Dramatic differences in the healthcare and life expectancy of people living in Britain and Switzerland are revealed in recent healthcare statistics published by the OECD, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development*.  

With its crisp mountain air and clean environment, Switzerland is traditionally seen as a healthy nation while the UK is perceived as industrialised, overcrowded and less healthy and these stereotypes have been justified by the OECD findings.  

They show that Switzerland’s mortality rates are lower, waiting times are shorter and medical technology is more advanced resulting in patient satisfaction levels that are the highest in Europe.  

While Switzerland’s lead may be partly due to its geography, it is also supported by the country’s healthcare system which is seen as one of the world’s finest.  

Financed through a tightly regulated insurance industry it enables the people to decide how much they spend on their healthcare rather than being financed by taxation and under Government control, which is the case with the UK’s National Health Service.  

The result is a comprehensive and universal service with fewer inequalities and better access to healthcare than in the UK.  

However, these benefits come at a cost. OECD figures show that Switzerland outlays 10.8 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP), second only to Norway and the United States. The UK spends just 8.4 per cent, putting it in 16th position among the OECD’s 33 member states.  

Switzerland spends €3,640 a year per capita while the UK spends €2,461. However, in Switzerland a greater proportion goes on private healthcare with a spend of €1,487 as opposed to €428 in the UK.  

The bottom line is that you can expect to live longer in Switzerland where average life expectancy from birth is 81.7 years (women 84.2, men 79) compared with 79.4 years in the UK (women 81.6, men 77.2).  

Life expectancy at 65 is also higher with women tipped to live for a further 22.2 years in Switzerland and 20.1 years in the UK and men anticipated to live for a further 18.6 years in Switzerland but 17.4 in the UK.  

Also, Swiss hospitals are better equipped with nearly three times more Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scanners and more than four times the number of Computerised Tomography (CT) scanners than in the UK.  

*Formed in 1961, the OECD provides a setting where the governments of 33 countries compare policy experiences, seek answers to common problems, identify good practice and coordinate domestic and international policies. Its aims are to support economic growth, boost employment and raise living standards.
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Another wartime Swiss hero ‘who should be honoured at Penthes’

It’s the forgotten story of a Swiss living in the UK who during the war volunteered to join the Royal Navy as a sick bay attendant and was to heroically lose his own life while saving others in the Normandy invasion.

The remarkable story of Arturo Fanconi is recalled in a letter to the Swiss Review from a reader living in Hove.

Rudy Compagnoni writes:
I read with interest the article concerning the recognition of Cpl. Schiess at the Château de Penthes in Geneva.
I believe another Swiss should be equally honoured.

Arturo Fanconi, whose parents came from Poschiavo in the Grisons, and who had an interest in first aid, volunteered as a sick bay attendant in the Royal Navy.

He was present at the Utah beach in Normandy on D-Day in June, 1944. He repeatedly went into a minefield to treat and retrieve wounded Americans until he was himself killed.

For this he was awarded the Prince Albert Medal in gold. The highest award for saving life. Incidentally it was the final time this decoration was awarded.

If so happens that while visiting Normandy some years ago we visited a museum at Quinville near Utah beach where this heroic event is recorded – complete with photo and copy of the citation.

I also saw a letter written by the colonel of the American regiment involved.

My own family also comes from Poschiavo and they knew Arturo’s family. I also met Arturo when he visited us on leave. His family live in Ilminster, Somerset.

I believe that after the war a deputation from Poschiavo visited Arturo’s grave at a Normandy cemetery.

With the importance of Henri Dunant and connection with the Red Cross I feel that Arturo’s bravery should also be recorded at the Château de Penthes.
London Swiss celebrate National Day in the capital’s oldest college

Accordionist and restaurateur Armin Lötscher livens up the event with those traditional Swiss songs that always bring back fond memories of the homeland.
There was an exciting new location for Swiss living in London for their annual celebration of Swiss National Day – and what a superb venue it turned out to be.

University College London, acclaimed as the fourth top university in the world, has 648 professors – far more than any other university in the UK – and an academic and research staff of more than 4,000. It has a student community of 22,000, almost a third of them from more than 140 countries outside the UK.

It was this academic powerhouse that played host for the first time to the many Swiss societies and clubs in the London area for a joint celebration of National Day, and the event attracted more than 350 Swiss, including many with their English friends.

Leading members of the Swiss community turned up to ensure everything went off without a hitch, including Ambassador Alexis Lautenberg using the occasion to say goodbye. Embassy chef Jacques Pasquier was there with his team of helpers to look after the food. Celebrity chef Anton Mosimann had designed a superb Mosimann special salad, and top Ticinese architect Ian Giuliani was head barman in charge of a tempting array of drinks.

And there was music galore to keep everyone on their toes. Top musician Claudio Alldi, whose wife is Swiss, brought along his famous orchestra, Armin Lütscher with his accordion led the lively children's lampion parade, and there was a surprise appearance of Frances Jones with her alphorn.

In many parts of Britain other Swiss clubs were celebrating National Day in their own individual way. At the event in Manchester, which always attracts a large number of Swiss from many parts of the Northwest, professional horn players Helen and Neil Grundy brought along their alphorns. And over in Yorkshire Swiss club members went really up in the world by getting together at the ancient Cow and Calf Inn at the top of Ilkley Moor with its very spectacular views of picturesque Wharfedale, one of the longest and most beautiful valleys in the county.

Thanks to Margrit Lyster for providing additional information about this event.
Leading Swiss kitchen appliance firm V-ZUG has come up with an alternative solution for wealthy British investors whose income has been decimated by the recession. Take the money out of shares and make a lifestyle investment in a top quality kitchen!

As potential clients move their cash around in an attempt to weather the financial storm, many are seeking new ideas. V-ZUG believes that purchasing a high-end kitchen is a good alternative investment and this is one of the reasons why it has decided to move into the UK market at a time when others are pulling out.

"Time will tell whether it is a good idea. But managing director Tim Hutchinson, who has been importing Swiss goods to the UK for 17 years, is confident that the quality of its products will prevail. "Ours is a very special range indeed and we intend to protect it carefully and wisely," he says. "We are offering a splendid and genuinely different proposition for British consumers who are looking for top quality kitchen appliances that have their own identity and don't follow the crowd."

To protect its brand, V-ZUG will not be seen on every high street but will be sold through special ‘destination’ studios. Earlier this year it opened its new UK showroom and distribution centre which includes a fully working training kitchen. For further details, visit www.vzug.co.uk.

Part of the fully working training kitchen in the V-Zug training centre

New kit deals
Geneva-based sportswear supplier Burrda has signed kit deals with rugby’s Northampton Saints and football’s Wolverhampton Wanderers, Leicester City and Watford. It is also the official supplier to the British Handball Association.

Tattoo contract
Swiss event infrastructure supplier NUSSLI has won a contract for planning and construction of the grandstand at the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoos for 2011 and 2012.

No icing on this cake
Swiss cheese specialist Emmi has teamed up with Eric Lanlard, the star of Channel 4’s Glamour Puds, to create a stunning wedding cake made entirely of cheese. The five-tiered masterpiece featured award winning cheeses from the Emmi range including Tête de Moine which was used for the top section and to create the rosettes that decorated the cake.
New Swiss Ambassador Anton Thalmann: ‘I look forward to a long and profitable acquaintance with the Swiss community in this country’

Anton Thalmann, who has succeeded Alexis Lautenberg as Swiss Ambassador in London, has sent this message to readers of the Swiss Review:

I am delighted to extend a warm greeting to all my fellow citizens via the pages of the Swiss Review as I begin my term as Ambassador of Switzerland in the United Kingdom. Switzerland and the UK have a long and strong shared history, and it is my hope and expectation that the ties that bind us will only strengthen further in the coming years.

In an increasingly globalised world, our activities here at the Embassy aim to highlight both the distinctive specificities of Swiss culture and society, and the fruitful collaborations and exchanges we can share throughout the UK as part of our public diplomacy programme.

I look forward to a long and profitable acquaintance with the Swiss community in all parts of the country as part of this work, and wish you all every success in your continuing endeavours.

Prize winning pianist Francesco in Award Concert tour

One of the first tasks for Ambassador Thalmann when he arrived in London was to confirm the Swiss Ambassador’s Award Concert tour which has become a regular event in the Swiss community calendar. This year’s tour features young Swiss pianist Francesco Piemontesi, with performances at the Wigmore Hall in London on October 26, Manchester Cathedral on October 27 and St Cecilia’s Hall, Edinburgh on October 28.

Born in 1983, Francesco studied with Lora Doallo in Lugano and with Arie Vardi in Hanover. He first came to international prominence as a prize winner in the 2007 Queen Elizabeth Competition in Brussels and through his close collaboration with the pianists Alfred Brendel, Cécile Ousset, Alexis Weissenberg and Mitsuko Ucida. In 2009, he received a fellowship from the Borletti-Buitoni Trust and was also announced as a BBC New Generation Artist. Highlights of his programme include Bach’s Partita no 1, Schubert’s Piano Sonata D 664, Liszt’s La Vallée d’Obermann and Schumann’s Fantasie.

With a particular interest in chamber music, he has performed as soloist with leading orchestras and has recorded for EMI Classics.

The First of August Committee

would like to thank the main sponsors of the National Day celebration – Carré d’Ache, V-ZUG and Swisscanto – plus generous donations from the New Helvetic Society, Unione Ticinese, City Swiss Club and the Swiss Church. Also more than 250 prizes, including SWISS air tickets, hotel stays in Switzerland and London, Swiss rail passes, a Mondaine clock and a Nespresso coffee machine.

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Poor punctuality lands easyJet in trouble

It’s the airline that carries more passengers between the UK and Switzerland than any other. But now easyJet is at the centre of a growing row concerning poor punctuality. Thousands of passengers have complained about unacceptable delays, cancellations and supplementary charges. Swiss newspapers have criticised the budget airline. And even its founder, Sir Stelios Haji-Ioannou has joined the outcry.

Sir Stelios quit the board in May in a row over strategy but he is still the largest single shareholder with 38 per cent of shares. His private holding company, easyGroup, owns the ‘easy’ brand and licences. Following reports that less than 50 per cent of easyJet’s international flights left the UK’s Gatwick airport on time, Stelios sent a scathing letter to chairman Sir Michael Rake demanding that the company improve its performance by October 17.

If there is no improvement, he warned he would terminate the airline’s ability to use the ‘easy’ name and orange brand.

easyJet Chief Executive Carolyn McCall has admitted that they have an issue with punctuality and put it down to crew shortages which were being investigated.

The company maintains that it has not breached any conditions that would allow Stelios to terminate its brand licence.

Switzerland has more than a passing interest in easyJet’s activities. Last year the operator carried four million passengers to and from Geneva airport, making it the No 1 airline with 38 per cent of the market. It employs 362 airport staff and creates more than 4,000 jobs in the Geneva region. Its importance to the region’s economy is even stronger during the Winter when it runs 50 flights a day between British airports and Geneva, carrying 10,000 British skiers each week-end.

Earlier this year, easyJet concluded a court battle with Stelios over the use of the licence for non-airline products such as car hire while he wants 75 per cent of its profits to come from air transport. However, despite taking a £65m hit from the volcano disruptions, easyJet recently posted a 5.3 per cent rise in three-month revenue to £759.2 million. It still expects full-year pre-tax profits in the range of £100-150 million.

Swiss Christmas Fair

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