

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 80 (2014)
Heft: [1]

Artikel: The Triassic and the Thetys Sea
Autor: [s.n.]
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-943928>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. [Siehe Rechtliche Hinweise.](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. [Voir Informations légales.](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. [See Legal notice.](#)

Download PDF: 16.05.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

The Triassic and the Thetys Sea

... Cont. from page 4

Once you have an indication that the rock in front of you contains something worthwhile, you have to find the extent of the fossil by examining the surroundings, keeping in mind that the pressures in the tectonic plates that pushed up the Alps may have twisted and crushed it into all sorts of shapes. Once everything is loosened, it is cast in plaster and secured in a wooden frame for transport to the preparator's lab.

Mind you, at that stage you still don't have a clear idea what you have found. In innumerable hours of precision work, the bones and structures of the fossils are freed from the surrounding stone with instruments as exotic as gramophone needles (the older amongst us remember those). Only at the end of this whole process, the fossil is ready for photographs, identification and either archiving or putting on display. **To be fair, after waiting for millions of years, those fossils have probably given up hope of getting out quickly anyway!**

A dinosaur becomes part of the Lanz family

200 million years ago, the five distinct fossiliferous levels of the Monte San Giorgio were most likely a sea basin whose bottom was poor in oxygen which prevented organisms that died there and sunk to the ground from decomposition. Apart from vertebrates, there are also fossils of fishes, insects, ammonites, crustaceans and plants to be found. Since the excavations started in 1924, over 10,000 discoveries have been made and many new species discovered, many of which have names relating to the region such as the *Helveticosaurus*, the *Ticinosuchus* or the *Ceresiosaurus*, after the Italian name of the Lake Lugano. **In honor of his long standing service to the institute of paleontology of the University of Zurich, one of the *Ceresiosaurus* species was even named after my father so that since 2004 there is a *Ceresiosaurus lanzii*!**

Whatever your interests are, fossils, hikes, biking, plants and animals, wellness or even just a quiet boccalino in one of the grottos (which some consider to fall under the wellness category as well), maybe even with a game of boccia, this little unassuming mountain in the very south of Switzerland has it all and a visit cannot be recommended highly enough.

Thetys Sea

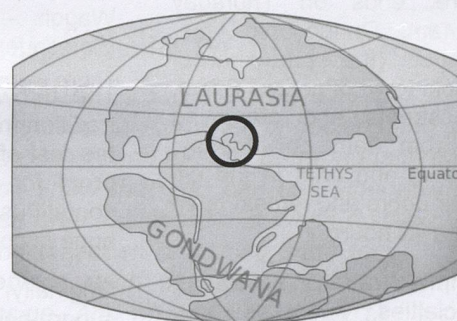
In the beginning, there was a great sea...

Throughout the Triassic geological period (252–201 million years ago), the earth's landmasses were combined into one large super continent, Pangaea. This was surrounded by a vast ocean called Panthalassa. At the equator, an arm of this ocean intruded deeply into the centre of Pangaea, giving rise to an ancient sea, the Tethys. This divided two large continents: Gondwana in the south and Laurasia in the north.

The Tethys sea included two basins of different ages, the Palaeotethys in the north and the Neotethys in the south. This was divided by the Cimmerian continent, a strip of land composed of many small plates. At the western end of the Tethys (see circle below), the story of Monte San Giorgio and the Southern Alps unfolded.

Scientists believe that Monte San Giorgio's oldest rocks once belonged to Africa, or at least a part of it known as the Adriatic Plate. This is why the rocks of Sottoceneri region around Lugano (the region south of Mt Ceneri) are often associated with the African continent.

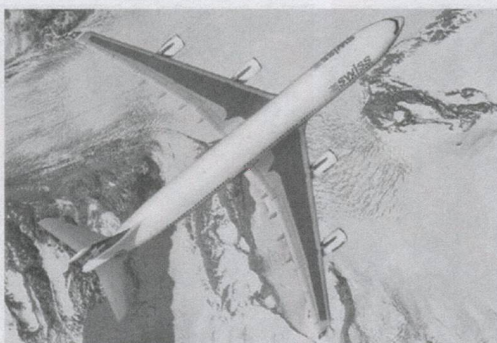
Source: www.montesangiorgio.org/en/Monte-San-Giorgio/II-periodo-Triassico/In-principio-era-il-mare.html



TRIASSIC
200 million years ago

Planet earth during the Triassic period. The continents Laurasia and Gondwana are separated by the shallow Thetys sea.

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Laurasia-Gondwana.svg>



The quality of a Swiss watch, neatly packaged in an airline.

It's the small things that make an airline great. At SWISS, we pay attention to every detail of our service. From personal assistance, to inflight cuisine and entertainment programmes: it all makes a difference. And with every flight we get just a little bit better. So you can count on enjoying your time on board. Enjoy competitive and flexible airfares to Switzerland and onto Europe with connections via Hong Kong, Shanghai, San Francisco and Los Angeles. For further information on Swiss airfares from New Zealand contact your local bonded Travel Agent or visit SWISS.COM.

QUALITY, **SWISS** MADE.

SWISS.COM

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER

