



# A Tall Ship for Switzerland

## Swiss History

### Commercial Sailing

Contrary to a generally held belief, Switzerland has a very old sailing tradition. Indeed, up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, most transportation was done along rivers and lakes. One must remember that the roads, whenever they existed, were generally in a very poor shape. For example, on Lake Geneva, a fleet of sailing boats handled the transportation of people and goods. At the outlet of the Simplon and Grand Saint-Bernard Alpine Passes was arriving a constant flow of goods from Venice and Genoa, and from even further to the East: It was one of the links in the Spice Road. The Lake Geneva Barks, derived from the Galleys of the Dukes of Savoy, have handled a steady traffic of construction materials until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The situation was very similar on the Vierwaldstättersee, or Lake Luzern, at the outlet of the Saint-Gothard Pass and on the Bodensee, or Lake Constance, at the outlet of the Graubunden passes. May you be reminded that, according to the famous legend, William Tell was not only a good shot, but also an excellent sailor! That merchant fleet has some worthy successors! Indeed, Switzerland currently controls, in tonnage, the largest commercial maritime fleet, not only of any landlocked country, but even higher than that of, for example, Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain or France!

### Sport Sailing

The Geneva Nautical Society (SNG) has already been founded in 1872. It is therefore one of the oldest in Continental Europe. Yachting is a Sport in which Swiss have always excelled: In various world championships, at the Olympic Games, winning round-the-world races and other great transoceanic races and even reaching the highest summit by winning and keeping the America's Cup. It is also the landlocked country with most sea-going pleasure boats.

### A missing Swiss Sailing Activity

There is however one field in which Switzerland is conspicuous by its absence: the Tall Ships' races and events. Every year, the World's most beautiful Sailboats meet in Rouen, Brest, Antwerp, Genoa, Lisbon, in American ports ... for the Tall Ship's Race (Ex-Cutty Sark Race), or for other meetings, thereby promoting the colours of their country in front of crowds of up to one million visitors in each port. Over a hundred Tall Ships, representing more than twenty countries (some of them very far away and not so rich, such as India, Indonesia, the old East-block countries, etc.), are attending. Switzerland, despite the fact that it owns the largest freshwater sailboats, including a 52 m long Galley, is not represented! The aim of this project is to repair this shortcoming by creating a Swiss Tall Ship, so that it may take part to the world's Tall Ships' meetings, bearing high the colours of Switzerland.

## The project

### A « Tall Ship » for Switzerland

The project is to restore a steel vessel built as a gaff-rigged schooner in the early 1900's, approximately 35 m long (on deck) and 7 m wide. Her restoration will be done in two stages: The first stage will take place in the port of Basel, in Switzerland, if it confirms that it will put at our disposal, at very attractive financing conditions, for the duration of the reconstruction, an area alongside a quay allowing the installation of a yard, with direct access to the public, who will be able to follow-up directly the progress of the construction. That first stage will include removing all the appendices added to the hull since its origin, reconstructing the wooden deck, the internal and external facilities and, more generally, all the works to be done on board, except the running and standing riggings (and probably the sails), which will be done at the Hobro shipyard, in Denmark, specialized in tall ships and their rigging. The restoration work will be coordinated by Otto Leth, a Danish specialist, who has already restored there several tall ships, including Brita Leth ([www.brita-leth.dk](http://www.brita-leth.dk)) and the 3-masted Maja ([www.skonnerten-maja.dk](http://www.skonnerten-maja.dk)). The restored Barquentine will be renamed « Miss Helvetia », thereby witnessing her belonging to Switzerland.

## Motives

### Tall Ships' Races and Events

First of all, this Tall Ship will ensure that Switzerland is represented at these events, in Europe and Worldwide. She will participate to the various races and cross the Atlantic to America at the start of winter, sailing back to Europe for the spring. It would even be possible to consider a round-the-world circumnavigation

### Tourist Appeal

The Swiss Tall Ship will provide a privileged mean of attracting Tourists to Switzerland. The impact will be particularly strong: Indeed, foreigners are always stunned when they see a sea-going Swiss vessel. They will be in for a surprise! All the more when they are invited to experiment the Swiss Chalet rustic atmosphere created on the Boat, to view films about Switzerland, to taste local Swiss Produce or to visit an exhibition / sale of Swiss branded products, and particularly of products under the "Miss Helvetia ®" brand.

### Sail Training

Like most Tall Ships of other nations, the Swiss Tall Ship will welcome on board young trainees (or cadets), who will complement the Barquentine's permanent crew. There should be no need to elaborate in details on the exceptional value of such an experience on the shaping of young people's character and behaviour: This has been proven time and time again, and is what induces Nations, regions and even Cities to build Tall Ships for sail training of their youth, thereby helping them learn about

themselves, discover hidden strengths and talents and understand the value of working as a team. The Swiss Tall Ship will further help these young people to identify themselves with their own roots, with all these lake and offshore sailors who have preceded them since thousands of years and passed on to them a cultural legacy they should be proud of. "Miss Helvetia" will be restored in accordance with the building and safety regulations applicable to passenger vessels.

### Restoration Costs and Timing

According to our evaluation, approx CHF 1'800'000 will be necessary to acquire the ship and restore it into a 3-masted Barquentine of over 45 m overall length (including bowsprit), accommodating comfortably at least 36 passengers, in addition to the crew. The first phase of the restoration should last between 18 and 24 months, subject timely availability of funds.

### Your support !!!

The financing of the restoration works will be ensured through, the "Sail Training World Foundation", a foundation currently being established, with an initial capital of CHF 50'000, which will collect funds for the purchase, the restoration and ensuing operation of "Miss Helvetia".

**We need only CHF 300'000 (or 6 corporate sponsors, each donating only CHF 50'000) to acquire the boat and to get the restoration work started.** Ask us for the benefits of our **CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM** for your Organization, be it a company, an administration, an association or a foundation!

You can also contribute as an individual, not only financially, but also by your own work on the project itself, by organizing meals and other support activities, by speaking about it around you, etc.

We need your active support for this project which will:

- Be « federating » for Switzerland,
- Favour the integration of youth in Swiss society, even those handicapped whatever their linguistic, cultural and social origins.
- Represent a « showcase » of Swiss know-how and tourist attraction, particularly at Tall Ship's events which, as stated above, welcome up to one million visitors in each port.

### For more information, please contact:

#### Alain GUIGAN

President, Sail Training Switzerland / STCH  
Swiss Sail Training Association  
Route de Vevey 6  
1096 Cully / Switzerland  
Phone: +41 21 792 1111  
fax: +41 21 792 1122  
Email: [STW@swissites.com](mailto:STW@swissites.com)  
Websites: [www.sailtraining.ch](http://www.sailtraining.ch)  
[www.sail-training-world.com](http://www.sail-training-world.com)