



Switzerland Trip Notes **September 10-24, 2012**

How did this trip come about? Tom said “I’m going” so how could I let him go alone – again! It was for our 60th and 70th birthday that we’d planned a very special Swiss trip in 2005 but my company canceled my participation and darned if Tom didn’t go on without me. He even kept the suites and special accommodations. We did go again in 2007 but that was different since it was over the Christmas and New Year’s holidays and thus we were unable to hike. This would be a primarily a hiking trip to our very favorite Swiss town of Grindelwald.

Overview of Grindelwald from the web: *Thanks to its magnificent vista and the glacier which once reached right into the basin, Grindelwald attracted its first guests from the end of the 18th century onwards. The actual breakthrough of Alpinism occurred in the mid-19th century, and local mountain guides climbed the peaks of the region with English tourists. The first ascent of the Eiger, the most difficult of Alpine mountains, took place in 1858 (the north face only in 1938). Road and railway construction made Grindelwald much more accessible towards the end of the 19th century, which in turn also heralded the onset of winter tourism. The first cableway in the Alps was built here in 1908 on the Wetterhorn. And in 1912, a railway reached the Jungfrauoch via Kleine Scheidegg; today the «Top of Europe» still remains Europe’s highest railway station and a world-renowned excursion destination within permanent snow and ice.*

Upon arrival – foggy and misty but the same ole’ Grindelwald we loved and still do. A world of its own and if there is a utopia, this is it. Second picture is out of breakfast window. We couldn’t count the number of times we’d been in Grindelwald but it was quite a few.

Photo show is posted at www.TomsKoi.com click photo shows. I’ll save the photos for that site. There will be separate ones for Grindelwald, then for Lucerne and Zurich.



Direct link <http://www.photoshow.com/watch/JY7TX6IR>

Comments from the show were music to our ears. Here's from Loujeanne: All I can say is WOW!!! Beautiful village and those mountain peaks are as majestic as you can get!! Love to have that pond with the stone bridge in our back yard! :D Thanks for sharing your adventure.

From Ellen: *Beautiful pictures, Tom. This is what I call "Heidi" country. When I think of Switzerland, I think of geraniums in flower boxes, high steeples, cows in meadows, and clusters of chalets tucked in rugged mountains. You got it all! And the picture of you eating soup is the best! Enjoyment personified!*

From Pat: *What a great photo show! I have got to recreate that trip. I absolutely love the mountains. Everything about it appealed to me and brought me a feeling of excitement and tranquility spontaneously.*

From Judy: *I loved it and plan to watch it again, as well as send it to my sister-in-law. Grindelwald is my favorite travel memory too. Haven't been since 1968, but it doesn't look like it's changed a lot, as far as having exquisite scenery. Loved the wine soup picture. I'll bet it's as good as it sounds! The "what's on a man's mind" picture is fabulous. Tom looks so distinguished, and Diana is as darling as ever. Love the swinging in the swing photos.*

Earlier from Judy: *I have fond memories of Grindelwald...mushed up with youthful memories. I was 21 when we went there on our honeymoon.... But since "you can never go home again," I doubt that one "can go on his/her honeymoon again." That's probably a fact, Jack.*



From our hotel in Grindelwald – breakfast room, out the dining room window and off our balcony.

Update #1 from a delayed Newark departure: What could have been a major problem has been resolved in an okay manner thanks to efforts by past Continental employees. (United folks never would have bothered even had they had the ability.) After getting our boarding passes in Newark with a connection thru Dulles onto Zurich the agent alerted me to delayed flights which would cause us to miss our connection to Zurich out of Dulles. Unfortunately Tom's first class was booked solid and he would eventually get a business first seat. My paid for upgrade to business class didn't work since I was then moved down the upgrade list and thus missed out by one seat but I had a good economy seat and they granted me the favor of blocking the seat next to me.

Update #2 from Grindelwald: I have recovered from a problem on the plane. Can you see me laid out on the floor at the back of the cabin in the galley? I was soon fine but it cost me part of my first day in Grindelwald. Fortunately Tom was okay being a tourist and dining by himself for lunch. By dinner time I was ready to eat one of my favorite foods: A rosti with egg, a Swiss specialty that we don't find made the same anywhere else. A specialty that we first found after hiking across a glacier in Saas Fe Switzerland in a little hut in the never-never-land that could only be supplied by helicopter, but that we've savored the memory of forever.

We love our room in the hotel next door to a place we'd stayed for years but which is under renovation. Again we have a top floor, a larger room, and a balcony overlooking a glacier and some amazing mountains. Again we have the famous Swiss breakfast



buffet spread. Again we have the simple perfection that we've only ever found in Switzerland. We are happy beyond measure. I hadn't intended to come to Switzerland again (can you ever go home again?) but when Tom announced that he was coming with or without me, and I remembered that our 2005 trip in honor of my 60th and his 65th and our 40th anniversary (or whatever year it was) got canceled by my company and he came on, I couldn't help myself but beg him to wait for me this time and I'd come along. Here we are. Oh, THIS is our 42nd anniversary so my arithmetic is off somewhere.

A purchase of a Swiss pass for 6 days will give us access to all trains, boats, cog wheels, cables and funiculars we want and it will keep Tom from climbing the hills that we used to climb. He can walk all day and can probably still get up the hills but says he doesn't want to. So with rain and/or mist and sometimes fog, we took the train to Interlocken for a walk around, a few diversions, a few drinks and finally a funicular up to Harder Kulm which is about 2,000 feet above the lake. It should have a perfect view across to the Eiger, Monch and Jungfrau (highest peak in Europe) were it not for the fog that came and went. So we drank at the lodge instead.

It is cold, or colder than I expected, all of which gave an excuse to shop the town for a special warm hat. Was it only last month in Sydney that I used the same excuse for a warm scarf? We are taking pictures like we've never been here before!

Update #3 about Thursday and Friday: The hotel owner had chosen a winner for our rainy day so we trusted her for our next and iffy weather day. It had snowed just a bit up from us and we took a post bus up thru the snow covered Mountains ---- farther and farther up to Gross Scheidegg where only the post buses are allowed on these tiny meet-yourself-coming curvy roads that are hardly wide enough for even a vehicle. Cows and goats were in the roadway making for many laughs between the oohs and aahs of the scenery added to by the snow cover.

We would hike for 45 minutes by the side of a rushing stream and among the cow fields. You know cow fields are like manicured lawns here? Eventually we reached a full hotel way out in the boonies where though over a hundred years old it had been modernized. Best of all was the delicious meal with wine and beer and bit of a tour by the young fit waitress. This was in Schwarzwaldalp and at the very old (plus 100 years) Hotel Rosenlauri.

The headline was an hour climb through a huge but narrow slot canyon with a powerful rushing waterfall then the walk down through a meandering forest trail. We would both be sore the next day.

I was pooped and finally needing jet lag catch up so Tom (who can sleep anywhere and does) found dinner on his own. He didn't have to go far. Our hotel offers a set menu for 40 sf which is not much more than \$42. Breakfast is plentiful and very Swiss and included. We eat a very hearty breakfast that would be enough to keep most folks I know all day.



The main hike we'd hoped for and put off for better weather happened on Friday. A 50 minute hike to Mannilechen which is the longest cable way in Europe put us up high in the region of all the biggies: Jungfrau, Monch, and Eiger. From there a panorama walk of about 1 1/2 hours takes one to Kleine Scheidegg at the base of the Jungfrauoch - truly the Top of Europe.

We've been up before into the ice tunnels and the \$100 per person trip up always seemed overpriced for the experience and even with our pass giving us 1/2 price we weren't interested again. It is a headline but once was enough when we can hike through the sights instead and have some exercise and some wonderful memories.

A train took us down thru Wengen, a lovely and lively village perched on one side of the canyon and thus car-free. But our destination would take us farther down the valley floor to Lauterbrunnen where we would get a cable up the other side of the canyon. Lauterbrunnen is known for the tall cliffs with hugely long waterfalls dropping to the valley floor. Trummelbach falls and canyon is the best known one. We would another day return, making the trip in reverse, and hike up to one of the falls.

With steepness too extreme for cars, everything for the town of Murren came the way we came - steep cable then train. Murren is obviously carless. It sits under the Schilthorn best known for Piz Gloria and a 1969 James Bond movie. Other than that and more views it is another extravagant lift ticket that we had no interest in. But we were looking forward to and did sit in the sunshine with drinks and later at a lovely restaurant for our favorite of Swiss meals: rosti and veal zuricoise. This is one of the better views we know with all peaks in sight at once. We have wandered their streets many times

and renewed our favorite street again all the while looking over to the other side of the canyon at Wengen and above that all those huge peaks that make Switzerland famous.

We stayed so late as to be challenged getting home after many transports closed down. A circuitous route had been done by Tom before (in 2005 when he came alone following my company canceling my trip.) 10pm home wasn't so bad but I wish breakfast were served later.

Last day update by Tom to Pat: I've had rosti and zuricoise twice now and still think it's wonderful. And Diana has had her favorite, rosti with a fried egg on top, twice as well. The past two days have been perfect sunshine -- the puffy whites you mentioned and today looks to be the same. Hiking a little tough yesterday but all's well. Looking at the gorgeous scenery keeps one going. This is our last day here and we'll miss it. They say you can't go home again? - Well, this has got to be as close as one can get. We still marvel at every turn and reminisce frequently. We have such fond memories of this place.

Me again, on "You can't go home again?" Maybe another reason for the saying is that it reminds you of age or should I refer to it as maturity? We used to climb up 3,000 and more feet UP and then come back down again all on our feet. Now we pay for cable rights to go UP and DOWN! We did some descending for a couple hours at a time but mostly this was a restful trip. Not that it hurts my body to be restful for a couple weeks

Observations from Ellen on why we like the mountains:

Sounds like the sights you're seeing are glorious! Waterfalls and canyons, and cable cars to see the peaks that define the roof of Europe. Awesome. Cows in Switzerland and sheep in England create a sense of rural country side that is soothing. Looks like you're in a wonderful spot. Something happens when you're overwhelmed by height. Your senses are heightened. Food and drink tastes better. Beauty is more soothing. The experience becomes all enfolding. Small details become interesting.

Just for the record -- elevations

Grindelwald starts at 1034 meters. First is 2168 and onto Bachalpsee is 2265. Our hike down was a lot of up and downs but put us at Waldspitz at 1919, then we were going down to Bort at 1570 which fortunately got aborted. Mannlichen is 2342, Murren 1645 and Lauterbrunnen 796.

Onto Lake Luzerne

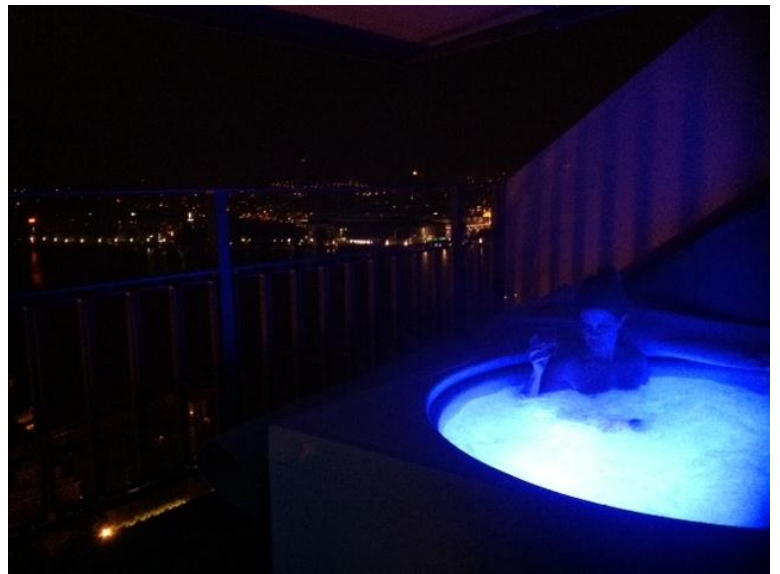


Yes, that's our hotel and yes that's OUR Lake Luzerne. We feel we own it having explored every inch of it numerous times. Look at the top deck of this hotel called Art Deco Montana. The floor with the private terraces complete with private Jacuzzi tubs. That's US! Though I confess that we had a bit of a lesser room for our last time, we found it the most charming and with more room. This time we had two Jacuzzi tubs, both inside and out, and lots of glitzy features. See below. The next picture gives more of the view and I think was made prior to the suites being built out on the top (6th) floor. I see a crane but I don't see our terraces.



***What to do on a rainy night in Luzerne?
AKA extravagant hotels***

When we showed up in Luzerne to our favorite Art Deco Montana hotel high up on the hillside it turned out that our room was mountainside whereas Tom had dreamed of having a lake view room again. It was New Year's 2008/2009 when we were one week in Luzerne in room 404 which was a huge room with double French balconies overlooking the lake. The New Year's Eve show was a number of ferry boats doing a 'ballet' or choreographed light show of moving ferry boats.



What to do? It was his trip. His dream. His 'gotta go home again' trip. So we paid up and took the newly built top floor room 605 which is a suite with a huge terrace overlooking the lake complete with a private Jacuzzi hot tub to match the indoor Jacuzzi tub in case you needed more bubbles (the indoor one was good for doing laundry) The room was extravagant in every way from the aromatherapy choices on the bathroom wall, the steam room, shower with multi body jets, Nespresso coffee pot, platform bed space with unique under floor lighting and this wildly silly private hot tub where one could sit in bubbles while the rain came down from above. We surprised ourselves and used it each evening. Sitting in a bubbling hot tub in the rain was part of the entertainment – see picture plus one from a foggy morning.



Photo Show on Bern, Luzern and Zurich is at <http://www.photoshow.com/watch/Wk7ER2nf>. That's probably plenty so I won't add many more here.

Food? One night we quizzed the concierge seeking a non-touristy restaurant and got a big break. While it was about thirty minute walk away, it certainly had not seen tourists and it gave us one of our better meals. Tom loves Zurichoise and it came with rosti and I had three medallions of venison along with spaetzli, red cabbage and the usual fruit accompaniments.

Camera? What's a vacation without a camera? Tom's super-duper Canon S100 got its lens stuck so I agreed to purchase another tiny camera for a running pocket. It didn't suit his purpose so later in the day he bit the bullet and bought another Canon S100. I think he enjoys the photography part of holiday and then the creation of a Photo Show. We really paid up and wonder if Purchase Price Protection through our credit card is going to help. My new camera had a panorama feature on it however and here's Tom's first effort by taking the bridge and surrounding scenery.



Lucerne's Chapel Bridge

The most famous landmark here is the covered wooden bridge across the Reuss River called the Kapelbrucke or Chapel Bridge which was built around 1350. It is dominated by the even older Wasserturm or Water Tower which dates from around 1300. In 1993 there was a massive fire and much of the bridge and interior was destroyed with only 25 of the original interior 110 medieval paintings remaining. The lost paintings were replaced with good replicas and the newly rebuilt bridge has quickly weathered to match the former appearance.

Now we're onto Zurich



Our hotel was on the river very close to the lake and just a five or ten minute walk to center town. It was basically compliments of Loudean who arranges Marriott hotels for us. The concierge floor and complimentary Wi-Fi was worth a mint but it was the view from our corner window that was the dramatic highlight: the city on one side and the river and pedestrian bridge on the other. Exactly what you see in the picture above.

Best of the Wurst - where did we go first?

Are you sitting down? Before even checking into the hotel Tom made a beeline to city center near to the opera house where we parked for about \$7 for an hour and then hightailed it to the area of the sausage/wurst stall that we'd found on trips before. But there was construction and the stall was gone and we were momentarily devastated as we'd been salivating all day pending the wurst fix and what is a wurst-lover to do? Follow the lines! Across a street was a very long line outside a trailer and sure enough it was OUR wurst stand and we indulged and I even thought of having a second. Amazing place: for 7.50 one gets a paper wrapped big fat wurst then grab your own chunk of dark bread and plastic container of mustard for dipping. It was fast selling to the multitudes and what a business. Seating was minimal, pigeons were plentiful, and curbside was not uncommon.



Dinner?

For me, it would be a happy and contented trip to have wurst from the stall every single day at lunch and then the variety of appetizers at the hotel's concierge floor for dinner. And we did return to the Best Wurst stall a couple days later.

Rental car

The little Volkswagen Golf eventually came to us at a deal of about half price but even that price would shock you. The diesel however gave about 30 mpg which helps with \$9 a gallon fuel. It was comfortable and much more car than expected. It's interesting how folks complain that American cars don't get as good fuel economy all the while they support our eco restrictions of heavier safety bodies, emissions, etc., all of which reduces the fuel economy and restricts the type of cars that are allowed into the U.S. We understand this in part due to Tom having worked with importation of cars from Europe after our time of living overseas. Americans typically want their cake and eat it too.

Evening in Zurich

It was suggested we not walk through the park at night; it turns out there are no real problems, just extra solicitations and maybe fear of pickpockets. Of course we walk the park – carefully! I didn't live in Saigon during the war for nothing!



Touring

We would take a guided tour and then walk the old historic section many times. We peered into churches and reminded ourselves of favorite old streets and locations from before. We walked every walkway along their two rivers and walked a very long ways along both sides of the lake. We poked into gardens and into a museum's grounds where we were treated to a showing of Japanese woodblock prints primarily of geishas which are some of Tom's very favorites. We ate well though much of it at the hotel and once Tom ventured out to dinner on his own for his third or fourth serving of Veal Zurichoise. I finally had enough of my rosti. It was a 'going home' event for me as I truly love larger cities and one with an old quaint historical quarter is all the better.

What makes the Swiss so different?

- Cleanliness to extreme - never full trash cans and always special bags for women's sanitary prod in rest rooms. Like an obsession.
- Toilets clean and in abundance. Never a charge. Always well supplied and sometimes even worthy of a giggle to see 20 rolls of TP stored up in a stall.
- Timetables rarely off by even a minute.
- Worn and old? Old yes. Worn no.
- Flowers and window boxes everywhere. A tour guide said the geraniums keep the mosquitos and flies away
- Names can be humorous: rotenegg is a village. Ausfahrt means exit.
- Test try Lowa brand boots from beginning of long hiking trail. Free. Turn in at other end. Found at Schynide Platte to First trail.
- Mountain hillsides even manicured. By cows and/or by hand. Some machines but grade of hillsides required a lot of hand-work. They use everything.
- Civilized even 14,000 feet up with mountain huts serving food and drink. Even toilets. Manicured and directional signs. Drainage build-up and bridges built at most unlikely and out of way places.
- Unemployment is at zero percent. Salary is high. Wait staff doesn't accept tips as they are professional. Even tour guides prefer small gift to a tip.
- Medical care is good but very expensive. Everyone pays in a minimum of \$350 month approximately (for public care) plus big deductible plus a percentage on top of that. Massachusetts plan was based on Switzerland's (per recent Forbes article.) Our tour guide pays about \$650 a month so she can choose her own doctors and not use public medical care.
- Fat people don't exist. Yet handicap accessibility does. If you see a fatso just listen and it's bound to be an American.
- Swiss railway spares no expense to make mountains easily accessible. Their costs were no object and thus neither are the tourists. 100 round trip plenty common. Schneige Platte round trip is 60 i.e., around \$62.
- Water fountains everywhere maybe trying to reduce amount of plastic bottles. Like the French they are sorry to have started the water bottle fad and laugh at Americans walking around with a big water bottle as though it were the Sahara. They've even gone so far as to allow restaurants to charge from 2 to 5sf for tap water in a restaurant as a way of making up for the loss of bottled water revenue.

- Wi-Fi connect is less available than other European countries. If a restaurant has it a 5sf charge is likely. When there is a connection, it's only for a few minutes until there is a cut off. Some public areas offer Wi-Fi but it only connects to local businesses.

Miscellaneous but special - While on this trip I had a hang up/worry/heart burn that brought about a special sweet missive from a special friend. This is what was said and it put my feet back on the ground. Pay attention to the First World versus Third World --

Pros:

- You enjoyed a dark chocolate bar, probably as a female coping mechanism.
- We are developing a true friendship as shown by our emails crossing, re the subject at hand.
- We are learning more about each other and won't have to waste valuable time filling in our history on future marathon trips that could be more wisely used partying, drinking and eating bread and dark chocolate.
- You can take joy in the fact that you learn, every day, how much you love your life and lifestyle, and do not wish to trade it in with that of others who you know, email, or meet.
- You are so fortunate to have these particular problems, that my Chinese daughter-in-law calls FIRST WORLD problems, and not the problems of hunger, fear, illness etc.
- You have loonie friends who will make loonie suggestions to help solve your issues/dilemmas.

Cons:

- Anything that's not really a first world problem.
- Issues relating to health, happiness and welfare of those you care about/love.

And then, in case I wasn't listening, from the healthy living director at one of my favorite places in the world – Kripalu:

The farmer's markets are bustling. The orchards are heavy with their bounty. The world is ripe with sights and smells; my favorite: the smell of homemade applesauce simmering on the stove. This is the season of the harvest, a time to celebrate the nourishing food and awe-inspiring beauty the earth brings forth. Taking a cue from nature, it is also a time to witness and celebrate the abundance in our lives. Being in nature can be a catalyst for connecting to your own sense of abundance. I felt this while walking in the woods with my 6-year-old daughter. I told her how lucky I felt for the abundance in my life: the beauty of where we live, our wonderful, crazy family, our friends. My daughter looked up at me with her no-nonsense expression and said, "Mom, you are over-the-top." We both laughed. So, I invite you to be "over the top". Look through the lens of abundance and see your world anew.

To cap it – Tom woke up with a thought and appreciation that we have not a care in the world. Not a problem, not a worry, not a bill, not any issue. Life is good!

What's next? That should be enough but I always end with a list of 'What's next?' We're quickly off to Buenos Aires for both a marathon and some touring followed by three hiking trips for me: Point Reyes National Seashore plus a marathon south of San Jose, then Tucson Arizona, quickly followed by Machu Picchu. December takes me to marathons in Dallas and Houston (one being the End of the World Marathon) before being optimistic and returning home for Marie's arrival. We will all three spend Christmas and New Year's in Vienna. January might be marathons in Anaheim and Redding CA before Sister Beverly arrives for our yearly Kripalu Yoga Retreat. Will daughter Alayna accept the

invitation to Maui or do I have to go alone? That's before an Israel trip for touring and the Jerusalem Marathon. I get home just in time for the three of us to venture to Paris for Spring Break. Is that a lucky kid? She fortunately seems to know it. April takes us to San Luis Obispo for a marathon, Santa Barbara for a week's apartment rental and a few days in LA before we venture to Vancouver for both touring and a marathon. There are various smaller trips before going to Madagascar for two hiking trips and a marathon in June. Enough? I still have some open slots

Trip Report -- Switzerland
December 23 to January 3, 2008

It was a winter wonderland when we landed at Zurich complete with light snow and the trees virtually covered with ice giving the landscape a Christmas card look. Not that it wasn't perfect timing, it being Christmas Eve.

The flight wasn't too unusual for us: Tom in first class and ignoring my pleas to bring me a port or a snack and can you believe that he even left behind the cute little goody bag? Me in cattle car but of course I get no sympathy since it was my choice. I look at my sitting in economy section as earning a good deal of money per hour and besides, I simply can't appreciate first class enough to pay up. My mother trained me well.

Our morning took us from the flight landing in Zurich to a cute little Opel rental car then driving the auto route towards Berne. Tom is at ease driving in Europe, but for that matter he's at ease at most things and has plenty of European driving time. Of course I needed coffee and a toilet stop and the best deal of the day was the supermarket with free coffee which we hit twice and worth maybe \$5 a cup. The German side of Switzerland is always neat and clean, but then what part of Switzerland isn't?

We've always said the roads are paved with gold in Switzerland. They build magnificent tunnels, feats of engineering in themselves, their mountains look like manicured moss gardens, and everywhere everything is simply perfect. Drive out of Switzerland in any direction and it's like a black curtain falls. They've never engaged in war and they've always had prosperity to include being the world's bankers. They might be cold hearted folks, somewhat like the Germans, but they've got a lot going for them (but foreigners who live or work in Switzerland say they are rarely included in social things.)

South of Berne we found another amazing bit of engineering – a roll-on-roll-off car train that takes you through a major tunnel in order to bypass the high and sometimes heavily snow covered passes. The cost is 20 SF (about \$17.85 at 1.12 francs to the dollar) and takes about 15 minutes and it seems like a deal and one that only the Swiss seem to be able to manage. We see more tunnels in the making but they've made many multi-mile ones since we started traveling there in the 70s. Most of our time was for hiking in the Alps and have left us with many fond memories and we were able to relive some of those on this trip Tom and I might differ on the priority of our favorite things in Switzerland but we generally agree that they are all excellent and include:

- Food and especially the Veal Zurichoise which Tom tasted first on Lake Lucerne in a small village called Vitznau at the foot of the Rigi Mountain, and Rosti, a grated potato pancake that might be served in a mountain hut or the finest restaurant and comes garnished with various ingredients from bacon to fried eggs.
- Big breakfast buffets that include many types of dried and cured meats, hams, sausages plus local and flavorful cheeses. Fruits are all of fresh, cut and/or dried. Cereals include the famous

Museli which I can only explain as being a grain similar to oatmeal in a yogurt type mixture with a mélange of small pieces of fruit. I wish I could find it in America.

- Room decorations which are almost spartan but made to last and most elegant. Simplistic elegance. Fixtures that will last years. Wood that is polished to a sheen and lasting through the generations. Lighting that is functional. Hotels always include the best down-feathered duvet-covered comforters and pillows in the entire world and which I've often tried to match in my American purchases but have been unable to at even the best of stores.
- The Alps which reach up well over a vertical mile (Jungfrau to the top of the Eiger as an example) and cover Switzerland and into some of Austria and France and are the most dramatic peaks we and most of the world has ever seen.
- Little villages that are quaint, comfortable, surrounded by the spectacular mountains and heaped in history.
- Hiking trails that are pristine and clearly marked and go on and on. One can hike for hours and never see another soul and suddenly come upon a hut that serves a delicious rosti with couple of fried eggs (and even furnishes a working toilet).

For Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, Tom had obtained reservations at a restaurant he found on his prior trip. Chez Heini is not only perhaps the best restaurant in Zermatt, but Dan Daniell, who is the 2nd generation owner (50 years in business), is both chef par excellence and singer too. He had just returned from New York City to sing at a special in the Hotel Waldorf and he generally performs nightly at his restaurant at around 10:30pm when the dinner is cleared away. He has a number of DVDs with some being works of art in conjunction with Abba who is his local friend and they perform to gain funds for children in need. We splurged both evenings and ordered the whole menu with multiple courses and as it turned out, this was one of the highlights of the trip because of the food of course but also because we had one of the finest, most professional, wonderful waitresses we've ever encountered. And because we've travelled a bunch, this is some compliment. Fortunately we had the same table and the same gal both nights (reserving three months in advance proved to be very prudent as the place was sold out every night for two weeks during the holidays and only one seating per table per evening meaning about a four hour meal each time). The calling card here is fabulous open fire roasted seasoned lamb in several forms, plus the best pommes dauphinoise (French scalloped potatoes with Gruyere or Emmenthal cheese) we've ever tasted. Black satin tablecloths, silver, crystal, custom designed dinnerware, special lighting, etc., etc. – you get the picture. No wonder it was booked solid.

Our hotel room in Zermatt was more of an emotional choice – we had stayed there the 1st, 2nd and 3rd time (maybe there was a 4th time also) when we were travelling to hike. The balcony of our favorite room in those days had a view of the Matterhorn but this time the exact room wasn't available but it was too cool to use the balcony anyway (about 32 most days). It was here on our first trip that we decided to try hiking, which effort simply built up more during each visit and eventually took us to other adjoining villages such as Saas Fe where we hiked the glacier, and Grindelwald where we returned time and again and would do so this trip too. Tom had been to Zermatt at least

three times since then without me, but that's another story(ies) too. Once with his friend Barry, once in the winter to ski, and once for our 60th and 70th birthdays when my company canceled MY trip and Tom added insult to injury by deciding to go on by himself. He insisted that the company not spoil HIS trip so he stayed in the large and special suites he'd reserved for US. (I thus had nothing for the company to reimburse but my air fare!)

On the other hand, we had never spent a great deal of time in Lucerne so this trip's hotel choice was new. (We'd stayed before on the lake in Weggis and also in Vitznau, the latter a few times.) True to form, we don't generally go backwards but the recent European trip to Paris and the Riviera had granted Tom an all new level of comfort and the related feeling of entitlement that he was reluctant to miss ever again. If you're looking for luxury and extravagance, everything is as perfect as imaginable at the Hotel Montana, high up a hill with balconies overlooking the lake and city. The attention to detail, the space, the amenities, the ambience, excellent service at all levels, justify the price. Tom chose well – again! Our room was so special that he didn't mind not getting the 2-level terraced suite that he'd been on a wait list for

Even if we weren't on a luxurious vacation, prices in Switzerland are shocking and simply NO better than those of the countries using the Euro. The Swiss Franc is nearly on par with the US Dollar at \$1.10 today, (but since we were there it will surely hit new lows, which always happens when we travel.) Sometimes we look at prices and think that it must be a mistake or that the decimal point is in the wrong place, but then reality sinks in. It's hard to have coffee for under \$5 and alcohol has always been expensive. At the Hotel Mont Cervin in Zermatt, a beer and house wine totaled 27.50. A main course at Chez Heini was 46. There are ways to get by on less, but true to form, we didn't do a lot of that on this trip. If your main meal is taken mid-day and the house menu is chosen, it's hugely more reasonable (which we did at least once.) Wine from the grocery store isn't as dear. We did picnic in the room for New Year's Eve by utilizing a deli, grocery and liquor store. (Not that staying in that room was any painful.) It wouldn't kill us to dine out on New Year's Eve but we rarely do anyway, everything is booked solid, and even more so, I'm delighted to NOT pay 250 (our hotel) to 440 (the Palace Hotel) per person. I suggested to Tom that I'd entertain him if he agreed to give up a restaurant that evening. That's a good deal, yes?

About the entertainment: Despite all the fireworks right out our window, and also all along the lakeside, as well as up and over the Pilatus Mountain coming from adjoining villages, despite the line up of lighted ferry boats in tandem on the lake, and despite the sounds of the cute little set of "Beatles" look alikes, all viewable from our twin balconies high up on the hillside, Tom still asked me "Where is the entertainment?"!!!

Touring in Zermatt was not extensive. We went up the cable car to see the Schwarzsee (translated to Black Lake) where I'd spent countless times trying to hike up, either never making it or when I did make it, the 'see' was dried up and I was ready to die of exhaustion having taken a wrong turn and going up the ski slope. (Tom saw it once with Barry but they cheated and took the cable car up.) The Schwarzsee, sits at the base of the Matterhorn, so we renewed acquaintances with both the frozen and snow covered lake and more importantly ate "rosti with egg on the top" for old-time sake, all with a super view. The cable tickets were 88 so the view needed to be good and the weather was crisp, clean, with only the perfect wisp of a cloud or two in the sky, being just enough to show how blue it

was. Speaking of crisp, I shivered the entire three days and Tom quickly bought me small crampons to attach to my shoes since the entire town was snow covered with a layer of ice underneath and of course it's incredibly hilly since the town is built in a valley and over time has run up the hillsides. We decided not to take the cog railway called the Gornergratt up to another peak, in part because we'd been there before and in part because the price was probably near the 200 mark per person. Shivering all the time wasn't much incentive to travel farther up the mountain either. We did very much enjoy however reminiscing about the hiking in these mountains, visiting the multitude of tiny villages, finding our hiking legs here in these Alps, and being constantly amazed at the gorgeous craggy peaks while walking in the mossy wonderlands. It's easy to want to climb a mountain because there's always something exciting on the other side, whether a glacier, a surprise avalanche, an ice palace, a lake or stream or waterfall, a little mountain hut serving my favorite, or a bunch of cows grazing and playing their musical bells that you've no doubt seen pictures of.

Staying seven days and seven nights in Lucerne might have been one or two too many, though had we taken in the mountain cable rides, seven days wouldn't have been enough. We'd already been up the mountains of the Rigi (up from Vitznau) and up Pilatus (from Lucerne) and while they were probably worthy of going up again, they were a day's adventure that we'd already done which made it harder to pay up the price of over 100 per person each. In addition the weather was quite cold even at the bottom and mostly cloudy making for less incentive even were the price not so dear. There was a new rotating cable car going up to Titlis but I'm not sure it was operating for the winter and the embarking point of the Village of Burkenstock (where we'd visited in the past) was basically closed for renovation. (The entire town, to include all hotels, was embarking on remaking themselves into the best resort in Europe and were virtually closed and not expected to open until sometime in 2009.) We did spend a day in Vitznau and another one in Zurich but I confess that they weren't found to be as exciting as earlier trips which might have been due to the cold and dreary weather. It was rarely over freezing and we didn't have very many clear or sunny skies.

No matter the weather, I was thinking how very lucky I was having just come from the Grand Canyon the week before. There I hiked down one mile. Here one would have to climb one mile up to reach the tallest peak. (Well, I couldn't but some do.) There the temperatures were similarly at or below freezing. There it was emotional for reaching my goal whereas here it was emotional for the memories of many trips in years past. When watching a film at Chez Heini and again at the ALPS IMAX, tears welled up and goose bumps persisted at my luck and fate. How super lucky I am to have Tom to travel with and to be able to do so in good health and in style too.

In Lucerne we enjoyed a unique experience called the Panorama. In the late 1800s artists would create 360 degree panoramas would travel from one site to another as a sort of motion picture and educational experience. This one had been created for a world's fair and depicted in the most amazing detail and in a trompe d'oeil effect, depicted the surrender of the French army in Switzerland marking the end of the Franco-Prussian war. It was then the Swiss people took in the zillions of French soldiers who were weak, exhausted and dying. It is no wonder the Swiss people have elected to repair and restore this 6000 square foot panorama as they were true heroes to agree to disarm and take in the soldiers. We really hadn't expected the Panorama to be so special and only bought the ticket as an after-thought and add-on to the Glacier Garden tour. Both were so good they were our main entertainment of the day and took going back for the 2nd day. We'd already taken a walking

tour of the Old Town the day before so maybe the cold helped us enjoy the indoor experiences of these two very different adventures.

You can never go home again but this was sure a good attempt. However, I think this is the last European trip for a very long while: The prices are simply too stupid and even crazier for two unemployed folks. (I usually keep track of what we spend but Tom asked that I not tell him the total cost this time.) We've seen a lot of Europe up close, lived within it for nearly five years, made multiple return trips as tourists (one of us more than the other – smile) and feel especially blessed to have been able to do so.

Later: I've held this report too long in part because Tom suggested that it wasn't my usual enthusiastic style. That set me to thinking and I realized he was right. I'm used to climbing a mountain, down into a canyon, winning a medal, or something that's a major headline to get my adrenaline pumping. Switzerland was lovely, I was lucky to be there, the company was great, but there was no major headline. Well, okay, maybe Switzerland should be a headline in itself. It is sort of like going to a beach as in going to the Alps. I don't know how to do that. I did think of some headlines from past trips:

1. Driving through the passes we were reminded of earlier days traveling in Switzerland. While assigned to SHAPE/NATO in Belgium, Tom had purchased a 1966 Ferrari 365GTC and to pick it up required a trip through the Alps and eventually into Vicenza, which is very near to Venice, to pick it up. That trip included excitement, drama, fear, new experiences, etc. not to mention a Ferrari that we were both fearful wouldn't make it home. The car was no more than picked up than it started to pour rain like we've never seen. Not even in the Far East in a typhoon. Sheets of water. Tom was driving this new (for us) and pricey (for us) car through new auto routes with a blanket of water making it nearly impossible to see. We were to follow friends who knew the way to a chateau we were staying at. Not being able to see, we lost them, plus any indication of where we were going or how to meet. Amazingly we all eventually met up at this huge old chateau that was turned into a hotel, but alas, the workers were on strike. Digger Odell was manning the reception and little dwarf was carrying bags but there were no other workers. We were given keys and allowed to choose our own suites and they were the biggest we'd ever seen with bathtubs too deep to get into and furniture that was massive. Since there was no restaurant available on site due to the strike, we were directed to a small town nearby called Mogliano and there we found a restaurant that has been in our memory bank forever. When we talk about our best experiences, that restaurant and their white truffles and their tour of the kitchens always comes up first and foremost to our mind. The next day our friends left early to return to Belgium and it was not until later in the day that we realized the Ferrari would not start. Three days later and three meals at the same restaurant later, the mechanic declares that "she just didn't want to run" and we started off with a chugging Ferrari and our hearts in our stomachs worrying whether "she" would make it. Close to Belgium Tom put his foot to the floor (as you can do on these auto routes) and "she" just purred all the way home. "She just wanted to run" -- finally!

2. Our Zermatt hotel in early days had a lovely balcony. I remember well being served breakfast there, with a view of the Matterhorn, and so cold you could see your breath, but so warm by the sun that even in your jammies it felt great and we watched the tiny hummingbirds at the window boxes. Perfect.

3. Balconies in Switzerland are always a source of joy and there's lots of super stories, not all of which I can tell, but all of which we remember well.
4. One of the highest peaks in the Grindelwald area is the Jungfrau and to get there one can hike a day out from town, through forests and waterfalls, then take the Jungfrauoch train up through the mountain to a very high peak where there's snow all the time. Inside is the Ice Castle that's a tunnel carved out of ice with ice carving statuary throughout. This is the closest I've been to the total whiteouts that you'd see on TV dramas. An extreme day.
5. Out of Zermatt, we once hiked up Sonnegga. Most people would take the funicular that runs within the mountain (and in later years we did) but we hiked and found a lovely lake on the top and a perfect place to picnic. When we were ready to descend, a storm started brewing and we tried to wait it out in a hunter's cabin. Within this cabin were about ten hunters who were drinking snappes or eau d' vie of which they offered to share. With time running out, we had to descend in the rain and we were so totally unprepared that by the time we got into our room and the hot shower, we were near hypothermia and the shower stung relentlessly. We learned to carry more gear when hiking distances. Still a memorable experience.
6. Out of Grindelwald, we'd hiked through the forests, up past villages set against the mountainsides, by the glaciers, and were complimenting ourselves on our feat and recognizing that we'd not seen a single person for hours when suddenly out of nowhere appeared a little old lady with her pocketbook and regular street shoes and not seeming to have the slightest difficulty. I guess she was Swiss.
7. Out of Saas Fe, the desire to hike a glacier was so overpowering that we both purchased the most wildly expensive hiking shoes so that we could realize our dream and off we went. The shoes never quite worked but they did get us across the glacier. The boots are made of different proportions for Europeans so they were discarded eventually since the fit was never right. A shame.

Switzerland Adventure, June 2005

By Tom without Diana

Continental sure does it right in their first (now called business) class with great seats, lot of distance between, nice food, good entertainment system and pleasant service. So the eight hours or so to Zurich went very quickly. Then on a train to the central station, taxi to Avis and I was on my way south taking the secondary roads and just moseying along and enjoying renewing my acquaintance with this wonderful country. The fields and forests were just as lush and green as I'd remembered and passing through the many little villages reminded me how organized, civilized, and clean the Swiss are. My car was, fortunately, air conditioned as the weather was quite warm, maybe low eighties, and the first feel of summer they'd had.

Spent about three hours in Lucerne – one of my favorite cities, walking and clicking away with the camera, and enjoying familiar sights and sites, from the ancient wooden bridges to the powerful river coming off the alpine lake, full with the snow melt. Lunch by the river made more enjoyable by the cooling breeze, watching the swans and ducks bob and beg for food from willing diners.

Then back in the car heading further south to my next destination – another favorite city – Bern (or sometimes, Berne). My hotel for the two nights was appropriately named Belle Epoch with decoration, artwork and flavor of that period. I was given a charming room on the quiet side and on the fourth floor looking out over the familiar red roof tiles of this very old and quaint city on the wide and powerful Aare River. It too was full and fast from the spring melt. I even saw a young man who'd tied a long rope to the side in the big curve around old town, and was actually surfing! in the fast current. How ingenious. In the evening, everyone was eating outdoors, all over town as the temperature was perfect and the sky clear with nearly a full moon rising. Surprisingly, it doesn't get dark until nearly 9:30 or so.

I had one of our favorite meals – the famous fried potato dish called Roesti -- and sausage. What a treat. I've tried many times to duplicate these at home but only get close.

Then it was early to bed and early to rise and walk up to the wonderful rose garden with all the blooms showing their very best. I had to restrain myself a bit to stop taking pictures. There is a nice water feature with includes a falls feeding a pond with several large pots of water lilies. I didn't see any fish but I learned I was wrong when a Great Blue heron glided in and perched himself on the edge. He seemed quite oblivious to people and very focused on a nearby water lily. Then all of a sudden he dove into the lily and came up with a good sized goldfish for breakfast. I spent the rest of the day walking old town and some middle to upper class neighborhoods, enjoying seeing how the Bernese lived. Finally, as the day was getting pretty warm again, I went off to my hotel to read a bit and nap and think about dinner.

I decided to try to find another of my favorite dishes – veal Zurichoise – small pieces of veal and mushroom done up in a cream sauce to die for. I asked the gal at the hotel I might find it and she gave directions but unfortunately, being Sunday, they were closed (which I found to be the case with many others). Not to be deterred, I went to the top hotel in town where I knew they had a spectacular terrace restaurant with a major view. I asked to look at the menu but was disappointed to learn, no

Zurichoise. I discussed this with the maitre d' who gave me the name and directions to a place nearby. CLOSED! I continued the search on my own but without success. So I went back to the ritzy terrace, told him my sad story, ordered a small beer (I'd worked up a thirst by then). In a few minutes he came back to tell me he'd explained my plight to the chef and that the chef decided he would fix the dish especially for me. Well, it was super and I gave it a full 10. You just never know. And while waiting for a dining experience, Mother Nature provided me with an astonishing array of pinks and gold reflections off of puffy white clouds set behind the Alps that had not been visible until that moment of the sunset. I tried and got close but somehow knew I couldn't capture that image and share it as I saw it. It is certainly etched in MY memory bank though.

Off to an early start the next morning on the way to another great spot – Grindelwald. We'd been there several times but the last time was probably '95 and though I tried booking into the same hotel we'd so enjoyed, was disappointed to learn they were undergoing renovations and would be closed. I took their suggested alternative and reserved for the five nights.

On the way I stopped in the small town of Thun which is on a lake of the same name with a backdrop of mountains and a most unique shopping area where there are shops under the elevated sidewalk above street level. Nice walk around including a visit to an ancient castle high atop a mound at the edge of the lake. Then another cup of that wonderful coffee with hot milk and on my to the next stop – Interlaken – literally, the town between two lakes. I'd forgotten how commercial and touristy it is so just drove through to the end of a very narrow and twisting little road, right along the edge of the lake. Another wandering tour then lunch in the sun with the water at my elbow, finally arriving in Grindelwald at 3:30. and finding my alternate hotel was very nice and that they'd given me the room I'd asked for. It had the great view I'd remembered. It turns out that the hotel I would have preferred was still battling the authorities over their building permit and was in fact, still open. Oh well. The important thing is that the restaurant was open (however, it turned out to have dropped a bit from earlier days – still good though).

As an aside, I'd gone on line before starting the adventure to find a telephone calling card that would allow me to call Diana daily instead of writing a one page daily fax as we'd done so many times in the past. For twenty bucks I found the best deal for 259 minutes at 7.9 cents a minute with no connection charge and a toll free access number in Switzerland. It worked great and allowed for the exchange of a lot more information than the one page note.

As another aside – I feel so fortunate to be able to take off and do this sort of thing -- physically, mentally and financially. Life is good.

Itinerary

Mon Sep 10, 2012

1:15pm Order car service pick up
3:25pm Depart EWR via CO#4922 to Washington DC Dulles IAD
4:55pm Arrive Washington DC Dulles IAD for plane change

6:04pm Depart Washington DC Dulles IAD via UA#936

Tue Sep 11

8:05am Arrive Zurich Switzerland and drive to Grindelwald

Rental Car A VW Golf

Hotel Hotel Gletschergarten for 6 nights
Obere Gletscherstrasse 1, Grindelwald, 3818 Switzerland
Tele 41 33 853 17 21 Fax 41 33 853 29 57

Mon Sep 17

Depart Grindelwald via car and drive to Lucerne

Hotel Art Deco Hotel Montana for 3 nights
Adligenswilerstrasse 22, Lucerne, 6002 Switzerland
Tele 41 41 419 00 00 Fax 41 41 419 0001

Thu Sep 20

Depart Lucerne via car to Zurich

Hotel Zurich Marriott Hotel for 4 nights (thanks to Loudean!)
Neumehlequai 42, Zurich 8001 Switzerland Tele 41 44 30 7070 Fax 41 44 360 7777

Mon Sep 24

11:55am Depart Zurich Switzerland ZRH via UA#937
3:16pm Arrive Washington DC Dulles IAD for plane change

5:15pm Depart Washington DC Dulles IAD via CO#4922
6:55pm Arrive Newark