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## Route de Bonheur

Ready for an adventure for the senses? Imagine nature's best hiking trails across the Swiss Alps, outstanding views, spas sourced with healing waters, and gourmet dinners accompanied by fine wines prepared by the best chefs of the region, all combined into one experience.

Last summer, Relais & Châteaux boutique hotels launched its first hiking route in Switzerland.



### The story behind La Route du Bonheur

The story of Relais & Châteaux began sixty years ago, when Marcel and Nelly Tilloy, the owners of La Cardinale on the right bank of the Rhône, came up with the idea of advertising eight properties under the umbrella of the "Route du Bonheur". This union led to the creation of the most prestigious hotel association in the world: Relais & Châteaux. Today, there are nearly 530 member properties spread among 64 countries.



### The Route de Bonheur is a luxurious treat for all senses

Four hoteliers in Switzerland have come together to launch the ultimate treat for the senses: an Alpine hike with spectacular views, connecting their Relais & Châteaux properties along a north-south route (it leads from the Bernese Alps to the central Valais and back). Of course, the hotels feature fine dining restaurants covering a total of 62 Gault Millau points, as well as luxurious spas with healing Alpine waters.

Without the hassle of worrying about logistics, this route can now be hiked entirely by foot. It truly ticks the box of

promising "bonheur" through breathtaking views.



The trip starts at the Lenkerhof Gourmet Spa Resort, established 350 years ago on the site of a natural sulphur spring. Today, guests can exclusively enjoy the outdoor sulphur pools during all seasons.

Gourmet dining is a key unique selling point of Relais & Châteaux, and each hotel takes a lot of care in using the best locally sourced ingredients, and the talented chefs will bring these local ingredients to life.



The hike starts from Iffigenalp in the upper Simmental, continuing along the historic north-south transit route over the Rawil Pass (altitude 2492 m), before descending to Lake Tseuzier. If you want to see many different landscapes in one hike, this is the route for you. The trail takes you through spectacular landscapes ranging from rolling, lush meadows (the stuff of Heidi tales), to dramatic glacier moonscapes, and includes a breathtaking descent into the French speaking part of Switzerland.

A chorus of cow bells welcomes you, and the classic postcard vista of a



valley with manicured, rolling meadows peppered with chalets are a feast for all eyes.

After a hair-raising traverse across a steep shale pass, you come across a small waterfall that makes you feel as if you are on top of the world.

Higher up, the landscape begins to change from Alpine forests to meadows of flowers comprising of Alpine rose, indigo blue spring gentians and violets, then near the peak which is at 2459 metres above sea level, the landscape changes dramatically to a glacier moonscape. There are vibrant turquoise



lakes with floating mini icebergs. The descent takes one down to snow drifts and meadows with a kaleidoscope of alpine flowers nestled among the granite ash grey rocks. This ends with a spectacular zig-zag descent to Lake Tseuzier, into the French speaking part of Switzerland.

For those of you who are not afraid of heights, you have the option of continuing to the "Bisse du Ro" water course. The route was carved into the rocks in the first half of the 15th century to bring water to surrounding communities.

### L'Hostellerie du Pas de l'Ours in Crans Montana

Finally, one arrives at the second Relais & Châteaux: L'Hostellerie du Pas de l'Ours in Crans Montana, a real hidden gem.

The next day, you have the option to follow the Walliser Sonnenweg (Valais Sun Trail) along the Bisse du Tsittoret watercourse, past inviting mountain inns to the Tièche Valley. The route continues over the Varneralp to the third day's destination, Leukerbad. Overnight accommodation here is provided by the Relais & Châteaux Les Sources des Alpes Hotel & Spa with its own thermal spring and the 14 Gault-Millau Restaurant La Malvoisie. The hotel evokes the feeling of the classic belle epoch era, with a bar

including leather clad couches and the smell of cigars boasting visits from the likes of Charlie Chaplin in the hey days.

The next day begins with an impressive cable car ride up to the Gemmi from where the route continues over the Gemmi Pass (altitude 2'314 m).



This is another traditional link between the Valais and Bernese Oberland. The route passes the small scenic Dauben and Arven lakes, perfect spots for a lunch break.

This is a much easier hike where you can appreciate the alpine meadows, flowers and forests along the way. The weather is unpredictable in the mountains - thick fog can cover the surrounding mountains. The path to Sunnbüel, when foggy, gives it a magical feel of 'Lord of the Rings' or the 'Hobbit'.

During good weather conditions one can see breathtaking views extending to Switzerland's highest snow-capped peaks (the Mischabel group, Monte Rosa, Weisshorn, Matterhorn), as well as the Bernese Alps.



The hike ends at Sunnbüel, where you take a cable car down to Kandersteg. From there, you transfer to our next Relais & Châteaux, the Waldhotel Doldenhorn (15 Gault Millau points). It is the youngest member of the Relais & Châteaux group. It is family owned and located in a secluded forest area with views of the Kandersteg waterfall. It easily makes you feel at home with its traditional Swiss decor and cozy atmosphere.

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The Route du Bonheur is an exquisite tour for all of the senses which will leave you wanting more.



This is a quintessentially Swiss, alpine luxury package for those looking for a unique experience. It combines meeting passionate hoteliers, hikes in spectacular nature, enjoying gourmet feasts and relaxing in various top spas.

<http://www.newlyswissed.com/route-du-bonheur-switzerland/>

Are you interested in the electronic version of the Helvetia ?  
Please advise Anita Zuber at [anita.zuber@swiss.org.nz](mailto:anita.zuber@swiss.org.nz).



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## Swiss Society AGM 2018

Saturday 2nd June

Invitation to all Swiss Clubs and individual members of the Swiss Society

Welcome drinks and casual dinner at the Taranaki Swiss Club in Kaponga, 5.30pm

### Sunday 3rd June

10am Cowbell Final at the Clubhouse

1pm lunch followed by

AGM of the Swiss Society of NZ

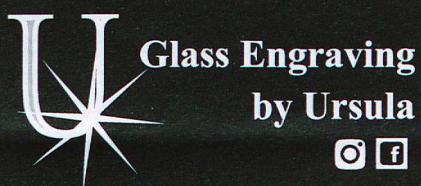
Dinner and costs to be confirmed

Please book your own accommodation.  
More details in next issue of Helvetia

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