

A wide-angle photograph of a mountain valley. In the foreground, two runners are seen from behind, running on a grassy slope. The runner on the left is wearing a bright pink tank top and black shorts, while the runner on the right is wearing a light grey t-shirt and black shorts. The middle ground is a vast, green valley with a riverbed visible. In the background, steep, rocky mountains rise under a clear sky. The overall scene is bright and sunny, suggesting a clear day.

# Mountain's Majesty

EVERY SEASON IS PEAK SEASON IN  
**SWITZERLAND**—A RUNNER'S  
YEAR-ROUND PARADISE.  
BY SAVITA IYER



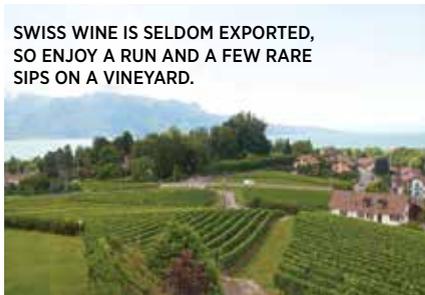
THE RUNNERS PICTURED HERE WEAR SHOES FROM ON-RUNNING, THE COUNTRY'S ONLY ATHLETIC FOOTWEAR BRAND AVAILABLE IN THE U.S.

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Switzerland's staggering mountain ranges—snow-capped in the winter, lush and green in the summer—provide a breathtaking panorama for any traveler. But for runners with a bit of wanderlust, this scenery isn't just a backdrop—it's a majestic stomping ground.

Former Swiss marathoner and world-class triathlete Oliver Bernhard grew up running up and down the peaks surrounding his childhood home. Even today, the five-time Ironman winner says he's astounded by the loveliness. "I'm blown away by the beauty of the landscape, and I enjoy the views from those hills as much as I did when I was young."

For runners who thrive on the outdoors, there are few places on earth more ideal than clean, green



SWISS WINE IS SELDOM EXPORTED, SO ENJOY A RUN AND A FEW RARE SIPS ON A VINEYARD.

Switzerland. It may be a small country (roughly one-tenth the size of California), but with its pure air and spectacular terrain, it packs a full punch, with crystalline lakes, winding rivers, verdant valleys and more than 50,000 kilometers of kept-up trails. Plus, Bernhard says the country's compactness lends to its allure: "Things are often not that far apart, so you can really have that beach-mountain experience here."

#### Priceless Views

For many Americans, Switzerland conjures thoughts of giant banks and secret accounts. But for many finance professionals, running helps bring balance to a demanding career. Lydia Gallwey first tried the sport following the recession.



LAKE GENEVA'S WATERFRONT OFFERS MULTIPLE PEDESTRIAN PATHS AND A BREATHTAKING VIEW.

Shortly after the 2008 investment scandal created by once-prominent financier Bernie Madoff—an event that threw the entire global financial system into total disarray—Gallwey, who works for Spanish bank Santander in Geneva, was so stressed out in her job that she desperately needed some kind of an outlet. Running proved to be the perfect release, and today, Gallwey runs regularly, both in the countryside, where she lives, as well as in downtown Geneva.

She says that running through the vineyard near her home helps her "appreciate the different smells and the way the earth feels beneath my feet and how that changes with every season." But she enjoys pounding the pavement



#### TWO WEGS

When choosing trails in Switzerland, you'll want to know your wanders from your bergs. A trail indicated as *wanderweg* (meandering path) means it's pat and easy to traverse—good for running. *Bergweg* (mountain road) is tough, technical and may involve some hand-over-hand climbing.



WOMEN RACE THROUGH THE STREETS OF BERN.



SAUSAGE FROM A STREET STAND MAKES FOR A TASTY POST-RUN LUNCH.

downtown just as much. “I love the way the sun’s rays reflect off Geneva’s Lac Lemman. I love seeing the ducks on the water and hearing the city sounds around me,” she says.

### City Escapes

Swiss cities, like Geneva, Lausanne, Bern and Zurich, have all the trappings of international urban centers. They’re hustling and bustling and have great restaurants, shops and nightlife.

Yet each city is also culturally unique: The chic, well-heeled crowds that elegantly step through the streets of Geneva, only three hours from Paris by train, embody that French *je ne sais quoi*. In Zurich and in Bern, the nation’s capital, the singsong pitter-patter of Swiss German flows easily over beer and bratwurst. Down in Lugano—the main city in Ticino, Switzerland’s southernmost canton, which borders Italy—it’s *la dolce vita* on the piazzas and the terraces of the open-air cafes.

The graceful architecture, cobblestone streets and many tree-lined boulevards of these metropolises make them ideal terrain for runners. What’s more—they’re smaller, cleaner and greener than so many other cities in the world, says Florian Koch, a professional athletics trainer with Swiss Athletics, which makes running on the city’s sidewalks and through



A PLAZA IN BERN IS THE PERFECT PLACE TO REST TIRED LEGS.



SWITZERLAND BOASTS LAKESIDE PATHS APLENTY.



GET LOST ON A BERGWEG IN THE ALPS.

the parks easier and more pleasurable.

All of the country’s cities have a river or a lake that’s wonderful to run by and just as delicious in the summer months to plunge into to cool off whenever possible. Plus, it’s easy to get off-road when nature beckons.

### Dirt Culture

Pierre Morath, a professional runner, coach and filmmaker, says that Switzerland boasts a unique and deeply ingrained trail culture. “Unlike in other European countries, trail running is a very important sport here,” he says. “No matter where you are in Switzerland, you can walk, trek or run, and this is very particular to this country.”

Indeed, Switzerland offers more than 100 complete trails of varying degrees

of difficulty. For serious adventure-seekers, there’s no greater thrill than taking part in one of the country’s famous mountain runs. These arduous half marathons, marathons and ultras all take place year-round (although the majority are in the spring and summer) at different high-altitude locations across the country, attracting athletes from all over the world.

How hard are we talking? The popular Glacier 3000 race starts in the mountain town of Gstaad and climbs more than 2,000 vertical feet—up pat-dirt trails and mountain paths before finishing on the tip-top of a real-life glacier—proof that in this magical country, you really can go from green fields to ice in a few hours on foot. **WR**



### Frau Runner

The city of Geneva has an unlikely hero: On a cold December night in the year 1602, Mere Royaume was standing at her stove and stirring up a pot of vegetable soup, when suddenly she heard a scuffling outside. From her window she spotted soldiers from the neighboring French region of Savoy silently scaling the walls surrounding Geneva, armed and ready to take over the city.

Immediately, Royaume grabbed her cauldron of soup—and flung it out. Scalded by the boiling hot liquid, the startled soldiers screamed. Their shrieks roused the sleeping citizens of Geneva, who dashed forth from their beds to save their beloved city from a hostile takeover.

Every December, the city celebrates the Escalade in her honor. Citizens, dressed up in period costumes, dish out cups of warm vegetable soup and mulled wine to passersby. The windows of Geneva’s famous chocolate shops proudly display cauldrons fashioned entirely out of cocoa and filled to the brim with marzipan vegetables.

But one of the greatest highlights of the weekend-long Escalade festivities is the Course de l’Escalade, a fun race that’s open to all ages of runners, from 6 years old and up. Split into 4K for women and 7K for men, the run takes place through the city of Geneva on the narrow, winding roads of the old town. Pro runner Pierre Morath says, “It has a carnivalesque quality, because people dress up in all kinds of fancy costumes, so it’s a lot of fun as well!”