



**WELCOME**



**THE EXPAT'S GUIDE TO  
MAKING FRIENDS IN  
TICINO  
INSIDER TIPS AND TRICKS**

**THAYANA ALBUQUERQUE KIRCHHOFF**



## INTRODUCTION

# Dear fellow expats, Welcome to "Expats in Ticino"!

I'm thrilled to extend my warmest greetings and introduce you to our vibrant community. As the founder of this community, I understand firsthand the challenges of acclimating to a new country, especially when it comes to navigating the **intricate nuances of Swiss culture**. Being a Brazilian myself, I vividly remember my initial struggle in comprehending the Swiss ways. From understanding the unspoken rules of punctuality to grasping the nuances of Italian gestures, it was quite the adventure!

However, amidst the initial confusion and occasional hilarious misunderstandings, one thing became abundantly clear: the importance of **"breaking the ice" and forging meaningful friendships**. Ticino, with its rich Italian heritage and captivating charm, offers a unique backdrop for building connections that can transform your expat experience into a truly remarkable one.

That's precisely why I created this e-book, "Making Friends in Ticino: The Insider's Guide." Within its pages, you'll find a treasure trove of easy-to-understand tips, amusing anecdotes, and practical advice tailored specifically to newcomers like us. From unraveling the mysteries of the "Ciao" culture to embracing the art of the "Aperitivo," this guide will equip you with the tools you need to **embark on your friendship journey with confidence**.



Life in Ticino is a tapestry of **brehtaking landscapes, mouthwatering cuisine, and a vibrant community spirit**. Yet, it is the bonds we form with fellow expats and locals that truly enrich our lives. Our motto, "**Life is better in Switzerland with friends,**" encapsulates the essence of what we strive to achieve as a community. We believe that by fostering connections, sharing laughter, and supporting one another, we can create a home away from home in this picturesque corner of the world.

**Now, let's not forget the funny moments along the way!** From my personal experience, there have been instances where I unknowingly attempted to greet someone with a warm Brazilian hug, only to be met with a polite handshake and a puzzled expression. Or the time I eagerly ordered a pizza in a restaurant, fully expecting to savor the classic Italian delight, only to be met with a cold stare and a straightforward response from the waiter: "No, this is a Grotto!" ("obviously" there are "Ristoranti" and "Grotti" and pizzas cannot be served in the latter). These amusing anecdotes remind us to embrace the joy of cultural exchange and appreciate the beauty of our diverse backgrounds coming together.

I sincerely hope that this guide becomes your trusty companion on your expat journey, helping you navigate the intricacies of Ticino's social landscape with ease and humor. May it pave the way for countless delightful encounters, lasting friendships, and **unforgettable memories**.

On behalf of "Expats in Ticino," I extend a heartfelt welcome. Together, let's embark on this exciting adventure, forging connections, creating laughter, and **making Ticino feel like home**.

**With warm regards,**

**Thayana Albuquerque Kirchhoff**  
Founder, Expats in Ticino





## CHAPTER 1

# Ciao, Newcomer! Welcome to the Friendliest Part of Switzerland

Welcome to the enchanting region of Ticino, a place where the breathtaking beauty of the Swiss Alps meets the warmth and charm of Italian culture. As you embark on your journey in this vibrant corner of Switzerland, allow me to be your guide and introduce you to the wonders of Ticino, its cities, and its people.

When I arrived in Lugano in 2021, like many of you, I was filled with a mix of excitement and trepidation. As a Brazilian navigating the Swiss way of life, I often found myself puzzled by the intricacies of Swiss culture. **The initial days were challenging**, and I admit I felt a pang of loneliness in this new environment. But in that moment, I realized that I had the power to change my expat experience and make a positive impact on others who might be feeling the same way.

With determination and a desire to build connections, I began organizing small events such as meet-ups to eat ice cream, dinners and aperitifs. These gatherings provided an **opportunity** for fellow expats and locals to come together, share stories, and break the ice. Little did I know that these humble beginnings would soon blossom into a thriving community of expats in Ticino.





It was through these events that I had the privilege of meeting wonderful people from all corners of the globe. **Each person brought their unique experiences,** cultures, and perspectives to the table, creating a mosaic of diversity that transformed my perception of friendship and community. I witnessed friendships forming, language barriers fading, and an overwhelming sense of belonging taking root.

Lugano, the largest city in Ticino, quickly became **a place I consider one of the best in the world to live.** Nestled along the banks of Lake Lugano, this vibrant city effortlessly blends Swiss efficiency with Italian flair. Its picturesque promenades, dotted with cafes and boutiques, invite leisurely strolls and the chance encounters that often lead to lifelong friendships. The cultural scene in Lugano is also vibrant, with art galleries, museums, and a bustling calendar of events that cater to every taste.

But Lugano is just the beginning. Ticino has so much more to offer. Take a short journey to **Bellinzona**, the capital of Ticino, and you'll be greeted by its majestic medieval castles, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. These well-preserved fortresses tell tales of ancient times and provide a backdrop for exploring the rich history of the region.

For a taste of true Swiss-Italian charm, head to **Ascona**, a charming town nestled on the shores of Lake Maggiore. With its vibrant waterfront, colorful houses, and lively piazzas, Ascona exudes an ambiance that is both relaxed and captivating. The narrow streets of its old town are home to delightful shops, inviting you to indulge in a leisurely shopping spree or savor a gelato while watching the world go by.





Just a stone's throw away, you'll find **Locarno**, known for its world-renowned film festival and the enchanting sanctuary of Madonna del Sasso perched high above the city. Locarno's charming old town, lined with arcades and adorned with frescoes, is a delightful place to wander, discovering hidden gems around every corner.

In Lugano, Bellinzona, Ascona, Locarno, and beyond, there is no shortage of wonderful things to do and explore. From hiking trails that lead you to breathtaking vistas to indulging in the culinary delights of Swiss and Italian cuisine, Ticino offers a myriad of experiences that will leave you enthralled.

As you embark on your own adventure in Ticino, **remember that you are not alone**. The community of expats in Ticino is here to support.







## CHAPTER 2

# Decoding the Ticino Social Code: From 'Ciao' to 'Aperitivo'

Welcome to the vibrant social landscape of Ticino, where every interaction is infused with a unique blend of Swiss efficiency and Italian warmth. In this chapter, we'll embark on a hilarious journey to decode the Ticino social code, unraveling the intricacies of **greetings, social norms, and the beloved ritual of the "aperitivo."**

Let's start with the universal Swiss greeting: "**Ciao.**" Yes, you heard it right! In Ticino, the Italian influence is strong, and "Ciao" is the go-to word for saying both "hello" and "goodbye." But don't be fooled by its simplicity. The pronunciation holds the key to fitting in seamlessly. Practice your best "chow" with a flourish of Italian flair, and you'll be greeted with smiles and nods of approval. Just remember to keep the double-cheek-kissing reserved for close friends, as the Swiss are known for their preference for **a polite handshake.**

Now, let's talk about time. **Swiss punctuality** is legendary, and Ticino is no exception. If you're invited to an event or meeting, make sure you arrive on time or even a few minutes early. The Swiss take their schedules seriously, and being fashionably late is not considered fashionable at all. So set your alarms, sync your watches, and embrace the beauty of being right on time—Swiss style!



Ah, the "**aperitivo**," a cherished tradition in Ticino. This pre-dinner ritual is a delightful combination of socializing, indulging in delicious bites, and sipping refreshing drinks. Picture yourself at a charming outdoor café, surrounded by friends and acquaintances, engaging in lively conversations while sampling a delectable array of finger foods. From bruschetta to olives, from cured meats to savory pastries, the "aperitivo" is a feast for the senses. And let's not forget the iconic **Aperol Spritz**, a vibrant orange concoction that perfectly complements the convivial atmosphere. So grab your glass, raise a toast, and immerse yourself in the true essence of Ticino's social scene.

As you navigate the social waters of Ticino, you may encounter a few unique customs that will have you chuckling in no time. For instance, when someone extends an invitation to their home, it's customary to bring a small gift—a bottle of wine, a box of chocolates, or a bouquet of flowers. It's a **gesture of appreciation** and a way to show your gratitude for their hospitality. And remember, it's not just about the gift itself, but the thought behind it that counts.

Now, let's dive into the world of small talk, an art form cherished in Ticino. Whether you find yourself in a café, at a networking event, or waiting for a bus, striking up **conversations with strangers** is a common occurrence. Embrace the opportunity to connect with fellow Ticinese and expats alike. From discussing the local weather (which is, much to the envy of the rest of Switzerland, mostly way warm and sunny) to sharing recommendations for the best gelato in town, small talk is the gateway to forging new friendships and creating those memorable "Ticino moments."

And finally, let's not forget the power of laughter. Ticino's social code encourages a **light-hearted approach to life**. Embrace the unexpected, laugh at the occasional language mix-ups, and find joy in the quirks of cultural differences. Remember, a smile and a shared laugh can bridge any gap and create bonds that transcend borders.





So, dear expat, as you embark on your social adventures in Ticino, let your "Ciao" be bold, your punctuality be impeccable, and your "aperitivo" be filled with laughter and delightful conversations. Embrace the Ticino social code, decode it **with a sprinkle of humor**, and watch as the doors to a world of vibrant connections swing wide open.

Next up, in Chapter 3, we'll explore the art of breaking the ice and navigating those hilarious awkward moments. Get ready for some side-splitting anecdotes and tips to turn any social fumble into a fabulous friendship opportunity. Stay tuned!







## CHAPTER 3

# Breaking the Ice: Hilarious Awkward Moments and How to Navigate Them

Welcome to the amusing world of social interactions, where **awkward moments** can be both cringe-worthy and memorable. As a new member of our community, we understand that these situations can sometimes occur when attending our events. However, rest assured that we are here to embrace and guide you through these moments, making your integration into Ticino easier and more enjoyable. **We've all been there**, and we're here to share our own experiences and support you every step of the way.

Imagine this scenario: You're at one of our social gatherings, surrounded by new faces and eager to make connections. Suddenly, you find yourself in the midst of an unintentional language mix-up. As a Brazilian myself, I can relate to these situations firsthand. I remember the times when I attempted to express my thoughts in Italian, but my brain couldn't help but interweave English or Portuguese. The result? A peculiar mix of languages that left my listener slightly bewildered. But fear not, dear expat! These linguistic mishaps are part of the expat experience, and they often become the **source of laughter, bonding, and shared stories within our community**. I'll never forget the time I confidently tried to convey that I would pay 28 francs to the waiter at a local café. However, in my linguistic blend, it came out as "twenty-otto." Astonishingly, the garçon understood me perfectly.





Navigating the art of introductions is another aspect that can lead to both humorous and awkward encounters. As you extend your hand for a handshake, we encourage you to add a touch of Italian flair to your introduction. Instead of a simple "Hello," try saying "**Ciao, piacere di conoscerti**" (Hello, nice to meet you). It's a small linguistic gesture that shows your willingness to embrace the local culture. And if your hand happens to be inexplicably sweaty, turn this potentially awkward moment into a lighthearted icebreaker. Offer your damp hand with a playful grin and say, "Perdonami, sembra che la mia mano sia un po' entusiasta oggi. Sarà l'emozione di conoscere tutti voi!" (Forgive me, it seems like my hand is a bit enthusiastic today. It must be the excitement of meeting all of you!) Within our community, we value authenticity and the ability to laugh at ourselves, turning potential awkwardness into a shared moment of connection.

Another aspect of social interactions that can lead to humorous situations is mispronunciations. It's perfectly normal to stumble upon certain words or phrases in the local dialect or Italian language. As a Brazilian starting fresh in Ticino, I made my fair share of mispronunciations and language blunders. But rest assured, dear expat, that our community is here to support you through these moments. **Embrace the humor in mispronunciations, laugh along** with your conversation partners, and playfully attempt the word again. For example, if you stumble upon the word "focaccia," you might accidentally pronounce it as "foh-CAH-see-ah." Embrace the moment and say, "Scusate la mia pronuncia, sembra che il mio accento abbia preso il sopravvento. Ma ditemi, dove posso gustare una deliziosa focaccia qui a Ticino?" (Sorry for my pronunciation, it seems like my accent took over. But tell me, where can I taste a delicious focaccia here in Ticino?) This light-hearted approach not only shows your willingness to learn but also creates an atmosphere of acceptance and camaraderie within our community.



We want to emphasize that as a member of our community, you can count on us to guide you through these situations and provide support whenever needed. We've all experienced the initial challenges of adapting to a new culture, learning a new language, and navigating social norms. Our shared experiences have allowed us to create a safe and friendly environment where you can freely express yourself and **embrace the ups and downs of the expat journey.**

Remember, dear expat, that the key to navigating awkward moments is to approach them with a lighthearted spirit and a dash of humor. Embrace the imperfections, laugh at yourself, and remember that these shared experiences create bonds and pave the way for genuine connections. We are here to make your integration into Ticino easier, more enjoyable, and filled with laughter.

In Chapter 4, we'll explore the tantalizing culinary delights of Ticino, from traditional delicacies to fusion cuisine that will leave your taste buds dancing with joy. Get ready to savor the flavors and embark on a delectable journey within our community.





## CHAPTER 4

# Savoring Ticino: Delightful Italian Swiss Foods and Gastronomic Adventures

Welcome to the culinary paradise of Ticino, where the flavors of Italy and Switzerland intertwine to create a gastronomic journey like no other. In this chapter, we'll explore the delectable **Italian Swiss dishes** that every expat should taste, provide a guide on how to pronounce them in Italian, and delve into the historic roots of "Cucina ticinese" – the traditional cuisine of Ticino. Prepare your taste buds for a mouthwatering experience!

Ticino's cuisine, known as "**Cucina ticinese**," is a delightful reflection of the region's history and cultural influences. Nestled between the Italian border and the Swiss Alps, Ticino has been a crossroads of culinary traditions for centuries. Its cuisine combines the simplicity and robust flavors of Italian cooking with the precision and quality of Swiss gastronomy. As a result, Ticino offers a unique blend of ingredients, techniques, and flavors that tantalize the senses.

Let's explore some of the iconic Italian Swiss dishes of Ticino and learn how to pronounce them in Italian:



1.

**Polenta:** Pronounced "po-LEN-tah," this traditional dish made from cornmeal is a staple in Ticino. Polenta has been a dietary cornerstone in the region for centuries, providing sustenance to farmers and families. Today, it is cherished for its versatility and ability to complement a wide range of accompanying ingredients.



2.

**Risotto al Funghi:** Pronounced "ree-ZOT-to al FOON-ghee," this creamy mushroom risotto is a true delight for the senses. Ticino's lush forests offer an abundance of wild mushrooms, making them a cherished ingredient in local cuisine. The risotto is cooked slowly, allowing the rice to absorb the flavors of mushrooms, onions, white wine, and Parmesan cheese. Prepare for a velvety, umami-packed experience.



3.

**Luganighe:** Pronounced "loo-ga-NEE-ge," this mouthwatering sausage is a specialty of the region. It has a rich history, dating back to the 16th century, when it was first mentioned in culinary texts. Made with a combination of pork, beef, and spices, it is traditionally grilled and served with polenta or in a bun. Sink your teeth into the smoky, savory goodness of Luganighe and savor a taste of Ticino's culinary heritage.





4.

**Gnocchi alla Ticinese:** Pronounced "NYO-kee" these pillowy potato dumplings are served in a rich tomato and meat sauce. Gnocchi, a beloved Italian staple, found its way into Ticino's culinary repertoire and became a local favorite. The combination of tender gnocchi and robust flavors will transport you to culinary bliss.



5.

**Merluzzo alla Ticinese:** Pronounced "mer-LUT-so" this delectable dish features cod fillets cooked in a tomato and olive sauce. Ticino's proximity to Lake Maggiore and its abundant fish supply influenced the region's culinary traditions. The tender fish absorbs the vibrant flavors, creating a harmony of tastes that will leave you craving for more.



6.

**Torta di Pane:** Pronounced "TOR-tah dee PAH-neh," this traditional bread pudding is a sweet delight. It has humble origins, rooted in the resourcefulness of using stale bread to create a delicious dessert. Made with bread, milk, eggs, sugar, and often flavored with raisins or almonds, it is baked to perfection and served warm. Prepare to indulge in a comforting, nostalgic treat that showcases the ingenuity of Ticino's culinary heritage.





As a lover of Ticino's culinary treasures, I created a **WhatsApp group called "Gastronomic Dinners"** back in 2021. Since then, we have embarked on countless culinary adventures, visiting dozens of restaurants mainly in Lugano, the heart of Ticino. Our aim has been to explore the region's finest Ticinese dishes and savor the flavors that make this place so special.

Within our "Gastronomic Dinners" community, we aspire to visit these renowned Michelin-starred establishments together, exploring their unique interpretations of Ticinese cuisine. It's an opportunity to expand our culinary horizons and experience the heights of **gastronomic artistry**. Some examples include:

- **Ecco Ascona:** Located in Ascona, this Michelin-starred restaurant showcases the talents of Chef, who masterfully combines flavors and textures to create memorable dining experiences.
- **Seven:** Nestled in the heart of Lugano, Seven is another Michelin-starred gem that offers a sophisticated dining experience with stunning views of the city. Their Chef takes diners on a culinary journey through innovative interpretations of traditional Ticinese dishes.
- **Locanda Orico:** Situated in Bellinzona, Locanda Orico is a charming Michelin-starred restaurant that offers a blend of traditional and contemporary Ticinese cuisine. Its Chef brings a creative touch to classic dishes, resulting in delightful and harmonious flavors.
- **Osteria della Posta:** Located in Mendrisio, this Michelin-starred restaurant is known for its impeccable service and delectable dishes. The Chef there showcases the best of Ticinese ingredients, transforming them into culinary masterpieces.
- **Ristorante Arte:** Situated in Agno, Ristorante Arte boasts a Michelin star for its exquisite blend of Mediterranean and Ticinese flavors. Their Chef crafts dishes that are not only visually stunning but also bursting with flavors that reflect the rich culinary traditions of Ticino.





Join us on this exciting journey of culinary exploration and indulge in the finest offerings that Ticino has to offer. The link to join our "Gastronomic Dinners" WhatsApp group can be found on our website, [www.expatsinticino.ch](http://www.expatsinticino.ch). Together, we'll savor the historic flavors of Ticino, celebrate its culinary heritage, and create lasting memories.

So, dear expat, get ready to embark on a culinary adventure, join our community, and experience the Michelin-starred delights of Ticino.





## CHAPTER 5

# Embracing Connection and Adventure: Your Gateway to Ticino's Friendship Wonderland

Welcome to the captivating world of connection and **adventure** that awaits you in Ticino. In this chapter, we'll delve into the wonderland of friendships and exploration, where you can unlock new experiences and forge deep connections with like-minded individuals. Prepare to immerse yourself in the vibrant community of Ticino and discover the various avenues through which you can connect, grow, and contribute.

As you settle into your new life in Ticino, we understand the importance of **finding your tribe** – a group of individuals who share your interests and passions. That's why our community, "Expats in Ticino," offers **an array of WhatsApp groups** that cater to different areas of interest. Whether you're an avid hiker, a tennis enthusiast, a tech aficionado, or a professional seeking a co-working space, we have a dedicated group for you.

Our WhatsApp groups, such as the "**Hiking Group**", "**Ladies Group**", "**Tennis Group**", "**IT Group**", "**Co-Working Group**" etc serve as vibrant platforms for connecting with like-minded individuals who share similar hobbies and interests. They provide opportunities to plan outings, exchange ideas, seek advice, and organize events within specific domains. These groups are accessible through our website, [www.expatsinticino.ch](http://www.expatsinticino.ch), where you can find information on how to join and participate.





The "**Hiking Group**" invites you to explore the picturesque trails and majestic peaks of Ticino alongside fellow nature enthusiasts. Lace up your boots, breathe in the crisp mountain air, and forge lasting bonds as you conquer the breathtaking landscapes together.

Our "**Ladies Group**" is a haven for female expats looking to connect, share experiences, and uplift one another. Engage in empowering conversations, participate in social events, and build a network of supportive friendships.

For those with a passion for tennis, our "**Tennis Group**" offers a platform to connect with fellow players, organize friendly matches, and partake in the exhilarating sport that brings people together across cultures.

If you're an IT professional or technology enthusiast, our "**IT Group**" provides a space to exchange ideas, share knowledge, and foster connections within the tech industry. From networking events to collaborative projects, this group is your gateway to the dynamic tech community of Ticino.

For individuals seeking a conducive work environment, our "**Co-Working Group**" is the perfect avenue to connect with professionals from various fields, share resources, and explore co-working spaces that foster creativity and collaboration.

In addition to these specific interest groups, our "Expats in Ticino" community is always open to individuals who are passionate about helping others and giving back. If you have fallen in love with Ticino and want to contribute to the growth and support of our community, we invite you to become an **ambassador**. As an ambassador, you'll play a crucial role in welcoming new members, organizing events, and ensuring that our community continues to thrive. Your dedication and enthusiasm will be instrumental in shaping the future of our vibrant expat community.



To join any of our WhatsApp groups or learn more about becoming an ambassador, visit our website, [www.expatsinticino.ch](http://www.expatsinticino.ch). Embrace the opportunities to connect, explore, and contribute to the growth of our community.

Ticino is a place where friendships blossom, adventures unfold, and a shared sense of belonging awaits. As you venture into Ticino's friendship wonderland, be open to new experiences, reach out to others, and **immerse yourself** in the vibrant community that surrounds you.

Together, let's embrace connection and adventure, creating a **network of friendships** that will enrich our lives and leave an indelible mark on our expat journey.

The wonderland awaits, dear friend.



# WORKSHOP UNLOCKING THE SOCIAL NETWORK



DEVELOP SOCIAL SKILLS  
OVERCOME SHYNESS  
CONTROL THE FEAR OF PUBLIC SPEAKING

Duration: 3h  
Check next dates on the website [www.expatsinticino.ch](http://www.expatsinticino.ch)