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Travelling in Switzerland with kids - or without

Smart tips for travelling by train in Switzerland

In the last European summer, my two boys and I spent a few weeks in Switzerland and explored our beautiful home country as much as we possibly could. We were particularly fascinated with the train system – of course everyone knows that the Swiss trains are spotless, quiet and punctual almost to the second.

But it gets better: By the end of 2012, every double-decker intercity train will have a family wagon either at the front or the end of the train. You'll recognise them straight away as the family wagon has monkeys, elephants and other jungle creatures painted on the outside. The ground floor has enough space for all the prams, strollers and bikes and upstairs is the playground. Yes, a kids' playground with a slide and a whole lot of fun stuff to keep the little ones busy during your train journey!

On the upper deck of the family wagon, every compartment is fitted with a games table that includes a 'snakes-and-ladder' and a jungle game (game pieces are available from the restaurant, bistro or mini bar on board of the train). If you think this is too good to be true, check it out on www.tickipark.ch.

Half fare card

This is like the traditional "Halbtaxabonnement" that you may know, but it's only SFr. 110.- and valid for 1 month. Perfect for those holidays in Switzerland! Bear in mind this is also valid for half price fares for most cable cars, funiculars, ships, etc. So this is very versatile and a good deal.

(<http://www.swisstravelsystem.com/de/tickets-de/swiss-half-fare-card-de.html>)

Family card

If you buy a half fare card, then your children up to 16 years of age will travel for free, as long as they travel with you. All you have to do is get a free family card when you purchase your half fare card and the deal is on. Family cards are only available when purchasing a card system from SBB.

SBB Junior card

If you have kids between 6 - 16 years old, it is worth getting a 'Junior card'. For only SFr. 30.- your child will travel free of charge for up to 12 months on every train, tram, bus, postauto, ship and even funiculars and cable cars! SBB also offers a "Grandparent card" where children accompanied by a grandparent travel for free.

Municipal day card

The "Municipal day card" is another really useful travel tip for Switzerland! With this card you can travel the whole Swiss public transport system (includes most ships, mountain transport, Panorama-trains etc.) for an entire day. Most municipalities have 2-4 travel cards available per day and charge approx. SFr. 40.- per card, but they book out super fast and you have to be smart to get one.



On www.tageskarte-gemeinde.ch you can see every municipality and the availability of cards. With most municipalities, the cards will have to be picked up within 5 days and paid on collection. So get your friends or family to help you out there and reserve one before you even go on holiday (ideally 2-3 months before you want it). Also, a few municipalities only want locals to get these cards, so read up about it on their individual websites, and see what their terms and conditions are.

Generally, this is an amazing way to get around. I bought one for my mum and myself on her birthday, and we had a wonderful day out, just the two of us: Morning tea in Gstaad, lunch in Montreux, afternoon tea in the Valais and dinner in the Bernese Alps. Does it get any better than that?!

I wish you happy travels and hope you can benefit from one or the other deal on one of your next journeys to Switzerland.

By Tanja Latham-Zurbrugg

