

Berne

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BERNE.

Berne, the Capital of Switzerland is one of the main stops on the Paris-Rome line. Step out, stay and delight in the sights of one of the loveliest medieval cities in Europe. Shopping here is quite an exciting experience and the changing moods of the weather-clerk need be no hindrance to enjoying the beautiful shops — for these are situated below the city's spacious arcades.

These arcades form an essential part of Berne's medieval charm.

Fountains in Berne. Fine examples of best Renaissance art, the fountains of Berne have been famous since the 16th century. They have survived until the present day thanks to the foresight and care of wise Magistrates. The beauty of the fountains is enhanced by the floral decorations which are one of the special duties of the city gardener. Love of flowers and a delight in using them to decorate their houses is a heritage of the Bernese. Flower-bedecked Berne and her fountains are unforgettable.

The Clock-tower. Berne has achieved world-fame through the musical chimes installed in the Clock-tower around 1530. Day after day visitors admire this unusual show. At the stroke of the hour numerous colourful figures are set in motion: they mark the hour with the ringing of bells and in various ways, both gay and solemn, announce the beginning of another precious hour of our time. A cock crows, a merry-go-round of bear cubs starts moving, the jester with sharp wriggles of his body rings two bells suspended above his head and Father Time, turning his sandglass, counts the strokes of the knight clad in golden armour, who stands at the top of the tower. The astronomical clock is also worthy of your close attention.

The Cathedral of Berne is one of the most perfect late Gothic churches in Europe. It is particularly striking when one reflects that at the time of its construction in 1421 almost half of the people then living in Berne could find place in their cathedral.

Bernese art connoisseurs and historians are rightly proud of its main portal, the magnificent choir stalls and the stained glass windows. Apart from the Protestant services there are evening concerts of religious music to which the fine organ with over 5,000 pipes is especially suited.

On summer evenings, performances of the medieval play "Everyman" are given on the cathedral square with the main portal as a striking background. This

event attracts many visitors. The graceful spire of the cathedral silhouetted against the sky is a symbol of this city, endowed with so much beauty.

The Town Hall of Berne now over 500 years old, has been recently carefully renovated and it remains to-day as a proof of the dignified simplicity of the rulers of old Berne and the city's great past. On the square before the town hall the Venner fountain stands in elegant simplicity; onto this square lead two streets, their arcades emphasising the medieval character of the whole scene.

It is not surprising that foreign visitors tell over and over again of the strong impression that the Bernese town-hall has made on them; and it is with respect and even a touch of awe that the visitor crosses the threshold and into the assembly hall of the highest Bernese authorities, through a portal erected as far back as the year 1406.

The Market in Berne. There are several markets held in Berne and the visitor is offered a wide choice of excellent goods in a charming medieval setting. This is especially true of the meat and cheese market held in the Kesslergasse.

The meat market is of particular interest, for something of the traditional connected with this market has been carried over from early times to the present day. About 200 years ago the city merchants forced their prices up to such levels as to arouse the indignation of the citizens and the mayor and council were forced to take action. They decided that some healthy competition would not be amiss and so they allowed the country people to open their own market in town. They have retained this privilege until the present day.

On Tuesdays and Saturdays the fruit and vegetable market is held on the square before the Houses of Parliament and its adjoining streets, the peasants flocking in from the surrounding country-side with their fresh produce. It is no uncommon sight to see Ministers of State and Councillors examining with interest the wares of the market people.

The whole market is studded with beautiful flowers, a matter of course to the Bernese with their great love of flowers.

CITY SWISS CLUB


Will Members kindly note that the next
MONTHLY MEETING

will take place on **Tuesday, June 13th, 1950, 6.30 p.m.** for 7 p.m., at **Brown's Hotel, Dover Street, W.1.**

The dinner will be followed by a film on Switzerland.

Members wishing to attend should send their cards to the Manager, Brown's Hotel, Dover Street, London, W.1, to reach him not later than Monday, June 12th, 1950.

C. E. SEINET,
Hon. Secretary.



Drink delicious
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The Old Town and the Bear Pits in Berne. All visitors go and see Berne's heraldic animals. Starting from the Clock-tower there is a pleasant walk through the arcades of one of the old streets which finally leads to the end of that half-island on which the foundations of the city were laid in 1191. A high stone bridge leads to the opposite shore and the *bear pits*, which certainly constitute Berne's main attraction. The oldest entry referring to the practice of keeping bears in Berne dates from the year 1441. Certainly previous to this date there were bears here, but unfortunately most of the records were destroyed in the great city fire of 1405. Whoever has watched the droll behaviour of our bears will understand why there are so many reproductions of the bear all over Berne. The heraldic animal is incorporated into many of our lovely fountains with charming and often humorous models of bears, both full-sized and cubs. And should you, dear reader, wish to enter into an animated conversation with a Bernese then just mention the bears to him!

The Bridges over the Aare and the Alps. Across the Aare, which does so much to heighten Berne's loveliness, stretch in elegant spans the bridges connecting Berne with its suburbs and the roads to the Bernese Oberland. There is a wide variety of bridges — from the modern sweep of the Lorraine bridge to the picturesque charm of the old Nydeggen bridge, erected in 1461. This combination is characteristic of the successful fusion of modern and medieval so typical of Berne. Often Berne is framed against the dramatic and lovely background of the Alps — a scene of breath-taking splendour.

There are many walks to be made through the beautiful country-side around Berne. Dählhölzli wood, Bremgarten forest and the Aare valley offer attractive walks and it really takes time to explore all the surroundings of Berne; so at the end of a walk one can still promise oneself with satisfaction: "To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new."

The Houses of Parliament and the Government. Our 22 autonomous little states (cantons) have been united since 1848 into the *Confederation of Switzerland*. On the 28th November of that year when the first assembly of the two legislating chambers took place,

Berne by a majority vote was chosen to be the seat of government.

To begin with the delegates met in various buildings put at their disposal by the city of Berne. Then in 1902 they assembled for the first time in the new Houses of Parliament whose high cupola, along with the cathedral spire, dominates the city sky-line. It is here that the Swiss Cabinet composed of the seven Bundesräte and their departments, works. In this building are also the council chambers where several times yearly the legislative councils of the House of Representatives and the Senate assemble. A Swiss flag flying from each of the little cupolas flanking the main one is the sign that they are in session. Anybody, without need of special authorisation, may attend the deliberations of our highest legislating body and personally witness the way in which our Parliament carries on its business in three different languages. In Switzerland several languages are spoken and our statesmen are authorised to use their own. So in the Swiss Parliament an everlasting succession of French, German and Italian is to be heard. Almost all delegates however, can easily follow their colleagues speaking other languages, without the aid of an interpreter. Stay in Berne and study the smooth functioning of the Parliament in this — the oldest democracy.

The Living Past. Berne has not only understood the art of maintaining itself as a beautiful old city but has also preserved traditions and customs, originating from the distant past, so that they continue to play an essential and vital part in our daily lives. Into this category fall above all the lovely *costumes* which suit our young people so well. The Bernese costume, one of the most attractive in Switzerland, is worn principally on Sundays as festive garment. Many popular celebrations which are held annually would be almost unthinkable without the decoration of this becoming dress and indeed it is to a large extent to the costumes that they owe their charm.

Whoever has a desire to know something more of Berne's past should visit the *Bernese Historical Museum*. The stained glass window dating from 1567, is kept in safe keeping there along with many other valuable things.

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