

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK
Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom
Band: - (1951)
Heft: 1168

Artikel: Roundabout Switzerland
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-694934>

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ROUNDABOUT SWITZERLAND.

DEREK MEAKIN'S monthly review of tourist activities in Switzerland.

Sixty per cent more English tourists have visited Switzerland this summer, and from all over the country reports are coming in of how the tourist business is booming. A thousand curious sightseers a day have been filing into the Castle of Chillon to see the scene of the Bad Lord Byron's famous poem. Zurich has never had so many foreign visitors since 1939, and at the peak period all the hotels, boarding houses and inns in the city and surrounding district had every bed occupied. And numerous mountain lovers have been to have a last look at the Matterhorn in its entirety before some enterprising climbers broke off a lump to send to New York.

What are the reasons for the increase? Fewer visitors to Italy, because that country expended all its energies on Holy Year? Fewer visitors to Austria, because Britons have found out that the promise of ultra-cheap holidays there is only a propaganda line after all?

Or is it because the travel agencies, who seem to be doing the work of the Swiss National Tourist Office in so excellent a fashion, have so successfully stressed the *reasonableness* of Swiss holidays? Of course, they can afford to push Switzerland at the expense of France, Italy and Austria, where there seems to be no halt to soaring prices, because a client sent to Switzerland invariably comes back satisfied.

Sixty per cent is a good figure, but I believe it could have been even better had Zurich allowed the S.N.T.O. in London a little more ready cash to step up the good work already being done by Mr. Ernst and his band of 30-odd willing workers.

Do you know that during the whole of 1950 the S.N.T.O. spent on newspaper advertising in Britain the miserable sum of £2,000 — *less than the cost of a single large advertisement in the Daily Express*?

Yet during the same period the French spent £17,000 on newspaper advertising.

Still, Dr. Edward Schütz, the Oracle of Lucerne, is probably one of the happiest men in Switzerland to-day. As far back as last May, as we were driving along the dusty road to Dietschiberg, he forecast in no uncertain terms: "We expect to cater for 50 per cent more English visitors between June and September this year." And he gave me four reasons: Cheaper Continental rail fares for party bookings; voluntary reductions in their profit margin by British travel agents; cheaper combined holiday tickets for Swiss trains, steamers and coaches; and the increased Treasury allowance.

The first three points are sound, but the fourth is wide of the mark. Commander Studd, chief of publicity-minded Polytechnic Tours, was right when he said at a Press conference in Berne that holidays these days are more a question of economics than of artificial currency limitations.

How many people can afford to spend £100 on a holiday these days? I think £50 is a good average, while thousands of Britons who have visited Switzerland this summer are in the £30-40 class. It is to these people that future tourist propaganda should be mainly directed.