

## Lausanne and the Canton de Vaud

Fourth largest among the cantons of Switzerland, the canton of Vaud and its capital Lausanne dominate most of the shore of Lake Geneva except for much smaller areas around Geneva itself, a bit of shoreline that lies in the canton of Valais, and the south shore which is in France. One of the earliest settled parts of Switzerland, the area now occupied by the canton of Vaud has been conquered by the Romans, the Burgundians, and various Alemannic tribes, as well as the House of Savoy and the Zaehringens of Germany. It became part of the Swiss Confederation in 1803.

Rightly referred to as the Swiss Riviera, the north shore of Lake Geneva is dotted with beautiful resort towns, world-class hotels and restaurants of the highest order, and picturesque vineyard slopes producing the light white wines of the region. The canton of Vaud is the second largest producer of wine in all Switzerland, after the Valais.

Whether you travel by train or lake boat, most of the places you'll be visiting on the lake shore are easily accessible. If you venture a little further inland, a short cab ride from the train station or a well-timed trip on one of Switzerland's outstanding Post buses will quickly bring you to your destination.

I've grouped the following suggestions around the cantonal districts, encompassing several towns and villages, in which they are situated. Be careful – visiting the Lake Geneva region in the canton of Vaud is addictive – you'll want to return over and over as I often do.

### LAUSANNE

The "Olympic City" is also the home of the world's most famous hotel school, the Ecole Hoteliere de Lausanne, and one of the world's most luxurious hotels, the Beau Rivage Palace, right on the lake shore in the old port of Ouchy. But it's not all glitz and high-ticket fare – Lausanne's newly reclaimed factory and warehouse district known as Le Flon is home to restaurants both casual and trendy, theaters, clubs, and the city's free bike-lending program. Though "something for everyone" is an outdated cliché, Lausanne offers it abundantly.

### BEAU-RIVAGE PALACE

Open since 1861, the hotel remains a monument to the opulence of the Belle Epoque. Today the hotel has just about completed its renovation which has included every square inch of front and back of the house spaces at the cost of hundreds of millions Swiss francs, as well as the addition of a luxurious spa. Its three main restaurants, La Rotonde, the hotel's gastronomic restaurant; l'Accademia, an Italian-themed restaurant; and the Café Beau Rivage afford an excellent variety of meals and snacks and encourage the visitor to think of ways to stay forever. The hotel's executive chef, Didier Schneiter supervises the whole operation, while La Rotonde is run by young chef David Sauvignet. Every first Thursday of the month La Rotonde hosts a wine dinner with outstanding Swiss and foreign winemakers such as Guido Brivio of Ticino or Jean-Charles Cazes of Bordeaux.

Beau-Rivage Palace Lausanne

Place du Port 17-19

CH-1000 Lausanne

Phone: 011 4121 613 3333

Fax: 011 4121 613 3334

Website: [www.brp.ch](http://www.brp.ch) (English, French, German, Russian, Mandarin, and Japanese versions available)

E-mail: [reservation@brp.ch](mailto:reservation@brp.ch)

### BRASSERIE ARTISANALE LAUSANNOISE

Boutique breweries abound in Switzerland, but most of them are found in the German-speaking area. That's one of the reasons I was fascinated by my visit to the Brasserie du Chateau, a small brewery with a delightful restaurant attached. The brewery produces an organic pilsner – both from the point of view of the products used and the lack of any chemical additions during the brewing process. The other beers are blanche (white), blonde, bitter, rousse (reddish), and brune (dark). Eric Bourgeaud, the friendly owner of the brasserie showed us around, then organized a fun tasting of the different beers, accompanied by a good focaccia that the restaurant prepares. There is a small choice of food to accompany the beer, but it's all good, plain, and tasty. The limited menu includes several pizzas, the focaccia we tasted, and a selection of salads. A hangout for locals mostly, this would be a fun place to spend an evening (or a late evening if you're jet-lagged) a little off the beaten path, especially if you have a taste for places that aren't touristy in the least. Plus they're open every day from 5PM until 3AM, and until 4AM on Fridays and Saturdays. I should have found out if there is a place nearby to go for coffee and croissants after the brasserie closes...

Brasserie Artisanale Lausannoise  
1, place du Tunnel  
CH-1005 Lausanne  
Phone from the US: 011 4121 312 6011  
Fax from the US: 011 4121 652 0640  
Website: [www.biereduchateau.ch](http://www.biereduchateau.ch)

#### CHOCOLATS BLONDEL

My friend Chris who lives in Zurich has been urging me for years to visit Blondel, a wonderful old-fashioned chocolate shop in Lausanne. So, the last time I was there I stopped in and was impressed with what I found. Although Blondel prepares a few different kinds of truffles and other bon bons, their main thrust is spectacularly flavored break-up chocolate we would refer to as bark. First of all there are dark, milk, and white chocolate selections, and they come in thin sheets with everything you can imagine mixed in. There is dark chocolate studded with delicious and sweet candied orange peel, milk chocolate studded with poppy seeds, and even white chocolate with pistachios. The list goes on and on. You ask for it by the 100 gram (about 3 1/2 ounces) weight, though you may of course buy more than that if you wish. I bought a bunch of different kinds to taste and they even made it back on the train to Vevey where I was staying. Later that night I savored a tiny taste of each one and was immediately seized with regret that I had not bought more. Blondel is a monument to the fact that excellent quality and simplicity go hand in hand. There are no outrageous combinations or colorful, trendy presentations – just excellent chocolate with top quality ingredients mixed in.

Blondel  
Rue du Bourg 5  
CH-1003 Lausanne  
Phone: 011 4121 323 4474

#### LAVAUX DISTRICT

One of Lake Geneva's most important wine regions, Lavaux is also home to the world-famous restaurant Le Raisin...

#### LE RAISIN

One of the most elegant restaurant in all of Switzerland, Le Raisin is worth a special trip if you are anywhere in the Lausanne, Geneva, Montreux area. Situated in Cully, about 20 minutes by car from Montreux, the restaurant also has an inn, the Auberge du Raisin, just in case you feel like pampering yourself to the maximum.

Part of the super-prestigious Relais and Chateaux group, the hotel and restaurant strive for perfection in every gesture. The quiet and understated dining room features tables well set apart and a feeling quiet well being – I wanted to spend the night right in the dining room.

Once you get a look at the menu, you might want to do the same. Every day there are several set menus and an a la carte menu that features the finest dishes you'll find anywhere.

One menu was composed entirely of fresh and salt-water fish dishes with crayfish, red mullet, and Mediterranean bass. Another featured lobster, sole and guinea hen. Menus are a great way to have the best the chef has to offer and still avoid the agonizing choices of the a la carte menu. But I was brave and confront the choices of the a la carte menu. I was rewarded with two magnificent dishes: a grilled red mullet cooked to perfection in an oil-based sauce and sautéed sweetbreads in a slightly piquant sauce – the two dishes complemented each other perfectly. Dessert was poached nectarines with nectarine blanc manger (a rich jellied cream) and ice cream flavored with fresh thyme, sounds odd, but an excellent juxtaposition of sweet and aromatic flavors.

You may have noticed that there weren't a lot of native-Swiss sounding dishes. I struggled with this a little myself until I realized that this is a restaurant that utilizes the best local and imported ingredients to prepare an innovative cuisine based on many styles and influences. Many restaurants of this type the world over offer menus based on the same idea, and let's face it, even if you adore Swiss food as I do, you don't really need to eat roesti every day!

Don't forget to reserve if you don't want to be disappointed – restaurants of this quality don't have many seats and when they're full, they're full for the evening.

Le Raisin  
1 Place de l'Hotel de Ville  
CH-1096 Cully  
Phone: 011 4121 799 2131  
Fax: 011 4121 799 2501  
Website: [www.relaischateaux.fr/raisin](http://www.relaischateaux.fr/raisin)

E-mail: [raisin@relaischateaux.fr](mailto:raisin@relaischateaux.fr)

#### VEVEY DISTRICT

The quiet and elegant town of Vevey, once the home of Charlie Chaplin, heads up this district which also includes Montreux, Chardonne, and La Tour de Peilz at the end of the lake. Don't miss the outdoor market in Vevey every Tuesday and Saturday morning.

#### HOTEL DU LAC

Newly renovated, the Hotel du Lac's outdoor terraces stretch right down to the lake shore. A short walk from the Vevey train station, it's also a great place for lunch, dinner, or Sunday buffet brunch if you're in the area. Chef Fabrice Taulier prepares a finely-wrought cuisine faithful to the traditional foods of the area, and emphasizing lake fish, wild mushrooms from the slopes above the lake, and local meats and cheeses. Pastry chef Christian Schmocker who has baked around in such illustrious Swiss establishments as the Pont de Brent crafts desserts that are at once delicate and exploding with flavor and texture. Right now he's featuring a mandarin orange frozen soufflé with butter-roasted spice cake and a ginger sauce – alone worth the trip as far as I'm concerned. The recent publication of the Swiss Gault and Millau guide for 2008 awarded 14 points to the newly reopened kitchens of the hotel – they're definitely moving in the right direction.

Hotel du Lac

1 Rue d'Italie

CH-1800 Vevey

Phone: 011 4121 925 0606

Fax: 011 4121 925 0607

Website: [www.grandhoteldulac.ch](http://www.grandhoteldulac.ch) (French, English, German)

E-mail link on the website

#### CHARLOT'S SHOES

Many of you may already know that the late Charlie Chaplin was a longtime resident of Vevey and raised his considerable family there. There are several monuments to his memory in Vevey, but I think the most amusing ones are his famous creaky and bent shoes rendered in chocolate at the Confiserie Poyet. About seven years ago Blaise Poyet, the owner of the confiserie wanted to do a Charlie Chaplin related chocolate, but found that all of the most obviously identifiable Chaplin symbols were already under license to others. That's when he hit upon the idea of rendering the shoes in chocolate with a creamy and crunchy filling of chocolate cream and caramelized pine nuts. The shoes are available in a variety of different styles of packaging and are a great souvenir of Vevey, whether or not you are a fan of Charlot's silent movies.

Confiserie Poyet

Rue du Theatre 8

CH-1800 Vevey

Phone from the US: 011 4121 921 3737

Fax from the US: 011 4121 922 4430

Website: [www.confiseriepoyet.ch](http://www.confiseriepoyet.ch)

E-mail: [info@confiseriepoyet.ch](mailto:info@confiseriepoyet.ch)

#### SWEET INDULGENCE IN LA TOUR DE PEILZ

The Confiserie Augnet is a sweet spot in the lovely village of La Tour de Peilz (pronounced "pay"), right on the shores of Lake Geneva. With over 20 different individual cakes and pastries, 15 different sandwiches and savory pastries, over 40 different chocolate bonbons, to say nothing of the large cakes and ices, chef-owner Jean-Marie Augnet has created a destination for all lovers of fine sweets and chocolates. A member of the prestigious Relais Desserts group of fine pastry shops throughout the world, Augnet hosted a meeting in April, 2002, for all the Relais Desserts members on a subject dear to his heart, milk chocolate.

Though it was mid-morning when I visited, I couldn't resist trying a couple of Augnet's specialties. I tasted Le Metis, a chocolate meringue base with vanilla cream and a bittersweet chocolate mousse and chocolate glaze, and Le Printanier, a light lady finger base with a creamy custard filling, berries and an almond meringue topping. I had to restrain myself remembering that lunch was but an hour or so away, but I could have gone on and on tasting Augnet's delicate and flavorful sweets. These are beautiful creations that don't emphasize presentation over flavor, though they are all lovely to behold. If you're in the neighborhood, I strongly recommend a mid-morning or afternoon stop, these desserts and pastries are among the best you'll find anywhere.

Confiserie Augnet (Closed Monday and the first 2 weeks of August.)

2 Grand Rue

CH 1814 La Tour de Peilz

Phone: 011 4121 944 6075

Fax: 011 4121 944 6063

Website: [www.patisserie-augnet.com](http://www.patisserie-augnet.com)

E-mail: [patisserie.augnet@bluewin.ch](mailto:patisserie.augnet@bluewin.ch)

#### GOOD WINE IN CHARDONNE

Chardonne is a sleepy little town set amidst the vineyards on the slopes above Lake Geneva. The Café au Bon Vin is the town's restaurant, serving gutsy regional specialties in a warm, friendly atmosphere. The day I visited for lunch last spring, I think my guide and I were the only people there who don't live and work in the village or vineyards – it's a typical local hangout with great food, reasonable prices and tons of atmosphere – just what I always crave when I'm traveling, especially when I've had it with fancy restaurants.

Thierry Sax, the owner, not only cooks all the food, but he also makes many of the cured meats he serves, for which the restaurant is justly well known. Sax showed us a ham that he had been aging for 5 years, though he said that he would probably have to soak it for a week before trying to slice and serve it. We began our lunch with some slightly less aged cured meats and sausages, then continued on with that Vaudois specialty, Malakoffs, a kind of cheese dumpling deep fried and served with pickled cornichons and onions. I love anything that has melted cheese in it, so I was very happy with my lunch that day. Dessert was a house-made frozen dessert flavored with a dark syrup of local cooking pears, called poires a Botzi, also used in nearby canton Fribourg.

If you wish to try the local wine, don't worry, the Café au Bon Vin carries 26 varieties of the wines produced only steps from the restaurant, and you won't be disappointed.

Café au Bon Vin (Closed Saturday in spring and summer; always closed Sunday)

Helena and Thierry Sax

Route du Village

CH-1803 Chardonne

Phone: 011 4121 921 2704

#### MONTREUX

Who hasn't heard of the world-famous Montreux jazz festival? It's also the home of the Montreux Palace Hotel, one of my favorite ways to pamper myself silly, and the spectacular Zurcher pastry shop, just a conveniently short walk from the hotel. Just a link for each – you'll love them both.

Montreux Palace Hotel: <http://www.fairmont.com/montreux>

Confiserie Zurcher: <http://www.montreux.ch/zurcher/confiserie.html>

#### L'ETIVAZ, A NEW OLD CHEESE

I love the district name of Le Pays d'en Haut (the land up above) and its capital town Chateau d'Oex (pronounced like "day"), not only for its fresh mountain air and picturesque beauty, but for its fabulous cheese, L'Etivaz (the z is silent). You can visit and taste at the Maison de L'Etivaz just a little southeast of Chateau d'Oex. You'll need a car for this excursion, but it's worth it. You'll find a cheese with all the intensity of Gruyere, but with a mild and buttery undertone, it's almost contradictory. L'Etivaz is one of the new breed of artisan-made Swiss cheeses where everything is done as in the past – the milk is heated in a copper cauldron over an open fire, only natural rennet dissolved in some of the whey from the previous day's cheese is used to coagulate the milk, and there is a minimum of mechanical means used in the process. At the dairy I visited several years ago, only an electrically powered "harp" was used to cut the curd into the appropriately small size before it was drained by hand in cheese cloths and packed into wooden molds. After draining, the cheese is unmolded, marked, and sent to the main aging cellars near Chateau d'Oex.

Website: [www.etivaz-aoc.ch](http://www.etivaz-aoc.ch) (in French, has a map for the visit near Chateau d'Oex)

#### ORBE DISTRICT: THE WINE TRAIL

The Cotes de l'Orbe, along with la Cote, Lavaux, and Chablais, is one of the four great wine-growing regions of canton Vaud. Chasselas, Pinot Noir and Gamay are the principal grapes grown in the region, along with some lesser-known local varieties. The vineyard area was first open to hikers about a year ago and has welcomed visitors with the typical

warmth of the region. Thirty-five kilometers of walking trails crisscross 169 hectares of vineyards, encompassing the districts of Cossonay, Yverdon, and Orbe. Either end of the trail is accessible from the train stations of Chavornay at the beginning or Essert-sous-Champvent at the end.

The trail is peppered with wine cellars where tastings are available. The route includes a trek through the Bavois forest, follows the Talent river and the Entreroches canal, scales the Mormont mountain, and passes through Eclepens, Pompales, and Montcherand. Right before the end at Essert-sous-Champvent, the trail passes through the vineyards of Valeyres-sous-Rances at Method. Of course, you're not obliged to make the entire hike. Starting at either end you can spend a few hours walking through the vineyards before turning back to your point of origin. I suggest having the tastings on the way back, however, especially if it's a hot day.

For more information contact:

Office du Tourisme du Canton de Vaud

Avenue d'Ouchy 60

CH-1000 Lausanne 6

Phone: 011 4121 613 2626

Fax: 011 4121 613 2620

Website: [www.lake-geneva-region.ch](http://www.lake-geneva-region.ch)

#### WINE DETAILS AND A CHATEAU

The canton of Vaud is second only to the Valais in the size of its vineyard area under cultivation. Producing mostly white wines from the Chasselas grape, there is also an excellent red wine called Salvagnin, made from Gamay, Pinot Noir, or a combination of those grapes.

The main regions producing white wines and the recognized appellations in those regions are:

1. Lavaux: Including the wines Lutry, Villette, Epesses, Saint-Saphorin, Chardonne, Vevey-Montreux, Dezaley, and Calamin.
2. Chablais: Including the wines Villeneuve, Yvorne, Aigle, Ollon, and Bex.
3. La Cote: Including the wines Morges, Aubonne, Fechy, Perroy, Mont-sur-Rolle, Tartegnin, Coteaux de Vincy, Bursinel, Vinzel, Luins, Begnins, and Nyon.
4. Bonvillars: Including a wine of the same name, plus Cotes de l'Orbe and Vully (Vaud).

A great place to learn more about the traditions of Vaudois wine making is also one of the most impressive wine museums in the world. Housed in the Chateau d'Aigle, not far from Montreux, and surrounded by the Chablais region vineyards of the same name, the chateau is worth a visit if for nothing else than its grandeur and beauty. I especially liked the collections of wine glasses, carafes and bottles going back hundreds of years.

Chateau d'Aigle

CH-1860 Aigle

Phone: 011 4124 466 2130

Fax: 011 4124 466 2131

Website: [www.swisscastles.ch/vald/aigle](http://www.swisscastles.ch/vald/aigle)

E-mail: [info@chateauaigle.ch](mailto:info@chateauaigle.ch)

## RECIPE: TARTE AU VIN A LA VAUDOISE

(Wine Tart from the Vaud)

This is a fun and easy recipe for a kind of sweet wine tart. There isn't a deep rich filling here – more like a thin layer of a lightly thickened and sweetened wine on a sweet crust. Though it's not traditional, I think it's great with sliced strawberries, or even a combination of berries.

Makes one 9-inch tart, about 8 servings

### Sweet Dough

1 cup all-purpose flour

3 tablespoons sugar

Pinch salt

1 /2 teaspoon baking powder

4 tablespoons (1 /2 stick) cold unsalted butter, cut into 8 pieces

1 large egg

### Wine Filling

1 /2 cup sugar

1 /4 cup all-purpose flour

1 /4 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 cup Vaudois white wine, such as Dezaley

2 tablespoons unsalted butter

One 9-inch diameter removable bottom tart pan

1. Set a rack in the lowest level of the oven and remove the rack(s) above. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.
  2. For the dough, combine the dry ingredients in a food processor fitted with the metal blade. Pulse several times to mix. Add butter and pulse repeatedly until butter is fully mixed in and the mixture is powdery. Add the egg and pulse repeatedly until the dough forms a ball.
  3. Roll the dough on a floured surface and fit it into the pan, trimming the dough even with the top of the pan.
  4. In a mixing bowl, whisk together the sugar, flour and cinnamon. Strew about a third on the crust. Whisk the wine into the remaining flour and sugar mixture.
  5. Dot the flour and sugar in the crust with butter, then place the pan in the oven. Pour on the wine mixture (having no racks above the pan means you can leave the tart in place and not have to push the rack with the tart and its liquid filling on it into the oven).
  6. Bake the tart for about 20 to 25 minutes, or until the crust is baked through and the filling is set and slightly puffed.
  7. Serve warm or at room temperature with plenty of the wine used to make it, well chilled.
- end