Italian-speaking **Ticino** (Tessin in German and French) occupies the balmy, lake-laced southern foothills of the Alps. It’s a little pocket of Italy in Switzerland and radically different in almost every way: culture, food, architecture, attitude and driving style owe more to Milan than Zürich, although Switzerland has controlled the area since the early 1500s. The main attractions are the lakeside resorts of [**Locarno**](https://www.roughguides.com/destinations/europe/switzerland/ticino/locarno/) and [**Lugano**](https://www.roughguides.com/destinations/europe/switzerland/ticino/lugano/), where mountain scenery meets subtropical flora. The best way to enjoy these chic towns is to join the locals promenading with ice creams. Unless you approach from Italy, there’s only one train line in – through the 15km **Gotthard Tunnel**. The climb to the tunnel is famous for its spiralling contortions: trains pass Wassen’s onion-domed church three times, first far above, then on a level, and finally far below.