



SWISS WITH US

NEWS & VIEWS



From the Embassy of Switzerland in the U.S.

Soirée Suisse edition / September 2024

From the Ambassador's desk

Dear Friends of Switzerland,

My wife Ilaria and I arrived in Washington, DC, exactly three weeks ago and are happy to be here. Actually, I should say we are happy to be back—earlier in my diplomatic career, from 2003 to 2007, when our children were still little, we were posted here.

On September 18, I submitted my credentials to President Joseph R. Biden; my tenure as Ambassador of Switzerland to the United States of America has now officially begun. It is an extraordinary honor to assume this posting and I am very much looking forward to showing the best of my home country to our American friends. I can clearly see how our bilateral partnership has further grown since we left here 17 years ago and I am deeply impressed by the strength of our connection.

Ilaria and I could not have asked for a better opportunity to introduce ourselves to the Washington, DC, community than at this year's Soirée Suisse, the Embassy's biggest annual event. Over the course of the evening, I had the chance to meet with leading figures from politics, industry, science, media, and more, and share stories of the impact that Swiss innovations and culture have on American life.

As I was born and raised in the Alpine town of Davos, I was enthusiastic about the theme of this year's Soirée Suisse: *Alpine Wonders: Reimagine the Natural Beauty of Switzerland*. As part of the theme, we were able to showcase the breathtaking beauty of our natural wonders and our beloved Alpine traditions: alphorns, flag throwers, gorgeous landscapes, and even two St. Bernard dogs. But we also highlighted Swiss innovations aimed at maintaining the country's natural beauty.

This year's Soirée Suisse featured activations aligned with the theme of the event. I hope you had the chance to explore the Swiss Polar Institute's multimedia installation on polar science, learn about Frontiers' open-research platform, take a photo with ABB's Lego bear, see SIG's sustainable packaging solutions on display, relax in the Swisstainable Lounge hosted by SWISS and Switzerland Tourism, and engage with Khalil Berro's art installation *BREATHE* and the Alpine Season photo exhibition. Below, you can revisit this year's activations.

I was honored to present our Embassy of Switzerland Gallatin Award to the non-profit Villars Institute for its transformative contributions to Switzerland's fight against the climate crisis. The Villars Institute, located in the Swiss Alps, is an excellent example of a modern approach to the preservation of the planet. It offers a cross-disciplinary platform for the exchange of innovative solutions to counter the effects of climate change.

Lastly, I want to express my gratitude to our 52 sponsors, without whom an event of this scale and prestige would not be possible. A special thank you to UBS, our partner sponsor for the third year in a row, and a Swiss institution dedicated to sustainability and social impact.

Thank you for your continued interest in Switzerland. I look forward to getting to know you and my new home even better in the months ahead.

Sincerely,
Ralf Heckner



Dr. Ralf Heckner is the Ambassador of Switzerland to the United States of America.

Protecting Our Alpine Wonders: 2024 Gallatin Awardee Villars Institute



Ambassador Ralf Heckner presented the Gallatin Award to the Villars Institute, represented by executive director Lee Howell.

Located in the heart of the Swiss Alps, the Villars Institute promotes solutions to global issues with a focus on sustainable systems and the fight against climate change, showcasing an innovative approach to the biggest ecological threats facing our planet.

At the Soirée Suisse, Ambassador Heckner presented the Embassy of Switzerland Gallatin Award to the Institute’s Executive Director, Lee Howell, honoring its contributions and recognizing its embodiment of the pioneering spirit of Albert Gallatin.



Sustainable Industries: ABB and SIG

Two major Swiss companies were on-site at the Soirée Suisse highlighting their efforts to make their industries more sustainable. ABB, a global leader in electrification and automation, aims to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030 and is a key player in sustainable technologies. With a Lego bear made of more than one million pieces, an homage to “Smokey the Bear” who turned 80 this year, ABB presented its safer and more reliable electricity technologies, which are crucial to protecting wildlife through the mitigation of fires.

SIG, a Swiss company founded in 1853, strives to reduce carbon emissions and promote a more circular economy with its innovative packaging solutions for the food and beverage industry. Many examples of its new, more environmentally-friendly products were on display at Soirée Suisse.





ABB's activation promoted wildfire prevention, while SIG presented its sustainable packaging solutions.

Scientific Impact: Swiss Polar Institute, Frontiers, *BREATHE*

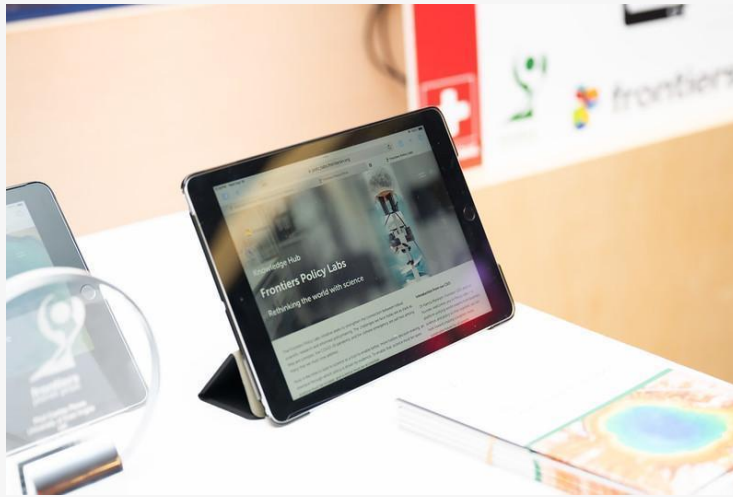


Khalil Berro's installation sheds light on the air we breathe.

The Swiss Polar Institute (SPI) plays a crucial role in advancing polar and alpine research by fostering collaboration among scientists, institutions, and nations. SPI focuses on both the Arctic and Antarctic regions, organizing field expeditions, facilitating data collection, and promoting international cooperation. Through its innovative projects, SPI contributes to our understanding of climate change and the various ecosystems in these extreme environments.

Frontiers is a leading research publisher based in Lausanne, Switzerland, with a mission to make science open—so that scientists can collaborate better and innovate faster to deliver solutions. Its commitment to open science was showcased at Soirée Suisse with interactive tablets and a video presentation.

At the nexus point of science and culture lies Khalil Berro's installation *BREATHE*, where the Swiss-Lebanese artist explores the origins of the air we breathe. An LED ticker displayed calculations of air pockets traveling through the atmosphere, with results projected alongside city names and timestamps. *BREATHE* is grounded in real-time data from the Atmospheric Dynamics Group at ETH Zurich, one of Switzerland's leading universities.

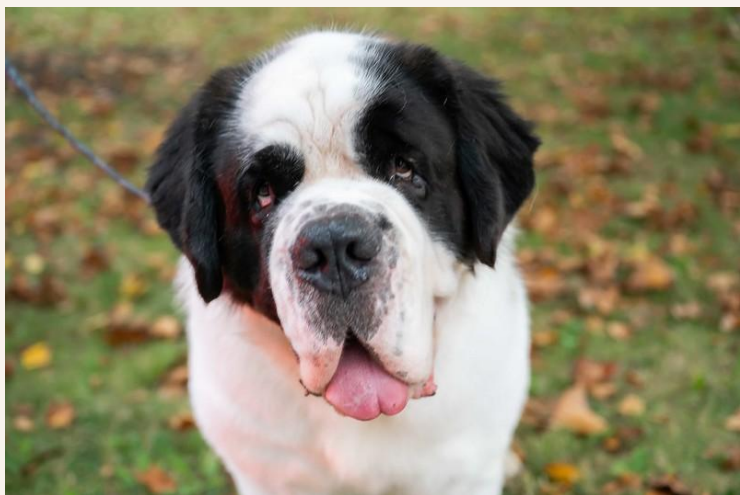


The breathtaking photo exhibition by the Swiss Polar Institute and Frontiers' dedication to open science highlighted Switzerland's leadership in science and research.

Natural Beauty: *Swisstainable Lounge* by SWISS & Switzerland Tourism and Swiss cultural elements

Switzerland's tourism industry is booming—SWISS International Airlines and Switzerland Tourism promote Switzerland to international audiences and help attract millions of tourists every year. In their *Swisstainable Lounge* at the Soirée Suisse, guests had the chance to explore Switzerland's innovative approach to sustainable tourism, from green-certified accommodations and responsible travel practices, to its support for local cultures and communities.

Swiss culture was also omnipresent at the Soirée Suisse: in addition to the exhibition displaying the beauty of the Alpine season, visitors heard alphorn players, saw traditional Swiss flag throwers, took photos with a pair of St. Bernard dogs, and enjoyed delicious Swiss food and drinks.





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