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Spend a Night in a Nuclear Bunker

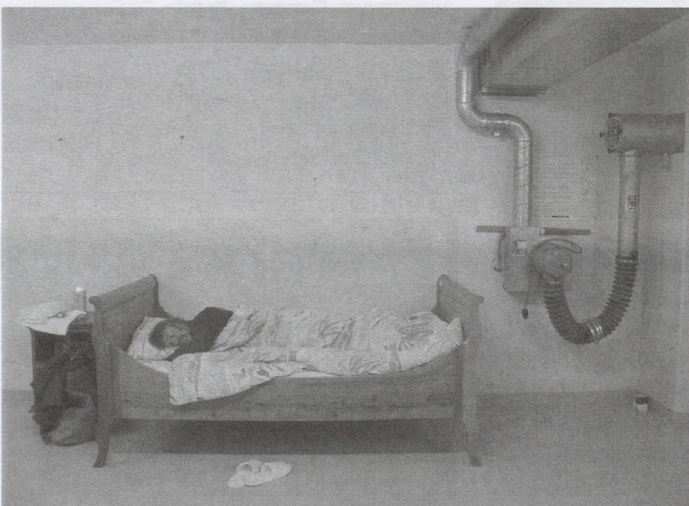
In Sevelen, two brothers have transformed a nuclear bunker into a "zero-star hotel." The outside world is visible only through monitors, and a wheel of fortune determines who gets to shower with warm water. The buzz, needless to say, is huge.

"Less is more" was the motto selected by the twin Riklin brothers when they set up their "zero-star hotel" in an abandoned nuclear bunker. The beds were bought at bargain prices from a condemned hotel in the region; the walls were left unpainted.

The town of Sevelen, located in the Swiss canton of St. Gallen, was at first just looking for a way to lodge musicians invited to play at a planned cultural center. But Sevelen had no room for a new hotel. So the town council decided to look more closely at one of the local civil defense bunkers.

"No one will ever want to sleep there," declared town council leader Roman Zogg, when he and fellow council members emerged from the bunker after a first inspection. The Riklin brothers and their "Studio for Special Projects" nevertheless received a commission. The bunker looked like a creative challenge, so the two artists took it on personally, thinking maybe they could forge something new out of the concrete block.

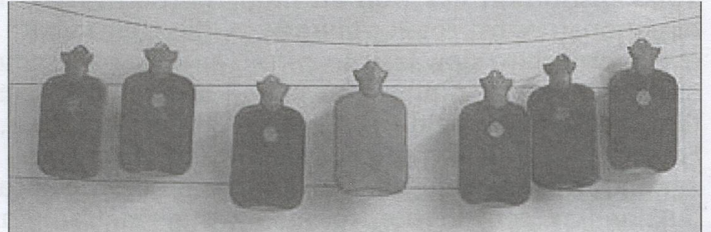
The brothers only had to comply with one requirement from the Swiss military: None of the walls could be demolished, and the civil defense facilities must at all times be ready to revert to their original function within 24 hours.



Zero Star Hotel

The hotel offers guests a few different classes of comfort. There's the standard layout, for example, which features original military bunkbeds, and a luxury booking, which provides plush, antique Biedermeier beds. A luxury booking, which costs around twenty euros a night, includes coffee in bed every morning and cookies in the nightstand every afternoon.

Instead of providing enough hot water for every guest, each morning after the hotel opens a wheel of fortune determines who gets to shower first, and who gets the ice-cold water leftovers. The luxury service, however, includes hot-water bottles to make the bunker more comfortable.



Central heating

But only in the reception area - which the Riklins call the "wash and lounge oasis" - can customers confirm that the outside world still exists. There they can gaze at a monitor which in an otherwise windowless building provides a live video feed from outside.

For the town of Sevelen, the hotel is almost as exciting as it may be for future visitors. The streets surrounding the town hall have buzzed with excitement. The whole world, it seems, has taken an interest in the bunker-hotel. The Riklin brothers never thought their small project would garner so much attention.

The hotel's operations will be taken up by the town itself. All the townspeople will be called upon to offer assistance.

from swissinfo

Switzerland Plans to Fine Naked Hikers

Some hikers prefer to enjoy mountain vistas in nothing but a pair of sensible walking boots. But naked hiking may soon become a costly hobby: Appenzell Innerrhoden wants to saddle those hiking au naturel with a hefty fine.

Climbers in the Swiss Alps last autumn were confronted with more than just stunning mountain panoramas. A group of nudist climbers were enjoying the fresh air, much to the surprise of their fully clad counterparts.

But their antics riled the authorities in the canton of Appenzell Innerrhoden, who now aim to stamp out the fledgling trend. If a proposed law is passed, those found trekking in the nude will be fined 200 Swiss francs starting this year.

Those preferring to trek in the buff get a more welcome reception elsewhere in the German-

speaking world. In the central German Harz mountain range, two villages put themselves on the map last year by advocating special routes through their forested slopes as an ideal stomping ground for naked hikers.



and partake in naked sports, from canoeing to horse-riding.

The practice of "FKK" (which stands for "free body culture") is a serious pursuit in Germany. Nudism was already popular at the beginning of the 20th century. It regained popularity after the war, especially in communist East Germany. Since reunification, German FKK fans of all ages sunbathe in the nude

from: Der Spiegel



Sleeping on straw

efforts have conspired to keep agrotourism from reaching its full potential. In fact, other places with less to offer are making nearly twice as much.

The study is based on research on farmers, local authorities and rural holiday promoters like Swiss Holiday Farms, Sleep on Straw and the website rural-tourism.ch. It found agrotourism had a lot of potential.

from swissinfo

Rural tourism struggles to take root

Staying on farms and experiencing rural Swiss life first-hand is a sorely underdeveloped sector of the tourism economy, a study has found.

With its pastures dotted with cows and its scenic valleys, Switzerland is an ideal country for agrotourism, yet the industry lags well behind neighbouring countries that have less to offer.

Switzerland could bolster its rural holiday market with focused marketing efforts, comprehensive funding and better industry standards. If these measures take root, farmers and rural innkeepers stand to reap millions of more francs each year in income while helping to preserve the country's celebrated open spaces.

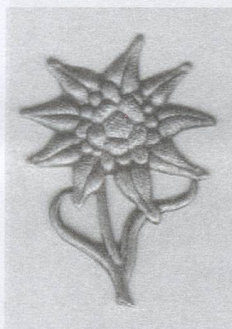
Although Swiss farmers have been enjoying robust sales recently, high production costs are eating into profits. The Federal Agriculture Office has encouraged farmers to be creative in finding ways to bolster their incomes through new activities.

Agrotourism is an understandable solution and is not new to Switzerland - the first official farm stays began in the southern canton of Ticino in 1975.

Yet the state of agrotourism in Switzerland is relatively unknown. Splintered marketing work, a lack of quality standards and poor brand-building

Checkered history of the Edelweiss

The Edelweiss was established 1907 as the sign of the Austrian-Hungarian alpine troops by Emperor Franz Joseph I. These original three regiments wore their Edelweiss on the collar of their uniform. During World War I the Edelweiss was granted to the German alpine troops for their bravery. Today they are still the insignia of the Austrian, Polish and German alpine troops.



Edelweiss was also a secret badge of the Edelweiss Piraten, the anti-Nazi youth groups in the Third Reich.

The Edelweiss flower was the symbol of Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS Gebirgsjäger, or mountain troops, worn as a metal pin on the left side of the mountain cap, on the band of the service dress cap, and as a patch on the right sleeve.

The rank insignia of Swiss generals have Edelweiss signs instead of stars. A Korpskommandant for example (equivalent to a Lieutenant General in other countries) wears three Edelweiss signs on his collar instead of three stars.

from Wikipedia