

The Guardian

10 of the best things to do in Vevey, Switzerland

The Swiss town's wine festival is as revered as it is rare but, from a Chaplin museum to boat tours and chocolate heaven, a trip need not be grape-related

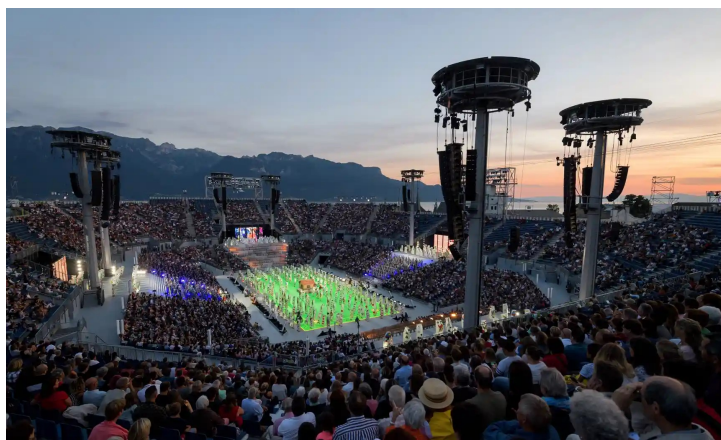


Time for tine ... Vevey's fork sculpture, Lake Geneva, Switzerland. Photograph: Valery Baretta/Alamy

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On 18 July, the peaceful town of Vevey, on the shores of Lake Geneva near Montreux, transforms into party central as it hosts one of the world's biggest (and rarest) wine festivals. The Fête des Vignerons - which was granted Unesco intangible cultural heritage status in 2016 - was founded in 1797 to honour the wine-makers of the Lavaux wine region, one of Switzerland's premier wine appellations.



Performers during a rehearsal for Fête des Vignerons. Photograph: Fabrice Coffrini/AFP/Getty Images

Today, the Fête des Vignerons (18 July-11 August) is a celebration that is only held every 20 years. Its centrepiece is 20 live shows in a specially built 20,000-seat arena but there are also daily parades, costumed wine-themed performances, workshops, wine and food tastings, music and more. A million visitors are expected to attend the event.

While this grape gala puts Vevey in the spotlight, there's an array of things to see and do, year-round, that will raise spirits without (necessarily) raising blood-alcohol levels - and here is our pick of 10 of them ...

Chaplin's World



Photograph: Florian Lica/Alamy

In Charlie Chaplin's former estate (which he moved to after effectively being exiled from the US in 1953), Chaplin's World is the only museum dedicated to the revered comic actor and filmmaker. Even if you're not a devoted fan, it's worth visiting this interactive museum. Peppercorned with letters, photos and original furnishings, the home is also filled with lifelike wax figures of Chaplin and his famous friends (such as Albert Einstein). Recorded television performances and home movies of Chaplin and his family are enthralling. A nearby complex holds recreations of Hollywood film stages from his movies, where guests are encouraged to act out some of his most famous scenes.

Adult £20, 6-15 £14.50, under 6 free, chaplinsworld.com

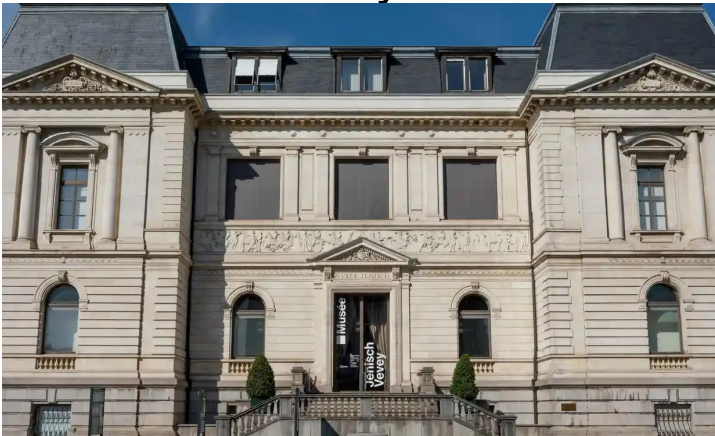
Vevey promenade



Charlie Chaplin statue on Quai Perdonnet. Photograph: Alamy

On the north-eastern shore of Lake Geneva, Vevey offers mountain views at every turn. For the most picturesque stroll, head to the town's lakeside, tree-lined promenade (Quai Perdonnet). It passes along the old town and by some of the town's museums - plus a couple of tiny parks. Keep an eye out for the bronze Chaplin statue (near the Alimentarium food museum), as well as the huge silver fork sculpture rising out of the lake.

Musée Jenisch Vevey



Photograph: Julien Gremaud/Jenisch Vevey Museum

This small, eclectic museum specialises in prints and drawings from Swiss and international artists, with a collection that spans from the 16th to the 21st century. It also has the world's largest collection of art by Viennese expressionist Oskar Kokoschka. Of particular interest are works by Alechinsky, Courbet, Dürer, Hodler, Picasso, Rembrandt and Vallotton. The 120-year-old building that houses the collection is a beautiful example of neo-classical architecture.

Adult £9.80, 18 and under free, museejenisch.ch

Les 11 Terres



A local favourite, this wine bar is worth the 10-minute drive out of Vevey. Amid the Lavaux vineyards, it serves up the area's largest selection of local vintages (many not usually available by the glass). It's a wonderful way to sample the region's wines. It also has a superb range of meats, honey and cheese from local farms. It's not unusual to run into one of the wine-makers from a nearby winery regaling guests with tales of the harvest while acting as bartender for the day. If unsure what to order, try a glass of chasselas; this refreshing white varietal is the darling of the Swiss wine world.

Ruelle du Petit-Crêt 2, 1098, Epesses, 11terres.ch

Ze Fork



This rustic cafe in a historic mansion offers casual Swiss dining at its best - and takes its name from the famous fork sculpture just a few metres away. The menu changes daily but its "3-ways" tapas-style concept remains constant. For example, the menu item "La Mer" will highlight three different kinds of seafood, each with its own innovative touch (from €18). While the food is amazing, Ze Fork's terraces, which border the restaurant on two sides and face the lake, are possibly its biggest draw - and explains why the restaurant is always busy (reservation advised).

Rue du Léman 2, zefork.ch

Boat tour



Chillon Castle, Lake Geneva. Photograph: Scott Wilson/Alamy

With the French Alps in the distance and the Lavaux vineyards behind, a boat trip is one of the best ways to explore Vevey and the surrounding Swiss riviera. CGN offers a variety of tours aboard its 100-year-old belle époque boats. The Riviera Tour floats by Montreux, Chillon Castle and Les Grangettes nature reserve. The Joyaux de Lavaux cruise does a loop around the Lavaux terraced vineyards and quaint hillside villages.

Tours from £30pp, cgn.ch

Funicular Vevey-Mont-Pèlerin

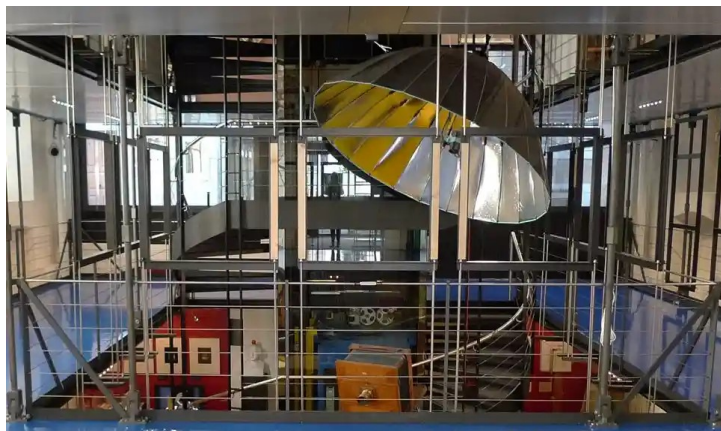


Photograph: Getty Images

The funicular from Vevey up Mont Pèlerin takes passengers through the Lavaux vineyards while climbing to an altitude of 810 metres. From this stop, passengers can visit the village of Mont Pèlerin and take in views of Lake Geneva. For even more vistas, there's also the option to continue by foot, along a well-marked, 45-minute route to the Plein Ciel lift (adult £4). The tower takes guests 65 metres to the top of Mont Pèlerin for views of the surrounding region.

Funicular runs every 20 minutes, £2.30 one-way, region-du-leman

Swiss Camera Museum



Gain a new appreciation for just how far cameras have come at this diminutive-but-engrossing museum. From the Camera Obscura up to modern digital devices, the museum has a collection of equipment, photographs and hands-on displays that testify to the ingenuity of those who worked so hard to capture a moment for an eternity.

Adult £13, 18 and under free, cameramuseum.ch

Läderach



If there is only room for one souvenir ... make it a box of Läderach chocolates. Not widely known, or available, outside of Switzerland, the family-run company is highly regarded among connoisseurs: Elias Läderach won the title of 2018 World Chocolate Master. The shop also offers a variety of chocolate-making workshops (there's even one for kids, £20 for one hour) and tasting seminars (£20pp).

Rue du Théâtre 8, laderach.com

Base Vevey



Photograph: Marcel Kultscher

This three-star hotel opened in 2018 and is just a few hundred metres from Vevey's railway station, as well as being within easy walking distance of most of the town's main attractions. Perfect for families, each of the 35 suites has floor-to-ceiling windows, a kitchen, TV and free wifi. There's also an onsite laundry, a restaurant and rooftop terrace, and bicycles are available for rent. A budget alternative is Vevey House hostel (doubles from £100 room-only), which is in a 19th-century building in the centre of town and has a bar and terrace.

Suites from £180 a night, basevevey.com

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This article was amended on 23 July 2019 to remove an incorrect reference to a Marilyn Monroe waxwork at Chaplin's World.

Since you're here...

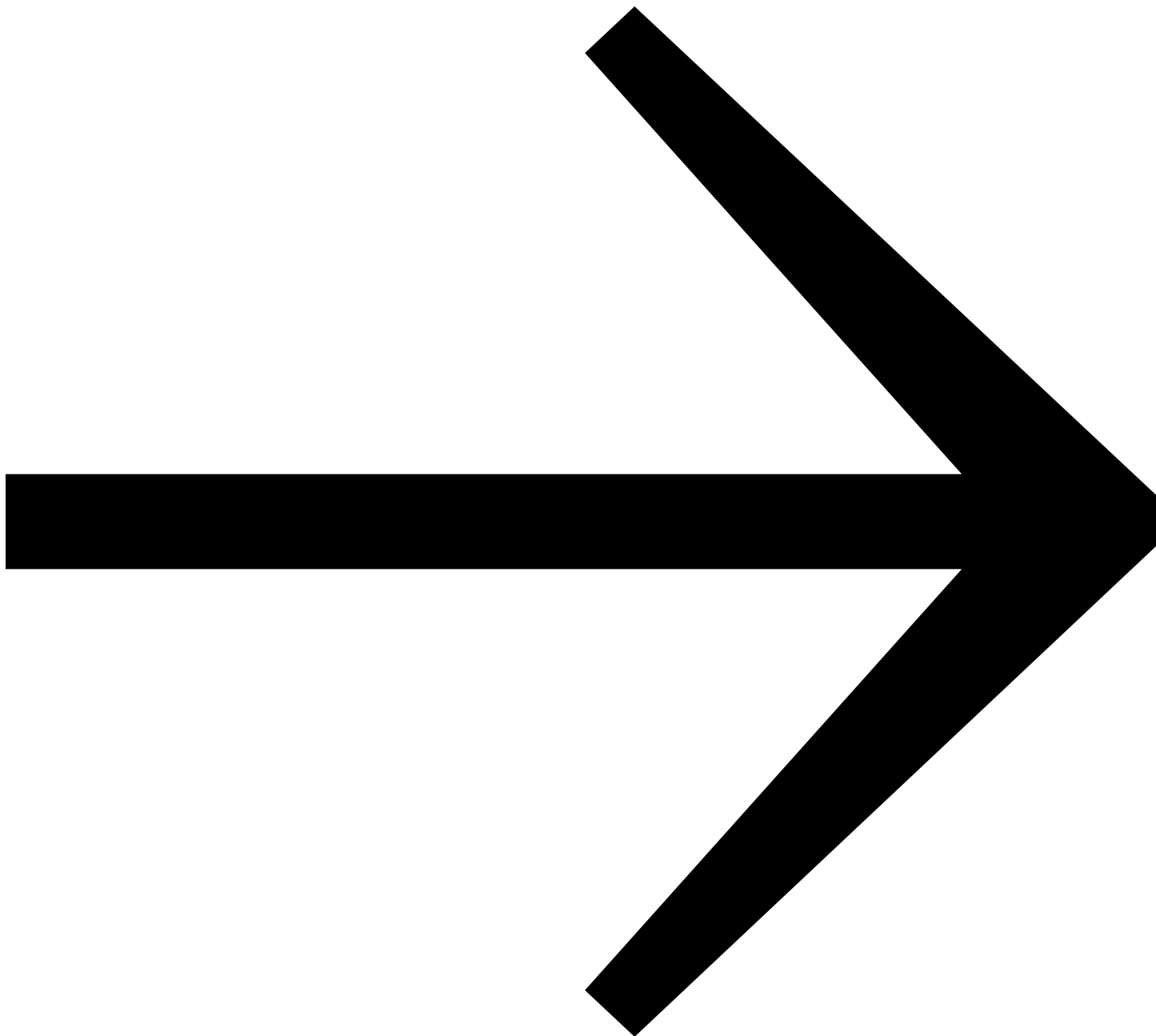
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