

Lake Thunersee, Switzerland: The Lake Thun Region

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

The beauty about visiting any country in the world is that you're likely to come across places that you've never heard of before, but once seen, you'll never forget them. Never was that more true than on our road trip around Switzerland.

Although planned with military precision (well, you wouldn't expect anything else from a Disney veteran, now would you?), guidebooks can only tell you so much about what you'll see along the way. As I planned our route for the day, which would take us from Bern, the capital of Switzerland, to [Zurich](#), I started to learn about Lake Thunersee, as we would have to drive around either one side or the other.

The lake stretches from Thun in the north, from where it gets its name, to the popular destination of Interlaken in the south. In total, it's about 11 miles long and three miles wide, creating a slender arc in between mountain ranges. To the south of the lake, in the distance, you can see Niesen, a mountain that stretches over 2,300 metres (7,500 ft.) above sea level, providing some stunning backdrops for the lake. There's even a funicular railway, which runs from Mulenen, on the southern side of the lake, up to the summit of the mountain.

Tempting as that side of the lake was for our tour, I eventually opted to drive along the north side instead. Our route took us through Thun first, a historic market town, which is dominated by the castle, Schloss Thun, that looms over the town. That dates back to 1191, when it was built by the Duke of Zahringen, and its fairytale spires are a beautiful sight. Underneath the castle, the old town sprawls out, with the main street running parallel to the river Aare, from which Lake Thunersee is formed. However, this is no usual old town. A walkway is built on the roofs of the buildings, so that it's actually on two levels.

From there, our route took us alongside the lake, with our first stop being Hilterfingen. Castles are plentiful in this area, and another is found here that dates from the mid-19th century. We actually found it completely by accident. We were so busy taking photos of the lake that it was only when I turned round and saw something in the trees behind us, and there was the castle, Schloss Huneg! One of the reasons we were so focused on the lake was not just the beautiful scenery, but the fact that this area is packed with boats, as Hilterfingen is home to a sailing school, which made for some wonderful photos. It really was a picturesque scene, and one that you could easily imagine seeing on the

front of a postcard.

A couple of miles further down the road is Oberhofen, which always finds its way into guidebooks and postcards, thanks to its 12th-century lakeside castle. When I say lakeside, I mean part of the castle is actually built in the lake itself, with an annex that juts out across the water through a walkway, with a spire rising above it. It's a wonderful sight, although sadly we were visiting out of season, so it wasn't open to the public. Between April and October each year, you can also catch regular boat trips around the lake, enjoying dinner, or perhaps a Sunday brunch into the bargain, while admiring the views.

Despite the fact that we couldn't travel around the lake by boat, we were still able to get some wonderful views from the lakeside road we traveled along. It was almost perfect spring weather, with warm temperatures but snow-capped mountains still topping off the scenery above the crystal blue water below. There were plenty of places to just pull over and admire the views as we drove along.

Finally, we were heading towards the southern end of Lake Thunersee, and into Interlaken. As we arrived, we could instantly tell that most of the money coming into this place is from tourists, as there were souvenir shops dotted all along the main street, with restaurants and hotels all over the place.

Interlaken is not home to any major attractions per se, but it attracts visitors who use it as a base to explore the nearby mountains, which include the Jungfrau, more than 4,100 metres (13,600 ft.) above sea level. It's a center for hiking in the summer, and skiing by winter. If adventure is your thing, then you'll find opportunities for river rafting, sky diving, windsurfing, and horse riding. One of the people that my husband works with comes here almost every year to enjoy the cycling in the region, and even this early in the year, we saw lots of cyclists already out and about. You certainly won't be bored here.

Lake Thunersee and its surrounding towns and villages is certainly one of the most beautiful regions of Switzerland, and I can see why it attracts so many people to it each year. It may not be an instantly recognizable name, but once you've seen it, you'll never forget how stunning this area is.

About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo

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