

## **Tourist Paradise or Gambler's hell?**

### **Gambling and Tourism in the Swiss Alps between 1848 and 1930.**

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Games of chance weren't mentioned in the Swiss federal constitution of 1848. With the rise of tourism in the Alps after 1850 many villages were transformed into tourist paradises. Games of chance became a crucial part of these paradises: They were a selling proposition, aimed at attracting foreigners and, of course, they represented a very important source of income.

Simultaneously strong opposition emerged, which looked upon games of chance as representing a serious danger.

In the course of fervid discussions, gambling as a whole was temporarily forbidden. But ultimately, legal loopholes permitted an exclusively foreign public to gamble. The definition of danger thus was directly related to the gambling public.

This contribution proposes to trace the history of gambling in Switzerland, by highlighting three examples, Saxon-Les-Bains, Interlaken and Lucerne – places, which were linked to the gambling industry in different ways.

Special attention will be given to the phenomenon of alternative worlds that contrasts with everyday life. The concept of holidays and recreation can be interpreted as being in opposition to everyday life. They represent a possible strategy on how to handle issues that are generally excluded and integrate them into society. On the one hand, gambling is strongly related to dreams and desire, while on the other hand the opponents of gambling themselves, by depicting their infernal fantasies, also create a world of contrast.

The proposed contribution will focus on these imaginary worlds and on the ways in which authorities and society handle them.