

Zeitschrift: Die Schweiz = Suisse = Svizzera = Switzerland : offizielle Reisezeitschrift der Schweiz. Verkehrszentrale, der Schweizerischen Bundesbahnen, Privatbahnen ... [et al.]

Herausgeber: Schweizerische Verkehrszentrale

Band: - (1949)

Heft: 6

Artikel: The charm of Chur

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-777726>

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THE CHARM OF CHUR

BY

CICELY WILLIAMS

Wherever one is going, north, south, east or west, one must almost invariably change at Chur, and no place better repays a visit. Chur lies on the River Plessur, at the entrance to the Schanfigg valley—the cantonal capital of Graubünden and the gateway to the Crisons. History broods over the lovely countryside between the lofty hills of Hochwang, Brambüesch and the Calanda; the cold breath of the distant

more ancient towers of Marsöl and Spinöl. This mediaeval Cathedral, built during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, is a perfect specimen of Lombardy architecture and is the finest building of the late Gothic style in Switzerland. The interior is especially beautiful and forms a perfect setting for the really magnificent carving of the High Altar. The Bishops of Chur have exercised a great influence throughout



Chur according to Sebastian Münster's Cosmography (1544).
Chur nach der Cosmographie von Sebastian Münster (1544). — Coire d'après la cosmographie de Sébastien Munster (1544). — Coira secondo una cosmografia di Sebastiano Münster (1544).

snows rises from the green waters of the Plessur hurrying over its last few miles to join the Rhine. The essence of the ancient Rhaetian culture is hidden in the grey stones of Chur and still lives, spiritually and materially, in its ancient streets and cloisters. There was a settlement here in pre-Roman times and the Romans themselves developed it as a station to guard their trading routes over the Septimer and Splügen Passes. Built high on a rock is the Altstadt crowned by the old Cathedral of St. Lucius and the even

history and the tombs of many of them are to be found in and around the Cathedral. Round the grey Cathedral rock cluster the old houses and paved alley ways of earlier times—indeed just at first the maze of streets and courtyards is quite perplexing. Picturesque patrician houses of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries border the narrow, winding ways. Tall stone houses they are, with quaintly contrived entrances; mysterious, disappearing staircases and massive gateways that might have stepped out of a fairy tale. The quiet streets wander on with here and there a turn



Above: Drum Major Rhyner before the old St. Martin Tower in Chur, about 1840.
Oben: Tambour-Major Rhyner vor dem alten St.-Martins-Turm in Chur, um 1840. — En haut: Le tambour-major Rhyner devant la vieille tour de St-Martin, à Coire, en 1840 environ. — In alto: Il tamburo maggiore Rhyner davanti alla vecchia torre di San Martino a Coira, nel 1840 circa.

and suddenly, and quite unexpectedly, there appears a diminutive open square in which small public gatherings could be held in comparative privacy and safety—quite an important factor in feudal days! One of these charming haunts goes by the delightful name of “Der süsse Winkel”, the sweet corner, and when the full moon bathes the tiny square in silver one can almost see the burghers of Chur holding their solemn deliberations in the shadow of the episcopal palace, while the Cathedral

Below: St. Martin Tower in its present form dating from 1917.
Unten: Der Turm von St. Martin in seiner 1917 erneuerten Gestalt. — En bas: La tour de l'église St-Martin dans sa forme actuelle datant de 1917. — In basso: L'aspetto attuale della torre di San Martino restaurata nel 1917.



bell tolls solemnly for service and the clock of the old Church of St. Martin chimes the passing hours.

There is much of interest to be seen in Chur besides the Cathedral and its rich treasury. The Rhaetian Museum is a mine of Graubünden history; and the Rathaus, and the "Grey House", which is the Government building, certainly should not be missed. Nor must we forget No. 75 Obere Reichsgasse, where Angelica Kauffmann was born in 1741—the first woman Royal Academician of England, in fact the only one until 1936.

But Chur does not rest only on the glory of past achievements. Broad, new streets lead from the station, itself an important junction, through attractive, modern, residential districts where there are first-class School and College

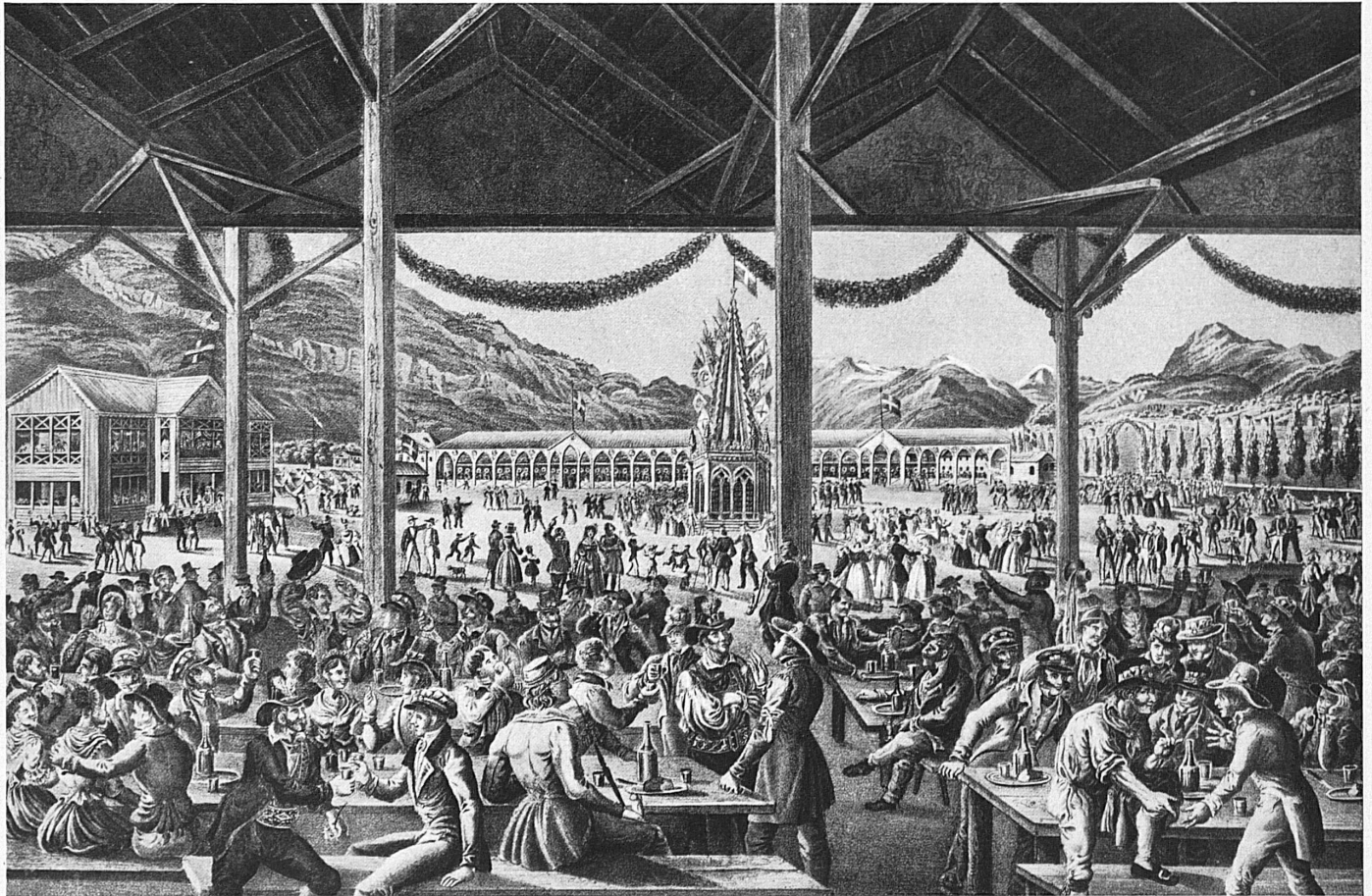
buildings, and well-laid out public gardens. It is a centre of excellent railway communications to all parts of Switzerland, Italy and Austria and the great alpine roadways, especially the Julier and the Splügen, are within easy reach.

The climate of Chur is mild on the whole, and chestnuts, figs and vines flourish in abundance. In Spring, when the High Alps are still mantled in snow, Chur breaks into the fresh glory of blossoming tree and shrub; in Summer, walkers and climbers wander farther afield and return after a day spent on glacier or rock. The Autumn brings the golden harvest of orchard and vineyard, and the lingering warmth only ends with the first fall of snow and parties of skiers setting out for the skiing slopes near at hand.

There are those who have found a hint of melancholy in this pleasant little town, but even melancholy, if tinged with history, can be quite enchanting. For Chur breathes peace, the peace of environment, of tall Churches towering above old leaning houses; of the chiming of Cathedral bells and of the dark hills looming beyond. And not only the peace of environment but the peace of content; there are no slums as in so many cities, no signs of strife, for the battles of Chur lie in the past—

"The wind is astir in the arches with the sound of swords unseen,
And the cries of kings departed and the battles that have been."

—and she rests satisfied and at peace, a haven of refuge for those whom she greets from the war-weary countries around.



The 11th Federal Marksmanship Match at Chur in 1842.

Oben: Das XI. Eidgenössische Ehr- und Freischießen in Chur 1842. — En haut: Le 11^e tir fédéral à Coire, en 1842. — In alto: Il XI. Tiro libero federale di Coira nel 1842.

EIDGENÖSSISCHES SCHÜTZENFEST CHUR 1949

Die große Tradition der eidgenössischen Freischießen früherer Jahrhunderte war mit der Gründung des Schweizerischen Schützenvereins 1824 in Aarau erneut aufgenommen worden. Die eidgenössischen Schützenfeste der nächsten Jahrzehnte waren Landsgemeinden von großer politischer Bedeutung: Hier wurde die gesamtschweizerische Idee gepflegt, bis der « neue Bund » von 1848 die Hoffnungen so vieler Schützen krönte. Nicht nur Pflege der Schießkunst zur Verteidigung des Vaterlandes war das Ziel dieser Feste, es galt vielmehr « ein Band mehr zu ziehen um die Herzen der Eidgenossen, die Kraft des Vaterlandes durch Eintracht und

nähere Verbindung zu mehren ». Das Siegel des Schweizerischen Schützenvereins trägt die bezeichnende Inschrift: « Die Ehre und Wohlfahrt des Vaterlandes sei sein Ziel, die Waffe sein Schutz und Schweizertreue seine Kraft. » 1842—1949! Nach einer Wartezeit von mehr als 100 Jahren hat Chur, die rätsche Kapitale, die hohe Ehre, die Schweizerschützen wieder zum vaterländischen Wettkampf einzuladen.

Tir fédéral Coire 1949

La grande tradition des tirs fédéraux des siècles passés avait été renouée à Aarau en 1824 par la fondation de la Société fédérale des carabinières. Les tirs fédéraux des vingt ans qui suivirent furent des rendez-vous populaires ayant une grande importance politique: on y cul-

trait le sentiment national et en 1848 la « nouvelle Confédération » vint couronner les espoirs d'innombrables tireurs. Le but de ces fêtes n'était pas seulement de développer l'adresse des tireurs pour la défense de la patrie; il s'agissait aussi « d'unir par un lien de plus les cœurs des Confédérés et d'accroître la force de la patrie par l'union et un contact plus étroit entre eux ». Le sceau de la Société fédérale des carabinières porte la devise bien caractéristique: « Que l'honneur et le bien de la patrie soient son but, l'arme sa défense et la fidélité suisse sa force. »

1842—1949! Après plus de 100 ans d'attente Coire, la capitale rhétienne, a le grand honneur d'inviter de nouveau les tireurs confédérés à se mesurer en ses murs pour leurs patriotiques compétitions.