

# Focus on stamps

The Collector's Magazine

2/2008

**Domestic birds:**  
Three new motifs round  
off definitive series

**Pro Patria special stamps:**  
Discover Switzerland on  
its cultural routes

**2008 Olympic Games:**  
Swiss Post pays tribute  
to three disciplines

Special stamp captures football fever

# Go, Switzerland

**SWISS POST** 

# Continuing commitment to historical routes



First-day cover motif

Special stamps with surcharge Pro Patria – Cultural Routes in Switzerland

**Sales**  
Philately:  
From 24.4.2008  
until 31.12.2008,  
while stocks last  
Post offices:  
From 8.5.2008  
until 31.8.2008,  
while stocks last

**Validity**  
Unlimited from 8.5.2008

Unstamped covers will be available for CHF 0.90 each at all philatelic salespoints and the Stamps & Philately Customer Service from 17.4.2008.

**Printing**  
Offset, 4-colour;  
Bagel-Security-Print  
Düsseldorf, Germany

**Sizes**  
Stamps: 33×28 mm  
Sheet: 194×145 mm  
(4 rows of 5 stamps)

**Paper**  
White stamp paper,  
with optical brightener,  
mat gummed, 110 gm<sup>2</sup>

**Perforation**  
13½/12½

**Designer**  
Vito Noto, Cadro-Lugano

First-day cancellation



The campaign and collection launched in 2007 to preserve and foster cultural treasures with a close link to Switzerland's key historical transport routes is continuing in 2008, in response to a proven need to protect these vital monuments to bygone architecture and travel. Swiss Post is issuing four special stamps in support of Pro Patria's work.

Swiss Post and the Swiss Pro Patria Foundation are once again dedicating this year's Pro Patria stamps to the theme of "Cultural Routes in Switzerland", following on from the first issue in this three-part set (2007–2009) that spotlighted major historical travel and trade routes through Switzerland. The stamp premium will enable Pro Patria to duly maintain its earmarked fund in line with demand.

**Transport history on stamps**  
Four more transport routes defined by ViaStoria, Berne University's Center of Transport History, are being showcased in 2008: the ViaSbrinz, the ViaRomana,

the ViaValtellina and the ViaStockalper. Once again, stamps that bear witness to Switzerland's transport history will draw attention to the country's natural beauty as well as to selected historical monuments. The many positive reactions to last year's stamps show that these stylishly designed and impeccably printed miniature works of art stimulate the public's curiosity and desire to go on fascinating journeys of discovery. So it is worth taking a closer look at the work of ViaStoria, because the "Cultural Routes in Switzerland" project is based on more than twenty years of research into the history of transport in Switzerland. This academic

groundwork has made it possible to provide sound historical facts about trade and tourism, and about the joys and tribulations of travelling in centuries past, as well as linking history to modern-day love of life and travel.

**Preserving monuments is the goal**  
With its broad-based campaign on behalf of "Cultural Routes in Switzerland", the Swiss Pro Patria Foundation is pursuing two goals. First, it wants to raise awareness of a cultural project of national importance among a wider public, both at home and abroad. And second, in the coming years, it wants to provide both conceptual and tangible support for preserving and restoring cultural monuments and structures that testify to transport history and making them accessible to the general public. Now that federal funding for cultural monument work has been slashed, Pro Patria's targeted subsidies are likely to be in even greater demand in future. The Swiss Pro Patria Foundation ensures its support goes only to exceptional restoration projects that are monitored by official cultural heritage units. By purchasing Pro Patria stamps, the people of Switzerland and visitors help establish the concept of "Cultural Routes in Switzerland" in our national cultural awareness. The stamps themselves put this message across, and the premium helps to fund specific projects.

ViaSbrinz:  
The 18th century Ladsteg bridge in the Ägenen Valley testifies to the erstwhile importance of the Gries Pass route.



CHF 0.85+0.40:  
The "Hälenplatte" (Canton Berne)  
Schnitzturm Tower, Stansstad (Canton Nidwalden)

**ViaSbrinz: where mule trains once passed**

In the late Middle Ages, the mature hard cheese now known as "Sbrinz" was a big-selling Central Swiss export to markets in northern Italy. And it was largely due to it that the mule track over the Grimsel and Gries Passes to Domodossola became a well developed commercial route. On its way from Lake Lucerne via the central Alps to the Formazza Valley, home of the Walser, the ViaSbrinz traverses fascinating natural and cultural landscapes. The Hälenplatte, an impressive sight on the ViaSbrinz, lies on the Berne side of the Grimsel Pass between Handegg and the Räterichsboden lake. Here, the mule track crosses the notorious "Häle Platte" referred to in many a historical travel narrative. At some unknown time, steps and holes for hand-rail posts were cut into the rock which had been polished smooth by the glacier. Glaciologist Louis Agassiz was more specific about dates, carving an inscription into the rock in 1838. A special landmark keeps watch over Lake Lucerne at Stansstad: the "Schnitzturm" Tower. First chronicled in 1428, it was part of the late medieval fortifications and still features in Stansstad's coat of arms. Rows of wooden stakes rammed into the lakebed used to protect it against intruders. The tower is open to visitors from May till September. Its strategic location between two lakes also made Stansstad useful for trade, and for many years, the village served as a transhipment point for mule trains, and later as a customs and warehousing point.



ViaSbrinz:  
impressive routes in the area near the Grimsel Pass.



**"Cultural Routes in Switzerland"**

The "Cultural Routes in Switzerland" project stands for a completely new take on Switzerland's cultural landscape, involving carefree walks, good food and drink, stylish overnight accommodation and a chance to relish the beauty of Switzerland through all five senses. A network of twelve national cultural routes ("Via Routes") and numerous regional ones ("ViaRegio Routes") follow historical transport routes, opening up the attractions of our man-made and natural landscape. Bookable discovery packages include overnight stays, information about routes, museum admission and in some cases luggage transport, as well as tickets for transport and lunch packs. In combining tourism and agricultural offers, the tourism programme promotes sustainable development in the regions along the historical transport routes, at the same time ensuring their appropriate use and preservation.

**For information, contact**

www.kulturwege-schweiz.ch  
ViaStoria – Center of Transport History  
Finkenhubelweg 11, 3012 Berne/Switzerland

ViaRomana (left): Studen on the Jäissberg (Canton Berne), once known as "Petinesca", used to be a Roman way station. Impressive remains of the gate walls have survived.

ViaValtellina (centre): Two "crot", traditional dairy cellars, are now used to store wine at Sassal Mason south-east of the top of the Bernina Pass.

ViaStockalper (right): The Old Hospice south of the top of the Simplon Pass served as accommodation for travellers, a transshipment point for mule trains and the summer residence of merchant Kaspar Jodok von Stockalper.



CHF 0.85+0.40:  
East Gate, Avenches (Canton Vaud)  
Columns at Nyon (Canton Vaud)

**ViaRomana: discovering the ruins of the Roman Empire**

Nearly 2,000 years after their zenith, Roman building techniques and Roman culture continue to fascinate us. On "Roman roads" (some genuine, others allegedly so) redolent with atmosphere, the ViaRomana follows part of the ancient route from Rome via Geneva (Genava) and Augst (Augusta Raurica) to what was then "Germania". It leads past the ruins of the Roman Empire, linking museums that display the major finds of the Roman Age in Switzerland.

The East Gate in Avenches is a commanding testimony to the past. Today, this reconstructed gate stands alone in a field, but it was once part of a city wall 5.5 kilometres long with 73 towers, mainly for ideological and representative purposes. Travellers entering the East Gate had an awe-inspiring first impression of "Aventicum", the Helvetian capital, which reached its prime in 71 AD when it was made a Roman colony.

The two columns from Nyon, near Lake Geneva, date from the middle of the first century AD. Once part of the portico that demarcated the sacred area of a forum, they were re-erected on the Esplanade des Marronniers in 1958 to commemorate the town's 2000th anniversary. It is worth taking a look at the column cornices whose style suggests they were carved by artisans from central France, whereas the limestone they are made of came from the base of the nearby Jura hills.

**Texts:** Roman G. Schönauer, General Secretary of the Swiss Pro Patria Foundation (introduction) and Caroline Süess, ViaStoria – Center of Transport History (stamp motif commentaries)

**Photos:** Heinz Dieter Finck, © ViaStoria

**Further information can be obtained from:**

Swiss Pro Patria Foundation  
Clausiusstrasse 45  
8006 Zurich  
Tel. +41 (0)44 265 11 60  
Fax +41 (0)44 265 11 69  
www.propatria.ch



CHF 1.00+0.50:  
Lane below Cavaglia (Grisons)  
Restaurant Dürrboden (Grisons)

**ViaValtellina: Valtellina wine links three Alpine cultures**

People in Graubünden and Vorarlberg have been enjoying Valtellina wine for centuries. Mule trains used to carry it north over the Bernina Pass, the Scaletta Pass and the Schlappinerjoch. This valuable liquid was beverage, currency, wage component and medicine rolled into one. The other main import from the south was salt. In return, there was great demand for cattle and horses from the north in markets in Lugano, Tirano or the Vinschgau. Nowadays, Valtellina wine travels over the Alps on other routes, but the traditional mule track has now been revived as the ViaValtellina, linking three cultures and three language regions.

The mountain-cum-mule track from Cavaglia to Poschivo features long paved sections and is one of the most attractive parts of the ViaValtellina. Near Cadera, above Poschivo, the path becomes a magnificent lane, bordered on both sides by dry stone walls, that traverses farming land. The region retains many traces of other mule tracks. There was never just one historical route. Depending on conditions, the muleteers selected the most convenient itinerary.

A long way further north, between Davos and the Scaletta Pass, the mule track passes through the tranquil Dischma Valley where the only lodging available to muleteers was the old Dürrboden Inn. It must have done great business, especially in autumn and winter, because oxen and sledges could transport much bigger loads than mules and horses in summer.



CHF 1.00+0.50:  
Lane near Engi (Canton Valais)  
Old Hospice (Canton Valais)

**ViaStockalper: traces of a long-gone commercial empire**

Over 300 years ago, the Brig merchant Kaspar Jodok von Stockalper (1609–1691) improved the mule track over the Simplon Pass, thus laying the foundation for his commercial empire. At just 2006 metres above sea-level, this pass had been a strategic link between Valais and Italy from time immemorial, but neither the medieval muleteers nor Napoleon Bonaparte controlled it like Stockalper. At a politically turbulent time, the "King of the Simplon" was master of this transit route through the Alps and employed 200 muleteers. The mule track was all but forgotten until the 1990s when it was revived as a cultural route.

One of the most delightful sections of the ViaStockalper is to be found on the south side of the Pass. Near Engi, the path becomes a narrow lane passing through magnificent pastures, from which it is separated by piles of loose boulders and dry stone walls, and continues on towards the village of Simplon with sections over mighty flagstones.

Many buildings still testify to the infrastructure used by Stockalper to secure the pass. A kilometre south of the top of the pass, there is the old, six-storey hospice which was built in 1666 to replace the medieval hospice of the Knights of St John. Stockalper used the upper two floors as his summer residence and equipped the lower ones as storage space and free accommodation for poor travellers. The Old Hospice now belongs to the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS).

**Presentation of the special stamp "Via Valtellina"**

The special stamp Pro Patria "Via Valtellina" will be presented at Casa Torre in Poschivo (GR), May 7, 2008 at 10 am. Vito Noto, the graphic artist of the special stamp, will sign the philatelic products. Swiss Post will have a sales booth from 11:00 until 12:30 where philatelic products of this issue will be available.

**Stamp booklet**

A booklet contains ten special stamps selected from the latest Pro Patria issue: six CHF 0.85+0.40 stamps (ViaSbrinz) and four CHF 1.00+0.50 stamps (ViaStockalper), plus CHF 1.00 for the cover = selling price of CHF 14.50. The stamp booklet is available from the Swiss Pro Patria Foundation, Clausiusstrasse 45, 8006 Zurich, from our PhilaShop (www.swisspost.ch/philashop) and at Swiss Post philatelic salespoints.

