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daughter of a Federal Councillor – and soon became the father of two children, Bouvier needed years to put the fruitful experiences of his four-year trip into writing. The author, who wrestled with every word and was a stickler for accuracy, soon went through a deep, personal crisis that plunged him into despair and alcoholism – an episode that found expression in his 1982 book of poems “Le Dehors et le Dedans” (Inside and outside). But it was precisely by recalling the distant memory of his time in faraway countries that he managed to pull himself out of the abyss. For many, Bouvier’s singular relationship with far-flung localities made him a credible decipherer of the human condition and an utterly unique travel writer.

“Savour the sweetness of life”

From 1963, Bouvier produced a flurry of works reminiscing on his extensive travels between 1953 and 1957. But he also covered subsequent visits to Japan, Korea and China, as well as producing a notable, vivid account of his time on the Aran Islands off the west coast of Ireland. Even after his death in 1998, Bouvier – whose mantra was “savour the sweetness of life and the art of living, as if today were your last” – has continued to inspire people around the world to travel with inquisitive, open eyes and treat the unknown with love and respect. Translated into all the main languages, his books have lost none of their magic, not least in this era of mass tourism.

Many of Nicolas Bouvier’s books are available in French, German and English.

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Switzerland in figures

Cow wins on recount. Marmot thwarted.

10 000

Switzerland has no official national animal. Comedian Claudio Zuccolini therefore decided to hold a plebiscite on the matter. The nominees? Cow, ibex, bear and lion. But the marmot, which had missed out in the nominations, suddenly surged ahead with 10,000 votes. Apparently, the poll had been hacked. Via e-voting. Ouch. The cow won in the end, garnering 52% of the votes. A beef retailer from Grisons, no less, announced this victory for all bovines. In no way is that suspicious.

330

Are they going to take place? The fate of the 2021 Olympic Games in Tokyo was still in the balance at the time of going to press. Notwithstanding this, Switzerland has won 330 Olympic medals in total at the Winter and Summer Games to date. The only Olympics at which we won nothing were in 1908, 1912 and 1964.

37 710 400 000

The Swiss National Bank announced profits of 37.7 billion Swiss francs in the first quarter of 2021 – shuffling uneasily in the process, given that this is a deluge of money. The same figure would be enough to cover footballer Lionel Messi’s salary for 248 years – or pay out a lump sum of 4,351 francs to every person in Switzerland.

10

Mandatory, pandemic-related work-from-home policies are now being relaxed. Opinion polls show that only 10 per cent of us want to continue working exclusively from home. Yet most of us want greater flexibility to switch between home and office working in future.

2

Travel operators say that many Swiss families double-booked their summer holidays this year, depending on whether they could go abroad or not. Hence, the current flood of cancellations was inevitable.

FIGURES COMPILED BY MARC LETTAU