

Europe's waterways are famous, if not "world" renowned. In particular, Friesland, the French canals and the Mecklenburg Lake Plateau are regarded as a Mecca for motorboat enthusiasts. By contrast, Switzerland's "Three Jura Lakes" mostly situated in the Fribourg Region are relatively unknown. This despite the fact that it can be considered among the most beautiful of navigation areas.



## *Sailing in Switzerland*

### "Three Lakes Area"

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS YVONNE LINSSEN

This area is made up of three lakes, Lake Biemme, Lake Murten and Lake Neuchâtel, which are linked to each other by two canals. An experience for anyone who loves nature, azure-blue water and great food.

growing area of Le Vully. The Lake of Biemme is reached via Lake Neuchâtel and the Zihl Canal. The lake is 39.3 km long. The town of Biel/Bienne is situated at its north eastern point. Close to Biemme, it's possible to sail up the Nidau Büren Canal and into the town centre of Solothurn via the river Aare. To the south, "St Peter's Island" – actually a peninsula – is reached via the small town of Erlach.



**"...Imposing town wall, beautiful buildings and fantastic views: Murten..."**

The Lake of Neuchâtel is the largest lake that lies entirely within Switzerland. It is 38.3 km long and 8.2 km wide at its widest point. On its northern shore is the town of Neuchâtel and on its western edge Yverdon-les-Bains. To the south is the Medieval town of Estavayer-le-Lac, where Linssen Yachts importer Nasta Marine is based. It is connected to Lake Murten by the Broye Canal. With a surface area of 22.8 km<sup>2</sup>, it is the smallest of the three lakes. It is 8.2 km long and a maximum of 2.8 km wide. On its southern shore is the town of Murten. On the northern side is the wine-

#### **Cheyres**

On 18 July we set off for Switzerland with a couple of friends. After about 6 hours' drive from Maasbracht we arrived in Cheyres in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. The small, idyllic village lies next to Estavayer-le-Lac on Lake Neuchâtel. There, the Linssen Grand Sturdy 29.9 Sedan was patiently awaiting our arrival for a week's sailing. The weather forecast was favourable – it was supposed to be about 24°C for the whole week. On our arrival, just after midnight, we just enjoyed the peace and quiet as well as the view from the cockpit.

On the Sunday morning, we first went for a stroll round the marina. This marina was built a few years ago and is therefore very modern. It's possible to refuel there and the toilet facilities are clean and tidy. This marina was full of Linssens, both large and small. One thing was noticeable: There were two (!) Grand Sturdy 500 Variotop®s which, by Swiss standards, are "mega-yachts". We had breakfast outdoors in the cockpit. Monique and Roger had done some shopping at home and provided us with delicious (Dutch) rolls.

#### **Murten**

After breakfast, we left port and set course for Lake Murten on our way to the town of the same name. After two and a half hours' sailing, we reached the Broye Canal and a short hour later we were sailing on Lake Murten. In Murten, you

**"...Mooring near the terrace  
of Hotel Bad Muntelier..."**





can moor at the “Beach House”, a friendly “beach club” on the water’s edge, which belongs to a waterside hotel, Hotel Bad Muntelier. We had lunch on the hotel’s terrace, with the boat in sight! The local speciality “Eglifilets” (Filets de perche) is highly recommended: fish freshly caught in one of the Jura lakes. After lunch we headed for the canal and anchor right in front of the mouth.

**Morning sun**

The morning sun shone in through the escape hatch, straight into my eyes. It was still early and the lake was as smooth as glass. In the saloon, our friends were also awake. Monique said that she had enjoyed stargazing through the open



**"...A great feeling:  
view of our Grand Sturdy 29.9..."**

Variodeck. It was just like sleeping outdoors! We sailed back to Murten and had breakfast in the courtyard at Hotel Bad Muntelier. Afterwards, we walked into the village. We visited the town wall, a small church and a beautiful viewpoint.

Murten is really worth a visit. We did a bit of shopping and returned to the hotel for lunch at the Beach House.

After lunch, we sailed back up the canal towards Lake Neuchâtel and then the Zihl Canal towards Lake Bienne. The wind was now blowing but our faithful 29.9 behaved well in the waves.

We moored off St Peter’s Island, a wonderful peninsula. We had a meal in the old monastery – now a hotel-restaurant – and drank a local wine from the Island.

The next morning we had a delicious breakfast “on the Island” on the terrace. After a hearty breakfast we went for a walk round the island. We decided to go a bit further and strolled towards the “mainland”. It was a good hour’s walk to Erlach. Once in Erlach, we sauntered through the town looking for a pavement café. We decided on the spot to stay at our mooring off the Island another night and went in search of a butcher to buy a barbecue and meat. The gentlemen went to the supermarket for the “hardware” and the sauces while the ladies went to the butcher for some nice meat. Success assured!

Because walking back with this “full load” was not an option, we decided to take the sightseeing boat. It was a strange but comical experience to take the boat to get back to our own boat! And so we enjoyed a great day out, this time without being at the tiller ourselves.

**Barbecue**

Once back on the boat, everything was prepared for the barbecue and tasty sauces were brought out. There’s nothing nicer than sitting at the barbecue with a view of your boat. With a drop of wine as well, what more could we want? Now and again people would wander past. But the best thing was

**St Peter’s Island – the jewel in Lake Bienne**

The peninsula was formed during the last Ice Age, when the Rhone glacier extended as far as Jura. Around 1127, a Cluniac monastery was founded on the island. It was subsequently used as an inn. Jean-Jacques Rousseau stayed there for two months in 1765 as an émigré.

This lovely spot was later visited by Goethe, Coke the

historian, Empress Josephine Bonaparte and the kings of Prussia, Sweden and Bavaria. Today, after several water-level adjustments, the Heidenweg road forms a natural bridge linking St Peter’s Island to Jolimont near Erlach. Surrounded by reeds and shrubs, it provides a habitat for many kinds of birds. Just as the woods on the Island,

the Heidenweg is also covered by a nature protection order. An excursion to the sleepy island with views of the Alps and the Jura mountains is well worth the trouble. There you can enjoy the mild climate in which vines and sweet chestnut trees can flourish.

Source: [www.st-petersinsel.ch](http://www.st-petersinsel.ch)



the people who asked if this was “our Linssen” as they had dreamed of having one for years. It was a great feeling.

The next morning we headed back to Cheyres. But we first had to look for a nice spot at which to anchor. When we exited the canal we saw a few yachts lying at anchor on our starboard side. We decided to go for a swim and laze around and we let the anchor winch roll. Because the water was only 30 cm deep under the keel we could all remain standing – a perfect opportunity to give the hull a good wash. With the anchor glistening through the crystal-clear water in the sun.

Later that day the wind started to blow even harder but we decided to continue anyway. We rang Ronny Mathys, managing director of Nasta Marine. Ronny invited us to come for a meal at his home. An invitation that we certainly don't regret accepting even today! We arranged for Ronny to collect us from the marina at Estavayer.

We sailed at a leisurely pace to Estavayer and waited for Ronny who, of course, was at work. It was busy in Estavayer. Because of the strong wind, everyone was rushing into the marina. We found a spot next to another Linssen. We were just relaxing in the cockpit when along came Ronny to collect us. We had a delicious aperitif on his terrace. The smell of good food now reached the terrace.

Ronny prepared “tenderloin from the oven” for us. Fantastic. With a pasta pesto and a salad. We ate on his terrace overlooking the lake and the marina. It's a pity we couldn't see our 29.9 this time.

After the meal, we returned to Cheyres to get a bit of sleep. Normally, there's no problem sailing back in the evening but unfortunately the marina at Cheyres isn't lit. Fortunately,

we knew exactly where it was and managed to find the right entrance.



**"...maintaining your Linssen is pure pleasure..."**

#### **Last day, early morning**

We walked into the village, had breakfast on the terrace of the baker's shop and pondered a while on the holiday. We then said goodbye to our friends. We left the marina again and moved close to Cheyres harbour to lay anchor. We were surprised by a glorious sunset on a mirror-smooth lake. We ate on board and sat pleasantly in the cockpit.

The next morning we gave the boat a thorough clean, filled the tank with diesel and sailed it back into the box. It was time to take our leave of our faithful 29.9 Sedan. Perhaps until next year??

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Murten: Hotel Bad Muntelier and Beach House

[www.hotel-bad-muntelier.ch](http://www.hotel-bad-muntelier.ch)

St. Petersinsel (Bielersee): [www.st-petersinsel.ch](http://www.st-petersinsel.ch)

