

Zürich, the Swiss Alps (Engelberg) and the Lake Region of Europe

It was the Grand Tour of Switzerland... we started with four nights in Zürich, the biggest and wealthiest city in Switzerland. Nadine and I led a tour of the city and additional tours to outlying areas each day. We were fortunate to have good weather, making our stay in this vibrant city even better. We had the city's Zürich Card, so we rode the Polybahn Funicular to the University of Zürich, where Einstein taught; we took a walk down Bahnhofstrasse, the most famous shopping street of Switzerland; we had a steamer cruise on Lake Zürich; a train ride for lunch at the Uetliberg Mountain overlooking the entire city; we visited the Swiss National Museum; and we visited the famous Kunsthaus, one of the world's leading art museums. We also had pre-arranged dinners at some of the most famous restaurants in Switzerland, including the Zeughauskeller, the Swiss Cuchi, and a delicious lunch at the Sprüngli Swiss Pastry Shop.

After our time in Zürich we joined members of the Pensacola Ski Club for a beautiful motorcoach transfer to Engelberg, in the Alps. We had a three hour stop in Lucerne, where we again led a short city tour before having lunch and continuing to Engelberg.

Engelberg's Hotel Terrace is a Belle Epoch Hotel that was built in 1906, and it recalls the elegant splendor of that period. It is situated on a hill above the village with a commanding view and a lobby elevator that takes you down to a tunnel leading to the city center. After check in, we had a welcome drink, a short walk and enjoyed a delicious buffet dinner. In fact, the breakfasts, dinners and restaurant staff were magnificent. They took good care of us and did special things for our theme nights: Team Colors, Bling Night and of course Hawaiian Night. Both clubs participated and there were prizes for everyone.

When we arrived in Engelberg there was almost no snow in the city, but on the second day it snowed like crazy and the city was blanketed with snow, making the view from the hotel even more spectacular. We had included lift passes everyday and ski guides for the group, which was a big advantage

since the ski area is vast and challenging. The non-skiers also accessed the mountains with their included lift passes to enjoy the Cliff Walk Suspension Bridge, the Igloo Village, Hiking, Snowshoeing, the Glacier Cave, and the many Mountain Restaurants.

There was a huge Benedictine Monastery that dominated the village. It was beautiful and we all toured the premises, which included a Café and the only Cheese Factory located in a monastery... the cheese was delicious.

While in Engelberg, about half of us boarded a train for the 45 minute trip through the mountains back to Lucerne, to tour the city, do a little shopping and have a wonderful lunch. Lucerne is a beautiful lakeside city, and it contains the most photographed sites in Switzerland.

After our time in the Alps, we boarded a motorcoach for the two hour transfer to Lugano, at the southern tip of Switzerland. Although Lugano is in Switzerland it is decidedly Italian. There are even palm trees growing around the lake. Lugano is one of the most beautiful lakeside towns in the entire world. The clear lake has a 200 foot water jet fountain and is surrounded by picturesque mountains and opulent hotels. We had a walking tour of the city on arrival and on Sunday we had a full day motorcoach tour of the entire region, including Lake Como, Lake Maggiore and the Castles and fortifications of Bellinzona.

We stayed in the five star Hotel Splendide Royal. It was like something out of a James Bond Movie, dripping in luxury! And on the last couple of nights we had cocktail parties on our Balcony overlooking the Grande Promenade of Lake Lugano, as we watched the moonrise, sipped Prosecco, danced, and sang much louder than we should have. What fun! It was a fitting way to end the trip with three beautiful evenings that none of us will ever forget.