

The success story of public transport in Switzerland.

They are virtually inseparable – Switzerland and its remarkable public transport system. Amazing feats were achieved as far back as the 19th century: the first Swiss lake steamer; the world's longest railway tunnel of its time; the first mountain railway.

First, there was the boat cruise.



18 June 1823 saw the launching of the first Swiss steamboat, the “Guillaume Tell” on Lake Geneva. By maintaining no fewer than eight historic paddle steamers, Lake Geneva Cruises steward a unique cultural heritage up to this day. These gems from the Belle Époque have plied the waters of the largest inland lake of Central Europe for 100 years now – passing by the terraced vineyards of the Lavaux (a UNESCO world heritage site), the distant snow-capped peaks of the Vaudois Alps and the fabulous Chillon water castle.

Then, in 1837, the “Stadt Luzern” started on its maiden voyage on Lake Lucerne. Even today, five of the historic steamboats of the golden era at the beginning of the 20th century still plough the multi-branched lake at the heart of Switzerland.

Thomas Cook: The package tour pioneer.



Not much later, in June 1863, the British tourism pioneer Thomas Cook set a milestone by organising the first-ever conducted package tour in the history of Swiss tourism. 60 intrepid travellers set off from London towards Geneva, Chamonix, across the Bernese Oberland, and on to Lucerne and Neuchâtel. Their methods of transportation: trains, horse-drawn carriages and even mules. At the turn of the last century, both the rapid development of traffic routes over Alpine passes and the opening of mountain railways paved the way for large-scale Alpine tourism in Switzerland.

Europe's first cog railway and the world's first cableway.



During the 19th century, adventure-seeking travellers urged on not only the construction of railway lines but also the development of mountain summits. At the very heart of Switzerland, Europe's first mountain cog railway saw its inauguration: the Vitznau-Rigi Railway. To this day, the Rigi (1,797 metres a.s.l.), located right on the shores of Lake Lucerne, remains one of the country's most popular excursion destinations. Other pioneering achievements followed – for example in Grindelwald in the Bernese Oberland: In 1908, the world's first passenger transportation aerial cableway, the “Wetterhorn-Aufzug”, made its maiden voyage. 1912 saw the

completion of the famous Jungfrau Railway leading up to Jungfrauoch – at 3,454 metres still Europe's highest-altitude railway station.

Breakthrough: Traversing the Alps on rails.



The inauguration of the 15-kilometre Gotthard tunnel and the Gotthard line around 1882 marked a literal breakthrough. Following the construction of this most important north-south connection across the Alps, famous mountain resorts such as Davos, St. Moritz, and Zermatt became accessible via rail. As only the third railway route worldwide to be awarded this honour, the Albula and Bernina line was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2008. After the First World War and up to 1962, the fashionable Simplon-Orient Express operated from Paris via Lausanne and the Valais to Venice and on to Istanbul. In 1906, the Simplon tunnel – bearing the name of the mountain it cuts through – overtook the Gotthard tunnel as the world’s longest railway tunnel. 2016 saw Switzerland set yet another world record: the opening of the 57-kilometre Gotthard Base Tunnel.

From stagecoach to PostBus.



On the world’s densest public transport network, the end of the train tracks need not signify the end of the journey: PostBuses enmesh the country in a finely woven network. Swiss streets are hard to imagine without these yellow passenger vehicles. The first PostBus route was launched near Berne in 1906. The second followed in 1919 over the Simplon pass. By 1930, the Swiss PostBus fleet had all but completely replaced the horse-drawn stagecoach all across the country. Nowadays, regional bus services complement the PostBus network.

Tradition teams up with high-tech.



Tradition and high-tech go hand-in-hand in Swiss public transport. A historic funicular dating back to the year 1893 takes visitors up to the mid-station of Stanserhorn. From there, guests change to the futuristic Cabrio cableway. This cableway – inaugurated in 2012 – offers the world’s first open-air rooftop platform. The journey up Stanserhorn thus becomes a remarkable synthesis of nostalgia and cutting-edge mountain railway technology.

Everything is connected: Switzerland ticks to a regular interval timetable.



Switzerland never ceases to invest in the improvement of its public transport network. In 1982, a revolutionary sort of timetable according to a Dutch model was introduced: the regular interval timetable. On this timetable, all trains of regional and long-distance lines operate in regular, fixed intervals – every hour or even at a higher frequency. Thus, connections can be optimally coordinated and transfer times reduced. Actually, the Lake Zurich shoreline railway had successfully used a similar system since 1968. The scheme finally extended to the entire country and even today, 40 years later, has not lost any of its precision.

The Gotthard Base Tunnel.



In 1992, the Swiss people voted for the construction of the Gotthard Base Tunnel. Thus, the foundation for a fast and reliable north-south connection was laid – another piece of pioneering history: for small Switzerland, for Europe, and for the entire world. 17 years after the start of construction works, the Gotthard Base Tunnel finally became operational by the end of 2016. The railway tunnel is a technical masterpiece breaking every record: 57 kilometres in length and as deep as 2,300 under the mountain.

The New Alpine Transversal has been completed.



With the commissioning of the 15.4 kilometre-long Ceneri Base Tunnel in December 2020, Europe moves a little closer together. After the opening of the Gotthard Base Tunnel (57 km) in 2016, the Ceneri Base Tunnel completes the New Alpine Transversal (NEAT). Thus, the continuous flat railway from Altdorf to Lugano becomes reality. Since trains can reach top speeds of up to 250 km/h on this new line, the travel time from Zurich to Milano is shortened from 3 h 40 min to 3 h 17 min. For travellers as well as freight traffic, this is a fast, comfortable and environmentally friendly alternative.

The history of Swiss public transport.

- 1823 “Guillaume Tell” – first steamer on a Swiss lake (Lausanne–Geneva)
- 1847 “Spanisch-Brötli Railway” – first railway line in Switzerland (Zurich–Baden)
- 1857 Foundation of "direct traffic", including standardisation of fares between North East Railways (Schweizerische Nordostbahn NOB) and United Swiss Railways (Vereinigte Schweizerbahnen VSB)
- 1863 Thomas Cook – first conducted package tour of Switzerland
- 1871 Vitznau-Rigi railway – first cog railway in Europe
- 1877 Lausanne-Ouchy–Lausanne-Flon – first funicular in Switzerland
- 1882 Gotthard railway tunnel (with 15 km the world’s longest railway tunnel of its time)
- 1888 Vevey–Montreux–Chillon – first electric tram in Switzerland
- 1889 Pilatus Railway – still the steepest cog railway in the world (48‰ gradient)
- 1891 Brienz Rothorn Railway – still operating as a steam-driven cog railway
- 1898 Gornergrat Railway – first electric cog railway in Switzerland
- 1902 Foundation of Swiss Federal Railways (SBB) – Merger of several private railway companies
- 1906 First regular PustBus service, Berne – Detligen
- 1910 St. Moritz–Tirano (Bernina Railway)
- 1912 Jungfrau Railway, section Eismeer–Jungfrauoch – Top of Europe
- 1930 Maiden voyage of Glacier Express
- 1952 Launching of “Swiss Holiday Pass”, forerunner to today’s Swiss Travel Passes

- 1956 Introduction of 2-class system (replaces 3-class system)
- 1960 Swiss Federal Railways (SBB) complete full electrification
- 1967 Schilthorn cableway
- 1973 Maiden voyage of Bernina Express Panoramic Train.
- 1976 Maiden voyage of panoramic coaches on MOB (today: GoldenPass Line)
- 1979 Maiden voyage of Panoramic Express MOB (today: GoldenPass Line)
- 1982 Introduction of regular interval timetable
- 1989 Launching of “Swiss Pass” for tourists from abroad (replacing “Swiss Holiday Card”)
- 2004 Implementation of Project Rail 2000 (new timetable for 90% of all trains)
- 2008 Albula- and Bernina line of the Rhaetian Railway are recognised as UNESCO World Heritage
- 2008 First subway of Switzerland in Lausanne. World’s steepest metro.
- 2014 New cabin for TITLIS Rotair gondola lift – the world’s first revolving gondola cabin
- 2015 Swiss Pass re-named Swiss Travel Pass
- 2016 Entering into service of the Gotthard Base Tunnel – the world’s longest train tunnel
- 2020 Inauguration of Ceneri Base Tunnel. Shortening of travel time Zürich–Milano
- 2022 Launching of the new premium panoramic train: GoldenPass Express (Montreux–Interlaken)

Pictures are ready for download [here](#).



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