Recommended Reading and More

We have compiled this selection of books especially for your trip. Please visit your local library, bookstore or favorite online bookseller to obtain any of these titles.

Recommended


History


Diccon Bewes. “Slow Train to Switzerland: One Tour, Two Trips, 150 Years and a World of Change Apart.” Perseus, 2014. Best-selling author Diccon Bewes follows in the footsteps of an 1863 tour group who traveled from London to Lucerne, Switzerland. In his trademark breezy, intelligent prose, Bewes traces how tourism and time have caused a sea change in Switzerland.

Culture

Andrew Beattie. “The Alps: A Cultural History.” Oxford University Press, 2006. Andrew Beattie explores the turbulent past and vibrant present of the Alps, where early pioneers of tourism, mountaineering and scientific research have each left their mark.

Diccon Bewes. “Swiss Watching: Inside Europe’s Landlocked Island.” Nicholas Brealey, 2012. In this international best seller, Diccon Bewees, a neutral Brit, covers cheese, chocolate, William Tell, bureaucracy and banks, all with humor and thorough research. His cultural portrait of the one-of-a-kind nation includes tips on local customs, greetings and etiquette.

**Art and Architecture**

Michaella Unterdorfer, Miriam Cahn, Christoph Buchel. “Swiss Made: The Art of Falling Apart.” Waanders Publishers, 2006. “Swiss Made” is devoted to the work of fifteen Swiss artists, each of whom has made a permanent impression in the field of contemporary art. Their work is included in one of the world's most important Swiss collections of contemporary art: Hauser & Wirth.


**Travel, Biography & Memoir**

Anne Herrmann. “Coming Out Swiss: In Search of Heidi, Chocolate and My Other Life.” University of Wisconsin Press, 2014. Part memoir, part history, part travelogue, Anne Herrmann’s passionate celebration of what it means to be Swiss intertwines personal revelation with cultural fact.


Mark Twain. “A Tramp Abroad.” Penguin, 1997. Written 11 years after “Innocents Abroad,” this is Twain’s second foray into European travel. Filled with his characteristic wit and humorous observations, it documents his journeys through Germany, Switzerland, France and Italy.


**Literature**

J.R.R. Tolkien. “The Hobbit.” Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012 (75th anniversary edition). Revealed in letters to family, Tolkien was greatly inspired by Switzerland’s Lauterbrunnen Valley which he visited as a teenager. Middle Earth in “The Hobbit” and “The Lord of the Rings” series is a reflection of this nature in abundance—the Alps, waterfalls, peaks, valleys and vast scenery suitable for quests.


M. F. K. Fisher. “The Theoretical Foot.” Counterpoint, 2016. MFK Fisher’s first novel, considered too racy for its time, features two unmarried American couples tramping through Europe in the late 1930s whose love affairs are tested by the rise of fascism and looming war.

John Le Carré. “The Night Manager.” Random House Publishing Group, 2017. This best-selling, post-Cold War thriller about ruthless arms dealers in Geneva is a gripping read. Carrying on the great Le Carré tradition of espionage, a man who essentially gave up living after a tremendous failure is given a costly shot at redemption.

Ernest Hemingway. “A Farewell to Arms.” Scribner, 2014. Set in snowy Switzerland and the rainy Italian Lake Country during WWI, this semi-autobiographical novel chronicles the romance between a British nurse and an American ambulance driver. This edition collects all of the alternate endings, along with early drafts of other essential passages.

Natural History and Field Guides


Music
Oesch's die Dritten. “Jodel Zauber.” Ais, 2007. Iconic to German-speaking Switzerland is yodeling, originating as a 16th-century signal communication between Alpine villagers. This compilation of oral song and rapid delivery is harmonized by an accomplished Swiss family group dedicated to keeping traditional folk yodeling alive.

Movies and TV
“Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith.” Directed by George Lucas, 20th Century Fox, 2005. The Bernese Alps surrounding Grindelwald provide the backdrop as Alderaan, the fictitious home planet of Princess Leia Organa. As the last of the Star Wars prequel trilogy, Anakin Skywalker decides between embracing the dark side of the Force or remaining a Jedi knight.

“On Her Majesty’s Secret Service.” Directed by Peter R. Hunt, Eon Productions, 1969. Switzerland, including the Schilthorn summit south of Interlaken, is an extensive backdrop for James Bond’s secret agent heroics. Sixth in the Bond film series, James counters villain Blofeld’s threat of the world’s food sources.

Guidebooks, Language and Maps
Padraig Rooney. “The Gilded Chalet: Off-Piste in Literary Switzerland.” Nicholas Brealey, 2016. In this amusing guide, a grand tour of literary Switzerland, Padraig Rooney profiles 200 years of outstanding works and their strong Swiss influences. He argues that the land of luxury hotels, fresh air and fresh milk deserves wide renown as a literary hub.


Insight Guides. “Insight Guide Switzerland.” APA Publications, 2018. This handsome guide gives a profusely illustrated overview of Switzerland, featuring concise essays by well-regarded authors on history, politics and culture, as well as hundreds of photos and maps and other practical information.