

EUROPE &gt; SWITZERLAND

## The Top 9 Scenic and Novelty Train Rides in Switzerland

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A voyage on a Swiss train is an obligatory part of a vacation in Switzerland, no matter what time of year you visit or how many times you've traveled in the country. Whether you're on a chocolate-themed train or a gravity-defying cogwheel journey, many of them run through some of Europe's most spectacular mountain landscapes. So sit back and enjoy the views—it's what you're here for, after all—on these top scenic and novelty train rides in Switzerland.

**01** Bernina Express  
of 09



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The bright red [Bernina Express](#) is one of the most famous train rides in Switzerland—and quite possibly the world. The four-hour ride between the Italian border town of Tirano and the town of Chur in the Graubünden canton of Switzerland is stunning for its dramatic change of scenery. The palm trees and lakes near Tirano quickly give way to alpine forests, glaciers, glittering ice-covered lakes (in winter), and the peaks of the Bernina Alps. With its viaducts, bridges, and tunnels, the Bernina route is also a marvel of 20th-century engineering.

The train runs year-round. Many travelers make the trip to/from Tirano to the tony ski resort of [St. Moritz](#) in a day. Along with the Glacier Express (see below), the Bernina Line is part of the historic Rhaetian Railway. Note that regular, non-express trains between Tirano and St. Moritz follow the same tracks and cost less. Just make sure to reserve seats in the panoramic train cars.

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## 02 Glacier Express

of 09

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In tandem with the equally famous Bernina Express, the Glacier Express is the hallmark of historic Rhaetian Railways. Running between Zermatt and St. Moritz, the train takes 7.5 hours to cover 290 kilometers (180 miles),

dramatic gorges, and, of course, glaciers. The Glacier Express is known for its comfy, panoramic train cars, and riders say there's little difference between first and second class, other than a little more elbow room. The newly introduced [Excellence Class](#), however, is a whole other experience, with lavish seats, a multi-course meal, and unlimited free booze—including champagne. Rhaetian Railways offers one-way or round-trip tickets, plus packages that include overnights in hotels along the route.

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### 03 Jungfrau Mountain Railway to Jungfrauoch

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There's more than one way to make the climb to Jungfrauoch, which at 3,454 meters (11,332 feet) is the highest elevation train station in Europe. Once accessible only via a narrow-gauge, cogwheel railway, you can now take a shortcut with the breathtaking Eiger Express ski gondola from Grindelwald to Eiger Station; from there, you can then transfer to the Jungfrau Mountain Railway up to Jungfrauoch. At the top of the glacier, there's a veritable Alpine amusement park, complete with an observatory, an ice "palace" carved into the glacier, snow sports, restaurants, hotels, and shopping. A trip to the Jungfrauoch is a pricey undertaking—but for many, it's worth it for the trip to the "top of Europe." The routes are usually open year-round but may close at short notice in the event of bad weather.

### 04 The GoldenPass Line from Montreux to Zweisimmen

of 09

Zcenerio / Getty Images

The GoldenPass Line is a series of trains spanning 210 kilometers (130 miles) between Montreux and Lucerne. Running between [Montreux](#) and Zweisimmen, the GoldenPass Classic is the most popular leg of the route. As the train climbs from the shores of Lake Geneva (Lac Léman in French), the terrain quickly changes from Mediterranean to Alpine, with the sunny lake shores and stepped vineyards giving way to quaint mountain villages and tumbling streams. If you can, book one of the romantic Belle Époque trains, modeled after the 1930s Orient Express train cars. Otherwise, the GoldenPass Classic cars offer a lower class of service, but with the same great views. When you reach Zweisimmen, you can opt to spend the night, return to Montreux, or switch trains to journey on to Interlaken and Lucerne. The GoldenPass Line runs year-round.

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## 05 Wilderswil to Schynige Platte-Bahn

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Thomas Janisch / Getty Images

Part of the Jungfrau mountain network, the vintage Schynige Platte Railway was completed in 1893. Its original electric rack-and-pinion train cars still make the steep, scenic trip from Wilderswil to the Schynige Platte, climbing

sweeping vistas of the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau peaks. A one-way trip takes about an hour, and the route operates May to October. Once at the historic Schynige Platte-Bahn (station), you can set off for hikes across mountains and meadows, have a meal in the station restaurant, or enjoy epic views from [Hotel Schynige Platte](#). To get there, drive from Interlaken or take the Bernese Oberland Railway from Interlaken to Wilderswil.

## 06 Cogwheel Railway from Alpnach to Mount Pilatus

of 09

Sabine Klein / 500px / GettyImages

It bills itself as the steepest cogwheel train in the world, and with a gradient of up to 48 percent, we believe it! It takes the mighty little red train 30 minutes to make the the 4,618-meter (15,150 feet) climb from Alpnachstad, on the shores of Lake Lucerne, to Pilatus Kulm, a recreation area on the summit of Mount Pilatus. The original cogwheel system was built in 1889, and not much has changed since then. Passing meadows and cutting through formidable rock formations, this is one of Switzerland's most memorable short train journeys. At the summit, there are hotels, restaurants, a winter snow park, hiking, and summer activities.

Package options include a round-trip boat ride from Lucerne, overnights, and meals. The train runs from May to November; at other times of the year, the summit can be reached by gondola or aerial cable car.

## 07 Gotthard Panorama Express from Lucerne to Lugano

of 09

Leonid Andronov / Getty Images

A 5.5-hour journey by train and boat, the Gotthard Panorama Express is popular because of the dramatic changes in scenery, climate, and culture along the way. Your trip begins in Lucerne city, where you'll take a boat across Lake Lucerne en route to Flüelen. From there, you'll hop on a train that climbs up to Göschenen, then transfer to a train bound for Lugano. The complete journey traverses three different languages and cultures—French to German to Italian—and ends near the shores of Lake Lugano in the southern [Ticino canton](#). The Gotthard Panorama Express runs May to October. The trip can be taken as separate legs, and only first-class cars are available.

## 08 Brienz Rothorn Steam Train

of 09



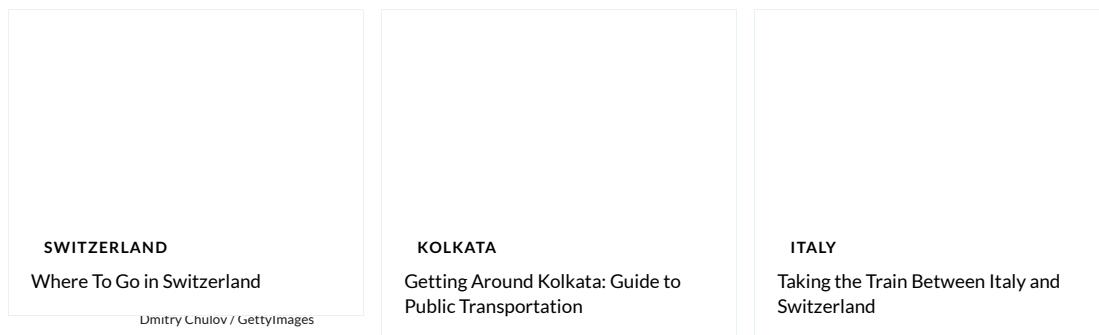
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A popular novelty train in the Bernese Oberland, the Brienz Rothorn Railway takes passengers on a 7.6-kilometer, hour-long ride up to Brienz Rothorn. The mode of transportation is delightful—open-air train cars are pushed up the mountain by vintage steam locomotives. At the summit (which is 2,266 meters above sea level) there's a restaurant, a hotel, hiking trails, and sweeping views of Lake Brienz and the Bernese Alps. The steam train runs June to October.

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## 09 Chocolate Train

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Cheese and chocolate are two of the pinnacles of Swiss cuisine, and a seasonal train ride from Montreux treats you to both these national treasures. The Chocolate Train (or Train du Chocolat) takes passengers to the House of Gruyère, where the famous cheese is produced, before transferring to the Maison Cailler Nestlé chocolate factory in Broc. Tastings are included, of course! Offered by the Montreux Oberland Bernois (MOB) Railway Company