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Heatwaves

Swimming pool Limmat river Zurich



River surfing in Thun

Heatwaves and rising temperatures in 2018 & 2019

In 2018 we were in Switzerland for three months and for most of that time it was very hot with record temperatures and warnings of drought. Often it was over 30 degrees and some nights the temperatures didn't drop below 20 degrees. In 2019 we were back in Switzerland for another three months and already in the second week (end of June) we were told that records had been broken and the hottest days in June were close to 40 degrees. Luckily the first heatwave only lasted about ten days and in-between there had been average temperatures and even some cool days - around 20 degrees. In 2018 there was intermittent rain so no threat of drought and in 2019 there was no fireworks ban for the 1st of August celebrations around the country.

How do the Swiss people cope during heatwaves? It's quite interesting how everyone closes their windows and shutters during the day to keep the heat out and then after sunset the windows and shutters get opened for a few hours. To me this doesn't quite feel like summer when you sit inside a dark house. It's also quite amazing how many shops and offices don't have air-conditioning. There are apparently even hospitals and rest-homes without air-conditioning so a lot of people were complaining and finding it difficult to cope.

During those days of extreme heat, especially during the holiday period, a lot of people are drawn to local pools, lakes and rivers. I have never seen so many people at a pool at any one time.

The river Aare nearby always had a lot of people swimming, floating on plastic devices or stand-up paddle-boarding and kayaking. In the city of Berne it is quite common for people to swim in the Aare in their lunch-break. They get in the water one end of town and swim down-stream with the current and then get out at the other end. As the river does a big "U" through the city it's never far to go back to work. They put their clothes in water-tight bags and these float alongside them.

The downside to all this swimming in waterways is the amount of people drowning (more than 16 in summer 2018). Many people only swim when it gets really hot and are not so familiar with the currents and the force of the water. It's amazing how quickly these waterways warm up after the cold winter and melting snow. The lakes of Zuerich, Sempach and Hallwil all reach about 26

degrees with the coldest lake being the Vierwaldstaedter Lake only reaching 21 degrees. The Aare river is usually about 22 degrees.

It is recommended to drink luke-warm tea and lots of water during these hot days. I believe lots of ice-cream is consumed during this time and I must admit I was one of the consumers. At the local restaurants and cafes they serve up a huge selection of ice-cream sundaes ranging from CHF 8 to 15. This can be as much as \$NZ20 converted, so a rather expensive treat!

Meanwhile back in New Zealand everyone had been telling us about the cold and rainy days so I was still very grateful to have been there in beautiful Switzerland and put up with a few scorching hot days during 2018 and 2019 Northern Hemisphere Summers!
Anita Zuber lenews.ch



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