

Swiss Climbing Huts

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Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1950)**

Heft 1137

PDF erstellt am: **29.06.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-690677>

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GEBETLIED EINES SCHWEIZERS (Bruchstück)

Johann Caspar Lavater (1741-1801)

Lass uns sein ein Licht auf Erden,
 Und ein Beispiel steter Treu;
 Frei, wie wir sind, andre werden,
 Und zertritt die Tyrannei!
 Gib, dass alle sicher wohnen
 Bis die Zeit die Pforte schliesst;
 Bis aus allen Nationen
 Eine nur geworden ist!

EIDGENOSSENSCHAFT

Gottfried Keller

Wie ist denn einst der Diamant entstanden
 Zu unzerstörlich alldurchdringner Einheit,
 Zu ungetrübt, strahlheller Reinheit,
 Gefestigt von unsichtbaren Banden?

Wenn aus der Völker Schwellen und Versanden
 Ein neues sich zu einem Ganzen einreihet,
 Wenn Freiheitslieb zum Volke dann es einweihet,
 Wo Gleichgesinnte ihre Heimat fanden:

Wer will da wohl noch rütteln dran und feilen?
 Zu spät, ihr Herrn! schon ist's ein Diamant,
 Der nicht mehr ist zu trüben und zu teilen!

Und wenn, wie man im Edelstein erkennt,
 Darin noch kleine dunkle Körper weilen,
 So sind sie fest umschlossen und gebannt.

DIE BESTIMMUNG DER SCHWEIZ

Heinrich Leuthold

Euern Freistaat sichert, ihr Schweizer, nicht mehr
 Jener Löwenmut, der die Heere Oestreichs
 Niederwarf und Karl, dem Burgundenherzog,
 Leben und Ruhm nahm,

Noch der Ehrgeiz, welcher das Szepter Mailands
 Prüfend wog, indessen die Riessenschlachten
 Auf den norditalischen Ebenen eure
 Waffen entschieden.

Heldenruhm hob einst euch beinah zur Weltmacht;
 Andre Zeiten, andre Sitten gaben
 Andre Säulen eurem Bestand, euch selber
 Höhere Ziele.

Euer Kleinstaat rage hervor durch Grosssin!
 Zeigt der Freiheit Segen Europas Völkern!
 Und durch Weisheit eurer Gesetze werdet
 Ihnen ein Vorbild!

OUR NEXT ISSUE.

Our next issue will be published on Friday, June 30th, 1950.

We take this opportunity of thanking the following subscribers for their kind and helpful donations, over and above their subscriptions: W. Gysler, A. Corbat, C. Filliez, F. C. Lichtensteiger, H. Koch, F. B. Tschudy, J. Christen, J. Born, O. Ernst, A. Aubonne, H. Ott, R. B. Meier, L. S. R. Asch.

SWISS CLIMBING HUTS.

By KENNETH KEMSEY-BOURNE.

We reproduce the following article which appeared in the April issue of the "LADY" with due acknowledgement.)

Some months ago one of the newsreels showed a fashion parade of winter sports clothes, artfully presented as taking place in a climbing hut. Models entered as though coming in from the snows outside. The show ended with the serving of drinks from a silver punch-bowl by a "guide," who wore a Tyrolean hat, embroidered braces, and — of all things — shorts. Unfortunately, real huts are not quite so well appointed.

Most Swiss huts are run by local sections of the Swiss Alpine Club, which has 30,000 members, but a few belonging to private companies. New huts are being built all the time, and old ones enlarged. The famous Britannia Hut, erected in 1912 by British members' subscriptions, is having its accommodation increased from 86 to 124 persons, at a cost of 110,000 francs, that is, £9,000. Huts recently opened have cost an average of £11,000 to build.

Why are these huts necessary? In Switzerland it is not possible to set out from a town or village, do a climb or two, and return home, all in one day. Apart from questions of distance, one must be on, and off, any snow-fields or the glaciers involved before the sun has made the surface wet and heavy. A hut provides a high-level base from which an early start may be made. The problem of food supply prevents a long stay at any one hut.

Who can use these huts? Anyone at all, subject to this list of priorities: those ill or injured, S.A.C. members and their wives; kindred clubs (French A.C., etc.), and non-members. Those intending to climb have preference over non-climbers. Since S.A.C. members have preferential rates as well as priority, it pays to belong. Even when an S.A.C. section books a hut for a particular night, one-quarter of the places are kept for other S.A.C. members who may turn up.

Some huts, like the privately owned Z'fluh, above Zermatt, are the size of hotels, with several storeys. Others, such as the Spannort Hut, above Engelberg, are small, single-storeyed and built under the shelter of a huge boulder, but very comfortable for all that.



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Several huts have windmills to generate electricity for lighting and heat, and many are fitted with telephones. The usual construction is stone outside and all-wood inside.

Most huts are, as you would expect, in almost inaccessible places, and the four-hour march up to the hut, possibly with the sun blazing down, may seem the most arduous part of the whole climb. Much-used huts have a resident warden in summer, and you should check this before setting out. In winter many huts are completely inaccessible, even to skiers.

Once in the hut, have a word with the warden. In large huts those who will be up earliest to do long climbs will be together in one dormitory, so that they will not disturb later risers too much. Take off your nailed boots, and find yourself a pair of Holzschuhe, or wooden-soled boots, which will be somewhere about the hut. Tricounis are not good for wooden floors.

You will also find a basket in which you can store the food for your party. Cutlery, plates and mugs will be provided, but you must take up everything else you will need, including salt. (Salt is important in climbing, since deficiency due to loss in perspiration can lead to cramp.) Everyone will have preferences about diet, but you will probably be carrying bread, butter, cheese, jam, sugar, salt, tinned milk, hard-boiled eggs, biscuits; apples, chocolate, boiled sweets; sandwich material such as ham or salami, and, of course, coffee, tea and soup. This soup, Knorr's or Maggi's, is carried in dry form, and only needs stirring up with boiling water; that may sound crude to gourmets, but this *suppe* is invaluable under hut conditions and can taste very good indeed.

People have been seen heating prefabricated meals of potatoes, macaroni, tomatoes, etc. This may pass in luxurious huts or if you have a Primus stove, but is not recommended as a habit.

Hut beds do not have any wire mattresses but are made side by side on a long, sloping wooden platform, running the length of the lager and covered with mattress or palliasse. If there are not many people in your lager then you may have more blankets. Extra arrivals can usually be squeezed in somewhere. Blankets are provided, and so are pillows (usually kept quite clean).

After arranging your sleeping-place you will probably be ready for the evening meal. You obtain plates from the warden and such hot water as you need. Fuel and stove space are often scarce, and you wait

your turn. Small tea-bags can be bought in Switzerland, but since the water available in the hut may not be hot enough to make good tea it is wiser to rely on coffee. Nescafé is available in small tubes.

You will be away with first light, or even before, taking some food with your gear in the rucksack, but leaving all non-essentials behind in the hut. After the climb you will be back in the hut for another meal, or at least a drink. Then you can collect the material you left behind and prepare to return to base. Before leaving, of course, you will sign the hut log-book and pay your dues.

Anyone using a hut, having a meal, for example, although not staying overnight, pays hut dues of about 50 centimes; S.A.C. members are exempt. Those borrowing cutlery, etc., or having hot water, pay a "Fuel tax," about 60 centimes, for each meal. For staying overnight, non-members pay three francs, and S.A.C. members one franc. Fees vary slightly from place to place, and sometimes a cantonal tax of 10 per cent. extra is charged.

On leaving you should give to the warden any spare food you may have, particularly tinned food.

In any hut you will be expected to do things for yourself, so be sure to check your rucksack before setting out. The warden and other climbers will help you if they can, and you must reciprocate. No two huts are alike, but you will rather like an outside water-colour, and these are very useful; each tube makes about two-thirds of a pint of good black coffee. If you must have milk, take a tin of sweetened condensed. At high altitudes you will find milkless tea and coffee, with or without sugar, more refreshing than tea made normally.

In view of an early rising in the morning it is as well to eat early in the evening and to be in bed early too. All hut lights will be out at about 10 p.m. in any case. You will find other climbers — Swiss, French, Belgian, some Italians and Germans — very ready to swap yarns, or to cut you in to a game of cards. You will soon get used to the various types of cards used in Switzerland. I remember one evening playing Pontoon with a hut-warden who spoke only Swiss-German dialect; they wanted to know just why one said "Twist one" or "Bust", and some climbers soon feel at home in a strange hut, for they all serve the same purpose, and the people you will meet there all have their hearts in the high places.

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