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Editorial

Unfortunately this month Paul was unable to write his editorial as he has been sick. A passenger of one of the touring groups from Switzerland left their homeland with a bug and unfortunately infected some of our members with it ... and sadly for Paul he was one of them. He is on the mend and we look forward to your editorial next month. I'm sure we all wish you and Christine a speedy recovery. Therefore in the absence of Paul's editorial I thought I would put in a contribution about Interlaken and the surrounding area as the Congress for the Swiss Abroad will be held there later this year.

Interlaken, capital of the Bernese Oberland

Interlaken is the "capital" of the beautiful Bernese Oberland and world-reknown as a leading winter and summer resort. It is also a departure point for

memorable excursions throughout the Bernese Oberland. Its name is derived from the Latin "inter lacus", meaning "between the lakes". To the visitor, Interlaken creates the clear impression of being a single town. In fact, it is made up of three politically independent municipalities - Interlaken, Matten and Unterseen. The focal point of Interlaken is the Hoheweg, which stretches for about 700 metres. Half-way along this main street is the historic "Hohematte", an open green area covering some 35 acres. Originally owned by a monastery, it affords a particularly impressive view of the distant Jungfrau. A decree dating back more than a century stipulates that the land will never be built upon. The Hoheweg itself is lined with fine hotels, attractive shops, cosy coffee houses and restaurants. It leads to the Interlaken West and Interlaken East railway stations, with their

landing stages on the Lakes of Thun and Brienz.

From Interlaken you may wish to visit some of the following :

Bonigen - only a five minute bus ride from Interlaken - is a quiet and relaxing holiday spot on the Lake of Brienz.

Grindelwald - the Glacier Village - is a delightful destination for individualists. The resort enjoys a most scenic setting, satisfying the diverse holiday demands of its guests. Grindelwald is an unspoilt setting of breath-taking beauty. Both its glaciers reach almost into the village itself, while the glacier gorge and mysterious blue ice-grotto are also outstanding natural attractions.

Jungfraubahnen - More than a century ago a far-sighted Swiss launched a project to build a railway to 3454 metres above sea level, and today the Jungfrauoch is still the highest railway station in Europe. In 1893 Adolf Guyer-Zeller hit upon the idea while hiking in the Jungfrau region. Construction work started from the Kleine Scheidegg in 1896. It took sixteen years instead of the planned seven, and costs totalled CHF 15 million instead of the budgeted CHF 10 million! But he was right about the ultimate financial success of the Jungfrau Railway, which opened on 1 August 1912 and made a profit from the first full year of operation. The Jungfrauoch enjoys a spectacular setting in the heart of the Jungfrau-Aletsch-Bietschhorn region, and is a focal point of the bid for UNESCO recognition as a World Natural Heritage. The route from the Kleine Scheidegg covers 12 km, almost all of it through the tunnel hewn out of Alpine rock. Stops are made at the Eiger North wall, Eiger Glacier and Sea of Ice stations, where huge observation windows offer breathtaking vistas of the valley below. A particularly popular attraction is the Ice Palace, created in the 1930s by local mountain guides. Located 20 metres under the Aletsch Glacier, it displays superb sculptures of wildlife and other impressive exhibits, carved out of natural ice. The most ambitious project of recent times has been the Sphinx Observation Building, which opened in 1996 after three years' construction work under the most extreme climatic conditions. The glass and steel structure provides a 360-degree Alpine panorama of breath-taking beauty. The trip to the "Top of the World" is spectacular.

Lauterbrunnen Isenfluh

Probably the most beautiful of the glacial valley in the European Alps. Scenic attractions include the 4,000 metre snow-capped peaks and

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