

le News

WEEKLY SWISS NEWS IN ENGLISH

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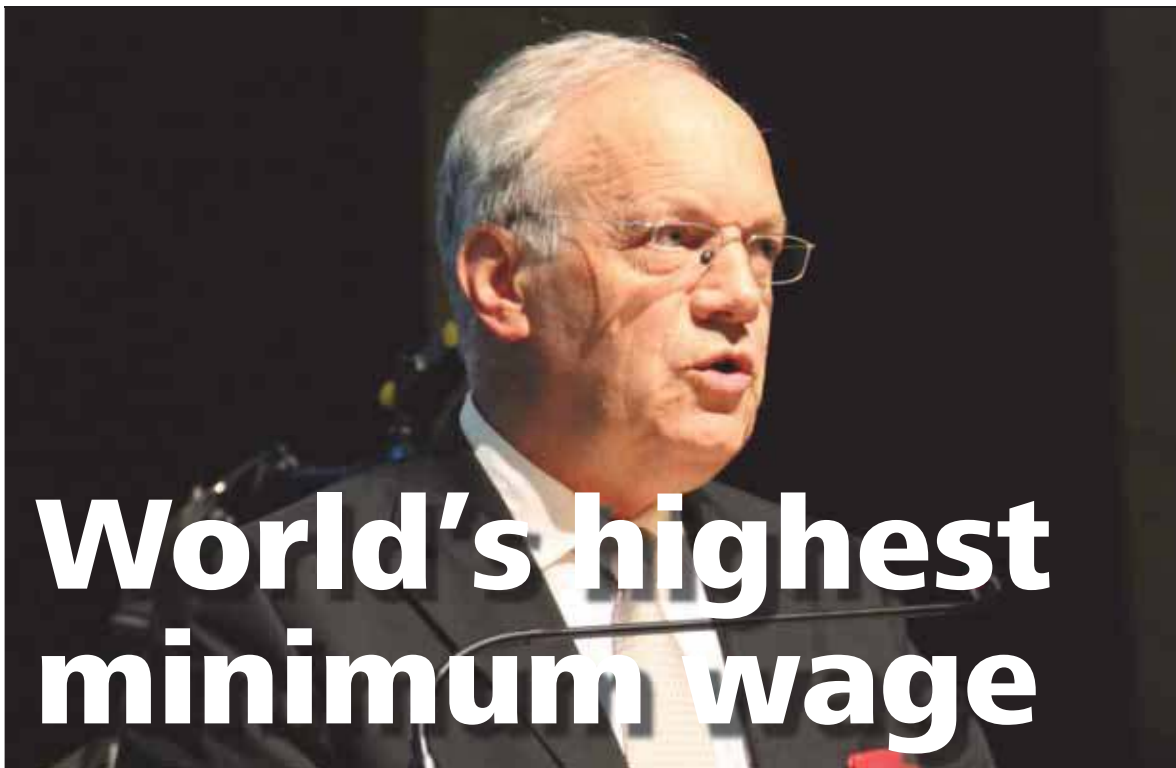
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Economic Minister Johann Schneider-Ammann: a minimum wage could lead to more unemployment.

Swiss voters go to the polls once again in May to decide another controversial issue.

BERN This time they will be asked whether or not to introduce a minimum wage that would be the highest in the world. A vote in favour would be yet another setback for government and business leaders, coming on the heels of last month's vote to curb immigration

from the European Union. The initiative, launched by the Swiss trade union federation (SGB) and supported by the Socialist Party, calls for a legal minimum wage of CHF 22 an hour or 4,000 a month. That compares to the equivalent of CHF 11.63 in France, CHF 10.35 in Germany, CHF 9.15 in the UK and CHF 6.34 in the US.

Trade-union representatives say their initiative is simply an issue of fairness

especially with regard to women, who they say face discriminatory wages. The SGB estimates that more than 300,000 workers, mostly female, do not have enough to live on. A recent UBS report noted that the cost of living in Swiss cities is among the highest in the world, but that strong salaries make up for it. The trade union federation insists their initiative is designed to help those in low-skilled jobs

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Next Week: The French elections

How strong will the right-wing showing be next Sunday?



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This Week in Switzerland

The expansion of internet domain name space may have repercussions on **trademark protection** strategies. **Francis Gurry**, director-general of the World Intellectual Property Organization, stated that an expected 1,400 new web addresses will add to the existing .com and other generic top-level domains, "forcing trademark owners to adjust their priorities in terms of registration and protection choices." In 2013 alone, **2,585 cyber-squatting cases** were filed with **WIPO's** arbitration and mediation centre.



The Swiss Federal Commission for **Air Hygiene** has reported on the latest European and Swiss health research findings. It recommends incorporating an additional ambient air quality standard for smaller particulate matter into the **Ordinance on Air Pollution Control** and is calling for a maximum level of 10 micrograms per cubic metre of air as recommended by the WHO.

UBS and Crédit Suisse are currently being sued by the United States Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation for **manipulating the LIBOR** global interest rate, along with 14 other banks. The alleged manipulation of the **LIBOR** rate between 2007 and 2011 benefited large institutions at the expense of small and medium-sized banking businesses as interest rates were deliberately misestimated.

A report by the University of Bern predicts that southern Switzerland will bear the **brunt of climate change**. Temperatures above 20 degrees Celsius at night will become the norm for at least two months of the year in the **canton of Ticino**. As well as affecting people and livestock, this will cause 90% of Switzerland's glaciers to disappear eventually, and the country's biodiversity will be severely altered.

Le Figaro has awarded **Lausanne a gold medal for easy living** ("la douceur de vivre"). The renowned French newspaper carried a glowing article waxing lyrical about the lakeside city, describing it as vibrant and full of amenities and recognizing its history, architecture, culture and lifestyle.

The number of candidates passing their **driving tests** is showing a **steady increase** in the canton of **Vaud**. Figures for 2013 confirm the trend, with a success rate of 57.3%, up from 56.1% in 2012. The Swiss average stands at 66.2% (65.5 % in 2012). Motorcycle tests were passed by 56% of riders in Vaud – lower than the Swiss average of 64.6%.

Eco-adventurer **Raphaël Domjan** has launched his latest project, **SolarStratos**, which will take him flying to 25,000 meters in a two-seater solar plane in 2017. After PlanetSolar, the catamaran that completed the first round-the-world tour of a solar-powered vehicle in 2012, Domjan – together with a team of experts – has set his sights on a plane entirely powered by solar energy and hydrogen. Aboard the plane, designed to fly to an altitude that normal planes cannot attain, Domjan **aims to reach the stratosphere** – thus achieving the record for the highest flight in history.



The *Cahiers d'archéologie romande* has recently seen the addition of book number 139 to its body of work. The book offers a comprehensive overview of ancient discoveries and excavations conducted by the University of Lausanne on the Jura's highest peak. These digs have revealed a large **Gallo-Roman temple on Mount Chasseron** and made it possible to identify other areas of historical interest.

Minimum wage

Continued front page 1

whose pay does not come close to the national average of CHF 6,000 a month – and women receive 18% less than their male counterparts.

In February, Economic Minister Johann Schneider-Ammann said that a minimum wage of CHF 4,000 a month could lead to more unemployment. "If jobs are being cut, the weakest suffer most," he said. Hardest hit would be small businesses and those working in retail, tourism and other service industries. Some economists have warned that a high minimum wage will force private businesses to raise prices and that this will harm competitiveness. Conservatives worry that rises in government salaries could deplete resources that provide welfare payments and pensions. The Union suisse de paysans is also against the initiative. Spokesperson, Sandra Helfenstein told Le News. "Many farmers earn less than CHF 4000 themselves and cannot afford to pay their workers such an amount."

At CHF 6,000 in 2011 according to UN

data, Switzerland already has the highest average monthly wage in Europe. The Federal Office of Statistics (FSO) said in its last bi-yearly report that wages for those in research and development could go as high as CHF 8,500 and CHF 9,000 or more for bankers. In contrast, those in retail make an average CHF 4,600 with personal services workers earning less than CHF 4,000.

Switzerland has one of the world's lowest unemployment rates as well as the smallest number of low-income workers. According to Ammann, "all this is because the state avoids intervening". He rejected the idea of a national minimum wage. The country currently has no minimum wage, although in 2011 Neuchâtel voted to adopt a minimum wage of CHF 20 an hour to take effect in 2015. It would affect only about 4% of the canton's workers but would serve as a base for future collective agreements. In the past, voters in Valais and Ticino have supported a minimum wage, but similar proposals were previously rejected in Geneva and Vaud.

Pamela Taylor

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WEEKLY SWISS NEWS IN ENGLISH

Editor's comment

From Nazi gold to heart of Europe

It may take months to gain a better sense of the impact of Switzerland's "yes" vote on curbing immigration. What is clear is that the cantons who were opposed to it are deeply concerned. Without a clear vision of the future, foreign companies are having second thoughts about committing to Switzerland. Some are exploring more conducive environments such as Ireland and Singapore.

While accepting that the vote may have been a mistake, many Swiss consider that, along with other Europeans, they share resentment towards foreign migration. Next week's French elections can be expected to show a right-wing surge. Many Swiss also firmly believe that Helvetic pragmatism will somehow work things out. What they fail to realize is that the country's reputation has been sullied in a manner reminiscent of the Nazi gold furore in the 1990s. Once again, Switzerland is seen as greedy, self-centred and oblivious to the rest of the world.

The challenge now is to show that Lake Geneva retains exceptional potential as the "real" heart of Europe. Together with neighbouring France, this is what the cantons need to invest in. With 3.9% growth and 14 million passengers in 2013, Geneva's airport is a case in point. Yet Cointrin can only expand so much. Barely 140 km away, Lyon's St Exupéry could take up the slack. It would make sense to link the two by high-speed rail. Such plans are being discussed, but do Bern and Paris really have the imagination for this? *Edward Girardet, Editor@lenews.ch*

Commune collaboration to improve services

Pully, Paudex, Belmont and Lausanne have signed a partnership agreement to extend their current collaboration on community services. The four municipalities have been cooperating for several years to provide general services such as drinking water, roads (winter service), sanitation, waste, electricity (network planning and remote reading of business customer meters), gas distribution) and public transport.

Now they have entered into a partnership that aims to create synergies through the joint coordination of projects, the pooling of manpower and materials, and the sharing of skills and best practices. The main purpose will be to provide better quality services but also to strengthen competencies to work within regulated environments. Synergies and coordination plans between employees of different departments at all levels will help reduce costs while respecting the identity of the individual communes.

Cristina Otero

Jazzing it up in Montreux

MONTREUX

The Montreux Jazz Artists Foundation, set up in 2007 as the educational branch of the world-famous jazz festival, has recently announced that it has redesigned its support for young talented jazz musicians. As of this autumn, students will be able to take full advantage of the foundation's reputation and facilities through long-term backing and mentoring at its new purpose-built music academy. Apart from the many workshops and competitions already offered by the foundation, the new venture will enable young jazz musicians to receive both short and long-term advice through a



structured programme.

Students who win the foundation's competitions, which were instigated in 1999, are also given the opportunity to play in some of the most prestigious jazz venues in the world, such as the Blue Note in New York and its Tokyo-based counterpart. Available throughout the calendar year, the foundation's initiative offers talented jazz

musicians the chance to hone their musical skills while enhancing their global outreach through focused mentoring. The three-week academy is based in Villeneuve in a property bequeathed by Sylvia Waddilove to encourage creative culture. Mentors

working with the students will include Joe Sample, Angélique Kidjo and Quincy Jones. *Christopher Woodburn*

Great places to buy English books

Geneva: OffTheShelf English Bookshop, 15 bvd Georges Favon, 1204 Geneva. 022 311 1090, books@offtheshelf.ch

Geneva: Des Livres et Vous, La Praille Centre, 10 Route des Jeunes, 1227 Carouge.

Lausanne: BooksBooksBooks, Rue Jean-Louis Galliard 2, 1004 Lausanne. 021 311 25 84; books@booksbooksbooks.ch

Lake Geneva region: Payot Libraire, Branches in most towns between Geneva and Montreux. www.payot.ch

In the face of online competition, the US now has fewer than 900 book stores. France still has 2,500 with book sales actually on the rise. In Switzerland, there are more than 500. Nevertheless, the book crisis has reached Europe. Chris Morrow, head of a bookstore in Vermont admits the industry is "in turmoil," but he has managed to turn things around by placing operations at the centre of his community.

This is precisely what

Bookshops struggle to survive

English-language bookshops here are trying to do. Off The Shelf books in Geneva is hosting author readings, and diversifying into events to encourage more people into the shop. "We have started children's story times on Saturdays and external events with theatres and associations," said owner Helen Stubbs.

Matthew Wake of Books, Books, Books in Lausanne reports that e-books and high shipping costs are problems. "Price is very much the issue," he said. "We have to explore new avenues and do better than Amazon, by informing young people especially, about

books." Wake would like to offer instant printing facilities, but Switzerland does not allow this for rights' reasons. Inadvertently, such protectionism is killing the industry.

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National

Body building drug haul

A Swiss firm is being prosecuted for allegedly importing without a licence three tonnes of the body-building steroid Androstenedione, commonly known as Andrion. The haul is enough to provide some ten million daily doses. Lukas Jaggi, spokesman of Swissmedic, the Swiss agency responsible for medical approvals, told Le News that the steroid is classified as a medicine and is used to delay the aging process.

Switzerland strictly regulates the sale of all medicines. According to Jaggi, this is part of a firmly independent regulatory and approval process. "Of course we cooperate with our equivalent organizations in countries all over the world including Australia, Singapore and the US. However, just because one country may approve a drug does not mean that Switzerland has to – and vice-versa." Androstenedione is banned by the World Anti-Doping Agency, and by the International Olympic Committee.

Jeremy McTeague

Swiss profits fly

GENEVA Swiss International Air Lines' "SCORE" programme, introduced to make the company more financially viable through cost-structure reforms, appears to have paid off.

According to Swiss, its CHF 264-million operating profit suggests that it is beginning to compete more effectively against archrival, easyJet. Swiss has significantly expanded its network. The airline, which replaced Swissair after the latter's 2002 bankruptcy, maintains its flagship image and claims Swissair's 71 years of prestige experience as its own. It now flies to 29 destinations from Geneva compared to only 13 a year ago. This points to a positive trend with Swiss now employing 8,250 staff, including 1,313 pilots.

Swiss says that its 24% increase in profits means that the 230 measures it has taken to reform financial and operational directives are working. Introduced in 2012, these seek to



Swiss now flies to 29 destinations from Geneva.

counter various operating difficulties including high fuel prices, political instability in the Middle East and North Africa, and competition from low-cost airlines. Improved operations, changes to marketing strategies and improved contract negotiations, notably securing pilot salary concessions, have all

contributed to overall performance. Revamping the airline's website has helped attract clientele, many of whom compare prices with easyJet. Swiss carried over a million passengers in February 2014 at 77.5% seat load factor, a 0.4% increase compared to 2013.

Christopher Woodburn

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Tuesday, March 18

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DANIELSSON DUO

Wednesday, March 19

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QUARTET /
STARLIGHT A.K.A SLAVIN/
ELDH/LILLINGER

Thursday, March 20

GENTLE MARVEL /
MYRA MELFORD'S
SNOWY EGRET

Friday, March 21

THAT'S THE BAND? /
STEVE KUHN TRIO

Saturday, March 22

GANESH GEYMEIER
VS STADE /
JAMES BLOOD
ULMER SOLO

Sunday, March 23

ANTIDOGMA /
ICP - INSTANT COMPOSERS
POOL ORCHESTRA



Go ahead for Imam training



Instruction will be in French and German.

FRIBOURG The University of Fribourg, recognized as Switzerland's only bi-lingual university, remains determined to launch a centre for Islamic studies in September despite opposition from a dozen right-wing politicians. The Fribourg parliamentarians object to public funds being used for a project they feel might compromise the Christian character of the university. However, Antonio Loprieno, Rector of the University of Basel and head of the training project is not worried. "There is no doubt that we have support from the cantonal government

and from the university itself. This was made clear at the opening of our conference."

The conferees discussed training to familiarize Imams with Swiss customs and law as well as courses for social workers and teachers to give them a better understanding of Islam. Instruction at the university's Faculty of Theology will be in French and German but course modules will be offered to all cantons in their own language. Loprieno said two professorships will be advertised, "open to all strands of Islam, whether from

Istanbul, Sarajavo or elsewhere, but the final decision will be made by a Council of Imams living in Switzerland."

Alain Bittar, director of the newly created Institute of Arab Cultures in Geneva, thinks training Imams is a good idea. "In all societies you have these 'black sheep' who give bad impressions about a certain group." He believes most Muslims in Switzerland are from moderate strands of Islam and that it is important to get their message across.


Pamela Taylor

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Business & Economy

Syngenta profits rise

Syngenta's 2013 annual report, released this week, highlights increased sales of 5% to USD 14.7bn. The dividend per share has increased to USD 11.40 (CHF 10.00). The company's R&D spend increased by 11% to USD 1.38bn.

Switzerland halts free-trade talks with Russia

The Swiss government is suspending free-trade talks with Russia in response to the Crimea crisis. Switzerland has made its decision in conjunction with other EFTA members: Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. Swiss Economics Minister, Johan Schneider-Ammann told SRF that while free-trade between Russia and EFTA is important it cannot be agreed at any price. The news comes in the immediate aftermath of a visit to Russia by President Didier Burkhalter during which the two countries celebrated 200 years of friendly relations.

The pros and cons of online brokers

GENEVA With \$4 trillion traded in foreign currency exchanges every day, investors are increasingly using online discount brokers to trade their assets.

The latter are becoming ever-more eclectic as equity, commodity and futures form part of their business portfolio. Operating at small fees and without fiduciaries, these firms bypass the high cost of traditional full-service brokers.

The forex market, however, can be a make-or-break scenario for investors. Margin requirements for standard trading tend to fall as low as 1-2%, making the high leverages attractive but dangerous investments. Patrick Soetens, Strateo Bank's general manager, assures that measures are taken



Patrick Soetens, General Manager of Strateo Bank.

to dissuade potential high-risk investors from trading certain financial options. "Each client must fill in a char-

acter-questionnaire that defines the investor as conservative, neutral, dynamic or aggressive," said Soetens. Of Strateo's clients, 95% trade in shares or EFTs without leveraging, though a second platform is available for the remaining 5% who wish to trade in margin products such as forex, CFDs (10% margin) or futures (2-5% margin).

With only 30% of all retail forex trades being profitable, it is advisable to practise on online broker platforms. OANDA, another online provider, enables new investors to practise forex trades using a free dummy account.

Speculative investments aside, online brokers offer much tighter spreads and lower commission rates to customers wishing to change large sums from one currency to another. The savings when compared to using traditional high-street banks can be significant. *Christopher Woodburn*

Insight

Take back control of the Web

A call for a Bill of Rights to protect the World Wide Web has created a buzz in the technology industry and among human rights activists.

The founder of the World Wide Web, Tim Berners-Lee, launched the appeal via several interviews last week on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the creation in 1989 at the CERN laboratory in Geneva of the three fundamental technologies that remain the foundation of today's Web. His Magna Carta idea is part of an initiative by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), which he founded in 1994, calling for a year of action by citizens to create a digital bill of rights in all countries to take back control of the Web from government and corporate influence.

The idea was applauded during a packed debate at Geneva's human rights festival (FIFDH) following the showing of a documentary film about Sweden's links to the US spy agency NSA. Through documents leaked by US whistleblower Edward



Snowden, the film traces the effort of two Swedish journalists to uncover how Sweden's neutrality may have been compromised by its collaboration with NSA.

The journalists' findings about the close working relationship between Sweden's security agency, the NSA and Britain's GCHQ created a sensation in the country. The respected web magazine, Infosecurity, noted that the documents suggest that Sweden "has access to the XKeyscore tool and has helped in

the Quantum hacking programme." Edward Snowden has explained that XKeyscore is a system that enables almost unlimited surveillance of anyone anywhere in the world, while the NSA has said usage of the system is limited and restricted.

WikiLeaks founder, Julian Assange, addressed the FIFDH debate from the Ecuadorian Embassy in London where he sought political asylum to avoid extradition to Sweden where he faces charges unrelated to his publication of US government secrets. Speaking on the big screen via Skype, Assange called the creation of the World Wide Web the biggest weapon since the invention of the atom bomb and said that like the atom bomb, "it will never be disarmed".

Asked by a member of the public why he had not requested asylum in Switzerland, Assange said he was discouraged on advice from the US Ambassador, and after his Swiss bank account was closed. "When push came to shove, I understood that I would not be safe in Switzerland." His lawyer, Spanish super-judge Baltasar Garzon, who may soon also represent Snowden,

told the audience that both Assange and Snowden were forced to accept asylum, in Ecuador and Russia respectively, because "asylum was denied them by three great democracies: the US, Great Britain and Switzerland".

Garzon said that history has shown how important it is for governments to know what other countries are up to. "We have lost our innocence. We thought the state was basically good and there to protect us." He said the documentary film "reminds us that President Obama has said the US will continue to spy on countries and check on what it needs to check on".

Spying on ordinary citizens, however, is something else and that's what the Quantum programme of mega data collection is able to do. Garzon said citizens must demand legal instruments to rein in this powerful tool. They must also demand that courts and judges be more transparent and protect those who attempt to reveal offences. "States are going after the leakers rather than investigating the matters leaked," he said.

Pamela Taylor

Lifestyle

Everest: courtesy of crowdfunding?

Nicknamed "the 16,000 metre lady" after climbing two Himalayan peaks over 8,000 metres – Shishapangma and Cho Oyu – in 2012, Sophie Lavaud describes herself as just "a mountain girl".

She now lives in Geneva, but spent most of her youth in Chamonix where she learnt to ski and inherited a passion for trekking from her mother.

After climbing Mont Blanc ten years ago, she was bitten by the high-altitude bug and now plans to be the first woman from Suisse Romande to scale the north face of Everest. A chance meeting with Norlha, an organization that provides development assistance in the Himalayas, prompted Sophie to launch the Providence EVEREST 2014 project. (Norlha in Tibetan means "providence" or "prosperity".) Commenting on what makes the Himalayas special, Lavaud

told Le News, "I guess it's mainly the people. You have to go there to really understand but they have spirit, goodness and generosity despite their poverty."

To raise funds for the organization of which she is now the patron, Lavaud is using the crowdfunding website www.moboo.ch. She is selling metres from base camp, at 5,500 metres, to the summit of the world's highest mountain at 8,848 metres. Anyone can participate, and so far over CHF 3,000 has been raised.

Lavaud will be accompanied on the two-month trip by François Damilano, a high mountain guide who will also film the expedition. They should reach base camp mid-April and after acclimatizing will move to higher camps before attempting the summit. They must finish before June because of the monsoon. To prepare for the adventure, Lavaud jogs, exercises and goes to the mountains at weekends. She also meditates and is on a special diet to put on weight.



Sponsorship by the metre for Everest certainly maximises the upside.

Asked what she feels when climbing, Lavaud responds, "For me it is a challenge, but it's something absolutely mine. I am not competitive; I don't care about beating records. It just starts when I look at a mountain and I think 'Oh, I want to go up there.' When you are up there you are alone with

nature and its beauty but also its dangers, and you just have to adapt. In a way it's a return to our origins."

To sponsor Sophie Lavaud's record-breaking attempt, starting from CHF 10 per metre, visit www.moboo.ch

Cristina Odero

le News

WEEKLY SWISS NEWS IN ENGLISH

Book launch and Panel discussion:

"Afghanistan Post-2014 – Will we ever learn from history?"

Co-hosted by:

The Graduate Institute Geneva & Geneva Centre for Security Policy with Democrats Abroad.

12.30–14.00,
Thursday, 27 March, 2014

Graduate Institute,
Maison de la Paix,
Avenue de France,
1211 Geneva



Moderator: Edward Girardet, editor, Le News. Journalist, author and co-editor of The Essential Field Guide to Afghanistan.

The Essential Field Guide to Afghanistan is the most comprehensive and practical handbook for aid workers, journalists, soldiers, diplomats, entrepreneurs, academics and travellers. First published in 1998, it incorporates insight, essays and infobriefs by some of the world's leading Afghan hands. For anyone who needs to understand this extraordinary country, the book is an indispensable information tool as Afghanistan enters a new and precarious post-2014 era.



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Open Forum

Thursday
March 27, 2014
5 - 8 pm

Info Session
6:15 pm

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1205 Geneva
Tram 15/12 or parking



hec-executive.ch

Lifestyle

Gathering of the Lunatics

ST-CERGUE For the past 15 years, once a year in March over a full moon, a group of us has gathered at the 1,348-metre Buvette la Genolière above St-Cergue for a fondue dinner.



The Genolière itself is a summer milking barn for cows from the village of Genolier below, but becomes a simple restaurant offering cheese, rösti and other gastronomic alpine sundries during the winter. We meet at La Givrine on the small-gauge railway from Nyon to La Cure, and then walk 30 minutes along a forest trail to the restaurant. The really keen ones ski up.

The gathering varies every year depending on who's around. What remains unchanged is that the "Lunatics' Walk", as we call it, has been consistently organized by American Wendy Lubetkin and her husband, Gerry Obara, who live down the mountain in Arzier. We've all come to rely on them to bring together diverse friends,

colleagues and complete strangers. You always leave having met someone new, or knowing others better, such as one guest who revealed, almost coyly, that he recently completed a history of Canton Vaud.

Once at the chalet, its lights powered by a generator, we cram around long, wooden tables in the low-ceilinged and candle-lit dining room. It's too cold for the outside terrace with its spectacular view of Mont Blanc on

sunny days, when cross-country skiers, snowshoe trekkers and hikers can stop for a bite. But warm bonhomie over chilled chasselas wine, dried meat and gherkins, and fondue, is enough. For dessert, there is apple pie, meringue with cream, and lemon or raisinet tartlets, the latter a local speciality. Then it's back through the woods, with the rising moon casting eerie shadows across the pine-studded, snow-swept landscape.

La Genolière is not the only rustic refuge. A whole string of them lines the Jura from the Col de la Faucille on the French side to Lake Neuchatel and beyond. For your last fondues of the season, check out Le Vermeille, 20 minutes further on from La Genolière. Others include the Couvaloup de Crans and BasseRuche outside St-Cergue, plus the Chalet de la Frasse in the Forêt du Massacre in Lamoura, just across the border. Check the tourism websites.

Edward Girardet





Education April

International school or local? Maturité, IB, IGCSE, A-level, or the US system? Studying in French or in English? Do my children need special education or academic support to achieve their goals? These are just some of the questions that challenge parents from abroad.

Léman Events is launching a new education platform, "April is Education Month". This initiative will comprise a regular series of blogs and events to better inform its network and the wider community. Léman Events has organized a networking luncheon with GEMS World Academy in Etoy to launch the project on 27 March at the Academy.

Director Jos van Megchelen told Le News, "Education is an important subject for the international community. This networking event offers an excellent opportunity for regional businesses, parents and anyone interested in education, to network and to tour the Academy. Anyone interested is welcome to register on lemanevents.ch." *Le News*

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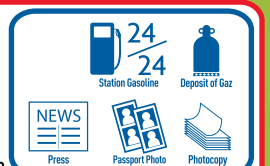
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Property

Does buying a home in Switzerland pay off?

Buying a home can seem like a more attractive financial option than renting, considering the equity that is built up over the years and that home prices continue to increase steadily.

It is important, however, to take into account all of the financial costs of buying a home and what experts sometimes call "the two golden rules".

Those rules are capital and income. First, a potential buyer must have at least 20% of the purchase price of the home in capital for a down payment if it is to be the primary residence. And second, the amount equivalent to 6% of the purchase price should be less than one third of the buyer's annual gross income. For example, for a property costing CHF 800,000, the buyer would need to put down a minimum of CHF 160,000 and have an annual income of at least CHF 144,000. Sites such as hausinfo.ch as well as many of the banks provide mortgage calculators – often but not always in French – to determine the maximum amount a person could spend purchasing a home, based on income, taxes, years to retirement and other factors.



Take care: homeowners are taxed on the equivalent rental value of their property.

Buyers and sellers will both pay fees, and homeowners will pay regular taxes including an income tax on the equivalent rental value of your property. Many cantons also levy a property tax. There are also restrictions on how long a second-home owner has to keep the home before selling it.

Will investing the money to pur-

chase a property guarantee a return on investment down the road? A recent study conducted by the Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETH Zurich) and www.comparis.ch found that the median per-square-metre asking price of apartments and houses in Switzerland has increased by at least 25% since 2007 in most areas of the

country. It will come as no surprise to potential buyers that Vaud and Geneva make appearances among the ten places with the largest price increases for apartments and houses over the past seven years.

Jackie Campo

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GENEVA RELOCATION

Travel

Swatch XTREME Verbier

Take a ride on the wild side this weekend at the Verbier Xtreme freeride finals.

In the Winter Olympics, skiers and snowboarders, race, slalom and jump off groomed slopes to a routine practised to perfection.

At the Swatch XTREME Verbier on 22 March, the opposite will happen. Nothing is planned. It's all about the individual's ability to pick the perfect line. In this ultimate test, snowboarders and skiers lean over the edge of the 3,222-metre Bec des Rosses, check out the snow and rocks, pick a line, and throw themselves off.

One by one the competitors jump off the edge, descending the most creative and difficult line between exposed rocks, snow and the tracks of the previous competitor. The judges mark them on the difficulty of their line, speed, size of their jumps, fluidity, technical ability and style. Riders are even judged on how they crash and fall. But at all times

control is essential. Lose it and you could die.

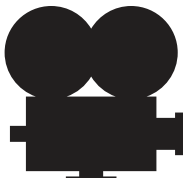
The adrenaline is as high among the 4,000 onlookers – craning their necks to watch the riders take the leap – as it is on the mountain. Avalanche risk and rock fall means that the crowd is kept at a distance, but specially positioned cameras on the rock face and a hovering helicopter relay the close-up of every turn and pause.

The party, live music and commentary, raclette, wine and cocktails then move from the mountain peaks to the streets of Verbier. Here bikini-clad girls gyrate up high in a glass bubble as fast-cut highlights of the final ride are shown on a huge screen. There is no formal podium for competitors. But then, like athletes everywhere, these free-spirited, world-class athletes do stand for a winners' picture, waving to the crowd, before sloping off to join the rest of the party.

Samantha Bolton
samanthabolton@gmail.com



Dicing with death: choosing the best line of descent is key.



FILM REVIEWS

By Neptune



3 DAYS TO KILL ★★

Sad to say, but the prolific (*No Way Out*, *Dances with Wolves*, *JFK*, *Tin Cup*, *The Company Men*), Oscar-winning, still attractive Kevin Costner has a dud on his hands with this supposedly exciting CIA thriller, written and produced by Luc Besson. When Costner, a top CIA operative, finds out he has only some months to live, he goes to Paris to reconnect with his

estranged wife and daughter, but gets caught up in a new deadly assignment. With two talents such as Costner and Besson, this could have been a super thriller. However, an obvious script, bad direction by a McGinty from Kalamazoo, Michigan (hiding behind the initials McG), and clichéd characters including the spoiled daughter and a bimbo-like CIA partner, make it more foolish than gripping.

NON-STOP ★★

Ok, this is a bad week for action flicks. And it doesn't help that stars who were once doing great drama, are now going for the megabucks rather than the brains. Liam Neeson, who starred in such fine films as *Schindler's List*, *Michael Collins* and *Kinsey* is now locked into the blood and guts genre, raking in the dollars

for such blockbusters as *Taken 1* and *2*. This one concerns a nonstop flight, a lot of "terrorism" twists, suspicions about the hero on board, and violence in the closed quarters of a jet. Go if you want, it even features Julianne Moore, who first shone in the superb *Vanya on 42nd St*. This is all terribly Faustian, and I'm not talking about the film.



Chez Vous

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AVEC LE SOUTIEN DE



Cracking up

Together in electric dreams

"I think you're too attached to that thing," my husband noted the other day, gesturing towards my computer. "Who?" I asked, cradling it protectively. "Do you mean Precious? What makes you say that?"

"You haven't made eye contact with me or the children in over a week."

It's true. But who can blame me? My computer is the perfect partner.

Our affair started a few years ago when my family left South Africa and moved into a small, sad hotel room in France. It rained almost every day of the month we were there, and I would have gone mad had it not been for my computer. It became our entertainment centre, playing DVDs and music non-stop; we used it to Skype family back home; we played games on it; and I spent a lot of time Googling things like, "what to do with small children when you're trapped in a foreign country, it's

raining and you have no car."

Normally one might turn to one's spouse at a time like that but seeing as he was the one who'd made off with the car, he wasn't in my good books. So I fell in love with the computer, and we've been going from strength to strength ever since. I adore my Precious and, I'm thrilled to say, my Precious adores me right back. Seriously. Every day, in a hundred little ways, my computer shows me how much it cares.

"What's on your mind?" Facebook asks me gently, every time I look at it. Nobody around here ever asks me that, unless I'm sighing a lot or lying down on the floor.

And Spotify is so thoughtful. It sends me little messages like, "You played Barry Manilow's Copacabana over a hundred times last week. You might also like James Blunt." I'm so touched by that kind of attention that I

don't even feel the need to explain that it was actually the four-year-old, who is obsessed with the song's clever juxtaposition of tragedy with disco.

Coursera will happily spend night after night with me talking about the poetry of Gertrude Stein without ever once threatening suicide or trying to steer the conversation to rugby.

Google answers all my questions immediately, never feigning deafness or telling me to "just hold on until this penalty shot is taken".

Pinterest understands my tastes and picks out nice things for me to wear, Audible reads me to sleep and, if my heart desires something, Amazon hops to it immediately, to find it for me.

All in all, I'm getting more attention from my computer than I am from anyone else in this house. I was in bed with a fever for four days last week before one of the children thought to offer me



a glass of water. And even then, they were only trying to revive me long enough to go downstairs and put the television on for them.

Worse, neither husband nor children noticed my new haircut which, thanks to a small misunderstanding between myself and the hairdresser, has left me almost functionally bald and with much larger ears than I intended.

But that's okay because love is blind. And, as long as I don't do anything silly like activate the Photo Booth app ... so is my Precious.

Robyn Goss is a South African writer, recently moved to Switzerland. You can read her blogs at www.robbygoss.com

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Contact Jonathan Barzdo 0794196168, Trélex

Le News photo competition

Le News is offering a Payot book token worth CHF 20 and the chance to be published to the photographer who submits the best photo and caption on the subject of:

"Blooming"

Email your entry to competition@lenews.ch by 25 March 2014.

Congratulations to Jeff Azoudis, winner of the Le News weekly photographic competition "Joy".



"Jakarta Joy", Jeff Azoudis

Regional Events

le News

PICK OF THE WEEK IN COLLABORATION WITH



Geneva. That's the Band? & Steve Kuhn Trio

21 March, 20h30

A total blues and jazz evening.
THAT'S THE BAND?
Marius Duboule, guitar; Gabriel Zufferey, piano
22h STEVE KUHN TRIO
Steve Kuhn, piano; Billy Drummond, drums; Buster Williams, contrabass.
From 23h00: Jam session (Cave)
Tickets CHF 40; concessions CHF 25

Sud des Alpes – AMR
10, rue des Alpes
1201 Genève
www.amr-geneve.ch



Geneva. Festival du rire de Genève

26–29 March, 20h00

The first edition of this hilarious festival opens its doors to the public with an entirely original programme. A host of talented comedians – both international and French-speaking Swiss – will perform every night for your pleasure.
Tickets CHF 25–30; subscriptions CHF 80–100

Casino Théâtre
42 rue de Carouge
www.rire-geneve.ch



Coppet. Les Grand Moyens

26 & 28 March, 20h30

Cyril Garnier and Guillaume Sentou star in an explosive comedy full of misunderstandings and absurd situations that are linked at a breakneck pace. Funny and moving at the same time.
Tickets CHF 65

Théâtre de Terre-Sainte
Route du Jura
CH 1296 Coppet
www.varietes.ch



Nyon. Compagnie Tandaim: Italie – Brésil 3 à 2

20 March, 19h00

In a living room in Palermo, an Italian family is ready to watch the quarter finals of the World Cup, in which Italy played Brazil on 5 July 5 1982. Enjoy the 90 minutes of suspense with the family through their superstitions, laughter and shouts of joy. Presented during the European week against racism.
Tickets CHF 15–28

Usine à Gaz
Rue César Soulié 1
1260 Nyon
www.usinegaz.ch



Morges. La trilogie des îles, Cie Irina Brook

22 & 23 March
Saturday 19h00; Sunday 15h00 & 17h30

Irina Brook revisits the world of Shakespeare, Homer and Marivaux, giving these legendary works a totally fresh style, in a reading full of humanity and humour. Tickets from CHF 35; concessions from CHF 16

Théâtre de Beausobre
2, Avenue de Vertou
CH 1110 Morges
www.beausobre.ch



Morges. Cabaret Fada

21 March – 12 April

A tribute to Tristan Tzara, Monty Python, Gherasim Luca, Boris Vian and many others. With Lucia Calvino, Céline Favrod, Celine Parmelin-Bruttin, Adrien Favrod, Stéphane Paccaud, Julien Rochat and Yvan Schwab. Check website for starting times. Tickets CHF 15–25

Théâtre Trois P'tits Tours
8, Promenade du Général-Guisan,
1110 Morges
www.troispetitstours.ch



Lausanne. International minerals and fossils exchange market

22 March 10h00–18h00;
23 March 10h00–17h00

More than 50 exhibitors will contribute to this display of magnificent crystals and minerals in all their brightness and beauty. An opportunity to talk with people sharing a passion and to buy some amazing stones and interesting fossils. There will be a special exhibition focussing on amber.

Tickets CHF 8.00; concessions CHF 4
Aula des Cèdres
33 Avenue de Cour
www.svm.ch



Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat

29 March - 6 April

The ever popular musical with lyrics by Tim Rice and music by Andrew Lloyd Webber. The story is based on the "coat of many colors" story of Joseph from the Bible's Book of Genesis. This was the first Lloyd Webber and Rice musical to be performed publicly.

Simply Theatre Studios, Main House,
Avenue de choiseul, Versoix
0222 860 0518



Villeneuve. Venise sous la neige

20–22 March, 20h30

An engaged couple is visited by a childhood friend of the groom. The bride-to-be is already upset and the evening quickly turns into a farce. You won't stop laughing!

Théâtre de l'Odéon
Via: Grand- Rue 43
Tickets CHF 25; concessions CHF 20
www.theatre-odeon.ch



Leysin. Swiss Nordic Skiing Championship

20–23 March

The Swiss Nordic skiing championship takes place in Leysin for the first time. Following the individual races in the first part of the event in January, this second part will feature individual sprints, long-distance and relay runs.

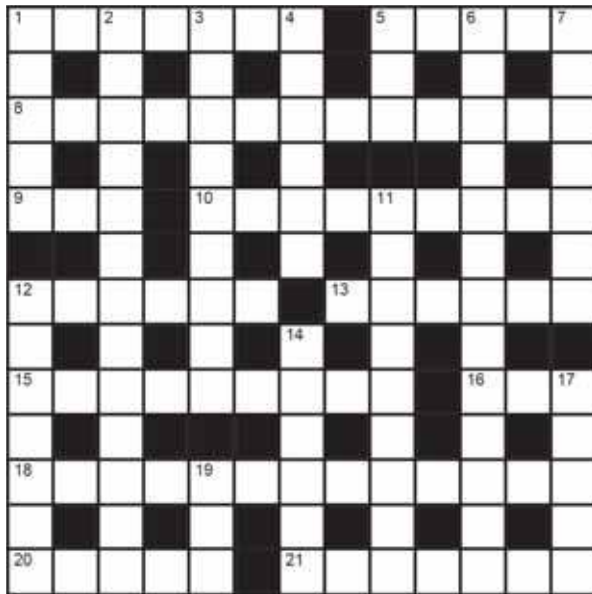
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Puzzles



QUICK CROSSWORD

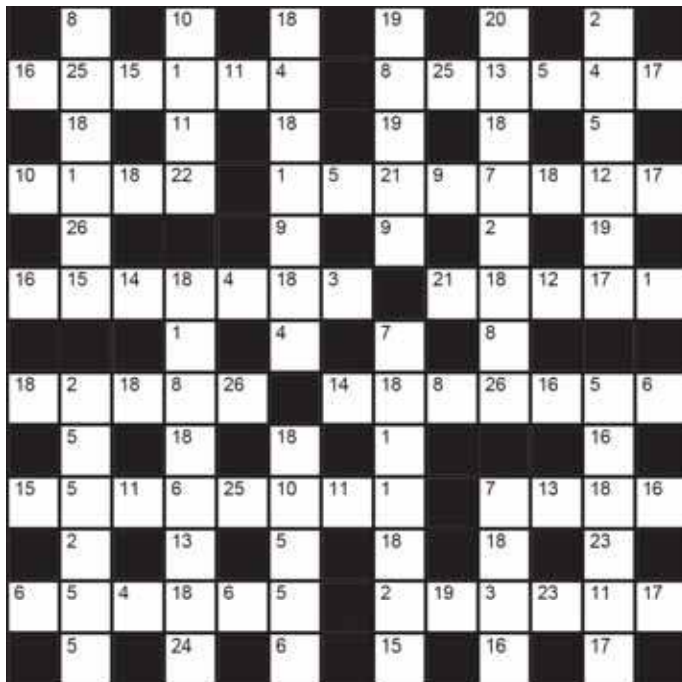
ACROSS

- 1 Breakwater (7)
- 5 Not the same one (5)
- 8 Puts a new vinyl on (6,7)
- 9 Pea vessel (3)
- 10 Wildly enthusiastic speech (9)
- 12 Seller (6)
- 13 Learned person (6)
- 15 Fashionable (9)
- 16 Indicating hostility or enmity (3)
- 18 One who creates new dances (13)
- 20 Chuck out (5)
- 21 Free from tears (3-4)

DOWN

- 1 Certificate (5)
- 2 Having more than the average number of mishaps (8-5)
- 3 Equipped with control tower and hangars (9)
- 4 Place (6)
- 5 Egg cell (3)
- 6 Magisterial (4-3-6)
- 7 Cheese melted with ale over toast (7)
- 11 Damsel (5,4)
- 12 Conveyance (7)
- 14 Hung (6)
- 17 Glaringly vivid (5)
- 19 Consume (3)

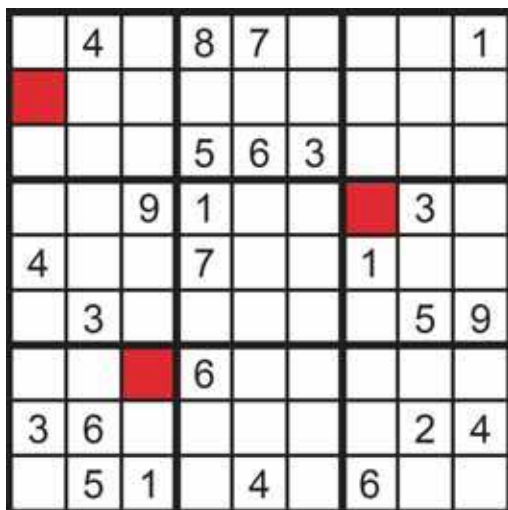
Last week's solution



CODEWORDS

Each letter has been replaced by the same number throughout the puzzle. Simply decide which letter is represented by which number and complete the puzzle. To start off we're given you the first three letters.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
				T		C						
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
											H	



SUDOKU

Easy

Enter numbers into the blank spaces so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9.

Le Review

The Woman in Black - Simply Theatre

I haven't seen the long-running West-End version of The Woman in Black and, before I saw the Simply Theatre production, I couldn't imagine how a play could be that scary. Well, it is. Maybe not cry-to-go-home horror-movie scary. But it's extremely creepy and there are some really good frights.

Things may seem a little quiet in the first half, as the play's groundwork is carefully laid down and the main characters established, but don't you worry – the action certainly picks up. The night I was there, the audience spent the whole second half alternately shrieking and giggling nervously.

The two actors are excellent, moving seamlessly between the many characters they play and transforming utterly with each one, and I marvelled at how much they achieved with so little. With only a handful of props, some dramatic lighting and a few sound effects, the story of Arthur Kipps and his very disturbing encounter with the mysterious Woman in Black came chillingly to life.



It's a clever story, well told, and it haunted me long after the audience had all gone home.

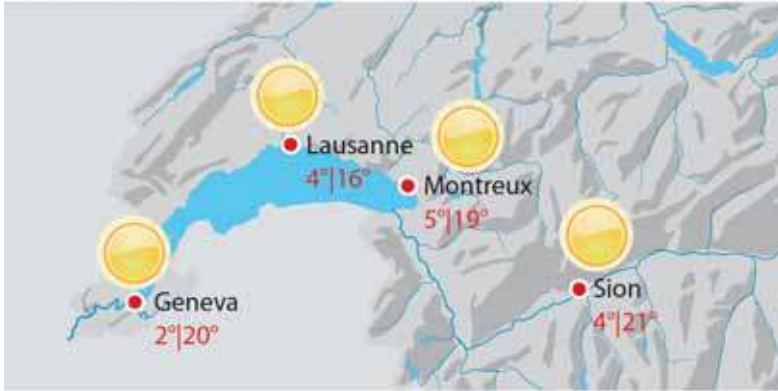
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Codeword: Send us the three letters in the shaded squares for a chance to win CHF 10.00. The first correct answer drawn next Monday will win. Email: prizes@lenews.ch

Weather

SUISSE ROMANDE



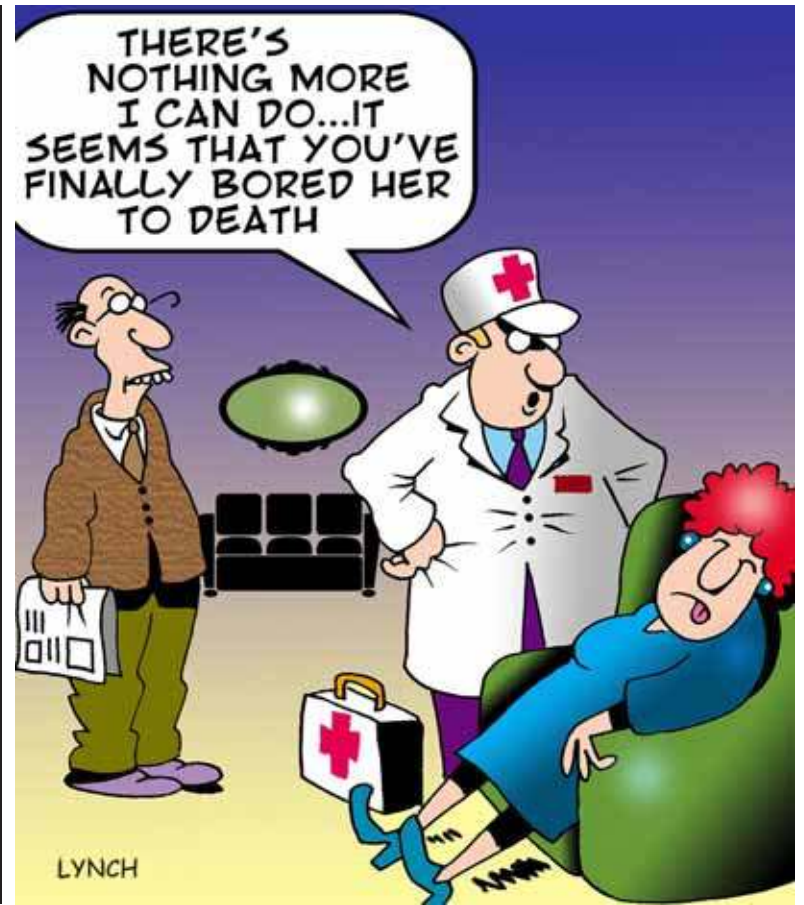
GENEVA	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
	2 20° ☀	7 19° ☁	7 11° ☁	4 10° ☁
LAUSANNE		6 14° ☁	4 7° ☁	1 5° ☁

SNOW REPORT - ON THE SLOPES

Verbier	166 cm	Crans Montana	210 cm	Les Rousses	170 cm
Villars	135 cm	Château d'Oex	60 cm	Chamonix	80 cm
Leysin	140 cm	Les Crosets	180 cm	Morzine	280 cm



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