

WorldDenver Presents:

# STAYCATIONS

a new way to travel the world without leaving your home

## SPELUNKING IN SWITZERLAND

*High on a hill was a lonely goatherd  
Lay ee odl lay ee odl lay hee hoo*

Alpine shepherds used yodeling (switching voice between a low-pitch to a high-pitch) to communicate in the mountain ranges, from one hill to the other, or to bring in the cows.

Roman Emperor Julian was quoted in a 4th-century rant about the “wild, shrieking songs” emanating from the Alpine region, but yodeling lives on today as a cultural icon.

Outside of its unique mountain music, Switzerland is also known for cash, cheese, chocolate, clocks, and the signed 1815 neutrality agreement that kept the Swiss out of both World Wars. In fact, some say the safest place to be during a nuclear war would be

Switzerland as the country is well prepared, with enough nuclear fallout shelters to accommodate the entire Swiss population. It's required by law that everyone has access to one of these heavily armoured shelters in their building and the Swiss military also keeps fully stocked artillery bunkers disguised as charming country homes, right in the middle of villages. It is also said that all the major entry points to Switzerland (like tunnels and bridges) are wired to explode at the first sign of a foreign invasion.

## CULTURE

In a small village tucked in an Alpine valley surrounded by meadows with grazing cows, the Kaltbach Cave is a sandstone labyrinth that was formed over 22 million years ago from a prehistoric seabed. Its name means “cold river,” and there is an actual river running through the cavern, where the mineral-rich air, consistent humidity, and cool temperature—which stays in the low 50s F year-round—create the perfect atmosphere for aging cheese naturally. The porous sandstone actually helps maintain the humidity levels—giving off moisture when the air is too dry, and absorbing it when it becomes too saturated. Only wheels of Emmentaler and Gruyère that receive a minimum of 19 out of 20 points make it to the cave, and once there, they'll spend up to 300 days being carefully tended to by cellar masters, who wash, turn, and test the wheels methodically. During this process, only pure water and cultures are used to care for the cheeses, and over time they'll develop a distinctive dark-brown to black colored rind, which is a marker of optimal natural aging from the cave microflora. Take a tour of the cave [here](#)!

## CUISINE

If you were to ask the author of Staycations, a perfect afternoon would be a picnic of assorted cheeses, maybe some fruit and crackers, and a lovely wine paired with a beautiful mountain view. While the cheeses referenced are Swiss in origin and aged in the Kaltbach Cave, a local gourmet grocery is likely to offer most, if not all options! Kaltbach Creamy, with its smooth texture, is the ideal partner for sweet flavors such as raspberries, blackberries, pineapple, and honey. The sweet sharpness of the fruit cuts through the creamy cheese providing a perfect balance of sweet and savory. Pair with light and bright beverages such as a Gose or Chardonnay. Emmentaler makes a delicious partner for savory dishes, perfect with mushrooms, melted within potatoes au gratin, and even served within Indian dishes such as naan bread with chutney. Try serving dried apricots alongside your Emmentaler for a satisfying combination and pair with Cabernet Sauvignon or a gin and tonic. Gruyère, perhaps the most well known of the three, has notes of dried stone fruit, black tea, and spice and pairs well with the surprising option of white chocolate as the nutty, Gruyère delightfully balances with the creamy vanilla sweetness. Enjoy with a Grenache or a single malt Scotch whisky. Learn more about how cheeses are aged in the [Kaltbach Cave with Cavemaster Michu](#).

## BEVERAGE

Sundays in Switzerland mean no mowing the lawn, no laundry hanging outside, no hammering, nothing that can be heard, be seen, or overall disturb the peace. It is frowned upon to work on Sundays, so the Swiss commit to being lazy, locking the doors to read a book, or spending a quiet day with friends and family enjoying a shared meal and Swiss wine, one of Switzerland's best-kept secrets. For those who prefer their beverages to be a bit more adventurous, [try the Swiss Fizz](#), a cocktail featuring absinthe. This high percentage spirit was very popular in the 19th century, and in 1907, Switzerland forbade the production of absinthe by law, because the drink was considered to cause hallucinations and brain damage. In 2005, the ban on absinthe production was lifted, and today several distilleries in Switzerland are producing and distributing high-quality absinthe.