

# SE Region Tour of Switzerland

By Peter Braybrooke

Ever thought of taking a holiday to Switzerland but worried that it's too complicated and risky? If that sounds interesting, read on.....

In the Spring of 2019 a group of us arranged a two-week continental trip to take us to Switzerland during September. There were five couples travelling in three X150 XKR coupes, one XKR convertible and one F-Type V8. The requirements were for me to organise a relaxing holiday, with driving days kept to a minimum with no more than four to five hours at the wheel each day. 10 am departures were to be the norm. Hotels were to be comfortable and affordable with segregated parking, so we didn't end up in the public parking places. Roads were to include some proper mountain passes and tunnels (where better to hear the gorgeous V8s?).

Our Swiss excursion was to include Weggis, situated on Lake Lucerne, Lugano, Grindelwald and Montreux. Our outbound route took us via Reims and Strasbourg, both of which provided convenient overnight stops, then down through Germany to the Rhine Falls, where we met up with members from the Swiss JEC.

## Reims-Gueux

The first overnight stop heading south was the Mercure at Reims Centre Cathédrale which offers usual Accor benefits, and has good underground parking. However, the exit gate requires considerable patience to operate! We booked half board and the evening meal was good.

On the way to Reims, we called in at the former Circuit Reims-Gueux where, being a Sunday, the local folk were having an informal gathering. The locals kindly moved their cars so we could get in front of the Jaguar pits.



We had an enjoyable hour or so here, being careful not to be knocked over by the cars powering up and down the long straight D27 road.

### 1 The Jaguar Returns to Reims

At our next stop in Strasbourg, we stayed in the Comfort Hotel. This was very basic, but had barrier controlled private parking and the breakfast was OK. It was conveniently located on the south side of town, adjacent to the motorway and a mere five stops on the tram from the city centre, where we had dinner. Strasbourg is a beautiful city and is worth visiting.



**2 Strasbourg**

### A word about navigation

Sue and I usually like to work with maps rather than navigation systems, but as I was the lead car almost all of the time, I opted to use my Co-Pilot navigation software on my iPhone. This allows me to store and load trips for each leg which had been plotted on Google Maps beforehand, and very reliably, which I should have remembered as we approached the Rhine Falls!

## Rhine Falls

The next morning saw us on the road to the Rhine Falls to meet up with our JEC friends there. The routing took us along the A35 motorway and across the border into Germany in the direction of Offenburg, then heading onto the B33 and onto the B27 before crossing the Swiss border into Schaffhausen and following the A4. This route takes you close to Kinzigtal, Gutach and Blumberg in Germany. We had a lovely coffee stop with gateaux on a small diversion to Bad Dürrenheim – a restful and green spa town.

The Rhine Falls is the most powerful waterfall in Europe, situated on the High Rhine. The falls are viewable from the south or north sides of the river, but the best view is from the south, approached from Lauferstrasse, where there is a large car park which is free. There's a café and a restaurant by the Schloss Laufen. There's a lift and then steps to get you up-close to the majesty of the waterfall on payment of an CHF 5 entry-fee. Definitely a must-see.



**3 Meeting JEC Switzerland at the Rhine Falls**

We arrived a little late for our rendez-vous having been held up by traffic and our diversion to Bad Dürrenheim. Once in Schaffhausen, I started to follow the brown tourist signs to the falls, ignoring the complaints of Co-Pilot and ended up on the wrong (north) side of the river! I hadn't realised this until parked up, so it took us half an hour to reach the right spot, where we met with Stefan, Marcus and Rosalita from JEC Switzerland. Red-faced! Fortunately some of our number had gone the right way.



#### 4 Line up in the coach park!

John had an issue with his car, which was attended to with help from Stefan at the local Jaguar dealer, and after an enjoyable afternoon at the falls, rounded off by a photo line-up in the coach park (imagine trying to do that in UK!), we headed off to our hotel in Weggis with our new JEC friends, and dinner together.

## Weggis

This pleasant lakeside town is an excellent base to enjoy Lucerne's leisure opportunities. The hotel we chose was the family run Hotel Alexander for our two day stay, which boasts full spa facilities with indoor and outdoor pools, dining terrace overlooking the lake and of course the all-important private parking. Room rate was CHF300 per night. The hotel staff were friendly, and we rated it highly.



#### 5 Pilatus Station & the Golden Round Trip

On our first day, some of us decided to do the Pilatus mountain golden round trip. This took most of the day, with a ferry via Lucerne to Alpnachstad, an ascent from there up the steepest rack-railway in Europe to a hotel and restaurant with terrace dining, affording amazing views over the valley, whilst we had lunch and watched the hang-gliders. Lunch concluded, we took the Dragon Ride cable car and then onto the "Panorama Gondolas" for our decent into Kriens. A short walk then onto a state of the art SwissTrolley trolleybus back to Lucerne for the 17:12 ferry to Weggis. A fantastic day!

On the second day, we made a visit to the Lucerne Transport Museum, which features separate buildings for rail, road and aviation. There's a cinema and lectures, a Lindt chocolate tour (with many free samples) and a fabulous children's activity centre to learn shunting, cargo handling, lorry manoeuvring and logistics. We were reminded too of Monteverde, Switzerland's last car manufacturer, with some rare exhibits. In the aviation hall there's a metal slide from the mezzanine to the ground floor – I had to give it a go. Fantastic!



#### 6 Now, where are we again??



**7 Leaving Hotel Alexander**

The third day brought about our departure from the lovely hotel Alexander on our much-anticipated transit to Lugano. We were planning to travel via the Susten Pass and then the Gotthard Tunnel.

## Lugano

It was always understood that the drive is as much the destination as the resorts, but local precipitation in the towns had caused snow on the Susten Pass and it was closed. Disappointed, we had to use other routes which brought us to the A2 near Wassen and on through the Gotthard Tunnel. Some of us chose to use the Gotthard Pass for the southbound journey, but I had planned both that and the Furka Pass, for the return journey to Grindelwald three days later, so most of us stuck with the tunnel, which is around 17km long, single bore. The V8s sounded great. Needless to say, I had the roof up during the transit.



In Lugano we were booked into the Continental Park Hotel, an imposing place built onto the hillside and once again looking down on the lake and 3 minutes from the main railway station. Room rate was CHF212 per night. The hotel has an excellent restaurant, a terrace facing the garden and a large outdoor swimming pool. In the afternoon, Happy Hour ensured we didn't drink our wallets dry!

## **8 Gathered for departure at the Lugano ParkHotel**

The friendly staff gave us a Ticino Ticket each, which provided discounted lake and funicular trips, plus free transportation on local buses and trains (compare and contrast to London!). Our first day activity was an inexpensive funicular trip up Monte San Salvatore. Here, there is access to the roof of the church to get amazing views of the lake, looking across into Italy and to the Campione D'Italia, a unique Italian enclave entirely within the Swiss borders. This view provided the impetus for our second day activity, a boat trip to the old and pretty village of Morcote for lunch, passing under the Melide bridge. Melide is home to the Swissminatur model village.



10 John's XKR at Como



9 Lake Lugano looking towards the Melide bridge

John, Wendy, Steve and Martina took a trip to Lake Como, braving the local Italian roads and returned safely.

## To Grindelwald by mountain pass

Retracing our route northbound on the A2 motorway towards the Gotthard tunnel, we exited at junction 42 to pick up the Gotthard pass at Airolo enjoying the long gallery (open-sided tunnel) there, exploiting



11 The long road gallery on the Gotthard Pass (photo from Google Streetview)



12 Peter's convertible on the Gotthard pass

the tuneful V8s. The pass is a delight to drive but is, I think, eclipsed by the Furka. As we climbed above the snow line onto the Furka pass, the vista was striking with snow-covered mountains and here and there slushy roads. At the summit we stopped to take in the view and enjoy some snowball fun. This was to me the driving high-point of the holiday and has to be one of the best driving roads in Europe.



13 Val, Martina and Sue enjoying the vista



15 Steve's XKR On the Furka pass



14 Phil's F-Type on the Furka Pass



16 David's Dynamic-R on the way down the Furka

Val even managed to construct a snowman. Full marks are awarded for maximising the alpine experience!

There was a degree of challenge in trying to find the best viewpoint for photos; was there a better one around the next bend?



17 Snowman!

## Grindelwald

After the excitement of the passes, we continued out more serene drive through the chocolate box scenery of the Bernese Alps and still 1000 metres above sea level into Grindelwald. This is very much an area for skiing and climbing, as it's surrounded by seven mountains including the famous Eiger. We stayed at the Central Hotel Wolter, which was comfortable but a bit smaller and more basic than the previous two and very much a town-centre location five minutes' walk from the station. Private parking was confined to the 8 or so places under the annexe, with overspill going into a segregated area of the public multi-storey over the road. This was fine, as it was almost empty. The rate was CHF 228 for bed and breakfast. We did note there was a charging point for electric cars! There was a road-side terrace for drinks overlooking (or should I say underlooking) the Monch and Eiger – all very picturesque. The food was good with enormous portions, and free entry to the spa facilities at their sister hotel which is a few minutes' walk away.

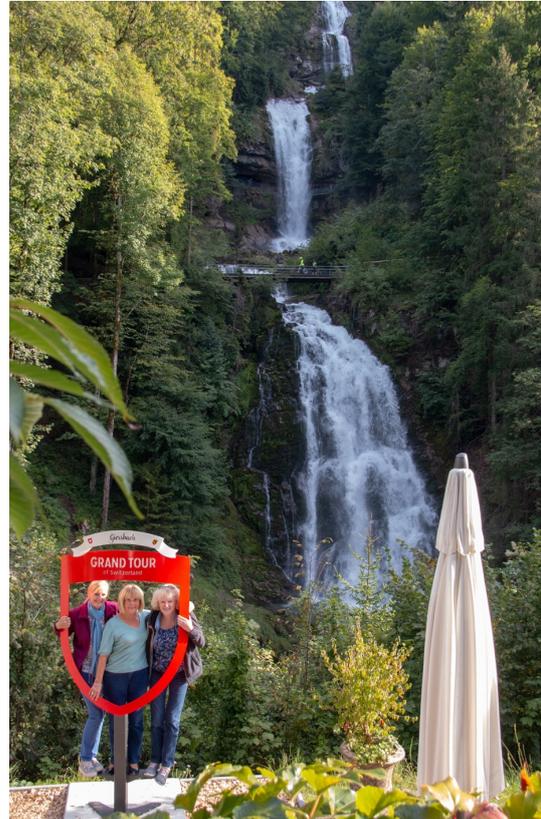


**18 Lauterbrunnen**

The day following arrival was devoted to sightseeing and our excursions took us into the mountains and valleys, including a trip to Lauterbrunnen for lunch and onto the Giessbach falls. The falls are spectacular and set in the grounds of the lovely Grandhotel Giessbach which was built in 1872.



**20's Ghost Club tour**



**19 Val Wendy and Sue at Giessbach**

A delight was to come across the Rolls Royce 20 Ghost Club, who had based themselves here, and we continued to bump into them in Gstaad and Montreux later in the trip. Their number included brass-era cars and one had come from New York to join their expedition!



**21 Coffee in Gstaad**

The following morning at a leisurely 10:00 am we were packed up and off to Montreux, via Spiez, Gstaad and over the Route Du Pillon. Gstaad has become a no-go area for through traffic, defended by the awful rising-bollards of vehicular doom. Nonetheless, we stopped there for our coffee break, and again there were old Rolls Royces to be found in the station car-park.

## Montreux

We arrived in the afternoon at the Hotel Bon Rivage in La-Tour-de-Peilz. The hotel overlooks Lake Geneva (or Lac Lemman si vous preferez), with direct access to the shore. Our rooms were very well-appointed and comfortable, and the food was just fine. CHF 250 for bed and breakfast seemed reasonable for what we had. The only irritant was that the lakeside bar terrace was not opened until 18:30 each day, which seemed to be an opportunity missed, and is something I never did get to the bottom of in our short time there. Mosquitos were present here, so defence measures were taken.



**22 Maison Cailler**

On our last day of sightseeing the next day, we met up for a trip to the Cailler chocolate factory at Broc. Eschewing the opportunity to go by the extremely expensive "Chocolate Train", we took the Jags for a 40 minute drive there. For lovers of chocolate it's another must-visit place and beautifully presented.

This completed, we all went our separate ways. Sue and I decided to visit the village of Gruyères, noted for its cheese. It's quaint and picturesque on the top of a hill, reached by an uphill walk from the carpark below as cars are banned there. There are plenty of opportunities for a full lunch including fondues, but Sue and I opted for a Gruyères baguette at CHF9 each. I think that works out about £16! Ouch. We should have shared one.



**23 Cheese!**



Wendy and John set off to find the statue of Freddie Mercury in Montreux and did just that!

**24 We are The Champions!**

Satisfied but poorer, we put the car back into the hotel car park and took the bus to Chateau de Chillon.

Once again, we had been given tickets at the hotel which gave us free bus travel and heavily discounted entry to the Chateau and other attractions! The chateau is unlike any other I've been to and has a long and interesting history and is definitely worth a visit.



**25 Inside part of Chateau De Chillon**



**26 Adieu Switzerland - Leaving Montreux**

## Homeward Bound

Our homeward routing took us direct to Troyes in France, staying overnight at the Mercure which has an excellent underground car park, before heading off to Calais the following day. It has to be said that over the approximately 1650 miles we travelled across three countries, the roads were excellent with barely a ripple or pothole to speak of. What a disappointment our cart-track like roads here must be to continental visitors!

The beginning of September is a great time to visit. The summer season is winding down and getting ready for the pre-winter shutdown, so traffic is easier, and hotels are less expensive. Weather is still fine.

## Costs

What did it cost? Prices in Switzerland for most things are considerably higher than in the UK. Looking at the accumulated credit card bills and currency exchange, the estimate is around £5000 per couple, which is less than many organised tours of similar character. We didn't scrimp and had very good quality hotels and food.

## Routings

I used Google Maps to establish the directions for each leg, establishing the street-names where appropriate for the routings used for my Co-Pilot navigation system, should anyone wish to follow the same path. *Bonne Route!*

### ***Strasbourg to Weggis via Rhine Falls***

<b>Postcode / Town</b>	<b>Road routing point</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Strasbourg	Rue des Corroyeurs 14	Mercure Hotel start point
77723 Gengenbach	B33	
77716 Haslach im Kinzigtal	B33	
77793 Gutach	B33	
78176 Blumberg	B33	
Laufen-Uhwiesen	Lauerstrasse	Rhine Falls visit
Küssnacht	Zugerstrasse	
Weggis	Kreuzstrasse	
Weggis	Hertensteinstrasse 42	Alexander Hotel

### ***Weggis to Lugano***

<b>Town</b>	<b>Road routing point</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Weggis	Hertensteinstrasse <b>42</b>	Hotel start point
Meggen	Hauptstrasse	
Luzern (Lucerne)	Seebrücke	
Meiringen	Hauptstrasse	
Gadmen	Sustenstrasse	
Wassen	Sustenpass	End of the Sustenpasse
Lugano	Via Basilea <b>28</b>	Hotel end-point

### ***Lugano to Grindelwald***

<b>Town</b>	<b>Road routing point</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Lugano	Via Basilea 28	Hotel start point
Gotthard Pass (Hospental)	Gotthardstrasse	
Obergoms	Furkapass / Furkastrasse	
Gletsch	Gletsch	
Grindelwald	Dorfstrasse 93	Hotel end-point

### ***Grindelwald to Montreux***

<b>Town</b>	<b>Road routing point</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Grindelwald	Dorfstrasse 93	Hotel start-point
Wilderswil	Hauptstrasse	
Spiez	Oberlandstrasse	
Gstadd	Güterstrasse	
Les Diablerets	Route Du Pillon	(for Col-du-Pillon)
Aigle	Avenue des Glariers	
La Tour-de-Peilz (Montreux)	Route de St. Maurice	Hotel end-point

## The Cast

Name	Car	Model
Peter and Sue Braybrooke	X150 SP	Grey X150 Convertible
John Diffley and Wendy Dodd	S2 XKR	Grey X150 Coupé
David and Val Hollander	DH14 XKR	Red X150 Coupé
Phil and Dee Hunt	W8 JFR	Black X152 Coupé
Steve and Martina Tullett	900 ST	Blue X150 Coupé

All the photographs of the trip were contributed by the cast except for the one from Streetview.

