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WHEN BY LAC LÉMAN...

...go abroad for lunch!



The CGN's ms Italie cruising on Lac Léman. This ship is not a paddle "steamer" as was built, since its paddle wheels are powered by a Sulzer diesel engine. Re-equipping this ship with steam propulsion is now a possibility (April 2005)

Photos: Kälti.

When staying on the Swiss shores of Lac Léman why not take to the water to take your meals and go abroad to have a meal. You also get to sample the excellent services and ships operated by the Compagnie Général de Navigation (CGN). These are an integral part of the Swiss transport system and many of the routes also allow trips to and from the French shore of the lake.

Every morning at 10.35 a CGN ship leaves Lausanne-Ouchy and heads in a westerly direction along the lakeshore calling at St Sulpice, Morges, St Prex and Rolle before heading out across the lake for the French shore. The next stop is Yvoire, an

attractive village guarded by the inevitable castle, that boasts several excellent restaurants. Disembarking at 12.20 your taste buds will be tingling, tempted by the delicious smells wafting from the kitchens. If you travel midweek, you should be able to slip into the nearest restaurant without delay, but if you arrive on a Sunday all the lakeside hostelrys may be fully booked. However, you should easily find a table on a roof terrace in the village which will give magnificent views past the château and over the waters. Our experience is that the choice of menu, the presentation and the ambience at any of the establishments will be in the best tradition of French catering -

and the house wine will be pretty good too.

After your meal there is the village to look around, especially Le Labyrinthe Jardin des Cinq Sens where you can explore the surprisingly extensive former kitchen garden of Yvoire Castle. Surrounded by high stone walls the gardens have been restored in keeping with French medieval traditions and feature plants chosen for their colours, scents, textures and even sounds, their leaves rustling as you pass by or the breeze blows. A visit to the gardens and the attractive ancient village is to be recommended, if you can drag yourself away from the gourmet meals at the restaurants, in order to walk-off the excess calories.

If you travel at the time of the spring and autumn timetable, while you are eating the ship you arrived upon crosses back to Nyon, returning to Yvoire in time to take you directly back to Lausanne at 15.10. However, in the summer the service is often operated by a paddle ship and continues on to Geneva. This vessel makes its return journey at 17.40 but you can return earlier either by changing at Evian-les-Bains, or by using one of the frequent vedettes that shuttle from Yvoire to Nyon. A short walk through this attractive town brings you to the main line station and a train back to Lausanne.

And, talking of Evian-les-Bains, do not think you have to drink only the water there. Indeed

the bottles bought from the supermarket shelves are now filled at Amphion-les-Bains, a little way along the lake shore, but the riches amassed by selling their water have resulted in a very distinctive tiled building where they originally filled the glass bottles. Evian is another excellent venue for a French meal and is a rather more flexible destination as CGN operate a fairly frequent service of shuttle ships from Lausanne. Many French people commute to jobs in Switzerland using this route. Its main advantage to visitors looking for a different place to eat is that you can enjoy an early evening meal in France as the company operates late ships from Evian back to Lausanne, leaving at 20.45 and 22.15 from Mondays to Saturdays. Evian is a busy town, and the restaurants are farther from the pier, but there is a huge range of cuisine to choose from, though you have to allow a little extra time to return to the lakeside in time to catch the ship than is necessary at Yvoire.

The CGN's new vessel ms Morges, waits for passengers at Yvoire. As with sea-going maritime practice the Swiss registered ms Morges flies the flag of its host nation, France, in this case from its bow staff. (May 2006)



Needless to say I have no commercial interest any of the French restaurants and so there is the usual disclaimer, and I certainly do not wish you to take all your trade away from the Swiss restaurateurs.

Indeed, if you are near Vevey during the daytime and feel peckish, I can thoroughly recommend the splendid self-service restaurant at the Manora department store. This is a short walk from the station and they even stay open a little later on Friday afternoons when the shop has longer trading hours.

Editor's Note. The French side of the lake is also becoming popular with UK citizens wishing to relocate to mainland Europe. Unlike in Switzerland it is easy to own property and become permanent residents, whilst prices are far more reasonable than across the water.

Ski resorts in the Savoy Alps are within easy reach, and using the CGN's frequent services Switzerland is an easy destination for frequent trips. Nearby Geneva Airport has frequent flights (some low-cost) from a number of UK airports.

After dropping passengers at Yvoire the ms Italie heads off to Geneva. (April 2005)



After one of its shuttle crossings to Nyon ms Morges returns to Yvoire to collect passengers taking lunch at the Hotel Restaurant du Port. Hungry passengers do not have to stray too far from Yvoire pier to reach, or to stagger back from, the nearest restaurants. (May 2006)

