

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 34 (2007)
Heft: 3

Rubrik: OSA news

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Young Swiss abroad have been discovering Switzerland for 90 years

Some 300 Swiss children from around the world will be travelling to their mother country this summer to find out about the Switzerland of today.

The Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad has a long tradition of running holiday camps. In 1917, the year it was established, the foundation brought Swiss children from war-stricken areas abroad to visit Switzerland. Back then, the host families offered their young charges a break and a few trouble-free weeks in a relaxed environment.

The first holiday camps were organised in the 1960s, when the foundation was still known as Schweizer Hilfe (it didn't get its current name until 1979). In 1990, it ended its partnership with Pro Juventute. Today the FYSA operates out of the offices of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad in Berne.

Every year, some 400 children aged between 8 and 14 take part in FYSA activities. The aim of the programme is to familiarise young people from more than 50 countries with Switzerland, and show them how much it has to offer. Often the children make friendships at camp that last for years, promoting contact and exchanges across the five continents.

The Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad would like to give all expatriate Swiss children at

least one opportunity to take part in its activities. It has therefore set up a fund for subsidising the attendance fees of children whose parents cannot afford to send them to Switzerland on holiday.

The FYSA consists of 22 cantonal committees, which organise annual collections that cover most of the organisation's expenses. The members of the cantonal committees together form the board of trustees, which meets once a year. The foundation's staff are responsible for organising and running the holiday camps.

The FYSA is always on the lookout for committed volunteers who would like to play an active role in one of the cantonal committees.

Young Swiss men and women abroad: active and committed

The youth programme of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) provides lots of interesting, up-to-date information about Switzerland, whether as part of a holiday spent together with other children of the same age from around the world or a study trip to discover more about their roots.

The 2007 Congress of the Swiss Abroad will have as its theme "United and committed: the Swiss on humanitarian missions". Young people are, of course, more than welcome to attend the Congress. For all those interested in deepening



Every year, 400 children from Swiss families resident abroad take advantage of Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad offers and spend their holidays in Switzerland discovering its beauty and unique characteristics. Established in 1917 to help children from war-stricken areas, the foundation has been operating under its present name since 1979.

their understanding of development aid and humanitarian work, we have an exciting seminar explaining the work of various NGOs and international organisations. After their introduction to human rights, participants are bound to want to get involved in a specific aid project. A street campaign in support of young people in Lima is therefore planned to take place in Geneva. It is extremely important to hear what young people think at the Congress. Federal President Micheline Calmy-Rey will take the time to answer questions from young people, and leading specialists in humanitarian issues will also be on hand.

In October, the Swiss people will be electing a new parliament, and campaigning is already underway. The OSA encourages all citizens – especially young men and women – to go out and vote on polling day. In the week before the general election, we'll be running a seminar offering behind-the-scenes insight into the elections, including an introduction by the OSA to the political system and an

opportunity to meet candidates standing in the parliamentary elections. We'll be taking a closer look at the media and experience first-hand how news is reported on television and the radio. Finally, we'll be monitoring the various parties' progress on election day, and then analysing the results together with experts.

There are still a few places left on the language course being held in Lausanne on 13-24 August 2007. These comprise French classes in the mornings together with other Swiss abroad, an attractive programme of leisure activities as well as plenty of opportunities to practice your newly-acquired language skills with your host family. Participants in the language course in Lausanne are also invited to take part in the discussions, activities and festivities at the Congress of the Swiss Abroad.

OVERVIEW

■ The Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad is a charitable organisation recognised by ZEWO. Its aim is to give Swiss children living abroad an opportunity to have a holiday in Switzerland, regardless of their financial circumstances, and thereby strengthen the bond with their mother country.

New host families sought

The OSA is recruiting host families willing to accommodate young people from around the world. We offer an exciting cultural exchange and experi-



THE OSA YOUTH SERVICE

■ The Youth Service of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad offers young Swiss living abroad the opportunity to discover more about their mother country. Its holiday camps and study trips are designed to foster closer links between the Swiss abroad and promote ties with Switzerland.

ence of other lifestyles that will bring a breath of fresh air and variety to your everyday life.

Host families offer our young people accommodation and meals. All other expenses are paid for by the young people themselves. Most young guests are enrolled in education programmes. However, two-week breaks without organised events are also possible.

As always, you can request further information about the above offers from the Youth Service by writing to youth@aso.ch.

Do you have any questions about Switzerland? SwissInfoDesk can help

SwissInfoDesk facilitates the search for Switzerland-specific information on the Internet. This service, provided by the Swiss National Library, is available in German, French and English.

SwissInfoDesk is a collection of the most important links on Swiss topics (2500 in the year 2006). The Web site is particularly specialised in history, geography, cultural studies, culture and languages, though it also covers everything from sport to business, politics to education. The range of topics is constantly being expanded.

The directory is compiled and maintained by IT specialists at the Swiss National Library. The links have been chosen for the relevance of the Web pages in question, and each link is explained in brief. Searching for electronic information has just become easier. SwissInfoDesk generally provides the required information more quickly and generates more pertinent results than searches conducted using a search engine.

Questions about Switzerland that cannot be answered through SwissInfoDesk can be addressed to the Swiss National Library's research



service. Search requests can be posted using an online form and are processed within 48 hours. Searches lasting up to half an hour are free. A fee of CHF 20 is charged for each additional quarter of an hour (or part thereof).

SwissInfoDesk: www.nb.admin.ch/slb/dienstleistungen/swissinfodesk/index.html?lang=en

Switzerland: New telephone prefix for the Zurich area

On 1 April 2007, the 01 area code was replaced by 044 for calls to the Zurich region of Switzerland. All numbers beginning +41 1 therefore now start +41 44.

Example of a call to the Zurich region from abroad:

+41 44 765 43 21 instead of
+41 1 765 43 21.

Example of a domestic call: 044 765 43 21 instead of 01 765 43 21.

Private or business callers with partners in Switzerland must change the numbers stored in their telephones and fax machines, electronic diaries, databases, directories, etc., and bring them in line with the new area code. The last seven digits of the number following the international and new area code remain unchanged. Numbers which already have an (0)44 or (0)43 prefix and all other telephone numbers in Switzerland remain unchanged. The Swiss Federal Office of Communications (OFCOM) has prepared a comprehensive dossier, which is available on the Internet at www.bakom.admin.ch/044

ORGANISATION OF THE SWISS ABROAD

Our services:

- Legal Department
- Youth Service
- Association for the Promotion of Education for Young Swiss Abroad (AJAS)
- Committee for Swiss Schools Abroad (CSSA)
- Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA)

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