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Editorial

Prominent Images of Switzerland...

School holidays are occasions to host Grandchildren in our house. We regard this as a privilege and as they grow up we enjoy passing on some of our Swiss peculiarities in various aspects of daily life.

One thing we have to make sure of is to have our cuckoo clock in operation and as a special thrill we usually find ourselves turning the hour-hand to make the cuckoo appear in fast succession.

What a perfect image of Switzerland is your cuckoo clock remarked one of our visitors recently. -

But, did you know that this is only

partly so? The truth is that the real home of the cuckoo clock is the Black-Forest in Germany and has been so since the early 19th century.



Reality is that most of the cuckoo clocks sold in Switzerland aren't Swiss...! They can be from Japan, China or South Korea. Many are plastic and have quartz movements. - But apparently there is one and only one genuine Swiss cuckoo clock producer, the *Lötscher Company* near Zürich. The subtleties

are explained as follows: The original cuckoo clock is either from the Black-Forest or from Brienz in Central Switzerland. The difference is that in the Black-Forest you have the 'hunting types' and the 'bird types' but the Swiss ones are the 'chalet types'. So if ever you want to have a genuine Swiss cuckoo clock you will have to obtain a **Swiss chalet-type**. Research has shown that there is written documentation in Switzerland and in Germany that the Cuckoo clock actually originated in Middle-Europe. The much respected dictionary of horology apparently states simply that they were produced as early as the 15th century in the German City of Nürnberg. -

But lets go back to the real Swiss chalet-type cuckoo clock that is available in some tourist shops in Switzerland.

A recent documentary heard on Swiss Radio International informed the listeners that the *Lötscher Company* has 2 factories in Switzerland, one in Brienz where the 'chalet' for the cuckoo clock is carved in wood and the other in Zürich where the metal parts, the movement, manufactured in Germany, is added. Swiss industry does no longer produce those movements. - That could lead us back to the debate; is the chalet-type of cuckoo clock genuinely Swiss with the foreign movement in a Swiss chalet? And just as this is a complicated question so is the manufacture of the cuckoo clock itself. Apparently it is the wooden part combined with the metal part which makes it so. The more sophisticated Lötscher cuckoo clocks contain a minimum of 146 pieces and come complete with dancing figurines, dogs, the cuckoo (of course) and a fine Swiss music movement. The Swiss Company Lötscher claims to have been the first to introduce 'fine cuckoo clocks with music' in 1956.

The best-seller according to a Company-spokesman is the most loved-one by the tourists, model Nr. 570, produced since 1921, with the looks of a real chalet plucked out of the centre of the village of Brienz in Switzerland.

- One day I will have to admit to our Grandchildren that our cuckoo clock which we bought many years ago right here in New Zealand is not Swiss, but from 'the other side of the

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