



Unspunnen Festival in Interlaken, 1 – 3 September 2006



Celebration of Swiss folklore

The 2006 Unspunnen Festival is a festival of encounters, a meeting place for the people of Switzerland, a country rich in colourful customs and culture. The traditional games and festivals are still carried on in their original spirit. Muscular men will try to throw the 167lb Unspunnen stone over record distances, even if this is no longer the original stone from 1805. Burly wrestlers will enter the sawdust circle to battle for the crown. Groups in colourful traditional costumes will twirl to the toe-tapping music of the Swiss folk music bands. Alphorn blowers will play in breathtaking competition. And of course there will be the traditional festivities on the Unspunnen meadow and the grand festival procession through Interlaken, with its famous green Höhematte. Spectators will get an impressive insight into the history, culture and wealth of tradition of all the Swiss cantons.





Unspunnen – a 200-year history



Festivals to celebrate reconciliation and friendship were being held on the meadow near Unspunnen Castle as early as the beginning of the 13th century. The purpose was to defuse tension and conflict – mainly between the city and the provinces and the government and people. A similar atmosphere of conflict existed shortly before the first traditional Unspunnen Festival in 1805: the people of the Bernese Oberland had been in constant rebellion against the supremacy of the City of Bern. They wanted independence and thus between 1798 und 1803 formed a separate canton in the Helvetic Republic. As a consequence, provinces and country were on an equal footing. However as early as 1803, 125 of the 195 members of the Bern Cantonal Parliament were from the City of Bern. This renewed the tension between the two cantons. This situation led the Mayor of Bern, Niklaus Friedrich von Mülinen and Interlaken's chief magistrate, Franz Ludwig Thormann, together with art lover Sigmund Wagner from Bern and artist Franz Niklaus König from Unterseen to organize the first Unspunnen Festival. As well as presenting rustic traditions, the aim was to reconcile city and provinces. However this wish remained unfulfilled and the relationship between town and country continued to be marked by distrust.

In contrast, the first two Unspunnen Festivals were a great cultural and financial success. Many famous guests such as portrait painter Madame Vigée-Lebrun and authoress Madame Germaine de Staël enjoyed the traditional festivities. Poets bestowed words of praise and artists captured the events for posterity with paintbrush and pencil, becoming ambassadors of



rustic tradition by displaying the stunning beauty of the Alpine landscape in the cultural capitals of Europe. The folk festival established the global reputation of Interlaken as a tourist resort. The major national Alpine wrestlers', yodellers' and alphorn blowers' associations, the Swiss Heritage Society and the Swiss Traditional Costume Association owe their origins to the Unspunnen Festival.

The festival did not take place every two or three years as planned. The “spirit of Unspunnen” was first reawakened almost one hundred years later in 1905, when the centennial celebrations were staged as the Federal Wrestling and Cowherd’s Festival. The true resurrection of this colourful cultural extravaganza did not take place until 1946: as the Swiss Traditional Costume and Cowherd’s Festival it took place against the background of peace, so deeply desired after the difficult years of war. Guest of honour was General Guisan. After 1946, the Unspunnen Festival was staged at regular intervals: 1955, 1968, 1981 and 1993. Interest and visitor numbers grew steadily and each event was a resounding success.

The Unspunnen stone – symbol of the Unspunnen Festival and a colossus with a turbulent past



The first Alpine Cowherds’ Festival on the Unspunnen meadow. A stone weighing 184 pounds was thrown but this has since disappeared.



A new stone weighing only 167 pounds was thrown at the second Alpine Cowherds’ Festival. As there were no further festivals for the time being, the stone was kept in an unknown place.



In a letter dated 18 April, Adolf Pfahrer from Interlaken bequeathed the stone to the Interlaken Gymnastic Club free of charge. He wrote that on the date mentioned, he would gladly hand over the Unspunnen stone, which had been in his care for such a long time.



The original stone dating from 1808 was thrown at the 1946 and 1955 Unspunnen Festivals.



1947

The Swiss Wrestling Association claimed the Unspunnen stone as its own. However, the letter of donation proved the Interlaken Gymnastic Club to be the rightful owner.

1981

The original stone was last thrown during the 1981 Unspunnen Festival.

1984

On 3 June, the stone was stolen from the Interlaken Tourism Museum by members of the Belier Movement from the Swiss Jura region.

1985

On 24 May the committee of the Interlaken Gymnastic Club went in search of a replacement stone and found one in the Grimsel area. With the help of a stone mason, this stone was fashioned into the shape and 83.5 kg. (184 pounds) weight of the original.

1989

The 'new' Unspunnen stone was exhibited on a marble plinth in the counter hall at the Interlaken UBS Bank, where it has remained safely to this day.

1999

Photographer Michael von Graffenried published a picture of the allegedly original Unspunnen stone in the magazine 'Schweizer Illustrierte'. The stone was stored in a wine cellar somewhere near Brussels. Willy Zimmermann, from the Interlaken Gymnastic Club, considered this to be the original.

2000

At the Interlaken Gymnastic Club AGM, Willy Zimmermann proposed that a committee be formed for the 'retrieval of the Unspunnen stone'. The proposal was approved and four members nominated.

2000

Wrapped as a bonbon, the stone was handed over to Shawne Fielding, wife of Swiss Ambassador Thomas Borer, on 11 August at Saignelégier in the Swiss Jura. It was identified as authentic.

2001

On 14 August, Shawne Fielding returned the stone to the Interlaken Gymnastic Club at a handing-over ceremony on the Höhematte meadow in Interlaken. The Belier Movement members had chiselled the 12 European stars and 6 December 1992 (date of the Swiss referendum on joining the EU) into the stone, next to the original dates of 1805 and 1905. This made it 2.3 kg lighter and it became a museum piece.



2005

On 9 January 2005, the original stone went on exhibition in the foyer of the VICTORIA-JUNGFRAU Grand Hotel & Spa as part of the '200 Years Unspunnen' celebrations. Shortly after 10.00 hrs on Saturday, 20 August 2005, four unknown men entered the foyer and busied themselves with the stone. They soon left the hotel with a dark-coloured sports bag, leaving behind a plaster replica of the stone painted with the Jura coat of arms. To this day, no trace of the culprits or the original stone has been found.

2006

The Swiss Championships Stone-Throwing Championships take place on 2 September. The return contest follows immediately afterwards - on 3 September at the Unspunnen Festival!

Unspunnen Festival 2006: Active participants and their guests

Active participants from various groups

Dance groups in traditional costume	4,000 persons
Yodellers	2,000 persons
Alpine wrestlers and stone throwers	200 persons

Estimated number of guests at individual events

Traditional costume dance festival	5,000 persons
Procession	70,000 persons
Alpine wrestling festival	10,000 persons
Ceremony/celebrations	40,000 persons

Number of media representatives expected 300 persons

Organisation and helpers 800 persons



INTERLAKEN – where the Unspunnen Festival takes place

INTERLAKEN, in a unique location between Lakes Thun and Brienz and at the foot of the towering trio, the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau, has for decades been the dream holiday destination and excursion departure point for countless international visitors. Easily reached by road and rail, INTERLAKEN offers guests a remarkable range of extremely attractive excursion options. Highlights undoubtedly include trips to the 3454 metre-altitude Jungfrauoch and the Schilthorn summit with its 'Piz Gloria' revolving restaurant. But Interlaken also offers all kinds of other attractions in addition to unique experiences in the natural world. The most popular excursion destinations include the Ballenberg Open-Air Museum near Brienz, the St Beatus Caves above Lake Thun, the Trümmelbach Falls in the Lauterbrunnen Valley, the Botanical Alpine Garden on Schynige Platte and the Mystery Park, the only one of its kind in the whole world. Bon vivants can explore Interlaken by horse-drawn carriage or stroll along the Höheweg promenade admiring the stunning views of the Jungfrau massif. Interlaken also offers a colourful cultural programme with numerous events and concerts.

Great for all guests...

No other resort in Switzerland can offer almost all types of leisure and pleasure activities within a compact 20-kilometre radius. Lakes Thun and Brienz are perfect for a vast variety of water sports or can be explored in comfort on a cruise. Hikers and bikers come into their own in Interlaken: the many hiking and biking paths with spectacular summit and lake views attract large numbers of guests to the holiday destination every year. Interlaken also offers an exciting range of adventure sports for adrenaline addicts – paragliding, river rafting, canyoning and zorbing - to name but a few - cater for that extra-special holiday kick.

Interlaken – in the midst of winter!

Interlaken is quite simply a summer holiday destination second to none. But this holiday region in the heart of the beautiful Bernese Oberland has plenty to offer in winter too. Winter guests have the choice of three Top Ski areas - each one easily reached with a free ski bus. The small but superb ski areas of Beatenberg and Habkern are perfect for families, and winter walkers and sledging fans will also be in their element. A rich range of excursions and favourable winter rates at 65 hotels round off Interlaken's attractive winter offers for guests.

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