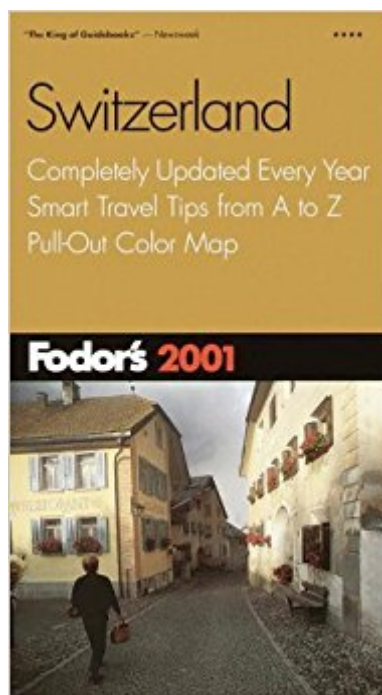




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Fodor's Switzerland 2001: Completely Updated Every Year, Smart Travel Tips From A To Z, Pull-Out Color Map (Travel Guide)



Synopsis

Fodor's Switzerland 2001 "Fodor's guides cover culture authoritatively and rarely miss a sight or museum." - National Geographic Traveler "The king of guidebooks." - Newsweek No matter what your budget or whether it's your first trip or fifteenth, Fodor's Gold Guides get you where you want to go. Insider info that's totally up to date. Every year our local experts give you the inside track, showing you all the things to see and do -- from must-see sights to off-the-beaten-path adventures, from shopping to outdoor fun. Hundreds of hotel and restaurant choices in all price ranges -- from budget-friendly B&Bs to luxury hotels, from casual eateries to the hottest new restaurants, complete with thorough reviews showing what makes each place special. Smart Travel Tips A to Z section helps you take care of the nitty gritty with essential local contacts and great advice -- from how to take your mountain bike with you to what to do in an emergency. Full-size, foldout map keeps you on course.

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Destination: Switzerland **Coziness** under strict control, anachronism versus state-of-the-art technology: strange bedfellows in a storybook land. Nowhere else in Europe can you find a combination as welcoming and as alien, as comfortable and as remote, as engaging and as disengaged as a glass cable car to the clouds. This is the paradox of the Swiss, whose primary national aesthetic pitches rustic Alpine homeyness against high-tech urban efficiency. This means your trains get you to your firelighted lodge on time. It means the shower in your room runs as hot as a Turkish bath. It means the cable car that sweeps you to a mountaintop has been subjected to grueling inspections. It means the handwoven curtains are boiled and starched, and the high-thread-count bed linens are turned back with a chocolate at night. It means the scarlet geraniums that cascade from window boxes on every carved balcony are tended like prize orchids. It means the pipe smoke that builds up in the *StÃfÂ bli* (cozy little pubs) at night is aired out daily, as sparkling clean double-glazed windows are thrown open on every floor, every morning, to let sharp, cool mountain air course through hallways, bedrooms, and fresh-bleached baths. **Dining** If you're looking for diverse dining experiences, you can't do much better than Switzerland, where French, Italian, or German cuisine may dominate, depending on which cantons you visit. In French areas (roughly Vaud, Geneva, Jura, NeuchÃfÂtel, and western parts of Fribourg and Valais) the cuisine is clearly Gallic, and wine stews, organ meats, and subtle sausages appear alongside standard cuisine *bourgeoise*: thick, rare beef *entrecÃfÂte* with a choice of rich sauces and *truite meuniÃfÂre* (trout dredged in flour and sizzled in butter). In the Ticino, the Italian canton, Italian cuisine appears virtually unscathed, particularly the Alpine-forest specialties of Piedmont and Lombardy (risotto, gnocchi, polenta, porcini mushrooms). The German cantons serve more pork than their neighbors and favor another standard dish that represents Switzerland though it vanishes in French-speaking or Italian-speaking areas: *RÃfÂsti*, a broad patty of hash brown potatoes crisped in a skillet and often flavored with bacon, herbs, or cheese, is as prevalent in the German regions as fondue is in the French. **Hiking** When the snow melts and the mountain streams start to flow, Switzerland takes to the hills. That the Swiss Alps are the ultimate in hiking is no secret: on a sunny day in high season in the more popular vacation areas, footpaths can be almost as crowded

as a line for World Series tickets. On narrow trails hikers walk in single file, and the more aggressive pass on the left as if on the autobahns of Germany. However, there is an almost infinite quantity of quiet, isolated routes to be explored; if you prefer to hike in peace, head for one of the less inhabited Alpine valleys -- in the Valais or Graubünden there are several -- and strike out on your own.

Regional Celebrations Basel's extravagant pre-Lenten observance of Fasnacht (Carnival) -- in which up to 20,000 costumed revelers fill the streets with the sounds of fifes and drums -- is only one of the hundreds of festivals that the Swiss celebrate during the year. As if to prove that its spirit is vast despite its small size, almost every Swiss canton hosts its own popular celebration of one event or another. In Geneva the Festival of the Escalade commemorates the town's repulsion of invading Savoyards. Lesser-known festivals range from the frivolous -- in the Schlittenda Engiadinaisa, young unmarried men and women ride decorated sleighs through the villages of the Engadine -- to the symbolic -- in the Landsgemeinde, the citizens of Appenzell pay homage to their country's democratic tradition by conducting a vote by public show of hands.

Shopping Swiss Army knives, Swiss watches, Swiss chocolate -- what could be more... Swiss? Though you won't find many bargains in Switzerland anytime soon, you will find some uniquely Swiss treasures. Some of the best souvenirs of this pragmatic country are typically practical, such as watches, clocks, and Swiss Army knives. Others are more luxurious, such as sweet milk chocolate; you'll be on the home turf of major manufacturers Lindt, Nestlé, and Tobler. But you should also try small local chocolate shops, where the candy is made on the premises. Marvelous music boxes from the watchmaking country around Lake Neuchâtel are sold in specialty shops all over the country.

Skiing Switzerland is Europe's winter playground, and its facilities are as technically advanced as its slopes are spectacular. As one recent skier put it, "There's just more" -- more slopes, longer runs, more stunning, crisp scenery than you'll find in U.S. resorts. Any level of skier can find a resort to meet his or her needs, from a cozy family-oriented village with easy and moderate slopes to the world-class challenges at Crans-Montana, Verbier, Wengen, St. Moritz, and Zermatt. Most resorts publish an area map showing their slopes and rating the trails for difficulty.

Spectator Sports If awards were given to countries with the most unusual sports competitions, Switzerland would win hands down. In the winter the action centers around St. Moritz, where a frozen lake provides a novel setting for golf, polo, dogsled races, and horse races: in the Winter Golf Tournament, red balls on white "greens" are a festive sight. The resort also has the world's only Cresta run; toboggan riders zip head-first down a winding ice channel, accelerating to 90 mph.

Although this book does not provide specific prices for restaurants and hotels (like the Frommer's guides do), it still provides a good overview of the different regions of Switzerland. It does not cover a great many of the hotels available in some towns (for one town, I easily found 15 hotels on-line, but the book only covered 2). Also, it tends to suggest the highest priced restaurants & hotels -- not good for someone on a budget. Overall, however, the book has helped me plan what I hope is a great itinerary for our trip this summer. If I had to give it a thumbs up or a thumbs down, I'd say thumbs up.

I bought this book for my upcoming trip to Switzerland. I also had the Frommer's Italy 2001 book to compare. The Fodor's book is hard to follow and is not very informative. Frommer's has a much more user friendly way of presenting the material, is more detailed, and provides better ideas for the typical tourist and those who want to do things differently. Frommer's also included better maps and better advice. I could go on. Do yourself a favor and buy Frommer's Switzerland (I did) or some other book. Just not this one (I was being nice by giving it a 2).

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