TOUR CODE

SW6

ADVENTURESABROAD

SWITZERLAND & AUSTRIA

19 days

Updated 22/11/2013

Day 1 *Arrive in Zurich*

Today we arrive in Zurich.

Overnight in Zurich. Meal plan: Dinner, if required.

Day 2 *Zurich: City tour - Train to Bern*

This morning we visit the Fraumunster Cathedral, with its slender blue spire, designed in an orthodox manner. It is small in size but is richly ornamented and adorned with paintings, frescoes and stained glass windows, some of those have been executed by Marc Chagall. The site of the Cathedral was originally a Benedictine abbey established in AD 853, later converted into a Royal Cathedral in the 14th century. The chief attraction of this church are five stained glass windows, each with it's own thematic colour scheme, designed by Chagall in 1970.

A short train ride takes us to Bern, Switzerland's capital city with a medieval town centre (designated a World Heritage Site) dating back to 1191. The old town is framed by the Aare river and offers spectacular views of the Alps.

A walking tour in Bern will allow us to see some of the town squares and rows of limestone buildings and medieval arcades, its Renaissance fountains with colorful figures, and the beautiful Cathedral surrounded by picturesque rooftops, Bern is truly a gem of medieval architecture in Europe.

Bern is the birthplace of Einstein's relativity theory, cradle of Toblerone chocolate and home to the largest Paul Klee collection in the world.

Overnight in Bern. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 3 *Bern - Solothurn - Montreux*

This morning a short train ride takes us to Solothurn, regarded as the finest Baroque town in Switzerland, where Italian grandeur is combined with French charm and German practicality.
From the 16th to the 18th centuries, the Catholic town of Solothurn was the residence of the French king's ambassador. Fine Baroque and Renaissance buildings, such as the noble Palais Besenval, and magnificent religious buildings greet the visitor at turn; the Old Town has eleven churches and chapels and the same number of fountains and towers. Truly magnificent is the St. Urs Cathedral, with a façade donated by Louis XIV, and an Italian-style staircase in front. Inside are wonderful Baroque stuccos. The town walls, which are still intact in some places, were built according to the principles of the French military engineer Vauban.

We return to Bern to pick up our bags and then take the train to Montreux on Lake Geneva. We have now left the German-speaking part of Switzerland and entered the French-speaking area. This provides a completely different cultural and historical atmosphere. Secondly, we have left the area of snow-capped mountains and entered a region with

a Mediterranean climate. This area is known as the "Swiss Riviera". Montreux's lakefront boulevards are studded with palm trees. The town is a favourite get-away for rock stars and hosts one of the world's most famous jazz festivals each year.

The long, flower-bordered lake promenade which links Vevey and Montreux and then onwards to Chillon Castle is wonderful for an evening stroll.

Overnight in Montreux. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 4 *Montreux - Gruyeres - Lausanne - Montreux*

This morning we travel by train to the picturesque town of Gruyeres in the Canton of Fribourg. The main street is lined with 15th and 17th century houses with twin windows and wide eaves. The cobbled street slopes down to the town fountain before rising again towards the castle. The 15th century castle affords excellent views of the wooded slopes and jagged mountains rising all around. We tour the castle which was formerly home to the Counts of Gruyeres.

This afternoon we visit the charming town of Lausanne on Lake Geneva. The town enjoys lovely views of the lake and the surrounding Alps. Many poets and writers, from Wordsworth to T.S. Eliot have enjoyed the flourishing artistic climate of Lausanne. Lausanne is still an important centre for art and entertainment, the Palais de Beaulieu and the Theatre Municipal frequently hosting dance and musical performances. The town is also the home of the International Olympic Committee and has a museum to the Olympic Games.

At the centre of the old town is the Place de la Palud lined by old houses and the Renaissance facade of the Town Hall. In the square is the charming 17th century Fountain of Justice. The nearby 15th century Castle St-Marie is today the seat of local government. The 12th century Cathedral is considered one of the finest Gothic buildings in Switzerland. In a 600 years old tradition, a town crier climbs the cathedral tower to call each hour between 10 pm and 2 am each night. A few years ago, when the government voted to withdraw funding for the town crier, the people of Lausanne voted to keep the tradition going through popular donation. This evening we return to Montreux.

Overnight in Montreux. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 5 *Montreux - Sion (Spring) OR Freiburg (Autumn)*

SPRING
On our spring departure, we have a short train ride east to the town of Sion, the main town of the Canton of Valais.

The nearby terrace of Nendaz, stretching from 1300m to 1400m in altitude, commands a fantastic view of the Bernese, Valais and Vaud Alps. A modern holiday resort has grown up all around the centre of this delightful old Valais village with its traditional timber houses, barns and grain stores. Owing to the dry climate of the Valais, farmers built a system of irrigation channels across the region centuries ago. Nendaz has the biggest network of these 'suonen', some of which are still used, and 98 km of footpaths now run along 8 of them. As one of the biggest raspberry and apricot growing areas in Switzerland, Nendaz has dedicated one of the local themed trails to fruit growing.

While in Sion, we will take in the cultural spectacle known as the National Festival of the Herens (a breed of cow). We spend the day here in the midst of beautiful Alpine scenery before returning to Sion for our overnight stay.

AUTUMN
A short train ride from Montreux takes us to Freiburg, nestled on a rock promontory, surrounded on three sides by the Saane River. Freiburg is one of the largest medieval towns in Uechtland. Over 200 unique Gothic facades from the 15th

century impart medieval charm to the Old Town.

Ramparts that are over two kilometers long used to protect the city in the past. Remnants of the walls, turrets and bastions are still preserved. Most impressive, however, is the Cathedral of Freiburg with its extraordinarily beautiful stained-glass windows. Construction started in 1283 and continued in several stages. Dedicated to St. Nicholas, it boasts a 74-meter-high tower that offers a fantastic panoramic view.

From Freiburg, we will travel 17 kms to Plaffeien to witness the Return of Cattle, one of the best- known traditional Alpine herdsman festivals. After four-months of summer spent high in the mountains, the colourfully decorated cattle returns to the valley in September. The cleaning and decking out of the animals is hard work, and the labour is all the better rewarded if a cheering audience awaits the return of the cattle to the village. 700 animals arrive over the course of the whole day. A local market displays craftsmanship and culinary specialities of the region.

Overnight in Sion OR Freiburg. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 6 *Train to Grindelwald: Excursion to Mount Jungfraujoch*

The Bernese Oberland village of Grindelwald at the foot of the famous north face of the Eiger is well-known, thanks to its magnificent vista and the glacier which once reached right into the basin. Grindelwald attracted its first guests, primarily the English, from the late 18th century onwards. The actual breakthrough of Alpinism occurred in the mid-19th century, and local mountain guides climbed the peaks of the region with English adventurers. The first ascent of the Eiger took place in 1858 (the north face was successfully climbed only in 1938).

Road and railway construction made Grindelwald more accessible by the end of the 19th century and first cableway in the Alps was built here in 1908 on the Wetterhorn. In 1912, a railway reached the Jungfraujoch via Kleine Scheidegg; today the Top of Europe still remains Europe's highest railway station and a world-renowned excursion destination with permanent snow and ice.

After dropping our luggage at Grindelwald, we take the train to Jungfraujoch, an excursion that takes us to over 3300m (11,000 feet). After travelling 6 km (4 miles) through a tunnel in the mountains we emerge at Jungfraujoch, the highest railway station in Europe. From here, on a clear day, we can see the immense Aletsch Glacier in one direction and the whole of the Interlaken area laid out below us.

Time-permitting, we may visit Gletscherschlucht (Glacier Gorge) near Grindelwald.

Overnight in Grindelwald. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 7 *Grindelwald: Excursion to Lucerne*

We depart Grindelwald this morning and travel by train to Lucerne.

The over 600 year old covered bridge in Lucerne is one of the most recognized symbols of Switzerland which makes the city a major destination for travellers from all over the world. However, Lucerne and the region around Lake Lucerne are also the heart and soul of this country. It was in this region that in 1291 Switzerland was founded by the oath of the representatives of the first three cantons.

Lucerne is situated on both sides of the Reuss River where it exits Lake Lucerne. The old town is charming with narrow streets and buildings in many styles. Lucerne is particularly famous for its covered wooden bridges. The watertower on the restored Kapellbrucke is a well-known landmark. The intact Spreuerbrucke features painted scenes inside

illustrating "The Dance of Death". After spending some time enjoying the delights of Lucerne we take the train back to Grindelwald and have the evening free to explore the pretty village on our own.

Overnight in Grindelwald. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 8 *Grindelwald - Zermatt*

This morning we travel by train into the mountains to the ski resort of Zermatt. This relaxing town has no cars (electric taxis are the only motorized transport) and sits in the shadow of the magnificent, jagged peak of the Matterhorn. The views of the 4478 m (14,692 feet) mountain are stunning. You feel so close that you could reach out your hand and touch the peak!

We take the famous Gornergrat cog railway from Zermatt across stunning bridges, through galleries and tunnels, idyllic forests, past gorges and mountain lakes with the Matterhorn continually in the field of vision, to the observation at Gornergrat located at a height of 3,089 metres. Surrounded by 29 four-thousand metre high peaks, by the highest Swiss mountain (Dufourspitz in Swiss, better known as Monte Rosa) and by the third-largest glacier in the Alps (Gorner Glacier), it offers a mountainscape panorama that couldn't be more overwhelming.

The balance of the day is free to explore Zermatt.

Overnight in Zermatt. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 9 *Zermatt*

For those who wish to have a closer view of the Matterhorn and would enjoy some gentle hiking, we make an excursion to the foot of the Matterhorn. The first section of our ascent is by cable car to Furi -- 1865 m (6,119 feet). From here we take a second cable car to Furgg -- 2434 m (7,985 feet). The views here of the Theodul Glacier and surrounding Alps are awe-inspiring. Another short cable car ride takes us to the plateau below the Matterhorn where there is a small lake called the Schwarzsee. In this flat area we walk a path around the lake drinking in the mountain vistas and savouring the fresh mountain air. There is a beautiful spot for a picnic near an old chapel by the lake. After our easy-paced walk we return by cablecar to Zermatt. Please note that if the weather is poor other sightseeing will be substituted this day.

For those who do not wish to join today's excursion, the day is free to enjoy the wonderful mountain panorama and clean mountain air from the town of Zermatt itself.

Overnight in Zermatt. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 10 *Zermatt - Glacier Express - St Moritz*

Today we take the spectacular Glacier Express train ride. Round every corner are mountains and more mountains, small villages, cows with clanking bells, glaciers, blue lakes and rushing rivers. The full length of the Glacier Express route from Zermatt to St Moritz passes over 291 bridges and through 91 tunnels. For much of its journey, it also passes along and through the World Heritage Site known as the Rhaetian Railway in the Albula / Bernina Landscapes.

The train is not an "express" in the sense of being a high-speed train, but rather in the sense that it provides a one-seat ride for a long duration travel. In fact it has the reputation of being the slowest express train in the world. The entire line is metre gauge (narrow gauge railway), and large portions of it use a rack-and-pinion system both for ascending steep grades and to control the descent of the train on the back side of those grades.

We arrive in St Moritz late this afternoon and transfer to our hotel.

Overnight in St Moritz. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 11 *St Moritz Area*

This region has many significant mountains and ski resorts, the most famous of which, and possibly the most famous ski resort in the world is St. Moritz. The town lies in two parts beside Lake St Moritz, and is located at 1856 m (6,089 feet) and surrounded by mountain peaks, such as Piz Nair at 3057 m (10,027 ft). The resort is still very exclusive and expensive, attracting the rich and famous, attracted to, among other things, the healing powers of its mineral waters.

While in Moritz, we will visit the Engadine Museum which showcases the history of the Engadine Region (this museum tends to close in the month of May). We'll also have an excursion to Zernez to visit the museum of the Swiss National Park.

Overnight in St Moritz. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 12 *St Mortiz - Liechtenstein - St Gallen*

From St Moritz we travel by train and bus to the Principality of Liechtenstein, one of the world's smallest states with one of the highest per capita incomes. Lying on the right bank of the River Rhine between Switzerland and Austria, Liechtenstein is only 160 sq km (61 sq miles) in size with a population of less than 30,000 -- one third of whom are foreigners.

Although Liechtenstein's independent status allows it to be a tax haven, the functioning of the country is heavily integrated with that of Switzerland. There are no border formalities involved in crossing between the two countries but you can get a Liechtenstein stamp in your passport.

Liechtenstein uses the Swiss phone and postal systems, the Swiss Franc is the local currency, and Liechtenstein is represented abroad by Switzerland's diplomats. However, Liechtenstein has no army, is a monarchy, and issues its own highly-collectable postage stamps. The capital city, Vaduz, is built around the castle. We explore the narrow streets and visit the National Museum. This afternoon we return to Switzerland and make our way to St Gallen.

Overnight in St Gallen. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 13 *St Gallen - Appenzell - Zurich*

This morning we explore the Old Town of St Gallen. The town became exceedingly prosperous in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries due to the linen industry. In the streets leading off the Marketplatz there are many handsome 17th and 18th century houses. St Gallen's most famous attraction is its cathedral, part of which dates from the 10th century. Here we see the colourful ceiling paintings and visit the library.

From St Gallen we make our way to the delightful town of Appenzell, one of the most traditional towns in Switzerland. Here many folk arts flourish and many houses have whimsical paintings on their walls. With about 7,000 inhabitants, Appenzell is the cultural center of Appenzell Innerrhoden, the smallest Swiss canton. The car-free village beckons with pretty lanes and myriad small stores and boutiques that are ideal for browsing. The facades of the buildings are decorated with frescoes and Appenzell Museum located in the town hall, shows a cross section of Appenzell's history

and culture.

Continue to Zurich.

Overnight in Zurich. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 14 *Zurich, Switzerland - Innsbruck, Austria*

Today we travel by train to Innsbruck.

Innsbruck is scenically squeezed between two impressive mountain chains and wa sthe host of the Olympic Winter Games in 1964 and 1976. The city is a classic Austrian hybrid of Gothic and Baroque in the heart of Tirol region and only two hours away from Salzburg and Munich. Innsbruck's Old Town is a small area of sturdy medieval houses, many painted in lively pastel colours and supported by sloping buttresses. This afternoon, we travel back in time strolling through the 800 year old city centre of Innsbruck.

Overnight in Innsbruck. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 15 *Innsbruck: City Touring - Salzburg*

Busy street cafes afford great views of Innsbruck's landmark, the Golden Roof, and its 2,738 gold-plated copper tiles. Constructed for Emperor Maximilian I in the early 15th century, it served as a royal box where he could sit in luxury and enjoy tournaments in the square below. Today Maximilian would see a busy shopping street with many exquisite boutiques, crafts-shops and restaurants. In no other place in the world is the dividing line between an urban area and rugged mountain terrain so thin.

We take the new Nordkettenbahnen funicular, designed by famous architect, Zaha Hadid in 2002, which now takes visitors directly from the city centre of Innsbruck to Hungerburg in a few minutes from where you can enjoy spectacular views of the Inn valley and the surrounding mountains.

We also visit the Imperial Palace and the Imperial Chapel, all of which give great insight into Innsbruck's past. Later, this afternoon, we take a short train ride eastwards to Salzburg, Depending upon our arrival time, we may have a walking tour along the narrow lanes of Old Salzburg to get a feel of this medieval city.

Overnight in Salzburg. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 16 *Salzburg: City Tour*

Today we tour Salzburg.

The narrow lanes and the high, narrow houses contribute to the medieval town atmosphere of Salzburg. Marvel at the doorways that lead into each building and be sure to peek into some of the stunning inner courtyards. At Getreidegasse No. 9, you will find Mozart's Birthplace, which today fittingly houses the Mozart Museum. Judengasse is the historic centre of the city's Jewish settlement in the 13th century, and one of Salzburg's oldest thoroughfares. The Goldgasse was once home to goldsmiths and some of the wares you find in the stores could easily be described as precious; antiques, Trachten, fine wines and oils can be found here. The ancient Steingasse has retained its medieval charm to this day and it historically was the main point of entry for the daily consignments of prized salt arriving from nearby Hallein. In nearby Kaigasse, the site of a former Roman temple, life seems to slow down further, as here you will

mostly encounter local residents.

During our walking tour of Salzburg's Old Town, we will see Mozart's Birthplace and the home where he lived, Salzburg's Grand and imposing Cathedral, and the Mirabel Gardens. Be sure to look out for the pedestrian bridge over the River Salzach with hundreds of 'Love locks' hung on the side rails declaring eternal love.

Overnight in Salzburg. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 17 *Salzburg - Vienna*

Today we travel by train to Vienna, the Austrian capital.

Vienna is a true cosmopolitan center, where different tribes and nationalities have, for centuries, fused their cultural identities to produce the intriguing and often cynical Viennese. Around 1900, Vienna was a city of vibrant, stimulating, intellectual life, a dynamic capital of elites that did pioneering work in many fields. Otto Wagner remarked in 1905 that "in spite of unfavourable conditions, Vienna is marching at the head of cultural nations". In a similar vein, international critics noted that Vienna was virtually unsurpassed in the sheer wealth of modern architecture that it had to offer at the time.

Overnight in Vienna. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 18 *Vienna: City Tour*

Walking about downtown Vienna is an absolute pleasure. The Innere Stadt, in particular, is best explored on foot. Our morning WALK takes us through some of the most well-trodden tourist routes in Vienna. We will take local transport to the Staatsoper, the premiere opera and classical music venue in Vienna, and possibly the world. From here we walk, heading north on Kartner Strasse, a pedestrian-only walkway of shops, trees, cafes and buildings of historical and cultural interest. Instantly recognizable along this walk is the Gothic, glorious Stephansdom (St Stephen's Cathedral). This is the geographical and emotional heart of the city. Our stroll down Graben St. takes us past Neo-Classical architectural masterpieces; then we turn onto Kohlmarket and head to Michaelerplatz and its array of architectural sites. We visit the Hofburg chambers, thus getting a view of this enormous Imperial Palace from both inside and outside.

Today our provided meal is lunch, to give everyone the opportunity to enjoy their evening at leisure, perhaps to attend one of the many beautiful concert venues, or even take in an opera.

Overnight in Vienna. Meal plan: Breakfast and lunch.

Day 19 *Departure*

Departure from Vienna.

BON VOYAGE! Meal plan: Breakfast.