

Day 9 - 17th September

Scenic Alps Train Ride

A wet start as we take the train up the Tyrolean valley with misty mountains to St Anton am Arlberg. We watched river rafts going down the River Inn, and then the train twists and turns so you can see the red train ahead dropping down slowly, as your ears pop through Vorarlberg to Bludenz and Feldkirch. We catch glimpses of waterfalls rushing down towards the train. These are the most marvellous train rides to take through the Alps visiting different locations. We will be back!



Transiting Switzerland

From Feldkirch we speed up through a corner of Liechtenstein and the weather is brighter with the lower territory as we come to Buchs and Switzerland. The sun comes out in Switzerland as the

Steam Train at Buchs SG



International Grand Trenzi Europa steam train comes into Buchs station as we are there!

We now leave Buchs in the other direction due to changing line in Switzerland, past some odd shaped crags and rocky outcrop near Sargans. There is an old ruined castle before we run alongside Lake Walensee. The effortless train travel speeds us through forested hills to Lake Obersee and Lake Zurich.

All change!

We have an easy change at Zurich to the high speed train to Paris. We are upstairs on a duplex train, with even better viewing, through Lenzburg and Aarau to Basel, and past its zoo. We speed up to 314 km per hour between Mulhouse and Dijon through lovely wooded landscape, so empty compared to the UK. We were given a cold snack of dried mango, biscuits or nuts plus a drink. Once in Paris we stay across the road from the Gare du Nord in the Mercure and luckily have a wonderfully quiet room.

Evening stroll in Paris

We take an evening walk up to Montmartre, where modern art was born in Bateau-Lavoir studio (Picasso, Braque, and Juan Gris developed Cubism here), plus the home of earlier painters such as Renoir, Van Gogh and Gauguin.



Montmartre

We climb up the crowded steps to Sacre Coeur and see the last of the sunset and go inside the Basilica, a Romano-Byzantine Church with interior mosaics from 1877, and masses of candles burning in memory of those killed in the recent Paris atrocities. Despite the tragedies the classic French bistro style cafes in all the streets thrive.

I have been to Paris many times before, but the atmosphere is changed currently, as there is an air of tension in the city with police and armed guards so in evidence, and a bomb scare with sirens at one point that Saturday evening. How many times does the ambience of a city change in history? Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the 19th century French philosopher in *Reveries of a Solitary Walker* enjoyed philosophical wanderings of thought,

and as you walk any city you take in the people, the buildings and the feeling, as well of course as the art and the food.