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Buchbesprechung: Around Switzerland in 80 maps : a magical journey [Diccon Bewes]

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BOOK REVIEW

'Around Switzerland in 80 Maps - a magical journey'

Author: Diccon Bewes.

Published by: Helvetiq, Côtes de Montbenon 30, CH-1003 Lausanne, Suisse.

Distributed in the UK by Turnaround.

Hardback: 220 pages. 33.4cm x 15.6cm. Full Colour.

ISBN: 978 2 940481 14 9

As someone who some 50 years ago qualified as a Surveyor/Cartographer, before the world moved-on and another career came along, I have had a life-long interest in maps. I can sit and read a map as others read a good book, so when Diccon Bewes suggested that I might like to review his latest book about his adopted country of Switzerland I was in seventh-heaven. This is a special book, not just to map lovers but to anyone who loves Switzerland, or wishes to get to know more about this fascinating country. As Dr Thomas Schulz the President of the Swiss Society of Cartography notes in his introduction; "It's surprising that no one else ever came up with the idea of taking a popular visual journey through more than 500 years of the rich tradition of Swiss maps. Maybe it really did just need the celebrated "outsider perspective", as well as the carefree curiosity of an Englishman who has

lived in and travelled around Switzerland for many years. This book gives an overview of Switzerland that would be hard to achieve using just some 220 pages in any other form. It is a visual joy. The maps are arranged in eight sections based around various themes, ranging from 'Borders and Lands' through 'War and Peace' to 'People and Power', whilst the 'Transport and Tourism' section has an interesting group of 17 maps. It would be hard to nominate just one of this eclectic collection of 80 maps as a favourite, but the one featuring a 'birds-eye-view' of Fribourg in 1606 is one I have come back to on several occasions. This is not a scholarly study, although the words accompanying each illustration tell us a lot, but it is unashamedly a browsing book to be dipped into in order to enjoy the splendid and comprehensive selection of examples of the cartographer's art.

Malcolm Bulpitt 

And finally...

Given the pictogram shown here it would be easy to lapse into some dubious humour along with words that have double meanings, but the need for this highlights in a somewhat different way the total change that has recently taken place in Swiss Tourism. The sign was discovered by SRS member Ilkka Huotelin in the toilet compartment of a train on the Zentralbahn, the railway that links together the two major Swiss tourist centres of Luzern and Interlaken. The need for the sign was obviously prompted by some non-European lavatorial practices that tourists, probably from east of the Mediterranean, may have been indulging in, and unfortunately had to be dealt with by the ZB's unsung cleaning teams. Fewer than 40% of visitors to Switzerland are now coming from traditional European and North American destinations, where they would have grown-up with the type of toilets provided on ZB's trains. Both the Vierwaldstättersee and the Berner Oberland are prime destinations for this new generation of often first-time-abroad visitors from lands with different cultural traditions, and some of them are apparently unused to conventional western toilet facilities. That the Swiss have stumbled upon the law of unintended consequences in encouraging this tourist flow seems to be the issue here. 



A view across Rorschach Bahnhof.
See 'Swiss Tip' on page 46.

