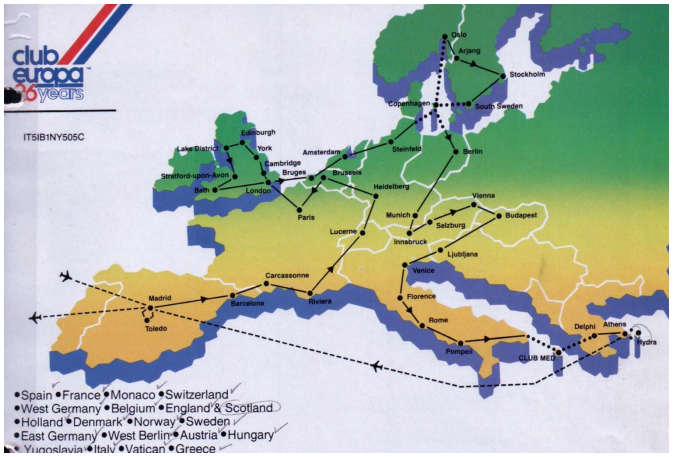
Switzerland Travel Stories 1985

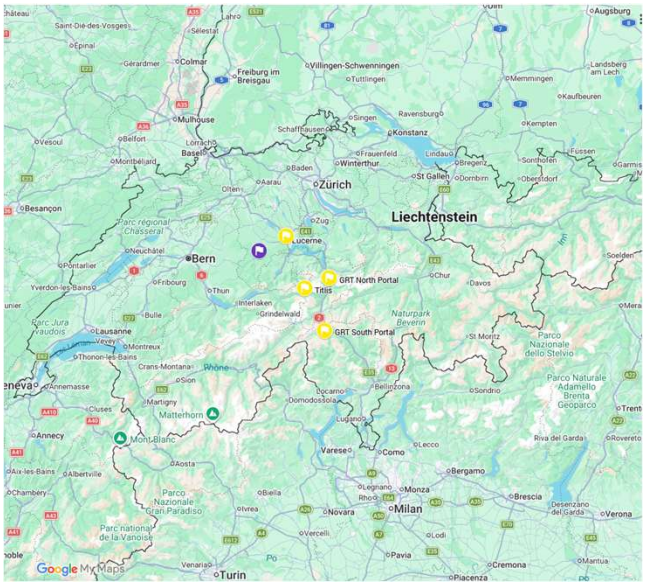


Topics

1. Introduction/Overview
2. The Longest Tunnel in the World
3. Memories of 5th Grade Geography Textbook
4. Swiss Army Notes
5. Swiss Guards, a Dying Lion, and a Hidden Pig
6. Ski Area Surprise



Introduction/Overview



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Switzerland Travel Stories 1985 – CLL Fall Semester 2026

"The Longest Tunnel in the World"

Elevations (above sea level, in feet):

Peak West of Pass	Gotthard Pass Summit	Peak East of Pass
9721	6909	9839

Tunnel	South Portal Elevation (ft)	Maximum Elevation Inside Tunnel (ft)	North Portal Elevation (ft)	Length (miles)	Year Opened
Rail (Original)	3747	3776	3639	9.3	1882
Road	**3760**	**3855**	**3540**	**10.5**	**1980**
Rail ("High Speed," Base)	1024	1801	1510	35.5	2016

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Switzerland Travel Stories 1985 – CLL Fall Semester 2026

"The Longest Tunnel in the World"

Longest Road Tunnels in the World (2026)

• Lærdal Tunnel	Norway	15.2 miles	2000
• WestConnex	Australia	13.91 miles	2023
• Tianshan Shengli Tunnel	China	13.8 miles	2025
• Yamate Tunnel	Japan	11.3 miles	2015
• Zhongnanshan Tunnel	China	11.2 miles	2007
• Jinpingshan Tunnel	China	10.9 miles	2011
• St. Gotthard Road Tunnel	Switzerland	10.5 miles	1980
• Tiantaishan Tunnel	China	9.7 miles	2021
• Daliangshan #1 Tunnel	China	9.55 miles	2025
• Muzhailing Tunnel	China	9.5 miles	2024

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Switzerland Travel Stories 1985 – CLL Fall Semester 2026

Swiss Army Notes – Military Factoids

The last battle against a foreign army by a Swiss "national" army Switzerland was in 1515. "Neutral" since 1815.

Swiss military has traditionally been almost 100% citizen militia (personal firearms kept in homes).

Swiss law currently requires (about) 10 years of compulsory military service for "all" able-bodied, qualified males (women's military service is voluntary).

First year: 18 to 23+ weeks
For 6 of the next 9 years: 3 weeks of "training"
Mobilizations: WW1, WW2, 2003, 2018 (probably others)

Size of 2026 forces: 100,000 (as of 2018) -- ~9000 of them full-time, the rest "militia".
Size was 200,000 (2003-2018); 400,000, prior to 2003

Unusual special units: Foreign evacuations, "Special" High-altitude Mountain Warfare Unit (but *all* members of infantry are qualified mountain- and ski-troops, to some degree), Non-ceremonial horse cavalry (until 1973), Bicycle Infantry units (until 2001).

Potential conscription for certain types non-military service (men *and* women).

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Switzerland Travel Stories 1985 – CLL Fall Semester 2026

Swiss Guards, a Dying Lion, and a Hidden Pig – Papal Guard Factoids

Recruits to the guards must be Catholic, single males, with Swiss citizenship, who have completed high school (at least) and basic training (at least) with the Swiss Armed Forces, and are of irreproachable reputation and health. (Papal Guards organization has no "official" affiliation with Swiss army.)

Recruits must be between 19 and 30 years of age, at least 174 cm (5 ft 8.5 in) tall, and prepared to sign up for at least 26 months.

Guards are permitted to marry after five years of service.

Currently 135 men are in the force. They have "operational" uniforms (similar to more-conventional-military everyday uniforms) in addition to the "ceremonial" uniforms they wear in public-display areas of the Vatican – also SWAT-like equipment.

The operational language of the force is German.

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Comparisons of North American and European Ski Areas (~2026)

Area Name	Location	Vertical Drop (ft)	Skiable Area (acres)
Revelstoke	British Columbia	5,620	3,121
Whistler Blackcomb	British Columbia	5,280	8,171
Timberline Lodge	Oregon	4,540*	1,430
Telluride	Colorado	4,425	2,000
Snowmass	Colorado	4,400	3,342
Big Sky	Montana	4,350	5,850
Kicking Horse	British Columbia	4,314	3,486
Jackson Hole (Teton)	Wyoming	4,139	2,500
Panorama Mountain	British Columbia	4,019	2,847
Steamboat Springs	Colorado	3,668	3,741
Heavenly Mountain (Valley?)	California/Nevada	3,500	4,800
Vail	Colorado	3,450	5,289

Area Name+	Location	Vertical Drop (ft)	Skiable Area (acres)
Zermatt/Cervina	Switzerland/Italy	~7,477	~5,000+
Chamonix	France	~7,326*	~761+
Alpe d'Huez	France	~6,920	~2,500+
Les Arcs	France	~6,647	~5,000+
Engleberg-Titlis	Switzerland	~6,560	~500+
La Plange	France	~6,500	~4,200+
Monterosa	Italy	~6,500	~450+
Val d'Isere	France	~6,234	4,500
Verbier	Switzerland	~5,643	~5,500+
Courchevel	France	~5,370	~25,000+

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