



# Lion and fondue and Wagner – oh my!

Written by Elizabeth Bloom on Tuesday, 10 September 2013 11:45 am.



Hallo from Lucerne, Switzerland! This is the third city of my journey, after Düsseldorf and Frankfurt, Germany, and the first place I will have been for longer than one night. I am glad for the breathing room, and there are certainly worse places for that than Lucerne – this city is incredibly beautiful. Lake Lucerne serves as the geographic heart of the city, surrounded by soaring mountains. Lucerne itself is quaint but self-aware as a tourist destination. Starbucks is a good indicator of that.



The Löwendenkmal memorial.  
Elizabeth Bloom / Post-Gazette

Beyond dropping my jaw at the beautiful views, I've tried delicious fondue and chocolate, walked across Europe's oldest wooden bridge (from the 14th century, according to my guidebook – Fodor's this time around), window-shopped (well, I made an exception for the chocolate store) and checked out the famous Löwendenkmal, a famous statue of a lion that honors Swiss guards who died defending Louis XVI of France. My guidebook says that Mark Twain said the statue is "the most mourning and moving piece of stone in the world."

It is the 75th anniversary of the Lucerne Festival, and I wrote an article that will be published in tomorrow's PG on the fascinating history of its founding. Conductor Arturo Toscanini was the first conductor here, and his life was tied up in the tense world of early 20th century Europe. The PSO has concerts here tonight and tomorrow.

What's also interesting about Lucerne is its musical life outside of the festival. Wagner had a villa in Tribschen, and it's where the first festival concert was played. He lived "in sin" there with his mistress, Cosima, according to Harvey Sachs, whom I interviewed for tomorrow's article and who is Toscanini's biographer. Cosima, who eventually married Wagner, was also Liszt's daughter. Music can be a strange world.

Of central Switzerland, Wagner apparently said, "I do not know of a more beautiful spot in this world!"

according to my guidebook. I think he had the right idea.

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