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y-go-round

levedon, Avon have recently
Switzerland to find copies of the
n. Here, Mrs D. Chiverton tells
es stirs memories.

meant battling with directions, finding the correct exit out of the huge railway station in order to find the right trolley bus, consulting the friendly members of the long bus queue for advice on direction and to obtain the correct fare from the wayside ticket automats. What a job!

July issue, page 14 – Neuchâtel. Alas, we only passed through it on our way to La Chaux-de-Fonds, to Glovelier and Delémont, yet I would dearly have liked to stop and visit the museum with the music automatons. Perhaps next time.

Page 22, St Gallen. Since my husband's visit there several years ago, he has said time and again that St Gallen is a must because of the Stiftsbibliothek and the Abbey.

So now we visited this gem of gems, the library of the former Benedictine abbey of St Gallen and which still "houses the abbey's cultural treasures dating back to the period between the 8th and 12th centuries, and is of inestimable importance to the entire world of art and history".

The cover picture on the recently received September issue shows the glorious view of Lake Geneva with the vineyards and the Savoy Alps in the background. Coming by train from

Swiss Observer



Swiss Observer in May – 'we revelled in many other picture book villages'

Puidoux-Chexbres we are always caught by surprise when a similar breathtaking view suddenly opens up, particularly on a sunny day.

Now we look forward to future Swiss Observers bringing more pictures of the homeland which not only stir up memories but are a real incentive to up and go and look oneself.

Having grown up in Switzerland I really don't know why I had apparently seen so little of my own country. It reminds me of the boy in Stans station where we were waiting for a train.

A gleaming white mountain peak showed through a gap in the station platform canopy and I asked the lad what mountain it was, assuming he was a local schoolboy. He looked at me with a worried expression on his face

and said: "I don't know and yet I live in Schwyz, I really don't know".

Having retired earlier this year from full time work, my husband and I decided to take the opportunity of this priceless gift of unlimited time and the repeated invitations from family and friends over the years, to treat ourselves to a retirement celebration trip of 11 weeks, which, apart from a few weeks in Germany and France, would include a one month Swiss Holiday Railway card.

We have not regretted it. It was worth every minute and every penny. Particularly that holiday rail pass. To be able to get on any train, boat or post coach (apart from a few private mountain conveyances some of which offer discounts), without the fuss of buying tickets every time – bliss.

We had done a little forward planning, and over the past year or so I had been making notes of places of interest "to be visited one day" described in various Swiss magazines. Among them the beautiful Verzasca Valley which we could fit in between the St Moritz-Lugano and the Locarno-Domodossola-Brig trips. Others have to be saved for a next time.

Also, as planned, we managed a visit to the Cats and Toy museums in Riehen, the Caricatur Museum in Basle and the Giant Slide down the lower half of the Aetzmännig.

Then there were the surprises provided by family and friends. For instance that unforgettable sunny Sunday beginning with a ride on the steam train from Hinwil to Bauma.

Here we found the same atmosphere as on a similar event in the UK, lots of excited children with happy parents, at the end of the line the steam enthusiasts' wives with stalls of refreshments, the old goods wagon transformed into a souvenir shop and the men rushing around with cameras.

From Bauma we went on to the Aetzmännig district (Goldingen), in the winter a busy ski resort.

Now a wizard has thought to transform it into a summer playground and among restaurant and amenities for children (playground and small wildlife park) a seatlift takes one to the top of the Aetzmännig mountain. But one can break the journey halfway and whizz down (on a trolley) a 700 metre long slide.

I had been looking forward to this and now, at last, here I was on this slide, exhilarated, imagining myself on the Cresta Run ...

Turn to Page 13



Swiss Observer in June – Solothurn, 'yes, we were there!'

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until I arrived at the bottom where the impatient attendant gesticulated me forward. Having heeded the notice "Now break your speed" there was not enough speed left to give me an impressive finale. I shall be wiser next time!

During the late afternoon we arrived at lovely Rapperswil on Lake Zürich. While having tea at the station restaurant – surprise of surprises for our rail enthusiast – in the station were carriages of the Orient Express bearing the notice "Nostalgic journey of the Orient Express Paris-Venice-Athens".

How was this possible? It was apparently a one-off railway special trip from Zürich HB with some old Orient Express carriages (privately owned) and a gleaming big steam locomotive tooting its way after the carriages.

If the Swiss Railways have more such lovely steam engines in ex-works condition tucked away why don't they take them out more often, thus providing an added tourist attraction?



Swiss Observer in July – St Gallen, 'visited this gem of gems'

The day ended with a chamber music concert in the Big Knights Hall (Grosser Rittersaal) with its beautifully decorated ceiling situated at the very top of the castle beneath the roof.

With the castle standing on a hill one has a superb view over the lakeside and town with its patchwork quilt of rooftops. The huge hall was packed, the music was enchanting and a gentle breeze blew through the open windows – a perfect day long to be remembered.

In Basle our friends said that under all circumstances we must see the old part of the town and took us on an afternoon walk along the Birs to the Rhine, through exquisite lanes and

streets beginning with the Letziturm, passing the water(mill) wheel in the Teich, St Alban Tal and Berg, Vorstadt, Münster, down here, up there, through gates, into courts. Fascinating.

Our friends from the Basel insisted that we visit the Musikautomatenmuseum Seewen (SO) so we went.

This unusual private museum can be found in a delightful hilly landscape above the village. It really is a boy's dream come true through years of caring and repairing instruments then collecting old musical boxes, hand organs and a great variety of music automatons.

With a group of people we enjoyed an hour's demonstration. Among the instruments was Debussy's own grand piano with the piano-roll cut by himself, so that his wife could listen to his playing when he was away from home.

Then there was the old hand organ with seven hymn tunes which was in use until a few years ago by a Methodist minister who had no instrument at one of his chapels.

Under a glass dome is an old couple sitting side by side on a park bench, she knitting, he reading the paper, smiling and chatting to each other with movements of heads, hands, and paper, while a romantic tune is being played.

And so on. It was not just a demonstration it was an experience.

What about the sun-drenched day on which we enjoyed a round trip on the Lake of Biel, or our boat trip on the Rhine from Kreuzlingen to Schaffhausen, or from Rheinfelden to Basle, or Lake Lucerne on a sunny morning on a boat full of school children on their annual outing, from Luzern to Flüelen where the sharp morning breeze made us rush for shelter.

Or the day we arrived in the holiday bustle one hot Saturday in Rapperswil and we gazed in rapture at the lake "full of giant colourful Easter eggs?" There I would have liked to snap the picture. It was a sight! Spinnakers they were, said husband.

Yes, our one-off "unlimited time" trip was worth it!

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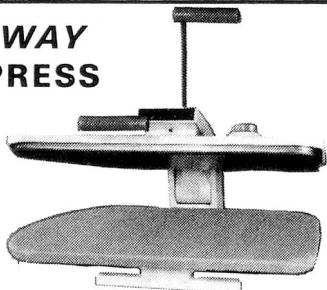
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