

Media release

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Tourism. Destination Switzerland

20 June 2026 – 2 May 2027 | Forum of Swiss History Schwyz

From Stopover to Dream Destination

How did Switzerland go from being a stopover for aristocratic travelers seeking cultural erudition to dream destination, holiday classic, and selfie hotspot for tourists from across the globe? Opening on 20 June 2026, the new exhibition at the Forum of Swiss History Schwyz tells the story of tourism in Switzerland from the beginning to now. It shows how palatial grand hotels, mountain railways, and rich touristic imagery have coined Switzerland as a country worth travelling to, and questions where the journey is headed.

How do tourists travel around Switzerland – and, conversely, how do we ourselves travel? The exhibition sheds light on various aspects of tourism: the country's rise from a mere stopover for aristocrats on their way to Italy to a travel destination in its own right along with questions regarding sustainability and overtourism. The tour through the show comes with a touch of nostalgia and many interactive elements. The temporary exhibition provides the necessary historical context and creates the appropriate space to reflect on the country's future as a travel destination in the light of current challenges such as climate change and digitalization.

Check-in and Holiday Allowance

The experience kicks off when you enter: the lobby is designed like the reception area of a hotel. Upon check-in, our guests receive a holiday allowance in the form of tokens which they can use to purchase things at interactive stations – such as a postcard at the gift shop or the entry to an exclusive selfie spot. The exhibition opens with a work by the artist duo Studer/van den Berg. The mountain panorama from the series *Vue des Alpes* conjures up a perfect, nostalgic holiday experience far off from any tourist crowd and the noise that comes with it. However, it is nothing but an illusion: upon second glance, the image turns out to be a purely digital contrivance, which takes us straight to one of the key questions: what is genuine nature – and what is merely a cleverly staged, ideal tourist image? From here visitors set out on discovery tour through the development of tourism in Switzerland with all its waves of growth, the driving forces behind them as well as its breaks and setbacks from the 18th century to the present day.

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From Grand Tour to the Democratization of Travel

The roots of tourism in Switzerland reach back to the 'Grand Tours' of the late 17th century when young British aristocrats used to put in a stopover in Switzerland on their way to Italy. It was only during the Enlightenment and the age of Romanticism that Switzerland switched from a being a transit country to a destination in its own right. Artists and writers pictured the alpine landscape as a place of unspoilt nature and tranquillity. This image dominates Switzerland's self-image as an ideal tourist destination to this day.

The Belle Époque Boom

Between 1854 and 1865, the 'golden years of mountaineering' helped to define the development of tourism. Conquering the various four-thousand-meter peaks for the first time spurred alpine tourism and brought economic growth to even the most remote valleys. This boom reached its climax at the end of the 19th century during the Belle Époque with the construction of spectacular mountain railways and luxurious grand hotels. However, the exhibition also addresses the first voices that criticized the 'defacement of the landscape' caused by growing numbers of tourists.

Where Do We Go from Here?

The final part of the exhibition focuses on the present: today social media shape the pictorial world of tourism, replacing the classical travel guides. The main motto for many travellers today seems to be 'more often, further, shorter' – with quite drastic consequences: here issues such as holiday apartments that remain unoccupied for months, melting glaciers, and the effect of growing mobility on our ecological footprint are addressed as is the question of what tourism could look like in the future.

Participation: Visitors Grow the Collection

The exhibition not only offers food for thought, it comes with an invitation to join in. Even before the show opens, we are launching a public call, asking people to submit their holiday selfies so that we can incorporate them into the exhibition. A selection of these travel images will not only be on display in the show, we also plan to integrate them into the photography collection of the Swiss National Museum as part of our digital cultural heritage. Finally, visitors are invited to cast their vote on four visions of the future and add their comments to the visitor's book before they 'check out'. After all, most of us are not only observers but also tourists ourselves.

Link: [Call for donations: holiday selfies for the Swiss National Museum - Swiss National Museum](#)

Education for All Generations

The exhibition is geared towards a wide audience – from young to old. While kids go on a special mystery tour with the Saint Bernard 'Beni', the museum also offers tailor-made

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workshops for schools. Adults will be able to enjoy a rich selection of guided tours with our experts. Special walks in Schwyz, Brunnen, and Morschach, themed guided tours in the company of the historical English travel writer Jemima Morrell as well as programmes for the entire family round off the programme. In this way, the Forum of Swiss History Schwyz becomes a place of encounter and reflection on a topic that concerns us all.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us:

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