

# The Swiss mouse goes globetrotting

Jimmy Flitz is literally a picture-book mouse, with a picture-perfect career. And now that Swiss Post is starring the travelling mouse on a CHF 0.85 special stamp, this explorer of Switzerland is off to see the world.



Admittedly, there is no shortage of mice in the vibrant world of children's picture books, with characters like Mats and Numi, Frederick, Luzili, Leo and a nameless mouse that features in a TV programme. These rodents read, tame cats or "try their paw" at socialism, but most of them have never made it onto a stamp – a privilege reserved for Jimmy Flitz, the ultimate Swiss mouse.

In fact, it is surprising that Jimmy Flitz has had to wait so long for this tribute. Sixteen is a ripe old age for a "Mus musculus" (the scientific name for house mice). Though, strictly speaking, Jimmy Flitz is a church steeple mouse or "Mus musculus cathedralis", who began his career in the steeple of Berne Cathedral back in 1994, in the story "Das Kind vom Turm" (The Child in the Tower) – the first children's book written by Berne poet, songwriter and author Roland Zoss.



Jimmy Flitz is just as popular with children as the concerts at which young fans sing stories in dialect with Roland Zoss. Photo: Tomas Wüthrich

## Easy contact with kids

The book was the first visible and readable signal from a man who had just undergone a radical transformation after finally finding the object of his decade-long quest. "For as long as I can remember, I've been yearning for warmth and vitality", says Roland Zoss. "In the course of my search for them, I travelled through over →



Jimmy Flitz

## First-day cover motif

## Special stamp The Swiss mouse "Jimmy Flitz"

### Sales

Philately:  
From 26.8.2010  
until 30.9.2011,  
while stocks last  
Post offices:  
From 3.9.2010,  
while stocks last

### Validity

Unlimited from 3.9.2010

### Printing

Offset, 4-colour;  
Joh. Enschedé,  
Haarlem, Netherlands

### Sizes

Stamp: 33×28 mm  
Stamp booklet:  
254×62 mm (open)  
(2 rows of 5 stamps)

### Paper

White stamp paper,  
with optical brightener,  
self-adhesive, on backing  
paper, 220 gm<sup>2</sup>

### Perforation

Serpentine cut (4 sides)

### Designer

Viviane Dommann,  
Meilen (ZH)

## First-day cancellation





→ 50 of the world's warm countries, gathering impressions and stories, and I noticed that, strangely enough, it was easier to make contact with kids than with adults in all cultures." Nevertheless, this commercial college teacher kept poetry for adults as a sideline, penned challenging novels such as "Saitenstrassen" (Streets of Strings) and recorded CDs with songs in High German, like "Flieg meine Seele" (Fly my Soul).

It took the birth of his daughter Lea in 1994 to make him realize what was hidden within him and what he had been searching for in the "outside world": an attentive eye for the childlike whose profound meaning and beauty can only be expressed in simple terms. Roland wrote "Das Kind vom Turm" (The Child in the Tower) for Lea, then two years later "Die Bärenfastnacht" (The Carnival of the Bears). He invented stories about a mythical creature, the "Xenegugeli", and a boy called Güschi, wrote international music for kids from "Muku-Tiki-Mu" land and lullabies from Slumber Land. The scenarios changed, but one character remained a constant – Jimmy Flitz, the lovable, astute church-steeple mouse with the red-and-white striped T-shirt.

### Jimmy Flitz's fame is spreading

Three years ago, the time was right for Roland Zoss to make Jimmy Flitz the cen-



**A poet with words and music: since 1994, Roland Zoss has written many stories and songs about «his» Jimmy Flitz.** Photo: Nicole Zoss

tral character in his stories, so the steeple mouse became a peripatetic explorer – the charming Swiss mouse curious to discover Switzerland's regions and cultures. "Jimmy Flitz – e Reis dür d Schwyz" (A Journey through Switzerland) was a three-part musical play sung and narrated by well-known Swiss performers like Marco Rima, Corin Curschellas, Christine Lauterburg and Büne Huber.

The Switzerland Tourism organization sponsored the project, the "Vereinigung zur Förderung Schweizer Jugendkultur" (Association for Promoting Culture for Swiss Youth) awarded the story its "Goldig Chrönli" (Golden Crown), and the airline Swiss included Jimmy Flitz's travel adventure in its kids' programme. New York's Putumayo World Music label even featured Roland Zoss's "Bärenguburi-Bubuland" on its "European Playground" album, making it the only children's song in Swiss dialect distributed worldwide. One thing led to another, and Jimmy Flitz became more and more famous. "From the start, the mouse was my mascot", says Roland Zoss, "and it's now a protected trademark." This brings the mouse full circle in two ways: first with its adventurous trip through the cantons of Switzerland, beginning and ending in Berne. And second, with its public success, which was never the prime aim but confirmed that the author had taken the right decision back in 1994.

And the fact that Jimmy Flitz will now be touring the world on a stamp also brings things full circle for Roland Zoss in another, personal way. In his teens, he qualified as a federal postal official in Berne and Niederbipp. So, from an early age, he brought people news and stories, both positive and less positive, all of them franked with stamps. "I also learned a lot about people at the post-office counter", Roland Zoss explains. Back then, he hated having to wear a tie at work (he rebelled by wearing an orange bow tie). Now, at 59, he has been a full-time poet for five years and has arranged his whole world on feel-good lines, letting us feel good with him.

Christian Hug

### Stamp booklet

The cover of the booklet of ten self-adhesive Jimmy Flitz stamps features the mouse in scenes with his friends Wulwul, the bear wolf, Fernanda the flower fly and Bubur the dragon.

