

Legendary St Bernard dogs find a home

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Legendary St Bernard dogs find a home

A museum has opened in the town of Martigny, in canton Valais, celebrating the past and present of Switzerland's most famous dog breed, the St Bernard. The institution also takes a look at the Great St Bernard Hospice high in the Alps, where the dogs earned their legendary status as lifesavers of travellers lost in the snow.



At the end of 2004, the friars at the hospice said a lack of manpower meant they would have to give up their world famous rescue dogs. The biggest fear was that this would mean the end

of the animals' breeding programme. The breed is in no danger of becoming extinct, but if the decision had been followed through, it would have been the end of an era. Only dogs bred at the hospice or in Martigny are classified as coming from the Great St Bernard.

Fortunately the Barry Foundation stepped in and took over the kennels in early 2005, ensuring that the canines will still be keeping watch over the St Bernard pass.

At that time the idea of a museum on the history of the animals was also mooted. It was accepted and the museum has been opened in a former arsenal building, thanks to a SFr5 million donation from the Bernard and Caroline de Watteville Foundation. The breeding programme has also been included in the museum, bringing the permanent exhibition to life.

Friars have been living on the 2,500-metre-high pass for nearly 1,000 years. The hospice was built on the pilgrim route between Canterbury in England and Rome. According to legend, it was founded by Saint Bernard of Montjoux.

The dogs - originally a crossbreed - are believed to have appeared on the pass in the middle of the 17th century. Their presence was recorded in paintings and drawings dating back to 1695 and has been attested by official documents since 1703. The hospice was built in a place where extreme weather was the norm. Early pilgrims had a tough time, with little more than a steep, narrow and poorly maintained road to take them across the mountains. The friars often knew when someone was on the way, and when night fell, would go out looking for travellers who had failed to arrive. The dogs would accompany them, helping uncover those who were lost. That the dogs used their own initiative to go out and look for missing travellers, carrying a barrel of rum around their necks is highly unlikely, even if it is part and parcel of the legend. There is no mention of the barrels in hospice chronicles.

Swatch foresees 1,000 new hires worldwide

Nick Hayek, the Swatch Group's chief executive, says he wants to create at least 500 new jobs in Switzerland this year and a total of 1,000 new positions worldwide. Hayek says he is always involved in hiring decisions at the Swiss watchmaking giant, which currently employs 28,000 people. He says that he and his management team are against hiring for the short term and then dismissing employees as needed.

While acknowledging that every firm functions differently, he criticises other companies' creatively-named cost-cutting programs and their tendency to genuflect to shareholders. Hayek also says he is not a fan of shareholders voting on manager salaries. To him, short-term shareholder value is not nearly as important for a company as creativity, the courage to try new things and to have satisfied employees.

from swissinfo

Cross-border shoppers targeted

Retailers have joined forces with the gastronomy industry and regional chambers of commerce to persuade local shoppers to spend their money in Switzerland.

The Swiss Small and Medium Sized Business (SME) Association is coordinating a campaign against cross-border shopping that is estimated to have cost the Swiss economy up to SFr5 billion last year. The strong franc was responsible for driving more Swiss consumers over the borders in 2011 to take advantage of cheaper goods in euro countries such as Germany, France and Italy.

The campaign, entitled "Yes to Switzerland - I want to shop here", aims to attract Swiss shoppers back to local shops by appealing to people's patriotism and the quality of homespun goods. Taking money out of the local economy affects wages, costs jobs and could erode the quality of Swiss goods as well as investment in environmental improvements, the campaign is claiming. Supermarket giants Coop and Migros, which both blamed the strong franc for deteriorating financial performances in 2011, have joined forces with the campaign.

from swissinfo

SOLUTION TO ANIMAL WORD SCRAMBLE ON PAGE 5

- | | | |
|--------------|---------------|-------------|
| 1. BIRD | 8. LION | 15. DOLPHIN |
| 2. DOG | 9. MONKEY | 16. GORILLA |
| 3. DONKEY | 10. BEE | 17. MOUSE |
| 4. GIRAFFE | 11. DUCK | 18. TIGER |
| 5. ALLIGATOR | 12. FROG | 19. RABBIT |
| 6. CAT | 13. ELEPHANT | 20. RAT |
| 7. HORSE | 14. CROCODILE | |