

22 LAKE GENEVA REGION – SOME HIGHLIGHTS



Yverdon-les-Bains, the castle dating back from the 13th century

The Lake Geneva Region is often called “a cocktail of Switzerland” and whatever your interests, it offers a remarkable range of leisure and pleasure activities for both body and soul. Here you’ll find peaceful lakes bordered by palm trees, the rolling wooded hills of the Jura, the delightful green landscapes of the northern part and the snowy summits of the Alps with the majestic glacier of Les Diablerets. Some enthusiasts even manage to ski on both snow and water on the same day! The Lake Geneva Region offers you a vast choice of sporting, cultural and leisure activities. For hikers and bikers, scenic routes and trails extend across the entire region. The range of holiday activities is wide. »»www.lake-geneva-region.ch



some highlights

From Montreux the **famous mountain train “MOB Golden Pass”** (free of charge for Eurail, InterRail, or Swiss-Pass holders!), one of the showcase journeys of Swiss railways, which climbs northwest through the hills into Canton Bern. On this spectacular route between Montreux and Zweisimmen (in the Bernese Oberland) you can stop, for example, in **Château-d’Oex and Saanen-Gstaad**.

Château-d’Oex

Château-d’Oex offers everything the heart of a sportsman could desire. A variety of mountain tours, **river-rafting** on the Saane river (from Saanen to Château-d’Oex), kayaking, canyoning, hydrospeed, **paragliding** (landing area right next to the Youth Hostel), **mountain bike** course with permanent time-recording and a number of other MTB routes.

Also worth a visit is “Le Grand Chalet” in Rossinière, a chalet dating from 1754, with 113 windows (trains to Rossinière take 6 minutes).

But actually Château-d’Oex is best known for all its hot air. When the Swiss Bertrand

Piccard and the Briton Brian Jones made their record-breaking 45,000 km round-the-world balloon flight in 1999, the takeoff point and centre of the whole operation was here. Every January the town hosts this arguably most beautiful sports event in the Swiss calendar, the annual Hot-Air Ballooning Week, when nearly 100 colourful giants catch the thermals to float peacefully over the hills and valleys round about.

How to get to Château-d’Oex: Hourly train from Montreux (takes 1 hour).

① **Tourist offices:** La Place 6 (026 924 25 25) »»www.chateau-doex.ch

Budget accommodation: Château-d’Oex Youth Hostel, Route des Monnaies 67, (026 924 64 04, closed April 1st – 20th, April 26th – June 1st, and after October 23rd). »»www.youthhostel.ch/chateau.d.oex

Saanen-Gstaad

The Gstaad-Saanenland holiday region actually belongs to the the Bernese Oberland, but is closely linked with Château-d’Oex and as well within easy reach of Montreux (see mountain train “MOB Golden Pass” above). The Gstaad-Saanenland holi-

day region is popular with a charming mix of visitors. While the car-free chalet village of Gstaad attracts countless stars and starlets, the smaller neighbouring village Saanen offers attractive options a little further away from the hustle, but still close to the action. There are **hiking** possibilities, from short walks to high alpine tours. Or how about **river-rafting** on the Saane river (from Saanen to Château-d’Oex), kayaking, canyoning, hydrospeed, etc. The possibilities are countless.

How to get to Saanen: Hourly trains from Montreux (takes 1 hour 15 minutes). Trains between Château-d’Oex and Saanen take only 16 minutes.

① **Tourist offices:** Promenade 41 in Gstaad (033 748 81 81) »»www.gstaad.ch

Budget accommodation: Saanen-Gstaad Youth Hostel in Saanen, Chalet Rüblihorn, Spitzhornweg 25 (033 744 13 43, closed April 1st – 20th, April 26th – June 1st and after Oct 23rd) »»www.youthhostel.ch/saanen

Villars-Gryon and Les Diablerets

Situated on a natural sun terrace at 1,300 metres, Villars-Gryon commands a fine view of Mont-Blanc and the Alps. More than 300 km of marked **hiking trails** and 150 km of all-terrain **bicycle trails** allow you to discover the beauty of the area. Three high-altitude lakes and numerous alpine farms (serving breakfast cooked on wood fires and demonstrating cheese making) offer a unique experience. At Chalet Martin in Gryon you can also book **rock climbing** and even **paragliding** (tandem flights), just ask at the reception. Les Diablerets is located at the foot of an Alpine massif capped by one of the most beautiful glaciers in Switzerland. Cross-country-skiing on a glacier at 3,000 metres is possible in summer! And do not miss visiting the **summit restaurant**, designed by celebrated Swiss architect Mario Botta. It has a fantastic terrace!

How to get there: By rail from Lausanne to Villars-Gryon (via Aigle or via Bex, takes approx. 1 h 15); to Les Diablerets via Aigle (1 h 20).

① **Tourist office:** at Rue Centrale, Villars (024 495 32 32); at Place de la Barboleuse 11, Gryon (024 498 00 00), at Rue de la Gare, Les Diablerets (024 492 00 10). www.villars.ch; »»www.diabletrets.ch; »»www.lake-geneva-region.ch

For accommodation Chalet Martin, Rue du Villars (079 724 63 74) »»www.gryon.com

Yverdon-les-Bains

Just 20 train-minutes from Lausanne on the southern tip of Lake Neuchâtel lies the attractive thermal capital of the French-speaking part of Switzerland, Yverdon-les-Bains. This beautiful spa town can look back on 15 centuries of health-giving hospitality. The **spa thermal center** at Avenue des Bains 22 (with thermal pools, jacuzzis and bubble and massage jets) is open daily 8 am – 10 pm (Sun until 8 pm), admission costs CHF 19.–. Or you may prefer to visit the dreamy world of the “House of Elsewhere” (La Maison d’Ailleurs), **museum of science fiction** (the only one of its kind in Europe) at Place Pestalozzi 14, open Wed – Fri 2 – 6 pm, Sat & Sun 11 am – 6 pm, admission costs CHF 9.–, students 7.–. For culture and history explore the 13th century **castle** and its museum.

How to get there: Yverdon-les-Bains is easily accessible by rail (approx. 20 minutes from Lausanne or 36 minutes from Biel).

① **Tourist office:** at Av. de la Gare 2 (024 423 61 01), »»www.yverdonlesbainsregion.ch

Budget accommodation: Gîte du Passant, Parc 14 (024 425 12 33) »»www.gite-du-passant.ch

All about the cities of Lausanne, Vevey and Montreux, see pages 18–21; All about Biel see next page.

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Pure relaxation at the end of a long day hiking