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## EDITORIAL

### TRAVEL ARTICLES

No doubt many of you who are travelling to and from Switzerland and to other parts of the world often feel the urge to write articles for publication about your travel experiences. Your feel that your adventures were so unique and so exciting, that you should share them with the rest of the world. Take our advice: DON'T.

Very few people, including professional writers and reporters succeed in this field. Most travel articles, particularly those relating to a family or a single person's own experiences rapidly become boring to the readers. It is the same as looking at someone else's holiday snapshots: "This is ME in front of the Eiffel Tower, ME holding up the leaning tower of Pisa, ME next to a guard in London, ME with Goofy at Disneyland" and so on, and so on.

Most writers of travel articles fall into the same trap. Let us give you a few examples: "We went up to the Jungfrauoch by train but the weather was bad and we were in the clouds all the way up, so we did not see anything" (Very exciting stuff). "A very early start today. We got up at 4 o'clock and had breakfast by 5" (If you are used to get up at 8, a 4 o'clock start might be an exciting thing for you, but you would bore the socks off from any farmers who do that every day). "The plane was late so we sat around the airport for over 3 hours" (So what! Every traveller

has gone through that more than once). "We found it difficult to communicate with the people because no one spoke our language" (What do you expect? People in other countries speak their own language which is not necessary English or Schwyzerdütsch). "We took a bus but discovered after a while that it was going in the wrong direction" (Here is a bit of excitement) "but then we found another bus which took us to the right place" (End of excitement).

Most travel articles written by amateur travel writers are peppered with these sort of descriptions of incidents which at the time might have been considered important, unusual or even mildly exciting but which in retrospect do not amount to very much.

And then there are the worn-out clichés. Every travel article must contain at least once the words "breathtaking view" (unless of course you are stuck up on the Jungfrauoch in thick fog). "From the quaint little villages" on the "rolling hills" to the "majestic mountains" with their "thundering waterfalls", from the "tropical paradise" with its "white sandy beaches" by the "deep blue sea" with "palm trees swaying in the gentle tradewinds" and the spread of "sweet scent of tropical flowers", the clichéd descriptions of your trip are endless. In fact you can just about describe any overseas trip by simply using hundreds of well worn, over-used and boring clichés taken out of travel brochures, travel articles and travel books.

As a matter of fact, travelling the world these days is a rather mundane affair, certainly nothing much to write about that could really interest other people. Just the fact that you have broken your own daily routine and gone on a trip to spice up your own life, does not make your experience any different from that of millions of other people who did the same thing as you.

This view of course may not be shared by the 380 odd passengers who recently travelled from London to Auckland on the same plane as the Queen. Although they probably never saw the Queen during the flight, just the thought of being on the same plane as the English monarch must compel a few passengers to writing articles or even a book or two about their, for them, fantastic and unique experience. Everyone else of course will be bored stiff about the matter.

And you will probably be bored stiff with this Editorial too, so it is better to stop it right here with a wish of "Merry Christmas" from your Editor.

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### NOTE TO SECRETARIES

Next issue of the Helvetia magazine: FEBRUARY 1996. All contributions must be in by 15 January. Many thanks for your kind cooperation.