

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 82 (2016)
Heft: [1]

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HELVETIA

MAGAZINE OF THE SWISS SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND



FEBRUARY/MARCH 2016

YEAR 82

Highlights

- Life back in Switzerland
- Swiss Rail Tips
- Secret Life of Doris Baertschi
- Unique Hotels in Switzerland

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Wanderlust Schweiz: the Origins of Adventure in Switzerland



The topic of this Helvetia magazine is adventure in Switzerland. What better place to start than with the national Swiss pastime of "wandern" (tramping) – an adventure which most Swiss people deeply connect with. The word "Wanderlust" epitomises this activity: the desire to go walking.

Of course – the world's people have been on the move for eons. The need for migration is deep in our genes and activated in times of upheaval such as climatic changes, overpopulation, resource scarcity, and so on.

Switzerland itself was overrun with migrating armies numerous times. The Romans, Alemanni and Burgundians are just some who claimed territory in Switzerland. Even the Swiss themselves attempted to emigrate from Switzerland in 58 BC to settle in France, only to be driven back by the mighty Caesar himself! For centuries, Swiss men have hired themselves out as mercenaries to foreign armies – and of course still do so at the Vatican. Similarly, Swiss tradesmen roamed all over Europe, honing their skills upon completion of their apprenticeships. Pilgrims also walked vast distances to obtain religious salvation. They had a distinct purpose to leave their homes, be it economic, religious or otherwise.

Today, life is a lot more stable than it used to be. Nevertheless, the urge to explore and experience new things and places – to have an adventure – persists in us. In Switzerland,

a key outlet for this urge is wandern.

Originally, wandern was the domain of the wealthy – such as naturalists roaming through the countryside and adventure-crazy English people attempting to climb our Alpine peaks. Thus, it was not a Swiss but Englishman Edward Whymple who conquered the Matterhorn first in 1865.

Thomas Cooke – the world's first travel agent – organised the first Swiss Grand Walking Tour for English-speaking people in 1863. Miss Jemima Morrell, from a middle-class family near York in England, kept a detailed diary of this tour. While walking through both the Swiss and French Alps, she commented on the extreme poverty of people in rural areas. To these impoverished Swiss people, wandern for pleasure was still a long time off.

However, this changed at the beginning of the 1900s and with increasing prosperity in Switzerland. Wandern became a more popular pastime. Unfortunately, this new trend coincided with the rise of the automobile which soon started to clog up and pollute roads traditionally used for walking. Naturally,

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