

Wanderlust Schweiz : the origins of adventure in Switzerland

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Highlights

- Life back in Switzerland
- Swiss Rail Tips
- Secret Life of Doris Baertschi
- Unique Hotels in Switzerland

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Wanderlust Schweiz: the Origins of Adventure in Switzerland



The topic of this Helvetia magazine is adventure in Switzerland. What better place to start than with the national Swiss pastime of "wandern" (tramping) – an adventure which most Swiss people deeply connect with. The word "Wanderlust" epitomises this activity: the desire to go walking.

Of course – the world's people have been on the move for eons. The need for migration is deep in our genes and activated in times of upheaval such as climatic changes, overpopulation, resource scarcity, and so on.

Switzerland itself was overrun with migrating armies numerous times. The Romans, Alemanni and Burgundians are just some who claimed territory in Switzerland. Even the Swiss themselves attempted to emigrate from Switzerland in 58 BC to settle in France, only to be driven back by the mighty Caesar himself! For centuries, Swiss men have hired themselves out as mercenaries to foreign armies – and of course still do so at the Vatican. Similarly, Swiss tradesmen roamed all over Europe, honing their skills upon completion of their apprenticeships. Pilgrims also walked vast distances to obtain religious salvation. They had a distinct purpose to leave their homes, be it economic, religious or otherwise.

Today, life is a lot more stable than it used to be. Nevertheless, the urge to explore and experience new things and places – to have an adventure – persists in us. In Switzerland,

a key outlet for this urge is wandern.

Originally, wandern was the domain of the wealthy – such as naturalists roaming through the countryside and adventure-crazy English people attempting to climb our Alpine peaks. Thus, it was not a Swiss but Englishman Edward Whymple who conquered the Matterhorn first in 1865.

Thomas Cooke – the world's first travel agent – organised the first Swiss Grand Walking Tour for English-speaking people in 1863. Miss Jemima Morrell, from a middle-class family near York in England, kept a detailed diary of this tour. While walking through both the Swiss and French Alps, she commented on the extreme poverty of people in rural areas. To these impoverished Swiss people, wandern for pleasure was still a long time off.

However, this changed at the beginning of the 1900s and with increasing prosperity in Switzerland. Wandern became a more popular pastime. Unfortunately, this new trend coincided with the rise of the automobile which soon started to clog up and pollute roads traditionally used for walking. Naturally,

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Word from the president

Dear Readers

The Xmas trees would be well stored away again and the body boards dusted off by now – hopefully you all had a wonderful festive season with your family and friends and a well deserved break during the summer time.

In this issue we are not concentrating on a particular region as such, but instead aim to awaken your “Wanderlust” – a topic that probably matches all of us really well, since we all ventured out into the big, wide world looking for adventures and excitement.

Amongst a whole array of wonderful and interesting articles, I have spoken to and written about Doris Baertschi – a Swiss artist and painter from West Auckland – who has an amazing and touching life story. She has recently been interviewed on TV3 and inspired hundreds of people – now you can read about her secret life in our Helvetia.

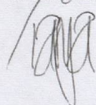
Our Trudi, who has moved back to Switzerland in May last year, has written an article about her life back ‘home’. It looks like most of us have a somewhat “Heidi-like” image of our home country – probably due to the fact that we only ever holiday there. Well if you want to find out how life currently really is in Switzerland, read page 3. Thank you so much Trudi for your efforts – I know that these personally written articles take hours to complete. They certainly add a very personal touch to our Helvetia, which makes our magazine so diverse and interesting to read.

On that note (and yes, I had the best intentions to say this earlier but believe it or not, the last Helvetia was jam packed and had no space for my words of appreciation...) I would like to thank the entire Helvetia team very, very much for all your efforts, support and help with yet another successful year of our wonderful Helvetia magazine! I couldn't do it without you and honestly appreciate your contribution very much.

Our 4 year term of hosting the Swiss Society in Auckland and creating the Helvetia is coming to an end in June this year – so another two issues to go and then we are handing over the reins to the Hamilton Swiss Club who is already super excited to take over (I hope...). New team, fresh ideas and a new life for our Helvetia magazine, which is now in its 82nd year.

Even though it will free me up as a mum and give me more time with my boys, it will leave a gap in my life since I invested a lot of energy into the Helvetia. But no time now to reminisce... I have to get on with organising the next Swiss Market! Hope to see you all there on the 7th May!

Lots of Love,



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trampers escaped to quieter backroads and trails, many of which had been in use for a very long time.

Jakob Ess, a teacher from eastern Switzerland, first highlighted the need for properly signposting walking tracks throughout Switzerland. After some haphazard attempts at this, the need for a nationally consistent method of signposting was recognised. Again, it was Jakob Ess who initiated this process, together with a number of Swiss institutions. In this way, the Wegweiser (walking signpost) was created in 1934. Characteristic black writing on yellow background: these signposts soon became very familiar to any Swiss with an interest in wandern. Tramping clubs – Wandervereine – soon started to pop up all over Switzerland. They created new walking routes, all duly signposted. Not even the Second World War could stop this trend, although the

Swiss army ordered the removal of all the signposts. This gave rise to guided walking tours, another trend which has persisted to today.

Over time, wandern became very deeply embedded in the Swiss psyche. The Swiss tramping network – all 65,000 km – are recognised as of national significance in the Swiss Constitution and legislation, together with the need for ongoing maintenance.

The Swiss tramping network is generally not limited by private boundaries. It is possible to walk from any corner of Switzerland to another, often via different routes. The amazing Swiss public transport system reaches almost every Swiss outpost – be it far or near, high or low – within a reasonable amount of time. This makes a true adventure accessible to anyone in Switzerland!

Susie Wood

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