

ADVENTURE IN THE SWISS ALPS

Famed for its winter wonderland, Switzerland's Engadin region offers more than meets the eye during the balmy summer months, says **Alisha McDarris**.



A couple hiking in Switzerland's Engadin region in summer

Switzerland is an outdoorist's dream: mountains streaked with glaciers, cobalt lakes, and bike trails beckon those who seek adventure and the feeling of wonder only vast expanses of nature inspire. But while world-renowned destinations like Zermatt, Bern and Zürich tend to hog the spotlight, the Alps in the Engadin region in Graubunden, in eastern Switzerland, are every bit as magical and mesmerising.

While the area may be more famous for its winter sports – travellers from all over Europe and beyond descend on the Engadin every season for the world-renowned skiing, Olympics history, and cosy European lodges – summer in the Engadin is full of both outdoor adventure and luxury (plus far fewer crowds). It's also filled with sights and experiences the mass of visitors who believe that this region is reserved for winter will never enjoy.

WHERE TO STAY

Travellers looking for rest and repose in addition to outdoor adventure should head to Celerina, the sleepier sibling of buzzing St. Moritz and posh Pontresina. Here, the streets are quieter, less crowded with upscale shops and luxury spas, but the village is perhaps even more delightful for their absence. Instead of activity, noise, and commotion, visitors and residents stroll to the small grocery in town, rest on patios in the late afternoon sun still outfitted in hiking boots and backpacks, and families cruise down narrow streets on rented bicycles.

Perhaps the perfect place to rest and recharge is in an alpine-themed room with a balcony at Chesa Rosatsch, which overlooks the mountains and hovers above the quiet chatter of the Inn River below. In the evening, peruse a wine list as thick as a dictionary in one of three dining rooms.



KICK OFF YOUR SHOES

Just a short walk from Chesa Rosatsch, trade your hiking boots for the feeling of silky grass and soft soil underfoot on one of the town's two barefoot hiking trails. Along Route 1, a milky blue creek flows and a soft cacophony of cowbells chuckle in fields nearby. Between the pines, needles carpet long stretches of packed earth and fireweed blossoms paint the trailside pink in the summer. Route 2 weaves through rougher forested terrain, but toward Lej da Staz is the perfect spot for a mid-hike dip.

BIKING BLISS

Cycling routes abound in the region, including a paved path that will take you from Celerina to St. Moritz. But the real attraction for those who enjoy adventuring on two wheels are the abundant mountain biking trails in the Engadin. If you're new to riding off-road, Chesa Rosatsch offers a bike school on the weekends, but you can also rent bikes from local shops to ride a plethora of dirt or gravel paths, including at lift-accessible Corviglia Mountain, where miles of sunny downhill trails – from technical single track to flow trails – await adrenaline junkies. Take a series of lifts up, ride down, repeat, and enjoy a refreshment at any number of huts scattered across the mountain.

clockwise from other page: Paragliding, mountain biking, hiking and golf are all popular activities during the summer months within the Engadin region





MARVEL AT ANCIENT GLACIERS

Glaciers abound in Graubunden, but one of the most popular and easily accessible is Diavolezza Glacier on the outskirts of Pontresina. A gondola whisks visitors to the edge of the glacier where you can sit, sip and relax at Berghaus Diavolezza or set out on a hike on quiet trails to explore fresh vantage points. It's cooler by the glacier; the light breeze skips over and down the mountains, picking up a chill as it tumbles down the ice, bringing a crisp sweep of air over the viewing platform, so bring a jacket and take a few moments to appreciate miles of moraine-stained flow gleaming in the summer sun.

HEAD UP TO HIKE

For sunny hikes with unrestricted views of sapphire lakes, glowing glaciers, and bright valleys flanked by mountains, ascend on the Muottas Muragl funicular to climb through forests of moss-draped evergreens to a number of trailheads that radiate



*clockwise from top:
Enjoy cool breezes on the glacier,
shopping, swimming and sailing during
your Engadin stay*

from the mountain station. The Panorama Trail (with a brief side-trip to Lake Muragl for a quick, cold dip) may be the most picturesque: Celerina rests in the green valley below, dense pine forests blanket whole hillsides, and sharp shadows hide the rocky western edges of majestic peaks in the morning sun. The Sesselbahn Languard marks the end of the route and takes hikers back down to Pontresina. ■

Engadin pass: If you plan to hike, bike, and explore, purchase the ENGADINcard 365, which offers nearly unlimited access to lifts, gondolas and transportation in the region. engadin.ch/en/engadincard-365/

Get there: From Zürich, take the UNESCO train route through Bergün for majestic mountain views along this carousel-like feat of railway engineering that loops and curves through and around mountains, valleys, and lakes. booking.engadin.ch/en

