

Madame Chauchat's grandchildren return

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Switzerland is one of the most popular destinations for a host of free-spending visitors from Russia and the CIS states.

Anyone who dips into late 19th and early 20th century literature set on the shores of Lake Geneva or in the Swiss Alps will inevitably come across characters from Russia such as the elegant Clawdia Chauchat. In Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain* she stole the heart of the protagonist Hans Castorp with her gentle yet wild nature. The descendants of Madame Chauchat's generation have been coming back to Switzerland for some time now, bringing life to Switzerland's tourism regions and destinations with just as much gusto.

Switzerland has lost nothing of its esteem in Russia. Winter holidays, wellness holidays and educational trips are particularly in demand, as are active and adventure holidays involving pursuits such as water sports, river-rafting and golf. Shopping is also an important factor for Russian visitors, which means a visit to Geneva or Zurich is at the top of their wish list. Madame Chauchat's descendants have retained some of the extravagance of their forebears. They still enjoy spending money today, with average daily expenditure put at some CHF 300. In 2001 the overnights accounted for by Russian visitors soared by 16% and near the 200,000 mark. Double-figure growth is also forecast for 2002.

Switzerland Tourism has been rigorously developing the emerging market of Russia and the former Soviet republics for many years now. The highlight of our work is our attendance at the annual Moscow International Travel and Tourism Exhibition (MITT). The show was a great success again in 2001 and was crowned by a visit from economics min-

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Left to right: Walter Fetscherin, Swiss ambassador in Russia, Pascal Couchepin, Federal Councillor, Aysena Nogovitsina, representative of Switzerland Tourism Russia, Federico Sommaruga, Manager Future Markets at Switzerland Tourism on the occasion of the MITT (Moscow International Travel and Tourism Exhibition).

ister Pascal Couchepin, who was touring Russia with a business delegation and took the opportunity to visit the MITT and the Swiss stand. Mr Couchepin was very happy with the presence of the 70 exhibitors in the Swiss pavilion. They included 45 Swiss regions, destinations and key service providers, as well as private schools and clinics, together with 25 local travel experts. Indeed, it was evident that the cooperation with the local tour organisers is bearing fruit and can be intensified still further. Five travel agencies were accredited as «Swiss Travel Specialists» and officially honoured as such.

Although Austria, France and Slovenia are not without their charm, only Switzerland can lay claim to Madame Chauchat!

