



instant  
escapes

# Alfresco Lake Geneva

Beach clubs, mountain air, jazz – the outdoor scene rocks in summer

Switzerland isn't just for ski season: its ornate cities, crisp air and charming waterfront towns make the country cool and refreshing in summer, too, despite regular highs of 30°C. Add fertile vines, lakeside pools and clickety-clack mountain trains and you have a breezy, boozy, beachy weekend break. By **Amanda Hyde**



instant escapes

## CUT-OUT-AND-GO GUIDE | ALFRESCO LAKE GENEVA

### SEE & DO

● Rainbow sun umbrellas and sandcastles cover the sands at Genève-Plage, where the whole city meets to cool off, **dipping and dozing all day at lakeside beaches and pools** (from £5; geneve-plage.ch). Around sunset, decamp to Les Voiles, the evenings-only beach club, to toast the sleek yachts moored in the marina from an outsized armchair.

● Meandering in the warm air, pick up a bargain designer bag or pretty crockery at one of Geneva's 'La ville est a vous' markets. The Swiss love a spring-clean, and set up piles of covetable stuff at these neighbourhood affairs. Between the stalls, **brass bands play, kids attempt painting and music**, and food vans vend all kinds of calorific grub, from Ethiopian to Caribbean.

● Just 40 minutes away by train, Lausanne is smaller and prettier than Geneva, as bohemian as Switzerland gets. Make for grey-stoned Place de la Palud and watch eccentric snappy dressers wander past as you sip coffee under a parasol. Now climb the steep streets of the old town, stopping to window-shop the many antiques boutiques, and crane your neck **admiring the soaring Gothic ceilings of the immense cathedral**.

● Novel lunch jaunt? On a ferry from Lausanne's pretty port at Ouchy, you can **glide to France across the glowing green water**. Aim for Evian (for

timetables and lake maps, see cgn.ch; around 35 minutes; from £25 return), with its pastel-painted streets, where restaurants include Une Histoire de Goût (menus from £20; Ave Général Dupas 1). The **sublime red mullet provençale makes the journey alone worthwhile**.

● The stroll-worthy lakefront town of Montreux (20 minutes from Lausanne by train) is famously **where Freddie Mercury settled, recording vocals for Queen's last album**. From his sky-punching statue by the market square, meander along the hazy waterside. In about 40 minutes, you'll reach the 13th-century Château de Chillon, emerging from lake mist like something from legend, glowing burnt orange with the rising sun (chillon.ch; entry £8.40).

● You'll get postcard-worthy shots from Montreux's **rickety, centenarian funicular railway as it click-clacks 1,575m up a mountain edge** towards the craggy peak at Rochers de Naye. Disembark at Caux for an amazing view: hay-coloured forest descending to shimmering water on one side; on the other, the Belle Epoque jumble of Le Bouveret town tumbling towards the lake (from Montreux station; about £14 return).

● There's different viewing in Vevey, Montreux's lesser-known sister town, the two linked by the 201 bus. Its neatly criss-crossed cobbled streets are packed with posh boutiques meeting an urbane, cafe-lined waterfront. Go for **Saturday morning's market: fine cheese, fresh flowers**, and hirsute Monsieur Barbieri, who sells excellent *calabrese* sauce (made from allotment-grown veg).

● Switzerland's biggest secret? Not Nazi gold but excellent wine, of which they export just one per cent. Chocolate-box cute Lavaux (between Lausanne and Vevey) is a good place to taste it: neat rows of vines pour down the mountains, while shady restaurant terraces hide in sunny lakeside villages. **Savour a few vintages on the Lavaux Panoramic Wine Train, which trundles between the vines** (April-Oct, £8; tickets from local tourist offices). ➤

Perchance to steam: left, a paddle-steamer sets off across Lake Geneva; below, from left, Château de Chillon bathed in sun; shuttered windows in Lausanne's old town

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### EAT

#### ● The city bargain

**CHEZ MA COUSINE** (Mains about £8)

**Because:** Eating in Geneva is usually pricey, but the cheap, simple chicken, roast potatoes and veg at this little chain will have you salivating.

**Travel's tip:** The Old Town branch, with its teeny terrace, is the most atmospheric. *Place du Bourg du Four 6; chezmacousine.ch.*

#### ● The portside lunch

**RESTAURANT DU PORT** (Mains about £17)

**Because:** Finding a good meal in Ouchy, Lausanne's tourist-trodden lakeside suburb, is hard – but the mussels and chips here hit the spot.

**Travel's tip:** You'll want an outside table – which means you'll have to reserve a couple of days beforehand. *Place du Port 5; 00 4121612 0444, hotel-du-port.ch.*

#### ● The tropical terrace

**MAITHAI** (Mains about £25)

**Because:** Nothing says summer indulgence quite like the spicy king prawns served on this shady lakeside Montreux deck. **Travel's tip:** The time to be here is dusk (around 9pm), as the mountains turn pink and the lake shimmers electric blue. *Rue du Lac 40; 00 4121964 2536, maithai.ch.*

#### ● The golden oldie

**HOTEL VICTORIA** (Mains about £30)

**Because:** This antiques-stuffed hotel in the chocolate-box village of Glion is like a peep into the area's early 20th-century heyday. **Travel's tip:** The old-fashioned menu is haphazardly executed – stick to simple dishes and savour the incredible atmosphere. *Route de Caux, Glion; 00 4121962 8282, victoria-glion.ch.*

#### ● The brilliant brunch

**HOTEL TROIS COURONNES** (Buffet brunch about £50)

**Because:** Despite the five-star fairy-tale surroundings (glittering chandeliers, frescoed ceilings), Sunday buffet brunch at this grand dame, commanding the lake at Vevey, is a wonderfully relaxed affair.

**Travel's tip:** Go for the sweet langoustines and homely rack of lamb. *Rue d'Italie 49; 00 4121923 3200, hoteltroiscouronnes.ch.*



### DRINK & SHOP

#### ● The secret jazz club

**ANCIENNE POSTE DES PLANCHES**

**Because:** The fantastic Saturday-night live music at this makeshift Montreux jazz joint packs in music lovers and oozes atmosphere. **Travel's tip:** They say you have to reserve, but wait until someone steps out for a smoke and they may let you sneak in. *Place des Planches 4; 00 4178 654 2826.*

#### ● The tip-top tea room

**P'TIT BAR, LAUSANNE**

**Because:** This cute little cafe does homemade infusions, such as warm elderflower or cool ginger. **Travel's tip:** There's real colour early on a Saturday, as market-stall holders set up in the shadow of the cathedral. *Rue Louis-Curtat 6; 00 4121323 5359.*

#### ● The eccentric brewery

**DOCTEUR GAB'S, SAVIGNY**

**Because:** Seasonal surprises at this industrial-estate microbrewery are made for connoisseurs: try summer's heady 'Cascade'. **Travel's tip:** The shop, in the hills above Lausanne, is a top Swiss secret, but only opens Saturdays 10am–4pm. *Chemin de Geffry, Savigny.*

### ASK THE LOCAL

Full-time mum Tercia Zivanovic lives in La Tour de Peilz, between Montreux and Vevey



Always **look at the lake before you board a boat trip:**

if the water's running left to right and you see lights blinking on the far left-hand shore, it's going to be choppy! Swiss attractions are seriously expensive. If you visit the **fun lakeside ones, such as the amazing Aquaparc** or Swiss Vapeur Parc (aquaparc.ch and swissvapeur.ch), check online for discount vouchers first. Montreux is at its best during the **Jazz Festival, when the lake is lined with pop-up bars and restaurants** (July 4; montreuxjazz festival.com). But you don't have to buy an expensive ticket to enjoy the fun – **musicians perform all day (and night) in the free outside area by the main arena.**



### STAY

#### ● The Old Town bargain

**HOTEL TRALALA** (Doubles from £90, room only)

**Because:** The music-themed Tralala, in Montreux, may have OTT red and white furnishings, but it's a great place to stay when the town's two-week Jazz Festival kicks off in July. Plus, many rooms have fantastic lake views.

**Travel's tip:** Avoid the £12 buffet breakfast; turn right out of the hotel and walk for two minutes to a cute cafe with a sunny terrace. *Rue du Temple 2; 00 4121963 4973, tralalahotel.ch.*

#### ● The boozy bolthole

**HOTEL LAVAUX** (Doubles from £96, room only)

**Because:** The chic white rooms in this '60s low-rise are right by Lavaux's vineyards (although also a railway line). **Travel's tip:** Look out for the excellent packages such as 'Winemaker's day', which includes lake-view rooms, time working in a vineyard and a tasting from £80pp per night. *Route Cantonale; 00 4121799 9393, hotellavaux.ch.*



#### ● The chic B&B

**LE BOURG 7** (Doubles from £109, B&B)

**Because:** This cosy, cool B&B in the medieval lakeside village of Lutry is as non-corporate as Switzerland gets, with rooms adorned in plush velvets and pretty embroidery.

**Travel's tip:** The cosy wine bar is a great place to while away an evening. *Rue du Bourg 7; 00 4121796 3777, lebourg7.com.*

#### ● The city sleepover

**EASTWEST HOTEL** (Doubles from £190, room only)

**Because:** This central-Geneva boutique number is delightfully eccentric, with yellow-walled rooms, a cosy scarlet bar and a restaurant doing delicious French/Asian fusion.

**Travel's tip:** Ask for a room at the back, to avoid road noise. *Rue des Paquis 6; 00 4122 708 1717, eastwesthotel.ch.*

#### ● The place to be seen

**FAIRMONT LE MONTREUX PALACE** (Doubles from £250, room only)

**Because:** Cinderellas on the up will



**Best of lake:** clockwise from top left, the terrace views are stunning at Fairmont Le Montreux Palace; Swiss patisserie; poolside at Beau-Rivage Palace, Lausanne; the vineyard terraces in Lavaux; Hotel Tralala, Montreux

adore star-spotting at this grand Belle Epoque pile, with its startling white rooms, lakeside pool and Harry's Bar.

**Travel's tip:** It's not widely advertised, but under-fives sleep and eat free. *Avenue Claude-Nobs 2; 00 4121962 1212, fairmont.com/montreux.*

#### ● The luxe escape

**BEAU-RIVAGE PALACE** (Doubles from £275, B&B)

**Because:** The service is superb, there's a Michelin-starred restaurant, and the sprawling terrace comes with knockout lake views. At weekends, Geneva's ex-pats flock to this Lausanne five-star with good reason. **Travel's tip:** Make time for the spa, a lavish affair that does sublime massages. *Place du Port 17-19; 00 4121613 3333, brp.ch.*



### GET ME THERE

#### GO INDEPENDENT

**EasyJet** (easyjet.com) flies to Geneva from 14 UK airports from £95 return.

**BA** (ba.com) flies from Heathrow (and Gatwick and London City in winter), from £150 return. **Swiss** (swiss.com)

flies from Gatwick, Heathrow and London City, from £175 return.

#### GO PACKAGED

**Crystal Summer** (0871230 8180, crystalsummer.co.uk) has a week at a four-star in Montreux from £1,037pp half board, including Luton flights and rail transfers. **Railbookers** (020 3327 0800, railbookers.com) has two nights at the Fairmont Montreux Palace from £479pp, including Eurostar travel from London and train transfer to Montreux.

#### GET AROUND

The highly reliable Swiss rail network connects Geneva airport with Geneva (20mins), Lausanne (40mins) and Montreux (1hr 20mins). You can change for regional stations. See [sbb.ch](http://sbb.ch) for fares and timetables. Driving is easy and relatively traffic-free too: **Auto Europe** (0800 358 1229, auto-europe.co.uk) has three nights' car hire from £95.

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

See [myswitzerland.com](http://myswitzerland.com) and [montreuxriviera.com](http://montreuxriviera.com). ■