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Swiss Customs

William Tell Open-Air Theatre

The tradition of the William Tell Open-Air Theatre in Interlaken began in 1912. Since then, Friedrich Schiller's play "William Tell" has been performed from 1912 to 1914, from 1931 to 1939 and every year since 1947, in the Rugen woods in Matten. Performances were only interrupted during the two world wars.

The William Tell Open-Air Theatre today involves about 190 performers, from children to old men, all in historically authentic costumes. The fascinatingly realistic backdrop, with live goats, cows and horses, allows ample room for action-packed riding scenes that raise the hairs on the back of your neck.

In this performance, the splendidly staged scenes of the swearing of the Rütli Oath and the shooting of the apple are turned into an exciting historical detective story. The curious can also take a look behind the scenes, a privilege not granted to normal theatregoers. In this intensely exciting show, the fine town of Interlaken and the magnificent scenery of the Jungfrau region also play glittering cameo roles.



Source: <http://www.myswitzerland.com>

He who has a thousand friends has not a friend to spare. And he who has one enemy will meet him everywhere.

Ali ibn-Abi-Talib(602 AD - 661 AD),
A Hundred Sayings

Contributed by Edith Hess

Funfairs in Switzerland

Switzerland is a country of fete days, fairs and festivals, particularly so during the summer seasons. Just as each canton has its own beautiful traditional costumes which have been passed down from father to son and from mother to daughter for many generations, each canton possesses its own unique festivals.

The Festival of St. Albans (Albanifest) in Winterthur

This particular festival is somewhat exceptional since it is based on an historical event but has only recently been reinstated. Up until the eighteenth century, the custom was regularly observed but only since 1971 has the "Albanifest" been celebrated in grand style again.

The festival dates back to June 22, 1264, when Winterthur received its status as a free town from Rudolf of Habsburg. Political and military matters were discussed and settled on St. Albans day. Of interest here is the parallel development of events that took place in Winterthur and later at the Rütli in 1291.

All the citizens were then invited to celebrate with a free meal (bread, cheese and wine) after church service up until 1866, when the town could no longer afford these hand-outs. As it was on St. Alban's Day (one of the town's four saints), the festival was thus named "Albanimahl". From 1971 each year, during the last weekend in June, the

old city centre of Winterthur is now transformed into a fairground with dozens of open air eating places, more than twenty dance- and light entertainment orchestras, several amusement stands and an enormous "Chilbi", a fair ground carnival with eateries and stalls. Thus, Winterthur's City Centre is transformed into one big party location. More than 100,000 festival fans converge on what "Winterthurers" claim to be the largest annual city party in Europe.

By Renate Meyer-Knecht

Sources: <http://albanifest.ch>, <http://www.winterthur-tourismus.ch>



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