

Switzerland by Rail and Italy's Lake District

with Dr. W. Bernard Carlson

May 2–9, 2027 | June 13–20, 2027



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From: \$10,175 per person

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Enjoy the highlights of Swiss and Italian scenery in style on this eight-day journey by rail that carries you from the peaks of the Alps to the island-dotted waters of Lake Maggiore. You will be joined by Great Courses Professor W. Bernard Carlson, creator of the popular course *Understanding the Inventions that Changed the World*. This journey gives you a front-row seat on one of those transformative inventions.

Board your first train in Zürich for a picturesque ascent into the mountains of Zermatt. Explore this quaint mountain town and ride cable cars high into the peaks to the dramatic Matterhorn Glacier Paradise for unparalleled views of the surrounding mountain ranges. From Zermatt, journey on the iconic Glacier Express to the stylish Alpine resort of St. Moritz at the heart of the Engadine region of mountains and lakes. Board the Bernina Express train travelling to Tirano, just across the border in Italy. Continue to the elegant resort of Como and come to rest along the shores of Lake Maggiore in Stresa. The final days of your trip are spent enjoying the charming Borromean Islands. Swiss hospitality and Italian *dolce vita* come together in this unforgettable trip.

Your Journey Expert



Dr. W. Bernard Carlson is the Joseph L. Vaughan Professor Emeritus of Humanities, Professor Emeritus of Engineering and Society, Program Manager, AgInnovation, University of Galway, Ireland, through the University of Virginia. He is a historian of science and technology, committed to helping public audiences understand the role of technology in society. Professor Carlson received his PhD in the History and Sociology of Science from the University of Pennsylvania. He has received the Sally Hacker Prize from the Society for the History of Technology and the IEEE's Middleton Award in Electrical History. Professor Carlson's biography of Nikola Tesla has been translated into 9 languages. At the University of Virginia he helped create the Committee for the History of Environment and Technology and created both the Engineering Business minor and the Technology Entrepreneurship programs. Professor Carlson teaches the Great Course *Understanding the Inventions that Changed the World*.

Highlights

- Take an immersive journey into the fascinating history and lore of trains and rail travel alongside your Great Courses expert and learn why railways are one of the most important inventions in modern history.
- Experience Switzerland's dramatic peaks as you explore Zermatt and ascend to Matterhorn Glacier Paradise, Europe's highest cable car station, with views of Switzerland, France, and Italy.
- Savor Switzerland's picture-perfect landscapes in style on iconic trains, including the Glacier Express and Bernina Express.
- Soak up the atmosphere of Lake Maggiore and explore the jewel-like Borromean Islands of Isola Bella and Isola Madre.

Switzerland by Rail and Italy's Lake District

Itinerary



Day 1: Welcome to Switzerland

Arrive at Zürich Airport. Meet with fellow passengers and board your first Swiss train for a ride to Zermatt, an Alpine gem famed for its association with the Matterhorn. This mountain town was nearly unknown until the mid-1800s, when adventurous climbers seeking to conquer the peak of the Matterhorn made it a popular destination. Arrive in Zermatt and check in to your hotel. Delve into the history of Swiss mountaineering and railways with insights from your Great Courses expert. Settle into the Hotel National amidst breathtaking mountain vistas. Enjoy a welcome reception and dinner this evening.

Included Meals: Dinner, Reception

Accommodations: Hotel National

Day 2: Glacier Paradise

Board one of Zermatt's iconic red cable cars and ascend to Matterhorn Glacier Paradise, Europe's highest cable car station at 12,740 feet. At the summit, enjoy unparalleled views of Switzerland, France, and Italy, with over a dozen snow-capped peaks towering above 13,000 feet. Continue your journey into Italy for lunch in Cervinia, a scenic ski resort town known for its connection to the Matterhorn's southern face. Then, return by cable car to Zermatt where, in an informal lecture, your expert will explore the highlights and themes of Switzerland's long history. Explore the charming, car-free mountain town on your own this evening.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodations: Hotel National

Day 3: The Peaks of Zermatt

Step aboard the historic Gornergrat Railway, the highest open-air cog railway in Europe, and ascend to one of Switzerland's most spectacular vantage points. This legendary train winds its way up the mountainside, offering panoramic views of the Matterhorn along with 28 other 12,000-foot peaks. At the summit, gaze upon

“Railways are not just a form of transportation but an invocation of a society’s values and goals. Journey with me and reflect on how Swiss and Italian people shaped trains to be part of their cultures.”

–Dr. W. Bernard Carlson



the Dufourspitze, Switzerland’s highest mountain, and the striking Gorner Glacier, one of the longest in the Alps. Descend to Zermatt for a traditional fondue lunch. Visit the Matterhorn Museum, where exhibits detail the triumphs and tragedies of the first climbers to reach the peak in 1865. Then, enjoy a walking tour of Zermatt’s historic quarter, home to centuries-old wooden buildings perched on stilts, designed to protect grain stores from rodents. Along the way, visit a beloved Swiss chocolatier and sample handcrafted sweets. Enjoy an evening at leisure, perhaps relaxing in one of the town’s cozy taverns for dinner or strolling its atmospheric streets.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodations: Hotel National



Day 4: Grandeur on the Glacier Express

Rise early today to catch one of Switzerland’s most famous trains, the Glacier Express, dubbed the “slowest express train in the world.” This eight-hour journey traverses three cantons—Valais, Uri, and Graubünden—offering a front-row seat to some of the most striking landscapes in the Swiss Alps. Travel through deep gorges, over dramatic viaducts, and past picturesque mountain villages while enjoying a gourmet lunch with fine Swiss wines. Along the route, observe landmarks such as the Landwasser Viaduct and the Rhine Gorge, also known as the “Swiss Grand Canyon.” Disembark at the end of the line in St. Moritz and check into your centrally located hotel. Your evening is your own to enjoy in this glamorous alpine town, a playground for the world’s elite that boasts stunning lake views and a rich history in winter sports.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodations: Hotel Schweizerhoff



Day 5: Enchanting Engadine—The Beauty of St. Moritz

Wake up in the heart of the Engadine region, known for its pristine lakes and elegant resorts. Take a ride on the Chantarella Funicular, which connects St. Moritz with the Corviglia summit. Ascend to take



in breathtaking views of the Upper Engadine Valley, where glacial lakes shimmer against a backdrop of snow-capped peaks. Upon returning to St. Moritz, enjoy a group lunch highlighting regional specialties such as Engadine nut cake. Later, visit the Engadine Museum, set in a beautifully preserved early 20th-century house, where exhibits showcase traditional alpine life, from wood-carved furniture to historic farming tools. Learn from your expert about the unique history of mountain railways. Spend the remainder of the day and evening exploring the elegant streets of St. Moritz on your own, perhaps stopping for coffee at a historic café or browsing luxury boutiques.



Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
Accommodations: Hotel Schweizerhoff

Day 6: Aboard the Bernina—From Switzerland to Italy



Today, embark on the Bernina Express, a UNESCO-listed railway that takes you from St. Moritz to Tirano, Italy. This spectacular journey traverses the Bernina Pass, reaching 7,400 feet, and descends through a landscape of glaciers, mountain lakes, and charming villages. The train's panoramic windows offer unparalleled views of landmarks such as the spiraling Brusio Viaduct and the dazzling Morteratsch Glacier. Upon arrival in Tirano, board a private coach for a scenic drive along Lake Como, passing elegant villas and colorful villages nestled against the lake's edge. Pause for a leisurely lunch en route and visit the resort of Como before continuing to Lake Maggiore, one of Italy's most enchanting destinations. Arriving in Stresa, settle into your lakeside hotel, and enjoy remarks from your expert and the peaceful ambiance of the lake at sunset.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
Accommodations: La Palma Hotel



Day 7: Island Idylls—Exploring the Borromean Islands

Today, set sail across the sparkling waters of Lake Maggiore to explore the Borromean Islands, a collection of stunning retreats owned by the noble Borromeo family since the 17th century. Begin at Isola Bella, home to the magnificent Palazzo Borromeo—a grand Baroque palace adorned with opulent frescoes, intricate tapestries, and priceless artworks. Wander through the island’s terraced gardens, where peacocks roam among rare botanical species. Continue to Isola Madre, the largest of the islands, known for its lush English-style gardens filled with exotic plants and tranquil ponds. In the afternoon, return to Stresa for a wine tasting, a perfect way to toast the region’s beauty. Learn more about the region with a lecture from your expert. Then, savor local cuisine and the peaceful ambiance of the lake over a final dinner as a group.

Included Meal: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodations: La Palma Hotel



Day 8: Departure

Depart the hotel early this morning by private coach to transfer to Milan-Malpensa Airport for your flights home.

Included Meal: Breakfast

Accommodations



Hotel National

Zermatt

Nestled in the heart of Zermatt, Hotel National is the only hotel in the city center offering majestic views of the Matterhorn. The boutique property seamlessly blends modern design with traditional Alpine charm, creating a warm, familial atmosphere. Each room is thoughtfully furnished, providing a cozy retreat after a day of adventure. The property features a full-service spa, wellness center, and exceptional on-site dining. **(3 nights)**



Hotel Schweizerhof

St. Moritz

A landmark in central St. Moritz for over 120 years, Hotel Schweizerhof offers timeless elegance and stunning views of the Engadine mountains and Lake St. Moritz. Guests enjoy refined local cuisine, a rooftop relaxation area with sauna and steam bath, and easy access to the Chantarella funicular. With its blend of tradition and modern comfort, Hotel Schweizerhof ensures an unforgettable stay in St. Moritz. **(2 nights)**



La Palma Hotel

Stresa

Located on Lake Maggiore's picturesque shores in Stresa, La Palma Hotel blends modern luxury with classic Italian elegance. Rooms feature plush furnishings and private balconies with lake or mountain views. Guests can enjoy the rooftop Sky Bar and pool, state-of-the-art wellness center, lush gardens, and direct access to the lake's promenade, all near Stresa's historic center and the Borromean Islands. **(2 nights)**



Pricing:

Departure	Double Occupancy	Single Occupancy	Deposit	
May 2–9, 2027	\$10,175	\$12,100	\$650	BOOK NOW
June 13–20, 2027	\$10,175	\$12,100	\$650	BOOK NOW

What's Included:

- All accommodations for the duration of the tour
- Meals, as noted in the itinerary
- All sightseeing and visits as noted in each itinerary
- Expertise of The Great Courses Expert, travel director and local guides throughout the tour
- All gratuities for on-tour guides, drivers, hotel and restaurant staff as part of the group program
- All on-tour transportation, unless otherwise noted
- Group airport transfers on arrival and departure
- Quietvox listening devices to facilitate audibility and social distancing on tour
- The assistance of an ATA professional travel team to assist with pre-trip questions, travel arrangements, including flights, extra hotel nights and other services
- Comprehensive pre-departure mailings and materials with information about the destination and what to expect on tour, including a suggested reading list
- Emergency evacuation insurance