

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 82 (2016)
Heft: [2]

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HELVETIA



MAGAZINE OF THE SWISS SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND

APRIL / MAY 2016

YEAR 82

Highlights

- Watercastle Switzerland
- World Expo Milan
- Farming in Switzerland
- Vier Quellenweg

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A Water Castle Named Switzerland



The Rhine Falls with the castle of Laufen

Switzerland is often called the water castle of Europe. Some six percent of the continent's fresh reserves are found within its boundaries. Astoundingly, the sources of the Rhone, Rhine, Danube and Po Rivers all emerge within its boundaries, flowing in all directions of the compass and ultimately sustaining some 300 million people across the continent.

Traditionally known as a land-locked country without any natural resources to speak of – this limited vision of Switzerland has changed significantly over the years with the growing scarcity of clean water – Switzerland has more than 1500 lakes, rivers and other waterways, as well as large volumes of water locked away in snow and glaciers at high altitude.

Although Switzerland comprises only 0.4% of Europe's land area, it also holds 6% of Europe's water. The Rhine Falls alone are the biggest waterfall in Europe and Lake Geneva the largest freshwater reserve (although it is shared with France). No wonder Switzerland has the title of the water castle of Europe and is increasingly recognised as such.

The Swiss Alps are both a European spring and continental water divide: The Rhine River flows into the North Sea, the Rhone River into the Western Mediterranean Sea, the Po River into the Adriatic Sea, and the Inn River (via the

Danube) into the Black Sea. The Gotthard Massif alone is sometimes called Switzerland's water castle, as the Rhine, Reuss, Rhone and Ticino Rivers all emerge within a relatively short distance of each other. They can all be reached on foot within a few days via the "Vier Quellen Weg", the four springs walkway. The important role of the Gotthard Massif in supplying Europe's water was recently highlighted at the World Expo in Milan in 2015 (see page 4).

Switzerland today is able to utilise its water resources for a multitude of purposes – by providing the cleanest of water supplies in Europe, generating valuable clean electricity and by offering a wide range of water-based activities. Most Swiss people have a close connection with water – be it a lake, a river, a turbulent mountain stream or simply one of the many fountains. There's no doubt: water is one of the defining elements of the Swiss landscape.

Susie Wood