

Lake Geneva & Vaud



East of Geneva, Western Europe's biggest lake stretches like a giant liquid mirror between French-speaking Canton de Vaud (pronounced Voh; Waadt in German) on its northern shore and France to the south.

Known to most as Lake Geneva, to Francophones (except some in Geneva!) it is Lac Léman. Lined by the elegant city of Lausanne and a phalanx of pretty smaller towns, the Swiss side of the lake presents the marvellous emerald spectacle of tightly ranked vineyards spreading in terraces up the steep hillsides of the Lavaux area. These grapes and those grown to the west of Lausanne produce some fine tipples and it is possible to visit some *caveaux* (cellars). Modest beaches, often backed by peaceful woodland, dot the lake, and around Montreux the climate is mild enough for palm trees to thrive.

Jutting out over the waters of the lake near Montreux is the fairytale Château de Chillon, the first of many that await exploration a short way inland.

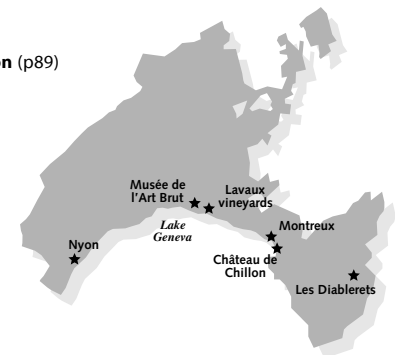
Lake-lovers can head north to Yverdon-les-Bains, which sits on the southern tip of Lac de Neuchâtel and offers the chance to relax in tempting thermal baths.

At its southeast corner the canton rises into the magnificent mountain country of the Alpes Vaudoises (Vaud Alps), a hikers' paradise in spring and summer, and skiers' haven in winter. Those addicted to the white stuff can even indulge in moderate summer skiing across the impressive Les Diablerets glacier.

In July, music rocks the lake with Montreux's international jazz get-together and Nyon's multifaceted Paléo music fest.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Marvelling at the fairy-tale **Château de Chillon** (p89) near Montreux
- Pondering the bizarre in Lausanne's unique **Musée de l'Art Brut** (p81)
- Touring the **Lavaux vineyards** (p88) east of Lausanne
- Hiking and skiing around **Les Diablerets** (p95) in the striking Alpes Vaudoises
- Grooving along to music festivals: jazz in **Montreux** (p90) and rock at the Paléo Festival in **Nyon** (p87)



■ POPULATION: 632,000

■ AREA: 3212 SQ KM

■ LANGUAGE: FRENCH

History

As early as 58 BC, Caesar's troops had penetrated what is now southwest Switzerland. In the succeeding centuries a mix of Celtic tribes and Romans rubbed along in peace and prosperity. Aventicum (today Avenches) became the capital, with as many as 20,000 inhabitants, and numerous other towns (such as Lausanne) flourished.

By the 4th century AD, the Romans had largely pulled out of Switzerland and Germanic tribes stepped into the vacuum. Christianised Burgundians arrived in the southwest in the 5th century and picked up the Vulgar Latin tongue that was the precursor to French. Absorbed by the Franks,

in 1032 Vaud became part of the Holy Roman Empire.

In the 12th and 13th centuries the Dukes of Savoy slowly assumed control of Vaud and embarked on the construction of impressive lakeside castles.

The Canton of Bern appreciatively took over those castles when, in 1536, it declared war on Savoy and seized Vaud. Despite the tendency of Bern's bailiffs to siphon off local wealth, by the 18th century Lausanne (the area's capital) was a thriving centre.

The French Revolution in 1789 had heavy consequences for its neighbours. On the urging of Frédéric César de la Harpe, leader of the Liberal Party, the Directorate in Paris placed Vaud under its protection

in December 1797. The following month, Vaud was declared independent. In 1803 Napoleon imposed the Act of Mediation that created the Swiss Confederation in which Vaud, with Lausanne as its capital, became one of six separate cantons.

Orientation & Information

Vaud straddles the three main geographical regions of Switzerland: the Jura mountains in the west, the relatively flat plain of the Plateau Central (Mittelland), and a smidgen of the Alps in the southeast.

Along its northern flank it is bordered by the Neuchâtel and Fribourg cantons. To the south lies France (briefly interrupted by the frontier with Geneva canton) and to the southeast the Valais, while to the east the German part of the country starts with the canton of Bern.

The **Canton de Vaud tourist office** (Map p78; ☎ 021 613 26 26; www.lake-geneva-region.ch; Ave d'Ouchy 60, 1006, Ouchy, Lausanne; 🕒 8am-5.30pm Mon-Fri) provides regional information, including hiking- and cycling-route brochures.

For information on Avenches and Payerne, which are part of Vaud, see p106.

In addition to the normal Swiss national holidays, the people of Vaud also take off St Basil's Day (2 January) and the Federal Day of Fasting (Lundi du Jeûne) on the third Monday in September.

Getting Around

The **Regional Pass** (7-day pass 1st/2nd class Sfr155/107) provides free bus and train travel throughout the canton three days in seven, and half-price travel on the other four days. It also gives 50% off CGN boat services as well as 25% off some cable cars (eg up to Les Diablerets glacier). There is a five-day version with two days of free travel (1st/2nd class Sfr129/89). Holders of one of the various Swiss rail passes (see p333) receive a 20% discount off the Regional Pass.

LAUSANNE

pop 116,330 / elevation 495m

This hilly city (loh-san), Switzerland's fifth largest (and third most visited after Geneva and Zürich), enjoys a blessed location. The medieval centre is dominated by one of the country's grandest Gothic cathedrals and,

among the museums, the unusual l'Art Brut collection stands out. Sports fans will love the Musée Olympique. Throughout the year Lausanne's citizens are treated to a busy arts calendar.

History

The Romans first set up camp on the lake at Vidy, a key halt on the route from Italy to Gaul that came to be known as Lousonna. In the face of an invasion by the Alemanni in the 4th century AD, Lousonna's inhabitants fled to the hilly inland site that became the heart of medieval Lausanne.

In 1529 Guillaume Farel, one of Calvin's followers, arrived in town preaching the Reformation but it wasn't until Bern occupied the city (not a shot was fired) seven years later that the Catholics were obliged to take notice.

From the 18th century, Lausanne exerted a fascination over writers and free-thinkers, attracting such characters as Voltaire, Dickens, Byron and TS Eliot (who wrote *The Waste Land* here).

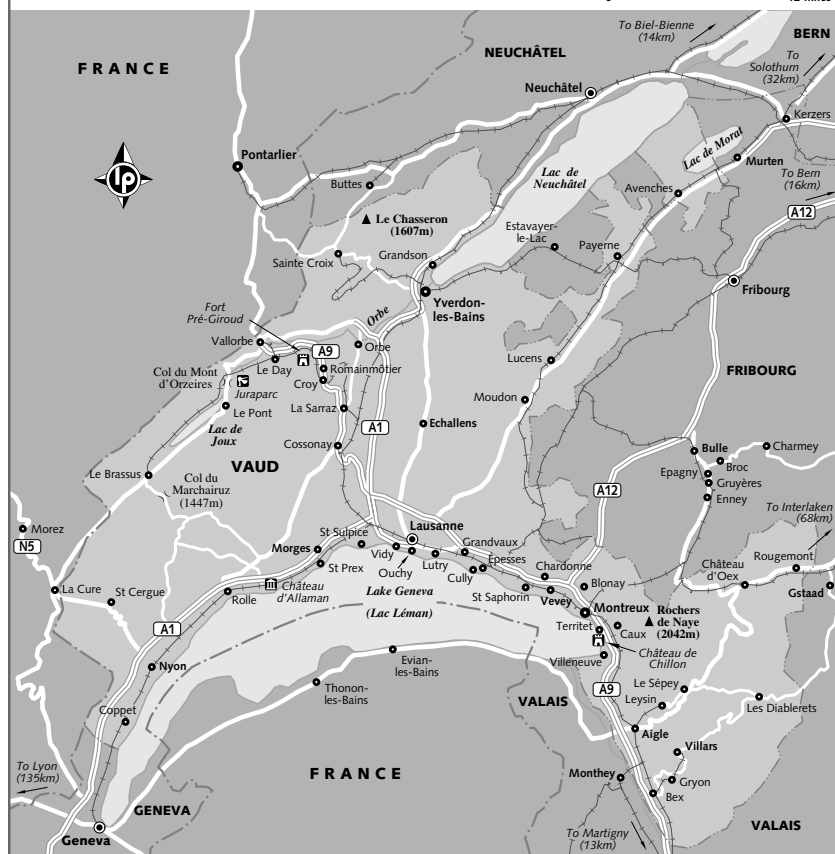
Lausanne, with only 10,000 inhabitants, became capital of the Vaud canton in 1803. The city began to take on its present appearance with rapid development occurring from the latter half of the 19th century.

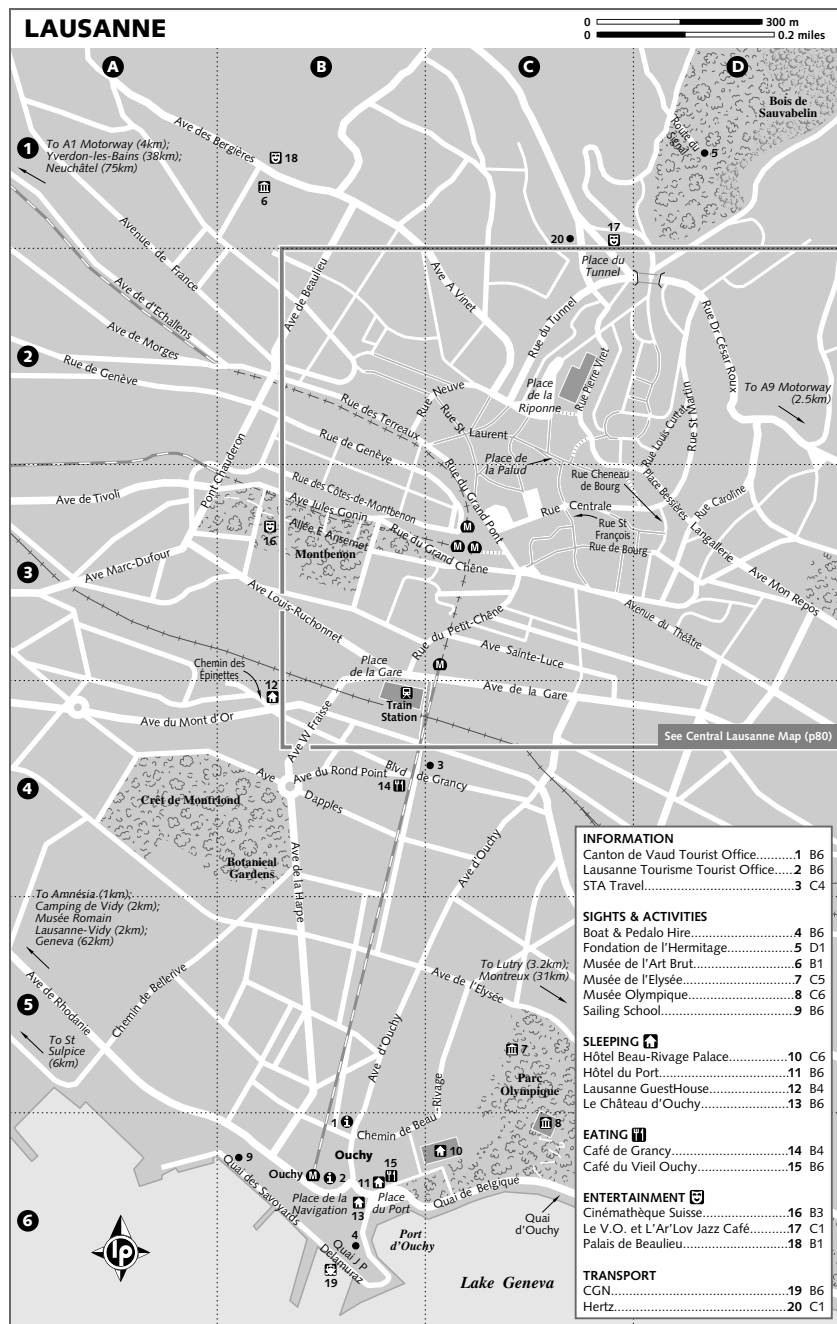
Today, Lausanne is a busy, vibrant city. Home to the Federal Tribunal, the highest court in the country, the International Olympic Committee (IOC), Tetra Pak and the multinational tobacco conglomerate Philip Morris, it also boasts a fairly boisterous wining and dining scene.

Orientation

The *Vieille Ville* (Old Town), with its winding, hilly streets topped by the cathedral, is north of the train station. Busy Rue Centrale runs along the valley that separates the *Vieille Ville* from another hill topped by Pl St François and its church. This square is the main hub for local transport, and off it to the east runs the shopping boulevard of Rue de Bourg. One of the country's top addresses in the 19th century (and on the Swiss version of Monopoly), it lost some of its class with the arrival of fast-food joints and poor renovation. Just west and downhill from Pl St François is Flon, an area of formerly derelict late 19th-century warehouses now partly taken over by a cinema

LAKE GENEVA & VAUD





complex, art galleries, trendy shops, restaurants and bars. The city long ago enveloped the picturesque lakeside village of Ouchy.

Information

BOOKSHOP

With a broad selection of material on Switzerland and books in English, **Librairie Payot** (Map p80; ☎ 021 341 33 31; Pl Pépinet 4) is one of the best bookshop chains in French-speaking Switzerland.

INTERNET ACCESS

The city provides Wi-Fi hotspots (at Sfr0.30 a minute!) around town: Flon, Pl de la Palud, Pl St François, Pl de la Riponne, Pl du Port, Pl de la Navigation and Parc Mon Repos. You pay when you log on. **Fragbox** (Map p80; ☎ 021 311 89 69; www.fragbox.com; Rue de la Tour 3; per hr Sfr5; ☎ 9am-11.30pm Mon-Fri, 1.30-11.30pm Sat, 1.30-10pm Sun) is aimed at gamers but they have high-speed Internet connections.

LAUNDRY

You can wash those dirty socks and jeans at **Quick Wash** (Map p80; Blvd de Grancy 44; ☎ 8.30am-8.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-8.30pm Sat & Sun). It costs about Sfr10 to wash and dry a load.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Lausanne's main hospital is the **Centre Hospitalier Universitaire Vaudois** (CHUV; Map p80; ☎ 021 314 11 11; Rue du Bugnon 46).

MONEY

Your first financial port of call is the **exchange office** (☎ 8am-7pm) in the train station. Otherwise, the city centre is full of banks. The **Banque Cantonale Vaudoise** (Map p80; Pl St François 10) has branches with ATMs all over town.

POST

The central **post office** (Map p80; Pl St François 15; ☎ 7.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat) is handy. The house in which Edward Gibbon wrote much of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* once stood on this site. The **main post office** (Map p78; Ave de la Gare 43) has extended hours at emergency counters.

TOURIST INFORMATION

There are two branches of the **Lausanne Tourisme tourist office** (☎ 021 613 73 73; www.lausanne-tourisme.ch). The **office** (Map p80; Pl de la Gare 9;

☎ 9am-7pm) in the train station is handiest for new arrivals. The other **office** (Map p78; Pl de la Navigation 4; ☎ 9am-6pm, 9am-8pm Apr-Sep) is next door to the Ouchy metro station. Ask about the Lausanne Card (Sfr15, valid for two days), which includes free public transport, 20% to 30% discounts on museums and discounts in some shops and restaurants.

City hall runs **InfoCité** (Map p80; ☎ 021 315 25 55; www.lausanne.ch/infocite; Pl de la Palud 2; ☎ 7.45am-noon & 1.15-5pm Mon-Fri). It has material on upcoming events in the city.

TRAVEL AGENCIES

The budget travel agency **STA Travel** (Map p78; ☎ 058 450 48 50; Blvd de Grancy 20) has several branches in the city.

Sights & Activities

CATHEDRAL & AROUND

The Gothic **Cathédrale de Notre Dame** (Map p80; ☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri Apr-Sep, 7am-5pm Oct-Mar), arguably the finest in Switzerland, stands proudly at heart of the *Vieille Ville*. Raised in the 12th and 13th centuries on the site of earlier, humbler churches, it lacks the lightness of French Gothic buildings but is remarkable nonetheless. Pope Gregory X, in the presence of Rudolph of Habsburg (the Holy Roman Emperor) and an impressive following of European cardinals and bishops, consecrated the church in 1275.

Although touched up in parts in succeeding centuries (notably the main façade, which was added to the original to protect the interior against ferocious winds), the building is largely as it was. The tiers of statues (mostly copies of the originals) around the entrance peer down at you with a chiding severity.

Inside, the most striking decoration is the 13th-century **rose window** in the south transept. The unusual geometric patterns comprise images relating to the seasons, signs of the Zodiac and the elements.

Just opposite the south flank of the cathedral are two minor museums. The **Musée Historique de Lausanne** (Map p80; ☎ 021 315 41 01; www.lausanne.ch/mhl; Pl de la Cathédrale 4; adult/student Sfr8/free; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue-Thu, 11am-5pm Fri-Sun Sep-Jun, 11am-6pm Mon-Thu, 11am-5pm Fri-Sun Jul & Aug) traces the city's history, and the **Musée de Design et d'Arts Appliqués Contemporains** (Map p80; ☎ 021 315 25 30; www.mudac.ch; Pl de la Cathédrale 6; adult/child/student Sfr8/free/5; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue-Sun Sep-Jun, 11am-6pm daily Jul & Aug) is a centre of modern design

that frequently holds intriguing temporary exhibitions.

VIILLE VILLE (OLD TOWN)

About 200m north of the Cathédrale stands the haughty, turreted **Château St Maire** (Map p80). This 15th-century castle was once the residence of the bishops of Lausanne and

now houses government offices. In the streets between the cathedral and castle are several tempting eateries.

In front of the main entrance to the cathedral, a covered timber stairway leads down to Rue Pierre Viret, from where two more stairways lead further downhill, one to the modern Pl de la Riponne and the other to

TEN O'CLOCK & ALL IS WELL!

Some habits die hard. From the height of the Cathédrale's bell tower, a *guet* (night watchman) still calls out the hours into the night, from 10pm to 2am. Four times after the striking of the hour he calls out: *C'est le guet! Il a sonné dix, il a sonné dix!* (Here's 10 o'clock! It's 10 o'clock, it's 10 o'clock!). In earlier times this was a more serious business, as the *guet* kept a look out for fires around the town and other dangers. He was also charged with making sure the townsfolk were well behaved and the streets quiet during the solemn moments of church services.

medieval **Pl de la Palud** (Map p80). The latter's name suggests that this 9th-century market square was originally bogland. For five centuries it has been home to the city government, now housed in the 17th-century **Hôtel de Ville** (town hall; Map p80). The column with the allegorical figure of Justice that presides over the fountain dates from 1585, or rather it pretends to – the original is actually in the Musée Historique de Lausanne.

Rue du Pont descends from the eastern end of Pl de la Palud to Rue Centrale, which you cross to climb Rue St François up to the square of the same name. The name comes from the church, **Église de St François** (Map p80), which today is a bit of a hybrid but in the beginning formed part of a 13th-century Franciscan monastery. You can admire some restored frescoes inside. It is hard to imagine that the church and monastery once stood amid peaceful green fields! Rue de Bourg, off to the east, was for centuries home to the privileged bourgeoisie.

About 200m west of Pl de la Riponne stands the only surviving vestige of medieval Lausanne's defensive walls. The cylindrical **Tour de l'Ale** (Map p80), tucked away at the end of Rue de la Tour, was built in 1340 at the extreme western point of the medieval suburb of Ale. That we can admire the tower at all is due to those townspeople who opposed demolition plans in 1903.

MUSÉE DE L'ART BRUT

This extraordinary **collection** (Map p78; ☎ 021 315 25 70; www.artbrut.ch; Ave des Bergières 11-13; adult/child/student & senior Sfr4/free/5; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue-Sun Sep-Jun,

11am-6pm Jul & Aug), put together by French artist Jean Dubuffet, opened in 1976 in what was a late 18th-century country mansion.

Brut means crude or rough, and that's what you get. None of the artists had training but all had something to express. A few were quite mad, many (justly or otherwise) spent time in mental asylums or were plain eccentric. Their works offer a striking variety, and at times surprising technical capacity and an often inspirational view of the world.

There are sculptures made out of broken plates and discarded rags, faces made out of shells, sculptures in wood, paintings, sketches and much more. A wooden wall shown upstairs was taken from an asylum cell where Clément Fraise carved designs with a broken spoon and, after that was confiscated, the handle of his chamber pot. Edmund Monseil, who spent most of WWII hiding in an attic, produced claustrophobic drawings on bits of paper, filled with glaring eyes surrounding the central figure or figures. The parade of works is as extensive as it is varied. To get there, take bus Nos 2 or 3 to Jomini stop.

PALAIS DE RUMINE

This neo-Renaissance pile was built to lord it over Pl de la Riponne in 1904 and, aside from the parliament of the Vaud canton, is home to several museums. This is where the Treaty of Lausanne was signed in 1923, finalising the break-up of the Ottoman Empire after WWI.

The main museum is the **Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts** (Fine Arts Museum; Map p80; ☎ 021 316 34 45; www.beaux-arts.vd.ch; Pl de la Riponne 6; adult/child/senior & student Sfr10/free/8, 1st Sun of the month free; ☎ 11am-5pm Fri-Sun, 11am-6pm Tue-Wed, 11am-8pm Thu), with many works by Swiss and foreign artists. The core of the collection is made up of works for landscape painter, Louis Ducros (1748–1810), and three other locals. The permanent collection is closed during the frequent temporary exhibitions.

The other **museum collections** (admission to each adult/child/senior & student Sfr4/free/2, 1st Sun of the month free; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue-Thu, 11am-5pm Fri-Sun) in the building cover natural history, zoology (with the longest – almost 6m – stuffed great white shark on show in the world), geology, coins, archaeology and history. The latter gives an overview of the history of the Vaud canton from the Old Stone Age to modern times.

CENTRAL LAUSANNE

INFORMATION	Palais de Rumine.....16 B2	XIIème Siècle.....31 C2
Banque Cantonale Vaudoise.....1 C3	Tour de l'Ale.....17 A1	
Centre Hospitalier Universitaire Vaudois.....2 D1		
Fragbox.....3 B1	SLEEPING 🛏	
InfoCité.....4 C2	Hôtel des Voyageurs.....18 B2	
Lausanne Tourisme Tourist Office.....5 A4	Hôtel Elite.....19 B3	
Librairie Payot.....6 B2	EATING 🍴	
Main Post Office.....7 B4	Brasserie Lausanne-Moudon.....20 C1	
Post Office.....8 B3	Café de l'Hôtel de Ville.....21 B2	
Quick Wash.....9 A4	Café Romand.....22 B3	
	Café-Restaurant du Vieux Lausanne.....23 C2	
	Le Vaudois.....24 B2	
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		
Cathédrale de Notre Dame.....10 C2		
Château St Maire.....11 C1	DRINKING 🍷	
Église de St François.....12 B3	Bar Tabac.....25 C3	
Hôtel de Ville.....13 B2	Café Luna.....26 B2	
Musée Cantonal des Beaux Arts.....(see 16)	Giraf Bar.....27 C2	
Musée de Design et d'Arts	Louis.....28 B2	
Appiqués Contemporains.....14 C2	Paparazzi.....29 C1	
Musée Historique de Lausanne.....15 C2	Pinte Besson.....30 B2	
	SHOPPING 🛍	
	Globus.....39 C2	
	La Ferme Vaudoise.....40 B2	
	TRANSPORT	
	Avis.....41 B3	
	Enzo Location.....42 A1	
	Europcar.....43 A3	
	Lausanne Roule.....44 A2	

MUSÉE OLYMPIQUE & AROUND

This **museum** (Map p78; ☎ 021 621 65 11; www.museum.olympic.org; Quai d'Ouchy 1; adult/child/student & senior Sfr14/7/9; ☎ 9am-6pm daily May-Sep, 9am-6pm Tue-Sun Oct-Apr) is surprisingly interesting given that its subject does not elicit universal interest. Housed in a lavish building in the Parc Olympique, atop a tiered landscaped garden, it tells the Olympic story from its inception under Pierre de Coubertin to the most recent competition using videos, archival film (usually including footage of the most recent games), touch-screen computers and memorabilia from the games.

The **Musée de l'Elysée** (Map p78; ☎ 021 316 99 11; adult/child/student/senior Sfr8/free/4/6, 1st Sat of month free; ☎ 11am-6pm) is worth keeping an eye on if you like photography. It stages temporary exhibitions that are often excellent.

THE LAKE

Lake Geneva (Lac Léman) provides plenty of sporting opportunities. Contact the **sailing school** (école de voile; ☎ 021 635 58 87; www.ecole-de-voile.ch) at Ouchy for courses on windsurfing, water-skiing and sailing, and equipment rental for these activities. You can also rent pedalos (Sfr20 an hour) and motorboats (Sfr60 an hour) at stands in front of the Château d'Ouchy. These stands also offer water-skiing at Sfr35 for 15 minutes.

CGN (see p85) offers a range of boat cruises.

In summer, head for the beach! The one at **Vidy** is one of the nicer beaches, backed by thick woods and parklands. Locals can be seen cycling, rollerblading (in-line skating) or just strolling along the waterfront on sunny weekends. Check out the remains of Roman Lousonna and the adjacent **Musée Roman Lausanne-Vidy** (☎ 021 315 41 85; www.lausanne.ch/mrv; Chemin du Bois de Vaux 24; adult/child/student Sfr8/free/5; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue-Wed, 11am-8pm Thu, 11am-6pm Fri-Sun), housed on the site of a Roman villa and containing a modest collection of ancient artefacts. It often stages temporary exhibitions.

BOIS DE SAUVABELIN

Lausanne is remarkably blessed with green spaces. Much of the lakeside is lined with thick woodland and spacious picnic areas. To the north stretches the bucolic expanse of the **Bois de Sauvabelin** (Map p78). This peaceful park is also home to the **Fondation**

THE REAL CAPTAIN NEMO

To the Swiss, he is the real Captain Nemo. In 1960, Jacques Piccard (born 1922) and a US Navy co-submariner took the deep-sea submarine *Trieste*, originally designed by his father, Auguste, down 10,916m to the Marianas Trench in the South Pacific. No-one has ever tried to repeat the feat, and Piccard (father of the round-the-world balloonist Bertrand) has dedicated most of his life since to the defence of the sea and lakes. In 2005 a lack of finance forced him to reluctantly pull his 11-tonne *FA Forel* mini-submarine out of the water for good. In it he and his team had run scientific and tourist excursions, principally on his home turf in Lake Geneva.

de l'Hermitage (Map p78; ☎ 021 312 50 13; www.fondation-hermitage.ch; Route du Signal 2; adult/child/student/senior Sfr15/free/7/12; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Wed, 10am-6pm Fri-Sun & holidays, 10am-8pm Thu). This charming 19th-century residence constantly hosts high-calibre temporary art exhibitions. Take bus No 16 from Pl St François.

Tours

A guided **walking tour** (☎ 021 321 77 66; adult/student & child/senior Sfr10/free/5; ☎ 10am & 3pm Mon-Sat May-Sep) of the *Vieille Ville*, lasting one to two hours, leaves from the front of the Hôtel de Ville twice a day in spring and summer. The tours are usually in French. From July to mid-September there are free guided visits of Cathédrale Notre Dame four times a day, Monday to Friday.

Festivals & Events

In the first week of July the city hums with performances all over town in the week-long **Festival de la Cité** (www.festivalcite.ch).

For Switzerland's **national day** on 1 August, hire a pedalo (see left) in the early evening and be ready on the lake for fireworks around 10pm.

The **Lausanne Marathon** (www.lausanne-marathon.com) is usually run towards the end of October.

Sleeping

BUDGET

Lausanne GuestHouse (Map p78; ☎ 021 601 80 00; www.lausanne-guesthouse.ch; Chemin des Épinettes 4;

dm Sfr30-35, s/d Sfr 89/100, without bathroom Sfr81/88; ☎ ☎ ☎) An attractive mansion converted into quality backpacking accommodation near the train station. Many rooms have lake views. Hang out in the garden or terrace. Parking is Sfr10.

Camping de Vidy (☎ 021 622 50 00; www.camping.lausannevidy.ch; Chemin du Camping 3; campsites per adult Sfr7.80, per tent Sfr9-19.20 depending on size of tent, per car Sfr3.50; ☎ year-round) This campground is just to the west of the Vidy sports complex, on the lake. Take bus No 2 from Pl St François and get off at Bois de Vaux then walk underneath the motorway towards the lake.

MIDRANGE

Le Château d'Ouchy (Map p78; ☎ 021 616 74 51; www.chateaudouchy.com; Pl du Port 2; s/d up to Sfr175/280; ☎ ☎ ☎) This is a whimsical castle (mostly built in the 19th century around the original medieval tower, complete with dungeon) enjoying a luxurious setting. Rooms are furnished in Louis XIII style but are showing signs of age.

Hôtel du Port (Map p78; ☎ 021 612 04 44; www.hotel-du-port.ch; Pl du Port 5; s/d Sfr182/234) A perfect location in Ouchy, just back from the lake, makes this a good choice. The better doubles look out across the lake and are spacious (about 20 sq m). Up on the 3rd floor are some lovely junior suites.

Hôtel Elite (Map p80; ☎ 021 320 23 61; www.elite-lausanne.ch; Ave Sainte Luce 1; s/d Sfr170/195; ☎ ☎ ☎) A central family-run hotel set in quiet grounds with good-sized, comfortable rooms, decorated in subtle colours and equipped with cable TV. Some have a shower, others a full bath. Those with balcony enjoy pleasant views across the city.

Hôtel des Voyageurs (Map p80; ☎ 021 319 91 11; www.voyageurs.ch; Rue Grand St Jean 19; s/d Sfr200/250; ☎ ☎) A handily located lodging for the historic centre of Lausanne, this hotel has comfortable if plain rooms. A nice touch is the free wi-fi throughout the premises.

TOP END

Hôtel Beau-Rivage Palace (Map p78; ☎ 021 613 33 33; www.beau-rivage-palace.ch; Pl du Port 17-19; s/d Sfr410/470; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Easily the most stunningly located hotel in town and one of only two five-star options, this place has it all. A beautifully maintained, early 19th-century mansion set in immaculate grounds, the hotel offers rooms with magnificent lake

and Alp views, a wellness centre and three restaurants.

Eating

Café de l'Hôtel de Ville (Map p80; ☎ 021 312 10 12; Pl de la Palud 10; ☎ 9am-6pm Sun & Tue, 9am-11.30pm Wed-Sat) Grab one of the tiny, wobbly tables in summer or squeeze inside on a cold winters' day in this most congenial café in central Lausanne. It is ideal for a hot chocolate and languid read of the paper, surrounded by the buzz of animated conversation.

Café-Restaurant du Vieux Lausanne (Map p80; ☎ 021 323 53 90; Rue Pierre Viret 6; meals Sfr50-60; ☎ Tue-Sat) An old stalwart, where good French and Swiss cooking comes in generous portions. Meat is the central theme, with dishes like *tartare de boeuf* (Sfr32) starring. In summer you can sit beneath the narrow pergola out the back.

Café Romand (Map p80; ☎ 021 312 63 75; Pl St François 2; mains Sfr17-25; ☎ 11am-11pm Mon-Sat) A tatty sign leads you into an equally unpromising looking arcade. A few steps in and a push of the door takes you out of the 21st century and back to another era. The broad, somewhat sombre dining area littered with timber tables of all sizes attracts everyone from bankers to punks for hot traditional food, ranging from fine fondue to *cervelle au beurre noir* (brains in black butter). The kitchen operates all day, rare for this town.

Café de Grancy (Map p78; ☎ 021 616 86 66; www.cafedegrancy.ch; Ave du Rond Point 1; meals Sfr40-50; ☎ 8am-midnight Mon & Wed-Thu, 8-1am Fri, 10-1am Sat, 10am-midnight Sun) An old-time bar resurrected with flair by young entrepreneurs, this spot has established itself as a hip hang-out with floppy lounges in the front, Wi-Fi, and a tempting restaurant out back. Wednesday is fondue night and brunch is offered on Saturday and Sunday.

Brasserie Lausanne-Moudon (Map p80; ☎ 021 329 04 71; Pl du Tunnel 20; mains Sfr25-40; ☎ Mon-Sat) Set on two floors overlooking the square, this restaurant offers such enticing dishes as *medaillons de filet d'autruche au poivre vert* (ostrich filet medallions with green pepper). They do a good *tarte tatin* (apple tart) too.

Café du Vieil Ouchy (Map p80; ☎ 021 616 21 94; Pl du Port 3, Ouchy; mains Sfr18-37; ☎ Thu-Mon) A simple but charming location for fondue, rösti and other classics. Follow up with a meringue smothered in *crème double de la Gruyère* (double thick Gruyère cream). Opt

for the timber-lined upstairs dining in winter and the sunny terrace in summer.

Le Vaudois (Map p80; ☎ 021 331 22 22; Pl de la Riponne 1; mains Sfr25-35) Classic local Swiss cuisine, concentrating on fondues and meat dishes like the nationwide fave, Zürich's *émincé de veau à la zurichoise* (thin slices of veal prepared in a creamy mushroom sauce).

Drinking

Louis (Map p80; ☎ 021 213 03 00; Pl de l'Europe 9, Flon; ☎ noon-2.30pm & 7-10.30pm) Wine-lovers flock to this place to quaff fine tipples from around Europe. Attached is a Mediterranean-style bistro for light meals and a swanky restaurant upstairs. Outside is an extensive deck terrace on Voie du Chariot.

Xilleme Siède (Map p80; ☎ 021 312 40 64; Rue Cité-Devant 10; ☎ 10pm-4am Tue-Sat) In a grand medieval setting with stone vaults and huge timber beams, this is a great place for a beer or six.

Giraf Bar (Map p80; ☎ 021 323 53 90; Escaliers du Marché; ☎ 9.30pm-1am Tue-Thu, 9.30pm-2am Fri & Sat) This tiny smoke-filled bar fills up on a Friday and Saturday night. The giraffe-skin motif is repeated inside on lampshades and the music can reach back to the 1980s.

Pinte Besson (Map p80; ☎ 021 312 59 69; Rue de l'Ale 4; ☎ 11.30am-2.30pm & 6-11pm Mon-Sat) The city's oldest tavern has been serving up local wines to Lausannois punters since 1780. The place oozes the atmosphere of another age and makes no concessions to modern modishness. Squeeze in for a round of fondue and wine or just drop by for a couple of evening ales.

Bar Tabac (Map p80; ☎ 021 312 33 16; Rue Beau Séjour 7; ☎ 7am-9pm Mon-Wed, 7-1am Thu & Fri, 9-2am Sat, 9am-3pm Sun) Like a spruced corner tavern of old, this is the kind of thing Hemingway probably had in mind when he spoke of a 'clean, well lighted place'. Squeaky timber floors lend warmth and punters engage in animated chat at tables around the L-shaped bar.

Paparazzi (Map p80; ☎ 078 853 17 66; Rue de la Barre 1; ☎ 6pm-4am Mon-Fri, 6pm-midnight Sun) A dimly lit, classy lounge bar where, to start the evening, you can taste a variety of Italian wines or, if you arrive later, take a stronger drink and throw yourself into a comfy couch till late.

Café Luna (Map p80; ☎ 021 329 08 46; Pl de l'Europe 7; ☎ 4pm-1am Tue-Thu, 4pm-2am Fri, 2pm-2am Sat) It's a spacious, modern bar, with all angular dark furniture, huge, saucer-like sufficed lights hanging from the ceiling and DJs

spinning all sorts of sounds from Thursday to Saturday.

Entertainment

Lausanne is one of the busier night-time cities in Switzerland, attracting young punters from as far off as Ticino and all over the western half of the country. In some bars you will find a handy free listings booklet, *What's Up* (www.whatsupmag.ch). Tickets for many shows can be bought in advance from **Ticketcorner** (☎ 084 880 08 00; www.ticketcorner.ch) or **Resaplus** (☎ 090 055 23 33; www.resaplus.ch).

LIVE MUSIC

Chorus (Map p80; ☎ 021 323 22 33; www.chorus.ch; Ave Mon Repos 3; admission free-Sfr35; ☎ 9pm-2am Thu-Sat) The appropriately dark and sometimes smoky ambience is perfect for local and international stars at Chorus, one of Lausanne's top jazz venues. It has food too.

Le V.O. et L'Ar'Lov Jazz Café (Map p78; ☎ 021 311 17 16; Pl du Tunnel 11; ☎ 5pm-4am) This venue, with red and pink low lighting, pulls in punters from all over town for tipples and occasional live music. It makes a good late night alternative to clubbing.

The Flon area is home to a number of fun venues.

Lecaféthéâtre (Map p80; ☎ 021 323 37 73; Rue de Genève 10; ☎ Tue-Sat) A hip yellow-hued cavern where a mixed crowd gathers for all sorts of live gigs (from jazz to turbo-folk), often free and starting around 10pm.

L'Atelier Volant (Map p80; ☎ 021 624 84 28; www.ateliervolant.ch; Rue des Côtes-de-Montbenon 12; ☎ 10pm-4am Thu-Sat) Like most of the buildings around this area, this venue is gaily painted and hard to miss. Salsa is a big theme on the 1st floor, but there are more mainstream hits on the ground floor and reggae on the 2nd floor.

CLUBS

MAD – Moulin à Danse (Map p80; ☎ 021 340 69 69; www.mad.ch; Rue de Genève 23; admission up to Sfr25; ☎ 11pm-4am Tue-Sun) With five floors of entertainment, MAD really is a crazy sort of place. Music themes can range from anything to trance to tranquil. Sunday is gay night (see opposite).

Amnésia (Map p78; ☎ 021 619 06 50; www.amnesia.club.ch; Ave E Dalcroze 9; admission Sfr20; ☎ 11pm-5am) This place packs them in down on the lake. Apart from the club proper (with four dance floors) you can get limbered up in

one of three attached bars beforehand and, in summer, get a snack in the restaurant on the beach (both open to 2am, May to October). Amnésia also organises occasional gay party nights.

D-Club (Map p80; ☎ 021 321 38 47; www.ddub.ch; Rue du Grand Pont 4; admission Sfr20-35; ☎ 10pm-5am Wed-Sat) D-Club is a heaving club where the DJs spin funk to house, especially the latter in all its latest sub-forms. Theme nights change regularly. To get here take the stairs down from Rue du Grand Pont and turn right before descending all the way into Pl Centrale.

Loft Electrohub (Map p80; ☎ 021 311 63 64; www.loftclub.ch; Pl Bel-Air 1; admission up to Sfr20; ☎ 11pm-4am Wed-Sat) Loft, a predominantly red bar and dance space just one level down the stairs of the Tour Bel-Air building, is another popular late-night option.

GAY VENUES

Trixx Club (admission free; ☎ 10pm-4am Sun) MAD hosts Trixx Club on Sunday night, the big club night for gays and lesbians throughout western Switzerland. Over the five floors is one dedicated to gals and another to guys.

CINEMA

Some of the cinemas around town show original language movies (watch for those marked 'vo' in the listings section of 24 Heures).

Cinémathèque Suisse (Map p78; ☎ 021 331 01 00; www.cinematheque.ch; Allée E Ansermet 3, Casino de Montbenon) For classics and film cycles, head for this place, the seat of the Swiss film archives and the location of a fine café and restaurant.

THEATRE, OPERA & CLASSICAL MUSIC

Lausanne has a rich theatre scene for most of the year. Listings appear in the local paper 24 Heures. Otherwise, pick up information on upcoming events at the InfoCité (see p79).

Palais de Beaulieu (Map p78; ☎ 021 643 21 11; Ave des Bergières 10) This venue stages concerts, operas and ballets. Lausanne has its own chamber orchestra and the renowned Rudra Béjart Ballet company.

Opéra de Lausanne (Map p80; ☎ 021 310 16 00; www.opera-lausanne.ch; Ave du Théâtre 12) Runs a season rich in events from September to May. Classics of opera alternate with classical music concerts and one-off presentations

of world music. Tickets can cost from Sfr15 to Sfr130 depending on the performance and seats.

Shopping

Rue de Bourg is lined with boutiques and jewellery stores. Otherwise head for Pl de la Palud and the surrounding pedestrian streets, where you will find department stores, fashion boutiques, wine and food speciality stores.

La Ferme Vaudoise (Map p80; ☎ 021 351 35 55; Pl de la Palud 5) This store sells an interesting array of cheeses, sweets, liqueurs and local farm produce.

Globus (Map p80; ☎ 021 342 90 90; Rue du Pont 5) The deli on the ground floor of Globus is full of costly Swiss and foreign goodies.

For grunge clothing and bargains away from the snooty central stores, hunt around the Flon, where you might also want to pop into the art galleries.

On Wednesday and Saturday mornings (6am to 2.30pm), produce markets set up on Rue de Bourg, Pl de la Palud and a couple of the other pedestrian streets around the square.

Getting There & Away

TRAIN

Three to four trains an hour run to/from Geneva (Sfr20, 35 to 50 minutes) and its airport (Sfr24, 45 to 60 minutes). One or two an hour travel to/from Bern (Sfr30, 60 to 70 minutes). Up to four trains an hour run to Yverdon-les-Bains (Sfr14.20, 20 to 45 minutes).

The station has a **left luggage service** (small/ big items per day Sfr4/7; ☎ 7am-8.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-12.30pm & 1.30-7.30pm Sun). The **train information office** (☎ 8.30am-6.45pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat) is close by.

BOAT

The company **CGN** (Map p78; ☎ 084 881 18 48; www.cgn.ch; Ave de Rhodanie 17) runs boats from Ouchy to destinations around Lake Geneva. From late May to late September there are frequent departures to all resorts, including the French side. There are no car ferries.

Up to 14 boats daily shuttle to and from Evian-les-Bains (France) in July and August (Sfr16/27.20 one way/return in 2nd class, 40 minutes), dropping to seven to nine boats the rest of the year. You can take less-frequent boats to places like Montreux

(Sfr20.60, 1½ hours) and Geneva (Sfr34.80, about 3½ hours). A day pass to go anywhere on the lake costs Sfr55 (Sfr74 in 1st class).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Several motorways link Lausanne to Geneva and Yverdon-les-Bains (A1), Martigny (A9) and Bern (A9 then A12). Car-rental companies include **Avis** (Map p80; ☎ 021 340 72 00; Ave de la Gare 50), **Hertz** (Map p80; ☎ 021 312 53 11; Pl du Tunnel 17) and **Europcar** (Map p80; ☎ 021 319 90 40; Ave Louis Ronchonet 2). **Enzo Location** (Map p80; ☎ 021 647 47 47; Ave de Beaulieu 8) offers a deal for Sfr20 a day plus 20c per kilometre.

Getting Around

Buses and trolley buses service most destinations (Sfr1.80 up to three stops, Sfr2.80 unlimited stops in central Lausanne for one hour, Sfr8 for 24-hour pass in central Lausanne). The Métro connects Ouchy with Gare (train station) and Flon (same prices as the buses). A second line is being built from Ouchy to Épalanges, in the northern suburbs.

Parking in central Lausanne is a headache. In blue zones you can park for free (one-hour limit) with a time disk (see p330). Most white zones are meter parking. Costs vary but can rise to Sfr2 an hour with a two-hour limit. The lower end of Ave des Bains is one of the few streets with some free parking spots.

If you need a taxi, call ☎ 080 080 58 05 or ☎ 084 481 08 10. A short ride from the train station to a central hotel will cost Sfr15 to Sfr20.

You can 'hire' bicycles (which carry advertising) for free from **Lausanne Roule** (Map p80; ☎ 021 312 31 09; www.lausanneroule.ch; Côtes de Montbenon 16) at Voie du Charriot in the Flon area. The bikes are available from 7.30am to 9.30pm, April to October. You leave a Sfr20 refundable deposit and ID. If you bring it back late, there's a Sfr10 fine and Sfr20 for each successive day.

AROUND LAUSANNE

La Côte

The coast between Lausanne and Geneva (known simply as The Coast) is sprinkled with fantasy castles, imposing palaces and immaculately maintained medieval towns. More than half of the Canton de Vaud's wine, mostly white, is produced along here. The towns along La Côte are on the train

route between Lausanne and Geneva and some can be reached by CGN steamers (fares from Lausanne to Morges are Sfr12.60, Rolle Sfr19.40 and Nyon Sfr26.40).

LAUSANNE TO ROLLE

A pleasant walk west of Lausanne (about 6km from Ouchy) brings you to **St Sulpice**, a semi-suburban settlement whose jewel is the Romanesque church of the same name by the lake. A handful of restaurants are well placed to alleviate hunger. Take bus No 2 from Pl St François and change to bus No 30 at Bourdonette.

Some 12km west of Lausanne, the first town of importance is the wine-growing centre of **Morges**. Towering over its port is the 13th-century **Château** (☎ 021 316 09 90; Pl du Port; adult/child/student/senior Sfr7/free/5/6; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Jul & Aug, 10am-noon & 1.30-5pm Mon-Fri, 1.30-5pm Sat & Sun Sep-Jun), built by the Savoy Duke Louis in 1286. Today it houses a trio of museums, among them the **Musée Militaire Vaudois** (stuffed with weapons and uniforms) and the **Musée de la Figurine Historique**, where 8000 toy soldiers are on parade! The town, which likes to sell itself as the 'flower of the lake', hosts a tulip festival from April to May.

Along the 26km stretch to the next major town, Nyon, are: the old village of **St Prex**, its centuries-old mansions bursting with the colour of creeping ivy and flower boxes; the stout **Château d'Allaman** (☎ 021 807 38 05; ☎ 2-6pm Wed-Sun), which houses the country's grandest treasure chest of antiques (ranging from carpets and furniture to ceramics and puppets, and covering styles from Gothic to Louis-Philippe and Biedermeier) that you can admire and (purchase permitting) purchase; and **Rolle**, which also boasts a lakeside 13th-century Savoy castle (closed).

NYON TO COPPET

Nyon, of Roman origin but with a partly Celtic name (the 'on' comes from *dunon*, meaning fortified enclosure), is a busy lake town (population 16,330) at whose heart is a glistening-white, five-towered **château**. The castle was started in the 12th century and modified 400 years later. It houses the town's **historical museum** (due to reopen during mid-2006). Nearby, in what was a 1st-century basilica, the multimedia display of the **Musée Romain** (☎ 022 361 75 91; Rue Maupeituis; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 2-

6pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar) gives some insight into Nyon's Roman beginnings as the Colonia Iulia Equestris. Nyon also offers a wealth of lakeside dining, from fondue to Thai.

The town's **Paléo Festival** (☎ 022 365 10 10; www.paleo.ch) is an outdoor international music extravaganza (the biggest in Switzerland) lasting six days in late July. The event attracts more than 200,000 people for a feast of sounds ranging from rock through jazz to world music; tickets cost about Sfr50 per day at the venue (cheaper in advance).

Coppet, halfway between Nyon and Geneva, is a tightly packed medieval village with a handful of cosy hotels and restaurants. A short walk up the hill brings you to the 18th-century **château** (☎ 022 776 10 28; adult/student & senior Sfr8/6; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Jul & Aug, 2-6pm daily Easter-Jun & Sep), a rose-coloured stately home that belonged to the wily Jacques Necker, Louis XVI's banker and finance minister. The pile, sumptuously furnished in Louis XVI style, became home to Necker's daughter, Madame de Staël, after she was exiled from Paris by Napoleon. In her literary salons here she entertained the likes of Edward Gibbon and Lord Byron.

Lutry & Cully

About 4km east of central Lausanne, Lutry (population 8450) is a captivating village. Founded in the 11th century by French monks, it is perfect for an afternoon wander. The central **Église de St Martin et St Clément** was built in the early 13th century. A short way north is the modest **château**. Stroll along the slightly twee main street, lined with art galleries and antique stores. On the last weekend of September the town celebrates the annual wine harvest with parades and tastings.

The **Caveau du Singe Vert** (Green Monkey Cellar; ☎ 021 866 16 26; Grand Rue 38) hosts a couple of live gigs a month. Another good place for concerts, especially *chanson française* (French classics) is **Esprit Frappeur** (☎ 021 793 12 01; www.espritfrappeur.ch; Villa Mégroz, Ave du Grand Pont 20; admission up to Sfr50; ☎ 7.30pm-2am Tue-Sat, 5pm-midnight Sun). Bus No 9 runs to Lutry from Pl St François in Lausanne.

Five kilometres east of Lutry, the wine town of Cully (population 1800) is home to one of the country's finest hotels. The **Auberge du Raisin** (☎ 021 799 21 31; www.relaischateau.ch/raisin; Pl de l'Hôtel de Ville 1; d Sfr350, apt Sfr490-580) started taking in weary travellers in the 15th century.

You have a choice of exquisite rooms and the restaurant (meals Sfr100 to Sfr200) is a gourmand's object of pilgrimage.

SWISS RIVIERA

Stretching east to Villeneuve, the Swiss Riviera rivals its French counterpart as a magnet for the rich and famous. The mild climate encourages palm trees and other subtropical flora to flourish barely an hour's drive from Alpine ski spots.

Lovers of panoramic train rides, steam trains and the like should inquire in either Vevey or Montreux about the many excursion options available in this area and to the Bernese Oberland.

VEVEY

pop 15,780 / elevation 385m

Vevey exudes a swanky ambience and has welcomed numerous celebrities, from Jean-Jacques Rousseau to Charlie Chaplin. Chaplin hung about for 25 years until his death in 1977. His former mansion in Corsier, the Manoir de Ban is destined to become a Chaplin museum in late 2007.

Orientation & Information

The hub of the town is Grande Pl, 250m to the left of the train station. The **tourist office** (☎ 084 886 84 84; www.montreux-vevey.com; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat mid-May-mid-Sep, 8.30am-noon & 1-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat rest of year) is on the square in the La Grenette building.

Sights

The old streets east of Grande Pl and the lakeside promenades are worth exploring. Apart from that, the main entertainment comes from several museums.

The **Musée Suisse du Jeu** (Swiss Games Museum; ☎ 021 977 23 00; www.museedujeu.com; Rue du Château 11; adult/under 6/6-16yr/student & senior Sfr6/free/2/3; ☎ 11am-5.30pm Tue-Sun Mar-Oct, 2-5pm Tue-Sun Nov-Apr) is certainly the most amusing. The games are arranged according to themes – educational, strategic, simulation, skill and chance, and you can play several (explanations are in French). The museum is in the Château de la Tour de Peilz. To get there, take trolley bus No 1 to Pl du Temple.

Nestlé, with its headquarters located in Vevey since 1814, runs the **Alimentarium** –

VINTNERS OF LAVAUX

The serried ranks of lush, green, vine terraces that carpet the steep slopes above Lake Geneva between Lausanne and Montreux belong to the Lavaux wine region, which produces 20% of the Canton de Vaud's wine.

The villages of Lutry, Villette, Cully, Calamin, Epesses (which, by the way, hosts one of the lake's few nudist beaches), Dézaley, St Saphorin, Chardonne and Riex are among the wine centres. The two main wine types are Calamin and Dézaley and most of the whites (about three-quarters of all production) are made with the Chasselas grape.

It is possible to walk through much of the Lavaux wine country. Starting in Lutry, you can follow trails that lead you through hamlets like Grandvaux and down to lakeside Cully. In each it is often possible to visit *caveaux*. They tend to open between 5pm to 9pm Friday through Sunday. You could even walk all the way to Chardonne, about four hours' walk depending on what sort of detours you make along the way. From there head to a lakeside town to pick up a train back to Lausanne.

From Lutry you have the option of catching the **Lavaux Express** (www.lavaux.com in French and German; adult/child Sfr10/5; ☎ May-Sep) one of those tractor-driven tourist trains that does several circuits along wine trails between Lutry and Cully. For more information consult the website.

Musée de l'Alimentation (Food Museum; ☎ 021 924 41 11; www.alimentarium.ch; Quai Perdonnet; adult/child/student & senior Sfr10/free/8; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun). Completely refurbished in 2002, the lakeside museum takes an entertaining look at food and nutrition, past and present.

Musée Jenisch (☎ 021 921 29 50; www.museejenisch.com; Ave de la Gare 2; adult/child up to 12/student/senior Sfr15/free/7.50/13; ☎ 11am-5.30pm Tue-Sun) exhibits Swiss art from the 19th and 20th centuries and has a special section on Oskar Kokoschka, the Viennese expressionist. Another section is dedicated to prints and engravings by artists ranging from Dürer and Rembrandt to Canaletto and Corot.

Musée Suisse de l'Appareil Photographique (☎ 021 925 21 40; www.cameramuseum.ch; Grand Pl; adult/child/student & senior Sfr8/free/6; ☎ 11am-5.30pm Tue-Sun) concentrates on the instruments rather than the images they produce. Other museums in Vevey cover such topics as wine-growing and the history of the town.

Vevey is the capital of the Lavaux wine-growing region and once every 20 to 25 years the wine-growers descend on the town to celebrate a huge **summer festival**. The last time was in 1999, so we'll be waiting a while for the next one!

Sleeping

Riviera Lodge (☎ 021 923 80 40; www.rivieralodge.ch; Pl du Marché 5; dm from Sfr31, d Sfr80; ☎) This place is a fun, central location housed in a converted 19th-century mansion. The rooftop terrace offers great views and you can use the kitchen

to keep eating costs down. Dorm rooms sleep from four to eight. A buffet breakfast is extra at Sfr8.

Hôtel De Famille (☎ 021 923 39 30; www.hotel-famille.ch; Rue des Communaux 20; s/d Sfr150/240, without bathroom Sfr85/150; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Modern rooms in this centrally located hotel offer the standard comforts, but you will also have access to a sauna and roof terrace for a little sunbathing in summer.

Hôtel des Trois Couronnes (☎ 021 923 32 00; www.hoteldestroisouronnes.ch; Rue d'Italie 49; s/d from Sfr295/380; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) This is Vevey's leading hotel, an elegant pleasure dome that's been in business since the mid-19th century. The hotel's three floors open onto interior galleries, and the décor – full of marble, period furniture and antiques – is all class. It has long been the choice of royalty and names from Thomas Mann to Saint-Saëns.

Eating & Drinking

Le National (☎ 021 923 76 25; Rue du Torrent 9; meals Sfr30-40; ☎ 11am-midnight Sun-Tue, 11-1am Wed-Thu, 11-2am Fri & Sat) Run by a young and enthusiastic team, this is a great place to eat and drink. On one side is a hip bar with oddly leaning glass-topped tables and stools or, for the more lounge-inclined, spots by the window. On the other side is the restaurant, where you can enjoy a mix of international dishes.

Le Mazot (☎ 021 921 78 22; Rue du Conseil 7; mains Sfr23-38) In the heart of the old town, this is an institute of classic local cooking, dominated by steaks and horse meat filets in the spe-

cial Mazot sauce (they're not letting out the secret recipe). You can dine on the ground floor or the 1st floor in a timeless setting.

Restaurant du Port (☎ 021 921 20 33; Rue d'Italie 23; mains Sfr20-40; ☎ Tue-Sun) Just west of the old centre, this spot is a three in one. The most characteristic is the cosy *pinte* (not a glass measure but a traditional Vaudois eatery and tavern), but you can opt for the more anonymous main dining area or sit out on terrace with lake views. Food ranges from lake fish to fondue.

Getting There & Away

Vevey is 15 to 25 minutes from Lausanne by train (Sfr6.60) and five minutes from Montreux (Sfr3). Trolley bus Nos 1 and 3 run from Vevey to Montreux (Sfr3.20) and on to Villeneuve (Sfr4.60).

AROUND VEVEY

A steam train chugs along the 3km track from Blonay to Chambly, where a train museum houses steam engines and machinery. Entry and the return trip cost Sfr16/8 per adult/child, but it only operates on Saturday afternoons and Sundays from early May to late October. On four or five Sunday afternoons in summer the steam train departs from Vevey (adult/child Sfr37/23.50).

Spots near Vevey with good views and walks are Les Pléiades (1360m), accessible by train, Chexbres, a stop on the summer 'wine train' that runs to Puidoux, and Mont Pélerin (1080m) which is accessible by funicular and has a panoramic tower, Plein Ciel. En route to Les Pléiades is Lally, where **Les Sapins** (☎ 021 943 13 95; www.les-sapins.ch; s/d Sfr80/140, d with bathroom Sfr160; ☎ ☎ ☎) is a good choice for accommodation and food. The views south to the Alps are fabulous. It organises snowshoe hikes in winter, among other things.

MONTREUX & AROUND

pop 22,570 / elevation 385m

In the 19th century, writers, artists and musicians (Lord Byron and the Shelleys among them) flocked from all over Europe to this pleasing lakeside resort. It has remained a magnet ever since, its main drawcards being peaceful waterfront walks and the Château de Chillon.

Montreux is best known to music lovers for its annual summer jazz festival (going since 1967). In 1971, Montreux casino was

the stage for a rather different kind of gig. Frank Zappa was doing his thing when the casino caught fire, casting a pall of smoke over Lake Geneva and inspiring the members of Deep Purple to pen their classic rock number, *Smoke on the Water*.

Orientation & Information

The lakeshore is fronted by a mix of 19th-century hotels, restaurants and shops, while the *Vieux Quartier* is a small cluster of quiet streets around Rue du Pont, high uphill. From the train station, on Ave des Alpes, take the lift or stairs from opposite the post office down to the shore. Here you'll find the **tourist office** (☎ 084 886 84 84; www.montreux-vevey.com; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat mid-May–mid-Sep, 9am-noon & 1-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat mid-Sep–mid-May), whose staff will help book hotels – a must in festival time.

Sights & Activities

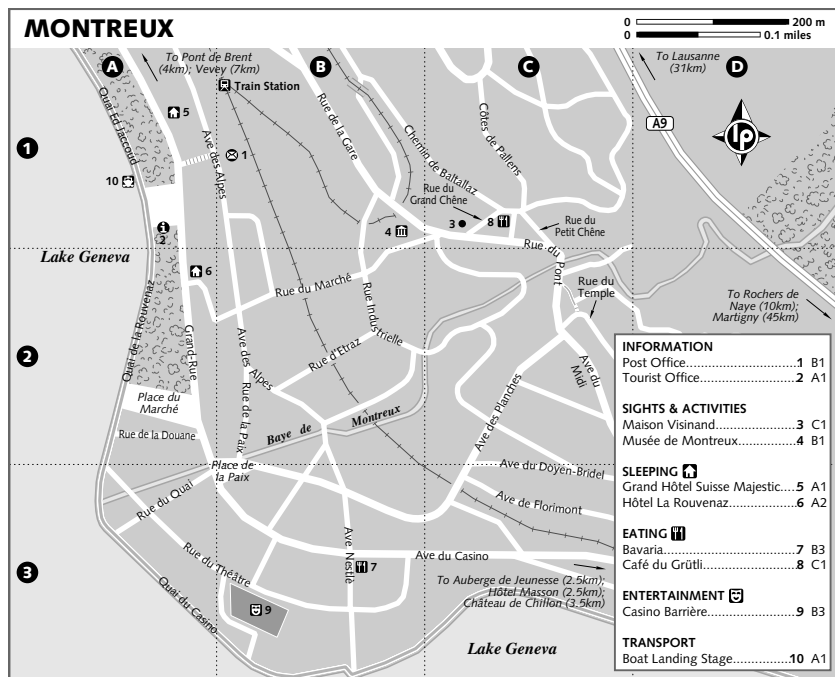
CHÂTEAU DE CHILLON

This extraordinary, oval-shaped **castle** (Map p76; ☎ 021 966 89 10; www.chillon.ch; adu/child/student & senior Sfr10/5/8; ☎ 9am-6pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-5pm Mar & Oct, 10am-4pm Nov-Feb) was brought to the attention of the world by Lord Byron, and the world has been filing past ever since – they say the castle receives more visitors than any other historical building in Switzerland.

Occupying a stunning position on Lake Geneva, the 13th-century fortress is a myriad of courtyards, towers and halls filled with arms, period furniture and artwork. The landward side is heavily fortified but lakeside it presents a gentler face as a princely residence. Chillon was largely built by the House of Savoy and then taken over by Bern's governors after Vaud fell to that canton. In the **Chapelle St Georges** are medieval frescoes. And don't miss the spooky Gothic dungeons.

Byron made the place famous with *The Prisoner of Chillon*, his 1816 poem about François Bonivard, thrown into the dungeon for his seditious ideas and freed by Bernese forces in 1536. Byron carved his name into the pillar to which Bonivard was supposedly chained. Painters William Turner and Gustave Courbet captured the castle's silhouette on canvas, while Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Alexandre Dumas and Mary Shelley were all moved to write about it.

The castle is a 45-minute walk along the lakefront from Montreux. Otherwise take



trolley bus No 1 (Sfr2.30), which passes by every 10 minutes.

MUSÉE DE MONTEUX

The **museum** (☎ 021 963 13 53; www.museemontreux.ch; Rue de la Gare 40; adult/child/student & senior Sfr6/free/4; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-5pm Apr-early Nov) recounts the history of the town and locality. Displays range from a handful of Roman finds and coins through to period furniture, bathtubs and street signs. The streets inland and further uphill are the core of the original Old Town of Montreux and merit a wander far from the lake scene. The charming **Maison Visinand** (☎ 021 963 07 26; www.centreculturelmontreux.ch; Rue du Pont 32; ☎ 3-6pm Wed-Sun) is a cultural centre and theatre with regular exhibitions.

ROCHERS DE NAYE

A scenic railway from Montreux leads to this natural platform (2042m), from where you have remarkable views of Lake Geneva and the Alps. MOB trains cost Sfr49 return (Sfr55 in July and August, Sfr3 extra for steam trains).

SPAS

Montreux is a good place for a relaxing bath and beauty session. For a couple of suggestions on where to get the full works, turn to p47.

Festivals & Events

Montreux's best-known festival is **Montreux Jazz** (☎ 021 963 82 82; www.montreuxjazz.com) lasting two weeks in early July. Many free concerts take place every day, but count on spending around Sfr40 to Sfr100 for one of the big gigs. The music is not only jazz; past performers have included BB King, Paul Simon, Jamiroquai and Marianne Faithfull.

The **Montreux-Vevy Music Festival** (☎ 090 080 08 00; www.septmus.ch; admission Sfr20-115) is a classical music fest (also known as Septembre Musical) held from late August to the end of September.

Sleeping

Auberge de Jeunesse (☎ 021 963 49 34; Passage de l'Auberge 8, Territet; dm from Sfr31; ☎ mid-Feb-mid-Nov; ☎) This modern, chirpy hostel is a 30-minute walk along the lake clockwise from

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Hôtel Masson (☎ 021 966 00 44; www.hotelmasson.ch; Rue Bonivard 5; s/d Sfr150/230 (P)) In 1829, this vintner's mansion was converted into a hotel. The old charm has remained intact and the hotel, set in magnificent grounds, is on the Swiss Heritage list of most beautiful hotels in the country. Just east of Montreux proper and back in the hills, it is best reached by taxi from Montreux centre, although you can walk it in about 30 minutes. It also has a small sauna and Jacuzzi for guests.

the tourist office (or take the local train to Territet or bus No 1). Dorms have two to eight beds.

Hôtel La Rouvenaz (☎ 021 963 27 36; www.montreux.ch/rouvenaz-hotel; Rue du Marché 1; s/d Sfr120/180; ☎) A simple, family-run spot with its own Italian restaurant downstairs, you cannot get any closer to the lake or the heart of the action. The rooms are simple but pleasant and bright, and most have some sort of lake view.

Grand Hôtel Suisse Majestic (☎ 021 966 33 33; www.suisse-majestic.com; Ave des Alpes 45; s/d Sfr200/280, with lake views Sfr250/330; (P)) With its two-tiered frontage and ranks of bright yellow awnings sheltering the balconies of those rooms looking out over the lake, this historic hotel (built in 1870) remains one of the most atmospheric on the waterfront. You can eat up the views on their terrace restaurant. Parking costs Sfr25.

Eating

Café du Grütli (☎ 021 963 42 65; Rue du Grand Chêne 8; mains up to Sfr28; ☎ Tue-Sat) This eatery is hidden away in the old part of town and provides good home cooking, ranging from rösti with ham to hearty meat dishes and the inevitable fondue.

Bavaria (☎ 021 963 25 45; Ave du Casino 27; mains Sfr22-40; ☎ Sun-Fri) The décor is a little 1970s, with horseshoe-shaped leather lounges gathered around some of the tables, but this is one of the rare spots in Montreux that you can get hearty, traditional cooking. Among the house specialties are a kaleidoscope of varieties of rösti, *fondue moitié-moitié* (literally 'half and half' cheese fondue, Sfr22), and entrecôte of...bison (Sfr38!) Wash them down with a range of Bavarian beers.

Pont de Brent (☎ 021 964 52 30; Route de Blonay; tasting menu Sfr180-240, mains Sfr40-80; ☎ Tue-Sat) Set in a pretty country house, this is one of Switzerland's top restaurants and has three Michelin stars (one of only two in the country). A changing and imaginative menu is complemented by a fine wine list. It's northwest of Montreux in the hamlet of Brent, and is accessible by train.

Entertainment

Casino Barrière (☎ 021 962 83 83; www.casinodemonstreux.ch; Rue du Théâtre 9; ☎ 11-3am Sun-Thu, 11-4am Fri & Sat) Resurrected in 2002, this casino has everything from slot machines to a pool (to cool off after burning off your millions).

Getting There & Away

From Lausanne, three trains an hour (Sfr9.80) take 20 to 35 minutes to reach Montreux. Scenic trains head up into the Bernese Oberland and Alps from Montreux (see p331). For boat services, see p73 and p85.

NORTHWESTERN VAUD

This part of the canton of Vaud is dominated by the Jura mountain chain and Lac de Neuchâtel.

YVERDON-LES-BAINS

pop 23,480 / elevation 437m

The Romans were the first to discover the healthy qualities of Yverdon's hot spa waters and since then the town has made its living from them. It's an enjoyable lakeside resort and Canton de Vaud's second-largest town.

Information

The **tourist office** (☎ 024 423 61 01; www.yverdon-les-bains.ch/tourisme; Ave de la Gare 1; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-3.30pm Sat Jul & Aug, 9am-noon & 1.30-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-3.30pm Sat May, Jun & Sep, 9am-noon & 1.30-6pm Mon-Fri Oct-Apr) has information on the town and surrounding area.

Sights & Activities

The Old Town core is clustered around the 13th-century **Château**, built by Peter II of Savoy. Inside, the **Musée du Château** (Musée d'Yverdon-les-Bains et Région; ☎ 024 425 93 10; adult/child/student & senior Sfr8/4/7; ☎ 11am-5pm Jun-Sep, 2-5pm Oct-May) contains local prehistoric artefacts, arms, clothing and a Ptolemaic Egyptian mummy.

Opposite the castle, the **Maison d'Ailleurs** (House of Elsewhere; ☎ 024 425 64 38; Pl Pestalozzi 14; www.ailleurs.ch; adult/child/student & senior Sfr7/4/5; ☎ 2-6pm Wed-Fri, noon-6pm Sat & Sun) is a science-fiction museum that features a mock-up of a spaceship, a room dedicated to HR Giger (of *Alien* fame) and masses of material dealing with the science fantasy worlds of figures ranging from Homer to Jules Verne and the present. The museum only opens when a temporary exhibition is on.

The lake offers the opportunity for various boat rides and other water activities, including windsurfing, water-skiing and sailing. Beaches stretch along 5km of the lakeside. One company that rents out boats, windsurfing kits and the like is **Les Vikings** (www.lesvikings.ch; Ave des Pins 34) at Yvonand, east of Yverdon along the lake.

SPAS

The water from the 14,000-year-old mineral springs starts 500m below ground. By the time it hits the surface it has picked up all sorts of salubrious properties from the layers of rock, and is particularly good

for sufferers of rheumatism and respiratory ailments.

The **Centre Thermal** (☎ 024 425 02 32; www.cyt.ch; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Fri, 9am-8pm Sat, Sun & holidays), the health complex off Ave des Bains, offers a wide range of treatments. Even if you feel fine you can enjoy bathing in indoor and outdoor pools (temperature 28° to 34°C) for Sfr16 for adults and Sfr10 for children. For Sfr25 you get access to the pools, saunas, hammams, a tropical shower, Japanese baths and a giant Jacuzzi.

Sleeping

Hôtel L'Ecusson Vaudois (☎ 024 425 40 15; www.ecussonvaudois.ch; Rue de la Plaine 29; s/d Sfr90/130; ☎ ☎) This hotel, with a ground-floor café, is the only central place. It has a handful of fresh, modernised rooms, some of which do not have their own bathroom and are a little cheaper.

Grand Hôtel des Bains (☎ 024 424 64 64; www.grandhotelyverdon.ch; Ave des Bains 22; s/d up to Sfr250/444; ☎ ☎ ☎) The big daddy of them all, with all imaginable comforts and free entry to the thermal pools.

Eating

Café/Restaurant du Château (☎ 024 425 49 62; Pl Pestalozzi 13; mains Sfr24-30) With its heavy dark timber beams and fine traditional meat and fish dishes, this classic mixes in a more modern tone with discreet furniture and lounge music. It also offers a limited pizza and pasta menu.

Restaurant des Sports (☎ 024 425 27 63; Rue du Millieu 47; mains Sfr25-35; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun) Head upstairs for intimate dining at this straightforward but reliable place. The standard menu is limited to a few meat dishes, perch filets and the like. But it throws in a seasonal menu, which in autumn means game and snails.

Crêperie Ange Bleu (☎ 024 426 09 96; Rue du Collège 11; crepes Sfr7-10, salads Sfr10-13; ☎ Tue-Sun) If all the above sounds too heavy, pop by this cheerfully yellow diner. It's small and busy, with people packing in for the myriad versions of sweet and savoury crepes.

Getting There & Away

Regular trains run from Lausanne (Sfr14.20, 20 to 45 minutes). One or two an hour run to Neuchâtel (Sfr13.40, 20 minutes). An hourly train heads for Estavayer-le-Lac (Sfr6.60, 17 minutes).

AROUND YVERDON-LES-BAINS Grandson

Grandson's stout, grey, 13th-century **Château** (☎ 024 445 29 26; adult/child/student & senior Sfr12/5/9; ☎ 8.30am-6pm) fell briefly to Charles the Bold in early 1476, but Swiss Confederate troops soon turned the tables and strung some of his routed Burgundian troops from the apple trees in the castle orchard.

The castle's **Musée d'Histoire** recounts the story of 1476 and other battles with dioramas, while the prize exhibit at its **Musée de l'Automobile** is Greta Garbo's white Rolls Royce.

Regular buses connect Yverdon with Grandson (Sfr2.60, 10 minutes). Or you could walk the 5km around the lake.

Sainte Croix pop 4180 / elevation 1066m

This town high in the Jura Mountains has been hailed for its music boxes since the mid-19th century. The art of making these expensive items is documented in the **Centre International de la Mécanique d'Art** (☎ 024 454

44 77; Rue de l'Industrie 2; guided tour in French adult/child/student & senior Sfr12/7/10; ☎ 10.30am, 2pm, 3.30pm & 5pm Tue-Sun Jun-Aug, 2pm, 3.30pm & 5pm Tue-Sun Feb-May & Sep-Oct, 3pm Tue-Fri, 2pm, 3.30pm & 5pm Sat & Sun Nov-Jan). Music boxes contain a rotating spiked cylinder that bends and releases metal prongs, causing them to vibrate and hum melodiously. Some of the more elaborate boxes also incorporate miniature drums, bells and accordions. The best exhibits are the musical automata, such as the acrobats, a tiny Mozart and Pierrot the writer.

The town is otherwise none too scintillating, but makes a handy base for local winter sports. The highest point in the area is **Le Chasseron** (1607m), the focus for the area's downhill skiing and a two-hour walk from Sainte Croix. It provides a marvellous 360° panorama of the Alps, Lac de Neuchâtel and the Jura.

A local train runs from Yverdon (Sfr9.80, 36 minutes).

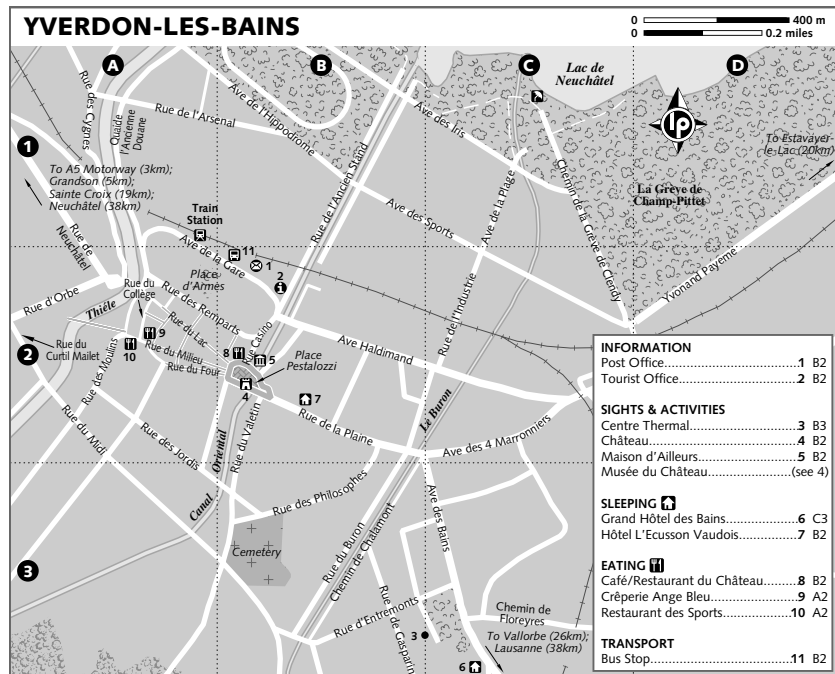
TO LAC DE JOUX

This little-visited corner of the canton to the north of Lac de Joux and its valley hides several gems. By car you could easily tour the area from Lausanne or Geneva in a day.

La Sarraz to Romainmôtier

From Lausanne take the N9 highway (not the motorway) towards La Sarraz. Its **castle** (☎ 021 866 64 23; tour of castle & museum adult/child/student & senior Sfr12/7/10; ☎ 1-5pm Tue-Sun Jun-Aug, 1-5pm Sat & Sun & holidays Easter-May & Sep-Oct), some of it dating from the 11th century, contains a museum devoted to the horse and carriage. From there follow a side road north to **Orbe** (where Nescafé was invented in 1938), which is interesting for the 13th-century **Tour Bernard** defensive tower and the **Musée de Mosaïques Romaines** (☎ 024 441 52 66; adult/child/student & senior Sfr4/2/3; ☎ 9am-noon & 1.30-5pm Mon-Fri, 1.30-5.30pm Sat & Sun Easter-Oct). The museum is a series of pavilions containing mosaics on the site of a 3rd-century Gallo-Roman villa, 1.5km north of town. In the first pavilion is the beautiful polychrome *mosaïque aux divinités*, which depicts the seven planetary gods (Jupiter, Saturn and co). The second one contains the *mosaïque du cortège rustique*, with several rural scenes including a man driving an ox-drawn cart.

From there it's 8km southwest to the hamlet of **Romainmôtier**, cupped in a lush green



bowl of vegetation and wholly dominated by the Cluny order's **Abbatiale** (☎ 024 453 14 65; admission free; ☞ 7am–8pm), a remarkable sandstone church whose origins reach to the 6th century. Upon and around its 11th-century Romanesque core were added new layers in higgledy-piggledy fashion over the ensuing centuries. Through the mixed Romanesque–Gothic entrance you step into the proud interior of the church, with its powerful pillars and faded frescoes. Of the couple of hotels and restaurants here, the pick is the lovely 17th-century **Hôtel au Lieutenant Baillival** (☎ 024 453 14 58; www.romainmotier.ch/publiinfo/baillival.html; s/d from Sfr100/160; ☎ ☑ ☒), full of antique furniture and rustic charm – call ahead to reserve one of the six rooms. It has its own restaurant.

Vallorbe to Lac de Joux

About 12km west along the N9 is the industrial town of **Vallorbe**. Its pleasant old centre astride the Orbe River is home to the **Musée du Fer et du Chemin de Fer** (Iron & Railway Museum; ☎ 021 843 25 83; adult/child/student Sfr10/6/9; ☞ 9.30am–noon & 1.30–6pm Tue–Sun, 1.30–6pm Mon Apr–Oct, 9.30am–noon & 1.30–6pm Mon–Fri Nov–Mar), where you can see a blacksmith working at a traditional forge. Power for the furnace is derived from four large paddlewheels turning outside in the river. The railway section includes models and memorabilia. An hourly regional train from Lausanne to Vallorbe (Sfr16.20, 45 minutes) travels via La Sarraz. It makes a stop at Croy, from where it is just a short postal bus ride on to Romainmôtier (total trip Sfr15.20, 35 to 45 minutes).

A few kilometres outside Vallorbe is the underground **Fort Pré-Giroud** (Map p76; ☎ 021 843 25 83; adult/child/student & senior Sfr11/6/10; ☞ noon–5.30pm Sat & Sun & holidays May–Oct), built in 1937 to ward off a possible attack from France. The seemingly unremarkable mountain chalet commands views across the Orbe Valley into France and below ground could accommodate 130 men. In its dormitories, canteens, kitchen, telephone exchange and infirmary now stand around 40 military mannequins. At the approaches are ranged artillery pieces and, down the hillside, five pillboxes. Bring warm clothing as the underground temperature is 8°C. The fort is a 40-minute walk from Vallorbe (follow the Fort 39–45 signs) or a nice drive through forests on a minor back road leading over the mountain ridge to Vaulion.

About 2km south of Vallorbe on the road to Lac de Joux at Mont d'Orzeires is **Juraparc** (☎ 021 843 17 35; www.juraparc.ch; adult/child Sfr4.50/3; ☞ 9am–dusk Wed–Sun, 9am–6pm Mon–Tue), where North American bison roam about in the company of bears and wolves.

Shortly afterwards you reach the Col du Mont d'Orzeires pass and descend to Le Pont, a sleepy village at the northern end of the **Lac de Joux**. This is a quiet spot for water sports and the source of your dinnertime perch.

The main road south of the lake follows the Orbe river through Le Brassus and skirts the border on the French side (bring your passport). You could turn east at Le Brassus to climb to the Col du Marchairuz pass (1447m) and descend through pretty villages towards Lake Geneva.

ALPES VAUDOISES

The southeast corner of Vaud extends into a captivating Alpine nook. A five-day regional ski pass for the Alpes Vaudoises (Vaud Alps), including Les Diablerets glacier and Gstaad (see p175), costs Sfr225. Glacier skiing is an option in June and July and the hiking in summer is a dream. Contact the local tourist offices for chalets, apartments and B&B accommodation in advance.

AIGLE

pop 7670 / elevation 405m

A many-turreted castle surrounded by vineyards is the highlight of Aigle, the capital of the Chablais wine-producing region in southeast Vaud. The Chablais, which extends into neighbouring Valais, produces some of the country's best whites using the Chasselas grape.

The castle, on a gentle rise, is itself enough to induce you to stop by. Anyone with even a vague interest in wine will want to visit its **Musée de la Vigne et du Vin** (☎ 024 466 21 30; adult/child/student & senior Sfr9/5/6; ☞ 10am–12.30pm & 2–6pm Tue–Sun Apr–Jun & Sep–Oct, 10am–6pm daily Jul & Aug). Two thousand years of wine-making are explained across 17 rooms. From July to September you can round off a visit with a free glass of local wine. Opposite the castle gates, the Maison de la Dîme houses the **Musée de l'Étiquette**, in which around 800 wine-bottle labels from around the world are displayed and explained. The naughty labels misapprop-

riating names like 'champagne' are at times quite a laugh. You enter with the ticket from the Musée de la Vigne et du Vin.

There are several hotels should you wish to stay. Regular trains operate from Lausanne (Sfr14.20, 30 minutes) to Aigle via Montreux.

LEYSIN

pop 2780 / elevation 1350m

Leysin started life as a tuberculosis centre but is now a sprawling ski resort with 60km of runs. Many other sports are on offer, including a *via ferrata* – a vertical 'footpath' negotiated via cables and rungs. The **tourist office** (☎ 024 494 22 44; www.leysin.ch; Pl Large) is based in the New Sporting Centre. Take in the Alpine scenery from the revolving restaurant atop **Mt Berneuse** (2048m). The cable car costs Sfr20 return in summer, or Sfr37 for the lift and a day's skiing in winter.

Hiking Sheep (☎ 024 494 35 35; www.hikingsheep.com; dm/d Sfr30/80; ☎ ☑ ☒) gets floods of accolades from happy backpackers. It's two minutes' walk from Grand Hotel station. It has a kitchen and good communal facilities. **Les Orchidées** (☎ 024 494 14 21; www.leysin.ch/orchidées; s/d Sfr80/140; ☎ ☑), a family hotel by Vermont station, has Alpine views and a decent restaurant.

To get to Leysin take the hourly cogwheel train that goes from Aigle (Sfr8.60, 30 minutes).

LES DIABLERETS

elevation 1150m

Overshadowed by the mountain of the same name (3209m), Les Diablerets is one of the key ski resorts in the Alpes Vaudoises. A number of fairly easy ski runs are open during June and July at **Glacier de Tsanfleuron** (3000m), which gives the Diablerets resort its recent official name, Glacier 3000. Whether you plan to ski or not, the views are fabulous.

Two cable cars run up to the glacier from the valley floor, both are linked to the village by bus: starting from Reusch or Col du Pillon you get to Cabane des Diablerets, where a further cable car whisks you almost to the summit at Scex Rouge. To ski from here all the way back down to Reusch is an exhilarating 2000m descent over 14km.

A one-day ski pass that takes in Les Diablerets, Villars and Gryon costs Sfr42. Including the glacier you pay Sfr55.

The town's **tourist office** (☎ 024 492 33 58; www.diabletets.ch), to the right of the train station, has more information.

Auberge de la Poste (☎ 024 492 31 24; www.aubergedelaposte.ch; Rue de la Gare; d Sfr200, s/d without bathroom Sfr70/140; ☎ ☑ ☒) is a grand, inviting, timber hotel oozing mountain charm.

From Aigle take the hourly train via Le Sépey (Sfr12.40, 50 minutes).

VILLARS & GRYON

Villars (1350m) and nearby Gryon share the same local ski pass with Les Diablerets and in winter are linked by a free train for holders of the ski pass. For information on the area check out each village's websites: www.villars.ch and www.gryon.ch. If you want to buy ski passes in advance at reduced rates, check out www.easyski.ch.

The skiing is geared towards intermediate skiers. In summer the country is perfect for hiking. One great walk starts at the Col de Bretaye pass (reached by BVB train from Villars), takes you past the pretty Lac de Chavonnes and on through verdant mountain country to Les Diablerets. The walk takes about four hours, and from Les Diablerets you could catch a train to Aigle. The views from around the Col de Bretaye are magnificent, taking in the Dents du Midi and Mont Blanc.

In Villars, **Hôtel Suisse** (☎ 024 495 24 25; www.elgringo.ch/hotelsuisse; Rte des Hôtels; r per person Sfr50) offers the cheapest central accommodation, with compact, cheerful timber-walled rooms (doubles with their own shower). It can get a little rowdy with punters returning after a night in the club next door. For impressive Italian cooking, **La Toscana** (☎ 024 495 79 21; Rte des Hôtels; meals Sfr50–60; ☞ 6–11pm Wed–Mon) is the best bet and is located in the same complex as the hotel and aforementioned club, **El Gringo** (☞ 11pm–4am Fri & Sat in low season, nightly in ski season).

From Aigle you can reach Villars by an hourly bus (Sfr7.80, 40 minutes). Otherwise, you can continue with mainline trains to **Bex** (known for its nearby salt mines) and connect with local trains to Gryon (Sfr6, 25 to 30 minutes) and Villars (Sfr7.80, 40 minutes). The train running from Gryon to Villars is free with the ski pass. Occasional postal buses connect Villars with Les Diablerets via the Col de la Croix pass (closed in winter).

PAYS D'ENHAUT

This northeast corner of Canton de Vaud, the 'High Country', lies about midway between Aigle and Gruyères. In winter it could be considered the western, Franco-phone extension of the swank Gstaad ski scene, just over the cantonal frontier.

Château d'Oex is an attractive family resort with a nice selection of moderate ski runs, but the place is best known for all its hot air. Bertrand Piccard and Brian Jones launched their record-breaking, round-the-world, 20-day hot-air balloon ride from here in March 1999 (they landed in Egypt). For one week in the second half of January the place bursts into a frenzy of floating colour as the town hosts the annual **Semaine Internationale de Ballons à Air Chaud** involving around 100 hot-air balloons ranging from the standard floater to odd creatures such as a massive Scottish bagpipe player! Entry just to see and feel all the hot air up close is Sfr7 on the weekend (free on the weekdays). If you want to fly up, up and away, steady your nerves for fiscal turbulence. It costs up to Sfr350 per adult (half for children) for

about one hour. Cheese and sweets lovers should make a beeline for **Le Chalet** (☎ 026 926 66 77; www.lechalet-fromagerie.ch; meals Sfr30-40; ☎ 9am-7pm Tue-Thu & Sun, 9am-11pm Fri & Sat). This grand old cheesemaker is the place to gorge yourself on creamy fondue or raclette and dreamy meringues with double cream. And they make the cheese in front of you too (from 1.30pm to 3.30pm)! It is just behind the Coop supermarket opposite the MOB train station.

Less than 10km east is **Rougemont**, the other main centre. Both villages offer a variety of accommodation throughout the year. Summer activities include rafting and hiking.

The Château d'Oex **tourist office** (☎ 026 924 25 35; www.chateau-doex.ch; La Pl) is in the centre, below the hilltop clock tower. There are about 20 places to stay, ranging from chalets to a handful of rather overbearing big hotels.

The resort is on the scenic Montreux-Spiez train route serviced by MOB trains. From Montreux it takes one hour and costs Sfr17.60 (plus Sfr6 reservation fee on Panoramic Express trains only).