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ZERMATT IN SUMMER

Mr. Werner Stettbacher has sent us accounts of his holiday experiences in Switzerland on previous occasions. Now retired, he neatly shares the twelve months of the year between stays in Majorca, Switzerland and Scotland.

My wife and I are now regularly spending the winter months in Majorca. Majorca is still about the best and cheapest place for holidays in Europe today. Some consider that the island has become over-commercialised, that hotels are sprouting off the ground like fungi. Yet there are still large areas untouched by all this, and the Spanish Government has recently declared that the north-eastern part of the island should be a protected zone. For a good walker, Majorca offers wonderful opportunities for ramblings and climbs. Its mountains and scenery are of great beauty. It is possible to walk for a whole day without hardly meeting a soul. Sometimes the only living creatures the walker comes across are eagles, scores of wild goats, occasionally a wild cat, and even snakes.

From May to July, we enjoyed ourselves in Switzerland, spending a few weeks in Locarno and Zermatt under the good care of the Hotelplan.

In a previous article in "The Swiss Observer" I mentioned that the Hotelplan "Aktion schoener leben" offered holidays at first-class hotels for pre-war prices at off-season periods. Fewer hotels have participated in this scheme during the past few years and I have to state regretfully that these pre-war prices have disappeared altogether. The Hotelplan is still making special offers (Sonderangebot) but at prices usually 30 per cent higher than in 1971. By present-day standards, the new prices are still low, but unfortunately out of reach of many pensioners.

Our holiday last May in Locarno was most enjoyable, although this town and its surroundings, like so many others, are increasingly affected by air pollution. The temperature too seems to be falling and winters getting longer. Even in mid-May the mountains surrounding Locarno were still covered in deep snow down to a height of about 1,700 metres. This probably explains why the number of visitors to the Tessin have been on the decline for the past two years while other areas of Switzerland are doing better and better.

In the second half of June, we moved to Zermatt where we stayed at the Hotel Cornergrat. The price was

up by 30 per cent on last year, but at 34 francs a day for a double room with bath and toilet, this still remained reasonable. Most other Zermatt hotels had very few guests, and there is apparently not much interest among hoteliers for pre-season tourism. Our hotel, with 130 beds, was fairly full.

Zermatt still retains its old magic and the numerous trains arriving daily spilled out their heavy contingent of visitors, many in groups, staying for a day or two.

Zermatt is a very expensive place although the locals like to tell you that it is even worse in the Engadine. You can spend a great deal of money in no time by using the ski and cable lifts on the Gornergrat alone.

If you are good on your feet and do not need any of these artificial means of transport, a fortnight's holiday in Zermatt during the off-season can still be quite cheap. The opening of a large Migros supermarket and restaurant a few years ago was a real godsend. The food, and particularly the pastries, offered by this restaurant are as good as in any other Zermatt restaurant and of course a lot cheaper. I noticed that as a result of this healthy and necessary competition, the tea-room of the largest local bakery has now shut down. A cup of tea at Migros costs you 70 centimes. Elsewhere, it may be anything from Fr. 1.20 to Fr. 1.50, with the cup only two-thirds full!

A big racket in non-alcoholic drinks seems to be under way in Switzerland. Prices go up each year but the bottles get smaller every time. At hotels, it is now almost impossible to get litre bottles of Suessmost, Orangina, Grapefruit, etc. as was the case until recently, and for which you paid anything from Fr. 3.50 to Fr. 4.50. You are now offered tiny bottles containing about 2 decilitres for which you are asked to pay from Fr. 1.80 to Fr. 2. By contrast, a litre-bottle of Orangina or grapefruit juice at the Migros still costs 80 centimes!

Zermatt as a community is faced with a number of problems, on which its people appear to be strongly divided.

Eight or nine years have elapsed since the typhoid scare, but Zermatt still has no plant capable of disposing of sewage. The four or five local policemen are engaged solely in administrative duties and have no time to attend to law-and-order matters. As a result, frequent complaints about young people singing, shouting and generally misbehaving at nights are not attended to. The growing number of hippies coming to Zermatt is also posing a problem. All private cars are supposed to stop outside the resort,



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