



Not just attractive for tourists, advantageous corporate taxes kick in soon © Luzern Tourismus & AURA

Canton Lucerne throws weight behind expat show

by Marcus Berry
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Expat-Expo, the nationwide trade exhibition showcasing English-language businesses and services, prepares to launch its final event of the year in Lucerne on Sunday. The city in Central Switzerland hosts the show for the first time and Expat-Expo president Ed McGaugh tells Swisster that the city has provided considerable support for the event – another first.

“We were actually contacted by the canton’s [business development board](#) and they asked us to come to Lucerne,” said Ed McGaugh to Swisster, as he prepares to launch [Expat-Expo in Lucerne](#) for the first time. “A local cantonal resource has never invited us in before,” he said.

“They’ve done a lot of advertising on our behalf and have been working with the [tourist office](#) as well,” he added.

Around 80 exhibitors have booked spaces for Sunday’s event according to McGaugh who reckons the city harbours great future potential for expat business, thanks to a radical shift in fiscal policy set for implementation in 2012.

“Lucerne recently voted to lower their corporate income tax and will have the one of the lowest in Switzerland,” he said.

Last year authorities claimed 140,000 francs from every million earned by companies in Lucerne. That figure will drop to just 52,500 francs in 2012.

“The Lucerne business development board is really aggressive and we’re going to hear a lot about the canton in the future,” predicted McGaugh.

“Also, it’s not that expensive – rents and property prices are quite low when compared to some other areas like Geneva and Zurich, plus it’s one of the most beautiful places in Switzerland.”

This weekend’s expat trade show is hosted in the city’s impressive [transport museum](#). The venue also boasts a planetarium, an IMAX theatre and a permanent Hans Erni exhibition – clearly plenty to compete with, but also attracting a larger crowd in general.

To maximise appeal, McGaugh has lined up some entertainment and side-events of his own including a seminar from the [British Swiss Chamber of Commerce](#) focusing on small businesses, and Gaelic music from Scottish band, [Caireas](#).

The Lucerne event marks the fifth Expat-Expo in Switzerland this year, three more shows than in 2008 in spite of the economic crisis.

“I don’t think that it’s gotten any worse. There have been cancellations but not a lot, say around five per cent. The peddle is not on the floor but we’re going pretty well. We have been working hard, though it’s not as easy as it was in 2008,” McGaugh said.

Next year promises further expansion and canton Bern has also been on the phone. “The Lucerne support seems to have spurred something. We would like to add Bern next year, but we’re currently looking for a location though,” he said.

McGaugh expects the trend to continue. “English has unofficially become the fourth language in Switzerland, which wasn’t the case ten years ago. It makes as much sense to publish instructions in English as in Italian,” McGaugh ventured.

“I lived here in the mid-70s when I was a kid and there was nothing in English. Now everyone’s realising the potential of the expat market at the same time and is rushing in,” he said.

Entry is free to the Expat-Expo in Lucerne. Doors open at 11am.