

## Holidays to Switzerland Travel Podcast Episode 15 Transcript - Visiting Spiez and Lake Thun

[00:00:00] Welcome to the Holidays to Switzerland travel podcast. Your host is the founder of [holidaystoswitzerland.com](http://holidaystoswitzerland.com) and the Switzerland travel planning Facebook group, Carolyn Schonafinger. On this podcast, Carolyn will be joined by a variety of guests who share their knowledge and love of the country to help you plan your dream trip to Switzerland.

[00:00:27] **Carolyn:** This is episode 15 of the Holidays to Switzerland travel podcast. Today's episode is all about the beautiful town of Spiez and the surrounding Lake Thun area. My guest is Kasiu Morganstern, Head of Sales and Marketing at the Belvedere Strandhotel in Spiez. I first met Kasiu a few years ago when she worked for Jungfrau Tourism and I'm really excited to chat to her today, knowing how passionate she is about the beautiful region that she lives in. I'm sure she will have lots of wonderful info to share with us today.

[00:01:03] Hi Kasiu.. Thanks for chatting to me today.

[00:01:07] **Kasiu:** Hi. Good morning. Nice to be there.

[00:01:10] **Carolyn:** Thank you. Can you start by telling us a bit about your background in the tourism industry in Switzerland?

[00:01:17] **Kasiu:** Yeah, for sure. So originally I'm from Germany where I studied hotel management and then I lived a few years in Spain and, uh, about 10 years ago I moved to Switzerland. Um, it has been already, to the Bernese Oberland. Back then I worked, um, in, in a five-star hotel in Grindelwald and, uh, I moved to the tourism board and after having my baby, I can't travel that much anymore as I did before, so, um, now I'm working for, um, the Belvedere Strandhotel in Spiez, as you said, and yeah, it's, a owned and run hotel.

[00:01:59] **Carolyn:** Oh, great. So what does your current role involve and, and what you know, some of it, the history and the highlights of the hand, the, um, the hotel.

[00:02:09] **Kasiu:** Yeah. Um, the, you has been detected, uh, to hospitality and tradition already over 100 years ago, as I said, um, It's owned by a family.

[00:02:21] They have a small chain around the Thuner See, or Lake of Thun, um, with, uh, different hotels and the hotel I'm working in, we do have a 56

rooms in total and, um, I take care of all the marketing and sales stuff. I would be there if anybody has any questions, I would help travel agents and tour operators, um, to find also the right activities around.

[00:02:53] And yeah, that's what I'm doing currently. Um, maybe some more things about the hotel. We have a kind of two buildings. So there's the traditional main building, which already has been built 100 years ago. And, uh, currently we're finishing the construction site of the second part a kind of, uh, terrace annexe building. And with that, we will have, 56 rooms and four star superiors.

[00:03:24] **Carolyn:** Lovely. And there's some pretty, impressive, I think, activities or things that you can partake in, in the hotel there. An infinity pool sounds just wonderful.

[00:03:36] **Kasiu:** Yeah. Um, definitely one of our highlights, uh, by side of the, um, private lido, which we have, uh, it's uh, only for hotel guests and. Yeah, both sides are really great in summertime, but also in winter. So our infinity pool is, uh, solar heated. So, you can take also a swim during winter time, uh, in the warm water.

[00:04:04] **Carolyn:** And there's something quite unique about the bar also.

[00:04:09] **Kasiu:** Yeah. Uh, the bar has been built right now with the construction. Um, it's, uh, It looks like a ship and it has, uh, it's really the best bar around, uh, Lake of Thun with having the view to the Bay of Spiez.

[00:04:33] Yeah, especially sunsets are really amazing. During summer time you can sit outside to have a drink. You have the look to the castle and the vine yards of Spiez and you can also see the, um, along the lake of Thun.

[00:04:49] **Carolyn:** Wonderful. Now I was going to ask you just to explain to those people that are listening, that don't know exactly where Spiez is. Um, they possibly haven't heard of it before. So can you tell us exactly where it's located?

[00:05:05] **Kasiu:** Yeah, I would say it's half way between Interlaken and Thun and it's directly at the lake. That's the easiest thing to say.

[00:05:13] **Carolyn:** Yeah. Yeah. And the, the hotel itself is built sort of on the side of a hill, isn't it overlooking the lake?

[00:05:21] **Kasiu:** Yeah. And also, uh, looking towards the bay. So all of the other hotels around Spiez, they looking from the bay, um, outside. So they're situated in the bay and we're looking to the bay and also to the lake and the bay by the way is called the most, the most beautiful bay in Europe.

[00:05:45] **Carolyn:** It's certainly very attractive.

[00:05:48] Yeah. So why is staying in Spiez such such a good alternative to say I'm staying in a hotel in Interlaken or Bern.

[00:05:59] **Kasiu:** Um, first of all, it's directly at the lake. If you haven't been to Thun or to Interlaken, do you know if you're staying in a hotel, you have to walk towards the lake, but you're never directly at the lake.

[00:06:15] So if you're staying in Spiez, the views are just amazing because you can just overlook the lake. And then second thing it's definitely quieter than the other cities, but it has really good transport options. So really good connections. So within 20 minutes, you're in Interlaken with, and we even have direct trains to Zurich airport and Milan.

[00:06:40] **Carolyn:** Wonderful. So what are some of the best things that you can do in Spiez?

[00:06:47] **Kasiu:** Um, as I said before, we have an old castle, uh, in Spiez, which lies directly in the wine yard. So walking around there, having you look in the castle and maybe, uh, some drinks on their terraces, um, at wine tasting. With the wine yard for sure we also have our proper wine in Spiez, and walking along the lake for, for, um, just enjoying the feeling, being at the lake and, uh, really tip from locals, if you're in Spiez, then the view from the Migros restaurant is really great. So Migros for them who don't know it's a supermarket, but it has, um, It has a restaurant up there and you have the view all over the lake

[00:07:36] **Carolyn:** yeah. I had, um, a Mitt that when I first visited, visited Spiez, uh, we stumbled, it was actually raining. So we'd got off the train. We thought, well, we need an umbrella. So we went into the supermarket to buy an umbrella and decided we'd go upstairs to the restaurant to have some lunch and wow. The view.

[00:07:56] That was so amazing. So that was a really good thing to sort of find. And then, then we wandered on down into the, uh, to the bay and, uh, went into

the castle. And of course the views from the, the, uh, the tower of the castle are just incredible as well.

[00:08:13] **Kasiu:** Yeah. Yeah. That's definitely like that. I mean, all around, it doesn't really matter where you are, but, um, this thing in the Migros restaurant is really something also local people use, and it's a, we go there to have our normal lunch break and then you just sit around and you really enjoy the view.

[00:08:36] **Carolyn:** That's right. Yeah. The best of both worlds, you get a reasonable, reasonably priced meal and a wonderful view for free.

[00:08:45] **Kasiu:** Yeah, that's right.

[00:08:47] **Carolyn:** Um, so Lake Thun is quite a large lake. It stretches from Thun to Interlaken. Um, so there's obviously other little villages and things around the lake as well. What else can people do if they're staying in Spiez or, or somewhere around the lake?

[00:09:05] What are some of the other popular activities?

[00:09:09] **Kasiu:** I like cruise. Definitely. You can take the, the boat directly from Spiez. And then it heads toward Interlaken or Thun. Uh, you can maybe combine it with a walk along the lake and then take a part of it by boat. Or, uh, we in the hotel, for example, we also rent, um, e-bikes where you could take a path by eBike.

[00:09:35] And we also have, um, a kind of small shipping boat, which you can, uh, use without driving license for it. And you can take your own, your own cruise around the lake. And then if you go a bit further for sure to visit the cities of Thun and Interlaken, which are really nice. We have caves, uh, the St. Beatus Caves, um, next to Interlaken or, if you want to go a bit higher up to the mountains, you can go to Beatenberg for example, the Stockhorn's really nice, which is next to us. Uh, Mount Niesen, which is just behind the hotel, for example, or just opposite on the other lake side, there's also the suspension bridge in Sigriswil.

[00:10:29] **Carolyn:** Okay. So how, how would people access all those places? I assume there's cable cars and, and mountain railways to get up to all those places you've mentioned.

[00:10:41] **Kasiu:** Um, as I said before, Spiez is a really good connected by trains and also buses towards Thun. If you'd like to go around like that, I don't think it's necessary to have a car. Um, I mean, uh, trains are so frequent that you really can just go, go to the train station - within the next 20 minutes you will have a train.

[00:11:06] And, um, it's also a very scenic train ride. If you take the train from Spiez to Interlaken, for example, Uh, by side of that, anybody who stays, uh, in Spiez, will receive the Panorama card from Thun, uh, with different advantages or so you get, uh, discounts on the, uh, to go up to the mountain tops or for the suspension bridge, as I mentioned before.

[00:11:31] And also you can use the buses for free to move towards Thun, for example.

[00:11:38] **Carolyn:** Okay. So with some of those places that you mentioned, Beatenberg and the, the suspension bridge, can you, can you tell us a little bit more about those? What, what can people see when, when they get there?

[00:11:52] **Kasiu:** Uh, so both, uh, places, Sigriswil and also Beatenberg are on the other lake side.

[00:11:59] So just opposite the hotel, they would look towards, um, Spiez, um, As you go , uh, then you would not only see the lake from above, but also all of the, um, mountains of the Bernese Oberland around. So the view from there is really great. And, uh, in Sigriswil, there's a suspension bridge where you could walk over,

[00:12:26] **Carolyn:** how long is the bridge?

[00:12:29] **Kasiu:** Uh, I would say it's about 100 meters.

[00:12:33] **Carolyn:** Yeah. Sounds like something, um, that would, uh, that, you know, lots of people would, it would enjoy.

[00:12:40] **Kasiu:** Yeah, for sure.

[00:12:42] **Carolyn:** So in your opinion, what is the best time of year to visit Spiez?

[00:12:49] **Kasiu:** Um, for us as Swiss, uh, it's all year round, each season has its own charm, but for foreigners for sure. I think it's more about spring to autumn. Yeah. During that time, I mean, in springtime you have all the flowers around, for example, in the Castle of Speiz, they really have a nice garden side where you can see it. And, uh, then in autumn, for example, the colors of the trees and everything around of the vine yards, they're really great.

[00:13:22] **Carolyn:** Good. Now, when, if people are staying in Spiez, um, what can they expect in the way of like, are there many other restaurants and shops, um, or do they, obviously we've mentioned that there's the Migros supermarket there. So if they need to grab a few supplies, they can, but what's the population of the, of the town?

[00:13:43] **Kasiu:** Roughly, I would say, uh, about, uh, 7,000.

[00:13:48] Yeah, you can find everything like the Migros restaurant is really something local people go to because it's next to the, um, biggest supermarket. But then, then along with the lake shore, you have a lot of, you can find a lot of restaurants. Um, all of the hotels do have restaurants inside. Um, Uh, where you can walk in, usually, uh. In our hotel, for example, we do have a nice restaurant with an outside terrace where you can also enjoy the view during your dinner time or during the lunch, if you go to the bar.

[00:14:25] So, um, yeah, and then there are a lot of small shops. Uh, along the lake shore.

[00:14:34] **Carolyn:** Great. So people will find whatever they need. They, they won't really be needing to go to one of the bigger towns to find anything?

[00:14:42] **Kasiu:** No, it's just, if they really want to go around to do shopping, then I would say, then they have to move to Thun, Bern, or to Interlaken in if they really want to go for clothes or something and yeah. Then for really shopping experience they, they would have to go to bigger town. Yeah.

[00:15:02] **Carolyn:** But for, uh, just for a great holiday experience, they'll find everything they need in Spiez.

[00:15:08] **Kasiu:** Oh yeah, definitely.

[00:15:10] **Carolyn:** So what is the number one reason that you would, um, tell someone that they should, should stay in Spiez when they're heading to that, uh, Interlaken, sort of Bernese Oberland region?

[00:15:23] **Kasiu:** Um, I would say it's the atmosphere at the atmosphere we get from the really great views we do have in there. So wherever you go, you have this, uh, lake view, you see the vine yards and stuff and gives kind of very warm and welcoming atmosphere. You feel like, uh, being somewhere in Italy and, uh, especially if you sit down on a terrace in the evening and enjoy the sunset, then it really feels like holidays.

[00:15:57] **Carolyn:** Excellent. And of course, if people are heading there, they should, um, definitely book in at the Belvedere Strandhotel.

[00:16:06] **Kasiu:** Oh, yeah. I would really love to welcome them for sure.

[00:16:09] **Carolyn:** Wonderful. So I'll link to the, um, the, the hotel's website in the show notes for the episode, so that people can get more information and they can find those show notes at [holidaystoswitzerland.com/episode15](http://holidaystoswitzerland.com/episode15).

[00:16:26] Thank you very much. Um, Kasiu for speaking with us and telling us a little bit more about Spiez and the Lake Thun region, and hopefully we're sending, when it's safe to travel again, hopefully we're sending lots more people to visit you.

[00:16:42] **Kasiu:** Yeah. Thank you, Carolyn. And thank everybody to hear about it.

[00:16:46] **Carolyn:** You're welcome. Have a great day.

[00:16:48] **Kasiu:** You too. Bye bye.

[00:16:50] **Carolyn:** Oh, that was fantastic. I really hope you enjoyed everything that Kasiu had to share with us today. Spiez is a really wonderful little village to visit. Uh, it's really picturesque and it's often overlooked by people who are so focused on visiting Interlaken and the Jungfrau region that it gets overlooked, but it's really, really worth a visit.

[00:17:14] Now, if you do plan to visit Spiez or anywhere, actually in the whole Bernese Oberland, it's really worth considering purchasing a Regional Pass Berner Oberland as it includes lots of the, uh, destinations or the attractions that,

uh, Kasiu mentioned today. Uh, it covers train travel between Bern and Lucerne. So a quite a distance. So if you're in Interlaken and you want to go to Spiez or to Thun that's covered as well as those further destinations that I just mentioned. It also includes discounts on admission to the castles that are around the lake and lots of other museums and attractions. Um, and it includes the, some of the mountain excursions that Kasiu mentioned, like Beatenberg and Niesen, as well as a discounted, um, tickets to the Jungfrauoch and a lot of the others, like the Schynige Platte, Harder Kulm are also included in the Bernese Oberland Pass. So I'll link to more information about that, uh, in the show notes with all the other info that you can find about this episode. Thanks again for joining us. And I look forward to chatting with you next time.

[00:18:34] Thank you so much for listening. For more great resources about planning a trip to Switzerland make sure you visit [holidaystoswitzerland.com](http://holidaystoswitzerland.com) where you will find trip planning tips, destination guides, information on transport, including Swiss rail passes and much more. You're also encouraged to join the Switzerland travel planning group on Facebook, where you can ask questions and chat to other past and future travelers to Switzerland.

[00:19:01] You'll find show notes from today's episode at [holidaystoswitzerland.com/podcast](http://holidaystoswitzerland.com/podcast). And be sure to subscribe to the Holidays to Switzerland travel podcast so you never miss an episode.