

1st World Tourism Forum Lucerne (WTFL)

Welcome by Kurt Zibung, Regierungsrat/Präsident ZVDK (April 22, 2009)

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,
dear participants of the first World Tourism Forum Lucerne

Welcome to Switzerland and to the beautiful city of Lucerne!
We are very proud to have you here – in the heart of Switzerland, in Central Switzerland at the Lake Lucerne Region. The city, the lake, the mountains – that's our slogan and that's what you will see during your stay with us.

As the representative of the cantons of Central Switzerland - having the patronage of the first World Tourism Forum Lucerne - and of the political authorities I'm personally very happy to have you all here and to follow the discussions and speeches during the next days.

Lucerne is a city of tourism: so tourism here is generating a direct sales volume of 1.5 billions Swiss Francs.

9% of all jobs are reliant directly or indirectly on tourism. Therefore tourism is a very important factor for the regional economy and that's why Lucerne is the perfect place to discuss the future developments of this industry. We are talking about an industry which first and foremost stands for emotionality and hospitality. On this note I'm sure you will enjoy a pleasant stay with us.

Lucerne is an internationally well known first class tourism brand and there are many reasons why holiday dreams of many people around the world come true here:

Our region is also called the "Essence of Switzerland" because it encompasses all the merits of our country: Located in the heart of Switzerland – which also means in the heart of Europe - Lucerne and Lake Lucerne Region is famous for its outstanding culture, the beautiful lake and the near mountains.

The Festival-City Lucerne is famous for its music and culture events which attracts thousands of visitors during the whole year. The world famous Lucerne Festival, the Blue Balls Festival or the international TV festival Rose d'Or are just some examples of how the international stage is set in Lucerne.

There are world famous sights like the landmark of our city the chapel bridge with the water tower and many more historic sights which have survived for centuries. But also the avantgarde, in the form of the Culture and Congress Center – designed by Jean Nouvel is at home in here.

Lucerne is the gateway to a very special part of the world: In just one hour from here you will stand on Mount Pilatus, Mount Titlis or Mount Rigi. There is the outstanding lake with a large fleet which invites our guests to an excursion on one of the historic steam boats. There are short ways, everything is close-by and our guests appreciate

our outstanding public transport system. You see Lucerne can be described very easily: The City. The Lake. The Mountains.

More than 700 years ago, some kilometres from here, on a meadow on the shores of the Lake near the village of Seelisberg there was the famous "Rütli Schwur". The legendary oath of the old Swiss Confederacy: Three oath takers representing the cantons of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden met to seal an alliance. This was the birthday of Switzerland. The oath is notably featured in the William Tell Drama by Friedrich Schiller.

Lake Lucerne was not only the birthplace of Switzerland but also a very important region regarding the origin of tourism in Europe and in the Alpine region. Starting back in 1760 there were the first foreign pioneers exploring the beautiful landscape around the Alps. In 1845 the first luxury hotel, the Hotel Schweizerhof, welcomed the first guests in Lucerne. Soon more hotel openings followed.

The Alpine regions were developed by building the first cog railroads and tracks: In Central Switzerland innovative engineers gave Mt. Pilatus the world's steepest cog-railway and Mt. Rigi Europe's first mountain railway.

Then in 1852, railway construction introduced the second phase of Lucerne's touristic development. Rail connections opened to Basel, Zurich, Berne and to Flüelen on the line to the Gotthard Pass. This advantageous situation was destined to make Lucerne a watering hole for the elite of all Europe.

So we are proud to see back to a very long history of tourism which is also linked to the touristic importance of the Alps. The Alps are one of the most important tourism destinations worldwide: One fourth of the world tourism happens in the Alpine region. And if you will have the opportunity to explore the Lake Lucerne Region you will see why the Alpine region inspires so many people.

I personally invite you to enjoy the Lake Lucerne spirit with Central Switzerland and I wish you a successful forum with an outstanding exchange of experiences and an agreeable time in Lucerne.

I would like to hand over now to Martin Barth, General Manager of the World Tourism Forum Lucerne

Thank you.