THE LOCAL 6 ESSENTIALS V LEARN ABOUT SWITZERLAND V HOMES V JOBS V **BECOME A MEMBER** Cost Of Living In Switzerland For Members Brockis: What you need to know about shopping second-hand in Switzerland <u>Lily Töngi-Andrews</u> - news@thelocal.ch Published: 7 Feb, 2023 CET. Updated: Sat 11 Feb 2023 08:41 CET brockenнаus Brockenhaus - a great place to go shopping. Photo by Claudio Schwarz on Unsplash Despite being one of the richest countries in the world, Switzerland has a thriving second-hand shopping culture. Here's what to know about thrift stores - known as 'Brockis' - and where to find them. Switzerland is known as a rich country and is on the Forbes 2022 list as one of the richest countries in the world. In fact, according to this list ranked by GDP (Gross Domestic Product or goods and services produced by a country during one year), Switzerland is the sixth richest country in the world. Not bad for a landlocked country that has more mountains than usable land, is around 238 times smaller than America, or 188 times smaller than Australia. Although a rich country, it might be surprising to learn that there is a large, thriving recycling culture, part of a circular economy that keeps the Swiss market and its wealth, well, circulating. A circular economy, according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) is an economy that 'entails markets that give incentives to reusing products, rather than scrapping them and then extracting new resources.' This means, according to the UNCTAD, that by returning all forms of waste to the economy, the benefits compound by providing: protection to the environment; natural resources are used more wisely; new sectors are developed; jobs are created and new capabilities are developed. As Switzerland moves from a linear economy, Brockis and second-hand dealers contribute to the evolving circular economy. What are Brockis? In English, Brockis are known as thrift stores, second hand or op/opportunity shops and are charitable organisations. There are varying chains within Switzerland: Heilsarmee (Salvation Army); Emmaus; Caritas; Blaues Kreuz (Blue Cross); HIOB International (Hilfsorganisation Brockenstuben); Fraeunverein (Women's organisations) and other independent stores in many cities and towns. They are generally Christian charities that are profit-orientated to support their projects that deal with social concerns, employment opportunities and marginalised people. Heilsarmee is one of the largest around the world and operates 20 stores throughout Switzerland. The first Salvation Army operations began on 10 December 1882 in Geneva and the charity chain has been helping and inspiring ever since. The stores are huge, often in warehouse size premises and offer a large selection of goods numbering around 50,000 different items per branch. Get updates from Switzerland straight to your inbox. Enter your email address By signing up you agree to our **Terms of Use** and **Privacy Policy**. We will use your email address to send you newsletters as well as information and offers related to your account. Other names to look out for are Brockenhäuser, Brockenstuben and Brockenhallen and in French Brocante. As the terms are free to use many second hand stores and dealers, that are not charities, also use it in their company name and advertising. How many stores throughout Switzerland are there? A large number and they can be found in every canton. Brocki Search, a pet project established by Christina Fischer in 2016 said, "The idea for Brocki Search arose from a personal need. To create a central contact point that makes it easier for visitors to find second-hand shops." Currently the website provides details and links to 609 Brockis from every canton. Why Brocki shop? Brocki shopping was once known for saving money and generally associated with the 'needy' or poorer demographic in society. But is it still just about saving money or are there other factors that play into how consumer behaviours have changed? A study by Vestiaire Collective and Boston Consulting Group (BCG) has estimated that the second-hand fashion market has a global market value of US\$40 billion today and forecasts a value of US\$75 billion by 2025. BCG writes that the consumption model has changed and factors such as: the perception of a 'smart and cool' choice, particularly by millenials and zoomers (Gen Z); finding unique items and a wide variety of styles and brands and environmental awareness are motivations for the change and not just for a culture of saving money and assisting those in need. Although, saving money is definitely a big part of it. Switzerland, according to this article by investment company Inyova, are European champions in saving. Even the UBS bank has a page on the best second-hand stores in Switzerland. Fischer, founder and creator of Brocki Search, has been visiting Brockis since she was a teenager and said, "I have observed a change in recent years. Topics like sustainability, zero waste and circular economy are now familiar to many people today. More people are striving to do their part for a sustainable future. This starts on a small scale, for example, by shopping in secondhand shops or donating their used items." Why donate? For the same reasons as why Brocki shop. Additionally, Brockis deliver slow fashion to their customers which on many levels is better than fast fashion. Many feel a sense of duty to give back to society & help others and it is a sustainable alternative to adding to the mountains of rubbish we already create. As affluent as Switzerland is, there are many that struggle, so it is reassuring to know that although people are buying new goods before their old ones are broken, particularly electronics, the value of giving something a second chance is recognised and valued. Fischer said, "Although I don't make a distinction in shopping between private or charitable Brockis, I do when I donate things like clothes, books, etc. It is important for me to know that the proceeds from the sale of my things are used for good causes." Daniel von Holzen, Head of Shops and Markets and Professional Integration from Caritas in Luzern said, "It is still a societal problem as there are more things than we can sell. We don't feel that we can solve the problem but we can lessen it." What can you find in Brockis? Von Holzen shares that Caritas accepts, "Everything you can find in an apartment. We empty out apartments for those going to retirement homes. We take furniture, dishes, glassware, books, bicycles, skiis, shoes, clothes, hairdryers, almost everything that is good quality." "What we don't take are things that are broken, not complete, dirty, or anything that is not hygienic - toilet brushes, for example. Other things that we don't take are items that there are too many of: lamps, prams and school bags - we have trouble selling these. Parents prefer new prams and new school bags. Also any furniture that is too complicated to take apart." To get an idea on figures, von Holzen shared with *The Local* that the three Caritas stores in Luzern canton (Luzern, Sursee and Hochdorf) had 120,000 customers in 2022. They also sell per year: 208'000 household items, 60'100 items of clothing, 40'300 books, 16'000 pairs of shoes, 9'300 electrical appliances, 7'900 furniture pieces, 700 bicycles at 1'254 items per day. The new Brockis Having dubbed Brocki shopping: 'finding what you didn't realise you needed', it is also a smart choice for many reasons as already mentioned and there are varying types of stores to satisfy anyone looking for a bargain. The stereotypical thrift style stores where you need to rummage through boxes and piles of wares are best for those who love the thrill of the find. There are also many that are now upmarket and chic, with wares that are both retro, vintage or modern. You can even find posts online advising how to find valuable art in thrift stores. Some even have cafes – see Zürcher Brockenhaus near the Zürich main train station, the oldest Brocki in Switzerland, a mainstay since its inception in 1904. Or the Seidenhof Brocki & Bistro at Stäfa along the Zurisee. You probably won't see Tina Turner having a coffee but it is in the same neighbourhood. Caritas in Luzern also has a more upmarket look. Von Holzen said, "It is designed so the unemployed people who work there are trained to work in other stores. Our prices still compare to other Brockis, as we need articles priced for people with not enough money, but we have it set out like traditional stores." So, if you have any quality goods that still have life, wish to support a more sustainable circular economy, support those less fortunate, are on the hunt for something retro, vintage or shabby chic, like anything with character there is a Brocki near you. And let's not forget the thrill of finding a bargain as many brand goods can be found for ridiculously good prices. Or, as one of the Heilsarmee's bylines reads: 'Brocki shopping 'stands for contemporary shopping under one roof: diverse, sustainable and affordable! **MORE #COST OF LIVING IN SWITZERLAND COMMENTS SHOW SEE ALSO** What are the **UPDATE:** The new Today in What is Switzerland's plan to flight routes to and Christmas deadlines Switzerland: A from Switzerland in allow some shops to in Switzerland for roundup of the latest open on Sundays? 2024? posting letters and news on Monday parcels? Get daily news straight in your inbox The Local Membership **Popular Topics** THE LOCAL 6 Latest News **About us** Login By signing up you agree to our <u>Terms of Use</u> and <u>Privacy</u> The Local Europe AB <u>Policy.</u> We will use your email address to send you **Contact us** Become a member Zurich Västmannagatan 43 newsletters as well as information and offers related to Find jobs in Switzerland Newsletters Geneva 113 25 Stockholm your account. 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