

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 67 (2001)
Heft: [10]

Rubrik: President's message

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President's Message

The following articles are an extract from the October newsletter of the Swiss Abroad Organisation (SAO) - called "ASO-Info"

Unforgettable Summer Camps

During the past Summer about 250 children participated in a number of Summer holiday camps in Switzerland, and many new friendships will hopefully last well into the future.

One of the most favourite activities was hiking, and other highlights were climbing and excursions.

Camp life also included the daily tasks of cleaning and tidying, dishes and bedmaking.

About 60 students or young working people (who used personal holiday leave) gave their time as camp leaders. Besides being animators and tour guides, they were also nurses, janitors, psychologists, football refs, swimming instructors, and nature study and history teachers.

One group of twenty 13 to 16 year olds on the "Journey through Switzerland" programme, using various means of transport, had a particularly memorable time. They biked right around the Hallwylsee and from Leissigen to Bern; hiked over the historical Saumpfad from Gotthard to Hospental, and over the Hauensteinpass on the Römerstrasse; zoomed from Sparenmoos to Zweisimmen on scooters; and traveled on an old steam engine train over the Furkapass. They found their way around and got to know the city of Bern travelling on buses and trams; and, after some instruction, paddled down the Doubs River in kayaks. All this took place within the short space of only two weeks and perfect weather!!

In 2001, as in other years, about 80 children could benefit from the SAO fund - children who would otherwise not have had the opportunity to travel to Switzerland to take part in the camps. And once again, thanks to donations received, more children can be assisted.

Around 35 children, all with different backgrounds and personalities, take part in each camp. Within the space of two weeks they experience much together and part not as strangers, but as best of friends.

2002 Youth Camps

Once again, there is a range of Winter camps in Switzerland cater-

ing to a variety of ages coming up.

- **Grindelwald, Ski sport week**
10 to 17 March (poss. extension)
Cost: Fr. 750, Age: 20 - 35 yrs

- **Bettmeralp, Easter ski camp**
30 March to 7 April
Cost: Fr. 700, Age: 14 - 25 yrs

- **Language Courses**
(Swiss)German or French
7 to 18 January

Cost: Fr. 970, Age: 15 - 25 yrs
A fun way to learn one of the national languages. Includes accommodation with host family, general pass for public transport, and well rounded programme.

For further information, go to website www.aso.ch, or contact:

Auslandschweizer-Organisation
Jugendienst
Alpenstrasse 26, 3000 Bern 16
Switzerland
Ph. 0041 (0)31 351 61 00
E-mail youth@aso.ch

Along with the newsletter, the envelope also contained a number of brochures and order forms. Feel free to contact me (details on page 2) for the following items:

"100 Jahr Bundeshaus"

2002 calendar, 50x70 cm, black and white photos of interior and exterior by Michael Stahl. Cost Fr.98

"Pestalozzikalender 2002"

This calendar, available in German only, is produced every year and sold through the ASO, for Fr.14

"Die Auslandschweizer im 20. Jahrhundert"

(The Swiss Abroad in the 20th Century)Switzerland's State Archive is dedicating the 28th issue of its magazine *Studien und Quellen (Studies and Sources)* to the above subject. It will be issued in December 2002, cost approx. Fr.45.

"Voting in Switzerland"

If you would like to vote in Switzerland, information leaflets and registration forms are available.

Finally, we have once again reached the last month of the year so, as is always the case, there will be no *Helvetia* produced in January.

I'd like to thank all of our members, from throughout New Zealand, for your support of our Society over the past year.

I wish you all a very happy and peaceful Christmas; a healthy and prosperous New Year; and safe and restful Summer holidays.

With my best wishes and kind regards to you all. Beatrice.

Christmas Message from the Swiss Ambassador, Mrs Sylvie Matteucci

Dear Fellow Swiss,

Swiss democracy, as well as the Kiwi way of life, is based on proximity and the ideal thing for me would be to address each one of you with his/her first name. But this would not be compatible with the overall format of your *Helvetia*, where other communications and information naturally require space. I have, therefore, settled for a more general form of address.

Looking out from what I call my second office (on the first floor of the official residence I happily use as Ambassador of Switzerland to New Zealand, together with my husband, Aldo) at our lovely garden - carefully nurtured and developed by Heinz Jäggi over the previous three months - at the great palm tree now stirring in a gentle northerly breeze, and at the Swiss flag rising close to the palm tree, I think this present assignment has been a great stroke of luck. The simplicity, the brave spirit, and at the same time the casual style of the people of this country, as well as the (often magical) beauty of the landscape, have a powerful grip, and I do not wonder at the steadily increasing flow of new Swiss settlers we register at the Embassy.

Nineteen months after my arrival here (to the day), I have also become professionally aware of the many links between Switzerland and New Zealand, and know that both countries have even more in common than I suspected, often approaching problems in very similar ways. Just one example is the desire to protect the environment without creating unnecessary constraints for economic development. Both share essential values, and strive to foster a climate of understanding and dialogue between their various linguistic communities. Both are also not ready to compromise on the importance of human rights and on the rule of law. Working over the past year to strengthen the links I have just mentioned has been demanding, while at the same time being a most enriching task for me as a diplomat and as a woman.

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