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Kipfer Family Visits Homeland

At the end of May this year the Kipfer family of Orewa, north of Auckland, flew to the Netherlands for a family wedding. From there we drove to stay with family in the Baselland Village of Wittinsburg. This was an exciting trip for all as we had not been 'home' for eight years. Patrick our youngest, was born soon after we returned from Switzerland last time, so this was his first visit to his father's home - his first meeting with his Grossmutter. We stayed in Switzerland for a month, visiting friends, relations and tourist spots in several cantons. In Baselland we sweltered in the unseasonal heat, but enjoyed picking and eating the early cherries. We visited the Berner Oberland, where Ueli's mother now lives in a picturesque old people's home

overlooking Lake Brienz, where each room has its private balcony, decked at this time with geranium boxes. One of our outings was to take Oma on a trip on that lake by ships which Ueli fondly remembered from his childhood. The Lotschberg in particular has been an all time favourite - as it is now for our boys. Another day there was spent planting flowers on Grossvater's grave in Bonigen - an especially meaningful task for Sam who had been especially close to his Opa.

Patrick's major goal for this trip was to touch snow for the first time. Little did we know that Switzerland would be in the grip of a heatwave! Nevertheless, we had promised, so up a mountain we headed. On our last trip Jennifer had experienced altitude sickness on the Jungfrau so we chose the less lofty Mt Titlis this time. While everyone else thoroughly enjoyed the day, again Jennifer only recovered after returning to base. No more mountains for this girl - born and having lived most of her life at sea level!

Another day saw us enjoying local entertainment at the Sunnsyta Ringgenberg Altersheim's summer festival and on another we visited friends near Zurich for a zany day of water fun and yet another barbecue. More driving took us to Schaffhausen where we visited the Munot Castle. There we saw local schoolchildren having an

art lesson, sketching the town below, enjoyed watching the young deer grazing in the old moat area and imagined life as knights of old. The Rheinfall amazed us as always, although all those steps were a bit much in the heat! Returning to the top we decided to look for lunch and the boys were thrilled to find we could buy fish and chips there.

Our adventures also included a surprise early 50th birthday party for Ueli, attended by over 60 friends and family from all over Switzerland and even one family who drove all the way from the north of Germany. We were wined, dined and generously entertained by many, visiting camping grounds beside the Rhine, holiday homes in the mountains, meeting old friends and new babies.

Sam was thrilled at the ancient architecture, and disgusted that some people had chosen to deface some of these beautiful buildings with graffiti and other mindless vandalism. Patrick was studying astronomy at school before we left New Zealand and was keen to compare the northern night sky with what he had seen at home, but it was not to be - the light was still bright long after he slept - till past 10pm most nights.

We left amid tears and promises to return much sooner next time. We have brought away with us many precious new memories, many many photographs, our daily diaries and a determination to keep teaching our children about the country which is their heritage.

Jennifer, Ueli, Sam & Patrick Kipfer

*The Editing Committee thank
the Kipfers very much for
their contribution*



Patrick (left) and Sam on Mt Titlis