

Press release, 28 April 2024

Swiss Youth Hostels celebrate their 100th anniversary with speech by Federal Councillor, new memberships and record overnight stays

On 28 April 2024, the Swiss Youth Hostels (SYH) celebrated their 100th anniversary with around 500 guests on the banks of Lake Zurich. A highlight of the festivities and a great honour for the non-profit organisation was the inspiring speech given by Federal Councillor Guy Parmelin. Following a record number of overnight stays in 2023, the Swiss Youth Hostels are looking to the 2024 financial year with optimism and are pleased to share some exciting news ahead of the anniversary year. They are revamping their membership concept, granting babies born in April a lifelong membership and giving the go-ahead for an ongoing digitalisation initiative.

Exactly 100 years ago, on 28 April 1924, the foundation for today's Swiss Youth Hostels (SYH) was laid with the founding of the Association for Youth Hostels Zurich. The first list of hostels included twelve youth hostels and four accommodations with haylofts. This marked the start of a 100-year journey for the non-profit organisation, which encompassed countless political, economic and social developments and changes within the organisation – from a period of decline during the Second World War, the upswing due to a massive influx of young people in the 1960s and international backpackers in the 1970s and 1980s, to an organisational restructure in the 1990s, repositioning in the 2000s, and finally a global pandemic and the return to normality in the 2020s.

“The ambassador of Swiss Tourism”: Federal Councillor Guy Parmelin addresses the guests

One century after its founding, the Swiss Youth Hostels are celebrating their anniversary today at the Bächlihof in Jona on Lake Zurich with around 500 guests, partners and representatives from politics and tourism. The SYH was accorded a special honour by the visit of Federal Councillor Guy Parmelin, who addressed the anniversary guests in a moving speech: “In the beginning – 100 years ago – an idea was conceived to support leisure activities in a meaningful way and provide an offer designed for this purpose. The Swiss Youth Hostels have clearly achieved this over these many years,” announced the Federal Councillor, emphasising the role of the Swiss Youth Hostels as an important player and prominent ambassador of Swiss tourism.

In addition to a lavish brunch buffet, engaging panel discussions starring notable personalities and various musical performances, the programme also featured a table football tournament. Alongside table tennis, table football is still one of the most popular activities at the youth hostels and often evokes fond childhood memories among many guests.

Affordable holidays for all – a guiding principle for 100 years

Even when the Youth Hostels Association was founded, the focus was on affordable prices so that all young people could afford an overnight stay in a hostel. “Back then, holidays were meant to be affordable for everyone – this guiding principle has not changed over the past 100 years and the Swiss Youth Hostels are still committed to providing inexpensive accommodation and catering facilities,” explains SYH CEO Janine Bunte. At the same time, the Swiss Youth Hostels have repeatedly managed to adapt to social changes and the needs of travellers. As a professional and modern entity, the non-profit organisation is actively committed to enabling young people, school classes, families and people with disabilities in particular to get together and engage in activities and experiences outside their familiar environment. “We firmly believe that this contributes to a supportive, responsible and fun-loving society – both over the past and the next 100 years,” says Janine Bunte.

Simplified membership and a “Lifetime Membership” for April-born babies

To mark its 100th anniversary, the Swiss Youth Hostels have revamped their membership concept in order to make membership more attractive and simplify access to affordable prices.

The new Membercard costs CHF 30 for individual travellers. The Membercard for families does not apply, as people living in the same household will in future also benefit from low-cost accommodation prices with a discount of CHF 7 per person/night through the membership of one parent. In addition, the Membercard entitles the holder to purchase additional tickets worth CHF 15 for people living in the same household who wish to travel alone. The new Membercard for travellers up to and including 26 costs CHF 15. Schools now benefit from free membership, and there is also a new "Lifetime Membercard" with an unlimited validity period.

There is also good news for new parents: Babies born in Switzerland and the Principality of Liechtenstein in April 2024 will receive lifelong membership to mark the anniversary year of the Swiss Youth Hostels. People travelling with the child and staying in the same room also benefit from member benefits.

| Membercard | Price |
|---|-----------|
| Under 27 years of age | CHF 15 |
| 27 years and older | CHF 30 |
| Additional ticket for people living in the same household | CHF 15 |
| Groups of 10 or more | CHF 100 |
| Lifetime | CHF 1,000 |
| Schools | CHF 0 |

With the launch of the [digital quest portal](#), the Swiss Youth Hostels are making it easy to purchase membership and manage personal data. This is a further step in the Swiss Youth Hostels' digitalisation initiative, which will become even more pronounced in the coming months.

Record overnight stays in 2023 and a promising start to anniversary year

In 2023, the Swiss Youth Hostels recorded a record number of overnight stays in their 42 own hostels. These increased by 7.4% year-on-year to 807,196 (2022: 751,722). At 73.3%, the proportion of Swiss guests in 2023 was 3.1 percentage points higher than in 2019. "The desire to travel has definitely returned over the past year – even the proportion of overnight stays by international guests was only 1.7% down compared with 2019. The good figures from 2023 are also evident in the first few months of 2024 and point to a successful anniversary year," comments CEO Janine Bunte.

In its anniversary year, the Swiss Youth Hostels organised numerous activities and events. Some of them will continue in the future following their great success:

| Highlights 2024/25 | |
|--------------------|---|
| 14.09.2024 | Table football tournament: Preliminary round in Zurich and Lausanne youth hostels |
| 05.10.2024 | Table football tournament: Final at Bern Youth Hostel |
| until 29.12.2024 | Anniversary exhibition at Burgdorf Castle Museum : "100 years of Swiss Youth Hostels – savouring, slumbering, adventuring together" |
| February 2025 | Inclusive snow sports camp at Interlaken Youth Hostel |

About the Swiss Youth Hostels

The Swiss Youth Hostels Association's network comprises 42 hostels under its ownership and 7 franchise properties, ranging from romantic castles to urban design locations and wellness hostels. The non-profit organisation with nearly 60,000 members generates around 800,000 overnight stays annually. The focus is on quality-conscious, sustainable and affordable tourism for young people and families. www.youthhostel.ch



Swiss Youth Hostels
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