



☆ The 13th Monthly International Culture Event Notice: Traditional Swiss Sports and Music! ☆



Switzerland is a country with a long history and, thus, various interesting traditional sports and music have developed. Have you ever heard of “Schwingen” or “Steinstossen”? Do you know what kind of sound an “Alphorn” makes? Why don’t you come by and find out?

♪Date: Saturday, October 19th, 2013

♪Time: 14:30PM – 15:30PM

♪Place: Asobook Community Room

♪Presentation: Romy Beer

Entry is free of charge and everyone is welcome! We are looking forward to seeing you there!

☆ Halloween ☆

At the end of this month Halloween will be celebrated in a lot of countries, so I thought it would be a good opportunity to look at the history and customs behind Halloween. ^^

Halloween is a yearly celebration held by a number of countries on the 31st of October. This celebration can be traced back to harvest festivals and festivals of the dead, particularly Samhain. Samhain is one of the four seasonal festivals of Ireland’s native people and marks the beginning of winter as well as the end of the harvesting season. It was held in Ireland, Scotland and the Isle of Man, and similar festivals were observed at the same time in Celtic lands (England, Northern France etc.) It was believed that during the night of Samhain the boundary between the worlds of the living and the dead became blurred and that the spirits of the dead would return. While the returning dead were welcomed and feasts held for them, other things such as fairies and evil spirits also made their way into the living world. The different ways of warding off harmful spirits greatly influenced the modern customs of Halloween.

For example, people wore costumes when going out of the house so they would not be recognized by the spirits. Also, in some regions people would dress up and go from house to house in order to collect food for the feast or fuel for the Samhain bonfire. Nowadays on Halloween, in many countries children dressed

in costumes go from house to house and receive sweets. This custom is called trick-or-treat, meaning that if they do not get any sweets the children will play pranks. The modern custom of going trick-or-treating may originate from these old practices.

Today, Halloween is mainly celebrated in America, Canada, Ireland and England. However, due to America's wide cultural influence Halloween has made its way to other countries as well. In Switzerland, Halloween has not yet become an actual custom but there are many Halloween themed parties. When I was younger, I would meet up with friends on Halloween and we would watch scary movies together. ^-^

Niseko will also hold a Halloween Event on October 6th (Sunday) at the Annupuri International Ski Resort. There will be fun games and contests such as trick or treating, a costume contest and guessing the weight of pumpkins. For more information please consult the Niseko Festival Organising Committee (part of the Niseko Resort Tourism Association), Tel: 0136-44-2420, www.niseko-f.com.

♪ The Legend of “Stingy Jack” and the Origin of Carved Pumpkins

A long time ago there was a man named Stingy Jack, who was a drunkard and liked to play tricks on people. The Devil heard about Jack's misdeeds and decided to steal his soul. Jack realized that there was no way he could escape the Devil and asked for a drink as his last request. The Devil agreed and turned himself into a coin so Jack could pay the bartender. However, Jack put the coin into his pocket next to a cross, which made it impossible for the Devil to transform back into his original form. Jack refused to allow the Devil to go free until he had promised to leave him alone for ten years, and so the Devil agreed.

However, after ten years Stingy Jack was faced with the Devil again, who had come to collect his soul. Jack asked the Devil to get him an apple since he was so hungry and the Devil, thinking he had nothing to lose, climbed an apple tree. As soon as the Devil was in the tree Jack carved a cross into the tree's trunk, trapping the Devil again. Jack demanded that the Devil leave him alone for the rest of his life and not claim his soul when he died, in exchange for his freedom. Left with no choice the Devil agreed.

Stingy Jack died a few years later and when he arrived at Heaven's Gates he was refused entrance because of his unsavory deeds and sinful lifestyle. Having nowhere else to go, he went to Hell, but the Devil kept his promise and would not let him enter. The Devil told him to go back where he came from, but as the way back from Hell was long and dark Jack asked for a light. The Devil gave him a glowing coal straight from Hell's fires and Jack put it in a hollowed out turnip. Since then, Stingy Jack is doomed to roam the dark nights with only his glowing turnip to light his way. Thus, both he as well as the lantern became referred to as “Jack of the Lantern” or just “Jack O'Lantern”.



Stingy Jack (drawn by Austin Wang)

Because of this story people started to make their own versions of Jack's lantern by carving scary faces into pumpkins and leaving them during the time of Halloween in front of their doors or windows in order to keep Stingy Jack and evil spirits away. Thus started the tradition of carved pumpkins.