

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 75 (2009)
Heft: [4]

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HELVE^{IA}

Magazine for the members of the Swiss Society of New Zealand Inc
Helvetia is in its 75th year

May 2009

Tourism in Switzerland



Those of us who spent their earlier years in Switzerland will remember how we watched tourists with some amusement when they followed their umbrella-waving guides through the Old City of Lucerne or through the railway station of Interlaken; the amusement occasionally turned to resentment, when a group of Japanese, on their way to the Verkehrshaus, clogged up public transport.

And now we are tourists in Switzerland ourselves if we go over to visit family and friends. Of course we blend in, don't need a guide, speak the language - but still: We see Switzerland with dif-

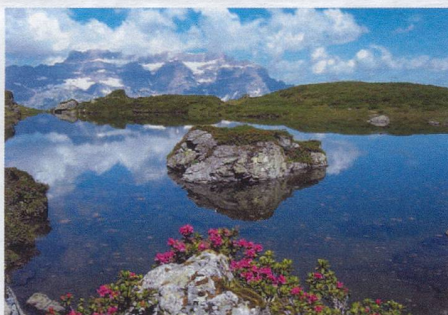
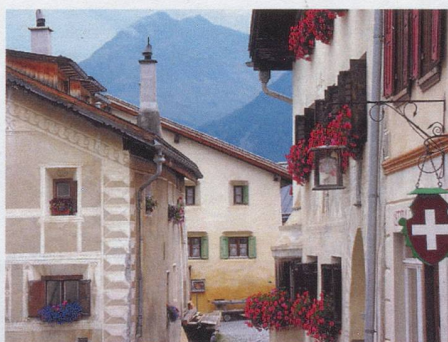
ferent eyes - and we probably visit more tourist destinations than if we had stayed in Switzerland.

Tourism has a long history in Switzerland. You can read about the first package tours to Switzerland in this Helvetia on page 14, but even before then, many people came to Switzerland. In the 15th century Einsiedeln, for example, was often visited by more than 200'000 pilgrims a year. They obviously didn't come for the beautiful Baroque church (which was built three centuries later!); they came to pray. "Religious tourism" is still alive, and so is "health tourism": Spas

have been popular from the early Middle Ages. A later Helvetia will be dedicated to them - to the health aspect and the more "hedonistic pleasures", as an author delicately put it.

As you can see from our selection on this page and from all the many calendars in our homes, Switzerland is a small country with many quite different landscapes. The Matterhorn is not what I'd like to live with every day, but other landscapes give me a strong sense of belonging - far beyond the feeling of visiting a beautiful country as a tourist.

tb



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