

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 74 (2008)
Heft: [10]

Artikel: Christmas - a celebration of light
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-943726>

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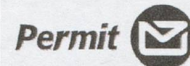
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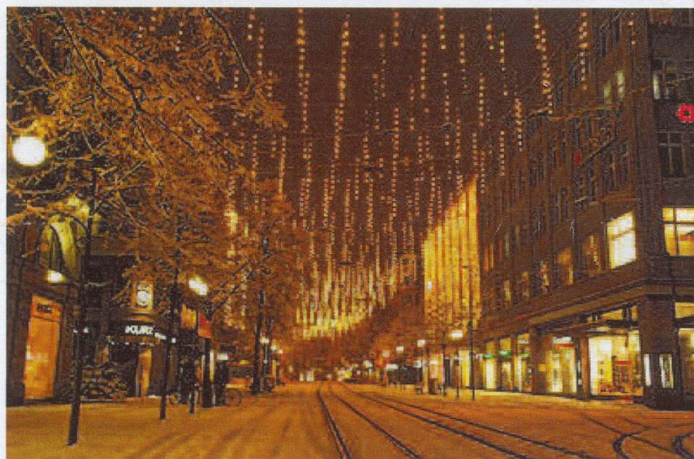
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CHRISTMAS IN SWITZERLAND

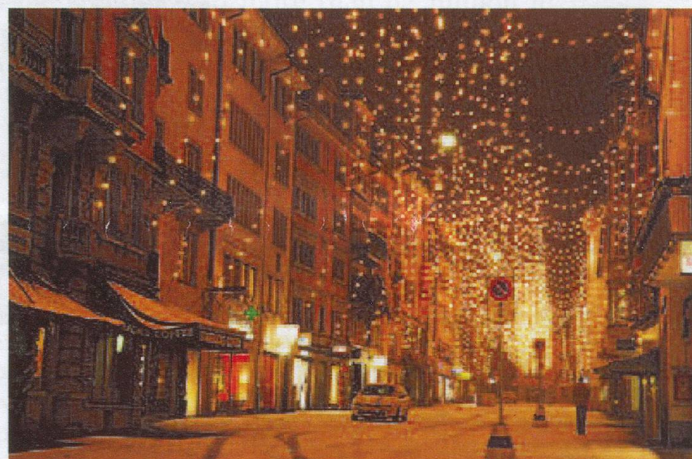
Christmas – a celebration of light

Those of us who grew up in Switzerland will remember Swiss Novembers, when a layer of fog covered the whole country on 700 or 800 meters. Below the fog, where most of us lived and worked, it was damp and cold and miserable. On the weekends, we might have escaped and sat in the sun, above the fog – but inevitably we had to dive into the fog again, to go to work on Monday morning. But then, when the days got even shorter, and daylight faded

mas for a whole month. Later on, I had the same month-long Christmas feeling in Zurich, where the Bahnhofstrasse was decorated with innumerable strings of lights, a whole sky of them between the bare trees. The window displays even of the most exclusive shops could not compete with the magic lights that filled the street, and the pre-Christmas hustle and bustle was drowned in this celebration of light.



Christmas lights and a fresh dusting of snow in Zürich's Bahnhofstrasse



Zürich's Rennweg

around 3 in the afternoon – December! Christmas decorations in the streets!

In Aarau, where I grew up, there were big Christmas stars in the narrow lanes of the Old City. Sometimes it would snow, and on several evenings the school choir would sing Christmas Carols in the city. The young singers were all wrapped up warm – and still got cold, but it was worth it. There was no money in it, not even a hot chocolate – but it was Advent, and homework could wait; we had Christ-

I have never regretted having come to New Zealand, but each December I feel nostalgic for the atmosphere in Swiss cities. New Zealand Christmas lights do not have the same appeal somehow, not only because they are switched on rather late in the evening. New Zealand days do not need brightening up in December; it is summer and we might even be tempted to go to the beach. Where does this leave Christmas? Well, we have to find a way to celebrate Christmas in a New Zealand way, I suppose. *tb*