

# Focus on stamps

The Collector's Magazine

2/2009

Pro Patria centenary:  
Miniature sheet honours  
cultural commitment

Old trees: new special  
stamps with  
birch, oak and willow

Europa stamp:  
"Helvetia" in the sky  
and a competition

Graphics industry special stamp

## From Gutenberg to the Internet

**SWISS POST** 

## Today's Pro Patria Foundation has a stronger cultural commitment



PRO PATRIA 2009

First-day cover motif

Special stamps with surcharge  
Pro Patria – Cultural Routes in Switzerland

Sales  
Philately:  
From 22.4.2009  
until 31.12.2009,  
while stocks last  
Post offices:  
From 8.5.2009  
until 31.8.2009,  
while stocks last

Validity  
Unlimited from 8.5.2009

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

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

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

Perforation  
13¼/12¼

Designer  
Vito Noto, Cadro-Lugano

First-day cancellation



2009 marks the centenary of the Swiss Pro Patria Foundation. Over the years, this non-profit organization's history and work have been documented for stamp-lovers on National Day postcards and special stamps – the latest of which is the third and final set of stamps dedicated to "Cultural Routes in Switzerland".

In the early 20th century, people became increasingly aware of the central importance of social welfare and the need to create appropriate public institutions and charities. In 1909, a group of public-spirited personages headed by Albert Schuster, a St. Gallen businessman, founded the "Schweizerische Bundesfeier-Komitee" (Swiss National Day Committee), an association which was to become the Swiss Pro Patria Foundation in 1991. From the outset, the organization's aim was to give Switzerland's National Day greater meaning and, building on public solidarity, to collect

money for social and cultural causes with the help of volunteers.

### Close ties with Swiss Post

From its earliest days, this non-profit organization has had close ties with Swiss Post without whose assistance Pro Patria's century of successful work might well not have been possible. Back then, the Swiss Federal Council strongly supported the initiators' original idea of a National Day donation and paved the way for cooperation with Swiss Post. Sales of National Day postcards with a premium designed by Swiss artists were launched

in 1910, and special stamps (also with a premium) were issued as a way of collecting funds from 1938. 1923 saw the creation of a second, more symbolic collection resource: National Day (1 August) badges.

### "One for all, all for one"

The organization's philanthropic and patriotic founders wrote: "Every citizen, no matter how modest his circumstances, should have an opportunity to contribute his mite to the national public benefit on 1 August". To the modern ear, the slogan "One for all, all for one" used in the early days of the National Day donation may sound rather bombastic but, until well after the Second World War, the annual collections – whose purpose was initially agreed with the Federal Council – were mainly used to alleviate social distress and want. Beneficiaries included Swiss soldiers and their families, mothers in need, various organizations for the disabled, the Red Cross or Swiss citizens living abroad.

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An early National Day postcard, designed by Burkhard Mangold (1873–1960), plus the "Pro Patria centenary" miniature sheet (see page 10 for details). Above, the first National Day stamp dating from 1938.



ViaFrancigena: nobody knows how old the steps cut into the rock above the Plan de Barasson really are. This route may even have been used by the Romans.



CHF 0.85+0.40:  
Historic track near Liddes (VS)  
Great St. Bernhard hospice, Bourg-Saint-Pierre (VS)

### ViaFrancigena: across the Alps to Rome

Immediately after his election as Archbishop of Canterbury, Sigeric the Serious had to make the arduous journey to Rome to receive the Pope's blessing, and the oldest description of the ViaFrancigena dates from his return trip in the year 990. The route had, however, already been used by the Romans as a way north and was revived in the Middle Ages for trading purposes. When the Pope proclaimed Holy Years starting from 1300, the ViaFrancigena became one of Europe's main pilgrims' routes, and has now been designated a "Major Cultural Route" by the Council of Europe. The hamlet Pallazuit near Liddes marks the start of a particularly impressive section of the ViaFrancigena. The medieval mule path was made passable for carts early in the 19th century. This old track is about two metres wide and gravel-covered in the traditional way,

with a strip of grass in some parts. It is flanked on both sides by low embankments, and walls separate it from fields. The Great St. Bernhard Pass links Valais and the Aosta Valley. Legend has it that the hospice at the Pass was founded around 1050 by Bernhard of Menthon, Archdeacon of Aosta, and Queen Irmingard of Burgundy to drive out bandits and make the Pass safe for travellers. St. Bernhard dogs are also bred at the hospice, and the breed owes much of its reputation as rescue dogs to Barry, who was born there in 1800. The church, consecrated in 1689, and a museum testify to the major religious and historical significance of this site.

ViaSalina (left): the port of Murten was an important landing point for salt consignments destined for Berne.

ViaSpluga (centre): two generations of paths at the Splügen Pass – in the foreground, the mule track followed by the ViaSpluga and, behind it, the road built between 1818 and 1822 which winds up the mountainside in a series of bends.

ViaRhenana (right): Basel's Middle Bridge used to be the only permanent Rhine crossing for miles around, bringing the city economic prosperity. The present bridge was built early last century.



CHF 0.85+0.40:  
Cart tracks near Vuiteboeuf (VD)  
Berne Gate, Murten (FR)

**ViaSalina: on the trail of "white gold"**

As Cassiodor, a Roman statesman, put it long ago "You can do without gold but not without salt". Salt used to be a valuable commodity, possession of which meant power. Until the 19th century, the Republic of Berne procured its "white gold" from the salt mines of Franche-Comté, with the "salt road" ensuring basic supplies for the people and filling the Republic's coffers. The ViaSalina connects Berne and Arc-et-Senans (France), both of which are Unesco World Heritage sites.

The history of transport has seldom marked the landscape as impressively as near Vuiteboeuf where several hundred metres of tracks, used from the 14th to the 18th centuries by carts carrying salt to Yverdon, are preserved in the limestone. To control their descent, the cartwheels were braked or blocked. Grooves prevented them from coming off the path, while steps were carved between the grooves to give the draught animals a foothold. The cart tracks were permanently maintained and renewed, and in many places, there are more than two dozen sets of tracks.

The salt was taken from Yverdon to Murten by water, via Lake Neuchâtel and the River Broye, and then transported on to Berne, usually overland. Murten dates from Roman times and had served as Berne's port since time immemorial. In 1159, the town was newly founded by the Zähringen dynasty and later fortified. The Berne Gate was part of these defences. Its present appearance dates from 1778, when it was modelled on the Zytlogge Tower in Berne.

**Texts:** Roman G. Schönauer, General Secretary of the Swiss Pro Patria Foundation (Introduction to Pro Patria's centenary) and Caroline Süess, ViaStoria – Centre of Transport History (stamp motif comments)

**Photos:** Heinz Dieter Finck, Cornel Doswald (© ViaStoria)

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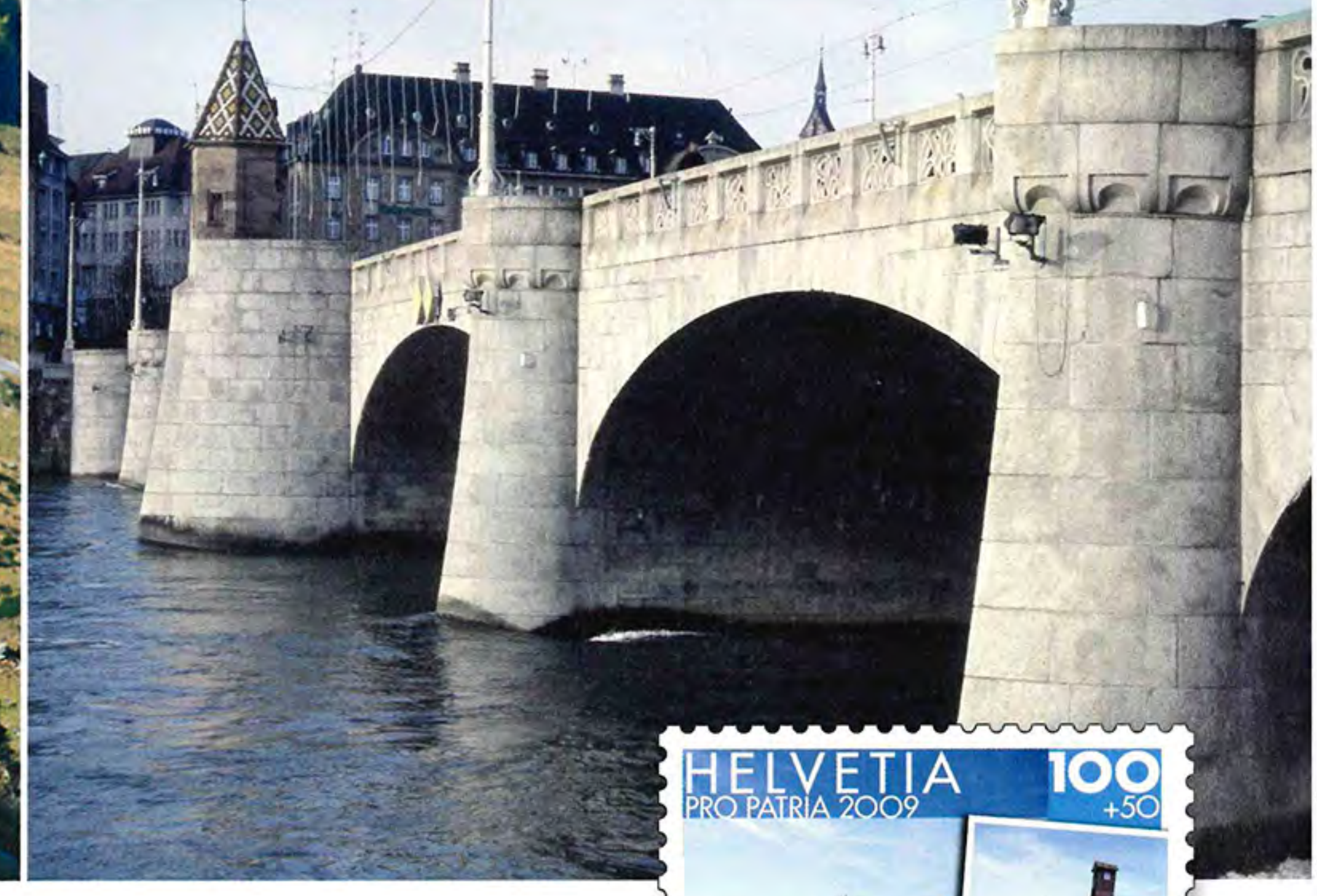


CHF 1.00+0.50:  
Viamala, Zillis-Reischen (GR)  
Albertini House, Splügen (GR)

**ViaSpluga: the terror and beauty of the mountains**

With its swaying footbridges, narrow bridges and deep ravines, the mule track over the Splügen Pass was notorious, even though it was for centuries one of the most important and best developed alpine transit routes. Nowadays, travelling the ViaSpluga is no longer a dangerous experience. However, it remains an impressive one, as scenic attractions like the Viamala alternate with places of cultural interest like the Pass village of Splügen.

The Viamala is the most famous ravine on the Via-Spluga, where the young River Rhine winds through the rock up to 300 metres below. There is evidence of centuries-old attempts to make the ravine passable, the oldest of which are semi-covered galleries which may have been carved into the rock by the Romans or during the Middle Ages. Comfortable travel only became possible when two bridges were built in 1738/39 and the road was moved to the right-hand side of the valley. And it was not until 1823 that mail coaches could negotiate the Viamala. Travellers and trade have shaped Splügen like no other village in the Alps. The two mansions beside the bridge over the Sustenbach testify to the prosperity of the powerful Schorsch-Albertini family and were built by Commissari Christoffel von Schorsch after a fire destroyed the village. The lower house, in which Schorsch's son-in-law J. U. von Albertini lived, bears the inscription "C 1719 S" in memory of its builder. Its location is completely geared to the bridge, in keeping with its trading and goods transhipment function.



CHF 1.00+0.50:  
Old Town of Basel with cathedral (BS)  
Salt drilling towers in Rheinfelden (AG)

**ViaRhenana: "retired" waterway**

The ViaRhenana follows the River Rhine through scenery defined by water, linking varied man-made landscapes. The monasteries and towns founded at key points on this historic waterway are now cultural centres of European renown. There are many ways of exploring on or beside the water what was once an important transport route – on foot, by bike, boat or ship.

From medieval times, the Upper Rhine was Switzerland's busiest waterway, but better roads and vehicles, and powerful competition from the railways, finally put an end to navigation on this stretch of the river. However, the Rhine north of Basel is still Europe's major waterway, and Basel's Rhine Port terminals handle roughly ten percent of Switzerland's foreign trade.

The Rhine also gave Switzerland its salt which dates from the prehistoric Triassic Ocean and was covered

by a layer of rock 1,000 metres thick. Over the millennia, the Rhine gradually wore the rock away, making the salt accessible to people. Salt drilling towers are historic monuments to the region's industrialization, and wooden drilling sheds protect equipment, pumps and drive units from the elements. Salt drilling towers Nos. 9 and 10 were erected by the United Swiss Salt Works in the 1940s near Rheinfelden and, though long decommissioned, were only recently moved to their current site just a few hundred metres from the banks of the Rhine.

**Stamp booklet**

A stamp booklet, issued at the request of the Swiss Pro Patria Foundation, contains ten assorted stamps: six CHF 0.85+0.40 (Via Francigena) stamps and four CHF 1.00+0.50 (Via Rhenana) stamps. It costs CHF 14.50 (incl. CHF 1.00 for the cover), and can be purchased from the Swiss Pro Patria Foundation, Clausius-strasse 45, 8006 Zurich, from our PhilaShop (www.swisspost.ch/philashop) and at Swiss Post philatelic salespoints

