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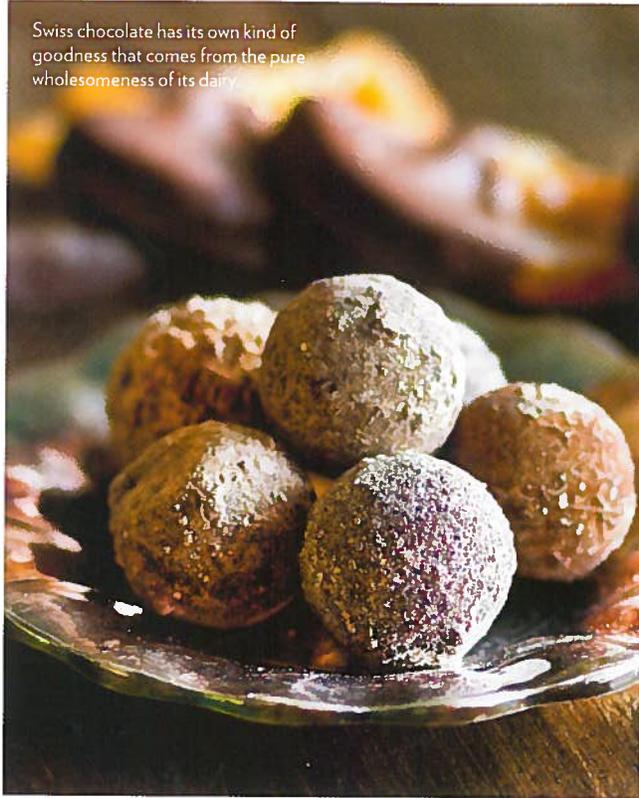
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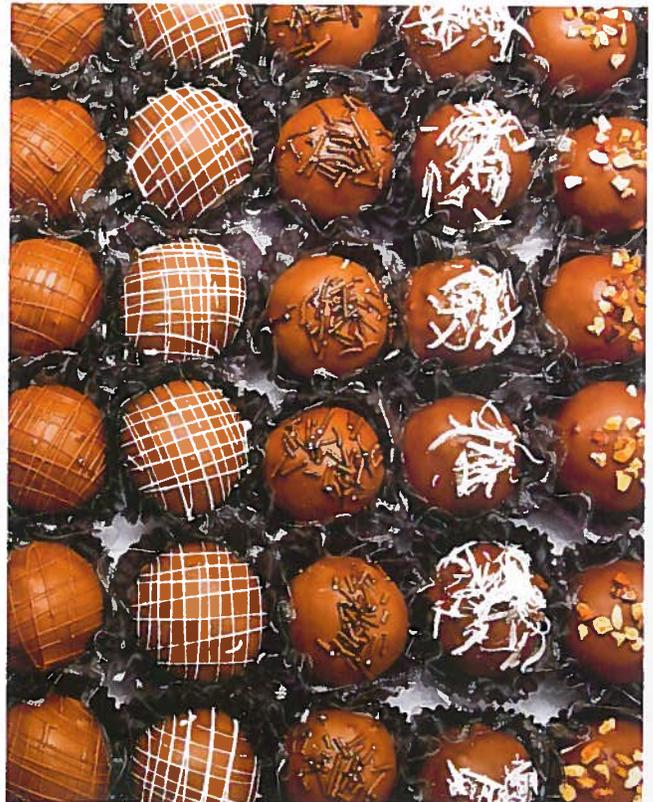
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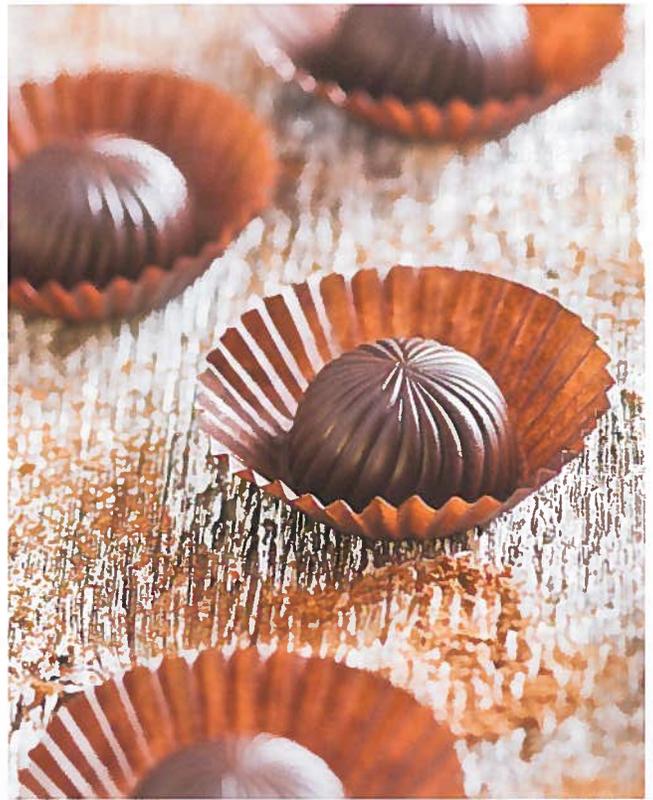


Swiss chocolate has its own kind of goodness that comes from the pure wholesomeness of its dairy.



SWEET LIKE





CHOCOLATE

IN 1875, DANIEL PETER INVENTED MILK CHOCOLATE IN A TINY LAKE GENEVA HAMLET CALLED VEVEY. TODAY, IN AND AROUND THIS TOWN ARE SOME OF THE BEST PLACES TO TASTE CHOCOLATE, AND LEARN HOW TO MAKE IT. **BY ADITI DATTA**

We're fairly comfortable with the notion inherited from pop culture and one which we know through experience to be true—that indeed, life is like a box of chocolates. And if we happened to get the creamy milk chocolate from the box, we'd have only Vevey to thank. Even though chocolate associations are evenly attributed to some European neighbours who certainly know their craft, there is that image that lingers in most minds of melting chocolate flowing uninterrupted

from vessel to vat—and that's the kind of chocolate that Switzerland made.

Swiss chocolate has its own kind of goodness, and is one that isn't casually conferred. Because agricultural facts like growing of sugar and cacao beans might not be in any country's control, these essential ingredients can be imported from outside Swiss borders. But the blending, mixing, refining, conching, moulding and tempering must happen within Switzerland in order for a product to quality as Swiss chocolate.

Other than perfection of technique that is only to be expected of the Swiss,

there is another constituent that puts the country's chocolate in a league of its own and that is the pure wholesomeness of its dairy. Lazy cows patched in textbook black and white may graze happily on deliciously green pastures reared on clean mountain air, but this merry herd benefits more from the landscape than just mood. Without biological stressors, the quality of milk is exceptional. The quality of chocolate made with that milk—even better.

Perhaps that's what gave a gentleman on Rue des Bosquets 13, Vevey, inspiration to add milk to this already indulgent treat. Production of chocolate started in Switzerland in

1819 and there were grand masters of chocolate like Charles-Amédée Kohler, Rudolf Sprüngli, Aquilino Maestrani, Jean Tobler and Rodolphe Lindt (their creations still available) but it took a persistent Daniel Peter eight years of perfection to finally introduce his secret project in progress to the world in 1875—chocolate, with milk. And with that, the fate of Vevey was sealed as the sweetest spot in the world.

DOESN'T GET RICHER THAN THIS

Even if we can't plunge ourselves head-first in a swirling pool of chocolate, these are some immersive to-dos for every chocolate lover that are as rich in experience as the bar in your hand.

SWISS CHOCOLATE TRAIN

All aboard the Chocolate Train! In partnership with the GoldenPass

Services, a special train takes passengers along the scenic hillside, passing by grazing cows on the rolling pastures— whichever seat you choose, the grass is as green on either side. The train is comfortable, air-conditioned, and served by friendly hostesses who are quick to bring you a chocolate croissant and coffee or hot chocolate to get you started. As if that wasn't enough of a sugar rush, there is also the anticipation of reaching the museum and all those unlimited samples at the end of the tour will give you something to munch on your ride back to Montreux.

goldenpass.ch

MAISON CAILLER, AT BROC

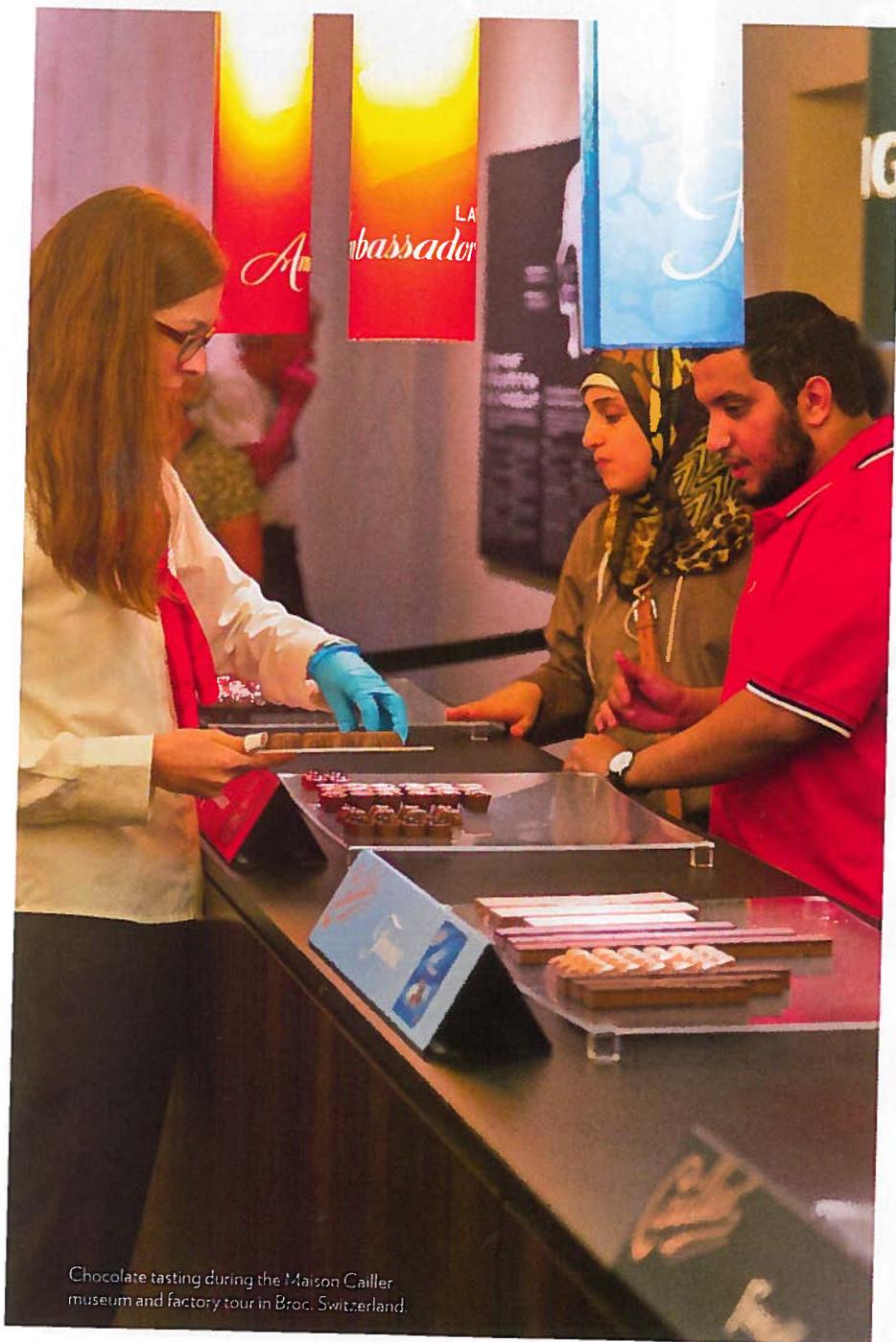
Move over Willy Wonka, we're going to Monsieur Cailler's factory. Cailler was the first factory dedicated to chocolate, started in 1819. The interactive audiovisual tour traces the history of chocolate and this particular factory, complete with signage and posters, from 1898 to the 1960s in such an engaging manner that one can almost smell the cocoa beans—the best mix of knowledge and sensation. Visitors have the chance to participate in a workshop and play with tastes of bitter and sweet—both of which you're likely to feel when you leave this wonderful spot. cailler.ch

MAKE YOUR CHOCOLATE AND EAT IT TOO

Today's master chocolatiers have their own signature blend and technique, which they're happy to share. The ultimate test of chocolate isn't only in the flavour but the rate at which it melts. If you want to know how to get it just right, join a chocolate making session with the rather famous Monsieur Poyet in Vevey. A stern but warm headmaster is just the right person to teach you all you need to know about perfectly moulded chocolate that's all soft and gooey on the inside. confiseriepoyet.ch

HALL OF FAME

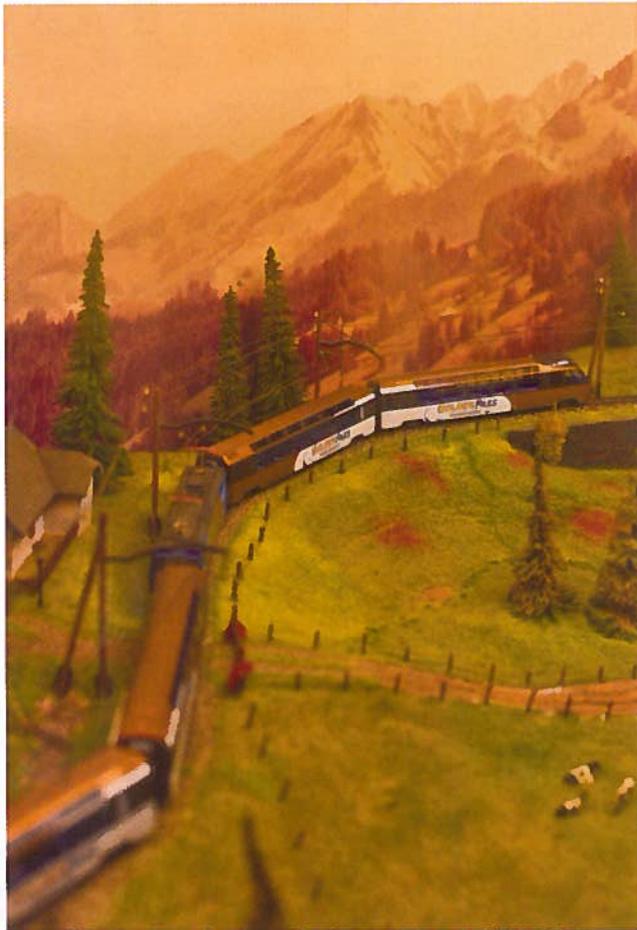
For chocolatiers entering Vevey's landscape (or any neighbouring city for that matter), the expectations are high,



Chocolate tasting during the Maison Cailler museum and factory tour in Broc, Switzerland.

B.O. KANE/ALAMY/INDIAPICTURE, OPPOSITE FROM LEFT, ANSHUMAN SEN, INDIAPICTURE

DANIEL PETER INVENTED CHOCOLATE WITH MILK IN 1875. AND WITH THAT, VEVEY WAS SEALED AS THE SWEETEST SPOT IN THE WORLD



From left: A model representing the chocolate train passing through Lake Geneva Region. Chocolatier making chocolate in Lausanne.

the pressure enormous. Here are some noteworthy names in the chocolate game to whom we owe much happiness:

DURIG CHOCOLATIER LAUSANNE, LAUSANNE

To ensure every aspect of chocolate makes you feel good, Durig uses only fair-trade organic ingredients to make their all their products. Their Chocolate & Hazelnut spread is quite simply, heaven on toast. durig.ch

CHOCOLATERIE WUTHRICH, LAUSANNE

You may claim to love chocolate, but do you love it enough to have a creation named especially after you? Well, it may have to do something with the fact that the exquisitely crafted chocolate at Wuthrich found a fan in the French

President, serving from 1974 till 1981, who even had a standing order for a batch to be sent to the Elysée. The trademark Giscard truffle lives on. wuthrich.ch

ZURCHER, MONTREUX

It might be a good idea to fill up with lunch at their in-house café before heading to the chocolate and cake selection of this chocolatier whose recipes have been in the family for over 130 years. Or you might skip lunch to make room only for desserts – depends if you see it as stomach half-empty or half full. confiserie-zurcher.ch

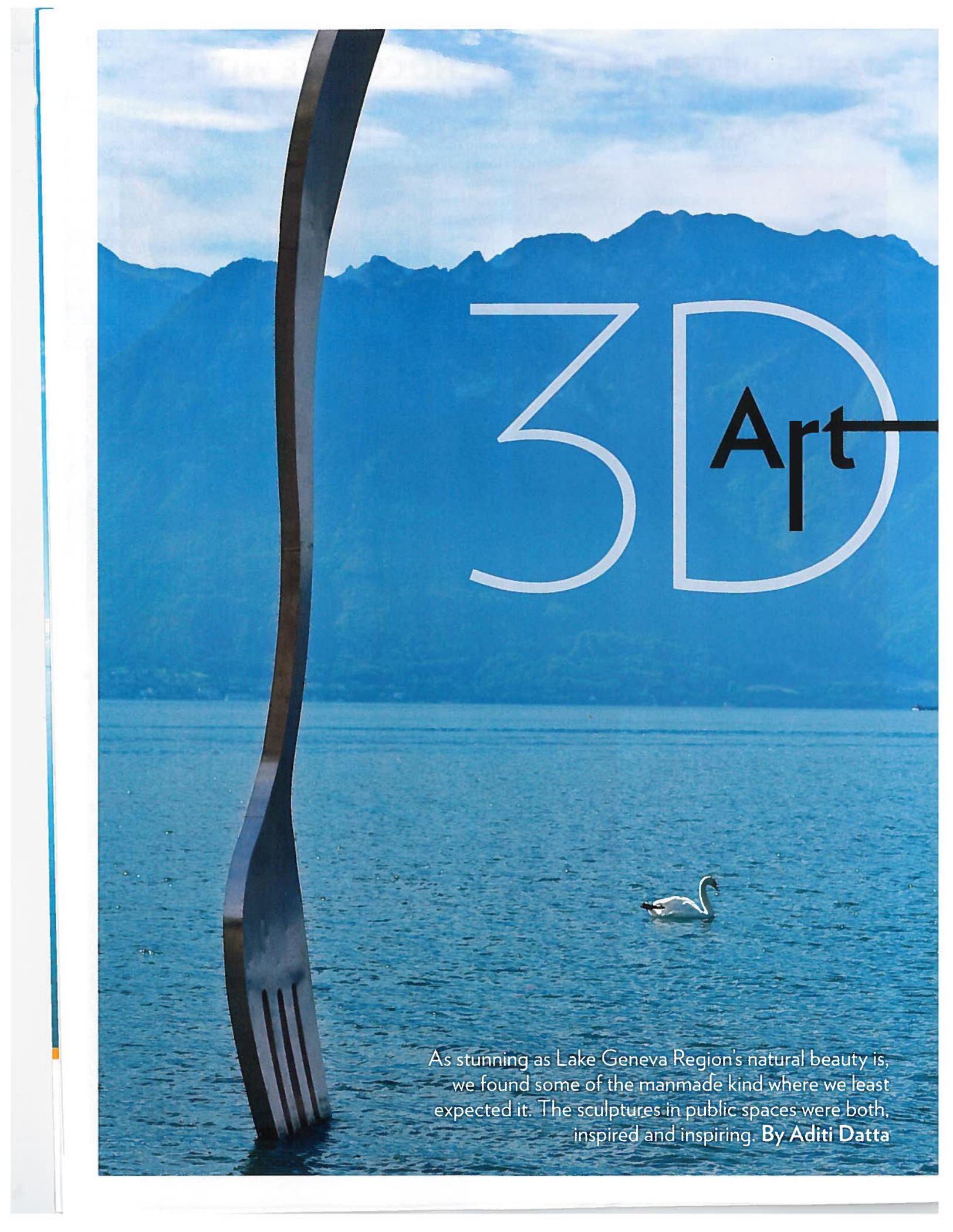
MOJONNIER, LAUSANNE

Opened in 1951, this chocolaterie might actually seem young in comparison with its cohorts of legend. Almost run like an association, artisans

must pass through vigorous tests judged by a pretty picky panel to make the cut, and once admitted, they share their traditional knowledge and unique tricks of the trade to move forward together, as one. confiserie-mojonnier.ch

EARLYBECK, CHATEAU-D'OEX

We don't usually like anything interfering with the decadent smell of chocolate, except for when it's freshly ground coffee beans we're talking about. The café-and-shop hails from Gstaad originally where the Oehrli family has been recreating their superb recipes for four generations. We tried the Champagne Truffles, unsure if we needed another sinful element and are confident we can say that joys only multiply. earlybeck.ch +



3D Art

As stunning as Lake Geneva Region's natural beauty is, we found some of the manmade kind where we least expected it. The sculptures in public spaces were both, inspired and inspiring. **By Aditi Datta**

At

Vevey, it is difficult to miss the metal fork plunged into the lake. It's close enough to the

lakefront that it seems to be just within people's reach and primed for the next bite, as it stands tall and proud, and glistens in all its glory in a shimmering pool of blue. The Fork is located directly in front of Alimenterium, the Nestlé food museum, and was erected in 1995 to mark the 10th year anniversary of the small-scale modern museum. After all, this is a place that loves and understands food in a way that most culinary capitals of the world can only hope to. If you look around in Lake Geneva Region, you'll find stories of history and culture in your journey from one place to the next. We share some here:

Charlie Chaplin Statue at Quai Perdonnet, Vevey

Right by The Fork, you'll see a straight-faced statue of a man that made many around the world laugh. A statue of Charlie Chaplin was erected to commemorate the 25 years that he lived in Vevey, and is a reminder in bronze of the power of humour. Taking forward Corsier-sur-Vevey's association with the man, the Modern Times Hotel and the Chaplin's World Museum, to open soon, will pay homage to the comic star. modertimesmuseum.ch

La Petite Sirène du Lac Léman | Little Mermaid of Lake Geneva, Lausanne

A statue by artist Natacha de Senger found its home on a rock in the lake in 1966, and has prompted scores of people on the shore to wonder what if there was another form of life in the sea? This, while the mermaid looks out in hope of growing feet and living a life on firm earth that we live everyday. Maybe we do have it better than we think.

Sea Nymphs and Seahorses, Jardin du Rivage, Vevey

Not much is known about the three sea



Freddie Mercury statue at the Montreux lakefront.
Opposite: The Fork in Vevey

nymphs done by Swiss sculptor, Edouard Marcel-Sandoz, who was an Art Nouveau artist and founded the French Society of Wildlife in 1933. Located near the point that people board the cruise ship, ferrying them up and down the lake, we're at least grateful to have an easier ride.

Freddie Mercury Statue, Montreux Lakefront

It would be fair to say that Montreux loves Freddie Mercury as much as he loved the town. Montreux was his sanctuary, as well as the venue of the

recording studio where much of British band Queen's music was made. This statue was unveiled in 1996 to an almost full house. Still visited by fans every single day, this statue is music in motion and seems to echo Freddie Mercury's famous words, "Don't stop me now, I'm having such a good time."

Ouverture au Monde | Opening to the World, Ouchy Lakefront

In stark contrast to more traditional forms of sculpture found in Switzerland lies a metal sphere of sorts, except that it isn't a complete circle. Made by

Charlie Chaplin statue in Vevey,
the chocolate town.





In the Garden of Sculptures, Olympic Museum, Lausanne.
 Right: Statue of novelist Vladimir Nabokov in front of Montreux Palace.



RIGHT: ANSHUMANSEN

prominent Spanish artist Angel Duarte in 1973, it shows an otherwise round world literally opening up, perhaps symbolising the ushering of a new age of Switzerland from its romantic past.

Gabrielle 'Coco' Chanel Headstone, Lausanne

Because respect must be paid. Although

not a work of art, the simple beauty of the headstone carved with Coco Chanel's astrological sun sign sees its fair share of visitors. For a woman who taught us about elegance, the power of smelling good in the morning, suiting up in the day, accessorising right, and stepping out at night in the ultimate uniform of sophistication now known

simply as the LBD, we'd be honoured to pay a visit.

La Vierge du Lac | Virgin of the Lake, Lausanne

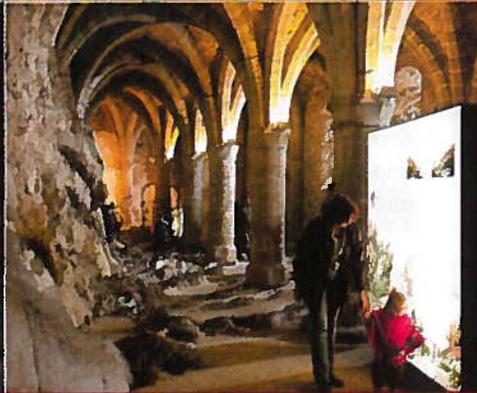
All of Lausanne knows every inch of this sculpture, as artist Vincenzo Kesselring chipped away from 1987 to 1989 on a large block of marble he had deposited

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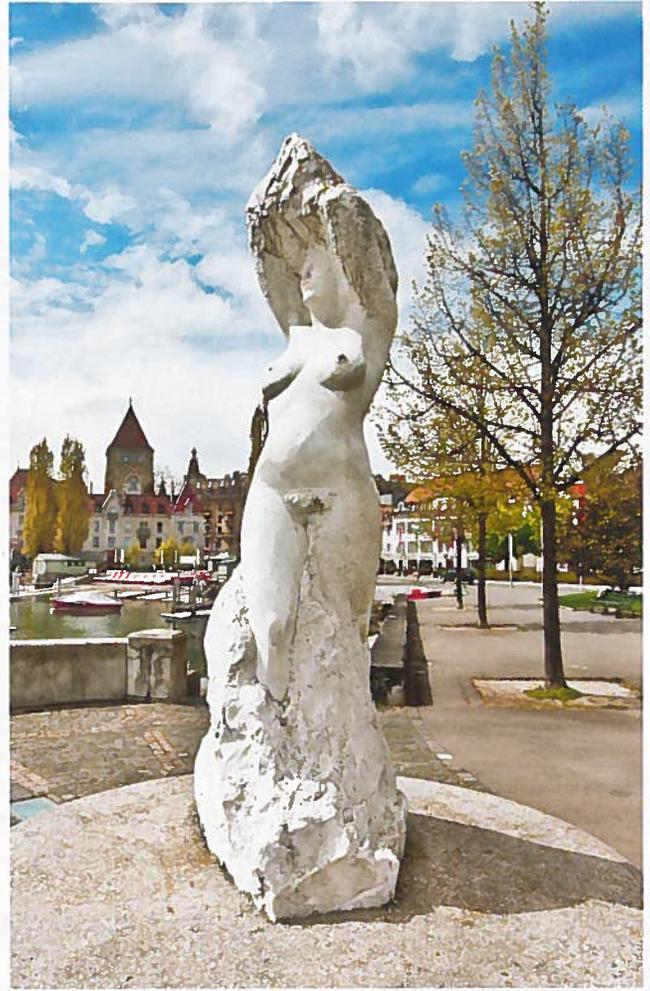
CHILLON

+ SWISS CULTURAL HERITAGE

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From left: Le Centurion in Place du Marche, Vevey; Virgin of the Lake in Lausanne.

on Lake Geneva's shore. Rumour has it that the people of the town weren't sure whether they wanted to keep this portrayal of unconventional beauty when it was completed but it stood for the beauty of the lake nevertheless, and that was too close to their hearts to let go of.

Homme-Poisson-Volant | Ma-Fish-Flying, Quai de la Rouvenaz, Montreux

Lausanne-born sculptor Gaspard Delachaux was known to have a way with stone. In 1985, he created this statue of a fish with a pair of human legs getting ready for flight. The texture of the wings is exquisite, giving the impression of fluid movement in what is ultimately hard, cold stone.

Le Centurion, Place du Marche, Vevey

If you think you're struggling a tiny bit in the language department, you'll

be happy to know that this dilemma prompted British-born Charles Morgan to turn to art in order to express his thoughts. His fantastical mobile sculpture made of seeming scrap and moving bits shows the light-hearted side of machinery that Switzerland is synonymous with.

Femme à l'enfant | Woman With Child, Lausanne

Created by award-winning sculptor Nicolas Delémont in 1991, the metal sculpture is an abstract depiction of a mother carrying a child in her arms, their forms almost indistinguishable from one another. A true reflection possibly, on the most universal human sentiment.

Le Jardin des Sculptures du Musée Olympique | Garden of Sculptures at the Olympic Museum, Lausanne

A minute spent at the Garden of

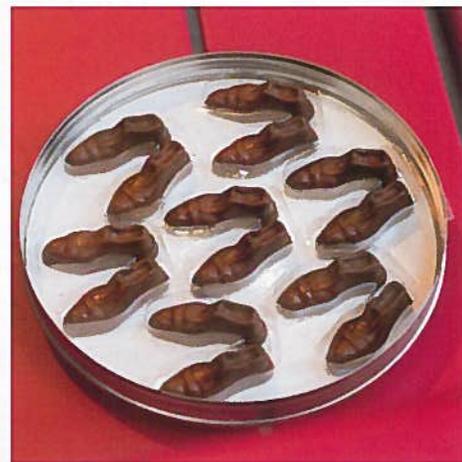
Sculptures is usually enough for a lifetime of inspiration, as you see scattered stories of triumph of will over anatomy. Visitors can see fantastic moments in sports commemorated for posterity, and if alongside them you spot a torn torso, don't worry that it's incomplete. The less conventional works of famed post-modern artist Igor Mitoraj grace the garden and remind us of beauty in even frailty and imperfection.

Before Flight, Quai Edouard Jaccard, Montreux

Created by Michel Buchs and displayed during the Montreux Biennale in 2011, this larger-than-life bird made with wire was awarded the Jury Prize and made a permanent display on the Montreux lakefront. It is perhaps an ode to apprehension on the brink of doing something great, despite the limitations. It's found its home in a town that has seen tragedy and soared above it. +



The Poyet store in Vevey has racks and racks filled with the sweetest creations. Try the Chaplin shoe chocolate for an experience you'll never forget.



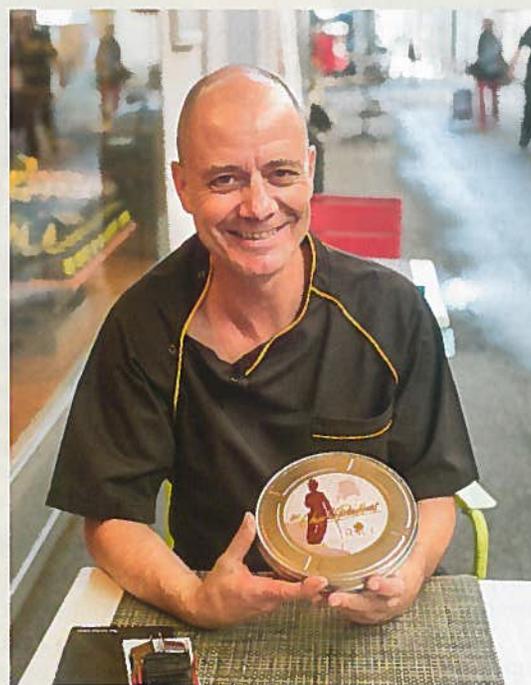
The Chaplin Magic

Monsieur Blaise Poyet is a stern man—he is in the chocolate business, in a chocolate loving town, and he has no time to waste. He chose Vevey to open shop in because it is small yet cosmopolitan, it knows chocolate, and having been completely burnt and rebuilt in the Middle Ages, it believes in chances. Poyet spends as much time with a boarding pass in hand as he does with a whisk. Technical expertise isn't the only thing needed for world class chocolate; he also needs new stories and flavours to make chocolate eating a complete experience. His creation for the Dalai Lama was carefully conceived and meticulously executed—infused with lotus flower and made crunchy with suma (Tibetan butter tea), the chocolate square is adorned with a gold ring to symbolise the way to heaven, and marked with a mandala sign. The Bombay special is made with mango, *garam masala*, milk chocolate, and *chai*. Poyet eyes our excitement suspiciously. He is convinced we'll gobble up the chocolate, which to him is an utter sin. He stays to make sure we take our time to taste his creations, one bite at a time. For 18 years and counting, Monsieur Poyet has taken his chocolate very seriously. confiseriepoyet.ch

MEET
Blaise Poyet

SERVING AT
Poyet Shop, Vevey

SERVING SINCE
Eighteen years



TOP LEFT AND BOTTOM LEFT: AROMA SAH ANANT



Atmosphere

THE SUISSE WAY

When travelling through Lake Geneva Region, you'll surely take notice of these traits of the land.

1 SWISS HOSPITALITY IS more discreet than any secret service. Despite being a very popular destination with celebrities, you will be hard pressed to catch a single name being dropped. What about Charlie Chaplin? Well, it's okay to share that he was here since he's no more. Our hostess at The Beau-Rivage Palace Hotel, Lausanne, tells us, "Ask me in 25 years. I'll tell you who was staying here the day you came to visit."

2 SWITZERLAND HAS THE crème de la crème when it comes to our favourite frozen dessert. Every café we visited, big or small; scooped out a dose of pride along with honest homemade ice-cream flavours.

3 EVEN IF YOU'RE tempted to walk everywhere, Lausanne's

punctuality might force you to hop on to the fully automated Metro. Keep an ear out for the charming sound effects as the train pulls up to each stop—you'll hear horses' hooves or the sound of water fountains, depending on the identity of the part of town you're passing through.

4 SOMETIMES IT REALLY is alright to kiss and tell. The social etiquette in Switzerland is to greet people with three kisses on alternating cheeks, starting with their left and your right.

5 ONE OF THE few places left with a town crier, Lausanne's man in the cathedral calls out every hour from 10 pm to 2 am, with an added layer of reassurance 'all is well' so that the town's people can truly rest, assured.





6 SHIPS THAT PASS in the day or night aren't exactly strangers; instead, they give a cheerful honk as they cross each other on their journeys up and down Lake Geneva.

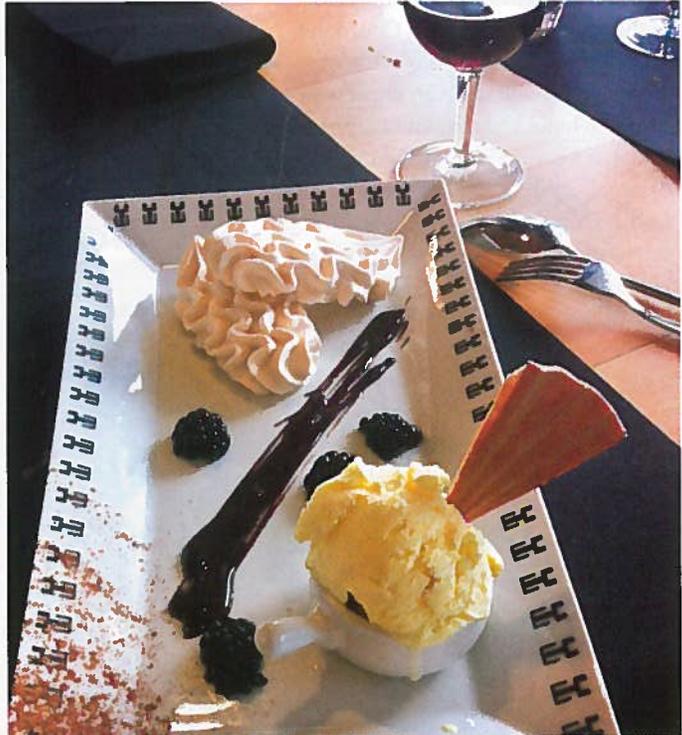
7 IF YOU'D LIKE to refrain from alcohol but need the perfect accompaniment to a fantastic rösti, most restaurants will suggest you alcohol-free beer that is every drop as good as the regular variety served around the world.

8 NAVIGATING THE UNDULATING landscape of Lake Geneva Region's towns need not be an uphill task; hotels usually give guests a complimentary city pass allowing them access to public transport and will help arrange a shuttle when you're checking in or out.

9 IF YOU NEED a minute to sit down, Switzerland makes plenty of room. We found warmth and respite on benches made out of wooden logs every few minutes, peppered with dashes of bright colours coming from little flowered pots nestled comfortably in their embrace. —ADITI DATTA



Clockwise from top left: Ships give a cheerful honk as they pass; Keep an ear out for the sound effects in trains; Meringue served with homemade ice-cream; Bench made out of a wooden log in Villars.



RELOCATED FROM TOP LEFT, COURTESY OF CGN COLLECTION ANSHUJAN SEN ARORA (@SHUJANSEN)

Heritage

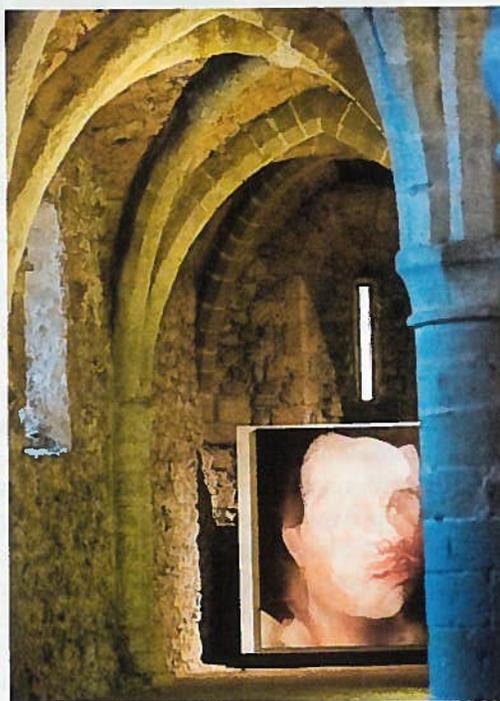
A FAIRY-TALE CASTLE

In the lake near Montreux, the magical Chillon Castle awaits exploration.



Down the tree-lined pedestrian pathway, along the bank of Lake Geneva, I am cradled in the lap of nature. Wild geese and ducks seek my attention—they are addicted to bread crumbs and salty chips that locals and tourists feed them. As if magically, all worries fade away. About three kilometres into the walk, from Montreux in the direction of Villeneuve, I spot a majestic castle occupying a whole islet in the lake. It is the prettiest Swiss Castle, just out of a fairytale—it is Château de Chillon or the Chillon Castle. A spectacle beyond belief, the beautifully-preserved medieval castle stands in all its grandeur against the backdrop of the clear blue sky and the snow-capped peaks of the Alps; its reflection glistening in the pristine blue lake.

Whether you are a tourist check-marking all must-dos in a city, or one



Clockwise from top: View of the Chillon Castle, A window overlooking Lake Geneva; The dungeon prison inside the castle.





The Medieval Castle holds within its fortified walls. 16th and 17th century architectural detailing and paintings.



who makes the more discerning choices; a visit to the Chillon Castle is not to be missed. A mention of the castle immediately bring to mind *The Prisoner of Chillon* by English poet Lord Byron, narrating the plight of prisoner François Bonivard:

*There are seven pillars of Gothic mould,
In Chillon's dungeons deep and old,
There are seven columns, massy and grey,
Dim with a dull imprison'd ray...*

Much before the castle earned its place in romantic poems, and novels, it was a fortress, arsenal, and prison. It was around the 1530s that Bonivard was held as a political prisoner in the mighty dungeons. With his writing, Bryon made a mark for Chillon Castle in the world of literature, but perhaps, he wished to leave a mark on the castle itself: He carved his name on a pillar in the dungeon! Protected by a Perspex screen, it is a tourist attraction itself.

The historical castle has seen three noble owners in its centuries of existence: the Savoy (responsible for most of the construction including the three spiky towers along the lakeside façade), the Bernese era, and the Vaudois era. One can spend hours wandering around the rooms and the historical cellar. Dark, dingy passages lead to interesting parts of the castle—Coat-of-Arms Hall with designs that were painted in the 13th and the 16th century, Chapel of the dukes, and toilets, where many humour tales of Medieval toilet habits come to fore.

Unspoiled scenery can best be observed from this architectural jewel's impressively decorated window-seats. However, take the steps that lead to the top of the tower (steep and seemingly unending, I wish I was fitter) and spectacle before me was of speechless beauty and glamour. chillon.ch

—AROMA SAH ANANT

Food envy is a phenomenon we know well—when you eye your companion's choice of meal and wonder if you did the right thing.

True gourmands are often ever so slightly torn; but with every bite, they also relish the rightness of their decision when it comes to a dish and venue. Here is a checklist of never-go-wrong dishes at these always-right places.

WHAT TO HAVE: SQUID INK FETTUCINI

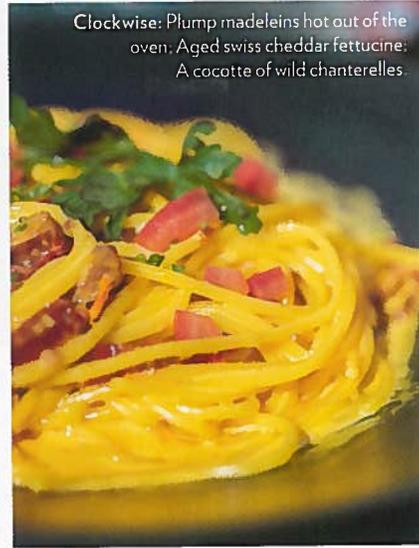
WHERE: LE NOMADE, LAUSANNE

As much as you may resist tearing yourself away from the neon-lit Arches, you'll find that the revelry continues as you step inside the lounge-wine bar-restaurant Le Nomade. Tables huddle together but we think it's part of the grand plan so that the high energy and good vibes touch every diner. We loved the Fresh Garden Salad with Raspberry Vinaigrette that was followed by the Open Ravioli of Autumn Vegetables & Carrot Puree, although, if we were going back for more, it has to be for the swirls of Squid Ink Fettucini that nestled Scallops in Saffron Sauce at its centre. **Place de l'Europe, Lausanne; 41-21/320-1313; restaurantnomade.ch**

WHAT TO HAVE: CHEESE PLATTER

WHERE: LE CHALET, CHATEAU-D'OEX

If you've long pondered who moves your cheese, you should head to this rustic fromagerie up in the hamlet of Chateau-d'Oex. Built as a typical Swiss chalet, the restaurant is split over a few levels in all-wooden splendor. The main dining room on the second level seems to enjoy a steady stream of lively patrons on the one side and on the other, a live fire where girls in traditional costume take turns in churning the rich dairy, straining it through muslin and preparing it to be set in a wheel that will be matured at one of the town's coveted cheese caves. The cheese platter is served with a few cold cuts and a lot of pride. **Route de la Gare 2, Château-d'Oex; 41-26/924-6677; lechalet-fromagerie.ch**



Clockwise: Plump madeleins hot out of the oven. Aged swiss cheddar fettucine. A cocotte of wild chanterelles.

WHAT TO HAVE: **RÖSTI**
WHERE: **AUBERGE DU COL-DE-SOUD, VILLARS**

It's been famously said about a certain humble vegetable that, no matter how you pronounce it, if a person likes potatoes, they must be pretty decent folk. So you can bet your bottom franc that you're in good company, as locals and tourists throng to Auberge du Col-de-Soud for their house specialty. Like every iconic dish, there is no definitive way to make the perfect rösti. Each kitchen tries its hand to master this marvel, made from as little as grated potatoes, simple seasonings of salt and pepper and the precise roasting technique that most chefs aren't too pleased to share but are more than happy to serve. Signature twists include ham, cheese, vegetables and eggs. **Rue du Col-De-Soud, Villars-sur-Ollon; 41-24/495-2640; col-de-soud.ch**

WHAT TO HAVE: **CRÈME BRULÉE**
WHERE: **SAFRAN, EUROTEL MONTREUX**

Chances are, if you've spent a bit of time in Lake Geneva Region, you know that crème brûlée is a dessert that can be wonderfully airy but is never taken lightly. So it's no easy feat to outdo all other crèmes and emerge champion, but we have to say, Safran is in a comfortable lead. We're not swayed by the fact that when you order this dessert, you actually get three. We're not distracted by the variety in flavour across the pistachio, coffee, and vanilla. Even the vanilla is anything but its plain metaphorical namesake. If an ounce of saffron is worth more than its weight in gold, then dessert at this sunny lakeside restaurant with bright yellow shade is definitely priceless. **Grand-Rue 81, Montreux; 41-21/966-2222; eurotel-montreux.ch**

WHAT TO HAVE: **SWEDISH PANCAKES**
WHERE: **LE MUGUET, LES DIABLERETS**

If you've ever basked in the glory and warmth of holding a cup of tea indoors while the rain pours down in sheets outside, you'll know the joys of piping



hot food brought straight to your table when you're coming in from snow-clad ski slopes. We suggest you settle down to a pile of Swedish pancakes, or crepes, at Le Muguet. If you're in the mood for savoury, there's spinach, cheese, mushrooms, eggs and bacon to choose from. Or if you'd rather something sweet, you could go for slivered almonds, honey, bananas, pears, coconut, Chantilly cream or chocolate. Or all of the above. **Rue de la Gare 15, Les Diablerets; 41-24/492-2642; le-muguet.ch**

WHAT TO HAVE: **3 OF A KIND**
WHERE: **ZE FORK, VEVEY**

We know food decisions can be tough, which is why we love the dining concept at Ze Fork, a lakeside establishment overlooking the famous Vevey fork. The menu offers you various themes and once you pick the core ingredient that you're

in the mood for, it comes prepared three ways. The menu changes frequently so the restaurant's regulars, of which there seem to be plenty, are always spoiled for choice. Even the dessert platters follow this theme, so chocolate purists can stay true to their love while citrus fans have the best from the orchard. **Rue du Leman 2, Vevey; 41-21/922-1813; zefork.ch**

WHAT TO HAVE: **SEAFOOD PLATTER**
WHERE: **BRASSERIE LA COUPOLE, VEVEY**

If the building itself is a local landmark and has been in place since 1912, then you can be quite certain that they're doing something right. The dome shape of the restaurant is iconic and goes back to its an almost Venetian architectural style. But it's not all ancient history—the brasserie was bestowed with three

Dining



Clockwise from left: Appetisers at Brasserie La-Coupole, Vevey; Al-fresco dining in Vevey; The elegant interiors of Safran, Montreux.





Diners at Le Saxo.
Below: A table at Safran.



Alpine cuisine is food cooked with edible flowers, of which Peppino at Eurotel Victoria knows a thing or two. The restaurant diligently chronicles different species of local flora in their special in-house book and uses native plants like *Allium ursinum* (otherwise known as Ramsons) with its delicate white petals as a fresh substitute for garlic or when in season, the wild strawberries that spring up as tiny dots of bright red through the misty mountainside. **Eurotel Victoria, Routes des Layeux, Villars-sur-Ollon; 41-24/495-3131; eurotel-victoria.ch**

WHAT TO HAVE: BLACK ANGUS STEAK
WHERE: LACOTEL, AVENCHES

With classic interiors and old world hospitality, we expected the restaurant to stick with tradition. Nothing could in fact be further from the truth. The family that runs the hotel wants to push Swiss food forward—as long as the ingredients are the best they can get their hands on and flavours are intact, all else is fair play. They go to great lengths to source steak cuts of superior quality, and continue their love affair with produce throughout the menu. The perch from the lake was presented with a Granny Smith apple

jelly, the watermelon Carpaccio came with a pineapple and ginger foam and the choice of dessert was chocolate dressed with wine grapes or a sweet, tangy lemon cannelloni. With faultless modern plating, the dishes—one after the other—seemed to come from a kitchen that knew what it was doing and was bold enough to have a bit of fun. **Route de Salavaux 2, Avenches; 41-26/675-3444; lacotel.ch**

WHAT TO HAVE: MUSHROOM RISOTTO
WHERE: RESTAURANT LE SAXO, MONTREUX

Like all good musical arrangements, this restaurant knows how to create symphony. Located inside the Casino, surrounded by legends and lyrics of great jazz players, Le Saxo brings together favourite dishes of French, Italian and Swiss heritage. We started with Le Saxo salad that created an unexpected melody between young salad leaves and lightly grizzled warm mushrooms, with perfect interludes of olive oil, balsamic and cheese. We were only too happy to lose, in favour of the creamy risotto with truffle oil and a light trace of cream. Encore, please. **Rue du Theatre 9, Montreux; 41-21/962-8383; lucienbarriere.com+**

exquisite stained glass paintings to celebrate its 100th anniversary. The seafood platter is fresh and again circles back to local pride, with the best fish from Lake Geneva prepared with both restraint and finesse. **Place de la Gare, Vevey; 41-21/925-0404; astra-hotel.ch**

WHAT TO HAVE: EDIBLE ALPINE FLOWERS
WHERE: PEPPINO AT EUROTEL VICTORIA, VILLARS

Would you like some flowers with your steak? Many families who live on the splendid Alpine slopes believe that the mountains have all that they need to live healthily and happily. A specialty of

TOP: CASINO BARRIÈRE OPPOSITE BOTTOM: COURTESY OF SAFRAN

Journey

Golden Ticket

The Lake Geneva Region offers some of the world's most spectacular scenery, from glacial lakes to misty peaks. And nearly every adventure is connected by train. By Aditi Datta

A panoramic journey aboard the GoldenPass in Lake Geneva Region.



Somewhere before we got into this routine of cling-wrapping our suitcases, dealing with excess baggage, huffing and puffing through security checks and getting past stern immigration officers—there was a less complicated golden age of travel. The kind during which novels were not just read but also written, the kind where stories were exchanged and hearts were won.

Even though trains have also gone the high-speed way, we still have a way to relive the glorious era of the railway by bagging a seat on the GoldenPass. Running from Lucerne to Montreux, it traverses the landscape from the German part of the country over to the French side. Every tour of Switzerland is a photographer's dream. But the 130-mile train route from Lucerne to Montreux, provides killer shots. Along this scenic route that hugs the shore of Lake Geneva, GoldenPass Line operates a couple of different rides. The newer GoldenPass Panoramic is a thoroughly

state-of-the-art train, with old-world hospitality intact. Broad, wide windows help passengers soak up as much of the scenery as they can. You'd be just as well placed if you wanted to focus inward with the GoldenPass Classic that retains its 1930s charm, with ornate wood furnishing, brass fixtures and formal upholstery. In true Orient Express style, the compartments offer drinks and dining which is brought straight to the table by smiling hosts/hostesses who take your order. The very able train conductors are also in charge of making sure the GoldenPass, like all things in Switzerland, runs like clockwork. The rail depends on human efficiency rather than computer control to keep the entire network ticking.

One of our favourite moments was when we asked for some sparkling water which the dining car happened to just have run out of—our conductor was quick to hop out of the train at the next stop and deftly pick up a few bottles, still ensuring she made up for any precious seconds lost before we got to the next

stop. As we learned that day on Lake Geneva, efficiency and hospitality can go together like horse and carriage.

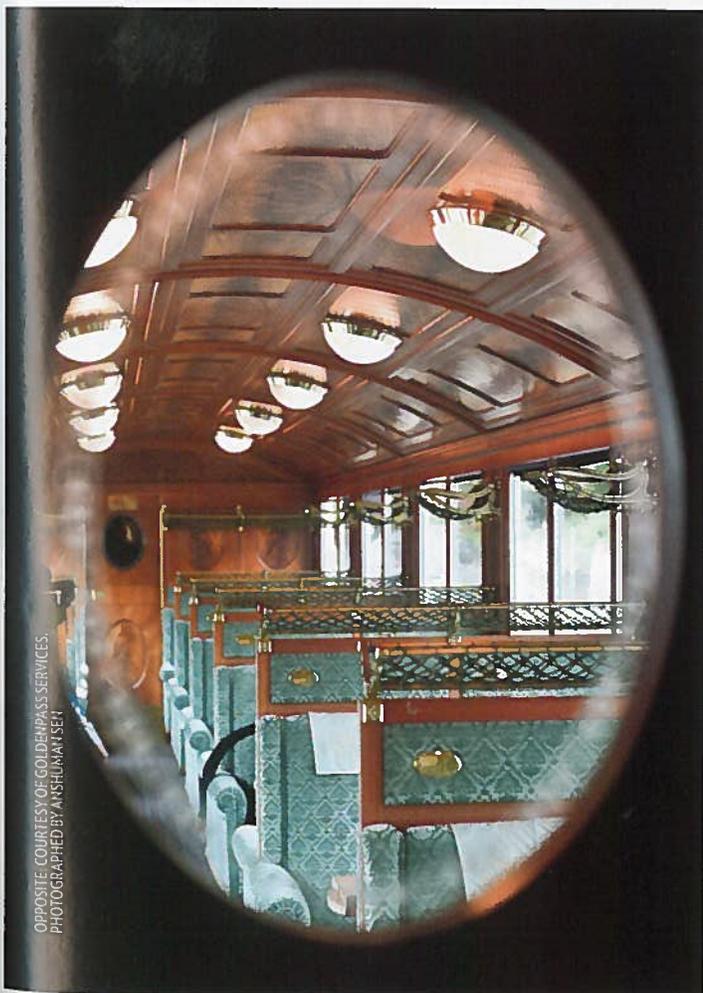
The GoldenPass also runs the Chocolate & Cheese Train, bringing us closer to two of our favourite Swiss treats. Despite the indulgences that await when we reach, we're happy enough in the GoldenPass to wish that wherever we're going, we haven't gotten there yet.

GET TAKEN FOR A RIDE

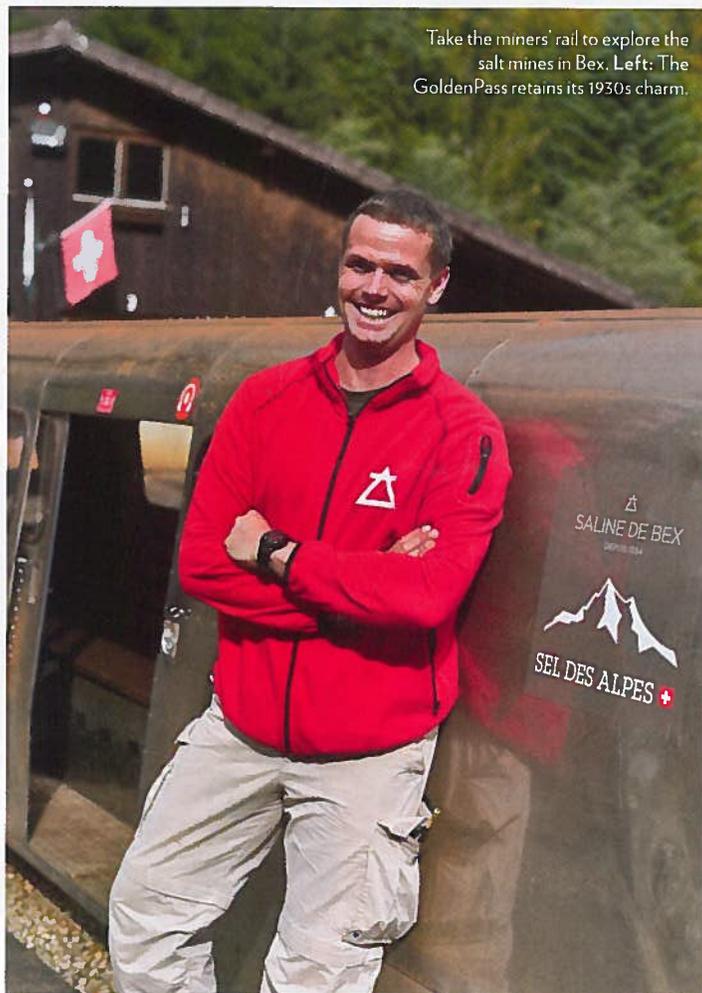
They say sometimes it's more about the journey than the destination. As we made our way around Switzerland, we found this to be plainly true, with unique encounters to be had on the move. Through a myriad of travel experiences, the Swiss sure know how to get around.

MINERS' RAIL

If you'd care to go deeper underground, you can actually get down to almost 400 metres below surface at the Bex Salt Mines. A narrow tunnel carved out of the rocky walls of the cave makes way for



OPPOSITE: COURTESY OF GOLDENPASS SERVICES.
PHOTOGRAPHED BY ANSHUNYATSEI



Take the miners' rail to explore the salt mines in Bex. Left: The GoldenPass retains its 1930s charm.



From left: Captain of La Suisse, Cruising Lake Geneva aboard the steam boat

the rather slim train used by miners to get to work. The tiny carriages carry only small loads, and the width-way seat in the front might not have sufficient space for two but this ten minute ride through the dark mines can be a truly immersive experience, and one that will make you thankful for the ease of your commute to work above ground.

VEVEY-MONT PÈLERIN BY FUNICULAR

Wine lovers will enjoy this train. Not only does this funicular take you through sun-dappled vineyards but it does so in an infinitely charming way. Also operated by GoldenPass, starting at Vevey, and ending at Mont Pèlerin village, this 11-minute upward journey operated on a single rail line gets more beautiful with every passing minute and metre. goldenpass.ch

AIGLE-LE SÉPEY-LES DIABLERETS BY TRAIN

The tiny compartments of this Chablais Public Transport service is covered on

the outside with bright, hand-painted murals of assorted points of local pride, such as playful valleys, streams, clocks and cows. The train inside is cozy about manages to easily accommodate skis and snowboards. It chugs along not-so-gentle curves and quaint railway stations where it stops, at the smaller ones, only on passenger request. tpc.ch

COLDU PILLON TO GLACIER 3000 BY CABLE CAR

The cable car from Col du Pillon takes passengers every 20 minutes to Glacier 3000, a winter adventure sports wonderland of sorts. But the ascent to the top can be quite an adventure in itself. Of all the views in Switzerland, we found this one to be one of the best with every colour in the spring palette lending its shades to trees below with the intermittent pond and pasture on either side. Just when you think you're the side of the cliff is too close for comfort, the cable car swoops upwards and glides

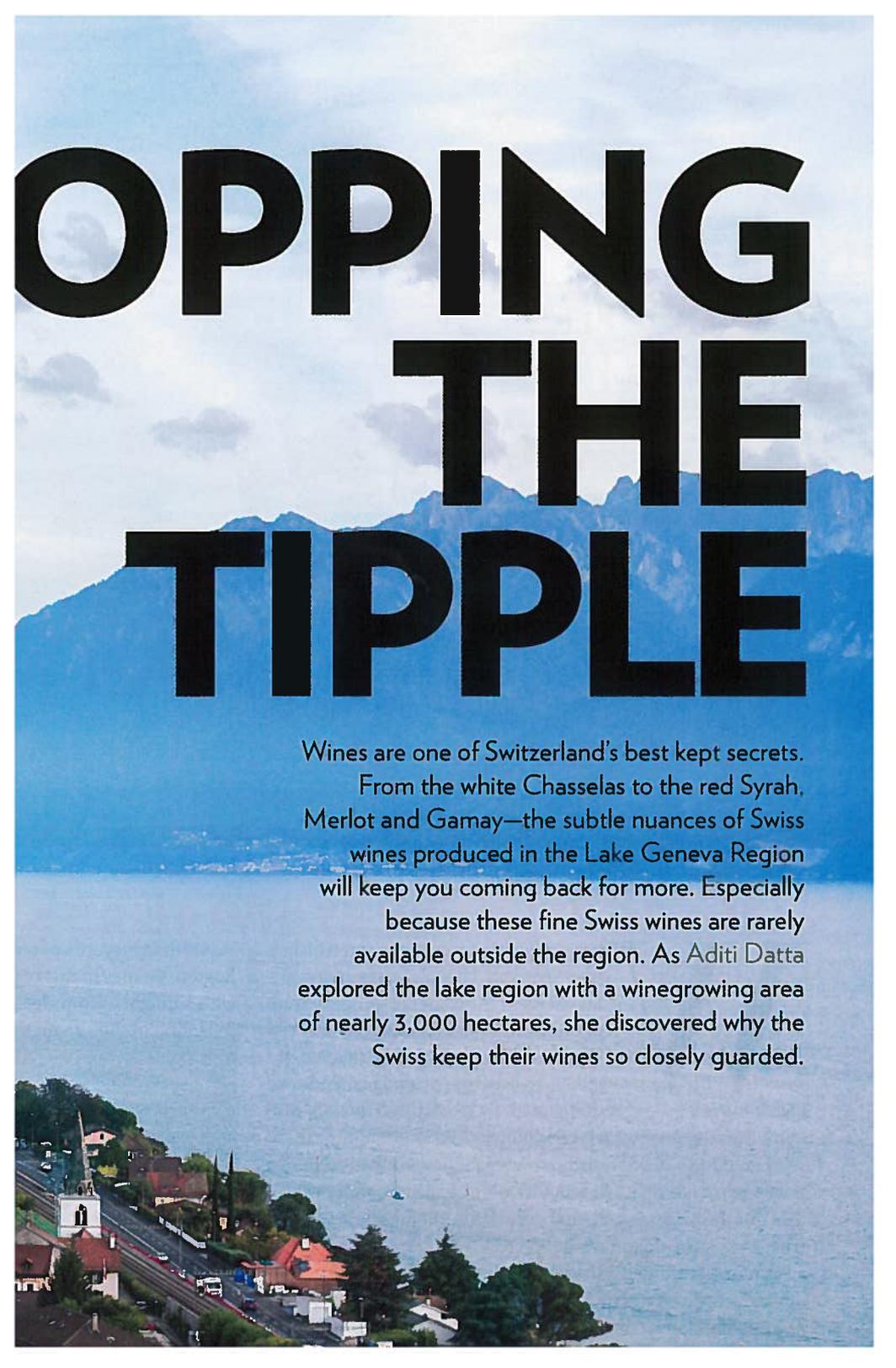
to its landing spot. Started in 1964 and refurbished in 1999, this effortless ride between 1546 metres to 2950 metres makes us agree that there ain't no mountain high enough. glacier3000.ch

LAKE GENEVA BY STEAMBOAT

Steamboat technology came to Switzerland in the shape of the Guillaume Tell on Lake Geneva in 1823. Her wooden hull was from Bordeaux, her engine from Liverpool. Eventually shipbuilding came to rest in Ouchy (pronounced 'Oo-she'). Today, eight ships that used to sail in the period between 1904 and 1927 can be found cruising Lake Geneva any day of the week. Painstakingly restored, they retain their original engines. The structures of the boats have been rebuilt in parts and reinforced for strength, and is expertly navigated by the captain and his able crew using old-fashioned calls to port. Stocked with food and drink, this might be the best way to sail into the sunset. cgn.ch +

Lavaux, the UNESCO World
Heritage site.



A scenic view of a Swiss lake with mountains in the background and a town in the foreground. The sky is blue with some clouds. The mountains are blue and hazy. The lake is a light blue color. In the foreground, there are buildings, a church, and a road.

POPPING THE TIPPLE

Wines are one of Switzerland's best kept secrets. From the white Chasselas to the red Syrah, Merlot and Gamay—the subtle nuances of Swiss wines produced in the Lake Geneva Region will keep you coming back for more. Especially because these fine Swiss wines are rarely available outside the region. As Aditi Datta explored the lake region with a winegrowing area of nearly 3,000 hectares, she discovered why the Swiss keep their wines so closely guarded.



Left to right: At Lavaux Vinorama, one can taste and buy Swiss wines produced in the region; grapes ready for processing; guests savour Swiss wines at Lavaux Vinorama.

What waffles are to Belgium and whiskey is to Scotland, chocolate is perhaps to Switzerland. And cheese. A declaration of undisputed victory and reigning expertise. It's not very often that local genius thrives quietly and contently below the radar. And so we landed in Geneva, utterly unaware of the fact that that we'd love wining as much as, if not more so, than dining. We've heard so much about wine from other European contemporaries that we didn't expect to find the drink of the gods to such high standards. But Switzerland, in true Swiss style, does not disappoint.

A lunch or dinner is usually accompanied by a polite offer of wine; not so much for merry-making, but more like punctuation to a meal. Lunch upon dinner upon lunch confirmed our evolving suspicion—that what we hand on our hands was very, very fine wine.

Not that we're complaining about unexpected brilliance, but just out of curiosity, how come we didn't know about this particular hallmark of Switzerland's vintage? As it turns out, the Swiss do love their wine. So much so that it doesn't have the chance to leave the country. What is brewed is consumed in entirety. This isn't just a function of demand, but also has everything to do with supply. The wine-growing parts of Switzerland are relatively small, although classic Swiss efficiency means that every inch of potential land is good for every possible drop.

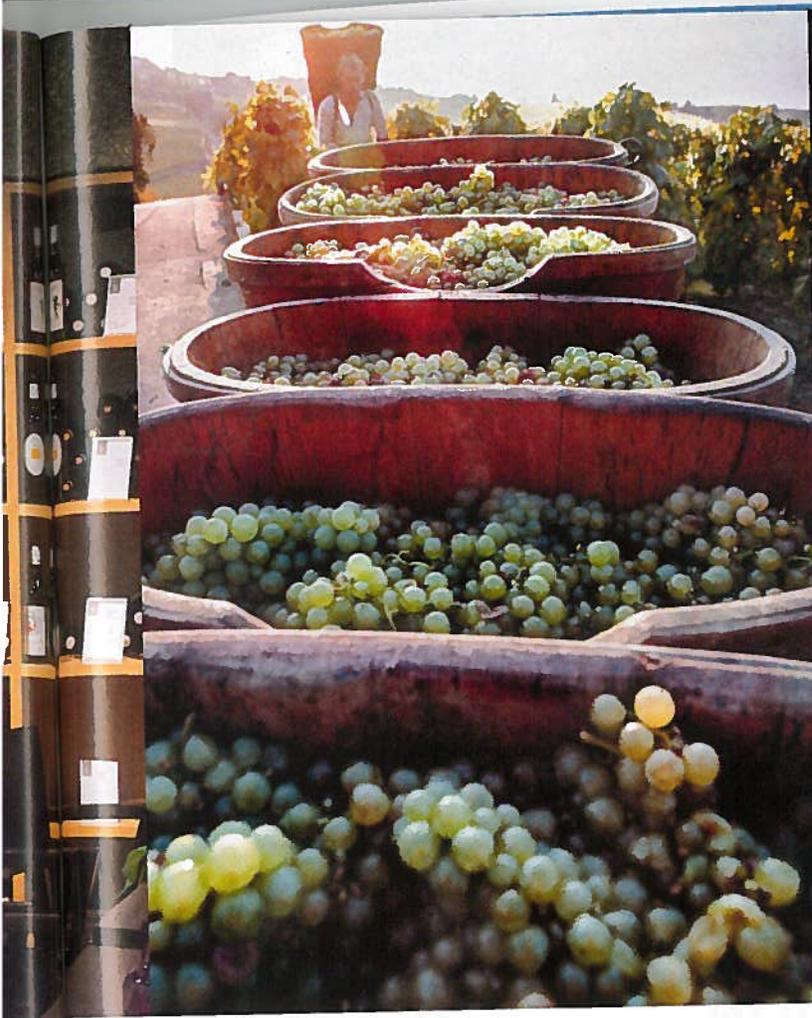
Of the vineyards of renown, most fall in the Lake Geneva Region. Grapes in this region are blessed more than once with sunlight—from clear blue skies as well as the mirror reflection of the sun on the lake with its own kind of blue. The annual production of 100 million litres of wine is divided in a neck and neck race between red and white. Watching the changing light and feeling the altered air from dawn till dusk on the terraces of one such land called Cully is enough to make us believe in the microclimate of Lake Geneva. And with it, the exact mix of factors that make the region so perfect for wine production.

The most popular variety is Chasselas, and by no means a coincidence, also the bottle that the Swiss are possibly proudest of. It's a crisp white wine, its dryness perfect to balance the richness of cheese, among other things. Although Pinot Noir is king of the reds, the subtle changes in soil within the region give birth to an impressive variety of reds ranging from Syrah, Merlot, Gamay to Gamaret.

The masterful blending of compatible varieties means that there is a seemingly unending range of beautiful reds and we'd be lucky to find the same one twice while passing through the towns of Lake Geneva. You may be tempted to hold one to the one you love, but there remains the question of what else might be around the corner.

LAKE GENEVA REGION (VAUD)

This canton lives on the Northern Shore of Lake Geneva and is home to notable names in a sommelier's world, including



CHASSELAS IS A CRISP WHITE WINE, ITS DRYNESS PERFECT TO BALANCE THE RICHNESS OF CHEESE.



Wine in the caves of Bex.

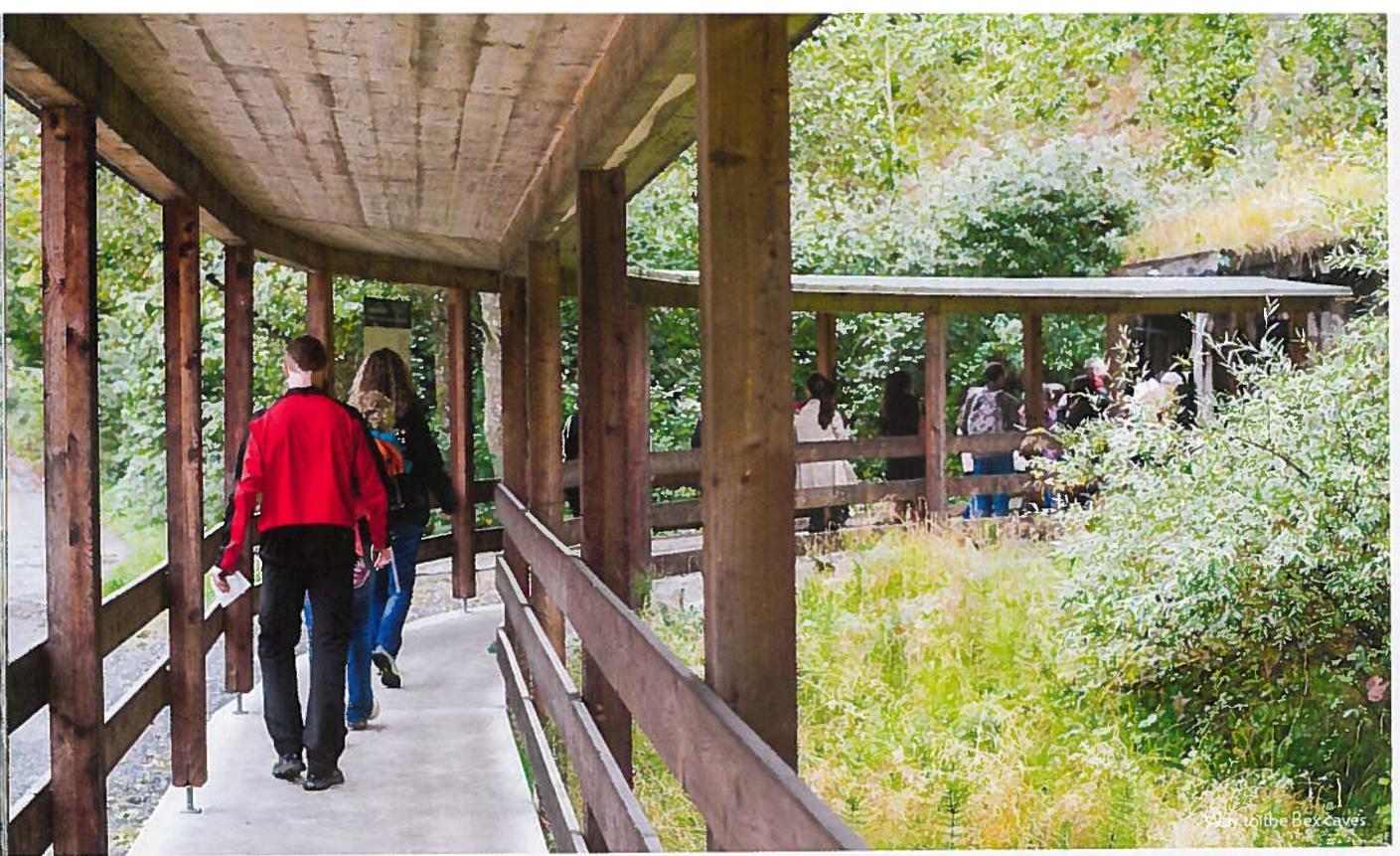
La Cote, Aigle and Chablais. The highly acclaimed region of Dezaley also happens to live here—the potent blend of Alpine sunlight and humidity at a certain altitude from the lake makes the grapes in this area grow to the perfect ripening stage. Only wine grown within a specified perimeter and at a specific height can be certified as a product of Dezaley’s rich clay soil—given the topography of the land and the prestige of the Grand Cru label, it’s a grand heritage to belong to.

The smaller villages of Rivaz and St Saphorin are where dedicated wine-growers find their much needed shelter from the storm and other forces of nature. With town populations of less than 376 each (although rumour has it that Rivaz recently added a 377th member), these sweet hamlets are filled with door upon door of wine cellars who might just, if you ask nicely, welcome you in.

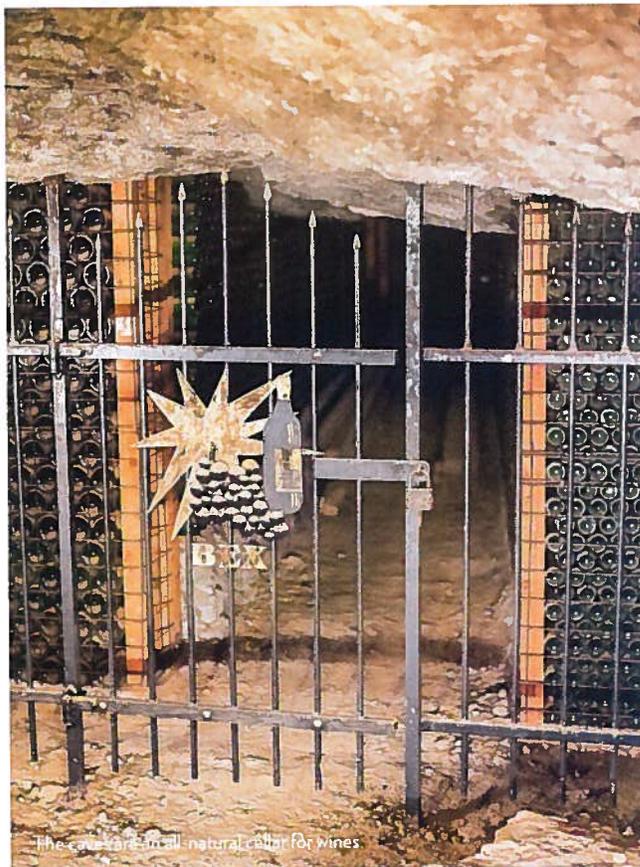
BEX

The mines those lie deep within the caves of Bex keep safe under their darkness a shimmering sea of salt. A quick lesson in geography tells us that a few million years ago, the hilly terrain of Villars-Gryon was actually part of the lake. A few mighty tectonic shifts later, this pool was actually pushed up into a peak and the original water deposits still sit behind the

FROM LEFT: ANSHUMAN SEN; MARCEL IM SANDI; COURTESY OF LAUSANNE TOURISM; COURTESY OF OTV/SCHWEIZ TOURISM/SIFFERT; ANSHUMAN SEN



OF THE VINEYARDS OF RENOWN, MANY FALL IN THE LAKE GENEVA REGION.



The caves are a natural cellar for wines.

rocky walls of the caves, which is why they're covered with glistening walls of crystalline salt.

Are salt and wine the same as chalk and cheese? Turn out, they couldn't be better friends. The soil in the sunny plains is rich in gypsum, and it gives grapes grown here their own distinct bite. The caves serve as an all-natural cellar, with the exact levels of darkness, humidity and temperature control that modern cellars with all the technology in the world usually hope to be. The caves are, above all, quiet and leave the bottled wines to complete their undisturbed journey from salt of the soil to the sweetest Chasselas.



OUR PICKS FOR THE BEST WHITE

- Aigle, les Murailles, Badoux
- Féchy, La Colombe, Paccot
- Yverne, Clos du Rocher, Obrist
- La Medinette, Dezaley Grand Cru, Domaine Louis Bovard



OUR PICKS FOR THE BEST RED

- Yvorne, Feu d'Amour, AVY
- Château d'Allaman, Schenk
- Dézaley Rouge, B Duboux



The Winegrowers Festival.

LA FETE DES VIGNERONS

The Winegrowers Festival is a unique celebration held in Vevey. Organised by the Brotherhood of Winegrowers, the festival is not just an unabashedly grand celebration but also an occasion to acknowledge and appreciate the unique bond of the wine-growers as they look beyond their immediate patch of soil and come together to protect the greater good of the vineyards. Legends, stories and all wine-related glory from as far back as the 17th

Century are enacted, and each edition of the festival sees several performances. It's no wonder then that the Fete des Vignerons are few and far between. We know our dedicated wine-growers of Vaud stay dedicated to their craft as they don't allow themselves to be distracted more than a few times a century with this festival. The festival will now be held from July 26 to August 11 in the year 2019. fetedesvignerons.ch



The fine nectars that make the best Swiss wines.

ARTISANS VIGNERON YVORNE

AVY or the Artisans Vignerons d'Yvorne was founded in 1902 as a cooperative effort by eight wine-growers from the Yvorne region who came together, each confident in their craft and eager to progress as a collective. Today, AVY represents about 120 carefully screened members and the co-operative manages and markets these fine nectars. Harvesting ancestral knowledge on both storage and soil as well as using modern technology to make the most of their harvest, this group of growers exclusively produce wines that bear the Yvorne Chablais AOC Appellation from their 55 hectares. An AVY wine therefore, is not just any wine.

MUSEUMS OF VINE AND ETIQUETTE AT AIGLE

The Aigle Castle looks too picturesque to be an icon of military supremacy, but was a stronghold bastion of the barons from the 12th Century. With no modern-day battles to fight, the walls of the castle now protect the rich history of wine-growing and wine-making from the region. Musée de la Vigne et du Vin (Museum of Vine and Wine) is set

in the Aigle castle, amidst Chablais vineyards and proudly displays tools and traditions dating back to 2000 years of wine-making. On the outside of the castle is Maison de la Dime which houses Musée de l'Étiquette—a comprehensive education of wine labels and how to, fairly, judge a drink by its cover. chateauaigle.ch



The Aigle Castle in Canton Vaud



Melanie Weber is among the few winemakers still to use traditional winemaking techniques.



THE WORLD OF MELANIE WEBER

Melanie belongs to the fifth generation of wine-makers from her family. Over 140 years of knowledge is now bottled within this fine wine-grower, who uses traditional techniques of pressing grapes until they turn into just the right light, right texture and right taste. The Chenalatte grown on mineral-rich earth is ever so lightly smokey, and a whole other shades of white from the citrusy Blonnaisses. Step into her cellar if you will, and you'll witness just how much labour goes into the production of wines so dearly loved. Does she tire of thinking wine day in and day out? She has no time! Between worrying about the particular patch of sunlight over her three stretches of red earth, the unexpected bout of pouring rain, transporting vines to the cellar safely each time as if it were the first time, tinkering with each barrel until it reaches what she instinctively knows is the peak of its perfection, there's no rest for the vintner.

THE CLASSY VINORAMA BRINGS TOGETHER OVER 260 VARIETIES OF LOCAL WINE.

A STUNNING SWISS CELLAR

The terraced vineyards of Lavaux are a prized UNESCO World Heritage Site. Each of the wines produced from these slopes packs in plenty of character, and is unique. Traipsing through all of them might prove to be a bit of a trek but instead, you can take a tour at the beautifully maintained Vinorama. This classy and somewhat concealed cellar is cut into a part of Rivaz's hilly terrain, and brings together over 260 varieties of local wine. All of this, accompanied by a local wine guide who knows the subtle difference that sets aside each one from the 259 others on display. The mini theatre shows a brilliant film that captures the journey of these wines from grape to glass, and with it, the arduous yet beautiful journey of the men and women who make the wine. We're usually not ones for spectating rather than doing, but in this case, we highly recommend the film so you can enjoy the beauty of each carafe more than ever. All the wines are on sale and it can be hard to choose only a few to bring back, but as a very wise travel companion pointed out, maybe the rest are best enjoyed with the Swiss sun on your face and Lake Geneva in plain view. vinorama.ch +

TOP: ANSHUMANSEN(Z)



Lavaux vineyards are a UNESCO World Heritage Site.