

The spoken word shall prevail

International Federation of Agricultural Journalists Congress, Switzerland, 31.8. – 4.9.2005

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the local council I should like to welcome you to Thun. It is a great pleasure and an honour for us and the whole population to host your 49th congress here in the Bernese Oberland. We are extremely pleased to know that over 200 journalists from 30 different countries will be our guests over the next few days. We hope that you'll feel at home here and enjoy the full beauty of our region. Welcome to the Bernese Oberland and welcome to Thun!

Unfortunately it is not possible from the point of view of time, among other things, but what I would really like is to take you for a stroll through our picturesque and architecturally unique old town, to climb up to the Schlossberg and show you the impressive courtyard with the old and the new castle, to show you the breathtaking backdrop of the Bernese Alps, as well as the Niesen and the Stockhorn in the pre-Alpine chain.

After that we would go down the romantic stairs to the Rathausplatz, which is one of the real jewels of Thun. Then I could take you to see the Woche panorama, a rare circular painting depicting how Johann Wolfgang von Goethe perceived Thun when he came here in the 18th century. I could tell you that famous authors such as Heinrich von Kleist and Rainer Maria Rilke spent many years of their lives here or at least visited the town, and that Johannes Brahms found the peace and time to compose his music here.

On our stroll through the town you would notice that despite being the 11th largest town in Switzerland with a population of 42,000 Thun has kept its personal character and its friendly familiarity, as well as a certain ambiance that is omnipresent in the old town. This is due not least to the weekly market, but also to the proximity of the Oberland whose valleys ensure that urban and rural populations remain in touch and that the needs and concerns of the agricultural population are regularly discussed.

As you can see, Thun – the gateway to the Bernese Oberland – has many beautiful and interesting features to offer!

In Thun sport is also very important and enjoys the spiritual as well as financial support of the authorities. We are therefore proud of the fact that Thun boasts no fewer than 145 sports clubs which ensure that our inhabitants remain physically and mentally fit! And as you know, Thun recently made international sporting history! The modest Thun Football Club succeeded in beating the great Dynamo Kiev to qualify for the UEFA Championship and then a week ago it beat Malmö in another super match – it was David and Goliath all over again!

I hope your visit to the Bernese Oberland will include some fascinating visits and interesting discussions and that you will take home happy memories of Switzerland in general, and the Bernese Oberland in particular.

And now I'd like to offer you an aperitif with cheese and plaited bread – two Swiss specialities that we have prepared for you here today. Bon appétit and, once again, welcome to Thun and see you again I hope!