

Swiss winter without broken bones

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SWISS WINTER WITHOUT BROKEN BONES

An American journalist, famous for his witty commentaries on daily life, told his readers that he had the "rare good luck" to fall from the train at the moment of his arrival in snowy St. Moritz and land on his nose. The flattering result was that he could walk around with a most impressive bandage prominently displayed, to be taken as a matter of course for one of those daring souls, who, like avenging gods, race down the icy slopes into the valley and now and then end up with broken boards and bones. A broken nose, he said, is not only extremely decorative and dashing, but also a thoroughly bearable "casualty" that arouses general sympathy. It also frees one from the duty of undertaking dare-devil ski-exercises, and yet allows the invalid enough freedom of movement for the conviviality of night life on the "roof of Europe".

This humorist's story could also be recounted in a more prosy style. Then the moral would be clear and simple: you must not necessarily be a "maestro" on the lacquered boards to feel at home in the Swiss mountain winter. And still less do you need to break every bone in your body.

The Land of 150 Fountains of Youth

Without a doubt, St. Moritz is the most famous of all Swiss mountain resorts. It is an ideal place for every conceivable pleasure of snow, ice and sun, and for that "smart set" way of life that has become to be known as "Après Ski". Here where the fun seeking world is a guest for the glittering months of winter, you will certainly not be out of step if you decide to enjoy yourself as a social lion rather than a tiger at sports — even without a false plaster cast on nose or skin. The proverbial sun of St. Moritz — it is even the trade-mark of this bracing spot — toasts you just as golden brown whether you haunt the countless ski runs or whether, from an outdoor café on the square, you sit with relaxed muscles and contented smile watching the jolly comings and goings of the would-be Olympians. "Smart set", did we say? Please don't misunderstand this. In the "Millionaires' paradise" that looks so costly at first glance, there is a long list of smaller hotels offering a delightful, pleasure-filled life at a daily all-in rate from S.Fr.20.— upwards.

Besides, St. Moritz is not Switzerland. There are around 150 more winter sports resorts, some of them not yet well-known internationally. They all provide exactly what the doctor has been ordering for so long, namely an abundance of curative, sun-warmed winter air. And probably you already know that one single week in the wholesome Swiss winter air is just as strengthening to nerves, spirit and body as two summer weeks at the seaside. Just for a change, we have turned the microscope on a few popular winter holiday spots in Switzerland for those who do not wish to take an active part in sports, and have come up with a whole list of first-hand hints about absolutely heavenly possibilities. From Montana-Vermala on the sunny side of the sun-saturated Valais, we have word that there are inexhaustible opportunities for walks and rides in horse-drawn sleighs; in addition, there is a cinema, as well as forty hotels with musical entertainment. St. Croix-les-Rasses, the winter resort in the Swiss Jura that is nearest to Paris, offers an equally wide range of outdoor and "Après Ski" activities, among them chairlifts to a viewpoint of the world-famous Alpine panorama. Here, too, there is a good chance to collect autographs from the many, many French film stars who are steady guests.

Paradise for 18 Francs

Now we fly back again to the Valais, to take a look at three other Alpine gems. First there is incomparable Crans-sur-Sierre. There in December, when fog and melancholy envelop humanity in the lowlands, the sun is switched on for eight hours a day. In February the daily average of sunshine increases to ten hours, and in March the mid-day sun is almost as tropically hot as at the equator. Tobogganing, outings in horse-drawn sleighs, in cars or with "Cabins in the sky" as well as deck-chair enjoyment of artistic and folk festivals on the skating rink, are samples of the favourite passive winter sport activities. For your amusement in the evening there are cinemas, a Kursaal-Casino, and night clubs. Zermatt, the inimitable mountaineering village at the foot of the Matterhorn, offers lodging for several thousand winter guests in its sixty-five hotels, and thanks to its excellent mountain railway connections lures even the most unsporty to the comfortable world within reach of one of the highest peaks in the Alps. On the neighbouring valley lies Saas-Fee, which, it is said, puts a lifelong spell on its visitors, who are drawn back again and again by its magnetic charm. It is one of the most favoured starting points for spring ski tours, but this should not discourage those who take no part in the sport from lingering here to drink in the most beautiful of Alpine landscapes. In this mountain village, cut off from the world, 5,900 feet above sea-level, one finds comfortable board and lodging for only 18 francs per day in good little holiday hotels.

Sledding in Convoy — another Winter Sport

The winter queen of Central Switzerland, easily reached by boat and mountain railway from Lucerne, or by well-cleared roads, is picturesque Engelberg with its medieval monastery and its rich programme of sports events and entertainment. Among them are the carnival on skis and skates. "Tailing parties" or sledding in convoy, as well as fancy dress balls in the Casino and other places. The Bernese Oberland, opened to the visitor up to 12,000 feet of the Jungfrauoch, and the furthest mountain hamlet by mountain railway and Postal buses, has long ceased to be the paradise in the heart of Europe for winter sports only. The great number of yearly international sports events — the Lauberhorn ski races at Wengen and the Inferno ski race at Mürren, to mention but two — need the support of enthusiastic spectators, and in fact draw crowds. Every year, from Gstaad and Adelboden to Grindelwald, the attractive winter resorts of the Bernese Oberland have more and more guests whose sporting ambitions are limited to a few trial runs on rented skis under the fatherly eye of a licensed Swiss ski instructor, or who merely want to watch and to enjoy. He who looks only for sun, rest and enchanting landscapes, will also find a rich reward in Winterly Braunwald, the sun-terrace of the Canton of Glarus. Further north, also in Eastern Switzerland, little explored by holiday-makers from abroad, lies Amden, sheltered from the wind, and almost too sunny for those who prefer powder snow. It has room for four hundred guests, and the price for one day's full board is, according to the official Swiss Hotel Guide between S.Fr.13.— and 15.—. Other treasures in the Eastern part of Switzerland for the sports fan or the leisure-loving are the mountains of Flums, as well as Nesslau, Alt St. Johann, Unterwasser and Wildhaus in Toggenburg. Let us not forget the little sulphur spa, Rietbad am Säntis, where, we are informed, bath and massage treatment s kept up right through the winter for those in quest of health.

Cosmopolis Above the Clouds

Back to the classic land of winter-sports — the Grisons. We have already described how reckless, luxurious, sophisticated, socially active or simple and homely life in St. Moritz can be. Exactly the same gamut of individual choice and possibilities is offered by other communities in the South-east corner of Switzerland. Davos, with its population of over ten thousand has moved up to be the "highest" city in Europe. And in winter it swells to a cosmopolis with an abundance of gala events. The horse races and the skating contests are world famous. World famous, too, is the Parsenn, defined as the most glorious mountain for ski-ing on earth. It is just as easily accessible from the neighbouring village, Klosters, where for some years half of Hollywood has spent the winter. For years Arosa has had a magic attraction for the youth of the world between 10 and 80 years of age. With its 3,800 hotel beds, its places of entertainment and its happy landscape quilted with easy walks and sleigh paths, Arosa is counted among the most soigné and versatile winter resorts in Switzerland.

The list of other attractive spots is almost endless, even if we only include those in the Grisons — Pontresina, Silvaplana, Sils-Maria, Zuoz or Scuol-Tarasp-Vulpera in the Engadine; Flims, Sedrun, Bergün, Tschierschen, Lenzerheide-Valbella or Parpan in other parts of the Canton.

Palm Trees in the Snow

Two of Switzerland's "Riviera" resorts — Montreux on Lake Geneva and Locarno on Lake Maggiore — are attracting increasing crowds of winter visitors. While occasional snowfalls may blanket their palm-studded lake-side promenades, the idea is that you can enjoy all the snow you desire without dispensing with such lovely conveniences as Mediterranean sunshine, sidewalk cafés, camellias in bloom and gambling at plush casinos. All you will have to do is to hop uphill in a toy train or aerial tramway, from Montreux to the virgin snowfields of Rochers-de-Naye (6,710 feet) and from Locarno to an elevation of 4,430 feet at Cardada and on by chair lift to the 5,480 feet high Cometta, one of Europe's sunniest winter meccas. At all three points, restaurants and sun terraces command tremendous panoramas, and — what a bliss for snow-haters! — transportation is always on hand for a fast return to the gardens of Eden below.

To cut a long story short: There are Swiss winter holiday joys galore, into which you may plunge without any obligation to become a ski hero, as you would joyfully plunge into the fountain of youth.

S.N.T.O.

INTERNATIONAL ALPINE CONFERENCE

Under the chairmanship of Dr. Paul Bernecker, Director of the Austrian National Tourist Office in Vienna, the heads of the tourist offices of the seven Alpine nations — Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Monaco, Switzerland and Yugoslavia — met at Grindelwald on 20th January in conjunction with "The Year of the Alps". The main theme of their discussions was the joint advertising campaign in North America to promote the Alps as "Europe's top tourist attraction".

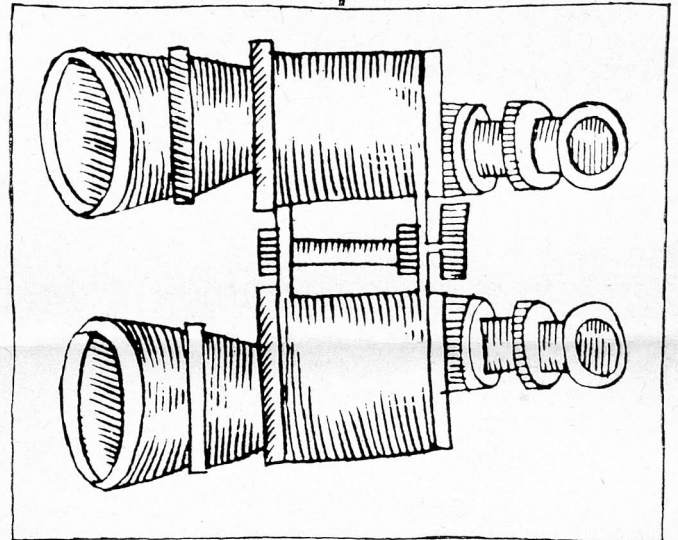
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FESTIVE BEGINNING TO "THE YEAR OF THE ALPS"

"In sixty million years the Alps will be worn away — so let's make the most of the time that's left!" This was one of the many references to "The Year of the Alps" at the recent international press conference held by the Swiss National Tourist Office at St. Moritz, where there was a simultaneous celebration of the centennial of the arrival of the first winter guests in that now famous resort town. What's the point of celebrating the Alps, if they will still be around for another sixty million years? The celebration has primarily historical roots: 1965 marks the first centennial of St. Moritz, Davos and Villars as winter resorts, and the 100th anniversary of the first successful climbing of the Matterhorn. And so an attempt is being made to impress more people with the climatic and geographic attractions of the Alps, their beneficent effects on modern man's body and spirit, and their excellence as a unique region for rejuvenation and the enjoyment of nature. As Dr. Werner Kämpfen, Director of the Swiss National Tourist Office, declared at the press conference: "In the 'Year of the Alps', anyone interested in building up his health by partaking of the very special atmosphere which the Alps offer, can celebrate his own personal festival — a festival of health and rejuvenation."

[S.N.T.O.]

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