www.beauxvillages.ch

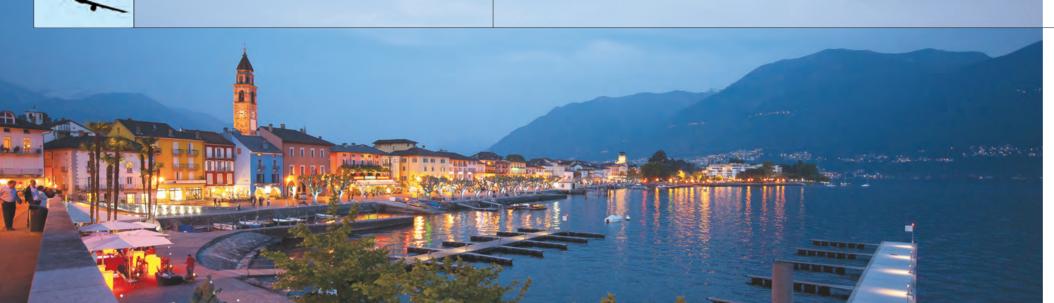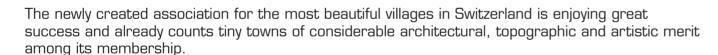**Left,** Ascona's lakeside promenade and narrow streets offer cafés, restaurants, fashion boutiques, shops, art galleries.
Below, with its characteristic small alleys, the arcades of old Patrician homes, its architectural monuments and natural beauty, Morcote can be considered "the Pearl of Ceresio".

SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL

The newly created association for the most beautiful villages in Switzerland is enjoying great success and already counts tiny towns of considerable architectural, topographic and artistic merit among its membership.

«Although small, our country boasts some truly magnificent villages, steeped in history and situated in enchanting places». So declares Kevin Quattropani, the dynamic president of the newly-formed association for the most beautiful villages of Switzerland, "I Borghi più belli della Svizzera", which following the example of initiatives already up and running in other European countries has decided to do likewise. «The idea came to me years ago during one of my many trips abroad», he explains. «Often, especially in Italy and France, I came across signs at the entrance to towns that said "One of the most beautiful villages in Italy" or "Listed as one of the loveliest villages in France". I started to look into the background to the concept and how these associations have evolved over the years. At this point it was clear to me that the concept could easily be adapted to our context, that this sort of network was missing in Switzerland and it was time to do something about it».
Kevin Quattropani set to work immediately and in no time at all various Swiss villages had signed up to the initiative, which in Quattropani's own words «aims to create a network of villages and to give them a voice, as by their very nature they often find themselves excluded from the major tourist routes. Synergy is the key word for us and the fact that more famous towns such as Ascona and Gruyères belong to the association helps other less well-known places such as Poschiavo and Grandson to emerge. We want to bring to people's attention the small jewels of towns that are truly worth discovering».
Stefano Steiger, in charge of the tourism department in Ascona, which was one of the first towns to join the association, points out: «The Association intends to steadily spread to all the linguistic regions of Switzerland, in order to rightly avoid too regional a connotation. In addition to Ascona and Morcote, Poschiavo, Saint Ur-

sanne, Grandson, Gruyères, La Neuveville and Le Landeron have also now joined, and I'm sure that other splendid places will soon take up this opportunity».
President Kevin Quattropani outlines the requirements the villages must satisfy in order to join the association: «The first is numerical: the town should not have more than 10,000 inhabitants within the local authority boundaries (taking into consideration the many amalgamations that have occurred in recent years), and no more than 2,000 inhabitants in the historic centre. Obviously it has to have an architectural and natural heritage of merit. There should be a prevalence of historic buildings in the overall village architecture, which should be aesthetically homogeneous. The town council should demonstrate, through

through the city's alleys, the starting point is the parish church of San Pietro e Paolo (Saints Peter and Paul) whose slender bell tower has become Ascona's emblem. Inside the building is the famous altarpiece of the Virgin, one of Giovanni Serodine's masterpieces (1600-1630). One cannot avoid searching for traces of his genius in the paternal home, the 17th century Casa Serodine, facing the small square in front of the church.

Morcote (TI)

Morcote, developed on the slopes of Mount Arbostora and once entirely devoted to fishing, has been mentioned in the historical documents since 926. Its lake front is characterized by buildings with porches and "loggias": the "Portici" – arches – of morcotesian houses are considered among the most beautiful in the Tici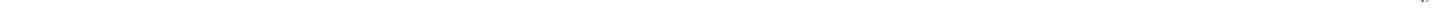no. Among these typical houses, you can see the Paleari House, an elegant residence of lords built in 1483 and transformed in 1661. Its decoration with the beautiful "stucco" was made by the artist Abbondio Paleari. The church of Santa Maria del Sasso, the terraced cemetery and the Tower of the Captain are the monuments of particular architectural interest.

Poschiavo (GR)

Poschiavo, a municipality in the district of Bernina in the canton of Graubünden, owes its beauty to the imposing Renaissance style of its courtly 19th century architecture.
Ten buildings in Poschiavo are listed as Swiss heritage sites of national significance. Three churches and a chapel are included: S. Maria Assunta, S. Vittore, S. Carlo Borromeo and Vecchio Monastero con cappella monastica di S. Maria Presentata. Three houses are on the list: Casa Tomé, Devon House,

concrete action, an interest in and a strategy to enhance, develop, promote and animate its heritage. It is important to offer visitors as full an experience as possible from a topographic, cultural, historic and gastronomic point of view». The councillor for tourism in Ascona adds that «The fact that not all villages can join the Association means that membership of "I Borghi più belli della Svizzera" is a guarantee of quality, which is what we are all looking for when we go on holiday». Ascona was instantly so enthusiastic: «Ascona's joining was a key moment», says Steiger, «because it has a breath-taking lakeside and a historic centre of unquestionable and well-preserved beauty; it has excellent tourism provision (about 40 hotels, 60 restaurants and lots of shops). It has a busy cultural life (provided by Monte Verità, the Fondazione Eranos, the local museum and many other places) and organizes events of international interest (such as the Jazz

Festival, which for ten days a year attracts about 50,000 people to our lakeside)». No sooner said than done: «Within about two weeks of the initial contact, our town had officially become a member». And now that it is a member of the Association, what changes can Ascona and the other member villages expect? «The advantages are more in the long term than immediate», replies Stefano Steiger. «In fact as soon enough members from all over Switzerland have joined, we will be able to create an interesting and innovative tourism circuit, which has already been proven to work in other countries such as Italy and France. Indeed, one could create tourist guides exclusively for "the most beautiful villages in Switzerland" (there is demand for similar guides in other countries), develop activities around this brand and – why not? – even closer contact and exchanges between the various towns». Here below you will find an overview

Above, Poschiavo boasts a typically Italian architecture.
Opposite page, Saint Ursanne has preserved much of its medieval character.

of the first villages that have joined the Association (you can read our article about Gruyères and its region at pag 36).

Ascona (TI)

Ascona is famous for its mild climate, its Old Town and a lake promenade which is dotted with street cafés and boasts a Latin ambience.
This tiny town is refined, picturesque, elegant and romantic, and has always had a passion for beauty and for the pleasures life has to offer, always attentive to the quality of the service. The historic centre's pedestrian alleys are swarmed with boutiques, restaurants, art galleries and antique stores. The lakeside promenade, recalling a fishermen's village of the past, is today a holiday paradise. Unraveling

and Li Curt House. Finally, there are three buildings now used as museums: Mulino di Aino, Palazzo De Bassus Mengotti, Palazzo Dorizzi.

Saint Ursanne (JU)
Saint-Ursanne, an old town on the banks of the river Doubs in the canton of Jura, has preserved much of its medieval character. The town contains many historical buildings, including a Romanesque abbey church, a collegiate church, a cloister, many medieval houses, a hermitage and an 18th-century bridge. Its name refers to Saint Ursicinus, a seventh-century monk who built a monastery hereIt's famous for its medieval festival every summer (in July) and its delightful Christmas market over the first weekend in December.

Grandson (VD)
The town's history is closely bound up with that of the lords of Grandson who played a very important role in Romand (French-speaking) Switzerland from the 5th to the 14th century; the Grandson line died with Otto III in 1397. His castle, situated on a hill overlooking the lake, is one of the largest fortresses in Switzerland.

La Neuveville (BE)
The town of La Neuveville was founded in 1312 by the Bishop of Basle. The early urban fabric of the town, an almost perfect square, has three parallel streets and a modern road cutting across them. Of the towers of the old fortifications, La Tour Rouge, il Run-

Above, Le Landeron is in the Canton of Neuchâtel, at Switzerland's language border with the German-speaking canton of Bern.
Opposite page, top, almost 1'000 years of history can be traced in the Grandson castle; **bottom,** the old town of La Neuveville is part of the Inventory of Swiss Heritage Sites.

der Turm and the Seetor date from the town's foundation. The so-called Eglise Blanche, was built in 1345 and expanded in the 15th century. The town hall, rebuilt 1541-69, is now a museum. The Bernerhaus, established in 1631, was the autumn residence of the Abbots of Bellelay. Rue de Faubourg, on the north side of the square, is flanked by houses from the 16th to the 19th centuries. The fortress of "Schlossberg" was built in 1283 by the Bishop of Basle, Heinrich von Isny as a bulwark against the expansion of the Count of Neuchâtel.

Le Landeron (NE)
This magnificent medieval town was built around an area planted with large trees. Antique shops, handicraft shops, art galleries and restaurants can be found here. Every year a famous second-hand goods market is held in the town over the last weekend in September. The Chapelle Ste-Anne, the Croix du Bourg, the neolithic and Roman era sites at the Ensemble de la Vieille Thielle, the Fountain de St-Maurice, the Fountain du Vaillant and the Town Hall with the Dix-Mille-Martyrs Chapel and Museum are listed as Swiss heritage site of national significance. The entire town of Le Landeron is part of the Inventory of Swiss Heritage Sites.

Anna Martano Grigorov

🇮🇹 **PICCOLO È BELLO**
La neonata associazione "I Borghi più belli della Svizzera" sta raccogliendo molti consensi, e gli splendidi villaggi svizzeri di Morcote, Poschiavo, Ascona, Saint Ursanne, Gruyères, Grandson, La Neuveville e Le Landeron vi hanno già aderito con entusiasmo. «Vogliamo portare all'attenzione del grande pubblico anche piccoli gioielli che vale assolutamente la pena di scoprire» afferma il fondatore e presidente dell'associazione, Kevin Quattropani.

🇫🇷 **PETIT, C'EST JOLI**
La nouvelle association "Les plus beaux villages de Suisse" est en train de se tailler un joli succès et les splendides villages suisses de Morcote, Poschiavo, Ascona, Saint Ursanne, Gruyères, Grandson, La Neuville et Le Landeron ont déjà adhéré avec enthousiasme à cette initiative. « Nous voulons protéger et valoriser les plus beaux bourgs de notre pays, en attirant l'attention du grand public sur de petits bijoux qu'il vaut absolument la peine de découvrir », affirme le président de l'association.