

Ep41 Trip Report Chelsea and Brenda

You can see the full show notes for this episode, get a PDF version of this transcript and listen to the episode [> here](#)

Are you dreaming of visiting Switzerland? Planning a trip to Switzerland is very exciting, but it can also be overwhelming. How do you choose which of the many scenic cities, towns, and villages to visit? Which mountain top excursions should you take? And what's the best way to get around Switzerland? And of course, how much of the country can you realistically see within your timeframe?

If you've asked yourself any of these questions, this is the podcast for you. This is the Holidays to Switzerland Travel Podcast and in each episode, your host, Carolyn Schonafinger chats with Swiss travel experts to answer your most commonly asked questions, provide practical tips and take you on a virtual visit to the most popular destinations - and of course, some hidden gems, to help you plan your dream trip to Switzerland. And you'll hear plenty of conversations about Swiss cheese and chocolate too.

Are you ready to plan your trip to Switzerland? Well let's get started?

Carolyn: Welcome to episode 41. Have you considered taking a family trip to Switzerland? If you're planning a trip with young children or perhaps a multi-generation trip, you may have some concerns as to how it will all work out so that everyone is happy.

For instance, how will you choose an itinerary that suits the interests and physical abilities of every family member?

Will there be enough sights and attractions to keep the children amused? What if they need some time to burn off some energy?

And how easy is it to travel around Switzerland with children and elderly grandparents?

I'm fortunate to have visited Switzerland many times with my children when they were young, and also on a multi-generation trip with my parents, my husband and our kids - who were young adults by then, so I know first-hand the concerns that you might have when considering such a trip.

Today's guests, Brenda Powell and Chelsea Powell, have recently returned from Switzerland where they enjoyed a wonderful vacation with four generations of their family.

I met them virtually in the Switzerland Travel Planning Facebook group and followed along with interest as they posted photos in the group during their trip.

Rather than me sharing my thoughts on family travel, I invited Brenda and Chelsea onto the podcast to tell us all about their trip and how they planned their itinerary to suit every family member from age 3 to 80!

Before we hear from Brenda and Chelsea, I'd like to give a shout out to the sponsors of the podcast, Switzerland Tourism. Visit their website myswitzerland.com for travel information and inspiration.

If you've been working too hard or you need a break, you need Switzerland.

Carolyn: Hello, Brenda and Chelsea. Thank you very much for being on the show. It's wonderful to finally meet you after having spoken or corresponded with you in the Facebook group, uh, before and after your trip.

Chelsea: Yeah.

Brenda: Hi, Carolyn. Thank you so much. This is so exciting.

Carolyn: It's wonderful to have you here now, just so we can get to know you both a little bit better.

Um, could you start by telling us a little bit about yourself? And was this your first trip to Switzerland or have you frequent travelers? Um, yeah, just share a little bit about your.

Chelsea: Okay, so I'll go first. I'm Chelsea and I'm married and I have three kids under nine. Um, I reside in San Diego, California, and I've traveled quite a bit here in the US, and I've done some international travel as well, but this was my first trip to Switzerland and my first international trip with my kids.

Carolyn: Okay. And what about you?

Brenda: Okay. I'm Brenda and I'm 62 years old. I'm married 39 years to my husband, David and I was able to make a trip to Switzerland with my dad, my sister, her friend, my daughter, her husband, my son and daughter-in-law Chelsea with our three beautiful grandchildren. This was my first trip to overseas and to Switzerland.

My sister's a yoga instructor and an athlete. Her friend went with this and she's a realtor. Our daughter is a data analyst and a GIS mapper. Her husband is a wildlife biologist and I am a dental receptionist. All of us love the outdoors and are experienced travelers.

Carolyn: Wow. There's some combination of, um, of skills there. Now. I think there's quite an interesting story about the reason that you actually went to Switzerland.

So who would like to tell me about that?

Chelsea: So it was actually a dream of my husband's grandfather to go. And my husband's sister and her husband gifted him the trip for his 80th birthday. Then COVID happened so that all kind of got put on a delay. Um, but then they found these really great price on flights and they asked the whole family, if anyone else was interested in going, this was, um, in the middle of 2021.

And they, um, it was just such a good opportunity that everyone was kind of like, well, We can't pass this up. Like we have to go, how could we pass up a great price on tickets to Switzerland with the whole family? So, um, that's kinda how we all ended up going. Wow.

Carolyn: So correct me if I'm wrong, but they were 11 of you all together.

There was eight adults and three children?

Brenda: Yes, actually originally there were 13. And then my daughter and her husband found out they're expecting triplets. They were the ones that were

gifting my dad to go to Switzerland. And because they're expecting triplets, they had to back out of the trip. So Chelsea and I became the, the coordinators of the trip and got it together.

Um, so there are 11 of us that ended up going from age 80 to age 3.

Carolyn: Wow. Well, I think having triplets is probably a pretty good excuse for not going to Switzerland.

Chelsea: Yeah.

Carolyn: I'd love to chat about your itinerary in more detail shortly, but can you just give us a bit of a quick overview of the cities and the towns that you stayed in, during your trip?

Chelsea: Um, yeah, sure. So we, uh, We traveled around a little bit. Our, when we first came in, we stayed in Zurich and we stayed in Zurich for a couple nights, then we made our way to Interlaken and we stayed in Interlaken for, was it three nights, Brenda? So that was kind of the main home base for a lot of the trip. And from Interlaken, we went to several other towns, um, and then made our way back to Zurich.

And then part of the group flew back home to the states. And my husband and my kids, and I actually stayed for a few more days and we ended up going to Grindelwald as well.

Carolyn: Lovely. So how did you get around when you were in Switzerland?

Brenda: Well, primarily we used the Swiss Travel Pass. And when, on the trains, um, we did use the trams and, uh, of course gondolas up to Matterhorn.

There were buses. So we just took advantage of the transportation system, which was excellent. I was, I was really amazed at how efficient it is, how precise it is. Um, we were able to purchase a Swiss Travel Pass early in the summer. That was 25% off. So we took advantage of a promo, um, uh, deal. And then our whole family went on and did that.

I'm so glad we did because travel was a, not as far as expense was non-existent once we had that trip, uh, travel pass that actually allows you to get into some.

The, when we went up to the Matterhorn, it allows you to get discount tickets on that.

Carolyn: And how did you find it with such a large group of people and obviously people of all ages and children, getting on and off with your luggage?

Was that easy enough or, sort of, you know, create a bit of stress at times?

Brenda: I think initially just learning how the platforms work and the times the trains leave, it's on military time. So you have to learn that. In the United States, we use AM PM. So it's a little bit different. Um, but my dad he's 80 and he, he knew military time.

So he's military. So he was actually the most, uh, acclimated to it. So we really enjoyed that. Um, Uh, but as far as the kids getting on, I was concerned most about my dad and the kids. And everybody just knew that once that door opened, you got on, find a place for your bags, as you is very easy. We learn right away that you don't speak a lot on the train.

You're kind of quiet, kept your mask on. Everybody was real good about that, but that getting on and getting off, uh, you know, that as soon as you're getting close to that station, that you stand up and get your things together. And go off. I was excited that there were coat little hooks that you could put right over your shoulder.

You're going to hang your coat, plenty of room to put your bag and backpack, and then your luggage so real easy.

Carolyn: Okay, good. And I bet the children enjoyed going on the trains to,

Chelsea: um, my kids loved it. My youngest always asked to sit by the window whenever we got on. And some of the trains have a family area on the trains.

So they loved that when they got to kind of run around and be a little bit louder on the train instead of being in the quieter area. But getting on and off was pretty, pretty easy with them for the most part, as long as they were paying attention and, um, Yeah, they really liked it.

Carolyn: All right. So I'd love to hear more about your itinerary, um, in a bit more detail and what you did in each place. So let's start at the beginning with

Zurich, where you flew into how many. Uh, yeah. Remind us how many nights you stayed there and what did you see and do whilst you were in Zurich?

Brenda: When we first arrived in Zurich was late in the afternoon, about four.

So the sun was getting ready to set and we decided to, some of them went off on a little walk and, and took off. We, uh, grandpa and I just stayed in the hotel and stayed, put, and had a little bit of a in, in the hotel, just a little something. Yeah.

Chelsea: We went to the grocery store, so my husband took the kids to the hotel to get them cleaned up and kind of ready for bed.

And I went to the grocery store and, and got all the necessary supplies for dinner. And the next day for going out.

Brenda: And then the next morning we woke up pretty early and then we walked into Zurich. We, it was really easy from our hotel. We could walk right down to the train station and get right on the train and it took us right into Zurich.

So it's super simple. Um, Went to Zurich and we walk the old, old Zurich, went down into a park. We found a lovely park and my sister, because she's yoga, she started doing all kinds of yoga poses by the trees and grandpa enjoyed walking through the park. That was one of my precious times. It was just walking with him, his dream coming true.

He's finally in Zurich in Switzerland, and he's just looking at, oh, at these big, massive trees and it's all autumn. So the trees were losing their leaves and beautiful colors, old buildings, churches, and he just enchanted. So just taking in his, what he was seeing was brings me tears, because I see him just sitting there enjoying it.

Carolyn: Very special. And Chelsea, what did you and your family.

Chelsea: We walked around and explored. Um, we ended up going into one of the old churches. I think it's Grossmunster. And my youngest actually wanted to climb the tower, um, which goes up quite high. And I didn't realize that at first, but, um, we, we made the trek up there.

She was very committed to going all the way up. It was a lot of stairs. But when we got up there, it was so worth it because you can see the whole city from up there. And it was such a beautiful view of, you know, the middle of Zurich. So that was a really special memory for me. Um, just being able to do that with her and have that time and see the city from that perspective.

So, yeah, we've kind of just wandered and, you know, got some walking in after the long plane ride.

Carolyn: And that's often like just the best way to sort of get over any jet lag or, and to climatize yourself to a new time zone to just, to, to still wander and go where, where the mood takes you.

Brenda: Yes, that morning, my daughter and Son-in-law had got up at four because we're still on California time. So, because they woke up so early, they went into old Zurich before the sun rise and they were right on the river and they took a beautiful video and photos of the actual river and the old churches, the bells were going off and here's, the sun was coming up right over the whole city.

It was gorgeous. And they shared those pictures with. That was one of the most amazing things is just being able to be in such a, an amazing expansive place. But then we would go walking and I heard the grandkids say Nonna, and next thing I looked over and there, they all are right by the river having a little snack.

And so we all joined them. So even though we were doing a little bit of our own thing, we would come together, find each other. And it was, that was a lot of fun. Yeah.

Carolyn: So after Zurich, you moved onto Interlaken and and so you stayed there for three nights and, um, did you spend the whole time in the Jungfrau region or did you do some, uh, some day trips away from there?

Brenda: We did do some trips.

Carolyn: So I think one day, uh, you mentioned that you spent, uh, around Lauterbrunnen.. So what, what did you do.

Chelsea: So kind of the same thing we wandered around a little bit. Um, once we got there, the group kind of split because there was some people that wanted

to do a longer hike and some people that just wanted to see some of the buildings.

So we kind of just wandered around, um, but saw the beautiful waterfalls and, um, my kids saw a playground, so they were. Just completely excited to see a playground and get to play and, um, just to be in that beautiful place with the mountains around it and the waterfalls and they're just playing. Um, so that's kind of what we did.

And then Brenda, when we got there, where did you wander off to?

Brenda: We ended up going back to the Staubbach Fall and seeing the beautiful majestic waterfall there. And then down below there were cows and they were just grazing, but there was a beautiful fountain there and their fountains all over Switzerland where you give, fill up your water bottles and just continue hiking. So then we started watering these cows, taking a big bucket. There was one right there almost like it was invite invitation to water the cows.

So we, uh, my son-in-law noticed that the cows were thirsty, so he filled up this, but big bucket, the kids just watched that, put the water over the. And watch the cows drink the water. And we had a lot of photos of that.

It was really special. And the youngest granddaughter she's three. She just put her hand over the fence and started petting the cow. And it was just a really sweet time that watched them. Then we walked back into the valley some more, there was a beautiful church in the village of Lauterbrunnen, and we went into it.

Most of the churches are open in Switzerland, so you can just walk in - peaceful time to just sit in and take in that. That was one of the most beautiful places I think I was in is, uh, just going into the churches. But as we walked back to the valley, my sister would meet people. And she would ask their little story and they would share, and she met these little couple, they were like 80 walking along and she, they were in the village and she asked her if she could take their picture.

So she had a picture with them, of people that she had actually met and got their story. And it was just a really sweet documentary of her visit all along the way. She would talk to people and get their pictures, ask them permission to take their picture with her. So in Lauterbrunnen, along with all the different photos,

we have, we have pictures of her with these people that she would meet and their stories.

We walked back to the back of the, as we're going through the valley, there was a library full of homemade soap and homemade cheeses. And fudge and you open this little door and pay by honor system. You put your francs in there and just pay for whatever you took out. And I make homemade soap so it was like a gift. I just thought this is so amazing to have soap that's made right there in Lauterbrunnen.

Um, and we continued to walk back. I think that day, my Fitbit blew up because I did like three times the amount of steps that I normally do on average, but it was a beautiful, beautiful day of a lot of walking, but you don't even know that you're doing it because you're just drinking water and walking and talking and visiting.

So, yeah.

Carolyn: Very nice. So you were back to, uh, stay in Interlaken that night. Um, and then the next day, I think you went somewhere pretty special. Where was that?

Chelsea: We did. The next day is when we went to Zermatt and we went to the Matterhorn.

Carolyn: So you, obviously, you went by train. Do you remember how long it took.

Chelsea: I honestly don't remember it, it wasn't that long.

Carolyn: I think for anyone listening, who who's interested, I think it's, without looking it up, about two and a half hours to two hours, two and a half hours. Yeah, definitely a doable day.

Chelsea: Yeah, it was very doable. Um, most of my time sequences for the trip is measured in how many snacks we went through as we were waiting to get to the destination, um, because my kids would just eat snacks the whole time.

Um, but yeah, so we went to the Matterhorn and that was amazing. So we went up to Glacier Paradise. And walked all through and saw the sculptures and everything there. And my kids were really excited about the slide. So inside

Glacier Paradise is a slide. Um, but they were running around a little too much in there and so they started to get effected from, um, the altitude.

So that's a good reminder if you're on the mat of horn with young kids, try to keep them from running around too much because they might start to just not feel super awesome. Um, but once we started to head back down, they felt fine.

Carolyn: And did you have much time then to spend looking around Zermatt itself?

Brenda: We did actually. Um, I was going to just share about going up to Matterhorn. Grandpa actually got on that, the gondola and went all the way up and he was amazed at all the beauty, uh, One of the skiers on the gondola going up said we had chosen one of the very best days that he and he's skied since he was little, the Matterhorn and he was in his thirties.

So he said, you've come up on one of the nicest days that I've ever been up here. So it was beautiful, but grandpa enjoyed it. When we went back down there, we ended up having dinner down there and just going into the, some of the shops. Um, my sister had the idea of buying Swiss knives for everybody that was on her little list.

And we found these little Swiss nail clippers made really good gifts. On our way back, we went to a chocolate shop. Chelsea found some really good chocolate there. Um, lots of shops and it's a little bit more touristy, but it was so beautiful. And in fact, my son in law said if he could stay anywhere a little bit longer, he would've stayed in Zermatt and take advantage of more of the hikes and all.

Carolyn: Well, that sounds like it was a really, really fun day out. And then I think the next day you also did a bit of an excursion. Where was that too?

Chelsea: We went to Montreux. So that was a longer train ride. I think it's about three and a half hours, I want to say. Um, so we went to Montreux. The train ride is beautiful though.

So all along the way you go by lakes and just the towns, you see, it was really neat. Um, and then we did the tour for, uh, Chillon Castle, so which is also covered by the Swiss Travel Pass, which is really great. Um, so we did that and I was surprised how interested my kids were in it.

I knew they liked castles. Um, it is quite a bit of walking though. It's very extensive. You can see every bit of the castle and I was surprised how interested they were in it. And my middle child, who's five, I had the audio guide and she was like every single thing, she wanted to listen to it. She wanted to know where we were and follow along.

So they really enjoyed that. Um, yeah, it was a lot of walking for my youngest, who's three. Um, but we had a carrier so we could carry her for part of the time. And then she was, she was good to go. Um, and I think it was a little too much walking for grandpa. So he found a nice little area to sit and watch people and look out at the lake.

Carolyn: Okay. From Montreux station to get to Chillon Castle, did you take, um, a local train or a bus or you, or did you walk along the promise?

Brenda: We took the bus and the bus took about a half hour to get maybe not that long, but with all the stops, but at the actual train station to where you board the train or that board, the bus is very short.

So it's super easy to go. Good signage. Um, grandpa felt, we all felt really safe and real like if you follow the direction, you know exactly where to get off.

Carolyn: Good. And did you have any other time to have a look around in Montreux?

Chelsea: Yeah. So one of my bucket list things has always been to go to a European Christmas market and it worked out that that was the first weekend the Montreux Christmas market opened. So we were able to go to that and it was so fun. It was just beautiful with the shops and the food, the whole atmosphere. It was just really fun.

Carolyn: Wonderful. And what, what did you like most about the market, Brenda.

Brenda: Well, my, my goal was to get some Christmas decorations for the tree that were actually made in Switzerland and just seeing the craftsmanship of the, the cutout cutaways of the ornaments and wood, wood the pieces, um, I was able to visit with some of their artists and they were, it was just really beautiful, but the food was good. We had some of the mulled cider, or what was it called?

The gluhwein. So I was introduced to gluhwein and they gave you little cups that were actually souvenirs from the Montreux Christmas market.

So we brought those home and Chelsea actually made a gluhwein for our Swiss fondue at Christmas this year when we came home. So that was a nice tradition. Yeah.

Carolyn: Oh, very special memory. Hmm. So back to Interlaken for you your final night there, and then, um, you're back to Zurich because I know some of your group were flying home.

Did you have much more time to spend in Zurich that day?

Brenda: Well, before we went back to Zurich, Chelsea and the group went up to Jungfrauoch and grandpa and I, and my sister decided to get back to Zurich. So we stopped in Bern on the way. He wanted schnitzel so we ended up finding a really good restaurant to have schnitzel. It was a Sunday and not a lot of restaurants are open on Sunday, but you do a little research and you can find one. Then we locked our luggage in the train station at a locker.

And it was super easy. That was a good way for grandpa. They were, they had different sizes. So we were all able to share one big locker and save, save money there. The train station at Zurich, no in Bern, is like a shopping mall. So you can do some shopping as well and get a few more souvenirs. Then, we took a taxi, the one-time we took a taxi to the place, the restaurant, and I'm glad we did because somebody had said it was like a half hour.

Most everybody rides bikes. So a half hour to them on a bus. Not much, but we, it was on the other side of town. So we ended up taking the taxi, found the place for lunch and had a wonderful lunch with my sister and my dad while the rest of them traveled to Jungfrau.

Carolyn: Good. So Chelsea, tell us about your, uh, excursion then up to the, to the Jungfrauoch.

Chelsea: So we actually stayed in Grindelwald. We found an apartment to stay in there that was beautiful and perfect for our family to start to slow down after the quick pace of the group travel. And it looked out at all the mountains there. So it was great and it was really close to the station with the gondolas to go up from Grindelwald to the different mountains.

Um, we went up to the Eiger and it was a beautiful day. It was really clear and we were able to see, you know, everything cause it was perfectly clear and the gondola going up there is really neat. Panoramic. So you can just see everything and as you're going up, and the kids were just like amazed being able to look down and look all around.

And then when we got up there, there was snow. So being from where we are by the ocean, they were really excited to see snow. And so they just played and played and played in the patches of snow that they found up there. And we came back down and we were really glad we had gone up that day because the next day wasn't clear.

Um, but we ended up walking around Grindelwald that day and exploring and found another playground that they played at and had just a great time and, um, you know, visited the grocery stores because when we were in the apartment, we were able to cook all of our meals. So we got one of the like fondue kits, which was great.

It was super delicious from the grocery store and made that at our apartment. And yeah, so we just kind of wandered around Grindelwald, which was really kind of storybook when it was not as clear because you have all the rolling hills and then kind of the haze. So it was kind of like being in a movie, which was fun.

Carolyn: And a nice, um, a nice sort of place just to be able to, as you said, relaxing at home after the busy time you'd had traveling with all the group,

Chelsea: Grindelwald was our favorite place we visited.

Carolyn: So how difficult was it to plan your itinerary initially so that, you know, it, it suited all different ages and, and I assume different interests as well.

How did you go about doing that?

Brenda: Well, Chelsea and I are good planners. We're administrators. We have the gift of planning and administration, and then Laura, my daughter, who is the GIS mapper and the data analyst, between all three of us. I think we just had like a home run with planning, um, B using technology.

Of course you can use the Google doc. And we shared that. So we typed in all of our itinerary ideas and so everyone would continue to share on it. Um, the

discoveries we made along the way we use Marco Polo a lot and just back and forth talking at when we had time, because we're all three busy. So Marco Polo allows you allows you to do.

Talk and share what you discover. And then the other person can communicate when they have time and you see it all together. So it's not a live live feed, but it's like this where you can sit back and talk to each other Google maps, which is amazing before they cut it out just a little bit, but we put our temporary on Google maps and you could link that, the place and then actually all the information about that place and then where you want to visit.

And, um, we also use the call, of course, the Holidays to Switzerland podcast, Facebook site, Switzerland travel planning group with you, Carolyn. So all of those were priceless. And then Chelsea just would go beyond that and find she found your podcast.

So that kind of got us kicked up to starting some good planning, but also videos. Um, you know, a lot of the different videos, YouTube, you could find on Switzerland just doing as much research we love that was part of the trip was the planning was, uh, made it amazing part. We enjoyed that a lot.

Carolyn: So did you ask for, for all the other family members that were coming along, did you ask them, you know, what, what they wanted to get out of the trip?

Did they have any, must-see things and then you, you tried to match all that together so you could fit everything in.

Chelsea: We did. Yeah. We, we kind of asked everyone if they had at least like three things that were really important to them that they experienced. So either somewhere they went or something they saw, or even something they wanted to eat as far as, you know, part of that whole experience.

So after talking to everyone and kind of figuring out what that looked like, um, you're able to kind of match some of that up and then usually there's way more things than are actually possible, but so being able to try to pare things down, to leave some space, to be a little bit flexible, you know, depending on weather, especially because of the time of year that we were visiting, you don't know if it's going to be raining that day or not.

So being flexible as far as weather and just, um, leaving space to, to where people could do things that they wanted to do, that the group didn't have to necessarily be together the whole time people could rest. If they wanted to rest, people could go, you know, walk around and just everyone kind of gave each other the freedom to do that, which made that easier.

And we talked about that beforehand.

Carolyn: That's really important, isn't it? If there are, if you all go there with the expectation that, you know, someone might want to have a couple of hours to themselves doing their own thing or just resting, then no one else gets offended if, if that actually happens.

Chelsea: Yeah. And the planning part was really fun too, for me with the kids, because.

They got to be a part of all that and get used to the idea of traveling and where we were going beforehand. Kind of like helping them practice because they were looking at the different foods and we were listening to, um, you know, learning phrases and German and, um, you know, in French different, the different languages in Switzerland.

And learning the different areas and what, what the train map looks like. So that made it really fun with them beforehand to,

Carolyn: yeah. Excellent. And now you mentioned that you'd stayed in an apartment in Grindlevald, but when the whole group was traveling together, what style of accommodation did you use?

Chelsea: So we stayed in a couple of different places. We stayed in a hotel in Zurich. And then an Interlaken in, it was a bed and breakfast and it was wonderful. The people that own, that place were very sweet. And then, um, they stayed in a hotel again, going back to Zurich and we stayed in the apartment and Grindelwald.

Carolyn: So did you find, find it difficult, uh, booking enough rooms for everyone and at the same time,

Brenda: No, my daughter, um, and her son, my son-in-law, they actually are part of the group of the hotel we stayed at. So they were able to get discounts for that hotel. Is there already, um, like executive members or something, so that

made it easy. So my daughter and son-in-law are vegan and they were able to find a B&B in Interlaken that was one of the most sustainable, like energy and vegan, um, uh, BnBs. My dad wasn't so sure about that, but when we did go there, uh, breakfast was excellent and had lots of choices. We had muesli and we had, um, all kinds of good, healthy breakfast. But they were very gracious.

And then they had an open area upstairs that allowed us to come in a common room and enjoy coffee and tea and ginger bread and chocolate together in the mornings.

Um, yeah, so that was easy to find because she had done research through the internet they were really good because we did call them and they accommodated all of us, uh, very easily. In fact, we were one of the first groups to go and travel after COVID, kind of the opening of Switzerland.

Again, we were the first group to book the Interlaken B&B, and we had the whole whole B&B by ourselves. The whole chalet was ours. So we felt like super guests were very, we were well catered to

Carolyn: oh, wonderful. Now, Chelsea, I'd like to ask you, was there anything about Switzerland that really surprised you?

Chelsea: Um, the thing that surprised me the most was, um, I think there was two things. One. The transportation. It didn't surprise me because that's what I've heard. Especially listening to your podcasts. There's been such good episodes about the transportation. Um, but it really is so easy to get around and that didn't surprise me, but it was just, I was kind of in awe of it.

But the water, the water fountains everywhere, um, and just the water everywhere. So being from a kind of a desert climate where we live. Um, water is very scarce and so traveling somewhere where there's just water, everywhere, lakes and waterfalls and fountains. It's just incredible. It's like everything's green.

And, um, my eyes were just like, I can't believe all the water.

Carolyn: Um, and what about for you, Brenda? What, what was there, that's that surprised you?

Brenda: Yeah, it kind of goes with, with what Chelsea said, but, we live, where there's one big mountain near us. And the highest peak is about 5,000 feet.

So to go to Switzerland and the whole topography is just Alps and mountains and majestic mountains and cliffs, but realizing those trains in that whole system is able to go over through, under, around, and, and travel anywhere in the, in that country really easily within a few hours. It's just amazing to me.

Carolyn: Um, yes, it's, it's an excellent system and the engineering that's gone into building some of those tunnels and rail bridges, it's just incredible, isn't it?

Now I'm going to ask you both in a moment to share , some of your most memorable moments with us, but I just wanted to ask you with grandpa turning, it was his 80th birthday.

Did Switzerland live up to his expectations?

Brenda: Absolutely. He was so happy. Worn out, you know, just took it all in. I was amazed. He was walking three miles a day to prepare for this at the gym since about six months before the trip. And so he was athletically, physically, mentally, physically, everything ready to go.

Um, he was the most prepared. He had his, uh, TSA pre-check and the Swiss COVID pass and all the things that he had to get, you would think for 80 year old would have been difficult. He had his passport renewed. Um, a lot of things, he was just, uh, in the forefront with, so he really did set the pace for all of us.

He's not as, uh, techno technology advanced, so that was difficult a little bit. But when he came back, I said, would you do it again? And he said, he wouldn't do it again, but he absolutely loved every second. It just lived up to all of his expectations. Yeah.

Carolyn: And how special it would have been to have so many family members there , that's, that's just amazing.

I've been lucky enough to be on a visit to Switzerland with my parents and my husband and our children. And, and just to have those, those memories that you can talk about, it's, it's so special. And I imagine for, for your dad, it's exactly the same.

Brenda: He, he loves it still. He follows your page. And once in a while I see it. It's funny because he'll comment on somebody like he's an expert now and I'm like, oh my goodness.

Carolyn: Oh, I love it. I wonder if he's the old, oldest member of the, of the page. That's that's wonderful.

So, Chelsea, what were some of the highlights or the memorable moments that, that you have from your, your trip.

Chelsea: I think the memorable moments for me were meal times, um, just experiencing the different foods, but also being together and talking about the day, um, either before it starts at breakfast or what we did once we hit dinner, um, riding on the trains, seeing everything, I love riding on trains and that's not something we have around here at all.

Um, and my kids were, you know, they was just like nothing they had ever done before. So they were just constantly amazed and that was really fun and special to see, um, going up the beautiful gondola, um, my kids playing in the snow . Cause they just, that was everything they had wanted on the trip.

They just kept saying, we want to play in snow, you know, and they'd see snow off in the mountains. And when we went up to the Matterhorn, there wasn't really a place where we were to, for them to do that. So when they just could go for it, they were so excited. Um, and just the feel and the beauty of Grindlewald.

It just has such a relaxing atmosphere and being able to just look out and experience that and slow down and relax was a really special time for us.

Carolyn: And what stood out for you, Brenda?

Brenda: Oh, there were so many moments that were so amazing. But the one thing that I realized at the very beginning when everybody was taking pictures of everything, we're all kind of in the same group, still watching.

And I, I was taking some pictures and I looked around, I said, you know what? There are 22 eyes seeing everything and they're taking it all in. So it just, my two eyes were able to see certain things I just realized 22 eyes were seeing and taking in everything. And that really was reflective of our trip.

We had so many more experiences to share. So when we sat down and had meals, we went to a one really special place here in Interlaken and had dinner together, a traditional Swiss dinner with fondue and, um, watching my grandson just pile this big old mound, as big as his head of bread and cheese.

And he had his own fondue palette. You know, in, our, our house, they have to share fondue with everyone, the whole family, but he ordered his own fondue pot. His eyes were just as big as saucers and he was so happy. And he did eat some of it, but I think there was more on the plate than he ate. That was a special memory.

And then the moment we, grandpa and I, walked through that park in Zurich and just shared, and there were some pictures of him just walking ahead of us and we took pictures of him. It was beautiful. I was thinking, you know, that's just reflective reflection of his life. Um, yeah, just the, the, uh, moments we got to talk together and share together the stories we would have enjoyed so many more stories.

I found out about my grandpa, my dad, a lot more, why he wanted to go. Him and my mom when they were married, worked at Swiss park here in San Diego, and they couldn't go on a honeymoon when they were married. So they had their honeymoon at a Swiss park in the Swiss people here in San Diego were so cordial, so, so friendly and he loved them so much.

They would tell stories about Switzerland and he always wanted to go. And that was how it started. So those memories, just knowing stories. Yeah. It's a sweet, sweet.

Carolyn: Beautiful. Now, do you have any tips that you'd like to share with other listeners if they're planning either a trip with their own children or with the multi-generational sort of trip, what tips would you give to people?

Brenda: I kind of interviewed the whole group and put together a little collage of what they said. So this reflects all of us, not just Chelsea and mine, she may have more to share, but, um, get all the travel apps in one place on your phone, like the SBB mobile, that's the train app, that was so helpful. A translate app, just to kind of understand some of the words.

Google maps, maybe your itinerary, webcams to kind of check out what the tops of these mountains look like when you get ready to go. Weather apps to put all the cities in our weather app, just, I could click on one screen and see all the

cities and what their weather was for that day. Um, Rail, Europe, COVID certificate, currency.

Um, we used Zoom meetings to plan. Uh, realizing kind of learning, I think one of the things that would have helped us is to learn the train system and how it works, how to read the boards and understand the platforms and how to get over, you know, it's really easy, but the first couple days is like, you're in learning mode and trying to learn all this.

My son was really good at interpreting what, where to go zone a or zone one or zone two on the train. We'd find ourselves in a train, um, door that was intended for first class. And we're like, we've got to go back to back. So just understanding that a little bit.

And the travel wifi was, was really helpful for us because we could get, cover all over. Um, we did a lot of FaceTime and real time video back to the States and with the wifi you could do real time to everybody, they enjoyed that.

Carolyn: Okay, good. And Chelsea, do you have anything else to add?

Chelsea: Yeah, so mine's probably a little more, um, travel with kids focused and one of the things is just to make sure you have a lot of snacks, which is just the case in general with kids, I think. Um, but lots of snacks and the right clothing. And the kids could really, um, accomplish a lot. So that was helpful.

Um, involving them in the planning kind of, like I said before of showing them videos of the places we're going to, talking about the food, kind of getting them excited about what they're about to experience, um, looking for parks.

Um, and the playgrounds that we went to was a huge mood booster for them. 'cause, you know, the kids sitting on a train and everything's fun, but at some point they start to get kind of worn out from that. And so being able to find places they could kind of just be free and they could be loud, you know, was, was great for them.

Um, I got some books from our local library, so they would look through. At what we were going to be doing or where we're going. And that was helpful. Um, listening to some of the language podcasts in the car. So it was just a fun way for them to get involved, listening to this podcast in the car as well.

So they could hear about, you know, everything with where we were going. Um, solidified for them like, oh, this is an actual place. I know, because for them it's hard to imagine somewhere they haven't been. Yeah.

Carolyn: Yeah. And one thing, actually, I didn't ask you before, when we were talking about traveling on the trains with the children, what did you do with them for, for their luggage?

Did they each have their own little, uh, backpack or did you just pack all , their clothing in, in your.

Chelsea: So we did all carry on. Um, so we didn't have any really large pieces of luggage. Um, but we packed, um, light to be able to combine things. So we originally started with backpacks, like everyone had backpacks, um, but the kids weren't doing super great, always about being able to carry, um, some of their stuff.

So the younger ones, we already had their stuff in our packs, but still, we just ended up with, too many items for carrying. So we actually ended up buying a Swiss souvenir when we got to Zurich, which we bought some two small rolling bags. And that was a lifesaver, the two small rolling bags, being able to roll those and put backpacks on top of that.

Um, once we had those getting on and off trains, getting through the cities and everything was much, much easier. So I recommend at least a couple rolling bags if you're traveling with kids. Yeah.

Carolyn: Great. All right. Well, thank you so much, ladies, for sharing all about your very special trip with us. I'm sure the other listeners out there will have found plenty of useful information from what you've shared with us today.

Have we got any plans for future visits to Switzerland?

Brenda: Both Chelsea and I are dreaming of going back, you know, there's, it really puts it in your, you've got it in your taste buds. And you're like, I want more, I want more, it's so beautiful and there's so many places to see.

We. I saw a few places, but we discovered there are just a lot of amazing destinations to be had. So yeah, we're kind of like you, Carolyn, and just kind of got addicted to it.

Carolyn: It's very addictive. But it sounds like from the little, you know, amount of time that you were able to spend there, that you certainly made the most of it in, you saw some of the most special places that there are in Switzerland.

So I'm sure that, um, was, a great temptation to, to go back and see more.

Chelsea: Yes, very much.

Carolyn: Yeah. Well, thank you very much again, it's been wonderful chatting.

Brenda: Thank you Carolyn .

What great advice from Chelsea and Brenda. I hope their tips and experiences have convinced you that a trip to Switzerland with children, or a multi-generational trip, is do-able.

By asking each family member what places they most wanted to visit, they were able to plan an itinerary that covered everyone's needs. Importantly, too, they agreed in advance that not everyone was obliged to join in every activity or excursion.

This is so important when you have travelling companions of all ages and interests, and especially children.

I really related to Chelsea's story about the joy her kids got from finding a playground. When my boys were young, we often found ourselves at a Swiss playground so they could kick a ball around for an hour. Honestly, there are things I would have much rather have been doing, but if that's all it took to keep the kids happy, it was well worth it.

Involving her children in the planning, and piquing their interest of Switzerland through books and food - and even this podcast - was another way that Chelsea was able to make the trip special for them.

The memories that all eleven members of the Powell family made on this trip will last with them a lifetime. And how special that Brenda's Dad - at 80 years

of age - was able to achieve his lifetime dream with so many family members. Beautiful memories indeed.

You'll find a list of all the places mentioned today in the show notes which you can see at holidaystoswitzerland.com/episode41. I'll also include a link to our detailed guide on planning a trip to Switzerland - it's just what you need to start planning your family vacation to Switzerland.

If you have enjoyed this episode, please leave a review on your favourite podcast app. You can also subscribe to the show so you never miss an episode.

Thanks for listening. Until next time, Tschuss!

If you'd like more great resources to help you plan your dream trip to Switzerland, there are lots of ways to connect with us.

Visit our website holidaystoswitzerland.com, sign up for our monthly newsletter or join our friendly, helpful community of past and future travelers in our Switzerland travel planning group. You'll also find the links to connect with us in the show notes for this episode. Show notes and the list of all previous episodes are available at holidaystoswitzerland.com/podcast.

Don't miss out on your fortnightly dose of Swiss travel inspo. Hit the subscribe button on your favorite podcast app so you never miss an episode. And if you enjoyed the show, please leave a rating.

That's all for this edition of the Holidays to Switzerland Travel Podcast. Thanks for joining us and happy travels.

You can see the full show notes for this episode, get a PDF version of this transcript and listen to the episode [> here](#)