

Zeitschrift: Annual Report / Switzerland Tourism
Herausgeber: Switzerland Tourism
Band: - (2016)

Vorwort: Editorial
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Jean-François Roth, President Switzerland Tourism



Jürg Schmid, CEO Switzerland Tourism

“We are slowly regaining lost ground in Europe.”

Did the tourism industry learn to deal with the strong Swiss franc?

The industry is continuing to rely on quality and innovation, which are the only motors of growth in the context of a strong Swiss franc. Factors such as new all-inclusive offers combining multiple services have contributed to help the industry regain some ground lost with European visitors in 2016.

How did ST contribute in this regard?

On the one hand, we've contributed by pursuing our dual strategy. We have worked intensively on long-haul markets, yet nevertheless maintained a strong presence in Europe. On the other hand, our marketing focuses on all those customer segments which have a high affinity with Switzerland. In this way we can best meet their specific needs and anticipate their dream holidays.

What are you taking from 2016 for the future of tourism?

The interest in the Grand Tour of Switzerland, both from our tourism partners and the public, is an encouraging sign for the future of this product. Tourism providers used it as a platform to develop original offers; it has proved to be a driver of innovation. From 2017, it will be possible to travel on the Grand Tour with electric vehicles.

“The Grand Tour is an industry-wide collaborative project.”

Has the Grand Tour of Switzerland been well received by guests?

It has been greatly appreciated so far. The market research institute Publitest recorded around 50,000 visitors on the Grand Tour in 2016. They generated between 290,000 and 360,000 additional overnights. Its brand awareness has reached a pleasing 43 %.

How did the cooperation with the tourism industry go?

The Grand Tour is an industry-wide collaborative project. The road sign network and the 22 photo spots are examples of this national effort, of which the industry can be proud. Now the Swiss offers have to establish themselves on the global touring market. So I'm appealing to all players in the industry to take ownership of the Grand Tour and give it the prominent place it deserves in their own communication campaigns. Neither ST nor the Grand Tour of Switzerland association will be able to do it for them.

How does the Tour fit into the new segment and experiential strategy?

Touring has recorded a global growth of 21%* and is one of the tourism sectors that have come out well despite the strong Swiss franc. In the latter, we offer memorable experiences, for which the price is not the determining factor in the guest's travel decision.