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TO CANTON GLARUS BY MOTORCOACH

by WELDON F. HEALD

One of the best ways to see Switzerland is by a combination of rail and motorcoach. This gives you a wide variety of prize travel packages of your own choosing, and enables you to visit every nook and corner of the Swiss Alps, no matter how remote or out-of-the-way. The comfortable and sturdy buses of the Postal Service make regularly scheduled daily runs in summer over most of the passes and penetrate scores of delightful Alpine valleys. You can plan any number of rail-motor round-trips and through routes and include them on your Holiday Ticket at greatly reduced fares.

As an example, a particularly fine combination railway-motorcoach journey may be made from Lucerne to Glarus, either as a loop or on your way to more distant points. One of the smaller Cantons, Glarus, is tucked away among a maze of towering snow-capped peaks, and is much more impressive vertically than horizontally. In fact, here is a thoroughly Alpine area that has been described as "a Microcosm of Switzerland". Certainly typically Swiss are Glarus's deep green valleys, its plunging cascades and waterfalls, little cotton-spinning and cheese-making villages, and steep-pitched, chalet-dotted mountain pastures. Most visitors call Glarus "unspoiled", which means that modern civilisation has been kind to the Canton's landscape and way of life.

Limited to the single valley of the Linth and its short tributaries, this sequestered region can be reached by wheeled vehicles only from the north up the river, or through one gap high in the rugged mountain barrier to the southwest. The latter is Klausen Pass, over which a road runs from Flüelen at the head of the Lake of Lucerne. The distance from Flüelen to Linthal in Glarus is 32½ miles and is made by regular Postal Motorcoach in summer twice daily each direction in about 3½ hours. On the way you are treated to a kaleidoscopic succession of Alpine gentleness and grandeur equal to any pass in Switzerland.

From Lucerne there is a choice of the early morning steamer 30 miles up the lake or the south-bound Saint Gottard Railway Express. Tickets are interchangeable and you needn't miss breakfast either way. The Linthal motorcoach takes off from the Flüelen wharf and station, returning to the picturesque town of Altdorf in ten minutes. Here the Klausen Pass Road branches east up the Schächenbach Valley and the long ascent to the summit begins.

This is the heart of the William Tell country and birthplace of Swiss liberty in the thirteenth century. The Public Square at Altdorf is the place where Tell is supposed to have shot the apple from his son's head with bow

and arrow. A bronze statue of the national hero and his son commemorates the event, and nearby is a theatre in which performances of Schiller's "William Tell" are given. Where the Klausen Pass Road bridges the Schächenbach, outside of town, is a memorial inscription recording the legend that Tell was drowned here trying to rescue a friend in 1350. The village of Bürglen, just beyond, tradition says, was his birthplace and home.

The road ascends the wild Schächen-Tal. The enclosing mountains become higher with each mile and shining, glacier-clad Scheerhorn and Claridenstock soar imposingly at the valley's head. At the mountaineering centre of Unterschächen the Brunn-Tal opens to the south revealing the tremendous cliffs of the Grosse Windgälle and Gross Ruchen rising nearly a mile and a half into the sky. Beyond, the road climbs the valley's north wall in a giant switchback and then follows high along the steep, rocky slope, 1,000 to 1,500 feet above the white-foaming Schächenbach. The opposite side of the narrow mountain trough is walled with precipices, topped by sharp peaks and sprawling ice-fields.

Passing through a rocky gallery, 360 feet long, the bus comes to a stop at a hotel on the Balm Alp, grandly situated directly beneath the Scheerhorn and Clariden. Here you can stretch your legs and mitigate the pangs of a mountain appetite with a snack. A mile farther on, 17½ miles from Flüelen, you top the barren gap of Klausen Pass, 6,404 feet elevation, and begin the descent into the valley of the Linth. The drop to the town of Linthal is 4,300 feet in 15 miles, and the road makes most of it in two series of zig-zags, separated by a traverse of the long Urnerboden, one of the most beautiful Alpine pasturages in Switzerland. There is no decline in scenic magnificence on the way down and the introduction to Canton Glarus is dramatic and stimulating.

The railway station at Linthal is the end of the Postal motorcoach line. The town is located deep at the bottom of the valley, and is a centre for walking and climbing expeditions among the gigantic semicircle of mountains enclosing the headwaters of the Linth to the south. Several guides are stationed here and if you are a mountaineer you can tackle a brace of challenging peaks and make headquarters at the half dozen or so huts of the Swiss Alpine Club. Or you can follow easier paths to waterfalls, lakes, high pastures and lofty outlooks, and perhaps tarry at one of several mountain inns.

But nobody should visit Glarus without going to Braunwald. Reached by funicular in 20 minutes from Linthal, this is the Canton's chief sum-

mer and winter resort in a slightly mountainside situation high up on the east side of the valley. A charming, widely scattered Alpine village. Braunwald stretches over a sloping natural terrace of flowery meadows, interspersed with groves of maples, fir and spruce. Perched more than 2,000 feet above Linthal, the place gives superb grandstand views of mountain and valley in whatever direction you look. But perhaps most spectacular is the rugged cluster of peaks at the head of the Linth, dominated by the huge snow-crowned wedge of the Tödi, 11,386 feet altitude, King of the Glarus Alps.

Braunwald is well provided with hotels and *pensions*, and in summer affords an unusual number of interesting walks and hikes, as well as varied climbs. Less well known as a winter resort, the village, some time ago, came into its own with an aerial tramway to the Kleiner Gumen, making accessible the extensive open ski slopes of the Ober Staffel. But in summer green or spread with glistening snow, Braunwald has a setting rivalled by few other Swiss resorts and surpassed by none.

Beyond Linthal the journey is continued by railway down the valley north to Ziegelbrücke, 18 miles, which is a station on the through London-Paris-Vienna line. From there you can return to Lucerne, proceed to Zurich, or elect to explore another Alpine detour.

Outstanding on the trip down the valley is the massive bulk of the Glärnisch, which rises abruptly 8,000 feet above the river. Although only 9,579 feet in elevation, it is one of Switzerland's finest mountains and stands in splendid isolation some miles north of the high peaks at the head of the valley. At the east foot of the Glärnisch is the town of Glarus, capital of the Canton. Here in the Public Square the *Landsgemeinde* meets each year on the first Sunday in May. This is an open-air legislative assembly of male voters to elect officials and enact laws.

If time permits, a side trip to Elm is rewarding. It is a summer resort and climbing centre deep among a group of rocky mountains, and is reached by an 8½-mile electric line from Schwanden. Then there is the Klöntalersee, a lovely blue lake at the base of the terrific northern precipices of the Glärnisch, easily visited by Alpine Postal Motorcoach from Glarus. The pleasant south shore resorts at the west end of the Walensee are also in the Canton, and the gem-like Obersee is worth at least a passing look.

So whether you plan quick circle tours or longer stays, combination rail-motorcoach trips are the smart way to travel in Switzerland. They add up to comfortable, reasonable and efficient travel to places usually missed on the "Grand Tours" — such as Canton Glarus.

(By courtesy Swiss National Tourist Office.)