

**Zeitschrift:** Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad  
**Herausgeber:** Organisation of the Swiss Abroad  
**Band:** 39 (2012)  
**Heft:** 2

**Rubrik:** Organisation of the Swiss Abroad

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## The whole world in one place

In August 1978, Alphonso Berger, who was 24 at the time, was one of the leaders at a Youth Service hiking camp. The ten-day journey, in which 30 to 40 young Swiss abroad aged 14 to 18 took part, went from Greyerz to Lake Thun.

Alphonso recalls that while the lead-up to the camp had been enjoyable, it had not quite gone to plan. He picked up three young, enthusiastic East Germans at the station in Berne on the day of arrival and the first thing he did was to invite them for a Coca-Cola. One glass became two, and many more followed until they suddenly realised that they had squandered all their money.

On the journey, which began the following day, the group was accompanied by two cooks and a VW army bus. The cooks drove ahead to the accommodation sites in the bus to prepare the food and

get things ready for the enjoyable evenings. The group slept in school buildings, youth hostels and tents.

Alphonso vividly remembers that some of his group experienced snow first-hand for the first time on this hike. The fact that these young Swiss people from abroad all felt a sense of belonging to Switzerland despite having very different backgrounds and coming from all over the world also made a lasting impression on him. "To see these people who were Swiss and yet completely foreign at the same time and to discover they all had a strong Swiss heritage and yet knew little about

the country and could not speak a word of Swiss German was strange but also intriguing", explains Alphonso. He adds: "I was amazed by the stories about their families' emigration and found the idea fascinating that they would probably never have met if it had not been for the hiking camp despite their common 'homeland'."

Alphonso says that many of them found the hikes challenging. They cursed and swore in the snow and rain, and the team of leaders had to encourage and motivate them. Problems sometimes arose on the mountain stages because some of the group did not have appropriate equipment. Some of them went up into the mountains wearing loafers and unsuitable clothing. Of course, they were all ultimately proud of their achievement. The young Swiss

abroad were particularly impressed with attractions like the Stockhorn and "Schynige Platte". "They were like all tourists in that way", recalls Alphonso.

Alphonso remembers how the lunches during the hikes proved a surprise. This was because each day two of the party



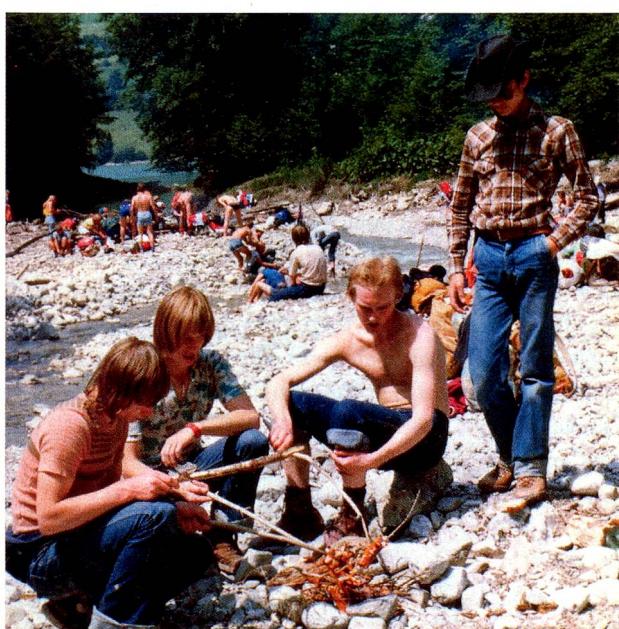
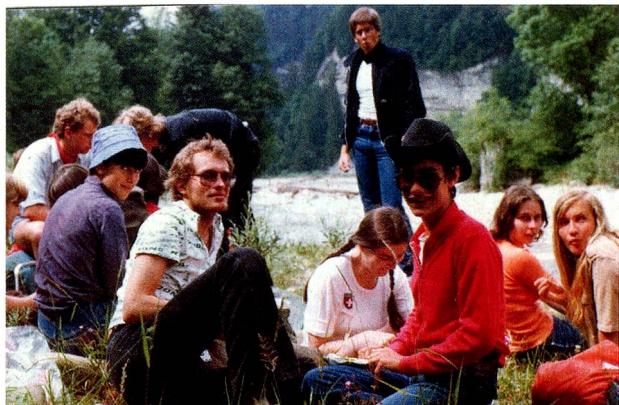
Hanspeter Alphonso Berger was born on 21 November 1954. His mother came from Mund in Valais and his father was from the Thun region. One of his grandfathers was Spanish. Berger initially worked for social services in the city of Berne and as a mountain guide. He later studied Chinese medicine in China and Japan.

were allowed to pick the food for that day. They were given money to go shopping. Alphonso says that the meals were sometimes very unbalanced: "The Australians only wanted meat, while others bought vast amounts of chocolate."

Alphonso found the job as a camp leader through an advertisement: "Tourist guide sought" read the newspaper announcement. He says: "I had just completed my training as a mountain guide and given up my job as a manager at the youth hostel in Grindelwald and was planning to take a second long trip to China. Working on a short-term project fitted in well."

Alphonso does not know what has become of the Swiss abroad who took part in his camp. He recollects that one or two couples fell in love but doubts whether these relationships lasted. Maintaining a long-distance relationship is certainly not easy.

SIMONE RINER



Photos from the 1978 camp. Do you recognise yourself in any of the photos? If so, let us know! [sjas@aso.ch](mailto:sjas@aso.ch)

### HIKING CAMPS TODAY

The Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad still organises hiking camps today. They are called "Swiss Journey" and "Bernese Oberland Adventure". Climbing is currently also often part of the itinerary but otherwise much has remained the same. The expectations and ideas of the participants are still very different but everyone ultimately enjoys the group experience and exchange with other people.



## OSA advice

### Can Swiss abroad take out health insurance in Switzerland?

The following article applies only to Swiss persons resident in a country outside the European Union or European Free Trade Association.

As a rule, compulsory health insurance in Switzerland is available only to persons who are domiciled in Switzerland or who work there. This is in line with the territorial principle under which laws apply to a specific territory. This generally means that Swiss abroad cannot take out compulsory health insurance in Switzerland. However, health insurers have the opportunity (but not the obligation) to offer health insurance products to Swiss abroad. If a health insurer offers this type of product, the insurance policy will be concluded on a private basis. Other options open to Swiss abroad are either to take out insurance in their country of residence or to take out an international insurance policy. The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad keeps a list of insurers offering services to Swiss abroad. The list is available on the OSA website (see link below) or may be requested from OSA.

There are exceptions for persons who work for a Swiss employer abroad (seconded staff) and are still in principle covered by the Swiss social insurance system.

For persons domiciled in a Member State of the EU/EFTA, the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons dictates which country is responsible for health insurance matters.

*Link: [www.aso.ch](http://www.aso.ch) > Consultation > Living abroad > Social insurance > Health insurance > Health insurance outside EU/EFTA or Health insurance within EU/EFTA States.*

SARAH MASTANTUONI, Head of the Legal Department

OSA's Legal Department provides general legal information on Swiss law and specifically in areas that concern the Swiss abroad. It does not provide information on foreign law and does not intervene in disputes between private parties.

## Summertime in Switzerland

**The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) is offering plenty of variety, adventure and fun this summer at its holiday camps for young people in Valais and the Bernese Oberland. OSA is giving young Swiss people abroad the chance to put together their own interesting and informative educational holiday.**

OSA is expecting over 120 young people to attend the summer camps in Lenk alone this summer. The Youth Service is organising activity holidays with participants from over 30 countries. The OSA team will provide the opportunity to learn new sports or to improve particular disciplines. The camp leaders will also offer alternatives for those who are not quite so energetic.

A charitable summer camp is being held for the fourth time in Saas Balen (Valais) where young Swiss abroad will carry out maintenance work in the community.

OSA will be providing young people with a particularly intense experience on its adventure trips through the Bernese Oberland. This project is aimed at participants who want to help shape the camp and learn new things in the process. The young people will enjoy a very special outdoor experience.

### Journey of discovery

A new OSA offer is a two-week stay with a Swiss host family with a personalised project for the participants. OSA is offering a programme featuring various themed excursions. Young people will be able to experience Switzerland's diversity by going off by themselves on trips that revolve around themes like water, architecture and transport and then publishing online reports on them. This stay can be combined with elements of the Training in Switzerland programme. OSA will provide individual advice and support for young people who are interested.

### Learning a language made easy

Swiss abroad will have an opportunity to learn German or French on the two-

week language courses. The young people will attend language classes in the mornings, and OSA will offer excursions and a fringe programme on a number of afternoons.

Finally, we will also prepare young people for the Congress of the Swiss Abroad to be held in Lausanne in August. The theme of the 2012 Congress is "Mobility and Innovation: Switzerland in Times of International Challenges".

We hope to see large numbers of Swiss abroad enjoying our offers for young people in 2012.

*Further information on the offers mentioned is available from:*

*Organisation of the Swiss Abroad  
Youth Service*

*Tel: +41 (0)31 356 61 00  
youth@aso.ch  
www.aso.ch*

## Summer camps for children aged 8 to 14

**In July and August 2012, Swiss children abroad will be able to spend two weeks at our summer camps having a great time with 30 to 50 children from all over the world while, at the same time, discovering Switzerland and its culture.**

There are still some places available on our holiday camps. The exact details and the registration form can be found at [www.sjas.ch](http://www.sjas.ch) > Our forthcoming activities. We are also happy to post you our information brochure on request. This contains an overview of our offers. The Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad would like to give all Swiss children abroad at least one opportunity to discover Switzerland in this way. We therefore offer reduced rates in legitimate cases. We would be pleased to provide you with further information.

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## Help with educational matters

Switzerland's education system enjoys a very good reputation. However, courses are very demanding and often require a high level of personal input. This applies to both traditional vocational training and university-level education. The Association Promoting Education for Young Swiss Abroad (AJAS) provides advice, support and assistance.

An increasing number of foreign students are enrolling at Swiss universities and with good reason – the quality of the education provided is highly regarded. AJAS aims to encourage young Swiss abroad to find out about and take advantage of educational opportunities in their native country. Studying in Switzerland is easier for Swiss abroad than for foreign students in many respects, in terms, for example, of the language, work permits, acceptance by the local population and grants. However, moving to Switzerland, searching for accommodation



and places on courses, and dealing with the authorities, etc. are a challenge for all young people from abroad.

AJAS has been promoting the education of young Swiss abroad for 50 years now. We give advice to over 650 people a year from every continent.

Young people or their parents should ideally contact AJAS as early as possible so that we can provide them with information about the range of educational opportunities available in Switzerland. We draw their attention not only to the special opportunities, but also to the difficulties that may arise. AJAS aims to provide young Swiss abroad and their parents with comprehen-

sive information before they decide to embark on education in Switzerland. If they then opt to come to Switzerland, AJAS is on hand locally to provide support, especially with administrative matters. We know from experience that most students settle in quickly and are soon able to organise themselves.

If you, as a resident abroad, are interested in educational opportunities in your native Switzerland, please do not hesitate to contact us. We, Silvia Hirsig and Fiona Scheidegger, will be delighted to advise you and provide you with information to help you make your decision. You can contact us at:

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CH-3006 Berne  
Silvia Hirsig, Advisor  
Tel. +41 (0)31 356 61 04  
Fiona Scheidegger, Director  
Tel. +41 (0)31 356 61 22  
E-mail: [ajas@aso.ch](mailto:ajas@aso.ch)*

We will, of course, be attending the Congress of the Swiss Abroad, which will take place in Lausanne from 17 to 19 August 2012.

## 90th Congress of the Swiss Abroad: 17 to 19 August 2012

At the 90th Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Lausanne participants will debate Mobility and Innovation: Switzerland in Times of International Challenges. Among other speakers, Federal Councillor Didier Burkhalter and Kurt Wüthrich, winner of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 2002, will honour us with their presence.

More on the topic and the latest information on the 2012 Congress can be found at: [www.aso.ch/en/offers/congress-of-the-swiss-abroad/2012](http://www.aso.ch/en/offers/congress-of-the-swiss-abroad/2012).

Put the Congress dates in your diary today. We look forward to seeing you!



Please send me the registration documents in spring 2012 for the 90th Congress of the Swiss Abroad (17 to 19 August 2012 in Lausanne).

My address is:

Surname:

First name:

Address:

Postcode/city:

Country:

E-mail:

Please write clearly in block capitals

Send the completed form to: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, Communications & Marketing, Alpenstrasse 26, CH-3006 Berne, Fax: +41 (0)31 356 61 01 or e-mail us at [communication@aso.ch](mailto:communication@aso.ch).