

Highlights of 2007

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Swissair in the dock

Not guilty! Six years after Swissair went bankrupt, the most spectacular commercial trial in Switzerland's history finally took place in Bülach



(ZH) from January to June 2007. The 19 defendants, including several former executives of the airline, were cleared and received compensation, as much as half a million Swiss francs in the case of Mario Corti. Former employees and creditors were furious at the outcome, saying justice had not been done. Zurich's public prosecutor appealed, but then withdrew the appeal in September. By contrast, the canton of Neuchâtel and the Belgian state are still pursuing their appeals against the acquittal of Mario Corti, Swissair's last CEO. The supreme court of the canton of Zurich will now probably have to rule on the affair.

From Switzerland with love

Marc Forster, Grisons's most famous export to Hollywood, will direct the 22nd James Bond film. But will the 38-year-old director of "Finding Neverland" (starring Johnny Depp) shoot it in his home country? Film Location, a company that promotes shooting locations in Switzerland, has suggested several to Forster, including Lucerne. In June, the cinematographer said the Alps would make the perfect setting for a 007 movie. What luck! World premiere: 7 November 2008.

Flooding in August

Torrential rain on 7-10 August led to flooding, swollen rivers and landslides throughout Switzerland. Hundreds of people had to be evacuated.

The towns of Delémont (JU) and Lyss (BE) were inundated, the Berne-Fribourg and Neuchâtel-Bienne railway lines were left underwater, while Lake

Bienne reached the record level of 430.90 metres, a full 47 centimetres above the danger mark. Initial estimates put the cost of the damage at about CHF 500 million. The Swiss Meteorological Office said Switzerland had as much rain over the three days as is usually recorded during the entire month of August.

Record-breaker and living legend

Roger Federer smashed yet more tennis records in 2007. In February, after 161 weeks at the top of the ATP world rankings, he beat the long-standing record of Jimmy Connors from 1974 to 1977. In winning his fifth consecutive Wimbledon title, Federer equalled Bjorn Borg's record (1976-80). And with 12 grand slam titles to his name, the Swiss tennis ace is now within two championships of Pete Sampras's all-time record.

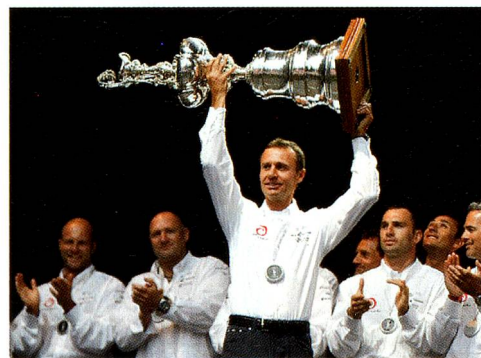
Young and poor

According to a report by the Federal Commission for Child and Youth Affairs (EKKJ), 45% of Switzerland's welfare dependants are under 25, compared with 1.5% for the over-65s. Of these 100,000 poor

young people, 70% haven't even completed vocational training. The EKKJ also noted rising debt levels among young people.

Alinghi sails to second victory

This summer, Ernesto Bertarelli's Team Alinghi beat Team New Zealand to win the 32nd America's Cup in Valencia, Spain. It was a historic double following Alinghi's win in New Zealand in 2003. American rivals BMW Oracle have since sued Alinghi over competition rules they



say favour the Swiss. The legal wrangling could jeopardise the next America's Cup, due to take place in Valencia in 2009.

Lötschberg toasted

Officially opened on 15 June 2007 after eight years of drilling through the Alps, the Lötschberg tunnel came into operation in September. Almost 200 trains a day now pass through it. The world's third-longest tunnel (34.6 km) has cut about an hour off travel times between Berne and the Valais.

Drama on the Jungfrau

In July, six French-Swiss soldiers lost their lives in an avalanche on the Jungfrau. The recruits, who were in their 17th week of military training, were apparently killed when one of them slipped, dragging the rest down with him. A military tribunal is investigating

the affair. Two mountain guides are charged with "multiple negligent homicide".

Stubbing out smoking

A ban on smoking in public places and at work, which has been in force in Ticino since April and is due to be introduced in the canton of Solothurn from 2009, looks like becoming law throughout the country in the next few years. The National Council agreed to the ban in principle in October.

Land of immigration

Switzerland is currently home to 1.542 million foreigners (20.6% of the total population), of whom 933,000 are from European

Union and EFTA member states. The Freedom of Movement Agreement with the EU has also had an effect on the composition of the foreign population: the number of EU nationals has risen by 3.2%.

Swiss franc slides

The Swiss franc continues to lose ground against the euro. This year it reached an historic low of CHF 1.6729 to the euro. The Swiss currency has fallen steadily in value ever since late 2001, when a euro only cost CHF 1.45!

Lavaux named UNESCO Heritage Site

Just like the prestigious wine-growing area of Saint Emilion in France, the Lavaux region of Switzerland and its terraced vineyards have now been added to the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites.

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