

Lucerne as seen by a British tourist

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TOURIST NEWS

Few of the many tourists who take the Jungfrau Railway to the Jungfrauoch, the highest railway station in Europe, know as they stand on its lofty terrace looking at the breathtaking panorama of the Aletsch glacier and the Bernese and Valais Alps that they are within a stone's throw of a great research station.

Yet the station, at a height of 12,000 feet, is of great importance to the world of science. Here physicists study cosmic rays, and scientists from many countries work on problems concerning astrophysics, astronomy, geophysics and medical subjects, as well as glacier movements.

In the Sphinx observatory British research workers have installed an electromagnet weighing 14 tons and propose to carry out research there from time to time for the next five years.

Belgian professors have taken with them to the Jungfrauoch special instruments to measure ultra-red solar radiations.

Last year 162 research workers and technical assistants used the Jungfrauoch observatory. Ninety-two of them were Swiss, who spent a total of 416 nights at the station. Twenty-six British workers, compared with 18 in 1949, spent 652 nights there, 21 Belgians (five in the previous year) were there for 451 nights, and 19 French (six) for 329 nights. Germany, which was not represented in 1949, sent four men, who spent 131 nights there.

The Lotschberg, Switzerland's highest railway tunnel and the third longest in the country, was pierced 40 years ago, when two parties, one working from the north and the other from the south, first made contact at a point 3000ft. above the sea. The tunnel, built in connection with the independent Berne-Lotschberg-Simplon railway, which connects Berne, the Swiss capital, with Brigue, runs beneath a towering 6000ft. mass of rock and snow. It was several months after the opening of the great 12½-mile Simplon tunnel that work started simultaneously at Goppenstein, in the picturesque Valais, and at Kandersteg, then a remote village, now a famous holiday resort in the Bernese Oberland. For the first time workmen used electrically-operated compressed air drills which worked wonders with the tough rock. They had to blast their way through different types of rock from chalk to granite, but they kept up a steady advance of more than a dozen yards a day, only interrupted by the disastrous inrush of glacial debris which brought about a curving course in the tunnel as finally completed. To do so, they needed 370 tons of dynamite. Exactly a year after the pilot tunnel was completed, the running tunnel was big enough to allow for construction of double track, and in July, 1913, the Lotschberg line—the first standard gauge mountain railway with electric traction—was opened. It not only meant the opening of a region rich in art treasures and incomparable mountain scenery, but also the introduction of a speedier access to the international Simplon line for much of Switzerland and Europe.

Swiss Car Imports.

According to figures recently released Germany has replaced the United Kingdom as the chief supplier of cars to Switzerland.

West Germany exported more than twice as many cars to Switzerland during the first half of this year than in the whole of 1950—a total of 8115.

The United States came second with 4102 cars for the first six months, compared with 3626 for the same period last year. France was third with 3496 cars, against 3791, followed by Britain with 3059, compared with 4093—a 25 per cent. drop.

Total Swiss car imports rose from 17,727 cars in the first six months of 1950 to 21,265 in the same period this year.

LUCERNE AS SEEN BY A BRITISH TOURIST

What a grand old time they are having in Lucerne right now! An endless stream of pounds, dollars, francs, marks and lire (in that order) are pouring into Switzerland's Town of the Golden Purse. The shops are selling out of nylons, embroidered blouses and lace undies almost quicker than they can wire for further supplies. Dozens of those gay little pedalos, despite their hire charge being double that of their cousins on Lake Leman, are always to be seen weaving in and out of the romantically-named paddle steamers, crowded with excited sightseers.

All of which goes to show that despite devaluation increasing their holiday costs by between 30 and 40 per cent., Britons and their European neighbours can still find enough cash for their annual fling on the banks of the Reuss.

It is not true that Britons go to Lucerne solely because it is the thing to do. There they find every ingredient for the perfect holiday—an old-world atmosphere that reminds you of Berne and the modern gaiety of Lausanne; with its Casino it introduces a dash of Monte Carlo, and its beautiful southern horizon brings a crescent of High Alps to its doorstep.

And Lucerne has really gone out of its way to pander to British holidaymakers, so much so that while French is the second language for the rest of German-speaking Switzerland, the people of Lucerne have unanimously chosen English.

Opening up Lucerne to the British in a big way actually goes back to the time of Bob Mitchell, the founder of the Polytechnic Tours. Passing through the town on the way back from Rome he was inspired by drinking a cup of tasteless Swiss tea, bought a hotel on the spur of the moment, added the now famous Lucerne chalets for £10,000, and filled them with second-hand furniture he bought on the cheap. They became a roaring success, and they still are. At the beginning of the century you could stay there 17 days for £10. Today a fortnight costs £35. But the crowds are still flocking there.

More than anywhere else in Switzerland, tourism in Lucerne is now a highly-developed industry. It has its own "factory" in the lovely Schweizerhofquai where they are constantly turning out a flood of brochures, leaflets, maps, folders, and photos, all bent on persuading foreigners with money to spare that Lucerne is a "must" for everyone. In charge of this unique workshop is chubby, bespectacled Dr. Edward Schutz, a former schoolmaster, who now looks upon the world as his classroom. That he has more than succeeded in putting over his lesson is obvious to anyone who has visited Lucerne this summer.

NOTICES

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