

**Zeitschrift:** The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK  
**Herausgeber:** Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom  
**Band:** - (1971)  
**Heft:** 1620

**Artikel:** Zermatt revisited  
**Autor:** Stettbacher, Werner  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-688166>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 02.04.2026

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

Autumn Fair, to be held in Lausanne from 11th to 26th September, 1971.

Invited by the government and the management of the Fair to make use of the international show window represented by this big economic event on the shores of the Lake of Geneva, the "World Wildlife Fund" will participate with an official exhibition showing the work accomplished so far on all five continents. Visitors will be able to see for themselves the aims of this great scheme, so beneficial to humanity through its protection and safeguarding of that invaluable, irreplaceable asset—nature.

## ZERMATT REVISITED

by Werner Stettbacher

My wife and I were on holiday in Zermatt during the second half of June 1971.

Some eight or nine years ago, the Press all over the world reported that Zermatt was in the throes of a typhus epidemic, because of contamination of drinking water through typhoid bacilli. Some of my Continental business acquaintances in London—all non-Swiss—impressed on me at that time that Zermatt would now be finished for ever as a holiday resort. I laughingly replied that human memory was notoriously short and that the alpine enthusiasts would always return to Zermatt.

I was last in Zermatt six years ago. Since then, Zermatt has changed beyond recognition, doubled in size, and the prices of hotels, and all sorts of sports articles sold in local shops must also have at least doubled. Before giving some details, I would like to reproduce what the *Tagesanzeiger* wrote on the 17th June, 1971:

*"In den Touristen Zentren stehen sich nicht nur Wachstumsfanatiker und Bremser, Spekulanten und Heimatfreunde gegenueber, sondern die pole-*

*The official character of this event will be emphasised by important ceremonies, in particular, on Saturday, 11th September, the Opening and Press Day of the 52nd Lausanne Fair. Escorted by his daughter, H.R.H. Princess Beatrice, Prince Bernhard of Lippe, Honorary President of the World Wildlife Fund, will preside over the plenary session in one of the big hotels in town, and then inaugurate the exhibition in the presence of a delegation of Swiss government officials, the diplomatic corps and leading personalities of this great and vital international institution.*

*mischen Baelle werden auch zwischen einzelnen Regionen gespielt. In einer Sendung des Westschweizer Fernsehens soll das harte Wort zum 'Kanton Graubunden, in dem es nach dem Mist des Goldenen Kalbes stinkt', gefallen sein—was auf der Gegenseite Formulierungen wie "Touristischer Amoklauf im Wallis 'Raubmentalitaet' und der gleichen ausgeloeset hat. (Zeitschrift "Natur und Mensch" Mai 1971).*

Below are details of some prices charged, without comment:

Hundreds of apartments (*Eigentumswohnungen*) are now for sale, at prices ranging from Frs. 150,000 to 200,000. In addition, one has to pay several thousand francs per year to defray the cost of the caretaker, and other expenses.

In the local sport shops, mountaineering boots are for sale at prices of up to Fr. 238.

The most up-to-date ski-ing boots cost Fr. 475 to 550.

An Eastman Kodak coloured film (transparencies) costs Fr. 19.90 as against around Fr. 16 in a top shop in Zurich.

A chemist offered two tooth-brushes at so-called half price, i.e. Fr. 2.90 for two, while a similar tooth-brush in the local Migros is priced at 70 centimes.

A small glass of tea costs anything from Fr. 1.20 to 1.50; the Migros Restaurant charges 70 centimes.

A season ticket for 6 days, valid for the cable railways and ski lifts in the ski-ing region between the Matterhorn and Monte Rosa, costs Fr. 180.

Any skier injured in that area can be brought down to Zermatt for a fee varying between Fr. 25 and 80.

Private ski lessons cost Fr. 22 per the hour, Fr. 50 for half a day, and Fr. 90 for a whole day.

For a meal a la carte in any of the better restaurants, you may well spend 30 to 40 francs including drinks;

one hotel, owned by the Commune of Zermatt, charges Fr. 17.50 for Crepe Suzettes for two.

A bookshop in the main street of Zermatt was offering some of the best known alpine books at prices ranging between Fr. 30 and 90. One evening, I saw the books being taken out of the window. The next day, the same books re-appeared in the window, marked up in price, by roughly 10%. Whymper's "Scrambles amongst the Alps", which has probably been in existence for 100 years, and which I brought before the war for 8 or 10 francs, was priced at Fr. 33. When it re-appeared in the shop, the price was Fr. 33.50. If a shopkeeper dared to do such a thing in Spain, he would be thrown out and the shop closed.

During the period 1923-1939, and after the war, I knew nearly all the Zermatt guides of my generation, but alas, many are now dead, either because of fatal accidents while climbing, or through natural causes.

Most of those still alive, and who at one time welcomed the rapid development of Zermatt, and the building of cable railways, for economic reasons, are now thinking differently. They blame the land speculators for driving up the price of land, making it impossible for them or for their sons to build houses of their own. They are also bitter because their savings, acquired through hard and dangerous work, are now being fast eroded by inflation, and they quite rightly are blaming the authorities in Berne, and the parliamentarians for this, as they are too cowardly to put a stop to ever increasing expenditure and wage increases.

Prices charged in Zermatt would be even stiffer if Migros had not built a large shopping centre and restaurant, which is spotlessly clean, and supplies meals, pastries and non-alcoholic drinks at half price or thereabouts. The Migros no doubt exercises some stabilising influence on prices, and numerous apartment dwellers and locals are now shopping there.

While most of the good class hotels, particularly now that the season is beginning in earnest, charge anything from 50 to 90 francs a day for a room, full board with bath, I would place on record that at the Hotel Gornergrat, a good class hotel opposite the Railway Station, the fourth largest with 130 beds, we were only paying about 25 francs a day for full board and an excellent room with bath. Not only was the food served plentiful, varied and superbly cooked, but all the staff including the waiters were exceedingly friendly. We went there through the auspices of the "*Hotelplan Aktion schoener leben*", and all being well, we intend to go again to Zermatt next summer.

I am naturally against the sort of profiteering that is going on in re-

### SWISS SPECIALITIES

SAUSAGES

CHEESE

CHOCOLATES

HERO CONSERVES

BISCUITS

ROCO CONSERVES

go to

**BARTHOLDI'S**

Charlotte Street, London W14

Telephone: MUS (636) 3762/3

ALSO FIRST CLASS MEAT

sorts like Zermatt, but I felt almost guilty when enjoying the excellent food served, for I was sure that the Management would lose over us. It is significant that the Hotel Gornergrat was full up most of the time, while nearly all the other Hotels had only a minute part of their rooms occupied.

The Alps, lakes above Zermatt, and the Matterhorn in particular, are as beautiful as ever, although some of the areas, particularly where ski-ing is practised all the year round, are now spoiled by the cable railways and ski lifts.

Many visitors spend some time at the local cemetery, where so many climbers, who were killed on the Matterhorn or on other mountains, are buried. Among these buried here, are the victims of the first ascent. All the graves are beautifully tended, even after 100 years, and it is a favourite spot for photographers. It is also surprising how many of the local guides have been victims of their profession, often at an early age. I knew personally most of the guides who died between 1930 and 1970.

One of my best friends among the Zermatt guides, although I never did any climbing with him, was Hermann Schaller, a Matterhorn specialist. Born in 1898, he died in 1960 of a stroke. He was a very heavily built man,

weighing around 100 kilos. No one would have thought that he would establish an all-time record for speed when climbing the Matterhorn, with a young American, about two years before his death. He climbed the Matterhorn from the base, the Hotel Belvedere, and was back there, in the incredible time of 3¼ hours. Schaller knew of course every foothold, having climbed the Matterhorn probably more than any one else, and could therefore make progress up and down at fantastic speed.

Back at the hotel, the young American decided to wait until all the climbers of the Matterhorn of that day had returned. He invited them to lunch, to celebrate the occasion. A doctor present checked the pulse of Schaller and of the young American. While Schaller's was normal, the American's was around 150. The doctor was sure that the American would not live long, and he actually died shortly afterwards.

I also renewed a long-standing friendship with guide William Perren, now 70, who in the past had as clients numerous members of the British aristocracy. He also did some climbing with Lord Hailsham, with the former Conservative Minister Amery, with his son and present Minister Julian Amery. I understand that Dr. Rast of London

was also a regular client of his. I believe that Mr. William Perren's brother Emil is now holding the record of the number of Matterhorn ascents, having set foot on its summit over 300 times.

My own guide for 30 years, Gabriel Perren, is now 79 years old, and in remarkably good physical and mental health. His numerous children decided not to become guides, but have made their name in the world. One of his sons, who had the makings of a great ski-ing champion, had other ideas, and is now a successful Zermatt hotelier.

What surprised us most was the great number of Japanese who came to Zermatt. This may be the result of a visit paid by the son of the Japanese Emperor to Zermatt two years ago, when he was officially received; but a competition held last year by a prominent Japanese manufacturer of cameras, when 500 of the best pictures received were judged, may also have played a part in this. A picture in colour of Findelen, with its beautiful chapel in the foreground, and the Matterhorn at the back, received a deserved first prize.

I myself have taken about 90 coloured slides, and I hope that I may be given the opportunity some day of showing them during a meeting of the SMS.

# **MAT** **Transport**

*The Professionals*

Head Office: Arnold House, 36/41 Holywell Lane, London, E.C.2

Telephone: 01-247 6500

Telex: 883225/886384

Allied Houses: MAT TRANSPORT A.G. BASLE — ZURICH