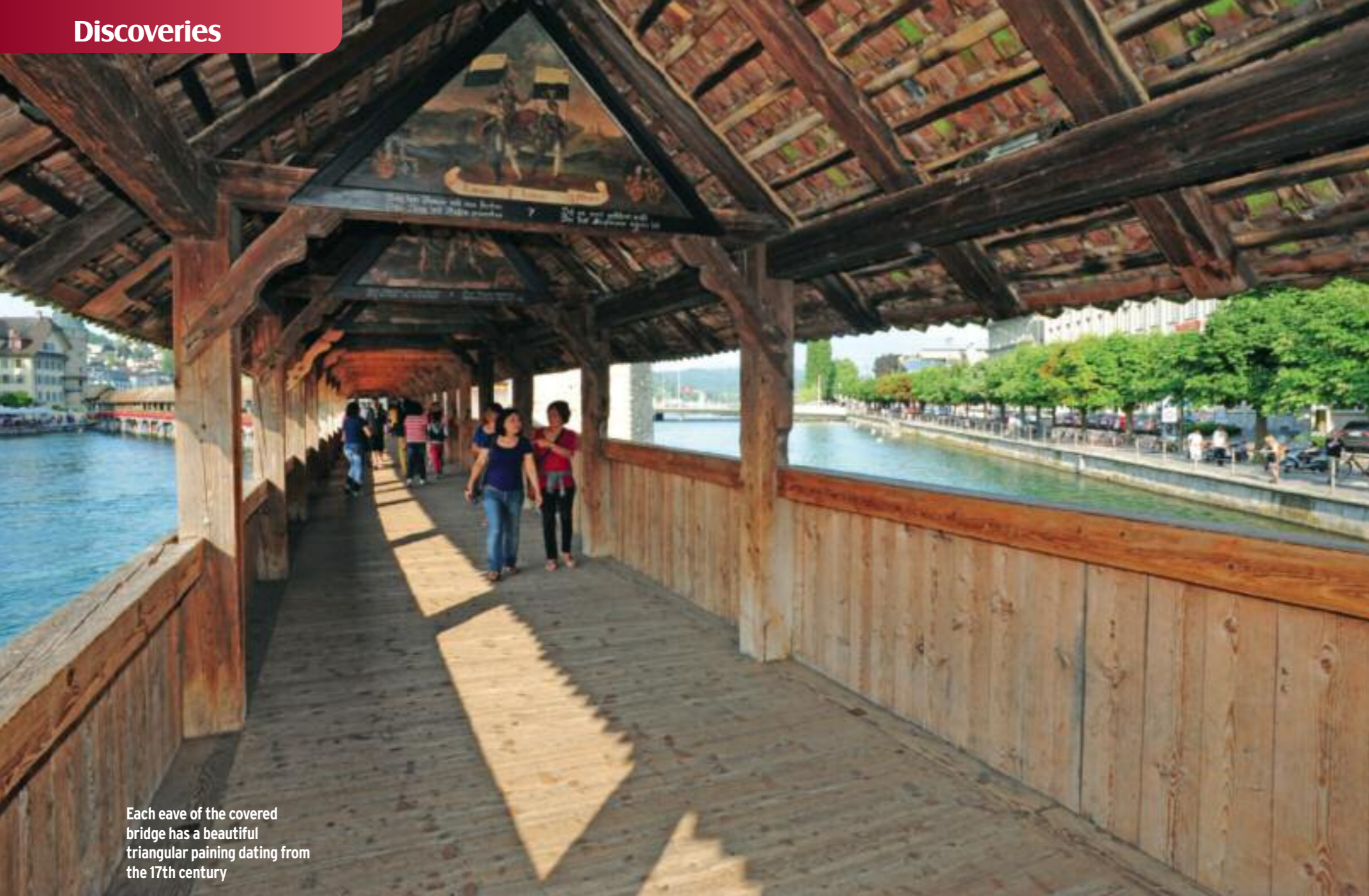


Lucerne's iconic covered
Chapel Bridge and water tower

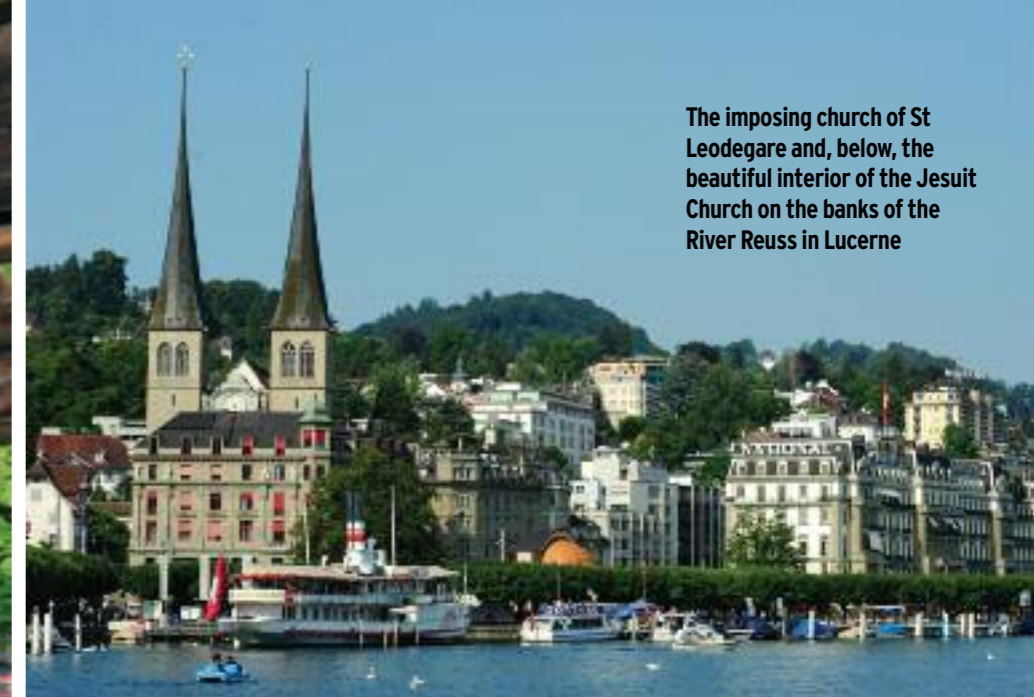
Luscious Lucerne

With its lake, medieval buildings, music and mountains, Lucerne is an unmissable Swiss delight, as **Norman Wright** discovers

PHOTOGRAPHY: CLIVE NICHOLLS



Each eave of the covered bridge has a beautiful triangular painting dating from the 17th century



The imposing church of St Leodegare and, below, the beautiful interior of the Jesuit Church on the banks of the River Reuss in Lucerne



HERE ARE two ways to cross the mouth of the River Reuss in the centre of Lucerne. You can join the trams, taxis and traffic on the new concrete bridge, or step on to the geranium-bedecked medieval covered wooden footbridge and stroll across to the old town admiring both the view and the paintings on the eaves of the roof at intervals along its diagonal route.

Take the Chapel Bridge with its 17th century paintings every time. It's a couple of hundred yards further to walk

but a privilege to follow in centuries of footsteps and marvel at Switzerland's most-photographed icon.

The bridge and the connected octagonal water tower next to it make Lucerne instantly recognisable.

At the Western end of Lake Lucerne, the town spreads along both banks of the lake and the river. The Chapel Bridge crosses just where the lake narrows and the Reuss takes over as the water rushes into it. Further along there are more footbridges connecting the two parts of town, including the wooden Mill Bridge with more paintings. From

those bridges you do get an impression of the power of the water. Its speed increases as the river narrows and there's a good view of the torrent as it plunges over foaming weirs and away.

The Water Tower and the Chapel Bridge, both built around 1300, are Lucerne's trademarks. The oldest preserved wooden bridge in Europe displays a series of 17th century paintings on triangular panels under its eaves. A major part of the bridge, including the paintings, was almost completely destroyed by fire in 1993. The

reconstructed bridge was reopened six months later.

Since then, many of the paintings have been replaced or recopied. The octagonal Water Tower, like the Chapel Bridge, formed part of the inner city fortifications and has served as an archive, a city treasury and a prison.

Lucerne is the capital of the canton of Lucerne and in many respects the most important city in Central Switzerland.

There was probably a small settlement here near the lake during Roman times or earlier. The St Leodegar monastery has

existed since the early eighth century. An important marketplace developed around the Reuss Bridge, which connected the monastery with the feudal court to the south.

Lucerne is also a city of palaces, churches, and squares. In the late Middle Ages passion plays were performed on the Weinmarkt square. The city instituted a public market hall on the Kornmarkt around 1370. This also served as a storage house for grain and was later converted into a town hall.

The Hof Church, the Town Hall and the Rittersche Palace are important

monuments dating from the late Renaissance, while the Jesuit Church is one of Switzerland's finest baroque churches. The Franciscan Church is considered to be the finest Gothic church in Central Switzerland.

Lucerne remained a small medieval town until the end of the 18th century, but with the beginning of tourism around 1830, it began to change and grow.

On the afternoon of August 25, 1938, Arturo Toscanini conducted Richard Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll* in the park at Trieschen before an audience of 1200



A spectacular cable care ride up to Klewenalp
 Left: Lucerne is noted for its classical music festival
 Middle: Teatime on the dock in Lucerne
 Below right: The archetypal image of Switzerland, a cow grazing in a mountain meadow
 Below left: Charming statue in the old town



people. The music and venue had been specially chosen, because it was at his country house in Tribschen that Wagner enjoyed the happiest and most fruitful period of his life. Toscanini's concert inaugurated the Lucerne Festival (formerly known as the International Music Festival of Lucerne). Since then, music-lovers from all over the world have been drawn to Lucerne every year.

Lucerne also has a dynamic art scene, typified by the art museum inside the Culture and Convention Centre. A boat ride on Lake Lucerne, which has the most extensive inland navigation system in Europe, is essential. The panorama boat, the five paddle steamers or the elegant catamaran ply the blue waters of Lake Lucerne surrounded by the green foothills and the mountain peaks.

The boats will take you all over the lake and to the mountains. Europe's oldest mountain railway winds its way up Mount Rigi or the world's steepest cogwheel train

will get you to the top of Mount Pilatus. A ride on the first revolving aerial cable car – the Rotair – will whisk you to the top of Mount Titlis, at 3000 metres (10,000ft) the highest accessible peak in the Lucerne area.

The picturesque lakeside villages of Weggis and Vitznau are located on the shores of Lake Lucerne and the sunny southern flank of Mount Rigi. This beautiful resort region has established itself as one of the best areas for spa and

wellness. You need to go up high on the mountain to find the mineral bath and spa Rigi Kaltbad, designed by the famous Swiss architect Mario Botta.

We took a lazy boat trip to Beckenried via a few stops to pick up more passengers. It was a short walk to the cableway of Klewenalp and a spectacular haul up to the top.

Up there at first it was wreathed in thin cloud. A herd of cows with their giant bells around their necks and mournful

brown eyes munched through their meadow. Countless walks fanned out from the cable car station with an excellent mountain-top café and restaurant on hand, too.

What we didn't expect was a herb garden. It is one of several demonstration gardens in the mountains planted and maintained by Ricola, the Swiss maker of herb sweets.

Ricola exports around 90 per cent of its production output, distributing 30

different herb specialties to more than 50 countries in Europe, Asia and America.

Emil Richterich, the company's founder, established the basis for Ricola's worldwide success in 1940 by creating the Ricola 13-herb blend – still a closely guarded secret – for the original herb drop. This blend is still used today in all Ricola products.

All Ricola herbs originate from controlled natural or organic cultivation in the Swiss mountains. Ricola has been



Passport to Lucerne

■ Thomson Lakes offers seven nights' half-board at the three-star Hotel de la Paix in Lucerne from £889 per person. Price includes flights from Heathrow to Zurich and train transfers. Regional airports are available at a supplement from £20 (Birmingham) and £40 (Manchester). Tel: 0871 230 8181, website: (www.thomsonlakes.co.uk).

Find out more

■ For more information on Switzerland, see the websites: (www.myswitzerland.com) and (www.swiss.com)
 ■ For more information on Lucerne, see: (www.luzern.com).



supporting the organic cultivation of herbs without the use of pesticides, herbicides and fungicides for more than 25 years – the company is therefore regarded as a pioneer of Swiss herb cultivation.

The history of the Swiss family company dates back even earlier in the 20th century. In 1930, master baker Emil Richterich founded the company, Richterich und Co, in Laufen, his home town, from which Ricola later derived its name. All those herbs are grown in the demonstration garden.

After lunching on the Swiss speciality of rosti potatoes, it was back down on the cable car and, as the weather had cleared, a wonderful view of the lake and hills.

The boat trip back to Lucerne, bathed in lovely sunshine, was idyllic as we chugged past the greenest of meadows and pretty little villages.

It is hard to better Lucerne with its history, music and art, and the mountains and lake just a short boat ride away – the very best of Switzerland.

Above right: Cruising Lake Lucerne is a relaxing affair. Main and above: One of Ricola's show herb gardens on top of the mountain at Klewenalp and, below, Ricola's range of herb drops

