



Author offers offbeat anecdotes

| 16:30 A 'second-generation expat' offers a unique take on her adopted Swiss homeland through a book written in English and in French.



© Crédit photo | Author Mavis Guinard offers an offbeat, bilingual guide to little-known facets of Switzerland of interest to both Francophone and Anglophone readers. | Photo: DR

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Who would have thought that Robert Louis Stevenson wrote *Treasure Island* in Davos, or that Sir Arthur Conan-Doyle decided to kill off Sherlock Holmes while on vacation in Switzerland? These arcane bits of information are among the nuggets to be found in Mavis Guinard's newly published offbeat guide to the mountain country. Written in French and English, the *Petit Guide de la Suisse insolite* or *Made in Switzerland*, contains literary anecdotes and curious facts culled by a former contributor to the *International Herald Tribune*. The book is an updated collection of travel writings Guinard, 82, wrote for the illustrious newspaper with an eye to Swiss links to the Anglo-Saxon world.

She recalls learning about Stevenson's sojourn in Davos during the 100th anniversary of *Treasure Island*'s publication in 1981. "The tourist office didn't even know about it," Guinard said in an interview. "They quickly put up a plaque to say where he stayed." Conan-Doyle, meanwhile, pioneered skiing in Switzerland at a time before it became a national sport. He strapped on the then new-fangled Nordic skis to schuss from Davos to Arosa. He spent a lot of time on his bottom, Guinard noted.

A resident of the Vaud village of Buchillon, between Rolle and Morges, she began collecting such scraps of information in a drawer while raising a family of three girls in Switzerland as her husband worked. For 10 years she edited the newsletter for the American Women's Club of Lausanne. But it was only after her children had grown up that she began using the information she had squirreled away over the years for travel pieces she wrote for the *Herald Tribune*. Guinard calls herself a "second-generation expat." Born American, she was raised in Paris and Argentina, where she worked as a reporter for the *Buenos Aires Herald*. She met her French husband in South America and when he was transferred to Switzerland she became as, she put it, a "house-bound Heidi." She tended to the business of enrolling their daughters in the local schools and learning about the customs that make this country so distinct.

Guinard admits there are not many expats in her village. Although she retains an American accent and remains a member of the American Women's Club, she has become immersed in the life of her small community. She has acquired a good enough knowledge of French to write her own translation for the 330-page book, which has received appreciative reviews in the French-language press. Of changes she has observed in the Lake Geneva region, Guinard said there are more expats than ever and at the AWC "the women are more professional," not just those working full-time but the ones who are volunteering. *Made in Switzerland*, 330 pages, is published by [éditions metropolis](#), of Geneva, and is available at most English-language book stores in the region.

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