



Musée national suisse
Château de Prangins

PRESS RELEASE



COUPEAU SUISSE
OBJET CULTE
MUSÉE NATIONAL SUISSE
CHÂTEAU DE PRANGINS

DU 20 NOVEMBRE 2009 AU 25 AVRIL 2010



MUSEE NATIONAL SUISSE



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
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Département fédéral de l'intérieur DF
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VICTORINOX



MUSÉE NATIONAL SUISSE - CHÂTEAU DE PRANGINS
1197 Prangins, tél. +41 (0)22 994 88 90
www.chateau.deprangins.ch, www.exposcouteausuisse.ch
Ouvert du mardi au dimanche de 10h à 17h

Embargo : 19.11.2009, 12h

TEMPORARY EXHIBITION

Swiss Army Knife – Cult object
From 20 november 2009 to 25 april 2010

PRESS CONFERENCE

Thursday 19 NOVEMBER 2009, 11 AM
Please confirm your presence at + 41 (0)22 994 88 68/90
or to rachel.vez-fridrich@slm.admin.ch

For further information on the exhibition

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Viusals

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PREVIEW

THURSDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2009, 18.30 PM, open to the public

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Address	Musée national suisse – Château de Prangins CH – 1197 Prangins Phone + 41 (0)22 994 88 90 info.prangins@slm.admin.ch www.chateaudeprangins.ch www.expocouteausuisse.ch
Opening hours	Tuesday to Sunday, 10 am to 5 pm
Admission	Temporary Exhibition CHF 7.-/5.- Permanent Exhibition CHF 7.-/5.- Combined ticket CHF 12.-/8.- Guided tour on request CHF 120.- Children up till 16 years free

THE EXHIBITION

The exhibition focuses on the famous Swiss Army knife, and how it has become an icon throughout the world. From the earliest tools of the Neolithic era to the modern pocket knives with a USB flash drive, it also explores the historical and cultural origins of the folding knife. Thanks to the loan of an exceptional private collection, visitors will be able to see a large number of models including magician's knives, knives with cigarette lighters, pistol knives and the original "pen-knives". The exhibition thus highlights the close links between the development of the pocket knife and civilisation in general.

The exhibition reminds visitors that the earliest history of human beings is inextricably linked to knives. Two million years ago, the first human beings used a sharp-edged stone not only as a cutting tool but also as a defensive weapon. Around 500,000 BC, it became a dual-faced flint knife. Its basic shape has changed little since then, but many different materials have been used for the blade. The first were made of stone, followed by bronze – an alloy of copper and tin –, iron, steel, and finally stainless steel. Invented in 1914 by an English metallurgist, stainless steel finally solved the serious problem of rusting.

The appearance of the Swiss Army knife at the end of the 19th century was a key development in the history of cutlery. Created in 1890, it became part of every soldier's equipment following a decision by the Federal Council. It is rare for armies to provide their soldiers with a personal knife. The Swiss Army knife is actually an accessory for the military rifle and therefore needs to be practical; indeed, that is the reason why it folds up.

Specialists maintain that folding knives were invented by the Romans. Back then, however, they did not have a spring mechanism, and the blade was kept open or closed by pressing on it. Folding knives appeared in increasing numbers during the Middle Ages, when a knife was the only weapon that commoners were allowed to use. People carried a knife that they could close up because the blade was protected by the handle, preventing accidental injury. Later, clothing began to include pockets, and with the invention of the spring some time around 1650, folding knives gained further popularity.

By the 18th century, advances in metallurgy enabled the construction of folding knives with at least two blades, while in the 19th century the industrial revolution and the advent of precision engineering allowed some cutlers to manufacture knives featuring up to 50 blades! Today Switzerland's largest knife manufacturer – Victorinox in Ibach, Schwyz – makes Swiss Army knives with no less than 80 functions, some of them highly sophisticated, including altimeters, barometers and alarm clocks. Modern-day examples certainly deserve their popular label of "toolboxes".

This exhibition therefore pays tribute to humankind's first tool, but also offers the chance to see a magnificent selection of pocket knives, spanning many types and periods of time.

The exhibition is organised by the Forum of Swiss History, Schwyz.

PUBLICATION The exhibition catalogue is in four languages (German, French, English and Italian). 50 p., 75 ill. in four colours.

EVENTS ACCOMPANYING THE EXHIBITION

Make sure you don't miss these! - "Make your own knife!"

A unique opportunity to assemble your own personal knife, with the help of a cutler from Victorinox.

19 November 2009, 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

20 and 21 November 2009

10, 11 and 12 December 2009

15, 16 and 17 January 2010

5, 6 and 7 March 2010

1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

CHF 20.-, on registration phone +41 (0)22 994 88 90 or info.prangins@slm.admin.ch

Special days

Sunday 17 January and 7 March 2010, from 1.30 p.m. to 5 p.m.

- **Parallel event at 2 p.m. and 3.30 p.m.**

"The thousand and one faces of the knife". Guided tours of the exhibition

"Cutting up and making holes!". An activity for children aged between 6 and 12. A chance to learn more about the Swiss Army knife, followed by a treasure hunt for knives hidden around the castle.

- **Permanent activities**

"Make your own knife!". A unique opportunity to produce your own personal knife, with the help of a cutler from Victorinox.

"Bring out your knives and scissors!". Jean-Paul Berchier, an experienced knife grinder, will sharpen your knives for you (maximum of three knives per family).

"Masterpieces of the cutler's art". Marvel at the craftsmanship and creations of Charles Roulin, one of the world's greatest knifemaking artists. The event will be attended by the artist in person!

"The wonderful story of the Swiss Army knife". A fascinating documentary by Gérard Lafont, looking at the incredible history of the iconic pocket knife: originally designed for the Swiss army, this remarkable steel and plastic tool rapidly developed a fascination all of its own.

Free entrance to the museum and activities, except for the "Make your own knife!" workshop

Guided public tours

Thursday 3 December 2009, 6.30 p.m. to 7.45 p.m.

Thursday 7 January 2010, 6.30 p.m. to 7.45 p.m.

Sunday 21 February 2010, 3 p.m. to 4.15 p.m.

Sunday 21 March 2010, 3 p.m. to 4.15 p.m.

Thursday 15 April 2010, 6.30 p.m. to 7.45 p.m.

Entrance and guided tour : CHF 12.-

Guided tours on request in French, German and English

Entrance : CHF 5.- / person. Visit : CHF 120.-.

Information and reservation +41 (0)22 994 88 90

Tours for schools

Discovery workshop for children from 6 to 12

"Knife quest"

Human beings have used knives since time immemorial. This activity is a chance for young people to learn about the exciting story of a tool that is as mythical as it is practical – and the sometimes surprising forms it has taken over the years.

Duration: 1 ½ hours. Registration required. Free activity, free entrance to the museum

VISUALS

www.expocouteausuisse.ch/presse_e.html

or on request to rachel.vez-fridrich@slm.admin.ch, phone + 41 (0)22 994 88 68/90.



1. Swiss dagger, formed part of the equipment of a Swiss mercenary in the 15th / 16th century (19th-century copy)

Collection of the Swiss National Museums
©The Swiss National Museums



5. Sardinian knife, with handles made of a boar tooth, Sardinia, Italy, 1950

Collection Horst A. Brunner
©The Swiss National Museum



2. Drude's knife (elves'knife), with inscription: "A farmer is the first man, who satisfy our hunger can." Germany, 1867

Collection of Horst A. Brunner
©The Swiss National Museum



6. Swiss soldier knife, first type 1891, black wooden handles, Elsener

Collection Horst A. Brunner
©The Swiss National Museum



3. French revolver knife, 1890

Collection Horst A. Brunner
©The Swiss National Museum



7. Swiss army knife Swiss Champ, classical pocket knife, 33 functions

Victorinox
©The Swiss National Museum



4. "Coltello d'Amore", engagement gift, Italy, 1997

Collection Horst A. Brunner
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