

# Winter in the Swiss mountains

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Forty years have passed since Sir Arnold Lunn, the English alpinist and writer whose name is so closely associated with the history of ski-ing, first draw up the rules for downhill and slalom racing which were later to gain general recognition. It was in 1922 at Mürren, the highest winter-sports resort in the Bernese Oberland, that the first slalom, marked out by Sir Arnold, was run. Slaloms of those days, which were laid out in such a way that the choice of route was largely left to the skier, were vastly different from those of to-day where the gates are fixed at such short intervals that the contestant has virtually no alternative but to take the fastest and indeed the only possible route between them. Acting on a suggestion of Sir Arnold's, the Kandahar Ski Club is going to hold a giant slalom at Mürren on 2nd January in the style of the twenties, so that the competitors will be faced with unusual conditions. Part of the course, which contains a straight downhill section, must be covered on unprepared pistes. The principal feature of the event, however, is the fact that it is an "unseen" race, for the gates will not be fixed until all the contestants are at the start. It will be interesting to see whether the "ballet dancers" on skis who are so successful in the modern slalom will also win the first places in this race for the Risorgimento Cup.

\* \* \*

In addition to the 500 ski-lifts, chair-lifts and aerial cableways already in permanent use in Switzerland's approximately 125 winter-sports resorts last winter, it is estimated that more than twenty new ones will be ready at the start of the new season to carry the ever-increasing numbers of skiers. The new installations so far announced are distributed among Switzerland's most important ski-ing areas and some of them open up new ski fields. They include the following:— Davos: Parsennhütte — Weissfluhjoch aerial cableway, Kreuzweg — Parsennfurka ski-lift; Grindelwald: First — Oberjoch ski-lift; Andermatt: Andermatt — Gemsstock Gotthard cableway; Charmey (Canton Fribourg): Charmey — Dents-Vertes cableway.

\* \* \*

The Ski-Club of Great Britain will hold the British Ski Race Week at Davos from 7th to 14th January. Competitions in slalom, giant slalom and downhill ski-ing are planned. Three new ski-hoists will be ready for the coming winter season:

The aerial cableway Brämabüel — Jakobshorn (4 minutes) is expected to be ready by January/February.

2nd ski-hoist to Brämabüel

Ski-hoist Jatzhorn (7 minutes)

Ski-hoist Carjoeler (3 minutes).

In December, courses for advanced skiers will be held for the first time at Grindelwald. Full details can be obtained from the Swiss National Tourist Office, 458 Strand, London W.C.2.

Like to go ski-ing this year?

(Photo: Swiss National Tourist Office)

## WINTER IN THE

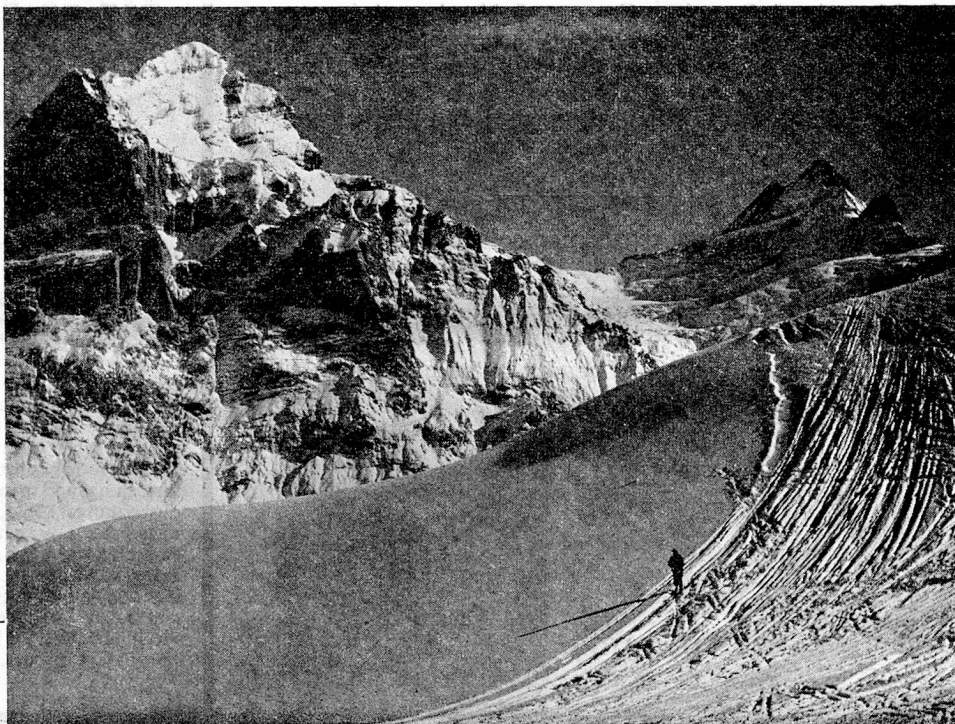
In his charming "Switzerland for Beginners", George Mikes claims that the most gruelling winter sport is the avoidance of ski-ing. For the temptation to ski is with you wherever you go in Switzerland — and to resist it calls for exceptional grit and endurance.

Like most of Mikes's paradoxes, this one is not without foundation. Holiday time is precious and a skier's legs are best employed in bearing him downhill rather than trudging upwards. With this in mind Swiss resorts have introduced a whole range of innovations in uphill transportation. This year alone, twenty new installations have been added to the five hundred skilifts, chairlifts and aerial cableways already at the disposal of winter sports enthusiasts in all regions of Switzerland. The latest facilities include the Parsennhütte-Weissfluhjoch cableway and the Kreuzweg-Parsennfurka skilift at Davos, the First-Oberjoch skilift at Grindelwald, the Gotthard-Gemsstock cableway at Andermatt and the Charmey-Dents Vertes cableway at Charmey (Fribourg).

These labour-saving devices are to be found in about 125 winter sports centres, some resorts boasting as many as ten of them. In the Valais, for example, Verbier has no less than twenty. But apart from the thrills of the piste — now so easily accessible — other, less strenuous, joys await you in Switzerland, whether you spend your holiday in a modern resort or in a peaceful village off the beaten track — occasions such as a leisurely sledge ride behind tinkling bells, or an excursion on snow-shoes through spruce forests and across virgin snow-fields. You can do this at place like Arosa, Pontresina, Flims, Grindelwald, Engelberg, Saas-Fee, Les Avants and Caux.

### Switzerland's mountain hotels get a new look

Modernisation and extension of the mountain transport system, construction of new artificial-ice rinks and



# SWISS MOUNTAINS

heated swimming pools such as the indoor pool at the Hotel Theodule at Zermatt and the open-air pools at the Palace Hotel, St. Moritz, and at Loeche-les-Bains, where you swim in comfort amid snow and ice — amenities of this sort have been a challenge to local hoteliers, for modern attractions must be matched by increased and ever more comfortable accommodation.

The call for quantity is answered by the provision of over 50,000 beds in 2,000 winter-resort hotels as well as countless beds in the rapidly increasing number of holiday chalets and private flats let by the season. Thus, apart from the peak period at the New Year and in February, all reservations from Switzerland and abroad can easily be met. However, in catering for quantity we must not forget the demand for quality. Greatly expanded accommodation is an economic proposition in all-the-year-round resorts, but at winter-sports centres the important thing is radically to modernise existing hotels and pensions while preserving their traditional atmosphere of hospitality and good living.

## The winter-sports calendar

Each year in Switzerland about one thousand sporting, cultural and traditional events contribute to the success of innumerable winter holidays. During the coming season, for example, the list includes such time-honoured attractions as the Lauberhorn International Ski Championships at Wengen (13th-14th January), the Inferno Competition at Muerren (4th February), the Parsenn Derby at Davos (11th February), the St. Moritz "White Ribbon" International Slalom at St. Moritz (21st February), the Gornergrat International Derby and the Blauherd Downhill Competition at Zermatt (16th-18th March), the International Ladies' Championships at Grindelwald (9th-12th January) and the Montgomery Cup International Ski Jumping Competition at Gstaad (11th February). The 15th to the 25th of January and the early days of February see the celebration at St. Moritz of the Commonwealth Games, which include ski-ing, curling, bobsleigh, skating and skeleton events, while the European Figure Skating Championships are held at Geneva from 28th February to 4th March.

Horse lovers will be glad to know that the traditional race meetings on snow will be held at Arosa on 14th and 21st January and, with international participation, at St. Moritz on 28th January and 4th February. Winter horse shows will attract visitors to St. Moritz (18th-21st January), to Gstaad (17th-18th February), to Leysin (24th-25th February) and to Davos (9th-11th March).

A great amount of work and money has to go into the preparations for each winter season; but the effort is amply repaid by the fact that Switzerland thereby maintains its reputation as the oldest and best equipped winter-sports paradise. The 600 million francs spent there every season certainly testify to this.

## A Snow Paradise in the South

On 24th December last, that is at Christmas, at the pleasant resort of Airolo, on the southern side of the Gotthard, the new aerial cableway Airolo-Sasso della Boggia was opened to the public, a truly valuable Christmas present for all ski-ing enthusiasts.

Stuated at an altitude of 3,838 feet, and in the very centre of Switzerland, Airolo, thanks to the superbly constructed Gotthard railway-line, is easily reached from all directions. This resort, which has become over the last decades increasingly popular as a tourist paradise, is also accessible in a short time from Upper Italy, the journey by train from Milan taking only three hours. During the whole of the winter season, the Swiss Federal Railways run in addition a special sports train, the "Freccia bianca" (White Arrow), for skiers from Upper Italy and Ticino.

The region of Airolo offers excellent ski-ing slopes; some of the best are now made accessible by the new aerial cableway. First-class snow conditions enable ski-ing enthusiasts to practise their favourite sport to their hearts' content uninterruptedly from November to April. But also outside the winter months, the Airolo region is a true Eldorado for mountain and nature lovers. They can find there a flora and a fauna second to none, in particular in the districts of Culisio, Nante, Pescium and Sasso di Boggia. As an invitation to the high ascents or to more modest excursions, there are also the many wonderful peaks, some of them over 3,000 metres (9,840 feet), the Cristallina, the Cima di Mezzogiorno, the Vespero, etc., or passes for rambling tours, for instance to the Maggia Valley. It is hard to realise that this Alpine paradise had remained, up to recent times, comparatively so little known. Despite this fact, Airolo offers visitors — even the most exacting — all possible tourist amenities. There is no doubt that the newly built aerial cableway will be



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another successful addition to the resort's development.

The new Ski School directed by the Ski-ing Champion of Ticino, Erwin Muller, assisted by a dozen first-rate instructors, the superb ice-rink, the skilift, and above all the active collaboration of the "Pro Airolo" organisation in the field of tourist publicity, all contribute to the ever increasing popularity of the winter resort of Airolo, which extends to all visitors a hearty welcome and wishes them a pleasant holiday in the southern slope of the Gotthard.

Every year at the beginning of the winter season the Swiss Ski School Association holds its Course for Head Instructors at Swiss Ski Schools in some well-known winter resort. This is a "dress rehearsal" for ski instructors and ensures that a uniform technique satisfying modern requirements is taught at all the winter resorts in the country. The instructors taking part in these advanced classes in ski teaching methods will be imparting their knowledge to a training group of skiers from all over the world. About 2,000 visitors are expected at Arosa (Grisons) this year for the 28th course, which will be taking place from 3rd to 17th December.

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