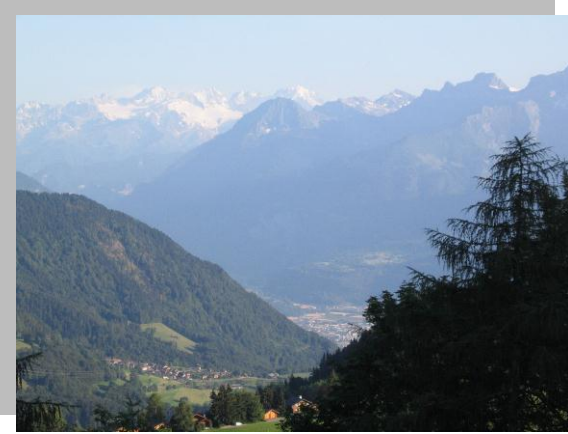


Journey's End

We four, Audrey and Mel, Kath and John thankfully alighted from our Ledger Silver Service coach after hours of travelling to get to our hotel in Leysin one of the highest villages in Switzerland. We were booked in very quickly by our tour guide and were soon ensconced in our respective rooms.



We took our own luggage with us in the lift even though we were supposed to have a porter to bring it up (he did not appear) but when we saw our rooms all was forgiven. They were light and airy with a large balcony complete with a table and chairs and the most fantastic view (see left) across the valley to the mountains beyond. At that moment I forgot all about the long journey we had just done, all I wanted to do was sit on that balcony and stare. I suppose the hotel did seem a little noisy at times but considering that there were whole busloads of kids who had come to learn a language during the week from schools all over

the place (Great Britain included) by just after 10pm all was peaceful. I think they wore themselves out learning in the mornings, swimming and playing ping pong etc in the afternoons and into the evening.

The village of Leysin is 1263 metres up in the Alps and is spread out on the side of a very steep valley. It has a very mixed population of just over 3000, this swells considerably at certain times of the year though with the spread of the hotels and housing one would not know how full or empty the place was. To get here we drove on roads with quite breath-taking drops and worrying hairpin bends. Meeting transport coming down and passing us had me holding my breath a few times, it was certainly an experience.



On the second day here we four decided not to go on the optional bus tour to Bern preferring to explore instead. Kath and John had discovered a path that looked like it could take us into the village without walking via the steep and sometimes dangerous road. Leaving Mel (who opted out of the exploration) in our room reading, we three set out into the sunshine. The weather was very agreeable and it was a delight to stroll down the winding pathway overlooking Leysin, the sides of the path were covered in wild grasses and flowers reminding me of our meadows back home. As we moved along the slope became steeper and we had

to be careful not to walk too fast or it would have turned into a head-long dash to the bottom. With the sun now beating down on us we finally stood in the village. The first thing we came across was a large trough full of crystal clear water which poured from several pipes set into the wall. This cool, covered area offered welcome relief from the heat of the sun, I suspect many a hiker took advantage of its shade in the past. There were quite a few shops strung out along the winding road and not that many pavements, they seemed to be only on one side of the road then they changed over to the opposite side. Care had to be taken walking these steep streets as traffic seemed to come quite close though there were several side cuts (I would hesitate to call them roads though traffic used them). We wandered down some of them following Kath who was making for a small church. It was built in 1445 and is still in use today. We had hoped to go inside but seeing a collection of pushchairs outside we decided to forgo that pleasure and leave the Mother and Toddler group in peace. We had

taken quite a few photos while John was busy with his video camera. I must admit to feeling the heat and was getting out of breath walking up hilly streets to get back to the path we had come down, luckily a café was situated right across the road from where we had stopped, and gratefully we headed for it. Imagine my surprise when I was told they sold decaf tea, I settled for that instead of my usual water. Another surprise was the size of the filled half bread stick we had ordered, it was half of a long French bread. Whatever its size it was very good and it kept me going till dinner at seven. After a rest it was time to tackle the climb up the side of the valley to our hotel. Despite a lot of stops for me to get my breath back I still enjoyed the feeling of achievement once we got to the top. We were hot and tired but I'm glad we did not go to Bern I would not have missed the day for anything.



Submitted by Audrey Goodwin
