

# Go and Ride Switzerland

Chocolate, cheese, clocks, knives and some of the best roads in Europe, it just seems that the Swiss do it better. We speak to **Kurt Stauffer** to find out more about riding in this beautiful and enticing European country

**ABR: Many people head straight to the Alps for their summer tours, tell us about Switzerland and why it's a great place to ride**

**Kurt Stauffer:** At just 41,285km squared Switzerland is a small country, there are 26 cantons, four languages (though each of these have many different dialects and slang) and various landscapes from the Jura to the Alps. On the map it's small, but if we were to flatten it out it would stretch the size of Europe from Portugal to Greece, including the UK. Going up and down the mountains, the change of altitude and the concentration on the narrow roads and hairpin bends draws a lot of your energy. As a country it arguably has the best surfaced and maintained roads in the world, and they're slung through spectacular

scenery, between mountains, valleys and along rivers and lakes.

**ABR: Is Switzerland a safe place to ride?**

**KS:** Absolutely! If you keep to the speed limits, think ahead and plan your day logically Switzerland is a very safe place to ride.

**ABR: What are the most suitable bikes for riding Switzerland on?**

**KS:** Honestly, any motorcycle is fine! On our rides we have mastered passes with Triumphs, BMWs, Harley Davidsons and even scooters!

**ABR: Are you allowed to ride off-road in Switzerland?**

**KS:** There are some regions where you can

From beautiful scenery to fantastic roads, Switzerland has it all

*'It arguably has the best surfaced and maintained roads in the world'*

ride off-road, but we don't ride them on our tours. We want to show you the country and some of its secrets and therefore we use surfaced roads. Some roads are private where no-one is allowed to ride, we organise the permits and show you things that most people will never see!

**ABR: How cheap is fuel in Switzerland?**

**KS:** Unleaded fuel is presently at £1 per litre.

**ABR: What about camping? Are there any laws about wild camping?**

**KS:** Wild camping is a bit of a grey area in Switzerland but there are campsites in abundance and it's unlikely that you'll travel a day without passing one. On our

tours we don't offer camping as we think that at a certain age you need to enjoy life!

**ABR: Switzerland has some stunning regions with equally amazing roads, which are the best regions to ride, and why?**

**KS:** Switzerland is mainly divided in three regions; 10% Jura, 30% Midlands and 60% Alps. Each region has its particularities and enjoyments, it just depends on your moods and taste. As you well know, tastes are different from the one individual to the next.

**ABR: Are there any 'must see' or 'must do' activities or roads to ride in Switzerland?**

**KS:** Again it's a matter of taste and knowing how to travel also means knowing where to stop and where to have a break. Bern, ➤



You'll have to ditch the bike for a while to catch a glimpse of the world's most iconic mountain, the Matterhorn. But it's worth it

## Five things you must see in Switzerland

As the country is very large and there are many regions to explore, I would initially split it into the following big areas:

### 1. Lauterbrunnen Valley

There are few words that can do the Lauterbrunnen Valley justice when it comes to describing the beauty of the place. The valley, which is situated in the canton of Bern, is one of the deepest in the Alps when measured by the height of the mountains that rise on either side, and the spectacular, sheer walls add to the dramatic nature of the views. If there's one place where you're going to have trouble keeping an eye on the road in spite of the surrounding scenery, it's here.

### 2. Grindelwald and the North Face of the Eiger

Film fans might recognise the Eiger from Clint Eastwood's 1975 hit *The Eiger Sanction*. Take a ride to the village of Grindelwald and gaze upon the imposing and intimidating north face of the mountain or take a ride on the Jungfrau Bahn, a railway that has been cut through the mountain which offers viewing opportunities from various points up the mountain's monstrous wall.

### 3. The Rhône Glacier

The Rhône Glacier is the largest glacier in the Urner Alps and is the source of the Rhône River. The best way to see the impressive block of ice is to ride a triangle of mouth watering passes known as the three-pass-ride which composes of the Furka Pass, the Grimsel Pass and the Susten Pass.

### 4. Zermatt and the Matterhorn

Arguably the most iconic mountain in the world can be found on the border of Switzerland and Italy. It's worth taking a trip up to Zermatt (though you can't ride here) so you can have a coffee in the shadow of the Tödi shaped Matterhorn.

### 5. Contra Dam

If the Contra Dam, which is located in Ticino, looks familiar that's because it was the dam from which James Bond jumped in the opening scene of *GoldenEye*. While jumping from the dam is definitely not recommended without protection, thrill seekers can bungee jump from its dizzy heights.



► Lucerne, Interlaken, Grindelwald, Lausanne, Montreux, Davos, Zermatt, St. Moritz, Schaffhausen, Murten, St. Gallen are just a few must-see cities/villages; then the Rhine Falls, the biggest waterfall in Europe, various castles like Chateau de Chillon, the Jungfrau Region with its impressive peaks, mountain tops like the Niesen, the Pilatus and the Stockhorn, the stunning Lauterbrunnen Valley with its waterfalls and base jumpers. It's also worth taking in other sights like a cheese or chocolate factory or a high class watch manufacturer.

### ABR: What else is there to do, other than ride?

**KS:** We build our tours around our customers taste, preferences and penchants. A technically inclined person would prefer to see a water powered saw mill while a creative person a chocolate factory for example. Our tours are organised in the way that couples or friends can share time together but still follow their own preferences during the tour. While the one can take a day tour the other can enjoy a massage at a Spa, have a swim, visit a castle, a city or other sights, have a walk with a nature teacher and learn about plants and trees, boat trips, safaris. Basically, there are many alternatives to just riding every day.

### ABR: Are there any laws and regulations that I need to be aware of when touring in Switzerland?

**KS:** Yes, keep to the laws, especially drink drive laws and the speed limits. Since the first of January 2014 a new law has been in force. Depending on how much you break the speed limit and where, your licence may be withdrawn, the fine will be set according to your income and wealth and they may even take your car or motorcycle away.

### ABR: Are other road users in Switzerland good drivers? Or are there lots of accidents?

**KS:** Due to our severe laws, continuous controls and road safeties, the number of road deaths has steadily declined. Today we have one of the lowest accident counts in Europe.

### ABR: What's the benefit of going on a guided tour of Switzerland rather than touring by yourself?

**KS:** We offer tours in countries that we know and have travelled thoroughly. We search for hot spots, highlights and attractions that are not common knowledge, places where not everybody goes to and places that are special and typical of local life. Our clientele are people between ►



➤ 45-75 years young that have seen a lot in their lives and want to be surprised and experience new things, this is our speciality. Then we show you real insider experiences and you'll get in contact with locals. To ride a pass is not difficult but when is it the best time to ride it? Do you ride it from the west, the south, the north or the east? Where are the best views and where can I stop without endangering myself and others? Where are the best photo-stops, restaurants, attractions, particularities and after a day's ride, it is nice to meet a hotel manager that waits for you with a glass of beer, wine or champagne, that welcomes you and has a special room with a view just for you. And last but not least it is safer to ride with someone in front of you that 'opens' the way and saves you money and time (also fines!).

**ABR: How many different tours do you offer?**

**KS:** We started in 1976 and built up a huge library of tours with differing itineraries. There are numerous tours and we publish only a few on our website. We sort them by tour type; Alps, discovery, escape the European winter, gourmet tours, moto-events and tours for women only.

**ABR: How long do they last?**

**KS:** Our tours range from one day up to six weeks.

**On a guided tour you can discover the areas and roads that only the locals know**

**Kurt Stauffer** runs a tour company called Twincruiser Tours. Kurt's company offers tours for all riding abilities and motorcycle types with a focus on having a motorcycle discovery holiday in style and discovering the finer things in life. Twincruiser Tours has a host of packages and destinations, even offering to tailor a tour around your specific requirements. For more information and to see prices, head on over to [www.twincruiser-tours.com](http://www.twincruiser-tours.com).



**ABR: What do they include?**

**KS:** Very good question! The services that are included are clearly stated on our tour description and in our order confirmation, there are no hidden costs. From the motorcycle rental, fuel, top accommodation, meals, non-alcoholic drinks with meals, road/tunnel/pass tolls, all taxes and our organisation and guides.

**ABR: What riding abilities are your tours for?**

**KS:** Each tour is rated by its difficulty, but our guides adapt to the weakest participant.

**ABR: Is there any preparation you need to do in advance of riding Switzerland?**

**KS:** Depending on how long you're going to be riding for and the season, it is highly advisable to prepare your tour in advance. Don't forget our motorcycle season starts at the end of May/beginning of June (depending on the snow) and ends around September/beginning of October. During these roughly four months everybody wants to get on two wheels and ride over a few passes!

**ABR: If you could describe Switzerland as a country in 10 words, how would you describe it?**

**KS:** Safe, clean, organised, very interesting, good quality and good price. **ABR**