



St. Gallen, Abbey Library

Switzerland's rural northeast (Ostschweiz in German) is not as mountainous as some other cantons, but compensates with lush green hills that are picture perfect. Bodensee (Lake Constance) is a big draw for summer recreation, while Stein am Rhein's main square could be from a fairy tale. The Rhine falls, Europe's largest waterfall, near Schaffhausen, are a dramatic spectacle. The main urban centre, St. Gallen, is world famous for its extraordinarily Baroque abbey, declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. And Liechtenstein, the world's fourth-smallest country (only slightly larger than Manhattan), offers princely perfect views from the castle above Vaduz. You'll love this part of Switzerland!

some highlights



St. Gallen

St. Gallen is Switzerland's seventh largest city and has a busy modern centre and a beautiful **old town**. The centerpiece is the **impressive Baroque abbey** (built from 1755 to 1767), declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The interior of the church is vast! It's opulently painted, decorated with stucco works and the choir area with its 84 superbly carved seats and the historical organ is an artwork in itself. The cathedral really is glorious and should not be missed! Within the same complex of buildings as the cathedral, and just adjacent to it, is the **famous abbey library**, one of the **oldest libraries in Europe** (open Mon–Sat 10 am–5 pm, Sun 10 am–4 pm). It's famous for its stunning interior and for its huge collection of rare and unique medieval books and manuscripts. The **Textile Museum** (at Vadianstrasse 2) provides an interesting and well-presented collection of St. Gallen embroidery, famous throughout the whole world (open from April 26th 10 am–5 pm).

At St. Jakobstrasse 37 you'll find Switzerland's first **beer bottle museum**, with 2,000 bottles from 260 different breweries on display (open Mon–Fri 8 am–6.30 pm, Sat 8 am–5 pm, entry is free of charge!). An **architectural highlight** in St. Gallen is the "stadtlounge" (city lounge), just 5 minutes on foot from the main station. Built by artists it invites you to linger and pass the time. The major event in St. Gallen is its **three-day rock festival**, Switzerland's biggest open-air festival (from June 30th–July 3rd).

Factory visits are within easy reach from St. Gallen. You can watch chocolate production at Schoggi-Land in Flawil or visit the show cheese factory in Stein (for details see "factory visits" on page 50).

How to get there: direct trains link St. Gallen with Zurich (65 minutes) and Chur (1 hour 35 minutes).

① **Tourist office:** at Bahnhofplatz 1a next to the train station (071 227 37 37) »www.st.gallen-bodensee.ch

Budget accommodation: St. Gallen Youth Hostel, Jüchstrasse 25 (071 245 47 77) »www.youthhostel.ch/st.gallen (from St. Gallen Station, take the orange "Trogenerbähnli" tram to the "Schülerhaus" stop, then 5 minutes on foot).

Schaffhausen and the Rhine Falls

Schaffhausen is the capital of Switzerland's northernmost canton and is nicknamed "City of Oriel Windows". With 170-odd examples of **oriel windows** this nickname is well-earned. Schaffhausen's beautiful riverside old town is crammed full of well-preserved architecture, lending the cobbled streets considerable charm. Two of the most grandiose houses are the **Zum Ochsen** house at Vorstadt 17 and the house **Zum Ritter** at Vordergasse 65, both with a Gothic façade and decorated with striking Renaissance frescoes. A 15-minute walk from the centre brings you up to the **Munot**, a fortification atop a vine-covered hill where you'll view the town in all its meandering glory. This is Schaffhausen's trademark circular fortress (admission free, open May–Sept 8 am–8 pm, April and Oct 9 am–5 pm). Schaffhausen also has a **casino** (at Herrenacker 7, open daily 12 noon–3 am, Fri & Sat until 5 am).

The very best excursion here is the short trip westward to the **Rhine falls**, Europe's largest waterfalls, 150 meters wide and 23 meters high! For a more subdued view, the falls on the north bank of the river are less steep and less violent. Cross the bridge to the south side to get a true impression

of the enormous impact of the water. The viewpoint from Schloss (castle) Laufen is best! From Schloss Laufen (**a castle overlooking the Rhine falls**) a stairway leads down alongside the splashing water to the lookout platform "Känzeli", where the roaring waters tumble inches from your nose. Starting from Schloss Laufen you can take a round trip in the Rhine falls basin or a **boat ride** to the rocks in its midst and climb up. A Rhine crossing costs CHF 2.– (duration 5 min.); a trip to the rock CHF 10.– (30 minutes); and a short roundtrip CHF 8.– (30 minutes). Or take the boat to Switzerland's biggest adventure park. Boat ticket from Schloss Laufen costs CHF 2.–, the park is open daily from 10 am to 7 pm, entry CHF 40.–.

August 20th sees a **mighty fireworks** display staged on the riverside (at about 9.30 pm)! The 4 km riverside walk from Schaffhausen to the Rhine falls takes about 45 minutes. Or you could take S-train no 33 to Schloss Laufen train station (takes 5 minutes and is possible from April–Oct only!). Another possibility is to take bus no 1 or 6 from Schaffhausen to "Neuhausen Zentrum", from where the well-signposted falls are a five-minute walk away. Or from Neuhausen Zentrum (Zentralstrasse) you can take the so-called "Rhine Falls Express", a nostalgic train that brings you to the falls (costs CHF 6.–).

How to get there: from/to Zurich main station trains take 40 minutes to Schaffhausen (or 49 minutes via Winterthur to Schloss Laufen). From/to Kreuzlingen you reach Schaffhausen by train (takes 55 minutes) or by **boat!**

① **Tourist offices:** In Schaffhausen at Herrenacker 15 (052 632 40 20); in Neuhausen at Rheinfallquai (052 670 02 37). »www.schaffhauserland.ch

Budget accommodation:

In Schaffhausen: Schaffhausen Youth Hostel "Belair", Randenstrasse 65 (052 625 88 00, closed after Oct 30th) »www.youthhostel.ch/schaffhausen (15 minutes on foot or by bus no. 3 direction Sommerwies to the "Wiesli" stop or by bus No. 6 direction Neuhausen to the "Hallenbad" stop).

At Schloss Laufen: Dachsen Youth Hostel, in an annexe of Schloss Laufen, the castle overlooking the Rhine falls (052 659 61 52, closed after Oct 30th) »www.youthhostel.ch/dachsen

Stein am Rhein

Little Stein am Rhein (just 20 km east of Schaffhausen) is a perfectly preserved medieval village. Over one million people pay their respects to this pretty town every year, so to enjoy this beautiful village you should stay overnight; it's only after 5 pm and before 10 am that there's much peace here. The Rathausplatz, often acclaimed as

the **most picturesque square** in Switzerland, is truly the type of place postcards were invented to celebrate! And the line of facades along the south side of the whole square is dazzling! A medieval **market** is held every Saturday morning! There are plenty of picturesque narrow lanes and alleys to explore. A manor house at Understadt 18, dating from 1279, is the **Museum Lindwurm** (open daily 10 am–5 pm), entry CHF 5.–, students CHF 3.–; the desk keeps English notes. Up the hill above the town, **Hohenklingen castle** provides a great view and a commendable restaurant!

How to get there: there are half hourly trains from/to Schaffhausen (takes 24 minutes); from/to Zurich main station trains take 40 minutes to Schaffhausen. But much nicer is to **travel by boat** (at least six boats a day arrive at Stein am Rhein, three from Schaffhausen downriver and three from Kreuzlingen upriver).

① **Tourist office:** at Oberstadt 3 (052 742 20 90).

Budget accommodation: Stein am Rhein Youth Hostel, Hemishoferstrasse 87 (052 741 12 55) »www.youthhostel.ch/stein



The Rhine Falls near Schaffhausen

Bodensee (Lake Constance)

Bodensee is shared by Switzerland, Germany and Austria. At its southeastern corner is Austria, focused around the town of Bregenz. The largest settlement on the German shore is the city of Konstanz, separated from its contiguous Swiss suburb of **Kreuzlingen** only by an arbitrary international frontier. Kreuzlingen welcomes you to a wide range of **water-sports** i.e. canoeing and kayaking as well as kayaking courses. The youth hostel lies in the middle of a park on the shores of the lake and has its own football and volleyball facilities. But Bodensee is also an El Dorado for **skaters** and **bikers**: The Bodensee cycle path measures over 250 km in total and the combination of bicycle/ship makes it possible to go on attractive, border-crossing cycling tours (information and route suggestions are available at the tourist office). There are dozens of **excursion cruises** all round the lake during summer season and as a Swiss Pass or Swiss Youth Pass holder you even travel **free of charge** along the Swiss shore!

How to get there: to/from St. Gallen take S-train no 3 (takes 55 minutes).

To/from Schaffhausen or Stein am Rhein you should take a boat. At least 3 boats a day (May–Sep) make the beautiful journey along the Rhine river a peaceful ride!

① **Tourist office:** at Sonnenstrasse 4 (071 672 38 40).

Budget accommodation: Kreuzlingen Youth Hostel, Promenadenstrasse 7 (071 688 26 63) »www.youthhostel.ch/kreuzlingen (on the lake shore, 5 minutes to walk from the railway station “Kreuzlingen Hafen (port)”).

The Principality of Liechtenstein

The principality of Liechtenstein is the world’s fourth-smallest country, only slightly larger than Manhattan. It does not have an international airport, access from Switzerland is by local bus. But don’t make the mistake of thinking you’ve arrived in Switzerland, even though the Swiss Franc is legal currency and all travel documents are valid! Liechtenstein even has its own **royal family**, who live in the castle above

Vaduz, the country’s capital and seat of government. **Vaduz castle** is not open to the public, but it’s worth the climb up the hill; at the top, there are magnificent vistas! Although Liechtenstein shares the Swiss postal system, it issues its own **postage stamps** and they are highly collectable. The small **Postage Stamp Museum** (at Stadle 37 in Vaduz) contains 300 frames of national stamps issued since 1912 (open Tue–Sun 10 am–5 pm). **Schaan**, the village just 3 km from Vaduz, is an ideal place to start on **hiking and cycling** tours. Liechtenstein has some 400 km of **hiking trails** through Alpine scenery (ask at the tourist office for the Liechtenstein hiking map). As well, **skating and biking** on the Rhine Dam are very popular. The friendly people from the tourist office or at your hostel will help you with route suggestions and excursion tips. An exciting experience is a visit in the Galina **falconry** in Malbun. Never again will you get as close to eagles, hawks, falcons and eagle-owls. From May until Oct (only in good weather) daily at 3 pm (except on Mondays), a professional falconer and his birds of prey put on a

unique flight show, costs CHF 8.– (buses from Vaduz to Malbun run half-hourly and take 31 minutes).

How to get there: the nearest airport to Liechtenstein is Zurich. Regular post buses run to Schaan and Vaduz from Sargans and Buchs, both of them on the main Swiss train line between St. Gallen and Chur. There are usually at least 3 buses an hour from the Swiss border towns of Buchs and Sargans that stop in Schaan/Vaduz. To Sargans it takes 55 minutes from Zurich, from Chur 18 minutes, from St. Gallen 1 hour 9 minutes; to Buchs it takes 1 hour 10 minutes from Zurich, from Chur 37 minutes and from St. Gallen 56 minutes.

① **Tourist office:** in Vaduz at Stadle 37 (00423 239 63 00).

Budget accommodation in Schaffhausen: Schaan-Vaduz Youth Hostel, untere Ruttigasse 6 (00423 23 250 22, closed after Oct 23rd) »www.youthhostel.ch/schaan (from Sargans or Buchs take the post bus and get off at “Muhleholz” stop, from there it’s just 5 minutes to walk).

««