

# A lake with lots of history

## PASSENGER NAVIGATION ON LAKE LUCERNE

### Traditional transport

For centuries, the navigable lakes and rivers of Switzerland have been used to transport goods and passengers. Prior to the development of an extensive road and rail network in the mid 19th century, waterways often provided the best link. Thanks to its central location in the heart of Switzerland and the proximity to major north-south trade routes, shipping on Lake Lucerne traditionally occupied an important role in the regional economy. In December 1835, the tradesman Casimir Friedrich Knörr surprised the locals, when he announced his intention to launch a steam-powered vessel on the lake. He followed through with his bold plans and on 24 September 1837 the proud «Stadt Luzern» celebrated its maiden voyage.

### From trade to tourism

During the «Belle Époque» in the late 19th century, tourism started to supplant trade as the most important source of income for the navigation company. Thanks to steam-powered transportation, faster journey times and better access to Switzerland from abroad, greater numbers of travelers than ever before flocked to the Alps. To meet demand, the fleet was significantly enhanced, with new and truly stately steamers being launched, in order to better accommodate the large crowds and provide exquisite comfort for those travelling in first class. In recognition of all the foreign guests, many of the Lake Lucerne steamboats received such symbolic names as «Victoria», «Germania» or «Italia». Today, the «Uri» is the oldest surviving paddle steamer dating from 1901, while the youngest is the «Stadt Luzern» from 1928. The latter is also the flagship of the steam fleet and in May 1980 had the honor of hosting Queen Elizabeth II on a state visit. In recognition of the event, the elegant upper deck lounge was later renamed as Queen's Salon.

### Enduring and endearing steamboats

With their tall stack funnels, red side wheels and melodic whistles, the paddle steamers are undoubtedly the most popular vessels on the lake and timeless icons. Nowadays listed as historic monuments and formally designated as mechanical engineering landmarks, their survival was far from certain during the 1960s, when harsh rationalization and ruthless modernization were the order of the day. It took a well organized grassroots campaign and outright street protests to save the steamers and provide them with a long-term future. Thanks to the establishment of the influential «Dampferfreunde» preservation society in 1972, the complete refurbishment of all five steamboats has been supported through generous public donations and institutional grants. The heritage fleet is complemented by 14 motor vessels of varying vintage. Presently, a state-of-the-art ship is under construction, which will help establish a new benchmark for quality and innovation when it is launched in 2017. Designed to resemble a Mediterranean super yacht, the vessel is being built on site at the shipyard in Lucerne.

For more information, please visit [www.lakelucerne.ch](http://www.lakelucerne.ch)