

Travel



For more inside tips, advice and holiday ideas, go to theguardian.com/travel



Flights from London to Zürich with Swiss Air cost from £99 return (swiss.com). Rooms at the Marktgasshotel, Zürich, start at £214 (marktgasshotel.ch). Rooms at Hotel La Sogliana, Val Bregaglia, cost from £79 (lasogliana.ch)

ALPINE ARTLANDS GRAUBÜNDEN, SWITZERLAND

The mountains and lakes are stunning, but the Giacometti family adds to the cultural landscape too, says Alice Fisher

Chugging to the Landwasser Viaduct through the village of Filisur on the Glacier Express, it's hard not to laugh at the views. Switzerland is unbelievably good-looking. The vistas almost look fake – the lakes too scenic, the villages too chocolate-box. Even the goats look like they should have agents.

A country this beautiful is always going to be about the outdoors, but if you visit the region of Graubünden this summer (and more than 1 million people will, for the hiking, the biking, to swim in the lakes or dance at the festivals), make sure you don't just stare at the mountains – Graubünden has a surprising art heritage, too.

This region's best-known family is the Giacomettis. In the UK, we instantly think of artist and sculptor Alberto (his retrospective at Tate Modern is opening next week – so spindly sculptural figures are going to

be hard to avoid). But in Europe, Alberto is just one of the family. His father Giovanni was a celebrated impressionist painter. Cousin Augusto is known for his stained-glass windows and Alberto's brothers Bruno and Diego were an architect and a sculptor respectively.

To see the landscape that inspired this talented clan, disembark at glitzy old St Moritz and head up to the village of Maloja. Here you can see Alberto's childhood home and the colourful panoramas that appeared in his early work, before he started hanging out with the surrealists in 1920s Paris. If you're lucky, Dr Marco Giacometti – the scion who runs the local Centro Giacometti – will run his art walk for you. Marco's trove of personal photos, family insight and contagious enthusiasm will make Maloja come alive for you. If you're really lucky, there'll be time to try the local marroni (chestnuts).

Val Bregaglia is home to the largest sweet-chestnut forest in Europe and the Hotel Longhin in Maloja has its own trees. I've never met a bowl of pasta I didn't like, but the chestnut tagliatelle here is special.

Down the road in Stampa, where the Giacomettis moved to in later years, the family's studio has been restored for visitors. The airy wooden atelier, with flowers on the table, cigarette burns on the floor and doodles on the walls, was used by Giovanni and then Alberto. During winter months, the sun doesn't penetrate the valley, and this was when Alberto mainly came. He liked his beautiful Swiss countryside gloomy, apparently. You can also pay your respects at the graves of various Giacomettis at the local San Giorgio church, but if you want to see the famous Eli Lotar bronze that used to sit atop Alberto's stone, visit Museo Ciäsa Granda – the sculpture was moved there to avoid light-fingered mourners. The



museum is worth a look anyway – built in the 1980s, it doubles as a nuclear bunker and the lower gallery has a peculiar, isolated feel.

Visits to Stampa and Maloja give a great sense of the Giacometti family, but head to nearby cities for more of their work. Chur is the largest city in the region and the oldest in Switzerland. Go there to loll on the shores of Lake Cauma or Lake Cresta, to do the Dreibündenstein hike trail or visit the village of Maienfeld where the story of Johanna Spyri's *Heidi* was set. But while you're in town, go to the Bündler Kunstmuseum. A gridded concrete extension by architects Barozzi Veiga was added last year to the 1875 mansion that houses the city's

collection. It's an unexpected landmark in this traditional town and full of work by artists with local connections, including Angelica Kauffmann and Ernst Kirchner as well as the Giacomettis. There's even a terrifying torso by HR Giger (of *Alien* fame) in the gardens.

If you want more Giacometti art, Zürich is an easy train ride from Chur. Although the Kunsthaus Zürich is a bit squashed for space while its fancy David Chipperfield extension is under construction (it is scheduled to open in 2020), it is still home to the Alberto Giacometti Foundation's collection, which includes more than 300 items and spans his whole career. Oh, and



Bridge of sighs: (clockwise from above) the Graubünden landscape; Head of Woman by Alberto; Winterlandschaft, by Giovanni; the Giacometti family's atelier; Woman of Venice V, by Alberto; and the local chestnut tagliatelle

while you're there, look up the gallery's Félix Vallotton canvases. London's Royal Academy is staging a big show of this relatively unknown post-impressionist next year.

This area is too beautiful to spend much time indoors, but tearing your gaze from the mountains is rewarding. See how this unbelievable landscape influenced and inspired the artists who lived there and Graubünden will seem like a lot more than just a pretty place. ■ *Giacometti is at Tate Modern from 10 May*