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YEAR 81

Highlights

- City of Solothurn
- Swiss Federal Shooting Festival 2015
- Swiss Pension (AHV) Update

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Solothurn: Where Hob-Nailed Boots Once Echoed



Solothurn viewed north from across the Aare River towards the Jura mountains, with the water front and Cathedral of St Ursus and Victor in the foreground.

Solothurn is a sleepy little provincial town on the Aare River, overshadowed by the Weissenstein Massif of the Jura Mountains. But don't underestimate this little backwater which packs a long and tumultuous history.

The City of Solothurn with its 17,000 inhabitants of today is the "capital" of the canton with the same name. As a strategic crossing-point on the Aare River, it has long formed an important staging post on the road along the foot of Swiss Jura mountain range.

Sparse relics dating to as early as the Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages provide proof of this early staging post. However, Solothurn really came into prominence around 15-25 AD. Salodurum, as it was then known, became a Roman road station and bridge head on the road between Aventicum (Avenches near Lake Murten) and Augusta Raurica and Vindonissa (modern Windisch) in the north.

Can't you just hear the Roman Legions stomping over the wooden bridge crossing the Aare River with their hob-nailed boots, on their way up north to fend off those terrible Barbarian tribes along the Rhine River! But by all accounts, there was a reasonably harmonious integration of the local Celtic (Helvetian) tribes of Salodurum with the new Roman administration.

Solothurn survived the post-Roman era well into medieval ages and early modern times, at times taking a central stage in the tumultuous happenings of the day. Well-to-do nobles added a series of elegant Baroque buildings, such that Solothurn is known today as the finest Baroque city in Switzerland.

Solothurn has a unique charm due to its largely unspoilt and historical old town, with its cobbled alleyways, magnificent squares, farmers' market, fountains and formidable buildings and spires. There is a lively historical scene with many uniquely themed guided tours – including one about Saints, Ladies, Whores and Witches and another about a passionate night spent by Casanova in Solothurn with one of its intriguing ladies!

In all, Solothurn is well worth a visit, hiding away all sorts of unexpected surprises. Find out more about the fascinating history of Solothurn, including its cult of saints and the magical number 11, in this Helvetia issue.

Susie Wood

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