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My strongest memories of Switzerland are culinary

Ladina Berta and Chatrina Bützer recall their childhood experiences at holiday camps organised by the Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad.

Ladina and Chatrina were typical Swiss expatriate children. Because their father worked for the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, they spent much of their youth travelling around the world. From the ages of 5 and 9 respectively, they travelled from Italy (where they were born) to attend four Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad holiday camps. Today they both live in Berne. Ladina works for the Youth Service of the Organisation for Swiss Abroad. The two sisters vividly remember life at camp.

Why and where did your family live abroad?

LADINA: The whole family travelled a lot because of our father's job. We were born in Italy, spent the early 1960s in Algeria, and later lived in central Africa, Austria and Burundi. That was followed by a short spell in Germany. Each posting lasted two to four years. Our father's last postings were to Thailand, Peru and Argentina, but my sister and I were already married by then, with Chatrina living in Berne and I in New York.

From where did you travel to the camps, and how was your journey organised?

* Ladina and Chatrina's mother comes from Trieste, while their father's family is from Grisons. Their great-grandfather, a leather import-exporter, emigrated to Italy. That's how their parents met at school. The family often visited Scuol or spent their holidays there.



Ladina Berta and Chatrina Bützer: The sisters have happy memories of their holiday camps in Switzerland.

CHATRINA: We went to the camps when we were living in Italy. We went twice to Salvan (VS) and twice to Vercorin (VS). The summer holidays were four months long in Italy, and we were supposed to spend a whole month in Switzerland. We first went to camp in 1955, when we were 5 and 9 respectively and living in Trieste. Throughout our adventurous journey to Switzerland, we both had to wear a label round our neck with our name, address and our destination: just like parcels in the post. An uncle met us at Milan station and helped us change trains. During the trip, I was responsible for my sister, because she was four years younger than me. The ticket inspectors always kept a watchful eye over us and told us when to get off.

What were the camp activities back then?

LADINA: We went on a lot of walks and were always outside,

even in bad weather. We often played in the garden. The camp also had two rabbits that were kept in a hutch in the garden. But these cute bunnies were eventually killed and served at dinner time. Not surprisingly, we didn't want to eat them.

What languages were spoken at camp?

CHATRINA: Lots. Our father sent us to camp to learn French.

Did you feel homesick?

LADINA: I didn't want to go to camp, and cried my eyes out at the station. But two days later, I didn't feel homesick anymore.

What was your worst experience?

CHATRINA: They served porridge for breakfast, and we had to eat it. That was the worst experience.

LADINA: We all had a rest after lunch. One day, I woke up from a deep sleep with the

sneaking suspicion that I was all alone in the house. I distinctly remember how relieved and happy I was to see my sister. The poor thing had had to stay at the house and look after me while all the others went off for a walk.

What are your strongest memories of Switzerland?

CHATRINA: My strongest memories of Switzerland are culinary. I loved potato salad because we never had that at home. Once we went on an outing by coach from Salvan to Martigny, where we went into a Migros store. That's typically Swiss. I also remember the skirt we had to wear on Sundays, together with smart shoes and socks.

LADINA: All the children's wallets were kept in a drawer in the common room. We each had about CHF 3 to buy sweets in the village shop. The money had to last us for the entire month. When you stood in front of the shelf containing all the coloured jars of delicious sweets in the village shop, it felt like being in paradise.

CHATRINA: I used my money to buy a huge pile of Sugus sweets, which I distributed among everyone at camp. You couldn't get chocolate, Sugus or Ovomaltine in Italy. Even tinned peas were only available later.

LADINA: My favourite memory of the camps was the first of August celebrations. I loved the lanterns, bonfires and especially the sparklers.

At the Swiss consulate in Trieste, all they ever did on the Swiss national holiday was grill sausages in the garden.

Can these camps help create a more peaceful world?

LADINA: Camps are a good personal experience. There is probably less focus on the

"peace-building" aspect at camps for younger children, and more emphasis on it at the youth camps (15 years and up). You learn in a playful manner how to get along with everyone, regardless of their language or culture. The camps are special because they create fond memories of your homeland, and therefore form bonds between the children and their fellow countrymen. You learn to be flexible and open-minded. Going to the camps can be a life-enhancing experience. They offer a framework for nurturing independence, personal development, raising awareness and learning how to cope with new, unfamiliar and unexpected situations. It really helped us, at any rate. I'd recommend all children to attend camp.

INTERVIEW: ARIANE ROULET & SIMONE RINER

Young Swiss Abroad enjoy holidays in Switzerland

The Swiss Alps are world-famous for their beauty and the many opportunities to engage in sports, relax or simply soak up the scenery. Book through the Youth Service now if you'd like your children to visit this winter.

Youth Service winter sport camps are extremely popular. After all, group holidays are always lots of fun, especially if it means spending ten days with young people from around the globe. It's a great way to exchange experiences with other Swiss abroad, learn about other kids' home countries, and discover the country of your forefathers. And any

inhibitions about speaking a foreign language are quickly forgotten, because interpersonal contact is what counts. Trained OSA skiing and snowboarding instructors ensure the experience is safe, lively and packed with new achievements, while a varied leisure programme makes for entertainment and a great atmosphere, be it alternative sports, a bit of relaxation or creative activities.

The following camps still have a few places available:

Winter sports week in Wengen (BE) (3.3.-10.3.2007)

A skiing and snowboarding camp for young adults aged 18 and up in the majestic alpine surroundings of the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau mountains. Wengen is a renowned winter sports resort famous for

the Lauberhorn downhill ski race and the Jungfraujoch train. You can even test your skills on the World Cup piste. The atmosphere is always excellent at this camp.

Price: CHF 800.-

Easter camp in Fiesch (VS) (7.4.-14.4.2007)

Fancy a week in the snow in spring, when the days start getting longer? The Aletsch region is just what you're looking for. With its indoor halls and outdoor sports grounds, the modern holiday village offers countless sporting opportunities. Plus you can enjoy the spectacular views surrounding this well-known ski resort and hopefully lots of mountain sunshine. This camp is run in two age-groups in association with the FYSA. Ages: 12 and up.

Price: CHF 690.-



Young Swiss Abroad enjoying the snow in Sedrun.



University taster

If you'd like to do something for your education while on holiday, the Youth Service has plenty of offers and accommodation. You'll live with one of our easy-going host families and gain an authentic insight into life in Switzerland. We'll put together a daytime programme tailored to your individual wishes.

But that's only a taster of what the Youth Service has on offer. Contact the OSA directly for more information.

As usual, information and details on youth arrangements are available from:

Organisation of the Swiss Abroad Youth Service
Alpenstrasse 26, CH-3006 Berne
Tel.: +41 (0)31 356 61 00
Fax.: +41 (0)31 356 61 01
youth@aso.ch
www.aso.ch

Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad summer camp 2007

Are you aged 8 to 14? Would you like to spend 14 days in Switzerland and find out more about your home country? The Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad runs summer holiday camps in Switzerland in July and August.

Programme

During the camps we go sightseeing, discover lakes, mountains, rivers and landscapes, go hiking and perhaps also visit local towns and cities. Some days we simply stay in camp and organise games, sports and a variety of workshops.

You'll also have an opportunity to discover some interesting aspects of Switzerland. For instance, we'll be taking a look at the Swiss language, Swiss songs, Swiss recipes, typical Swiss games and traditional sports.

Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad holiday camps offer a chance to mix with young people from different linguistic and cultural regions around the world.

Cost

The camps cost between CHF 800 and 900 per child. The Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad aims to offer as many young Swiss abroad as possible the opportunity to have a holiday in Switzerland at least once. Parents can therefore apply for a reduction in the price of the camp. Application forms can be requested with the registration form.

Rendezvous

The groups always meet at Zurich Airport at around lunchtime.

Parents are responsible for the organisation and cost of the outward journey to Zurich Airport on the first day and the return journey from Zurich Airport on the last day.

Staff

Experienced teams of multilingual camp leaders ensure that everything runs smoothly throughout the fortnight, and provide an interesting and varied range of activities.

Registration

Details of these camps as well as the registration form will be available at www.aso.ch (under "Youth", "Holiday camps for 8-14-year-olds", "Program Summer") from January 2007 onwards. On request, we can also send you our information brochure by post. The deadline for registration is 15 March 2007.

Winter camp 2007

NB: There are still a few places available for the winter camps in Hasliberg (10-17 February

2007) and Fiesch (7-14 April 2007). *Please register soon!*

For more information, contact our staff in Berne, who will be happy to help you:

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60 years of charity: Swiss Solidarity celebrates its anniversary

Swiss Solidarity recently celebrated its 60th anniversary. On 26 September 1946, Radio Sottens (now Radio Suisse Romande) broadcast its very first "Chaine du Bonheur" programme to raise money for children orphaned during the Second World War.

Swiss Solidarity was the brainchild of radio journalist Roger Nordmann, entertainer Jack Rollan and radio director-to-be Paul Valloton. The first show's special guest was Juliette Hédiguer from Avenches, who had temporarily taken in an orphan from England. The pro-

gramme, which was initially aired once a week and later only for disaster appeals and at irregular intervals, was first broadcast in German-speaking Switzerland in October 1947 for the benefit of the so-called "oil soldiers", and later also in Italian-speaking Switzerland and at times throughout Europe. In 1983, the SRG SSR idée suisse changed the legal form of Swiss Solidarity to a foundation. Today numerous private radio stations, newspapers and online services are as-

sociated with it, and Swiss Solidarity has become the aid and charity appeal platform for all Swiss media. To date Swiss Solidarity has raised some CHF 900 million from 115 separate appeals. All the money is used to fund aid projects. Swiss Solidarity covers its own costs through interest earned on as yet unallocated donations.

Projects assessed and approved by Swiss Solidarity are currently managed by 42 accredited and affiliated aid agencies, which are permitted to deduct no more than 10 percent of the allocated project funds. This makes Swiss Solidarity Switzerland's largest and most efficient aid and charity appeal platform. In 1999, the foundation received the International Human Rights Award for its work. Swiss Solidarity currently finances some 300 projects in 46 countries to the tune of CHF 245 million. About 70 percent of the money raised is used to fund long-term, sustainable reconstruction projects, while emergency aid on the one hand and rehabilitation and temporary relief on the other account for 15 percent each. Swiss Solidarity currently has 16 employees sharing 12 full-time posts. Its headquarter are in Geneva, and it has regional offices in Berne and Lugano.

Under the terms of its statutes, Swiss Solidarity is committed to helping "victims of disaster and people in need, no matter what the causes". In addition to providing disaster relief, Swiss Solidarity has since its inception operated a permanent child support unit (for projects in poor countries) and a welfare unit for families and individuals in Switzerland suffering temporary financial difficulties.