



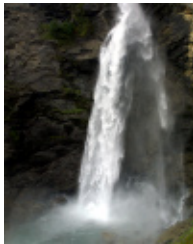
BURT WOLF TRAVELS & TRADITIONS

THE SWISS MITTELLAND

Sherlock Holmes was the greatest detective who never lived and for over a hundred years, millions of fans have followed his adventures in magazines, books and some of the most successful mystery films ever made. Holmes was created in the 1880s by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Sir Arthur was a doctor but his early practice was so small that it left him time to write and he eventually became one of England's most successful authors. In sixty-eight books Holmes triumphed over evil, which often appeared in the form of Professor James Moriarty, the greatest of the master criminals.

In 1893, Conan Doyle wrote "The Final Problem" in which both Holmes and Moriarty met their end at Switzerland's Reichenbach Falls.

There are a number of theories as to why Sir Arthur killed off his most famous character. Conan Doyle loved Switzerland and had set off with his wife on a hiking tour. In the middle of the trip his wife was diagnosed with tuberculosis. Conan Doyle appears to have killed Holmes so he could stop writing and devote himself to caring for his wife. He may also have put an end to Holmes to punish himself for being distracted by his writing. As a doctor he never fully forgave himself for not spotting his wife's illness before they left England.



The falls have become a shrine for Sherlock Holmes fans. Each year thousands of visitors ride the restored rack railway that travels along the same path that was used by Holmes and Moriarty—at least on the way up.

The Sherlock Holmes Museum

At the base of the falls is the town of Meiringen, which has made Sherlock into an industry. The place is packed with signs commemorating his exploits. There



are 250 societies devoted to the study of Sherlock Holmes, with over 80,000 registered members, and almost all of them feel the need to come here as often as they can.

In the basement of what was once the town's English church is the Sherlock Holmes Museum. It contains a precise replica of the living room that Holmes and Dr. Watson shared at 221b Baker Street.

Holmes spent his life and met his end fighting evil-minded villains—an undertaking that is of particular interest to the Swiss. Their national hero, William Tell, was right up there with Sherlock when it came to taking on the bad guys. Holmes specialized in the individual criminal, whereas Tell worked exclusively with agents of undemocratic governments.

Swiss Democracy

The Swiss love majority rule and have made it part of their culture for over 500 years. Democracy in Switzerland starts in the smallest town and works its way up or down, depending on your view, to the federal level.

In the district of Appenzell, Election Day begins with the region's representatives marching through the streets. They move along slowly so everyone can get a good look at the government and see in which direction it's going.



When the officials and the citizens reach the town square, the issue at hand is read to the public. People have been talking about the vote for months but just to make sure that it is understood, there is one last explanation of the point in question.

Then a vote is called for. If the number of hands going up clearly indicates the community's preference the result is announced and they move to the next item on the agenda. If things are not obvious they will make a person-by-person count.

The Swiss Parliament



Switzerland's Parliament building was built in 1896, made exclusively with Swiss materials, and presents the work of Swiss artists and craftsmen.

Parliament elects a Federal

Council of seven members and each year a different member becomes Federal President. Officially the post has no special powers or privileges but it sure looks great on your resume.

For me, the most interesting aspect of Swiss democracy is a rule that allows the citizens to propose legislation of their own or block legislation already approved by Parliament. Anyone who gathers 100,000 signatures to support a particular initiative gets a nation-wide vote on the issue. In recent years voters have rejected a cap on military spending but accepted the protection of marshlands. It only takes 50,000 signatures to challenge a piece of legislation that has been passed, but you've got to make that challenge within a hundred days of the official publication of the law.

In addition to their government responsibilities, the members of Parliament have a busy schedule of extra-curricular activities. There's a cooking club, a group of singing senators and a sky diving team.

Bernese Sports

The Mittelland is a center for the traditional Swiss sports of *hornussen*. It grew out of an ancient Roman war game where soldiers practiced their skill at hitting hot missiles at the enemy. During the 1500s Swiss farmers turned it into a game.

It's played on a field or flat meadow. First thing you do is get the cows out of the way.

Then you take a piece of clay and place it at the end of a curved metal track called a *bock*. A disk that is a little smaller than a hockey puck called a *hornuss* is stuck on top of the clay.

The *traf*, which is a 10-foot long flexible rod with a cork handle and a compressed wooden cylinder at the end is swung back and then forward in a golf swing-like motion. I'm holding one in the photograph on page one, upper left. The objective is to hit the hornuss as hard and far as you can. Of course, the force of the traf coming off the bock and impacting on your hornuss is important but it's not everything.



Out in the field, which was recently filled with cows, are members of the opposing team who, while being very careful where they step, use paddles known as *schindelen* to stop your hornuss before it hits the ground. If it does hit the ground it's a *nummer* and the fielding team gets a penalty point. Each player gets two strokes per round and the lowest number of points wins. The game takes about 3½ hours but my lawyer says I can get time off for good behavior.

THINGS TO DO

BALLENBERG: THE SWISS OPEN-AIR MUSEUM

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WWW.RADO.COM

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THE SHERLOCK HOLMES MUSEUM

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E-MAIL: INFO@SHERLOCKHOLMES.CH

WWW.SHERLOCKHOLMES.CH

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FAX: +41 31 322 98 65

E-MAIL: GESUCHDIENST@PD.ADMIN.CH

WWW.PARLIAMENT.CH

Swiss Cheese Making

Professional Swiss cheese makers produce hundreds of different cheeses and much of their finest work is done in the region known as Emmental. Emmental is also the name the Swiss use for what most Americans call Swiss cheese. Today almost all Swiss cheese is made under highly regulated industrial conditions, but if you'd like to see what Swiss cheese making was like in the past you can stop into the Affoltern Dairy in Emmental and take a look.



THE EMMENTAL AFFOLTERN SHOW DAIRY

CH-3416 AFFOLTERN I/E
TEL: +41 (0) 34 435 16 11
FAX: +41 (0) 34 435 01 51
E-MAIL: INFO@SHOWDAIRY.COM

For information about Swiss cheeses, including where to buy them in the United States, visit WWW.SWITZERLAND-CHEESE.COM

You can even make your own. You need to make a reservation in advance and it costs about twenty-five dollars per person to join a group of ten. A professional cheese maker guides you through the process, and you can make up your own group, assuming you have nine friends who want to make cheese.

How to Go

SWISS PASS

1-877-456-RAIL

WWW.RAILEUROPE.COM



This pass entitles you to unrestricted travel by rail, bus and boat on the Swiss Travel System network for 4, 8, 15 or 21 days or a full month. Also included are trams and buses in 36 towns and cities as well as discount fares on many mountain railways and cable cars.

THE POSTBUS (POSTAUTO)



This area is one of the most beautiful parts of Europe and I think the best way to see it is on one of the post buses that run throughout the country. Their organized routes take you through the most beautiful parts of the country. You don't have to worry about which roads to take, or keeping to a tight schedule. Just relax and enjoy the scenery.

Information about the Postbus system is available in English at USA.MYSWITZERLAND.COM and in French, Italian and German at WWW.POST.CH.

Ballenberg

Farm animals, historical gardens and fields surround the buildings at the Swiss Open Air Museum at Ballenberg. In many cases the animals and plants are considered endangered species and can only be found at Ballenberg. Where else could you see a grazing woollen-coated pig?

My favorite building was a typical farmhouse from the area around Bern. The district that it comes from is famous for its high quality sandstone and farmers used as much of it as they could afford. The guy who built this house used sandstone for the cellar vaulting and the back of the first floor. The rest of the house, however, was made of wood and painted gray to look like sandstone. The top floor windows are also just paint—no rooms behind. Specific realities were not important; it was the overall impression that counted.



The inside is also set up to give the feeling of dignified prosperity—three parlors leading into each other—totally impractical for daily use. The plan for this house was determined more by the desire to create an impression than by any rational considerations.

Across from the main house is the "treasure house" which was the place where the farmer kept the reserves that would ensure his survival if the main house



was destroyed by fire. It was always built up toward the prevailing wind, and it had to be visible from the main house. If you're lucky enough to have a treasure, you'd better keep an eye on it.

WHERE TO STAY

While I was in Bern I stayed at the Bellevue Palace which is right in the center of the city and just down the block from Parliament. It's the home away from home for the nation's top officials and ministers. When Parliament is in session 50 members of the government live here. It's the best place in town and it should be—it's owned by the Swiss federal government.

The original Bellevue Palace was put up in 1913 on a site that had been the federal mint. The owners liked the idea that the land already had a history of attracting money. The building was designed to look like the federal buildings that surround it. Today the hotel still has the feeling of early 20th century luxury but behind the elegance is well-placed technology.



HOTEL BELLEVUE PALACE BERN

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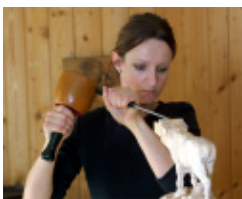
E-MAIL: DIREKTION@BELLEVUE-PALACE.CH

WWW.BELLEVUE-PALACE.CH

When a farmer's youngest son was old enough to take over the farm his father gave it to him and moved out. The reason the youngest son was chosen was that it gave the father the greatest number of years of control. But when father and mother moved out they didn't move far. Usually about 25 yards seemed far enough. The house that they moved to was called a *stockli* and it was just far enough across the yard to give the son's family a sense of privacy but well within nagging distance.

In addition to teaching the history of Switzerland through its buildings, Ballenberg staff demonstrates more than 25 different period crafts. It also has three restaurants that serve traditional dishes from each of the regions of Switzerland.

Wood Carving



If you are a fan of woodcarvings you might pop over to the nearby town of Brienz, which is home to the House of Jobin. Founded in 1835 by the great-great grandfather of the present owner, Jobin produces a wide range of wooden music boxes, kitchen utensils and sculptures. The carving shop is open to the public and you can watch the artists at work.

Swiss Watch Makers

About six thousand years ago humans became interested in knowing what time it was. And with every generation that followed, the desire for greater precision and greater availability became more pronounced.

We have discovered tools for measuring time that go back to 3,500 BC. The sundial goes back to 1500 BC and was probably the first clock to measure in hours. The word "clock" originally meant "bell" and was a reference to the bells that announced the hour from bell

towers during the Middle Ages. The first clocks showed up during the 1300s but they weren't very accurate. They got a lot better during the 1600s when the pendulum was introduced. The first watch showed up around 1500 and for over 500 years were based on expanding springs that were wound up to keep the mechanism going.

During the 1500s, religious conflict forced Protestants out of France. Many of them were skilled metal workers and watch makers and most of them moved to Switzerland. Today Switzerland is the world center of the watch making industry.

RADO

I visited the watchmaker's rooms at the RADO Company just outside of Bern. Along with the traditional Swiss respect for the watch's internal technology they have taken a modern approach to design. They wanted to have a look that was easily recognizable.



Their first claim to fame came from the development of the original scratch-proof watch called the DiaStar and introduced in 1962. Instead of the conventional metals used by most watch makers, like gold and silver, RADO works in hard metals, high-tech ceramics and sapphire crystal.

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TRAVELS & TRADITIONS
 RECIPES FROM
 THE SWISS MITTELLAND

VEAL STEAK IN MOREL SAUCE

Kalbssteak an Morchelsauce

Makes 4 Servings

- ¾ ounce dried morels*
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter*
- ¼ cup chopped onion*
- 4 tablespoons sweet paprika*
- ½ cup dry white wine*
- 2 tablespoons cognac*
- 2 cups veal demi-glace or beef stock*
- 1 cup heavy cream*
- Salt*
- Freshly ground black pepper*
- Cayenne*
- 4 8-ounce veal steaks*
- 2 tablespoons olive oil*

In a bowl of warm water, soak the morels for at least 1 hour or up to 8 hours. Drain the morels and rinse them under running water to remove any remaining dirt particles. Halve the small morels and quarter the larger ones and set aside.

In a large heavy-bottomed saucepan, melt the butter over medium heat and add the mushrooms and onions. Cook for 5 minutes, or until the onions are soft. Sprinkle in the paprika, then add the white wine. Increase the heat to medium-high and boil until the wine has reduced by half. Pour in the cognac and cook for 2 minutes more. Add the beef stock and cook, stirring occasionally, until the mushrooms are very soft and the stock has reduced slightly, about 5 to 7 minutes. Add the heavy cream and simmer for 2 minutes. Keep an eye on the cream as it can boil over. Season the morel sauce to taste with salt, pepper, and a pinch of cayenne pepper and keep it warm over low heat while you prepare the veal.

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Season the veal steaks liberally with salt and pepper to taste. Heat a large heavy-bottomed skillet over high heat. Sear the steaks until golden brown on each side then finish

cooking in the oven. Depending on the thickness of the steak, steaks should cook 6 to 10 minutes for medium-rare.

To serve: Place a steak in the center of a large dinner plate and spoon sauce over top.

Recipe courtesy of The Gasthof of Löwen, Worb, Switzerland.



BRAISED MARINATED BEEF

Suure Mocke

Makes 6 to 8 Servings

- 3 cups red wine*
- 1 cup red wine vinegar*
- 2 cups diced celery root*
- 2 cups diced onions*
- 2 cups diced leeks*
- 2 cups diced carrot*
- 2 tablespoons minced garlic*
- 2 bay leaves*
- 2 whole cloves*
- 20 whole black peppercorns*
- ¼ teaspoon dried thyme*
- ¼ teaspoon dried rosemary*
- Pinch dried sage*
- 4 to 5 pound piece boneless beef chuck, tied*
- Salt*
- Freshly ground black pepper*
- Flour for dredging, plus 2 tablespoons*
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil*
- 3 tablespoons butter*
- 3 tablespoons tomato paste*
- 1½ cups demi-glace or rich beef stock*
- ½ cup small pickled onions, such as cocktail onions, for garnish*
- 8 strips cooked bacon, for garnish*
- ½ cup sautéed mushrooms, for garnish*

In a small saucepan over medium-high heat, bring 1½ cups of the red wine and vinegar to a boil, then

add 1 cup of each of the celery root, onions, leeks, and carrots, 1 tablespoon of the garlic, 1 of the bay leaves, cloves, peppercorns, thyme, rosemary, and sage. Return to a boil and remove saucepan from the heat and set aside to cool completely. Put meat in a deep non-reactive bowl, such as glass or stainless steel, and pour cooled marinade over beef. Cover and marinate in the refrigerator for five days, turning the meat every day.

On the fifth day, preheat oven to 325°F. Remove meat from marinade and pat dry with paper towels. Season the meat generously with salt and pepper to taste, and lightly dredge in the flour. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a large, well-seasoned cast iron pot or heavy-bottomed Dutch oven, over high heat. Sear the meat well on all sides, about 3 minutes per side. Remove the meat to a plate and carefully wipe out fat from pan with paper towels. In the same pot, melt the butter and add the remaining vegetables, garlic, and bay leaf. Add the tomato paste and cook, stirring constantly, until the vegetables begin to soften, about 5 minutes. Add the 2 tablespoons flour and cook for 2 minutes more.

Pour in the demi-glace and the remaining wine, and return the beef to the pot. Cover and place in the oven, and cook until beef is tender, 3–5 hours, depending on the pounds and thickness of the beef. To check for tenderness, pierce with a long bamboo skewer, if there is little resistance from the beef, it's tender.

To serve, remove the meat from the pot and allow to rest for 15 minutes, then carve into thick slices. Serve the beef with the gravy and garnish each plate with pickles onions, strips of bacon, and sautéed onions.

Recipe courtesy of The Gasthof of Löwen, Worb, Switzerland.

WHERE TO EAT



THE GASTHOF OF LÖWEN

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FAX: +41 (0) 31 839 58 77

E-MAIL: OFFICE@LOEWEN-WORB.CH

WWW.LOEWEN-WORB.CH

A twenty-minute ride from Bern to the town of Worb will deposit you in front of the Gasthof of Löwen. The building has the traditional architecture of the Emmental region and the same family has run it for over 600 years. The present generation is represented by Hans-Peter Bernhard who does the cooking and his wife Ursula who runs the front of the house.

I tasted two of the house specialties. One was a brisket of beef that was marinated in a mixture of vinegar and wine and then slowly braised and served with mashed potatoes. The second was a veal steak sautéed and served with a morel mushroom sauce and noodles—both were excellent.

A few years ago Ursula gave her husband an antique corkscrew and a book on the history of corkscrews. It appears to have been an ideal gift. Today Hans-Peter has a collection of over 650 corkscrews that are on display in a cellar beneath the restaurant.

