination: Stresa
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: La Palma Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Enjoy an orientation briefing at your hotel; you'll have the opportunity to sign up for optional tours that interest you.

Then, set off on a walking tour of scenic Stresa, your home base for the next three nights. This township of roughly 5,000 residents is one of Italy's jewels, sitting on the shores of sparkling Lake Maggiore. A fishing village since the 15th century, Stresa has always been a beloved resort town for the region's well-to-do.

During your walk, you'll learn about the region's local produce during an **exclusive Discovery Series event**. Some of the world's most beloved cuisines comes from Italy, from wines to olive oils, breads, and pastas. Learn about the local products during a sampling.

Lunch/Afternoon: Yours to do as you please. Your Program Director will be happy to recommend a spot for lunch and free time activities.

Dinner: Join your fellow travelers for an included Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 4 Stresa • Explore Borromean Islands

- Destination: Stresa
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: La Palma Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Depart for a private boat ride to explore the Borromean Islands. Your first destination is Isola Bella, where you'll spend the morning discovering the Palazzo Borromeo. Looking like a complex straight out of a fairy tale, this 17th century complex has long been renowned for its Neoclassical ballroom, gardens, and artificial grottoes. You'll have both an included tour and time to stroll the grounds your own.

Your next stop is Isola Pescatori, a charming fishing village as well as a discovery walk with your Program Director before visiting Isola Madre. The largest Borromean island, Isola Madre features a magnificent, English-style botanical garden.

Lunch: Enjoy a light lunch at a local restaurant in Isola Pescatori.

Afternoon: Free for your own discoveries—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Later, join your fellow travelers at the hotel for a discussion with a local expert about the growing trend of Italian workers crossing the border into Switzerland to seek jobs. During

this **exclusive Discovery Series event**, you'll candidly explore this controversial issue, and learn how the phenomenon affects the relationship between these two nations.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Evening: Free to spend however you wish.

Day 5 Stresa • Optional *Treasures of Lake Orta* tour

- Destination: Stresa
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: La Palma Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Spend today at leisure, or join an optional tour to discover the *Treasures of Lake Orta*.

Take in this picturesque sub-Alpine lake during a panoramic drive. In Orta, the lake's namesake village, you'll find a hidden gem that many visitors have yet to discover: the Sacro Monte, one of nine northern Italian chapels intended as pilgrimage sites, and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Your optional tour also includes a walking tour with a local guide of the village of Orta, and a private boat ride to San Giulio Island—a place of meditation where a community of cloistered nuns live in a Benedictine monastery. Take a discovery walk ending at a medieval church before taking your boat back to Orta. You'll return to Stresa in the late afternoon, where you'll toast your final night in Italy with your fellow travelers during an included drink at your hotel.

Lunch: If you've chosen to join our optional tour, lunch is included in Orta. Otherwise, lunch is on your own in Stresa today.

Afternoon: Return to Stresa at the conclusion of your optional tour, and enjoy the rest of the afternoon to do as you please. Your Program Director will be happy to recommend free time activities.

Dinner: Partake in an Italian tradition during an included *apericena* dinner—a light meal enjoyed alongside drinks around dinnertime.

Evening: Continue making independent discoveries this evening. Your Program Director can recommend activities.

Day 6 Stresa • Visit Zermatt, Switzerland • Interlaken

- Destination: Interlaken
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Metropole Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Say goodbye to Stresa—and Italy—as you depart for Interlaken, Switzerland. You'll stop at the Simplon Mountain Pass for a chance to take photographs, weather permitting. One of the most famous mountain routes in the world, this pass offers commanding views of the snow-capped Swiss Alps and the many villages that dot the valleys below. During your stop, you will have the opportunity to see the stone eagle built by Swiss soldiers in 1944 while patrolling the Swiss border with Italy.

Then, board a train for a short ride to Zermatt, a high-altitude (about 5,300 feet) town perched on the Alpine mountainside. A beloved ski resort town, Zermatt has been attracting outdoorsy travelers and athletes since British mountaineers hiked here in the 19th century. Its name derived from the same root as the nearby Matterhorn—*Matten* being German for “meadows,” of which Zermatt has optimal views.

Explore Zermatt on a walk with your Program Director.

Lunch: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: Continue your scenic journey to Interlaken.

Dinner: On your own. Your Program Director can offer restaurant suggestions.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 7 Explore Interlaken • Switzerland Today discussion • Woodcarving museum • Home-Hosted Dinner

- Destination: Interlaken
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Metropole Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Learn about modern life in *Switzerland Today* during an **exclusive Discovery Series discussion**.

You'll then embark on a walking tour of Interlaken, an idyllic Swiss Alpine town, with your Program Director. There you'll explore Unterseen, an old hidden part of the town where locals live. Continue on to the 19th century Kursaal Casino and its gardens, where you can see the Flower Clock, a flat garden shaped into the figure of an iconic Swiss clock. In front of the Kursaal, stroll along the local promenade, enjoy the view of the Jungfrau mountain. You may even see para-gliders landing down in the Hohematte, a 35 acre park.

Lunch: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: Visit Lake Brienz for an **exclusive Discovery Series tour** of a local woodcarving workshop. Woodcarving is one of Switzerland's heritage crafts, and this region is the heart of production for these works of art. Learn how woodcarving (and in particular, the local specialty of chip carving) became emblematic of Swiss craftwork, and meet the artisans still producing such pieces today.

Dinner/Evening: Visit a local Swiss family for a **Home-Hosted Dinner**. Always a memorable experience, these evenings provide you with an opportunity to visit a typical home and sample home-cooked food of the region. Your Swiss hosts will be delighted to tell you about their culture, and introduce you to family traditions and foods.

Day 8 Interlaken • Farm visit

- Destination: Interlaken
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Metropole Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Discover Swiss country life during an **Exclusive Discovery Series event**. A local family will welcome you to their farm in the Brienzerland countryside, one of the most traditional areas in central Switzerland. In the surrounding pastures, where cows graze in the high green meadows, you will gain insight into the everyday life of a real Swiss farmer.

Lunch: Enjoy an included picnic lunch at the farm, featuring a taste of its various fresh products, including a variety of local cheeses.

Afternoon: Yours to do as you please. Your Program Director will be happy to recommend a spot for free time activities.

Dinner/Evening: Continue making independent discoveries this evening, with dinner on your own. Ask your Program Director for restaurant recommendations.

Day 9 Interlaken • Optional Bernese Oberland tour

- Destination: Interlaken
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Metropole Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Take today at your leisure to explore more of Interlaken, or join our optional Bernese Oberland tour.

The Bernese Oberland encompasses the German-speaking highlands of the region of Bern. This UNESCO-protected region is the most glaciated area of the European Alps, boasting Europe's largest glacier and a range of habitats for diverse flora and fauna. During the tour, you'll visit Trummelbach Falls, unique glacial waterfalls that are accessible underground. You'll also see the Lauterbrunnen Valley, or "The Land of 72 Waterfalls" (the name literally translates to "many fountains"), and hear the thunder of all the waterways that crash down in this scenic valley. Take a ride on the *Jungfraubahn*, a train that runs to the highest rail station in Europe. Disembark at Kleine Scheidegg to witness views of the surrounding area from nearly 7,000 feet.

Lunch: If you've joined today's optional tour, lunch is included at a local restaurant. Otherwise, lunch is on your own today.

Afternoon: Optional tour travelers will return to Interlaken this afternoon, where the rest of the day is at leisure. Your Program Director will be happy to recommend free time activities.

Dinner: At the hotel.

Evening: Continue making independent discoveries this evening.

Day 10 Interlaken • Visit Liechtenstein • Winery visit • Seefeld, Austria

- Destination: Seefeld
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Eden or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Transfer to Seefeld, Austria—stopping on the way in the tiny landlocked nation of Liechtenstein.

At a mere 62 square miles, Liechtenstein is the sixth-smallest microstate in the world with a population of more than 37,000. Stop in its capital, Vaduz, which was founded circa 1322 and is home to Liechtenstein's Parliament, as well as the seat of the Roman Catholic Archbishop. A compact city with much political history, Vaduz makes for a pleasant discovery walk with your Program Director. Then, enjoy an **exclusive Discovery Series visit** to a local winery.

Lunch: Enjoy a guided tour and light lunch, as well as the opportunity to sample local vintages during a tasting.

Afternoon: Complete your journey with an overland crossing into Austria, arriving at your hotel in Seefeld in the early evening.

Dinner: Enjoy a light dinner at the hotel, including a taste of *speck*, a smoked ham with a rich and salty flavor with a simple recipe, adhered to by the locals for generations: “a little salt, a little smoke, and plenty of fresh mountain air.”

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 11 Explore Seefeld • Optional Austrian Afternoon tour

- Destination: Seefeld
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Hotel Eden or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Set off on a walking tour of Seefeld, a Tyrolean town founded as a farming settlement in 1022, Seefeld offers Old World Germanic charm and a landscape of snowy mountains, wooden church spires, and the Karwendel Nature Reserve.

Lunch: On your own. Your Program Director can recommend a café or restaurant.

Afternoon: Free for your own discoveries—ask your Program Director for recommendations. If you are looking to learn more about the landscape you've just entered, consider joining our *Austrian Afternoon* tour.

On this optional tour, you'll begin with a visit to Tratzberg Castle. Built at the beginning of the 16th century, the castle has served as the residence of a number of noble families and today is open to the public as a showcase of what life in a typical Gothic-Renaissance Tyrolean castle was like. The castle is remarkably well-preserved, and as you wander its grand halls and courtyards, you'll see many original furnishings and fittings that have survived since the castle's construction.

Then, drive to the shore of Achensee Lake, the largest lake in Tyrol and one noted for its incredibly clean and deep blue water. You will take a ferry to Scholastica, perched along the lake's northern shore.

Dinner: If you've chosen today's optional tour, you'll enjoy an included dinner at a local restaurant, featuring traditional Tyrolean

flavors. Otherwise, dinner is on your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 12 Seefeld • Explore Innsbruck • Women of World War II conversation

- Destination: Innsbruck
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Eden or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Travel by motorcoach to Innsbruck, the capital of Tyrol. This city offers a truly spectacular look into European history, having been continuously inhabited since the Stone Age. Innsbruck has kept most of its medieval buildings, including its Baroque Cathedral which looms imposingly over the central *Domplatz* (Cathedral Square). Spend the morning exploring these sites and more on a walking tour with your local guide

Lunch: At local restaurant.

Afternoon: Learn more about the many important roles women play in times of war during an **exclusive Discovery Series discussion** on the *Women of World War II*. You'll then enjoy time for independent exploration before returning to Seefeld—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Dinner/Evening: Continue making independent discoveries this evening, with dinner on your own. Ask your Program Director for restaurant recommendations.

Day 13 Seefeld • Optional Bavaria tour

- Destination: Seefeld
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Eden or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Free for your own discoveries—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Or, join an optional tour to learn more about Bavaria, the largest state in Germany. This fascinating region has a proud cultural identity, separate from that of the rest of Germany, and some of Germany's finest architectural wonders trace their identity to Bavarian builders.

Those who join the optional tour will depart this morning for a visit to the Oberammergau. You'll tour its theater, where a 2,000-person Passion Play is performed every ten years to thank God for sparing residents from the Black Plague, then set off on a discovery walk of the town with your Program Director.

Lunch: On your own. Check with your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions.

Afternoon: Today's optional tour continues as you head to UNESCO-listed Linderhof Palace, the former home of King Ludwig II that was inspired by the construction of France's Versailles. The rococo decorations of this impressive palace are offset by a precisely designed garden outdoors, and both the interior and exterior are rich with symbolism that your local guide will point out. This historic residence offers unique insight into the 19th century through its architecture and opulence. Return to Seefeld after your palace tour, arriving later today.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: The evening is free for independent discoveries.

Day 14 Seefeld • Explore Mittenwald, Germany

- Destination: Mittenwald
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Eden or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Depart for Mittenwald, a Bavarian town that has long been a vital transportation hub for the region, lying as it does on a low route through the Alps. It has also made significant contributions to the arts, as it is one of the centers of Luftmarei art, the local tradition of “facade painting,” decorating the walls of houses and buildings throughout the town. Here also, fine violins, violas, and other string instruments are manufactured by skilled craftsmen. The *Geigenbaumuseum* (Violin Museum) of Mittenwald is home to a permanent exhibition of locally made classical stringed instruments, which have been produced in the town for more than 300 years.

Lunch: Enjoy a typical Tyrolean-style lunch at a local restaurant, accompanied by a performance of traditional music.

Afternoon: Return to Seefeld, where the rest of the day is free for your own discoveries—ask your Program Director for recommendations. Perhaps you’ll take this time to explore one of the many scenic pathways that have made this town a popular destination for visitors—and even the host site for Nordic events during multiple Winter Olympic Games.

Dinner: On your own. Your Program Director can recommend a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 15 Seefeld • Explore Munich, Germany

- Destination: Munich
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: NH Collection Munchen Bavaria or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Depart for Munich, Germany. Upon arrival, set out for a discovery walk of the city with your Program Director.

Lunch/Afternoon: Yours to do as you please. Your Program Director will be happy to recommend a spot for lunch and free time activities.

Dinner: Reminisce about your Alpine memories with your fellow travelers during dinner at a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 16 Munich • Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel. Early departures will be given a box breakfast to take along.

Morning: Transfer to the airport for your flight home. Or, extend your European vacation with our optional post-trip extension to *Munich, Germany & Salzburg, Austria*.

END YOUR TRIP WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION

5 nights in *Munich, Germany & Salzburg, Austria*

Day 1 Explore Munich, Germany

Day 2 Munich • Optional Dachau Memorial tour

Day 3 Munich • Lake Chiemsee ferry ride, Austria • Transfer to Salzburg

Day 4 Explore Salzburg

Day 5 Salzburg • Optional Hohenwerfen Castle tour & falconry show

Day 6 Salzburg • Return to U.S.

OPTIONAL TOURS

During your trip you will be able to book optional tours directly with your Program Director. He or she will ask you to confirm the payment for these tours by filling out a payment form. Optional tours can only be purchased with a credit or debit card. We accept Visa, MasterCard, and Discover credit cards. We also accept Visa and MasterCard debit cards, but it must be a debit card that allows you to sign for purchases. We do not accept American Express.

In order to correctly process these charges, there can be a delay of 2–3 months from the date of your return for the charges to be posted to your account. Therefore we ask that you use a card that will not expire in the 2–3 months following your return.

Please note: Optional tour prices include gratuities for local guides and motorcoach drivers, are listed in U.S. dollar estimates determined at the time of publication, and are subject to change. Optional tours may vary.

Treasures of Lake Orta

(Day 5 \$145 per person)

Join a full-day optional tour to Lake Orta, a scenic subalpine lake surrounded by picturesque ancient villages. Tour one of the nine Italian *Sacri Monti*, chapels built as pilgrimage sites, which are now UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Then enjoy a private boat ride to San Giulio Island, a rocky island in the middle of the lake that provides impressive views of the surrounding shore. Take a walk around the island before returning to the mainland for lunch and some time at leisure in Orta.

Bernese Oberland

(Day 9 \$200 per person)

Explore this unique Swiss landscape on a full-day tour. Tour Trummelbach Falls, glacial waterfalls that can be accessed via underground entrances. Discover the Lauterbrunnen Valley, or the “Land of 72 Waterfalls,” and hear the thunder of all the waterways that crash down in this scenic valley. Take a ride on the *Jungfraubahn* train to Kleine Scheidegg, a mountain pass nearly 7,000 feet up renowned for its impressive views of the surrounding

landscape, where you’ll enjoy an included lunch before descending the mountain to return to Interlaken.

Austrian Afternoon

(Day 11 \$170 per person)

Enjoy a visit to historic Tratzberg Castle. Built at the beginning of the 16th century, this is one of Austria’s most well-preserved Gothic-Renaissance Tyrolean castles, with many of its original fittings and furnishings still intact from the original construction. Then, take a ferry across royal blue Achensee Lake, an oasis surrounded by the massive Karwendel and Brandenburg peaks of the Tyrolean countryside. After exploring Scholastica, a scenic town on the lake’s northern shore, you will enjoy a traditional Tyrolean supper comprised of regional specialties and local flavors.

Bavaria

(Day 13 \$145 per person)

Germany’s Bavaria region has a distinct heritage, which you’ll see during a visit to the Oberammergau. You’ll tour its theater, where a 2,000-person Passion Play is performed every

ten years to thank God for sparing residents from the Black Plague, then set off on a discovery walk of the town with your Program Director. After lunch on your own and free time, head to Linderhof Palace, which was inspired by the construction of Versailles. You're sure to gain a richer understanding of this region, which in turn will deepen the rest of your Alpine discoveries.

PRE-TRIP

Lake Como & Milan, Italy

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » **Accommodations** for 4 nights
- » **6 meals:** 4 breakfasts, 1 lunch, and 1 dinner
- » **3 included tours:** Como, Bellagio, Milan
- » **Gratuities** for local guides and motorcoach drivers on your extension and all optional tours
- » **Personal headset** for all included and optional tours on this extension
- » Exclusive services of a Grand Circle Program Director
- » All transfers

PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Discover one of Europe's most beloved lakes, and some of its most sophisticated towns, such as Como and Bellagio. On this pre-trip extension, explore Lake Como, the chic Alpine gem with a beauty that has drawn noted philosophers, composers, leading men, and poet laureates. You'll also feel the excitement of Milan—a historic city that is brimming with culture and style.

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart today on your flight to Milan, Italy.

Day 2 Arrive Milan, Italy • Como

- Destination: Como
- Accommodations: Hotel Due Corti or similar

Morning/Afternoon: Arrival times vary throughout the day, depending on your city of departure. You'll be met at the airport and assisted to your hotel in Como, which will serve as your base of operations for your discoveries of nearby Lake Como and Milan. Meet your Program Director at your hotel and enjoy a Welcome Drink as you settle in to your accommodations.

Dinner/Evening: Continue making independent discoveries this evening, with dinner on your own. Ask your Program Director for restaurant recommendations.

Day 3 Explore Como

- Destination: Como
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Due Corti or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll begin this morning with a Welcome Briefing, during which your Program Director will outline the logistics and details of your trip. Afterward, enjoy a discovery walk of the city of Como led by your Program Director. You'll marvel at the impressive architecture of buildings like the Duomo and stroll through public gardens.

Lunch: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: The rest of the afternoon is yours to explore at your own pace—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 4 Lake Como cruise • Visit Bellagio

- Destination: Como
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Hotel Due Corti or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Cruise up Lake Como to Bellagio—the “Pearl of the Lake” and the lakeside retreat for generations of well-to-do Italians and international jetsetters. Your two-hour journey will be a scenic one, as it climbs Lake Como’s southwestern fork. Verdant, steep mountains plunge into the water on all sides, and many luxurious villas dot the lake shore.

Upon arrival in Bellagio, take an orientation walk with your Program Director to get to know this charming town. You’ll also have time to make your own discoveries: Stroll its Via Garibaldi from the waterfront through the town, wander manicured gardens such as those at Villa Melzi, or relax on the lakeside *piazza*. Keep an eye open for the eleventh-century Torre delle Arti, a stone tower that no longer serves a military function, but rather hosts artistic exhibitions. With a history stretching back 2,500 years, you’ll feel the mixture of ancient heritage and modern culture alive in the town.

Lunch: On your own in Bellagio—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: Return to Como. The balance of the day is free for your own discoveries—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Dinner/Evening: Continue making independent discoveries this evening, with dinner on your own. Ask your Program Director for restaurant recommendations.

Day 5 Como • Optional Bergamo tour

- Destination: Como
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Hotel Due Corti or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today is yours to enjoy at leisure, relaxing at the hotel and enjoying the laid-back atmosphere of Lake Como. With numerous churches, private villas, and lakeside walking paths, you’re sure to discover a new side of this beautiful town.

Or, take a full-day tour of Bergamo, a town in the Lombardy region rich with art and architecture, and the home of the famed *Commedia dell’Arte* theatrical tradition. Once the outpost of Venice in the Italian Mainland, Bergamo is one of the most beautiful and better preserved towns in all Northern Italy. Set off on a walking tour through the upper part of the city, set high on a hillside.

Lunch: If you’ve chosen today’s optional tour, lunch is included at a local restaurant. Otherwise, lunch is on your own today—your Program Director can recommend a local restaurant.

Afternoon: After some free time to wander Bergamo, your optional tour concludes as you return to your hotel by motorcoach. The rest of the day is on your own—your Program Director can recommend activities to suit your interests.

Dinner/Evening: Continue making independent discoveries this evening, with dinner on your own. Ask your Program Director for restaurant recommendations.

Day 6 Como • Visit Milan • Transfer to Stresa • Join main trip

- Destination: Milan
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Travel to the vibrant city of Milan, known for its incredible style in art, architecture, and fashion. During a guided walking tour, you'll see the white-marble majesty of the Duomo—Italy's largest

cathedral, which took nearly six centuries to complete—and the famous La Scala opera house and museum. La Scala has hosted many premieres of the world's finest operas, and has been particularly important to Giuseppe Verdi, one of Italy's most beloved composers.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Transfer to Stresa where you will join your fellow travelers on your *Romantic Villages of Alpine Europe* trip.

OPTIONAL TOUR

Bergamo

(Day 5 \$180 per person)

Take a full-day tour of Bergamo, a town in the Lombardy region rich with art and architecture, and the home of the famed Commedia dell'Arte theatrical tradition. Once the outpost of Venice in the Italian Mainland, Bergamo is one of the most beautiful and better preserved towns in all Northern Italy. Set off on a walking tour through the upper part of the city, set high on a hillside, and see the grand Cathedral and Colleoni Chapel, one of the most distinguished examples of Renaissance architecture in Italy. Enjoy a lunch at a local restaurant, as well as free time to explore medieval and Renaissance heritage in the many *piazze* and churches that characterize this welcoming town.

POST-TRIP

Munich, Germany & Salzburg, Austria

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » **Accommodations** for 5 nights
- » **7 meals:** 5 breakfasts, 1 lunch, and 1 dinner
- » **3 included tours:** Munich, Lake Chiemsee, Salzburg
- » **Gratuities** for local guides and motorcoach drivers on your extension and all optional tours
- » **Personal headset** for all included and optional tours on this extension
- » Exclusive services of a Grand Circle Program Director
- » All transfers

POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Immerse yourself in Bavaria's famous and festive city, as you discover Munich's many palaces, churches, and museums, not to mention sampling delicious brews. And experience Salzburg—famed home to Mozart and the Von Trapp family—from the charming lanes of Old Town to the exalted might of Hohensalzburg Fortress.

Day 1 Explore Munich, Germany

- Destination: Munich
- Accommodations: NH Collection Munchen Bavaria or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Feel the pulse of Bavaria's capital as you explore Munich's most interesting places on a guided tour. Named after the monastic order who founded the city, Munich today is well known all over the world for its Oktoberfest beer festival, its Bayern Munchen soccer team, and is one of Europe's car manufacturing, publishing, and finance powerhouses. But you'll still feel right at home—the city's motto is "*Munchen mag dich*" ("Munich loves you").

On your tour, you'll see *Marienplatz*, the central square, as well as Nymphenburg Palace and the world-renowned *Glockenspiel*, a masterpiece of clockwork on the front of the Town Hall. Next,

you'll be introduced to Munich's biggest export: beer. The brewed beverage is an integral part of life in Bavaria, and the region is still home to more than 600 breweries (many of whom are represented at the city's annual Oktoberfest celebrations). You'll sample one of the city's finest brews at an included beer tasting.

Lunch: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: Free for your own discoveries—ask your Program Director for recommendations. Perhaps you'll visit the 14th-century Residenz, the distinctive and informative BMW Museum, or perhaps you'll just enjoy the *gemutlichkeit* (coziness and good cheer) of a local beer hall.

Dinner/Evening: Continue making independent discoveries this evening, with dinner on your own. Ask your Program Director for restaurant recommendations.

Day 2 Munich • Optional Dachau Memorial tour

- Destination: Munich
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: NH Collection Munchen Bavaria or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Free for your own discoveries—ask your Program Director for recommendations. Or, you can take an optional tour of Dachau Memorial, a sobering look at the legacy of World War II.

Lunch: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: Free for your own discoveries—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Dinner/Evening: Continue making independent discoveries this evening, with dinner on your own. Ask your Program Director for restaurant recommendations.

Day 3 Munich • Lake Chiemsee ferry ride, Austria • Transfer to Salzburg

- Destination: Salzburg
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Sheraton Salzburg Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Embark on your journey to Austria, stopping on the way at Chiemsee Lake, a pre-Alpine glacial lake with three islands dotting its surface. Take a ferry ride to Fraueninsel, where you'll enjoy a scenic discovery walk.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Fraueninsel.

Afternoon: Ferry back to the mainland. Continuing on to Salzburg, you'll arrive in the late afternoon, with plenty of time for an orientation walk of your new neighborhood with your Program Director.

Dinner/Evening: Your evening is free to relax or explore independently, with dinner on your own. Ask your Program Director for restaurant recommendations.

Day 4 Explore Salzburg

- Destination: Salzburg
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Sheraton Salzburg Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Begin your walking tour of Salzburg—the center of which is designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. A beautiful medieval city, Salzburg is where the genius composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born. You'll experience the fairy-tale feel of Old Town, where Mozart is beloved—so much so that a local confectioner named Paul Furst created a unique marzipan and chocolate candy devoted to the musical master called *Mozartkugeln*, which you'll have the chance to taste. From the Middle Ages to the 19th century, there is much architecture, culture, and art to discover throughout our time in this historic city.

Lunch: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: Free for your own discoveries—ask your Program Director for recommendations. Perhaps witness the Hohensalzburg Fortress, stroll through the Mirabell Gardens, or simply soak in the Alpine beauty of this town.

Dinner: Gather with your fellow travelers for a Farewell Dinner.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 5 Salzburg • Optional Hohenwerfen Castle tour & falconry show

- Destination: Salzburg
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Sheraton Salzburg Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Continue to enjoy storybook atmosphere in Salzburg, or opt for a tour of Hohenwerfen Castle, a medieval eleventh-century fortress situated atop a 2,000-foot tall rocky promontory overlooking the Austrian market town of Werfen.

Ascend to the castle's lofty heights via funicular, enjoying breathtaking Alpine scenes of snowcapped peaks and thickly forested hills as you rise toward the peak. Once you arrive, learn more about the castle's fascinating history—including its brush with Hollywood stardom as the setting for the 1968 action film, *Where Eagles Dare*—on a private tour with a local guide.

Hohenwerfen Castle is also the home to Austria's historic regional falconry center, and your optional tour includes a demonstration of the skills of these majestic raptors at the hands of a trained professional. Afterward, you'll have a little free time to wander the castle grounds on your own before lunch.

Lunch: Today's optional tour includes lunch at a tavern in the castle. Otherwise, lunch is on your own.

Afternoon: Yours to do as you please. Your Program Director will be happy to recommend a spot for lunch and free time activities.

Dinner/Evening: Continue making independent discoveries this evening, with dinner on your own. Ask your Program Director for restaurant recommendations.

Day 6 Salzburg • Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Transfer to the airport for your flight home.

OPTIONAL TOURS

Dachau Memorial

(Day 2 \$120 per person)

Take a sobering look at the legacy of World War II at the Dachau Memorial today. The first concentration camp, Dachau was created from a former ammunition factory that became a living nightmare for the nearly 200,000 prisoners who were sent here over its twelve-year existence. A visit to this site will provide moving context for many of your German and Austrian discoveries.

Please note: Lunch is not included in this optional tour.

Hohenwerfen Castle tour & falconry show

(Day 5 \$190 per person)

Discover the splendor of Hohenwerfen Castle, a medieval eleventh-century fortress situated atop a 2,000-foot tall rocky promontory overlooking the Austrian market town of Werfen. Ascend to the castle's lofty heights via

funicular, enjoying breathtaking Alpine scenes of snowcapped peaks and thickly forested hills as you rise toward the peak. Once you arrive, learn more about the castle's fascinating history—including its brush with Hollywood stardom as the setting for the 1968 action film, *Where Eagles Dare*—on a private tour with a local guide.

Hohenwerfen Castle is also the home to Austria's historic regional falconry center, and your optional tour includes a demonstration of the skills of these majestic raptors at the hands of a trained professional. Afterward, you'll have a little free time to wander the castle grounds on your own before lunch in the castle's tavern (included in the cost of the optional tour).

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Your Passport

- Must be in good condition
- Must be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- Must have the required number of blank pages (details below)
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable

Need to Renew Your Passport?

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit the U.S. Department of State’s official website at **www.travel.state.gov** for information on obtaining a new passport or renewing your existing passport. The U.S. Department of State allows for passport renewal by mail or, for applicable citizens, renewal online. We advise you review the process and requirements for online passport renewal on the official website.

You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

Recommended Blank Pages

Please confirm that your passport has enough blank pages for this vacation.

- **Main trip only:** You will need 2 blank passport pages.
- **Pre-trip extension to Lake Como, Italy:** No additional pages needed.
- **Post-trip extension to Munich, Germany & Salzburg, Austria:** No additional pages needed.
- **Both a pre- and a post-trip extension:** You will need a total of 2 pages.

Visa Required

We’ll provide you information with detailed instructions, application forms, and fees about 100 days prior to your departure. In the meantime, we’re providing the information below as a guideline on what to expect. This info is for U.S. citizens only. All visas and fees are subject to change.

- **Europe (Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Austria):** U.S. citizens will require an online visa-waiver to enter countries in the European Union. There is no set timeline for when this requirement will start – we will contact all impacted travelers before their departure once the start date is confirmed.

Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?

If you are not a U.S. citizen, or if your passport is from any country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate, embassy, or a visa services company about visa requirements. We recommend the services of PVS International, a national visa service located in Washington D.C.; they can be reached at **1-800-556-9990** or **www.pvsinternational.org**.

Traveling With a Minor?

Traveling with a minor may require certain documentation for border crossings. For further detail on the required documentation, please contact the local embassy or state government.

Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents

We recommend you carry color photocopies of key documents including the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, air itinerary, credit cards (front and back), and an alternative form of ID. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals.

If you plan to email this information to yourself, please keep in mind that email is not always secure; consider using password protection or encryption. Also email is not always available worldwide. As an alternative, you could load these documents onto a flash drive instead, which can do double-duty as a place to backup photos during your trip.

Overseas Taxes & Fees

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency).

RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

Keep Your Abilities In Mind

Please review the information below prior to departing on this trip. We reserve the right for our Program Directors to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home if their limitations are impacting the group's experience.

GROUP SIZE

- A maximum of 42 travelers, led by a local Grand Circle Program Director

PACING

- 4 locations in 15 days, including 1 single-night stay

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Walk 1-2 miles unassisted and participate in 1-2 hours of physical activities daily, including stairs
- Three days of this trip may require 3 miles of walking and 3-5 hours of optional physical activity
- Not accessible for travelers using wheelchairs or scooters
- Travelers using walkers, crutches, or other mobility aids must travel with a companion to assist them
- We reserve the right for Program Directors to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience

TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Several days at altitudes between 3,000-6,000 feet
- Uneven walking surfaces, including unpaved paths, hills, stairs, and cobblestones
- Travel by 51-seat motorcoach, public trains, and 50- to 200-seat boats

CLIMATE

- Daytime temperatures range from 43-82°F during touring season
- June-August are the warmest months, with high humidity in Lake Maggiore
- April and October weather can be unpredictable and change quickly
- Alpine temperatures can drop suddenly with cold wind, rain, or snow year-round

Health Check

Feeling healthy and confident of your mobility is essential to fully enjoy your trip. If you have ongoing medical conditions or concerns about your health, we highly recommend that you schedule a checkup with your personal physician at least six weeks in advance of your departure date.

- Discuss with your doctor any aspects of your itinerary that may affect your health and be guided by his or her advice. (You can use the “Keep Your Abilities in Mind” on the previous page as a guideline to discuss with him or her.)
- You may want to have a dental exam before your trip. A loose filling or developing cavity would be difficult to remedy while you are traveling.
- If you have a condition that requires special equipment or treatment, you must bring and be responsible for all necessary items related to your condition.

No Vaccines Required

Recommended Vaccines

At the time of writing there were no required vaccines for this trip. The CDC recommends that all travelers be up to date on their routine vaccinations and on basic travel vaccines like Hepatitis A and Typhoid, but these are suggestions only. However, this could change in future so we encourage you to check with the CDC yourself before meeting with your doctor.

Traveling with Medications

- **Pack medications in your carry-on bag** to avoid loss and to have them handy.
- **Keep medicines in their original, labeled containers** for a quicker security screen at the airport and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas.
- **Bring copies of your prescriptions**, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name to be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications.

We recommend checking with the State Department for medication restrictions by country: **travel.state.gov** (Select “Find International Travel Information” then select “Country Information”; if you don’t see any medications specifically mentioned under the “Your Health Abroad” section, then you can presume major U.S. brands should be OK).

Staying Healthy on Your Trip

Jet Lag Tips

- Start your trip well-rested.
- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane.

- Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don't push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

Allergies

If you have any serious allergies or dietary restrictions, we advise you to notify us at least 30 days prior to your departure. Please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-321-2835**, and we will communicate them to our regional office. Every effort will be made to accommodate you.

Water

- Water on this trip is considered safe, but as an added safety precaution against possible stomach upsets, we recommend you drink bottled water as much as possible.
- Bottled water is usually for sale in hotels, food shops, and restaurants.
- If you're out of bottled water, hotel tap water is okay to drink, but it may taste unpleasant because of heavy chlorination.

MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

Top Three Tips

- **Carry a mix of different types of payments**, such as local currency, an ATM card, and a credit card
- **Traveler's checks are not recommended.** They can be difficult to exchange and the commission fee for cashing them is quite high. It's more practical to view them as a last resort in the event of a special situation.
- **You will not be able to pay with U.S. dollars on this trip;** you will need local currency instead.

Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like www.xe.com/currencyconverter, your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

Euro Countries: European Euro (€)

Switzerland: Swiss Franc (Fr.)

How to Exchange Money

If you want to exchange money before your trip, you can usually do so through your bank or at an exchange office. Your departure airport in the U.S., a travel agent, or an AAA office are also possible outlets. Or you can wait and change money on the trip instead—but it might be helpful to arrive with some local currency in case you run into a bank holiday or an “out of order” ATM.

On your trip, the easiest way is to withdraw funds from a local ATM. The ATM will give you local money and your bank at home will convert that into U.S. dollars.

You can also exchange cash at some hotels, large post offices, and money exchange offices. To exchange cash, you'll usually need your passport and bills in good condition (not worn, torn, or dirty). New bills (post 2014) are best.

Please note that many banks in Europe will only exchange money for their own customers. Never exchange money on the street. All exchange methods involve fees, which may be built into the conversion rate; ask beforehand.

ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card. Many banks will charge a set fee or a percentage fee each time you use a foreign ATM. We

recommend that you check with your bank before you depart. Don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

In most countries, ATMs are widely available in major cities. If you are in a rural location, it will likely be harder to find an ATM. If you are visiting a country that has different expectation for ATMs, they will be listed below.

Credit & Debit Cards

While traveling, most countries and major cities will accept credit cards. We suggest that you bring one or two, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, as not all are accepted around the world. If you are visiting a country that does not commonly accept credit cards, they will be listed below.

Italy: Credit and debit cards are widely accepted in Italy. Occasionally a small “Mom and Pop” restaurant will be cash only, and street vendors or taxis usually are cash only, but most other businesses will take cards.

Austria: Credit and debit cards are widely accepted in Austria. For small purchases or markets, you may need cash instead.

Chip Cards

Many countries have adopted credit cards that have an embedded computer chip. These cards are inserted into the reader instead of swiped. The card owner then authorizes the purchase using a PIN instead of signing.

Though this technology is common in the U.S., occasionally there are machines in other countries that can't read U.S. cards, or the machine can read the card, but asks for a PIN. This doesn't happen often, and is nothing to worry about. You can usually resolve the situation by asking the cashier to let you sign. (If you don't speak the language, just mime signing on your hand.) If you are not able to sign for a purchase, such as at an automated ticket booth, you can use another form of payment, such as a debit card that has a PIN.

Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges or withdrawals from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company and/or bank you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure. Some banks or credit card companies will also let you do this online.

You should also double-check what phone number you could call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don't assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1 800 numbers don't work outside of the U.S.!

Tipping Guidelines

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. But for those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines. To make it easy for you to budget, we have quoted the amounts in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency or in U.S. dollars.

- **Grand Circle Program Director:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your GCT Program Director at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$7–\$10 per traveler for each day their Program Director is with them. *Please note that tips for your Program Director can only be in the form of cash. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Program Director during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*
- **Hotel Housekeeping:** Many travelers will leave the equivalent of \$1–\$2 per day, per room for the hotel housekeeping staff.
- **Included in Your Trip Price:** Gratuities are included for local guides and motorcoach drivers on your main trip, extensions, and all optional tours.

Time at Leisure: When you are exploring on your own, it’s useful to know when to tip and how much, because local customs often differ from the U.S. Here are a few helpful guidelines for the most common services a traveler might use:

- **Taxis:** In Italy, tipping is not customary, but many locals will round up the fare and let the driver keep the change. In many cities in Switzerland, Austria, and Germany the tip is included in the fare, and will be announced on a sign inside the cab; otherwise a 10% tip is appropriate.
- **Restaurants, cafes, and bars:** Throughout Europe, the tip for the waiter or bartender is usually included in the prices or added on as a service fee. Look for a statement on the menu like *servizio incluso*, *service compris*, or *service enthalten*—all of which mean “service is included”, or for a service charge on the bill. If you would like to leave a tip on top of the service fee (or in the rare case when the service is not included) then 10% would be considered generous. Note that in Italy, you may see the word “coperto” on your bill. This is not a tip, but more of a cover charge for the use of the table, table cloth, napkins, etc.
- **Public Restrooms:** Most public restrooms in Europe have attendants that take care of cleaning and supplies. It is customary to leave a small tip for them—usually half of whatever currency is in use in that country (i.e. euros)—so hold on to those coins! Some restrooms are pay-toilets; you pay the staff at the entrance to the restroom or drop the appropriate coin into the slot on the stall door. Many restaurants, cafes, and shops offer only pay-toilets or reserve their restrooms for patrons only.

AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

Land Only Travelers & Customized Air

Quick Definitions

- **Land Only:** You will be booking your own international flights. Airport transfers are not included.
- **Air-Inclusive:** You booked international air with us. Airport transfers are included as long as you didn't customize your trip's dates (see next bullet).
- **Customized Air:** You booked international air with us, and have customized it in some way. If you have customized your trip's dates to arrive early, stay longer, or stop on your own in a connecting city, airport transfers will NOT be included. You must also arrange your own accommodations for any additional nights. For your convenience, a preliminary list of your included hotels is available on your My Planner at www.gct.com/myplanner under "My Reservations".

Air Inclusive Travelers

If you have purchased air with Grand Circle Travel, there are some points that may be helpful for you to know.

- **Arrival:** Once you arrive, you'll need to collect your luggage and clear customs. A Grand Circle Representative will meet you outside of customs and assist you with your transfer to the hotel or ship. Important note on porters: Airport porters are NOT allowed in the baggage claim area. On arrival, you must take your luggage off the baggage carousel and load it onto a cart, which you will then move through customs. When you exit customs, you'll handle your cart until reaching your transfer vehicle. Your driver will load your luggage into the transfer vehicle.
- **Flight Delays:** Grand Circle Travel is not responsible for flight delays or cancellations. In the unfortunate circumstance that your flight is delayed or changed, please try to reach the regional Grand Circle office (their number will be in your Final Documents) in order to make new arrangements for your transfer. Due to airline regulations our staff is not notified of flight rerouting, and our local representative won't necessarily be aware of your new arrival time. In these cases you will need to arrange your transfer by taxi to your hotel.
- **Flying with a Travel Companion:** If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.

- **Selecting Your Seats:** If your airline allows pre-assigned seats, you will be able to select and view them directly from the airline's website after booking. Some airlines will not allow seat confirmation until your reservation is ticketed 45–30 days prior to departure, and/or they may charge a nominal fee. You may locate your itinerary on an airline's website utilizing the Record Locator Number found on the Air Itinerary in your My Planner.

Airport Transfers Can Be Purchased

For eligible flights, airport transfers may be purchased separately as an optional add-on, subject to availability. To be eligible, your flight(s) must meet the following requirements:

- You must fly into or fly home from the same airport as GCT travelers who purchased included airfare.
- Your flight(s) must arrive/depart on the same day that the group arrives or departs.

Airport transfers can be purchased up to 45 days prior to your departure; they are not available for purchase onsite. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-321-2835**.

If you don't meet the requirements above, you'll need to make your own transfer arrangements. We suggest the Rome to Rio website as a handy resource: **www.rome2rio.com**

Optional Tours

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your vacation by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

What You Need to Know

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved with your Program Director can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard, Visa, and Discover credit cards; we can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.)
- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as "OPT Boston".
- Your Program Director will give you details on the optional tours while you're on the trip. But if you'd like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Planner at **www.gct.com/myplanner**).

Communicating with Home from Abroad

Cell Phones

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone can accept one.

Calling Apps

Another option is to use a smartphone app like Skype, FaceTime, or WhatsApp. We recommend you use WhatsApp to communicate with home while abroad and with your Trip Experience Leader while onsite. You will need a Wi-Fi connection if you do not have international coverage. Other calling options include smartphone apps such as Skype or FaceTime. You will need a Wi-Fi connection for these apps and the calls may count towards your phone plan's data allowance. Many smartphones—and some tablets or laptops—come with one of these apps pre-installed or you can download them for free from the appropriate apps store.

Calling Cards and 1-800 Numbers

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.).

One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

How to Call Overseas

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. Note that foreign phone numbers may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even within a country the number of digits can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

Italy: +39

Germany: +49

Switzerland: +41

Austria: +43

PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on bag per person.
Weight restrictions	Varies by airline. The current standard is 50 lbs for checked bags and 15 lbs for carry-on bags .
Size Restrictions	Varies by airline. Measured in linear inches (length+width+depth). Generally, 62 linear inches is the checked bag limit; carry-on limit is 45 linear inches.
Luggage Type	A sturdy, fabric-sided suitcase with built-in wheels and lockable zippers is recommended.
TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS	
Same as the main trip.	
REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS	
<p>One suitcase and one carry-on bag per person: Due to the space limitations on bus transfers, you'll be restricted to one suitcase and one carry-on bag per person. This is to ensure that we have room for everyone's luggage. We ask that you abide by this limit to avoid inconveniencing your fellow travelers and prevent additional airline luggage fees (which are your responsibility). Most airlines now charge to check more than one suitcase per person for flights to Europe and other international flights.</p> <p>Luggage rules: Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.</p>	

Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.

- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the FAQ section.
- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines.

Your Luggage

- **Checked Luggage:** Consider a duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase. Look for one with heavy nylon fabric, wrap-around handles, built-in wheels, and a heavy duty lockable zipper. Due to space limitations on our motorcoaches, you are allowed one piece of checked luggage per person. Porterage at airports and hotels is provided for **one** bag per person. All bags should have luggage tags.
- **Carry-on Bag:** You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during your daily activities.
- **Locks:** For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

Clothing Suggestions: Functional Tips

- **Travel light:** A good rule of thumb is to gather together everything you want to bring; then take half of that. To have a varied travel wardrobe, yet keep your luggage light, we recommend you select a color scheme and pack color-coordinated clothing items that can be mixed to create different outfits.
- **Pack casual clothes:** Comfortable, informal apparel is acceptable at each of your destinations. At dinner, you will not need to wear “dressy” clothing; men do not need jackets or ties and women do not need fancy dresses. You may want one or two “smart casual” outfits for the Welcome Reception or Farewell Dinner, but it's completely up to you.
- **Consider clothing designed for travel, sports, or camping:** With modern fabrics, lightweight packing for comfort and protection through a wide range of weather is easy.
- **Bring rain gear:** Regardless of your month of travel, rainfall is certainly a possibility. We suggest you bring a folding umbrella and waterproof shell. Water-resistant walking shoes are advantageous in case heavy downpours pass through.
- **Good walking shoes are critical.** This program features many included tours that follow steep, unpaved or cobbled routes; and even an average day of light sightseeing or shopping can put great demands on your feet. If you prefer more ankle support, take light hiking boots. In case you get caught in the rain, we suggest you bring an extra pair of walking shoes, and rain boots or galoshes. Aboard ship, you'll want non-slip shoes with rubber soles.

Style Hints

- **Proper attire in churches:** To satisfy dress codes for Italian churches, men and women are requested to cover their arms and legs. No shorts above the knees or sleeveless garments please. Women wearing sleeveless blouses can cover their bare arms with a scarf. It's no longer necessary for women to cover their heads. Pantsuits are now acceptable in churches.

What to Bring

We have included suggestions from Program Directors and former travelers to help you pack. These packing lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. We recommend using www.weather.com and consulting the “Climate” chapter of this handbook.

Your accommodations will supply soap, body wash, and shampoo/conditioner. If you prefer a certain brand you may want to bring your own, but otherwise you can rely on what they provide. **And don't forget a reusable water bottle**—you'll need it to take advantage of any refills we offer as we are working to eliminate single-use plastic bottles on all of our trips.

Recommended Clothing

- ☐ Shirts: A mixture of short and long-sleeved shirts to layer
- ☐ Trousers, jeans, or skirts
- ☐ Comfortable walking shoes and/or water resistant shoes
- ☐ Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood
- ☐ Sleepwear
- ☐ Socks and undergarments
- ☐ A jacket or sweater, depending on the time of year

Essential Items

- ☐ Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, shampoo/conditioner, shower cap, body soap, etc.
- ☐ Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses and your prescription
- ☐ Sunglasses with a neck strap
- ☐ Wide-brim sun hat or visor
- ☐ Pocket-size tissues

- ☐ Photocopies of passport, air ticket, credit cards
- ☐ Compact umbrella
- ☐ Electrical transformer and plug adapter—see “Regional Electricity” section.
- ☐ Travel-size hair dryer: Many hotels will provide hair dryers, but not all. If a hair dryer is essential to you consider a travel-size version.

Medicines

- ☐ Your own prescription medicines
- ☐ Vitamins
- ☐ Cold remedies: Sudafed/Dristan
- ☐ Pain relievers: Ibuprofen/naproxen/aspirin
- ☐ Laxatives: Senokot/Ex-Lax
- ☐ Stomach upset: Pepto-Bismol/Mylanta
- ☐ Anti-diarrheal: Imodium
- ☐ Band-Aids, Moleskin foot pads
- ☐ Antibiotics: Neosporin/Bacitracin

Home-Hosted Visits

It is customary, though not necessary, to return your hosts' generosity with a small gift. If you do bring a gift, we recommend that you bring something the whole family can enjoy, or something that represents your region, state, or hometown. Get creative and keep it small—peach jelly from Georgia, maple sugar candy from New England, orange blossom soap from California; something that can be used or used up is best. When choosing a gift, be certain to consider the local culture as well. For example, we do not recommend alcohol in Muslim countries because it is forbidden in Islam, and your hosts may be religious. Not all Grand Circle vacations include a home-hosted visit; please check your final itinerary before you depart.

Electricity

When traveling overseas, the voltage is usually different and the plugs might not be the same shape.

Voltage

Electricity at hotels in Italy, Switzerland, Germany, and Austria is 220 volts. In the U.S. it is 110 volts. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, smartphones, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220–240. But you should check the item or the owner’s guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. Plugging a 110V U.S. appliance into 220/240V 50/60Hz service will ruin the motor. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.)

Plugs

The shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you’ll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Because you will encounter multiple plug types on this trip, it may be easier to purchase an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. Versatile and lightweight, these can usually be found at your local electronics goods or hardware stores. Sometimes you can buy them at large retailers too, like Target or Walmart. If you forget to bring an adapter, you might also find them for sale at the airport when you arrive at your destination.

Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B. Here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

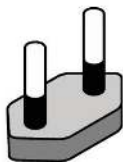
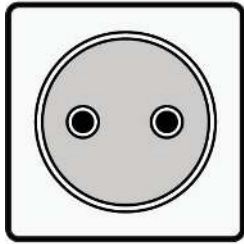
Italy: C, L, or F

Switzerland: C and/or J

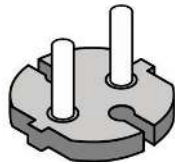
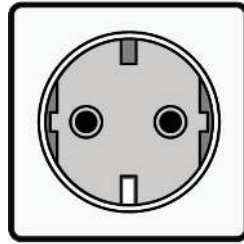
Germany: C and/or F

Austria: C and/or F

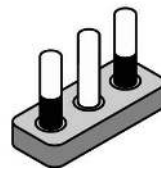
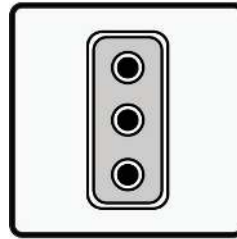
Type C



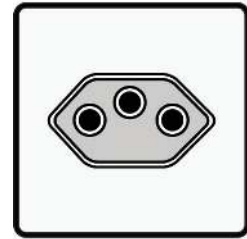
Type F



Type L



Type J



CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

Stresa, Italy: The climate in Stresa is semi-tropical, with year-round moderate weather. Spring and summer are generally sunny with temperatures averaging in the high 70s. Fall is cooler, but not cold. Night temperatures, however, usually drop in Stresa just as they do in Interlaken and Seefeld; be prepared for both warm weather and chilly temperatures that could dip below 50°.

Interlaken/Seefeld: These two towns have a climate that is comparable to that of New England. Spring and fall daytime temperatures are moderate, and summer days average a comfortable 70°; however, because of the shifting Alpine air currents, it can be unpredictably cool. Evening temperatures always drop, and can be as chilly as 40°.

Lake Como, Italy: Lake Como has a relatively mild climate with tropical and sub-tropical plants growing all year round. Some people even compare its climate to that of the Mediterranean region. In January the average daily temperature is about 36° and in July the average is 90°. This region tends to experience unpredictable snowfall, but it is most common in the areas of higher elevation.

Munich, Germany: Munich's climate can go to extremes—from bitter cold in the winter to hot and muggy in the summer. By late spring, the weather is typically sunny and pleasant, but days of cloudy, wet weather should not be ruled out. Summer is generally warm, though evenings can be cool. Light showers are a common occurrence. Autumn comes early: by mid-September the weather has usually started to cool off and skies have become volatile, sometimes alternating from bright sun to a dark overcast several times a day.

Salzburg, Austria: The climate in Salzburg is subtropical. Autumn and winter typically exhibit fog but not too many thunderstorms. In summer the temperatures are moderate and in winter they are mild, though the winter winds tend to be quite strong. On average, the warmest month of the year is July (66°) and the coolest month is January (31°).

Climate Averages & Online Forecast

The following charts reflect the **average** climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to use **www.weather.com** for a more accurate forecast of the locations you visit.

Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity & Monthly Rainfall

MONTH	STRESA, ITALY			INTERLAKEN, SWITZERLAND		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	46 to 30	--	9	36 to 25	85	10
FEB	50 to 31	--	6	40 to 26	80	10
MAR	58 to 37	--	7	48 to 31	75	12
APR	62 to 43	--	14	55 to 37	70	12
MAY	71 to 52	--	16	64 to 44	70	14
JUN	78 to 58	--	14	69 to 50	75	14
JUL	82 to 61	--	11	74 to 53	75	13
AUG	81 to 61	--	13	72 to 53	80	14
SEP	72 to 54	--	11	66 to 48	80	9
OCT	63 to 47	--	13	57 to 40	85	8
NOV	53 to 37	--	12	45 to 32	85	10
DEC	46 to 31	--	10	37 to 26	85	10

MONTH	SEEFELD, AUSTRIA			LAKE COMO, ITALY		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	36 to 20	85 to 63	9	46 to 30	--	2.6
FEB	38 to 20	88 to 60	10	50 to 31	--	1.8
MAR	43 to 25	89 to 56	7	58 to 37	--	2.4
APR	50 to 31	89 to 54	4	62 to 43	--	5.8
MAY	60 to 39	84 to 54	12	71 to 52	--	6.5
JUN	64 to 44	85 to 58	5	78 to 58	--	7.1
JUL	69 to 48	86 to 56	9	108 to 80	--	5.9
AUG	68 to 48	90 to 58	7	108 to 80	--	5.9
SEP	62 to 43	92 to 58	6	72 to 54	--	6.7
OCT	54 to 36	90 to 58	4	63 to 47	--	5.7
NOV	41 to 26	88 to 66	6	53 to 37	--	5.6
DEC	36 to 21	86 to 66	5	46 to 31	--	2.9

MONTH	MUNICH, GERMANY			SALZBURG, AUSTRIA		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	36 to 24	88 to 80	13	38 to 25	86 to 74	2.8
FEB	38 to 25	90 to 74	12	42 to 27	86 to 66	2.5
MAR	48 to 32	87 to 62	16	51 to 33	84 to 58	2.6
APR	53 to 36	86 to 57	17	58 to 39	82 to 55	3.7
MAY	63 to 44	84 to 55	16	68 to 47	79 to 53	5.1
JUN	68 to 50	85 to 58	18	72 to 53	80 to 56	6.8
JUL	72 to 54	84 to 55	18	76 to 56	81 to 55	7.9
AUG	73 to 54	89 to 55	16	76 to 56	84 to 56	6.9
SEP	66 to 48	91 to 61	15	68 to 50	87 to 59	5.2
OCT	55 to 40	92 to 71	17	59 to 42	87 to 63	3.5
NOV	44 to 32	90 to 80	16	46 to 33	87 to 71	2.9
DEC	38 to 27	89 to 81	15	39 to 28	86 to 75	2.8

ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

Your Program Director

During your exclusive Grand Circle vacation, you'll have reliable assistance available at all times from an on-site Grand Circle Travel Program Director. Your Program Director is fluent in English and can give you an inside perspective on your destinations. He or she is supported along the way by local tour guides, who guide you expertly through particular sites and cities.

Many Grand Circle Program Directors are graduates of professional education programs for travel guides. In addition, they receive specialized training directly from Grand Circle, training that is based on what we've learned from thousands of past travelers about how to make the trip most enjoyable. Your Program Director offers both a deep knowledge of the region and a commitment to make this a very pleasant, informative, and rewarding travel experience for you.

Your Program Director will provide sightseeing trips, handle all travel details, reserve optional tours you choose to take, oversee your Discovery Series events, and provide any other assistance you may need. You will be in the company of a Program Director throughout your vacation.

The Cultures of Alpine Europe

The locations visited on this journey have all been shaped by the Alps, though the landscapes you'll admire each have a unique character. So, too, do the cultures of each destination, where you will encounter a variety of languages, cuisines, traditions, and attitudes.

In the **Italian Lakes District**, you'll find some truth to the stereotype of Italians being passionate, animated, and gregarious. This is certainly true relative to their northerly neighbors, though a southern Italian might describe their northern countrymen as reserved. This is all a matter of *campanilismo*—a sort of provincialism. The word derives from the Italian for “bell tower” (*campanile*), and refers to a sort of “our bell tower is taller than yours” mentality. So you'll hear people identify themselves not as Italians, but in terms of their region, town, or even their specific quarter of town. *Sono Lombardo*. (I'm from Lombardy.) *Sono Milanese*. (I'm from Milan.) *Sono Stresiano*. (I'm from Stresa.) This makes sense when you consider that Italy has only been a unified nation for about 150 years: most Italians have deep, local roots that long predate that.

In terms of *campanilismo*, northern Italy in general (and Lombardy in particular) is the most prosperous and industrious part of Italy. A southerner would tell you that the northern way of life is fast-paced and business-oriented. But you'll probably not notice that in the Italian Lakes District, since this is where well-heeled Italians have come to relax and play since Roman times.

Italian culture places a high value on interpersonal relationships, starting with the family. To reflect well on one's family, one is expected to dress well, behave graciously, and be dutiful. It is part of the concept of *la bella figura*, the “beautiful figure” that all Italians strive to cut. In the north, perhaps that *figura* is just a little more *bella* than elsewhere, because people here tend to be the most fashion conscious in Italy. You can see this in action during the early evenings, when locals may gather at public squares and lakeside promenades for *la passeggiata*, the traditional

evening stroll. Even in rural areas, people will be fashionably (if casually) dressed, the mood will be upbeat, and good manners will be on display. As a cultural phenomenon, *la bella figura* may well be a metaphor for the allure of Italy itself: confident, elegant, charming, and engaging.

Switzerland defines itself not as a nation, *per se*, but officially, as the “Swiss Confederation,” a conscious and mutually beneficial bonding of 26 different cantons (states) speaking four main languages (German, French, Italian, and Romansch) and numerous dialects. Your destination, Interlaken, lies in the German-speaking canton of Bern, in the Bernese Oberland. This was and still is dairy country. But thanks to its stunning setting between lakes Thun and Brienz, and its brace of mountains dominated by the Monch, Eiger, and Jungfrau peaks, Interlaken’s main industry has, for hundreds of years, been tourism. As a result, about 26% of its residents are foreign nationals, and the people are generally multilingual and quite cosmopolitan.

It is considered common courtesy to greet everyone with a friendly “Grüezi.” If you enter a room full of people, you’ll be expected to greet each one individually. You may be surprised when even very young children come up to shake your hand and introduce themselves. Otherwise, the Swiss are rather formal, and are not known to be outgoing. Their reticence is often mistaken for diffidence, but it really is more about having respect for individual privacy. Most Swiss will be happy to help you with directions or assist you if you need a hand. But you have to ask.

For every stereotype, there are exceptions. For instance, the Swiss have a reputation for being orderly and law abiding. But you may be surprised, say, if you are patiently waiting your turn at the deli counter, and the local Swiss people just keep barging ahead of you. The Swiss, oddly, rarely line up for anything, so do as the locals do: nudge your way forward and just speak up.

In a land of expert watchmakers, it’s no surprise that precision and punctuality are highly valued. You might find Swiss requirements about being on time a bit obsessive, or their insistence on the finer points a bit pedantic. But remember that that perfectionism has garnered the world’s esteem and confidence when it comes to the celebrated Swiss quality—whether that pertains to scientific instruments or chocolate or trains or cutlery. The Swiss claim to have more registered patents and Nobel Prize winners (mainly in science) per capita than any other nationality. Considering their penchant for precision, you can probably trust their numbers.

Austria has much to be proud of when it comes to cultural milestones: the music of Mozart, the philosophy of Wittgenstein, the psychoanalysis of Freud, the art of Klimt, and more. As the home of the Hapsburg dynasty, Austria exerted unprecedented influence over European history, from the Middle Ages up until the first World War. Today, Austria enjoys an enviable standard of living; is home to many international agencies; and has maintained its neutrality, even during the height of the Cold War. Yet with all that, outsiders often confuse Austrian culture with that of Germany, which causes understandable resentment among many Austrians.

Austrians tend to think of themselves as more easygoing than most Germans. This comes across in what is called *Schmäh*. This is a uniquely Austrian sense of humor that originated among Viennese cabaret performers, and is now prevalent all over Austria. Where Germans are said to be direct, proper, and literal, *Schmäh* relies on a subversive sense of irony, sly wit, and innuendo. It is all in good fun, so don’t take offense if an Austrian seems to be teasing you.

Austrians love to socialize and place a high value on good conversation. It's very traditional for friends and family to gather at the local *Gasthaus* (pub), *Heuriger* (wine pub), or coffeehouse to relax and socialize for hours. This is an important aspect of *gemütlichkeit*, which is a state of friendliness, warmth, nostalgia, and happiness.

Your destination here, Seefeld, is *gemütlichkeit* incarnate. Sitting in heart of the Austrian Tyrol, in the Eastern Alps, is a cozy warren of chalets, *gasthause*, antique farms, and mountain meadows straight out of *The Sound of Music*. Though Seefeld is world famous as a winter sports resort (especially *langlauf* or cross-country skiing), its easygoing, Tyrolean charm makes it popular year-round. Prior to its late 19th-century transformation into a holiday resort, Seefeld was a religious pilgrimage site, based on a miraculous story (the *Legend of the Host*.) Its two old churches are still attractions, and many of the local holidays and festivals had religious roots.

You may be familiar with the persistent stereotypes about **Germans** being no-nonsense, workaholic, logic-driven rule-followers. But your preconceptions may be challenged when you visit the Bavarian capital, Munich—one of Germany's most multicultural, liberal, free-thinking, and party-loving cities. Munich is not the only German city to defy that old, staunch stereotype. The fact is, the aftermath of Germany's role in two world wars has prompted many here to re-assess traditional attitudes.

But a few of the generalizations have some basis. . . . For instance, Germans are typically very direct, and very honest. So when they deliver an opinion it won't be ambiguous or sugar coated. For this reason, some people may mistake them for being blunt. But to a German, speaking frankly is not considered rude, it is considered truthful, and helpful. The opinion being delivered is likely to be well thought out, as Germans place a great value on logic and critical thinking. How this manifests itself in daily life is evident in how efficient and punctual everything is—be it public trains, the national health service, or the vaunted trash recycling program.

Perhaps the capacity for honesty and critical thinking has helped Germany in its long process of "*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*." It's a word that describes the nation's struggle to come to terms with the Nazi era and the Holocaust. Many cities boast monuments, museums, and centers dedicated to the study of anti-Semitism; while there are no monuments to war heroes of the Third Reich. All school curricula include frank sections on the Nazi era. Reparations have been paid to Holocaust survivors; and overall, German institutions have been willing to engage in thoughtful, albeit painful conversations about past complicity and present responsibility. Many have linked Germany's work to confront past guilt to its current welcome of refugees. Though the migrant crisis is not without controversy, most Germans support the government's policies.

Another impact of WWII has been the breakdown of class barriers. Most Germans had to rebuild everything from scratch, but since many necessities were covered by social welfare programs, today's Germans enjoy a comfortable, middle class existence. Privacy is highly valued, so people tend not to divulge a lot of personal information about themselves at first. But Germans usually become very open and warm once they get better acquainted with you. Their sentimental streak comes out when they share *gemütlichkeit*, a feeling of warmth, affection, coziness, nostalgia and celebration. If you are invited to join in, please enjoy. Resistance is futile.

Hotel Courtesy in Italy

Italian hotels do not allow food and beverages to be taken from their breakfast rooms, nor is it courteous to eat or drink food or beverages purchased elsewhere in hotel common rooms. In conformity with municipal laws to promote urban decorum, hotels do not allow hanging laundry on room balconies. Travel clotheslines, used in your bathroom, are a more private and effective solution.

Italian Cuisine

Italy may have been unified as a nation in 1861, but its cuisine is another story—and a glorious one at that. Here, gastronomy has always been a matter of regionalism and seasonality. The country is divided up into 20 distinct regions, each with its own specialties. The good news is that there is certainly culinary overlap, and since Italians are famously passionate about food, you can enjoy many beloved regional dishes all over Italy.

The structure of a typical Italian meal is designed to stimulate your appetite, and promote moderation—along with variety. So it will begin with dishes like the following:

- **Apertivo:** A glass of sparkling prosecco or spumante white wine or Spritz.
- **Antipasto all’Italiana:** Raw vegetables served with various cheeses salami and Speck
- **Crostini** Fried polenta squares topped with sauces or pâtés,
- **Bagna Cauda:** A hot dish made with garlic and anchovies, dipping sauce for vegetables typical of Piedmont

The first course, called Primo, comes next. Here is where you may enjoy your carbohydrates as a small dish such as:

- **Polenta:** A dense cornmeal porridge can be served with various toppings, like tomato meat sauce or a “white” sauce of sausage and mushrooms.
- **Canederli:** A large gnocchi dish made with stale bread soaked in milk, eggs, and smoked bacon, flavored with butter and cheese.
- **Risotto alla Milanese:** A simple and creamy risotto with the perfect combination of simple ingredients like butter, white wine, parmesan, and saffron
- **Pizzoccheri:** Long noodles, made from a dough of wheat and buckwheat, is served with potatoes, butter, Casera cheese and stewed savoy cabbage from Lombardy

The main course is called Il secondo. This is usually a small, simply prepared dish of chicken, meat, or fish including:

- **Cotoletta alla Milanese:** A tender veal cutlet coated in crunchy breadcrumbs fried in butter
- **Osso Buco:** Braised veal shanks crusted with a citrus zest mixture called gremolata.
- **Vitello Tonnato:** A dish of cold, sliced tuna

Your meal will conclude with a Dolce (sweet) such as:

- **Tiramisu:** A layered confection of sponge cake, mascarpone cheese, coffee and liqueur.
- **Sbrisolona:** A crumbly almond cake from Lombardy.
- **Strudel di Mele:** Similar to the German apple strudel, this is a flaky pastry stuffed with apples.
- **Castagnaccio:** A gluten-free cake, baked with chestnut flour mixed with olive oil, walnuts, pine nuts, raisins, and rosemary for a slightly savory taste

Dolci may be served with coffee or an alcoholic digestivo such as herbal amaro or limoncello. It is meant to aid your digestion of a memorable meal, one that will certainly have been toast-worthy

Swiss Cuisine

Swiss gastronomy reflects the best traditions of neighboring France, Germany, Italy, and Austria. But often these borrowed dishes have a Swiss twist. Then, there are uniquely Swiss specialties that tend to be simple, but stand out for the freshness and quality of their local ingredients.

One of the most well-known dishes is **fondue**, which is cheese melted with white wine in a special pot called a *caquelon*. It's as much a social experience as gustatory one, because it is meant to be shared by all at the table. Each diner will dip small pieces of bread into the melted cheese. Another cheesy classic is the Valais specialty, **raclette**. This is not only a type of cheese, it's a way of enjoying it. The cheese is slowly grilled over a fire, and as each layer melts it is sliced off to blanket boiled potatoes, pickles and onions. Friends will patiently wait for their slices of **raclette** to melt while sharing conversation and glasses of local **Fendant wine**.

- **Roesti:** These potato cakes are grated, pan fried till golden and crispy, and topped with salty **speck** (bacon), a fried egg, and melted **raclette** cheese. They are delicious paired with gherkins and pickled pearl onions.
- **Papet Vaudois:** A mix of leeks and potatoes that are simmered for hours. This makes a creamy base for the plump, red **saucisson Vaudois** or sausage of the Vaud canton.
- **Risotto:** This famous rice dish is popular all over northern Italy, but here it is flavored with dark red saffron grown in the canton of Valais. It is one of the best in the world, referred to as red gold. In the Ticino, your risotto may come with veal and bacon.
- **Zurcher geschnetzeltes:** This dish hails from Zurich but is a national dish. This is diced veal, calves kidneys, and sweetbreads sautéed in a sauce of onions, butter, white wine, cream, and mushrooms.
- **Zopf:** Try this sweet, yeasty bread that is braided and baked and served with butter and jam for breakfast.
- **Birchermüesli:** A glass of oat flakes mixed with milk, yogurt, grated apple, hazelnuts and almonds. It's all left in a fridge overnight and served in the morning.

- **Cordon bleu:** You may think this is a French dish, but it was actually invented in Switzerland. It is a meat cutlet of chicken, veal, or pork that is pounded thin, layered with a thin slice of ham and **Gruyère cheese**, then breaded and fried.
- The French also made **absinthe** fashionable, but it was introduced here by a Swiss doctor, Pierre Ordinaire, who created this potent spirit that is anything but ordinary.
- **Leckerli:** If you want something sweet try these sticky, spicy, sweet gingerbread cookies with a hint of hazelnut. They originated in Bern but are now a Christmas favorite all over Switzerland.
- Of course, your sweet tooth will crave the heavenly **Swiss chocolate**, but when you want something lighter, the Swiss are wizards with **meringue**. You'll find it whipped into cake frosting, mounded on pies, or mixed into chewy cookies with chocolate, fruits, and ground nuts.

German Cuisine

German Cuisine varies greatly from region to region. The southern regions of Bavaria and Swabia share many dishes among them and with their neighbors to the south, Switzerland and Austria. In the West, French influences are more pronounced, while the eastern parts of the country have much in common with Eastern European cuisine and there are marked Scandinavian influences in the northern coastal regions. But the region that is often viewed as having the most classic German cuisine is Saxony.

- **Sauerbraten:** A tangy pot roast that is eaten all over Germany. *Sächsischer Sauerbraten* uses beer instead of wine to marinate the beef before its long, slow braising. *Rheinischer Sauerbraten* is made with raisins and crumbled *lebkuchen* (gingersnaps) to give the tangy gravy a touch of sweetness
- **Dresdner Wiegebraten:** A Dresden meat loaf made with minced pork, veal and beef bound with eggs, breadcrumbs, anchovies, bacon and herbs that gets slathered with butter before roasting.
- **Sächsische Kartoffelsuppe:** (Saxon potato soup), a rich, creamy puree of potatoes and broth studded with onions fried in bacon fat, finely chopped greens, and bacon and sausage bits—all seasoned with ginger, nutmeg, salt and pepper. A special version is made with succulent shrimps and shrimp broth.
- **Leipziger Allerlei:** A casserole of shrimp or crayfish mixed with cauliflower, carrots, peas, asparagus, and mushrooms, baked with a creamy sauce topped with bread crumbs.
- **Buchweizenpfannkuchen:** A buckwheat pancake that may be served with syrup and cranberries, or with salmon and a salad.
- **Dresdner Eierschecke:** A three-layered cake filled with custard and cream.

- **Currywurst:** A bratwurst flavored with curry, ketchup and Worcestershire sauce. It was invented in 1946 by Herta Heuwer, a Berlin housewife who decided to spice up her family's diet by trading some booze for seasonings from some British soldiers. *Currywurst* is a classic example of post-war, East German cuisine—a style that arose during a time of severe shortages, when the people of the former German Democratic Republic (East Germany) had to get inventive with very economical ingredients.
- **Westfälischer Schinken:** Or Westphalian ham is made from pigs raised solely on acorns. The meat is dry cured and smoked over beechwood and juniper.
- **Dampfnudeln:** A yeasty steamed dumpling with vanilla sauce. If they are topped with *powidl* (a plum jam) and sprinkled with poppy seeds, they are called *germknödeln*. If you prefer your dumplings savory, *dampfnudeln* can be enjoyed with mushrooms and béchamel sauce; or with gravy and rolls of beef stuffed with bacon and pickles called *Rouladen*.
- **Badische Schaeufele:** Smoked pork shoulder simmered in wine with garlic, leeks, juniper berries, and other spices.
- **Maultaschen:** In this dish, pockets of dough are stuffed with spinach, meat or cheese; and eaten as a main course or in a beef broth.
- **Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte:** Or Black Forest Cake. It's a chocolate layer cake filled and frosted with fresh cream and cherries soaked in *Kirschwasser* (cherry schnapps), and decorated with chocolate shavings.
- **Nürnberger bratwurst:** These were the first sausage to receive the European Union's Protected Geographic Indication (PGI) status. To be labeled as *Nürnberger bratwurst*, these small, coarsely-ground pork sausages must be 2 ¾–3 ½ inches long; contain mace and marjoram; and be made within the metropolitan Nuremberg limits. The most popular way to eat them is *Drei im Weggla* or "three in a bun."

Austrian Cuisine

Austria has quite a bit of culinary overlap with neighboring Germany. But you have only to consider the scope of the Hapsburg Empire to understand the many influences that have also shaped the national cuisine: the empire once ruled over Switzerland, Holland, Alsace, Burgundy, Spain, Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia and Italy, and happily appropriated many of their ingredients and cooking techniques. This is to say nothing of the Turkish influence that wafted westwards across the Austro-Hungarian empire.

- One constant on Austrian menus is the national dish, **wiener schnitzel**, the classic Viennese veal cutlet which is pounded till thin, breaded, fried and served with wedges of lemon and greens. It can also be made with chicken or pork.
- **Tafelspitz:** A filet of beef (or veal) that is gently simmered with vegetables, and served with applesauce and horseradish. Late spring brings spargel, or asparagus, which are particularly tender and flavorful here. It'll appear as a special on many menus, often served with a delicate hollandaise or just butter, lemon, and toasted bread crumbs.

- **Kasspätzln:** A Tyrolean casserole of chewy, hand-made egg noodles that are mixed with sauteed onions, covered with *bergkäse*, a strong local cheese, and baked till browned. Before serving, it is topped with crispy fried onions and parsley.
- **Speckknödeln:** A bacon dumpling that is often served as an appetizer or in stews or clear soups. It is just one of the dozens of different dumplings that grace the Austrian table.
- **Frittatensuppe:** Or “pancake soup” is a Styrian specialty that is popular all over Austria. It’s a bowl of clear beef consommé with strips of cooked crepes or pancakes.
- **Würstelstande:** Or sausage booths. These street stalls are the go-tos for snackers on the go, and the sausage of choice will usually be a wiener sausage, which Austrians will only ever call a “*Frankfurter*.” You can also ask for a *bratwurst*, a *Käsekrainer* (which is studded with cheese), or a *Debreziner*, which is a lightly-smoked, reddish sausage spiced with paprika.
- **Sachertorte:** A classic chocolate sponge cake layered with apricot jam, and covered in chocolate ganache. It’s available all over, but for the quintessential Viennese experience, try it where it originated, at the Sacher Hotel, or at the famed Demel bakery.
- **Mozartkugeln:** Small, round candies are balls of pistachio marzipan and nougat, covered with dark chocolate.

One thing Austria can thank the Turks for is coffee. Legend has it that when Hapsburg troops chased the Turks out in 1683, the retreating invaders left behind bags of coffee beans. Within two years the first Viennese coffee house opened, and the rest is history. In 2011, UNESCO designated Viennese coffee house culture as part of humanity’s intangible cultural heritage, saying that the coffee houses have a “very specific atmosphere” and are places “where time and space are consumed, but only the coffee is found on the bill.”

Stresa in Brief

Local Transportation

The town is small and compact, so walking is easy. Public transit options center on the lake and include scheduled ferries, which cross the lake to points in Italy and Switzerland (don’t forget your passport), plus water taxis. You can buy tickets for the ferry at the office by the pier or through Tomassucci Travel (Viaggi Tomassucci); for a water taxi you can hail a boat by the pier or ask your hotel front desk.

Interlaken in Brief

Local Transportation

It is great to explore Interlaken on foot, but if you don’t feel like walking, there are other options. Taxis are metered and reliable; the Jungfrau Cable Car will take you to the winter sports area; and during the summer months bike rental are popular (ask your hotel front desk). If you’d like to get out of town, there are two train stations—each conveniently located at either end of the main street, Hoheweg.

Cuisine

Interlaken offers Italian and French restaurants, along with those serving traditional Swiss fare: cheese fondues, dried beef and pork, hearty soups, sausages, sweetmeats, buns and cakes, and delicious chocolate. Other international cuisines are represented, too. You will find dining out in Switzerland to be on the pricey side, with lunch or dinner costing more than you may be used to in the U.S.

Seefeld in Brief

Local Transportation

Like the other villages and towns we visit on this trip, Seefeld is a walking town. You can also use metered taxis or ask your hotel if the shuttle bus (shuttledienst) is running; in past years this shuttle was free of charge (which may or may not change in future), but it only ran on a limited seasonal schedule.

Lake Como in Brief

Local Transportation

When visiting Lake Como, the main methods of local transportation are taxis, buses, and a public ferry system. Taxis are a great way to get around, and hotels can usually arrange for pick up but in Como they tend to be a bit pricey. The good news is that buses run all along the shores of Lake Como, and ferries allow you to explore the lake area as well.

Munich in Brief

City Layout and Details

Munich is a wonderful city for walking, and the best way to tour the Marienplatz, Munich's vibrant heart in the historic Altstadt (Old Town), is on foot. You can stroll its grand squares and see the Old City Hall and the New City Hall, whose façade boasts the famed Rathaus-Glockenspiel, a clock bedecked with life-sized mechanical figures that move through their performance several times a day to the ringing of bells. Not far from the Old City Hall is the open-air food market, Viktualienmarkt, with its jumble of stalls offering fruits, vegetables, and some trinkets. The city center also includes the Frauenkirche (the Cathedral of Our Lady), topped with its onion domes of brass that have become the symbol of the city. If you head west along the pedestrian-only Neuhauserstrasse and Kaufingerstrasse, you'll reach another lively square, Karlsplatz (referred to as Stachus after a 19th-century beer garden), where tram lines head out to other sections of the city.

North of Marienplatz is Max-Joseph-Platz, home to the Residenz (the former royal palace) and the National Theater. If you are interested in browsing boutiques and upscale shops, you should continue your walking tour eastward from Max-Joseph-Platz along Maximilianstrasse. Fashionable shops can also be found on Kaufingerstrasse and Neuhauserstrasse, east-west avenues in the Old Town's large pedestrian zone. During your travels, you might want to ask for directions to the Platzl quarter's Hofbräuhaus, possibly Europe's best-known beer garden.

A little outside of the Old Town, to the north, is Schwabing, which used to be the city's haven for artists, poets, and authors (Thomas Mann and Herman Hesse among them). In the latter part of the 20th century, this part of Munich became too expensive for struggling artists, but Schwabing still retains some of its former cultural appeal.

Local Transportation

Munich is served by an efficient network of buses, trams, and two railways: the U-Bahn (inter-city underground line) and the S-Bahn (suburban above-ground line). The S-Bahn crosses Munich on an east-west axis and goes out to the surrounding countryside in all directions. All forms of public transport operate from about 5 am to 1 am daily. Tickets are interchangeable between U-Bahn, S-Bahn, buses, and trams. Free maps and information are available at the tourist offices.

Cuisine

In Munich you will find a range of international foods, along with the city's renowned wine cellars and beer gardens where you can find traditional Bavarian dishes.

One of the city's prized menu items is the Weisswurst, a white sausage stuffed with veal, pork, parsley, and other flavorings. The Weisswurst is usually served before noon, and to enjoy its delectable filling, you first peel the sausage skin before eating its flavorful meat, possibly complemented by a sweet mustard. You can also feast on Scheinwurst mit Kraut (pork sausages with sauerkraut); chilled meat molds created with beef, pork, and liver; thick slices of a spicy meatloaf called Leberkase; and roasted chicken, ham hocks, or knuckle of pork. You might want to try a taste of Munich's Sauerbraten (a marinated beef pot roast) or the popular Muchener Schweinhaxe (a pork shank roasted until its skin is crisped). Many restaurants also serve seasonal game, such as boar, venison, rabbit, or duck. Seafood includes herring, tuna, mackerel, and salmon. If you favor freshwater fish, you might try the regional trout, carp, pike, or Rencke (similar to perch). Accompaniments may include potato soup, more sauerkraut, large pretzels (possibly coated with cheese), fresh horseradish, and boiled cabbage with bacon.

Rounding out the meal is a choice of sweets, some restaurants offering sweet pastries, apple strudel, or Dampfnudlen (a type of dumpling served in a vanilla sauce and usually sprinkled with cinnamon). And of course, no trip to this region would be complete without sampling their renowned beers. There is a huge number of breweries, large and small, creating a tantalizing range of wheat beers (Weissbier) and lagers.

Salzburg in Brief

Local Transportation

In the center of Salzburg most attractions are heavily concentrated within walking distance. However, if you'd like to explore further, Salzburg offers affordable and efficient public transportation in the form of buses and trains. You could also enhance your knowledge of local

history while on the go by riding in one of the horse-drawn cabs found throughout the city. The drivers have been known to give quite the history lesson while also providing a memorable way to travel.

Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More

There may be scheduled visits to local shops during your vacation. There is no requirement to make a purchase during these stops, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor's terms of purchase. Grand Circle is not responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.

Returns

If you discover an issue with an item, you should contact the vendor directly. If the shop is outside the country, you should expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. We recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Keep in mind, local practice may vary from the standards you are used to, so don't assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up or that you are guaranteed a refund.

Crafts & Souvenirs

Italy

Popular souvenirs include leather goods, silk ties, knitwear, gold jewelry, ceramics, straw goods and other handicrafts, small cabinets, and jewelry boxes. Each region in Italy has its specialties. You'll also see many different items made from olive wood or Carrara marble; just remember that any marble items you purchase should be put into your checked luggage for the flight home. (If you put them in your carry-on, they may be confiscated by security as "weapons".) In Italy, a Value Added Tax is levied on most articles, services, and meals, and ranges from 4% to 22%. Depending on how much you spend on certain goods in specially marked Tax Free Shopping stores, you may be eligible for a partial refund of this tax. Ask the shopkeeper, salesperson, or our local staff for details. Be sure to save all receipts and the special Global Tax Refund forms for Customs, as receipts alone are not enough.

Switzerland

Popular Swiss souvenirs include chocolate, cheese, clocks and watches, embroidery, and Swiss Army knives. Switzerland's bargains are to be discovered during sales in July and August. The sales tax (or VAT) is already included in the price. The amount on the price tag is the one you pay.

Germany

Popular German buys include Nymphenburg porcelain, cutlery, high-quality cameras and binoculars, loden clothing, goose-down comforters, Rosenthal china and glassware, and chocolate. Munich is Germany's fashion capital—there are plenty of chic boutiques, especially on Theatinerstrasse, Maximilianstrasse, and Schwabing's Leopoldstrasse.

Value Added Tax: Depending on how much you spend on certain goods, you may be eligible for a partial refund of Germany's 16% Value Added Tax (VAT). You must obtain a special form for VAT from the store. Ask the shopkeeper or salesperson for details, and be sure to save all receipts for Customs.

Austria

Popular buys include glassware, crystal, porcelain, petit point, musical instruments and scores, fur hats, ski wear, and, of course, lederhosen (leather pants), loden-cloth coats, and sachertorte (chocolate cake). But be forewarned: the quality of Austrian wares is exceptionally high, and so are the prices!

Value Added Tax: In Austria, a Value Added Tax is levied on most articles, services, and meals, and ranges from 10% to 30%. Depending on how much you spend on certain goods in specially marked Tax Free Shopping stores, you may be eligible for a partial refund of this tax. Ask the shopkeeper or salesperson for details. Be sure to save all receipts and the special Global Tax Refund forms for Customs, as receipts alone are not enough.

U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, **www.cbp.gov** has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the export duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the import duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.
- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

Italy

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 116,348 square miles
- **Capital:** Rome
- **Languages:** Italian is the official language; German, French, and Slovene are also spoken in towns near the borders of Austria, France, and Slovenia.
- **Ethnicity:** Italian, with small clusters of German-, French-, and Slovene-Italians in the north and Albanian- and Greek-Italians in the south
- **Location:** Italy is bordered by France, Slovenia, Austria, Switzerland, the Ligurian Sea, the Tyrrhenian Sea, the Ionian Sea, the Adriatic Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea.
- **Geography:** Italy lies in southern Europe and includes the Mediterranean islands of Sicily, Sardinia, and several other small islands. The region of Tuscany is a blend of rugged hills, fertile valleys, and long stretches of sandy beaches that curve along the west coast of central Italy and fringe the pine-forested coastal plain of the Maremma. Sicily enjoys mountains in the north and east, a vast central plateau, and a fertile coastline dotted with sea-level resort towns.
- **Population:** 58,990,000 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Christian 80% (overwhelming Roman Catholic), Atheists and Agnostics 20%, Muslims estimated at less than 2%
- **Time Zone:** Italy is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Rome. Daylight Saving Time begins the last weekend in March and ends the last weekend in October.

National Holidays: Italy

In addition to the holidays listed below, Italy celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

01/06 Epiphany

04/25 Liberation Day

05/01 Labor Day

06/02 Republic Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

11/01 All Saints' Day

12/08 Feast of the Immaculate Conception

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 St. Stephen's Day

Italy: A Brief History

Italy proudly wears the mantle of Rome, the polity from which so much of Italy's historical, cultural, and religious heritage has derived. But even though the Romans were the first to unify the peninsula, they were not the first to dominate it. That honor goes to the Etruscans, whose empire, Etruria, reached its zenith in the 7th century BC. It was centered between the Arno and Tiber rivers, mostly in Tuscany. The Etruscans were farmers, miners, seafarers and warriors, but they were riven by factionalism and in 509 BC, their last king was tossed out by Ligurian-Latin nobles in the small town of Rome. Tired of monarchs, they created the first Roman Republic.

Etruscan culture disappeared by the 2nd century AD, but the Romans were quick to appropriate many aspects of the Greek culture that had taken root in southern Italy and Sicily, where there were Hellenic colonies called "Magna Graecia." As the colonies were absorbed, so were Greek religion, architecture, and the basic tenets of democracy. During the 1st century BC, Julius Caesar defeated Gaul, making Rome the ruler of the entire Mediterranean world. After Caesar's assassination in 44 B.C., his nephew Octavian, later called Augustus, became Rome's first official emperor. The capital became an architectural showcase, and new territories stretched across Europe into Asia Minor, existing under a "Pax Romana" that brought prosperity and stability.

Pax Romana declined in the 3rd century A.D. thanks to inept and corrupt emperors, and attacks by outside barbarians. Rome eventually embraced Christianity in 313 under Constantine I, who established an eastern capital in Constantinople. But splitting the Rome into western (Roman) and eastern (Byzantine) halves did not halt the empire's demise. The eastern Roman empire fell in 476, and though the Byzantine half survived, it never regained the full might of Rome. In 800, Italy was briefly reunited under Charlemagne, but soon disintegrated into squabbling kingdoms.

Italian culture peaked during the 15th and 16th-century Renaissance. The independent city-states formed a delicate balance of power, with ruling families (such as the Sforzas, Borgias, and the Medicis) funding a golden age of art, invention, and intellectual activity that produced some of the greatest figures of Western civilization—Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Dante Alighieri, Brunelleschi, Galileo, and others. It did not, however, stop the rival families from fighting.

By the 19th century, many Italians believed that they could function as a single nation, a belief spearheaded by the general Giuseppe Garibaldi. Independence was declared in 1861, and by 1870, the nation was consolidated under King Victor Emmanuel II. Italy was ruled as a monarchy and joined the Allies in World War I. But the 1920s ushered in a dark era as Benito Mussolini organized discontented Italians into the Fascist Party to “rescue Italy from Bolshevism.” What he delivered was a totalitarian state. Mussolini joined with Hitler and fought the Allies during World War II, during which 400,000 people were killed, hundreds of thousands were left homeless, and the economy was ruined. In 1945, Mussolini was captured and killed by partisans.

Italy was again declared a republic in 1946, but remained seriously divided during the postwar era by political extremes. Governments rose and fell, and in the 1970s, a series of terrorist acts by the left-wing Red Brigades threatened stability. By the early 1980s, the terrorists had been suppressed, but public discontent spilled into the 1990s as inflation and ongoing scandals involving public officials and the Mafia altered Italian politics. Parties dissolved, new ones formed, and new alliances emerged. This led to the election of media mogul Silvio Berlusconi as Prime Minister in 1994. But within a year, Berlusconi was forced to resign. He ran again in 2001 and was reelected, setting up a pattern that repeated for more than a decade: Berlusconi has been Prime Minister three separate times between 1994–2011, and continues to remain a political force despite having been convicted of tax fraud.

The previous Prime Minister, independent Giuseppe Conte, was elected in 2018 and heads up a populist coalition. Among his accomplishments have been the introduction of a national guaranteed minimum income, the nationalization of several companies, stricter immigration policies, and the western world’s first national lockdown in response to COVID-19. The current Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, Italy’s first female Prime Minister, was sworn in on October 22nd, 2022. Meloni is a member of the right-wing, national-conservative party, Brothers of Italy, a party that is considered to be the most right-wing party in power in Italy since World War II.

Switzerland

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 15,940 square miles
- **Capital:** Bern
- **Languages:** German is the main language of Switzerland. French and Italian also are widely spoken in certain areas. English is spoken widely in tourist and business circles.
- **Location:** Switzerland, in central Europe, is the land of the Alps. About the size of New Jersey, it is surrounded by France, Germany, Austria, Liechtenstein, and Italy.
- **Geography:** Switzerland is a small country nestled amidst the Jura Mountains and the Alps. Situated between Germany, Austria, Italy, France, and Liechtenstein, it offers a combination of towering glaciers, crystalline lakes, rolling hills, fertile river valleys, and a broad central plateau.
- **Population:** 8,738,791 (estimate)

- **Religion:** Roman Catholic 38.2%, Protestant 26.9%, Muslim 5%, other Christian 5.6%, other 1.6%, none 21.4%, unspecified 1.3%
- **Time Zone:** Swiss time is six hours later than Eastern Time; when it is 6 am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Switzerland. Daylight Saving Time begins the last Sunday in March and ends the last Sunday in October.

National Holidays: Switzerland

In addition to the holidays listed below, Switzerland celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. Each region can also set its own holidays as well. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

01/02 Berchtold Day

05/01 May Day

08/01 Swiss National Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

11/01 All Saints' Day

12/08 Immaculate Conception

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 St. Stephen's Day

Switzerland: A Brief History

Archaeological evidence suggests that Switzerland's history dates back to Paleolithic times, when hunter-gatherers began to settle in the lowlands north of the Alps. Swiss territory became integrated into the Roman Empire in the centuries following Julius Caesar's invasion of Gaul in 58 BC. Under Roman rule, important cities were established including Geneva, Basel, and Zurich. These remained linked to Rome and the northern tribes by military roads and trade routes.

After the decline of the Western Roman Empire, Germanic tribes including the Burgundians and Alamanni invaded and forced the Celto-Roman inhabitants to retreat into the surrounding area. The Burgundians took over the western territory, while the Alamanni settled in the north. Both Burgundy and the dukedom of the Alamans eventually came to be known as the kingdom of the Franks, and by 800 AD they fell under the rule of Charlemagne, the first of the Carolingian kings.

The land that would eventually become Switzerland was divided in the aftermath of the three-year Carolingian Civil War. Charlemagne's son, Louis the Pious, signed the Treaty of Verdun in 843, the first in a set of treaties that would ultimately divide the Swiss territories into three distinct kingdoms. These kingdoms would not be re-integrated until the middle of the 10th century, when the Carolingian territories fell under the rule of the Holy Roman emperors.

In centuries to come, the Swiss territories would become an area of great importance as north to south trade routes opened up through the Alps. After the death of the Holy Roman Emperor in the 13th century, the three regions finally came together and signed a charter on August 1, 1291, leading to the formation of the Old Swiss Confederacy. The confederation experienced substantial growth as more of the surrounding regions, known as cantons, joined. This was the beginning of Switzerland as we know it today. But it wouldn't be until 1648 that Switzerland finally gained legal independence from the Holy Roman Empire.

After 1798, a post-Revolutionary French invasion led to the disintegration of the cantons and a period of severe economic decline. Napoleon's Act of Mediation eventually restored partial autonomy to the original cantons. But it was not until the map of Europe was redrawn in 1815 with the Congress of Vienna that Switzerland's independence was reestablished, and the confederation was recognized as a permanently neutral territory.

This neutrality has withstood ever since, but peace was never a given. In 1847 a civil war broke out pitting a largely Protestant army against a special league of Catholic cantons. The Protestants made quick work of it in only 26 days, but the result was a new constitution that established a compromise between those who wanted a centralized government and those who supported cantonal authority. This balance is one that was honed over time and is still a hallmark of the Swiss Confederation. So is direct democracy, which was affirmed in 1874 with constitutional amendments that require many federal laws to be approved by national referendum. Today, a petition with 50,000 signatures can challenge a proposed law, and 100,000 signatures can force a public vote.

Switzerland's neutrality left it untouched during World War I, when its only involvement was to organize Red Cross units. During World War II, surrounded by fascist-run states, Switzerland again proclaimed its neutrality, though some of its leaders advocated appeasement. But the world took note when Swiss General Henri Guisan led an army to the Rütli Meadow (site of the 1291 Oath of Allegiance) in a show of force that displayed just how ready and well-prepared the Swiss were to defend their own soil. There were some "accidental" Allied flyovers that went unpunished, and Switzerland provided a safe haven for escaping Allied POWs and other refugees. But that shelter was infamously not extended to Europe's Jews, and Switzerland's banks have been condemned for being havens for stolen Nazi assets. (In 1998, the two largest banks, UBS and Credit Suisse, paid \$1.25 billion in compensation to Holocaust survivors and their families.)

Switzerland's postwar history has been characterized by remarkable economic growth and stability; and buffeted by its armed neutrality, the country has moved away from its previous isolation to become a major player on the world stage. The country hosts the European headquarters of the UN and World Health Organization, despite the fact that Switzerland did not join the UN until 2002. Switzerland is also not a member of the EU, though it joined the EU's Schengen passport-free travel zone. This opened the borders to workers from the other EU members, but in 2014, Swiss voters approved a referendum to reinstitute immigration quotas.

Germany

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 137,846 square miles
- **Capital:** Berlin
- **Languages:** German is the official language; Turkish is also spoken in Berlin.
- **Location:** Germany is bordered by Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Switzerland, the North Sea, and the Baltic Sea.

- **Geography:** Located in central Europe, Germany is bordered on the west by the Benelux countries and France, and on the east by Poland and the Czech Republic. Switzerland and Austria are to the south. Germany's northern coastline is met by the North Sea and the Baltic.
- **Population:** 80,854,408 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Protestant 34%, Roman Catholic 34%, Muslim 3.7%, other 28.3%
- **Time Zone:** Germany is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Berlin. Daylight Saving Time begins the last Sunday in March and ends the last Sunday in October.

National Holidays: Germany

In addition to the holidays listed below, Germany celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. There are also some holidays that are not national holidays, but are widely observed. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit **www.timeanddate.com/holidays**.

01/01 New Year's Day

05/01 May Day

10/03 Day of German Unity

11/01 All Saints' Day

12/24 Christmas Eve

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 Boxing Day

Germany: A Brief History

For many contemporary travelers, the history of Germany has been overshadowed by its role in the two World Wars of the past century. But that belies the two millennia of history and culture that is the legacy of Europe's Germanic people, and which awaits your discovery.

During the Bronze and Iron Ages, Germanic tribes from southern Scandinavia and Northern Germany expanded, mixing and clashing with Celtic, Baltic, Slavic, Gaul, and Indo-European people. Settling east of the Rhine and north of the Danube, in a region the Romans dubbed "Germania," they never unified. But they repulsed nearly all efforts of Rome to colonize them. The Romans were only ever able to subdue Germania's southern and western flanks.

With the 5th century fall of the Western Roman Empire, Germanic Franks rose as the largest tribal confederacy of the middle Rhine. They spread to Gaul, absorbing all of France; and as far west as Poland. There was no unified German nation but by 800 AD, there was a Holy Roman Empire with the Frankish king Charlemagne as Emperor. For 1,000 years, the Holy Roman Empire mostly controlled Europe, and German prince-electors mostly controlled the Empire.

The Holy Roman Empire became a collection of duchies, principalities, Free Imperial Cities, and ecclesiastical states that spread across the larger kingdoms of Germany, Italy, Bohemia, and Burgundy. In 1440, the Austrian Hapsburg dynasty took control of the Holy Roman Empire (and held it until 1806). But all the imperial states became embroiled in the Thirty Years War

(1618–1648), which was sparked by a revolt of Bohemian Protestants, but grew into a deadly struggle between Bourbon and Hapsburg powers. Most of Central Europe was devastated by the conflict.

The prospect of a unified German nation began to coalesce during the Seven Weeks War in 1866, when the Prussian army under Otto von Bismarck defeated Austria. Prussia's superior firepower convinced other German states that Austria was no longer a force. Bismarck then formed a North German Confederation without Austria—the forerunner to the unified German Empire of Kaiser Wilhelm I. Bismarck fostered alliances and instituted universal health care, pension plans, and other social welfare programs. But after Wilhelm I died in 1888, his grandson Wilhelm II rejected liberal reforms in favor of imperialism, which led to Germany's involvement in World War I. Its defeat ended of the German Empire with the 1919 Treaty of Versailles.

The punitive provisions of the Versailles agreement opened the door for the Nazis. In 1933, a government was formed with Hitler as Chancellor. By 1934, Hitler took over as Fuhrer and established a totalitarian regime. German Jews were targeted by vicious propaganda and stripped of their rights. By 1939, half of Germany's 500,000 Jews had fled. The Final Solution was implemented in 1941, and the ensuing Holocaust killed 6 million Jews and 11 million others. Meanwhile, Germany began annexing territories and the world was drawn into war.

The Allies defeated the Axis powers in 1945, leaving a partitioned Germany with a decimated political, social, and economic infrastructure. Yet despite its ruin and enormous burden of shame, the Federal German Republic (West Germany) became a parliamentary democracy, a NATO member, a founding member of the European Union, and one of the world's richest countries. When the Iron Curtain fell in 1989, the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) demanded reform. German reunification took place in 1990. Since then economic integration of East Germany has been difficult, but progressing. Angela Merkel, the Chancellor from 2005 to 2021, helped Germany retain its position as a leader of the EU, and indeed, of the free world.

Merkal stepped down from her position following the COVID-19 pandemic and was succeeded by Olaf Scholz, who has since weathered the 2022 Russian Invasion of Ukraine. Scholz responded to the invasion by significantly increasing Germany's defense budget and supplying weapons to the Ukraine resistance.

Austria

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 32,382 square miles
- **Capital:** Vienna
- **Languages:** German is the official language. English is also spoken, particularly in all tourist areas and major cities.
- **Location:** Austria is bordered by Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Italy, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein.

- **Geography:** Landlocked in Central Europe, Austria features the mountainous Alps in the south and west, but also is home to flat plains and gentle slopes in the north and east.
- **Population:** 8,665,550 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Roman Catholic 73.8%, Protestant 4.9%, Muslim 4.2%, Orthodox 2.2%, other 0.8%, none 12%, unspecified 2%
- **Time Zone:** Austria is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Vienna.

National Holidays: Austria

In addition to the holidays listed below, Austria celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit **www.timeanddate.com/holidays**.

01/01 New Year's Day

01/06 Epiphany

05/01 Labor Day/May Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

10/26 National Day

11/01 All Saints' Day

12/08 Feast of the Immaculate Conception

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 St. Stephen's Day

Austria: A Brief History

Austria has been populated since Neanderthal times, but its most significant early culture was the Hallstatt, which arose around 400 BC when Celtic people settled along the shores of the Hallstatter See. The Celts formed a confederation called Noricum, established a prosperous salt trade, and forged iron implements. When Romans arrived in 15 BC, they made the area a province. In exchange for their excellent Noric steel (which the Romans used for swords), the Celts received protection—and they needed it, as Germanic Teutons and other tribes invaded.

When Charlemagne arrived in the 8th century and created a zone in the Danube Valley called the East March. In 976, the Babenburg dynasty became the margraves of this “eastern realm” or Österreich, German for “Austria.” The Babenburgs extended the territory and made Vienna their capital. When they died, Rudolf I took over in 1278, ushering in the dynastic powerhouse that dominated Europe for 500 years. Consolidating power through strategic marriages, they built a network from Spain to the Netherlands to Germany. The Hapsburgs were all prince-electors of the Holy Roman Empire, and from 1452 they elected their kinsmen as its Emperors. But holding power was not easy. In 1618 Europe erupted into a Thirty Years War that caused nearly eight million deaths. It was largely a contest between Bourbon and Austro-Spanish Hapsburgs. Things further destabilized when the Turks advanced to Vienna. They remained a threat until 1699.

Austria bloomed during the Enlightenment reigns of Maria Theresa and her son, Joseph II. They instituted reforms, and were patrons of the arts (with Mozart as their court composer). Decades later, a result of the Napoleonic wars was that the Holy Roman Empire was dissolved in 1806. But

the Hapsburgs survived, creating a German Alliance of hundreds of small states. In 1867, Austria and Hungary united as a dual monarchy—and reveled in the Austro-Hungarian Empire's cultural flowering. Vienna, newly magnificent after a flurry of building, was its epicenter. The Empire prospered until Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated in 1914, sparking World War I. The 1919 defeat of the Central Powers (Austria-Hungary, Germany, Turkey, and Bulgaria) ended the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which split into several nations per the Treaty of Versailles.

Austria became a republic, but suffered inflation, unemployment, and the loss of a national identity. Political tensions erupted into violent street fights, and in 1934, a Conservative government took legislative powers from the parliament, making Austria a fascist country. Though the Treaty of Versailles had expressly forbidden the reunification of Germany and Austria, Hitler (himself an Austrian) had other ideas about this Anschluss. When the Nazis goose-stepped into Austria in 1938, they were welcomed by cheering crowds. Austria's military, economy, and political infrastructure were integrated into Germany's war efforts; the execution of Jews and resistors stepped up; and many Austrians participated in the Nazi's crimes.

Austria was liberated by Allied and Soviet troops in 1945, a second republic was established, and Austria remained under occupation. In 1955, Russia demanded that Austria declare its neutrality as a condition for ending Soviet occupation. This status enabled Austria to be a bridge between East and West during the Cold War. But the nation never came to terms with its war history. That started in 1986, when former U.N. Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim ran for president. He won and served until 1992, and investigations into his wartime activities were inconclusive.

Austria joined the EU in 1995, adopted the euro in 1999, and is one of Europe's most prosperous nations. It is considered a liberal democracy, and consistently ranks high for its quality of life.

RESOURCES

Suggested Reading

Italy

Princes of the Renaissance by Mary Hollingsworth (2021, History) An exploration of the lives and times of the aristocratic elite whose patronage sparked the art and architecture of the Renaissance in fifteenth and sixteenth century Italy.

Absolute Monarchs: A History of the Papacy by John Julius Norwich (2011, History) A deeper look into the most significant popes in history and what they meant politically, culturally, and socially to Rome and the rest of the world.

La Bella Figura: A Field Guide to the Italian Mind by Beppe Severgnini (2007, Nonfiction/Humor) An Italian columnist and best-selling author journeys through his homeland while providing hilarious observations at the beautiful face Italy shows to the world, and the chaotic, garrulous, and often contradictory impulses that lie behind it.

The Monster of Florence by Douglas Preston and Mario Spezi (2008, Non Fiction) A remarkable true story by best-selling author Douglas Preston who, with Italian investigative journalist Mario Spezi, try to track down the identity of a serial killer known as the Monster of Florence.

History by Elsa Morante (1974, Fiction) A half-Jewish, Roman mother tries to survive in WWII Rome with her two sons. Though the main characters are fictional, each chapter opens with an factual account of real events that happened when the action takes place.

Switzerland

Slow Train to Switzerland: One Tour, Two Trips, 150 Years – and a World of Change Apart by Diccon Bewes (2013, Historical Fiction). Mass tourism started in 1863, when seven travelers departed London for a train ride through the Alps, to Switzerland. Follow as Bewes as he tells the story of Thomas Cook’s first Conducted Tour of Switzerland, using the dairy of Jemima Morell, one of the seven travelers.

The White Hotel by D. M. Thomas (1981, Fiction) This controversial novel mixes fantasy with historical accuracy as it tells the story of Lisa, a young opera singer, who is treated by Sigmund Freud for “severe sexual hysteria.” Through erotic fantasies, poems, letters, and case study notes, we learn about Lisa’s chance encounter with a soldier, which leads to their affair at a white hotel in the Swiss countryside, to marriage and family life in Kiev, and to the barbaric Nazi atrocities at Babi Yar.

Why Switzerland by Jonathan Steinberg (1976, History) This book is based on the author’s premise that Switzerland is a unique country from which the world can learn much about how democracy ultimately rests on the community level. The author has been a lecturer at Cambridge and is married to a Swiss-German woman.

The Magic Mountain by Thomas Mann (1924, Fiction). Nobel Laureate Mann brings us to an exclusive sanatorium in the Swiss Alps, which is a microcosm for European society in the days before World War I.

Heidi by Johanna Spyri (1881, Fiction) One of the most popular works of Swiss literature, this best-selling book tells the story of a young girl's coming of age in the Swiss Alps, where she lives with her grandfather.

Germany

Tschick by Wolfgang Herrndorf (2014, Fiction) Two unpopular teenagers—one German and one Russian—"borrow" a car and go on a joyride across Germany. Although the protagonists are young, the story seems to delight adults too—it was recommended by the ambassador of Germany as one of the best modern stories from his country.

In the Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin by Erik Larson (2011, History) Acclaimed historian and author Larson follows the experiences of the American ambassador to Germany in 1933 as he and his family slowly come to realize the menace and danger that is Hitler's Third Reich.

Martin Luther: A Life by Martin E. Marty (2004, Biography) A brief but engrossing biography of the fiery Protestant reformer who transformed western thinking, sending shock waves across Europe's political as well as religious landscape.

Before the Deluge: A Portrait of Berlin in the 1920s by Otto Friedrich (1995, History) A noted historian describes the raucous social, cultural and political scene in this most vibrant city, when Christopher Isherwood, Marlene Dietrich, Albert Einstein, Greta Garbo, Berthold Brecht, Walter Gropius, Vasily Kandinsky and so many others made their home here.

The Silent Angel by Heinrich Boll (1992, Fiction) A German WWII deserter returns to his home town of Cologne after it has been carpet bombed, and encounters a city filled with shell-shocked people trying to survive both physically and spiritually. Nobel Prize winner Boll, a Cologne native, drew from his own postwar experiences to create this moving portrait.

Austria

The Habsburgs: The History of a Dynasty by Benjamin Curtis (2013, History) Discover how this Austrian family gained power—and held it—for more than 500 years, shaping all the nations featured on this adventure.

When Nietzsche Wept: A Novel of Obsession by Irvin D. Yalom (2013, Fiction) Set in 19th-century Vienna, this novel is built upon a clever conceit: the psychoanalytic sessions between the impoverished and suicidal philosopher, Frederic Nietzsche; and distinguished physician Josef Breuer, who is undergoing his own existential crisis. The twist is that Nietzsche, too proud to seek help, does not know that he is Breuer's "patient." As the two meet in Vienna's salons and coffeehouses, we encounter the personalities of the day, including Sigmund Freud, and gain a sense of the healing power of connection.

The Age of Insight by Eric Kandel (2012, Art) This book takes us to Vienna in 1900, where leaders in science, medicine, and art began a revolution that changed forever how we think about the human mind—our conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions—and how mind and brain relate to art. Kandel traces the ideas and advances of Vienna, in rich and rewarding detail, and their enduring influence today.

The Painted Kiss by Elizabeth Hickey (2005, Historical Fiction) The author, an art historian, imagines the relationship between the artist Gustav Klimt, and his younger model-mistress, the couturier Emilie Flöge. She was the inspiration for his famous work, *The Kiss*, and it was her name that he uttered as his dying words.

The Austrians: A Thousand-Year Odyssey by Gordon Brook-Shepard (1996, History) A noted historian, draws upon his long-standing associations with Austrian leaders and his special access to the private Hapsburg family archives to trace the identity of Austria as it developed over a millennium.

Suggested Films & Videos

Italy

The Life Ahead (2020, Drama) At 86, Sophia Loren makes her first screen appearance in ten years in this Netflix original, filmed in Puglia. And it's a stunner. She plays Madame Rosa, a Holocaust survivor who takes in the children of local sex workers. A neighbor asks her to care for Momo, a Senegalese refugee whose delinquency may be too much for Rosa, whose own tormented past is catching up to her.

The Tourist (2010, Thriller) Beautiful Elise (Angelina Jolie) has a mysterious off-screen lover, Pearce, who has fled England and is wanted by both Scotland Yard and the mob. He tells Elise to entrap an unwitting tourist (Johnny Depp), who will be mistaken for Pearce (who is rumored to have altered his appearance), and arrested in his place. This convoluted caper plays out beautifully in Venice's mysterious alleys, romantic canals, and opulent palaces.

Rome (2005–07, Television Series) This multiple Emmy-winner from HBO deftly weaves the stories of fictional and real characters (Julius Caesar, Octavian, Marc Antony, Cleopatra, etc.) during Rome's 1st century BC transition from a republic to an empire. Outstanding production values and a stellar cast.

The Merchant of Venice (2004, Drama) Al Pacino gives us one of the most masterful portrayals on stage or screen of Shakespeare's tragic moneylender, Shylock. He receives strong support from Jeremy Irons and Joseph Fiennes, and Venice itself, where much of the production was filmed. The city looks so enticing, it's a wonder that Pacino did not chew up the scenery.

Life Is Beautiful (1997) Roberto Benigni is the lead actor and director of this heart-wrenching comedy/drama about a Jewish Italian bookshop owner in Mussolini's Italy who tries to shield his son from the horrors of a Nazi concentration camp. Italian with English subtitles.

Switzerland

The Clouds of Sils Maria (2015, Drama) The misty Engadine backdrop sets the moody tone for this story about a middle-aged actress (Juliette Binoche), and the young assistant (Kristen Stewart) who for whom she feels both attraction, and mistrust.

Journey of Hope (1990, Drama) Three members of a Kurdish family make a grueling journey on foot, in search of a better life in Switzerland. Though made in 1990, the struggles it depicts are still topical in modern Switzerland—and all the world.

Courage Mountain (1990, Adventure) This film is about a young Swiss girl named Heidi who is sent off to an Italian boarding school at the beginning of World War I. She's reluctant to leave until she learns that her sweetheart Peter has joined the army. This film version of the sequel to Johanna Spyri's novel *Heidi* tells the charming story of Heidi and her five classmates as they embark on a journey through the forest and mountains to cross over into Switzerland.

Downhill Racer (1969, Drama) For a satirical spin on the American Dream, *Downhill Racer* is a 1969 film centered on the efforts of a self-centered and ambitious Olympic-grade skier (Robert Redford) to reach the top—a goal that he believes can only be achieved by discarding any emotional attachments that might impede his progress. When he finally attains his goal, he learns that the thrill of this victory is indeed an empty one.

Germany

Look Who's Back (2015, Comedy) Can Germany escape the specter of Nazism? Not according to this biting satire, in which der Fuehrer magically reawakens in 2014 in the square where his bunker once stood. He is horrified to learn that the country is led by a woman, Poland is a free state, and the Fatherland is full of immigrants. An out of work filmmaker thinks this eccentric character is just a comic Hitler impersonator, and he builds a reality show about him. As Hitler becomes a media sensation, others are shown to share his ideas about the future of Germany. Filmed *Borat*-style, many scenes feature real people reacting to this putschy provocateur.

The Lives of Others (2006, Drama) A drama that marked the feature film debut of German filmmaker Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck. Set in East Berlin in 1984, an agent of the secret police conducts surveillance on a writer and his lover. As the story unfolds, he finds himself becoming increasingly absorbed by their lives. As intoxicating as it is chilling, this film quietly depicts the secret world of German espionage. In German with subtitles.

Schindler's List (1993, Drama) Spielberg's masterpiece about a callow industrialist, Oskar Schindler, whose life is transformed as he gradually, then unceasingly works to save his Jewish workforce during World War II.

Cabaret (1972, Musical/Drama) Directed by Bob Fosse, this movie has it all: a killer Broadway score, a perfect cast, Fosse's sultry choreography, pointed social commentary, and an electrifying portrait of lost souls struggling to survive in Weimar-era Berlin on the cusp of Nazism. It did not win Best Picture, but took eight other major categories including Best Actress (Liza Minelli), Best Supporting Actor (Joel Grey), and Best Director (Fosse).

Immortal Beloved (1994, Drama) After the death of Ludwig van Beethoven (Gary Oldman), the life and loves of the great composer are revealed in flashbacks as his friend and executor tries to solve the mystery of an unmailed letter to a mysterious lover.

Austria

The Woman in Gold (2015, Drama) Helen Mirren stars as Maria Altmann, an Austrian-Jewish Holocaust refugee who successfully sued the Austrian government for the return of a major artwork that was stolen from her family by the Nazis: Gustav Klimt's *Portrait of Adele Bauer-Bloch*, who was her aunt. Based on a true story.

Museum Hours (2012, Drama) A lonely guard at Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Art Museum befriends an enigmatic American visitor, who has been called here due to a family emergency. Through conversations sparked by the art they both admire, the two begin sharing their lives, and the life of Vienna.

Before Sunrise (1995, Comedy/Drama) Two strangers meet on a rain and decide to get off in Vienna for just one evening. As they explore some of the city's most evocative landmarks, their conversations go from wryly philosophical to deeply personal, before they must decide to go their separate ways. Stars Julie Delpy and Ethan Hawke collaborated on writing the sparkling dialogue.

Amadeus (1984, Drama) The pious Italian composer Antonio Salieri is obsessed with his rival, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, whom God has favored with divine talent and worldly success—despite Mozart's immaturity and vulgarity. The Oscar winner for Best Picture, this epic from director Milos Forman is gorgeously filmed, and lifted by its pitch-perfect performances by F. Murray Abraham (as Salieri) and Tom Hulce (as Mozart.)

Useful Websites

Grand Circle Forum (tips from previous travelers)

www.gct.com/forum

Grand Circle Frequently Asked Questions

www.gct.com/faq

**International Health Information/CDC
(Centers for Disease Control)**

www.cdc.gov/travel

Electricity & Plugs

[www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/
plugs-and-sockets](http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets)

Foreign Exchange Rates

www.xe.com/currencyconverter
www.oanda.com/converter/classic

ATM Locators

www.mastercard.com/atm
www.visa.com/atmlocator

World Weather

www.intellicast.com
www.weather.com
www.wunderground.com

Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)

www.travlang.com/languages

Packing Tips

www.travelite.org

U.S. Customs & Border Protection

www.cbp.gov/travel

Transportation Security

Administration (TSA)

www.tsa.gov

National Passport Information Center

www.travel.state.gov

Holidays Worldwide

www.timeanddate.com/holidays

Useful Apps

Flight Stats

Track departures, arrivals, and flight status

LoungeBuddy

Get access to premium airport lounges around the world

Timeshifter

Personalized tips for avoiding jetlag, based on neuroscience and your own data

GoogleMaps or Maps.me

Maps and directions anywhere in the world

Triposo

City guides, walking maps, and more – and it works offline

Rome2rio

Where to go, what to see, and what to do in more than 160 countries

Flush or Sit or Squat

Find a clean toilet anywhere

Uber or Bolt or Grab

Ride sharing around the world

Visa Plus and Mastercard Cirrus

ATM locations

Shows the location of the nearest ATM in your network

TunnelBear

Provides a secure VPN (virtual private network) that will encrypt your browsing data when you use a public WiFi network

What's App or Skype or Signal

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

Duolingo, FLuentU, or Babbel

Learn dozens of foreign languages

Google Translate

Fast and simple translations

XE

Currency conversions

SizeGuide

Clothing and shoe sizes in all countries

Best Units Converter

Converts currency, mileage, weights, and many other units of measurement

Happy Cow

Locate vegan and vegetarian eateries in 195 countries

Eatwith

Dine with locals all over the world

Meetup

Connects you with locals who share your interests

Skyview

Identifies constellations and heavenly bodies

Travello

Find travel friends on the road

TripWhistle

Maps your location and provides emergency numbers for police, medics, and more

GeoSure

Safely navigate neighborhoods around the world

Tourlina

For women only, it connects you with other female travelers


ALIX for One


Created by and for women, it identifies solo-friendly dining spots in major international cities


Chirpey


For women only, connect with other women, find out what's safe, meet up, and more




Arrival/Departure  **2**


Nights at destination 

Included Tour 

Optional Tour 

Motorcoach Route 


PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

SWITZ. *L. Como*  Bellagio

Lake Como **4**

Bergamo

ITALY

Milan 

POST-TRIP EXTENSION

GERMANY

2 Munich

Chiemsee 

3 Salzburg 

AUSTRIA

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Created by Barbara Werren, 31-time traveler
from Lakewood, CO



Created by Sharon Fleury, 8-time traveler
from Poughkeepsie, NY



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