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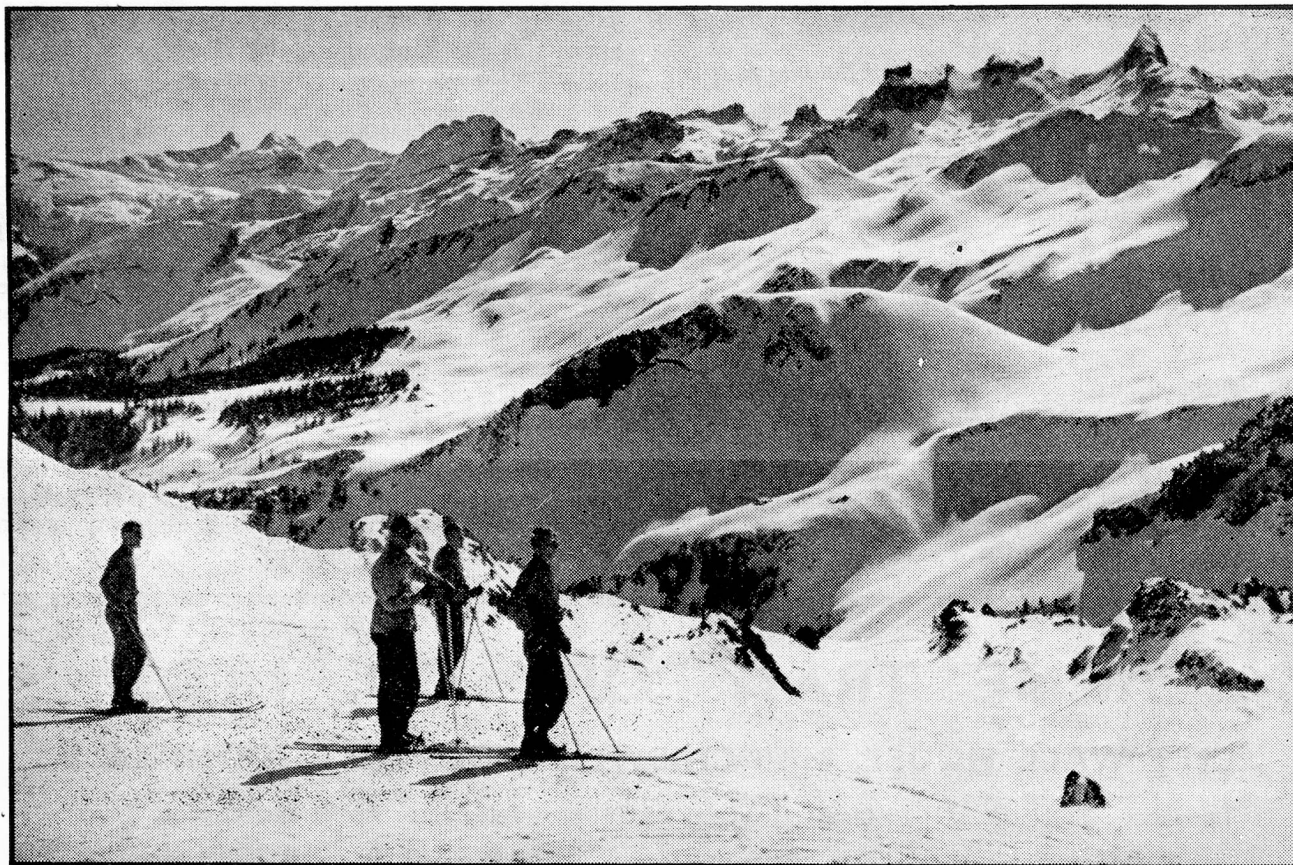
It's time to rent your Winter Chalet

Planning to rent a mountain chalet this winter? Now is probably the last moment to make up your mind, especially if you want the chalet for Christmas and New Year holidays.

If you don't know anyone who has just the right place going for a song try writing to the *Syndicat d'initiative* (*Verkehr's Verein* in German-speaking Switzerland) of your favourite winter sports resort, asking for their list of furnished chalets and flats for renting.

If yours is an economy budget you will fare better in smaller villages like Les Diablerets or Morgins than in places like Gstaad. And you always are charged more from mid-December to mid-January than at any other time during the winter, even if there is no snow. Guarantees of a white Christmas are not handed out even at St. Moritz!

So if you have no school-age children to tie you down it is safer, cheaper and nicer to book later. But



Ski-ing is the most popular sport in Switzerland

(Photo: Swiss National Tourist Office)

These lists give details of the accommodation available, the number of beds (bring your own sheets and towels, say most landlords), the type of heating, sometimes even the price asked, plus the name, address and telephone number of the person to get in touch with. Usually chalets known to be booked are crossed off before the list is posted. But you cannot be sure.

It is still advisable, unless you have a trusted friend in the right neighbourhood, to go and view the place before you sign on the dotted line and pay the deposit you will be asked for.

Prices vary according to the resort and the chalet. A four-bedroom job, sleeping seven but with an old boiler that has to be stoked night and morning, is likely to be a lot cheaper, but more tiring to cope with than a two-bedroom centrally heated chalet with bath.

do not leave it until March, except at high altitude resorts where snow conditions are known to last.

Incidentally, it is often a good bargain to rent a chalet for the whole winter at an all-inclusive price, if you find one within week-end reach.

I know a family that has been lucky enough to get a chalet for the whole winter for 400 francs, plus the cost of wood, coal and electric light. But this sort of bargain only happens once in a blue moon. It is safer to count on spending at least 600 to 1000 francs a month or more for rent.

And take out a ski accident insurance policy before you go, if you have not got one. You can also insure against breaking your skis.

INGRID ETTER.

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