

*Beverly's Travels***Switzerland by Train, Bus, Boat & Swiss Historic Hotels**

by Beverly A. Hogg

For the past 10 years many historically significant hotels from all over Switzerland, no matter the size or number of guest rooms, have been coming together under one marketing umbrella and presenting themselves as Swiss Historic Hotels. Gone is the stigma of historical meaning dusty, old, or, out of style. Public interest in historic hotels and restaurants has been rapidly growing around the world, and these Swiss hoteliers realize the tremendous attraction their unique properties offer, whether they are large hotels, castles, bed and breakfasts, manor houses or country houses. Although major renovations and restorations have been accomplished to the 50-plus Swiss Historic Hotel membership, the buildings have maintained their historic authenticity and architectural significance, and all changes are continually being certified by experts. All of the hoteliers or innkeepers are dedicated to preserving their past and cultural heritage, in an effort to protect their future. And as with all things old or having historical significance, they all have a story to tell. As I visited several in the collection of Swiss Historic Hotels, over the course of just a few days, I was traveling on the unique public transportation system with a Swiss Pass that allows free travel by train, bus and boat, including the much loved scenic panorama routes, and admission to 470 Swiss museums.

Switzerland is a multicultural, multilingual country, located in the heart of Europe. Part of the country speaks German, and other parts speak French, and almost everyone speaks English. My non-stop Swiss International Air Lines flight arrived into Zurich, Switzerland's largest city. Packing only a small light-weight wheeled carry-on proved to serve me well over the next few days, as everywhere I went, so did my bag, and Swiss Pass. No checked bag allowed me to walk briskly through the Zurich Airport and down one level to the main train station and make the 1 hour 20 minute express train to Basel that I had hoped for. Basel is known as the Scenic City of the Rhine and is most famous for the museums, art and architecture and I wanted to arrive in daylight. Located directly on the Rhine in the Old Town of Basel, The Hotel Krafft was just a short cab ride from the train station, but when I arrived I had nothing to pay the driver with. My efforts of raiding the sock drawer, and other cubby holes, for un-spent Euros from a previous trip before I left home, didn't help me. Switzerland uses Swiss francs, not Euros. Although, my cab driver would have taken Euros in payment out of kindness, I didn't have enough. I went into The Hotel Krafft with the driver and was able to change my US Dollars to Swiss Francs with the help of the young lady at the front desk who spoke perfect English and had a keen sense of humor. I later learned that at more than 200 train stations throughout Switzerland, you can purchase not only Swiss francs but also some 90 other currencies. My cozy room at The Hotel Krafft welcomed this weary traveler with open-arms. The 60 carefully renovated guest rooms have all the amenities of a modern boutique-style hotel, while retaining the charm of yester-year. The Hotel Krafft, www.krafftbasel.com, was selected as Swiss Historic Hotel of the Year 2007.

After a good night's sleep and tasty breakfast in the Hotel Krafft's spacious dining room, I caught a bus to the local train station to transfer and travel south to the formally walled Baroque City of Solothurn where a local bank was hosting a fun-family festival that consumed the entire town. A walking tour of the town, and a delicious luncheon at Hotel Baseltor, did not disappoint. The word Baseltor means the entrance to the city from the days when it was completely walled around. This Swiss Historic Hotel is at the entrance to the city and next to the magnificent neo-classical Cathedral of St. Ursus. After lunch it was back to the train station to continue on via train to the town of Biel. It was just a short walk from the Biel train station to the boat dock where I boarded a boat (with my suitcase and Swiss Pass) for the scenic ride on Lake Biel to St. Peter's Island and The Hotel St. Petersinsel, just one of the stops on the boat trip around Lake Biel. This stop is very popular with site-seers, as the grounds of this once island – now a peninsula are very beautiful, and the restaurant serves delicious fresh white fish from the lake and full-bodied wines from the grapes grown on the property. At Hotel St. Petersinsel there are only 13 highly coveted guest rooms. During the Middle Ages Cluniac Monks settled on the island founding a monastery around 1100 A.D. During renovations several years ago, a mural painting was discovered on one of the walls of a large room dating back to the 1400s. It was wisely decided not to renovate this particular room and use it instead as a meeting space with the ancient mural serving as a 'speakers' backdrop. St. Petersinsel www.st-petersinsel.ch was named Swiss Historic Hotel of the year 2010.

I love Switzerland and everything that it is famous for—chocolate, cheese, Swiss Army knives, wines, watches, and now add to that the unlimited adventures that a wait with a Swiss Pass and the remarkable Swiss Historic Hotels. I was on a combination of scenic train routes that



Waiting for the steamboat "La Suisse" at the boat landing pier in the colorful town of Cully to take the scenic trip around Lake Geneva to the famous Chillon.



The Giessbach funicular railway, the oldest in Europe since 1879, operates from April to October.

encompassed parts of the Jura Foot Line (Jura Mountain Range) linking the towns of Basel and Lausanne, and including scenic boat rides on Lake Biel, Lake Léman; from Lausanne to Montreux, picking up the Golden Pass Line to travel through vineyards and glamorous Gstaad, continuing north along the Lake Thun shoreline with glimpses of the impressive Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau peaks and more luxurious scenic boat riding on Lake Brienz and the legendary Giessbach Falls enroute to Interlaken, and ultimately back to Zurich Airport, all the while visiting and staying at more Swiss Historic Hotels than I have room to mention. I do have good reason to return to Switzerland, and soon. I have just learned they have a Chocolate Train that operates between May and October from Montreux via Gruyères to Broc, where you can visit the chocolate factory and sample Switzerland's most seductive specialty to your heart's content. Sign me up.

The Official Website of Switzerland Tourism www.MySwitzerland.com has thousands of ideas of what to do in Switzerland – www.swiss-historic-hotels.com for Swiss Historic Hotels, and www.swisstravelsystem.com for Swiss Pass.



The Grandhotel Giessbach, a hotel from the golden age of tourism (dating from 1873) enjoys a picturesque waterfall setting between the mountains, Giessbach Falls, and Lake Brienz. "Historic Hotel of the Year Award 2004." photo by Beverly Hogg



Train riding in Switzerland is non-stop picture postcard beautiful. photo by Beverly Hogg



Show me some Switzerland via Trains, Buses, and Boats and Swiss Historic Hotels--I'll show you some happy.