

Media release

The Royals are coming A regal exhibition in Schwyz

13.3.2021 – 3.10.2021

Members of royal families have visited Switzerland for centuries - from Emperor Napoleon III, Empress Elisabeth of Austria, Queen Victoria, Emperor Wilhelm II to Astrid, Queen of the Belgians, and Queen Elizabeth. Their visits are now the subject of an exhibition at the Forum of Swiss History Schwyz «The Royals are coming» runs from 13 March to 3 October 2021.

For all that, they have no royal traditions of their own - or perhaps because of that - the democratically minded Swiss do like a good story about foreign royals. News of visiting royalty spreads like wildfire, and thousands of people line the streets to catch a glimpse of blue-blooded celebrities.

Drawn to Switzerland

The reasons why crowned heads come to Switzerland are as varied as their individual backgrounds: it might be a state visit from Greece, Ethiopia, or Thailand; rest and recreation for British or Danish royals; or even French emperors with cause to flee abroad. Royal visitors from around the world have long favoured Switzerland as a destination. «The Royals are coming» examines the experiences of royal visitors to Switzerland, and presents rare mementos of their trips. Whether in the form of maps of the Swiss military manoeuvres observed by Emperor Wilhelm II, the evening gown worn by the Empress Elisabeth of Austria, the journal entries she made, or even a strand of hair from a lion's mane plucked from the dress helmet of Emperor Haile Selassie. All these and more allow visitors to the exhibition to immerse themselves in the fascinating world of the royals who have been drawn to Switzerland.

Media in the spotlight

A special focus of the exhibition is on the role of the media, and particularly the tabloid press, in how royal visits are portrayed. Astrid, Queen of the Belgians serves as an example of media hype. Word of her death aged only 30 in a Swiss road accident spread within no time, and it dominated the news headlines. A year later, a commemorative chapel was inaugurated at the scene of the crash.

Queen Victoria offers a further illustration of how monarchs have left traces behind them in Switzerland. Her month-long holiday in 1868 launched British tourism in Switzerland – and led to a spate of “christenings” in her honour, including the *SS Victoria* on Lake Lucerne, the Victoria Hall in Geneva, the Hotel Victoria Jungfrau at Interlaken, and the Viktoriaplatz in Lucerne.

Throne of royal wishes

A special highlight awaits visitors as they reach the end of the exhibition. Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be a monarch yourself? What would your first official act be? What laws would you enact? What experience would you want above all else? Meeting another crowned head, perhaps, or the president of a particular country? Or would you want to live in a huge palace with lots of staff to satisfy your every need? In our «Chamber of Royal Wishes», visitors can place a crown on their head and give free rein to their royal fantasies.

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact us:

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