

# Switzerland by the lake

Sun, lake and some time.  
That's all it takes to be happy.  
Architect **Sophie Morard** has created a place for herself where she will never work.

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Photos: Croce & Wir*



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Architect Sophie Morard

## Modest 64 m<sup>2</sup>

The view of the wide, turquoise waters of Lake Geneva toward the south with the towering mountain peaks of the French Chablais massif is breathtaking. Le Corbusier was also impressed by this mountain panorama and, together with Pierre Jeanneret, built the 64 m<sup>2</sup> small *Villa Le Lac* for his parents in 1923. It is considered as an early expression of minimalism and was included in the World Heritage List.

Sophie Morard's weekend house is in St. Gingolph, on the opposite shore near the border with France. Here, where the mountains rise out of the alpine lake, a strip of shore offers just enough space for the road, the railway tracks and a row of small holiday homes.

In harsh winters, there is a risk of avalanches, which makes it impossible to use the houses all year round due to strict regulations. But Sophie is barely affected by this limitation, as her office SHE Architecture and therefore her centre of life is in the ski resort of Verbier an hour away. From there, she works on commissions for clients whose exclusive chalets have become rundown and need to be redesigned. Together with her three employees, she also likes to focus on interesting new construction commissions from the Rhone Valley.



### Recognised potential

In 1998, Sophie's husband bought a cottage by the lake. For some years now, his son has been successfully using it as a wakesurfing centre and they enjoyed spending time there. Sophie, however, saw another potential in the area: A cottage from the sixties seemed to be gradually decaying on the adjacent property. After lengthy negotiations, the couple managed to persuade the previous owner to sell the house.

Sophie already had concrete ideas and plans in mind. "Christian gave me free reign," she recalls. "His only wish was a spacious summer kitchen where he could devote himself to cooking and waiting on our friends. So everyone had their roles set out for them and our guests and I enjoy being pampered by him here at the lake."

### Planning according to plan

Inspired in the broadest sense also by Le Corbusier's house on the lake, she directed all her attention to redesigning the existing building, whose usable substance was limited to the structure. The floor plan could not be expanded because of the strict spatial planning law. Therefore, she was looking for design possibilities to create a maximum of volume and sense of space using the 64 square metres. With an asymmetrical bay window including a large window facing the lake, she not only created an alcove to linger and enjoy, but also a romantic guest bed for two. A finely structured glass partition between the central cooking and dining area and the bedroom with a bathroom makes it possible to experience the entire volume in everyday life and can be closed with a curtain made of linen, if desired. If you also open the sliding doors to the large terrace and the lake, guests feel completely free and the boundary between internal and external space seems to disappear.



### Just don't stand out

“The area around the lake is not defined by the landscape as much as in my projects in the mountains. Here, the water surface and the sky create a vastness,” the architect explains. “I wanted the house to visually merge with the surrounding landscape.” In her search for suitable materials, she came across aluminium and thus the serrated profile by PREFA in the colour bronze. Laid seamlessly and precisely, the result reflected the look she had had in mind. In combination with the Prefalz roof and drainage system, the tinsmith created a uniform and sustainable building envelope that withstands the changing weather conditions at the lake in the long term. “The construction process, including the outdoor facilities, only took six months after planning. Still, we could hardly wait to finally spend our first weekend here,” she recalls.

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## Wanderlust is long gone

“The proximity to the lake is brilliant. The water is clear, especially in the morning,” Sophie enthuses. “We spend a lot of time swimming and wakesurfing.” The edge of the lake is only eight metres away from the kitchen. Walking from the kitchen’s terrazzo across the ash decking and soft lawn gives Sophie pleasure. “The haptics of a place are very important to me,” she explains. Her husband enjoys the waterfront lounging area and spends as much time outside as possible. “Since we moved here, Christian has showered in the bathroom maybe twice,” the architect recalls. He prefers to use the outdoor shower in any weather.

Relaxed, the two watch the hustle and bustle of the Swiss Riviera from a distance. And if it does get too quiet for them, they can reach the harbour of the lake-side metropolis of Montreux by boat in only 15 minutes.





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