

Itinerary for Italy and Switzerland Trip

June 18 - 29, 2009

June 18, 2009 (Thursday): **Delta Airlines Flight from Atlanta to Milan, Italy**

Delta Airlines Flt # 74 departs Atlanta at 6:40 p.m. Arrives in Milan at 10:10 a.m. on June 19th.

June 19, 2009 (Friday): **Milan, Italy to Portovenere, Italy**

- * 10:10 a.m. Arrive at Malpensa International Airport, Milan, Italy
- * 12:00 noon. Depart Milan on deluxe motorcoach toward Parma, Italy.
- * 1:30 - 2:00 p.m. Arrive in Parma, the city known for producing the famous Italian ham.
We will enjoy lunch at a country café or at a fattoria which is an Italian farm.
- * 3:30 p.m. Depart for Portovenere.
- * 6:00 - 6:30 p.m. Arrive in Portovenere and check in to the Grand Hotel Portovenere located right on the little harbour in Portovenere. The Grand Hotel is an antique Franciscan monastery dating from the year 1600. It is truly an Italian hotel with lots of “flavour.” You will be enchanted with the location and the medieval harbour town of Portovenere.
- * 6:00 - 7:30 p.m. Free time to freshen up and go exploring the beautiful little village of Portovenere. Our hotel is just a few yards from the medieval stoned entrance into the little village with its beautiful cobble stoned streets and alleyways. The little harbour is a picture postcard harbour with colored buildings lining the water and little boats bobbing at the docks.
- * 7:30 p.m. Dinner is included at our hotel. You may dine inside or enjoy the beautiful outside terrace right in the harbour area. It is delightful! Dinner will consist of one appetizer, one first course, one main dish with a side and a dessert. Beverages are not included.
- * Overnight at the Hotel Portovenere.

June 20 - 22, 2009 (Saturday, Sunday, Monday): **Portovenere and Cinque Terre**

- * 7:30 - 10:30 a.m. Breakfast buffet included at the hotel. The buffet is typically Italian with cakes, brioches, mixed cereals, juices, mixed marmalades, yogurts, fruit salad, different types of bread, focaccia, ham, cheese and of course coffee, capuccino, tea, etc.
- * The next 3 days are yours to spend as your wish. You may hike the Blue Trail, ride the ferry boats between the towns, catch the train between the towns, explore each town and do some shopping. You will not run out of things to experience and enjoy. Be sure and take time to just sit at outside cafes and just digest the beauty of it all.

If some of you are interested in exploring Pisa or Florence, you can check at the tourist office in Portovenere about day tours to these locations. The time is yours to enjoy. This is a marvelous location!!

Depending on what you might enjoy, you will have the options of purchasing Cinque Terre Cards and Ferry Boat passes to get from Portovenere and town to town and for hiking the Blue Trail. Please refer to the Cinque Terre printout to help you decide how to plan your days.

- * 7:30 p.m. Every night dinner is included at our hotel and will be served at 7:30 p.m. You will always have one appetizer, one first course, one main dish with a side and a dessert. Beverages are always extra. You may put them on your room account.

June 22nd Note: Tonight our guide and bus driver will be arriving at the hotel and will have dinner with us and overnight at our hotel. Our guide’s name is Elaine Koch and our driver is Alois. Those who have been with us previously to Switzerland may remember them both. They are fabulous!

June 23, 2009 (Tuesday):

Portovenere to Milan to Varenna on Lake Como

- * 6:30 a.m. Please have luggage outside your hotel room for porters to gather and take to the bus. Please put only your large suitcase out and plan to bring your carry-on down with you to breakfast. In that way, you can put your last minute items in your carry-on and give our porters plenty of time to get all the luggage down.
- * 7:30 a.m. Please identify your luggage out by the bus so it can be loaded.
- * 7:30 a.m. Breakfast begins. Everyone needs to eat early this morning so we can get on the road to Milan.
- * 8:15 - 8:30 a.m. Depart by motorcoach to Milan.
- * 1:00 p.m. Lunch included today near the location of "The Last Supper."
- * 2:15 p.m. First group reports to check in for first viewing of "The Last Supper."
- * 2:30 p.m. Second group reports to check in for second viewing time of "The Last Supper."
- * 2:30 and 2:45 p.m. Viewing of Leonardo da Vinci's painting of "The Last Supper." We will be in two groups. One group will go in at 2:30 p.m. for fifteen minutes and then the second group will go in for fifteen minutes.
- * 3:00 p.m. Get on motorcoach and travel short distance to center of Milan.
- * Visit to La Scala. This is arguably the single most important opera house in the world. It was built in the late 18th century and is hallowed ground to lovers of Verdi who was the house composer for decades.
- * Visit to the Duomo or cathedral, the city's centerpiece and is the fourth-largest church in Europe - after the Vatican's, London's and Sevilla's.
- * Travel on to Varenna on Lake Como
- * Late afternoon arrival to Varenna and check in to Hotel Royal Victoria which faces the lake and is situated in the historical centre of Varenna, a charming historical village. The Hotel Royal Victoria has a very old tradition. Once a spinners, it was bought by Mrs. Giuseppina Pezzini who transformed it into a hotel and called it "Hotel Royal." The "Hotel Royal" afforded hospitality to many famous people. In 1838 the Queen of England stayed here, and it was in her honour that the hotel changed its name to "Hotel Royal Victoria."
- * Free time to explore the hotel and the adorable village of Varenna.
- * 7:30 p.m. Dinner included at our hotel in the "restaurant gourmet." The menu this evening consists of Conchiglie pasta with meat sauce, Breast of Chicken "primavera", Vegetables of the season, Potatoes "panama," Millefeuille with cream, and beverages. If the weather is good, we will dine on the veranda.
- * After dinner tonight you may wish to walk the "lake walk." It is so beautiful! There is a little paved path that follows the lake's edge and it is lighted with little lights to lead the way. You may also wish to walk up to the village piazza just for a little peak at nighttime. It is charming and so interesting with the locals out and about.
- * Overnight at the Hotel Royal Victoria.

June 24, 2009 (Wednesday):

Varenna

- * 7:00 - 10:00 a.m. Continental Breakfast included at our hotel.
- * This day will be free for everyone to enjoy as they wish until we meet for our private ferry crossing to Bellagio. There are printouts with suggestions of activities to enjoy as well as maps of locations in Varenna.

- * Lunch on your own. Since our time is limited in Varenna, you may wish to enjoy a lakeside lunch today at a little café. The views are splendid! Just choose a location, take a seat and then the waiters will come to you for your order.
- * 4:00 p.m. Private ferry boat ride over to the little town of Bellagio.
- * 4:20 - 5:30 p.m. Time to walk around Bellagio and explore this beautiful little town. If you choose to come earlier to Bellagio, please let someone know so we will not wait for you at the 4:00 ferry. There are very beautiful gardens in Bellagio as well as in Varenna. If you are in Bellagio early, please meet the group at the Grand Hotel Villa Serbelloni for aperitifs at 5:30 p.m.
- * 5:30 - 6:30 p.m. Aperitifs on the beautiful terrace of Grand Hotel Villa Serbelloni. Over the past 100 years, the Grand Hotel Villa Serbelloni has been one of the most well-known and prestigious hotels in the world. In 1850, it was built as a luxurious holiday villa on the banks of the lake for an aristocratic family from Milan. In 1872, the villa, which is in pure neo-classical style, was sold and since then it has formed the nucleus of the Grand Hotel Villa Serbelloni which opened in 1873. Its interior reflects the good taste of the wealthy nobility of the time, including beautiful frescoes, paintings, Persian carpets, crystal chandeliers from Murano and beautiful marble staircases.
- * Dinner on your own tonight in Bellagio. There are many charming restaurants in Bellagio. Our guide will point out some suggestions.
- * 9:30 p.m. Private ferry back to Varenna. If you decide to return to Varenna earlier, please let someone know so we will not wait on you at 9:30 p.m.
- * Overnight at our lovely Royal Hotel Victoria.

June 25, 2009 (Thursday):

Varenna to Grindelwald, Switzerland

- * 6:30 a.m. Please have luggage outside your doors for porters to gather.
- * 7:30 a.m. Please identify your luggage out by our bus to be sure it got down from your room and is ready to be loaded..
- * 7:00 - 10:00 a.m. Breakfast included at our hotel
- * 8:30 a.m. Depart Varenna via Como to beautiful Lake Lugano, a glacial lake located at the border between Switzerland and Italy. It is surrounded by hills and Alpine mountains. You will always remember the magnificent beauty.
- * Morning coffee/tea stop by Lake Lugano. Glorious!! Coffee/tea and snacks are optional here. You will purchase your own.
- * Continue on the Gotthard road and travel by way of the Nufenen and Grimsel Passes. They are awesomely beautiful this time of year. During our drive, we will climb over 7,000 feet with snow covered mountain vistas and glacial areas all around us. The views are glorious!
- * Lunch included on our journey at the top of the Grimsel Pass. What a view!.
- * Continue down the Grimsel Pass to the Bernese Oberland, a massif set in the heart of Switzerland. Everywhere you turn in this area, you are awe-inspired by the beauty you behold.
- * We will next walk through the Aare Gorge. (25 minute walk) These gorges cut by the Aare River are one of the most popular curiosities in the Bernese Oberland. The viewing galleries lead into the narrowest part of the gorges, the walls of which, sometimes sheer, sometimes curiously polished and hollowed by erosion are very, very impressive. Stranger still, however, is the dim light in the depths of the cleft where the jade-green stream of the Aare flows.

* Continue along the Lake of Brienz to Grindelwald for check-in to the Sun Star Hotel. The 4-star Sun Star Hotel is set in the center of lonely mountain lakes, bright Alpine meadows and the unique panorama of the majestic Swiss Alps: the Eiger, the Monch and the Jungfrau along with the Grindelwald glaciers. It is truly a fairytale location. All of our rooms face the Eiger. How wonderful!

* 7:00 p.m. Dinner included at our hotel

* After dinner, you may choose to relax at our hotel or take a stroll around the charming village of Grindelwald. How much fun at night to see the little village all lit up. You will feel as if you are in another world.

* Overnight at our Sun Star Hotel.

June 26, 2009 (Friday):

Bernese Oberland in Switzerland

* 7:00 - 10:00 a.m. Breakfast included at our hotel

* 8:30 a.m. Depart with motorcoach for the Lauterbrunnen Valley to photograph the magnificent waterfalls plunging over 1,000 feet. The valley is lined with huge rock walls and from the tops of these walls fall beautiful waterfalls. On either side of the valley are the magnificent Alps with the Jungfrau on the left and the Mittaghorn-Grosshorn group straight ahead.

* We take the exciting cogwheel mountain railway from Lauterbrunnen to Wengen. The ride climbs steeply up the impressive valley side to the little town of Wengen. Wengen is one of the most beautiful resort towns in the Bernese Oberland. From this site you have views of the Alpine pastures and forests from which, after being dazzled by the Jungfrau, you can look along the Lauterbrunnen rift for unique and magnificent vistas. This delight can be constantly renewed by walks along perfectly kept paths from the town.

* We will walk through the little town of Wengen, have a cup of coffee and maybe a pastry, then each will continue on his/her chosen activity for the day. At this point you will pay independently depending on what you choose. The weather is a huge factor here.

A) Continue to Grindelwald via Kleine Scheidegg

B) Continue to Kleine Scheidegg and stay on transport to Jungfrau, then return to Grindelwald by train.

C) Travel by cable car and gondola to Grindelwald

D) Return to Lauterbrunnen and then get on our coach for return to Grindelwald.

Elaine, our guide will help us make choices. Do not worry here. All choices are magnificent!

* Lunch on your own. There are always delightful options for lunch in the Alps. Every place has a fantastic view.

* Our guide will direct us all about the best way to get back to Grindelwald, depending on the activity you are enjoying.

* Free time back in Grindelwald to enjoy a swim at the hotel, do some shopping, or just rest a bit.

* 7:00 p.m. Dinner included at our hotel this evening.

* Overnight at the Sun Star Hotel

June 27, 2009 (Saturday):

Grindelwald to Engelberg, Switzerland

* 7:00 a.m. Luggage outside your doors before breakfast

* 7:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. Breakfast included at our hotel.

* 8:00 a.m. Please identify your luggage by our bus to be sure it got down o.k.

- * 8:45 a.m. Depart from Grindelwald and travel a short distance to board our boat to cruise across Lake Thun which is located right at the foot of the mountains. It is lovely to get a different perspective of the Alps from the lake. They are enormous!
- * Travel to Emmental (place where Emmental cheese is made) to a little old Emmental farmhouse where we shall enjoy a delicious farm lunch.
- * Travel on to Luzern, famous for its glorious lake, majestic Alps and antique covered bridge. We will stop in Luzern for photos. If we have time, we will let you walk around a little and have a coffee. Near the bridge area, one can always find beautiful swans and ducks swimming and there are lovely tables by the lake just waiting for you to “sit a spell.”
- * Travel up into the mountains to the little village of Engelberg which is completely encircled with the Alps. It is as if time has stood still here. You will love Engelberg! The foundation of the Benedictine monastery influenced the development of the village to a great extent. Today’s seminary school grew out of the former monastery school and the writers’ and painters’ schools.
- * Check-in to our lovely Hotel Schweizerhof Engelberg. Everyone’s room faces the glorious Alps. The hotel is charming with many characteristics that date back over 100 years when it was established.
- * Free time for a short walk around Engelberg.
- * 7:00 p.m. Dinner included at our hotel.
- * 8:30 p.m. Enjoy a Swiss Folklore Show where the locals of the town put on a performance just for our group. It should be absolutely delightful! Ms. Ruth, who you will meet tomorrow when we visit her home, is the yodeler tonight.
- * Overnight at Hotel Schweizerhof Engelberg.

June 28, 2009 (Sunday):

Engelberg, Switzerland

- * 7:00 - 10:00 a.m. - Breakfast included at our hotel
- * We start our day with a horse and carriage ride through the valley to Ms. Ruth’s home which is the oldest house in Engelberg. Here we will have morning coffee and cake with her before continuing back toward town to Mt. Titlis. Ms. Ruth is the lady who yodeled in the Folklore Show last evening.
- * You may choose (Optional Activity) to take one of the most beautiful rides of your life up to Mt. Titlis with an elevation 10,000 feet. It is the highest point in central Switzerland. The trip involves three different cable cars and the final one is a revolving cable car where the floor turns 360 degrees (very slowly) as the cable car climbs to the top. The view from the top is unbelievable! You can see all over the Alps. You are now on a glacier. Your trip ticket includes:
 - a. Round Trip Cable Cars
 - b. A Ride on the Ice Flyer - A chairlift which is equipped with bubbles in order to protect the passengers from wind, snow and rain. Using Ice Flyer, you can enjoy an absolutely unique and unforgettable ride just a few meters above the Titlis Glacier with its huge and impressive crevasses.
 - c. View of the South - You walk through a 180 meter long tunnel that brings you to the “South Wall Window” which gives you a fantastic view to the Italian Alps.
 - d. Titlis Glacier Grotto - The Glacier Grotto extends across the highest part of the Titlis glacier. The grotto measures 150 meters from the entrance to the end. The temperature inside stays the same -1 C to -1.5 C, regardless of the outside temperature.

Other Activities on Mt. Titlis Available for a Fee:

a. FUN LIFT is an activity that you pay extra for doing. First let Fun Lift carry you up backwards 80 meters in an inner-tube, and then you go coasting down a snow path 150 meters to the finish.

b. Glacier Cave is in the heart of the Titlis Glacier, ringed by glittering ice walls. It is a whole new world that opens to you This impressive cave takes visitors through a 150 meter long tunnel down to 20 meters under the glacier's surface.

c. Old Style Photos - You can get a Swiss traditional picture as a skier, a mountain climber or a hunter. The costumes are easy to slip over your own clothes and special equipment like a gun or an Alphorn are available. Your photo will be ready in 5 minutes.

* From Mt. Titlis, return to Engelberg at your leisure. You can take the cable car and chair lifts back down whenever you like and it is an easy walk back to the village. If you choose to not go up Mt. Titlis, then you are welcome to walk on back to the village and enjoy the afternoon at leisure.

* Lunch on your own at any of the little Swiss cafes. You may enjoy a fondue for lunch. Yum!

* 7:00 p.m. Dinner included at our hotel this evening.

* Use this evening to pack for our trip home tomorrow or you may wish to buy that last minute souvenir.

* Please bring your luggage down after dinner in order to put it on the bus tonight. That way, you will be sure that it is out of your room and on the bus for our trip to Zurich early in the morning. The bus will be locked and your luggage will be ready to go in the morning. You may keep your carry-on out and bring it to the bus before we load up in the morning.

* Overnight at Hotel Schweizerhof Engelberg. Early to bed because of our early rising in the morning to depart for Zurich.

June 29, 2009 (Monday):

Engelberg to Zurich - Flight Home

* Continental Breakfast included at our hotel, or we may have to take breakfast boxes with us depending on the time of departure. We will wait and see what our guide thinks at that time is best for our group.

* 5:30 a.m. Drive from Engelberg to Zurich.

* 7:00 a.m. Arrive at Zurich International Airport.

* Check-in and maybe have time for a little hot breakfast.

* Flight home on Delta Airlines

Delta Flt # 67 departs Zurich at 10:00 a.m. Arrives in Atlanta at 2:30 p.m.

There will be so much to share when you return home. This is an absolutely beautiful trip and we are so happy that you are joining us!

We will have a "Trip Reunion" to get the group back together once we return home. We will send you a notice of the date, time and place at least 2 - 3 weeks before the get-together. That will give you time to organize your pictures and have them ready to bring to the reunion. It is always so much fun to see everyone again!

