

Society ::

## Swiss quiz game to shops for 1 August holiday



Image: ©2009 Helvetiq

**Lausanne, Switzerland (GenevaLunch)** - *Quick* - what's the Matterhorn called in French and how long is the Swiss president's term of office? How many cantons does Switzerland have and what makes raclette different from other cheeses? Don't know?

Whether you are new to Switzerland or have been here all your life it is difficult to truly fit in if you are not familiar with the local cultural heritage. There is a new way to build up knowledge and have fun at the same time: a game called Helvetiq, originally designed to help people applying for Swiss nationality, which comes out in English 1 August, Switzerland's national holiday. The game came out in French earlier this year and sold 7,000 copies in its first eight months. Among other buyers: communes, including Vevey, Crans-près-Celigny, Attalens and Penthalaz, have bought it to help local people prepare to become citizens.

The game has two distinct parts. The first one a quiz that is rather like a mix between Trivial Pursuits and ludo, for ages eight and up, with two to four players. There are a total of 312 questions but each game involves only 13: an interesting educational feature is that each card presents two related questions, both of which may be asked in the course of the game. This means that even if you did not know that Alinghi first won the America's Cup at Auckland, New Zealand, you will be able to answer the related question that comes round, provided you can remember it.

I have lived in Switzerland for almost three decades and have a pretty good general knowledge of the country but still found plenty of questions where I did not know the answer: which is the highest mountain entirely within Switzerland? The questions cover history, geography and general cultural questions, including politics and sport. The makers promise that new questions will be added - perhaps the names of Roger Federer's twins? There is a certain amount of chance involved as players toss dice to determine how quickly they can lead their cows to the mountain pastures, which means that players have a chance to catch up even if they miss the early questions. There is a clear educational benefit to the game, and I can see it being used in international schools in particular as part of the attempt to help students integrate more with their host country.

The second game is a more strategic affair, where the players compete to advance political careers in the three branches ( judiciary, legislature and executive) and the three levels ( communal, cantonal and federal) of government. This might be adapted by allowing negotiations and alliances. It's designed for players age 10 and up, with three to four players.

The Redcut company behind the Helvetiq project was created by Hadi Barkat, Nils Rinaldi and Yves Barbey. Barkat is an entrepreneur, investor and engineer who was an investment manager for a venture capital fund for four years and who has worked in Switzerland with Shockfish, a spin-off from EPFL, Lausanne's federal polytechnic institute, as well as Logispring, IP01, Cod-It. Rinaldi is an engineer and project manager who currently manages the Camipro project at EPFL, including services related to RFID identity cards. Barbey is an engineer with Jean-Daniel Berset Ingénieurs Conseils SA. The trio worked with two Lake Geneva region companies, Gameworks and designer Urka, to design and cut the games.

Several shops in the Lake Geneva region carry the game or it can be ordered online directly from the publishers.

**Publisher:** Redcut, Lausanne, Switzerland

**Cost:** CHF69.90 plus shipping

**Ed. note:** Nick Bates is an avid board games player and teacher; he also writes about sports for GenevaLunch

Posted by :: **Nicholas Bates** on 29 July 2009 at 18:42 | [permalink](#)

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