IFTA IN THE ALPS

International Study Tour
in Switzerland, Germany & Italy

November 20–28, 2026

PRE-TRAVEL NOTES

ONWARD TRAVEL
EST 2014

IFTA

A LETTER FROM GREG LANG

IFTA EDUCATION DIRECTOR

Guten Tag und Buongiorno, IFTA Members,

With all focus these days on the apples that have been harvested and those yet to be picked from our orchards, perhaps you can take a moment to daydream about our upcoming study tour to Switzerland, southern Germany, and northern Italy: high efficiency apple, cherry, peach, plum, and pear orchards; schnitzel and cider; state-of-the-art fruit-growing technologies; pasta and wine; the massive Interpoma exhibition; beautiful Lake Constance and the towering Dolomite mountains; two innovative fruit research centers; and above all, the graciousness of our Swiss, German, and Italian fruit-growing hosts!

Arriving in Switzerland's largest city on the shores of 26-mile long Lake Zurich, we'll hit the ground running the next day visiting several Swiss orchards, a nursery, and a distillery on the way to Lake Constance. Crossing the lake to Germany, over the next two days we'll encounter a wide variety of orchards, innovative orchard covering systems (including agrivoltaics), German farm markets (including automated fruit vending kiosks), the renowned KOB research center, tasting and discussions of new apple varieties, and of course a dinner at a Germany brewery!

Traveling south through the Alps to Italy, we'll keep up the intense pace with a very full half day at South Tyrol's innovative Laimburg research center, learning about their experiences testing and developing orchard technologies including visioning/imaging, robotics (with a possible fruit-picking drone demonstration), organic production, and a special lunch and wine tasting in their Felsenkeller (rock wine cellar). The Laimburg scientists include two previous IFTA conference keynote speakers, Walter Guerra and Christian Andergassen, both of whom play key roles in the organization of Interpoma. While there, we'll also meet up with a group of like-minded leading fruit growers traveling from Australia on an APAL orchard study tour.

After Laimburg, we'll leave our road tripping ways behind and settle into Bolzano for four nights and three days of diverse study tour experiences. Wednesday through Friday, we'll have Interpoma access, the world's largest, most comprehensive exhibition and trade show for everything associated with growing, packing, and marketing apples (but featuring many production technologies applicable to all tree fruits), as well as an optional Congress on spray technologies. We also hope to visit several South Tyrol orchards during that time, and we'll have an exclusive final day tour of the unique Melinda apple packing operation with its robotics, aerial tramway for apple transport, and mountain cavern storage facilities. On Thursday, we've arranged for a traditional mid-afternoon Thanksgiving dinner, a Turkey trot for those so inclined, and the opportunity to catch Bolzano's Christmas Market opening night ceremonies (Italy's largest!).

My usual IFTA study tour advice applies – pack relatively lightly with the necessary all-weather essentials for orchard tours as well as enjoyable dinners, and plan to fill up any extra space in your suitcase with Interpoma exhibition materials, local cheeses/wines/ciders/beers/spirits, and other cultural treasures you may find to accompany the many vivid memories, ideas, and new friendships that you will return home with.

Buon viaggio e gute reise!

All the best,
Greg

A detailed daily timetable will be distributed upon arrival in Zurich

DAY BY DAY

DAY 1:
FRI. NOVEMBER 20

- **Arrival in Zurich, Switz.**
- Check in at Radisson Blu
- Welcome dinner at hotel

DAY 2:
SAT. NOVEMBER 21

- **Transfer to Friedrichshafen, Germany**
- Swiss orchard tours
- *CT: Appenzeller Tour*
- Free evening

DAY 3:
SUN. NOVEMBER 22

- German orchard tours
- *CT: Lunch and visit to Pilings Prehistoric museum*
- Dinner and social evening at Hopfengut Brewery

DAY 6:
WEDS. NOVEMBER 25

- Interpoma Tradeshow
- **Grower & Cooperative Visits***
- *CT: Visit to Dolomites, Chiusa / Klausen village*
- Afternoon Wine Tasting*
- Törggelen Harvest Dinner*

DAY 7:
THURS. NOVEMBER 26

- Interpoma Tradeshow
- Interpoma Congress*
- Option to join midday "Turkey Trot" hike
- 2pm American Thanksgiving Dinner
- Christmas tree lighting & Bolzano Xmas Markets opening

DAY 8:
FRI. NOVEMBER 27

- Interpoma Tradeshow
- Interpoma Congress*
- **Melinda Packinghouse & Underground Storage Tour***
- *CT: Option to join a cooking class or Via Ferratta hike**
- Farewell dinner & castle party

Register for Interpoma Add-Ons:
https://www.fierabolzano.it/en/interpoma

*At Interpoma, IFTA has arranged two exclusive add-on tours. Register for **Grower & Cooperative tour on 11/25** and/or **Melinda tour on 11/27** via the Pre Travel Survey. Space is limited!*

Tour Destinations

OVERVIEW

DAY 4:
MON. NOVEMBER 23

- **Transfer to Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany**
- German orchard tours
- *CT: Pretzel class in G.-P.*
- Group dinner at hotel

DAY 5:
TUES. NOVEMBER 24

- **Transfer to Bolzano, Italy**
- Laimburg Research Centre visit
- *CT: Visit Innsbruck Christmas Markets*
- Optional group dinners: banquet or beer hall*

DAY 9:
SAT. NOVEMBER 28

- **Departure day**
- Participants will transfer to MUC or MXP Airports*, join a post-tour extension*, or depart independently

***CT** = Companion Tour*

** = Requires advance registration*

OUR HOTELS:

Radison Blu Hotel Zurich Airport
Zurich Airport
Rondellstrasse
Zurich
Switzerland
November 20-21

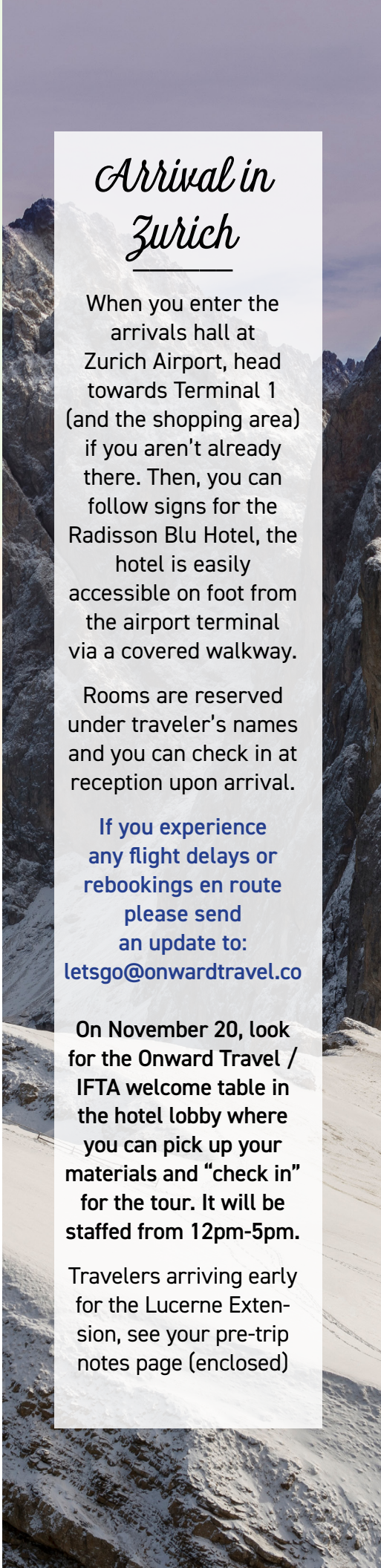
Hotel City Krone
Schanzstraße 7
Friedrichshafen
Germany
November 21-23

Riessersee Hotel
Riess 5
Garmisch-Partenkirchen
Germany
November 23-24

Parkhotel Laurin
Via Laurin, 4
Bolzano
Italy
November 24-28

MXP AIRPORT HOTEL:
Osteria della Pista
Via Verbano, 1
Casorate Sempione
Italy
November 28-29

MUC AIRPORT HOTEL:
Hilton Munich Airport
Terminalstraße Mitte 20
Oberding
Germany
November 28-29



Arrival in Zurich

When you enter the arrivals hall at Zurich Airport, head towards Terminal 1 (and the shopping area) if you aren't already there. Then, you can follow signs for the Radisson Blu Hotel, the hotel is easily accessible on foot from the airport terminal via a covered walkway.

Rooms are reserved under traveler's names and you can check in at reception upon arrival.

If you experience any flight delays or rebookings en route please send an update to: letsgo@onwardtravel.co

On November 20, look for the Onward Travel / IFTA welcome table in the hotel lobby where you can pick up your materials and "check in" for the tour. It will be staffed from 12pm-5pm.

Travelers arriving early for the Lucerne Extension, see your pre-trip notes page (enclosed)

WEATHER & PACKING

WEATHER November will be a nice time to travel to Europe. Advent is on the horizon and the seasonal fall cuisine is delicious. The seasons are changing so be ready for brisk sunny days, chilly nights and the potential for some rain or snow. Days are getting shorter and it might even feel downright wintry.

PACKING Dress throughout the tour is casual. Be sure to bring sturdy, comfortable shoes for orchard tours and cobblestone streets, and **layers will be very important,** including a warm jacket, a sweater or two, and a scarf. You'll likely also be happy to have a hat and gloves. Snazzy attire is optional for the farewell party.

PACKING LIST:

- ✔ **Passport!** Double check that it is valid for at least three months beyond the date of travel. **TIP:** Email yourself a photo of your passport. If you lose/misplace your passport it will make the replacement process much easier.
- ✔ A hair dryer, soap, and shampoo will be provided for you at the hotels, so no need to pack them. You may wish to bring conditioner.
- ✔ A small backpack or bag that goes across your body to carry your camera, extra layers, water bottle, etc. is advisable.
- ✔ Weather gear. Bring a small umbrella and a waterproof jacket. All weather boots are a good idea as well.
- ✔ A notebook and pen... and some folks like a clipboard for taking notes in orchards.

A FEW MORE THINGS TO PACK:

- Refillable water bottle.
- Electricity adaptor.
- Sunglasses, a warm hat and gloves.
- Business cards.
- Face masks. We still recommend this precaution especially on crowded airplanes and when traveling with the group if you're not feeling 100%.

We'll be moving around a lot as a large group so please try to limit your packing to one suitcase and a personal item.

ELECTRICITY

In Northern Italy and Germany the standard plug is dual prog Type C or the "Europlug" type. These work in Switzerland, too, and will be enough for most travelers even though many outlets are for Type J, which is the same as Type C but with a third grounding plug (so Type C is compatible).

Most modern electronics, like your laptop or phone, have a built in voltage convertor. But you need to be especially careful with anything that heats up or has a motor, like a curling iron or shaver - check your appliance for a label with its voltage requirements to see if you need a voltage convertor and in that case in Switzerland you would also need a Type J plug for grounding.

TYPE C PLUG

CELL PHONES & TECHNOLOGY

CELL PHONE SERVICE

Many travelers elect to add international service to their cell phone plan and pay a daily use fee. For AT&T this service is called Passport and is $12 USD/day. For Rogers it is called "Roam Like Home" and costs $15 CAD/day. For the Canadian plans, multi-day passes are the best value. Make sure to have these services active on your phone before travel.

If your phone is unlocked, there is also the option to add an "E-Sim," which saves a considerable amount of money over the international plan. Check out an E-Sim app like **Airalo** to see if it will work for you.

Apps to Download:

- **WhatsApp** allows texting and calling over wifi and is very convenient. As long as both parties have WhatsApp, texting and calling with the app is free. Once you have the app you can join the IFTA in THE ALPS group, linked at www.iftatravel.com

- **Photocircle** is by far the best system we've found for sharing photos with travel groups. Download the app and once the tour gets underway we'll send a link to join our "circle."

CREDIT CARDS & MONEY

CURRENCY Switzerland is on the Franc, while Germany and Italy are on the Euro (as is Austria).

CASH ATMs are the best place to exchange money. You'll pay an ATM fee (usually ~ $5) but you'll get the best exchange rate with no commission. Note that your bank may charge a foreign transaction fee. **Please note, if an ATM asks you if you want to accept its conversion rate you should always select NO.** You will still get your cash but at a better exchange rate. ATMs are readily available throughout our trip.
We recommend sticking with your credit card for our short visit to Switzerland.

CREDIT CARDS **It's no longer necessary for most cards but still a good idea to call your credit card company to let them know you're traveling.** Also check and see if your card charges foreign transaction fees so you know what to expect on your bill, and can plan the smartest way to use your credit card. Credit cards are widely accepted in our destinations. If, when the payment is processing, you are given the option to pay in local currency or USD, choose local currency for a better rate.

contacts

For general questions:
letsgo@onwardtravel.co

Molly Crist
Onward Travel
Tour Coordinator
molly@onwardtravel.co
267-825-5880

Greg Lang
IFTA
Education Director
langg@msu.edu
517-256-7785

Kat Clauhs Dhand
Onward Travel
Tour Coordinator
katerina@onwardtravel.co
845-636-3626

BOLZANO CHRISTMAS MARKET

TRAVELER TO-DO LIST

Complete the Pre Travel Survey at www.IFTAtravel.com by Nov. 2
*This is required for **each traveler**.*

✔ Per the enclosed Traveler Info Sheet, if you need to **update emergency contact or passport info**, you can do that on the Pre Travel Survey. Note your emergency contact must be someone not traveling with you on this tour.

✔ **Consider trip insurance**: if you'd like to protect yourself against trip cancellation or interruption due to illness, as well as protection against many other scenarios, we recommend Travelex trip insurance.

If you purchase a Travelex policy, please use our location #32-0704 so we get a copy of your policy automatically. If you did not use the location number but purchased a policy, please forward it to us. You can find more info at:

www.onwardtravel.co/trip-insurance

✔ **Double check the enclosed Traveler Info Sheet** and confirm your itinerary is displayed correctly as are any allergies, dietary restrictions, or special accommodations needed.

✔ **Label your luggage with the enclosed luggage tag**. Make sure any hand luggage or medical devices are labeled, too.

✔ **Download WhatsApp on your phone**
Join the *IFTA in the ALPS* WhatsApp group linked at www.IFTAtravel.com. The chat group is for announcements only, only admins can post, but it will be an excellent way for you to get info on the go before and during the trip.

✔ **Email yourself a photo of your passport**

✔ **Book optional activities at Interpoma**.
The 3-day admission to the tradeshow/marketplace is included in your *IFTA in the ALPS* package. There are optional tours and a conference program called Congress. You may sign up for these things separately, at addt'l cost. **Note Onward Travel is not handling registration for Congress or Interpoma's tours so please register directly to participate.**

Registration and details at:
www.fierabolzano.it/en/interpoma

Interpoma Congress
Happening 9am-12:30pm each day, 89€ per session

Thursday 26 November | *New Approaches in Spraying Technology. Efficiency meets Sustainability*

Friday 27 November | *Regional Chances and Global Challenges: Latin America in Focus*

Interpoma Tours
9 tours offered throughout the convention, 120€ per tour.