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SNOW OFFERS SURPRISING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

For those who want a cheap bed near the snow field

Caravanning in the snow is gaining in popularity. Winter sports enthusiasts possessing a caravan sooner or later decide to take their mobile homes with them on their winter excursions. Despite this refreshing contact with nature, they do not want to do without the convenience of a well equipped caravanning site incorporating sanitary installations, a wash-house and a drying-room. The *Touring Club Suisse*, rue Pierre Fation 9, 1211 Geneva, maintains 13 well equipped camping sites. Nearly all of them are close to well-known resorts: Berne, Lauterbrunnen, Lenzerbeide, Leysin, Morgins, Diemtingen, Ricken, Saanen, Sembracher, Tenego Miralago, Tschier, Vaduz and Weissenburg. The caravan site of Grusch in lower Prattigau is being inaugurated for this winter. It is ideally situated 600 feet away from the lower terminal of the Danusa chairlift which takes skiers up to a magnificent and little known skiing region lying at over 5,400 feet. There is also a skating rink quite nearby. However it is advisable to a reserve a caravan-space in time. There is also a new caravan site one mile away from the lower terminal of the aerial cableway of the Hoch Ybrig region. The site is supplied with electric power from its own transformer house. Caravan owners can obtain useful tips and information from the *Touring Club Suisse Camping and Caravanning Guide* costing one franc.

For those who want to try Bobsleigh . . .

Many winter-sports resorts in Switzerland possess tobogganing runs but very few have specially prepared sledding tracks. One of them is at Preda, near Bergun, on the Samedan-Thusis road. The natural three-mile long tobogganing run at this resort is open daily (in favourable snow conditions) and can be used during evenings by sledding fans. The track is illuminated.

Tobogganing runs also exist at Davos, Engelberg, St. Moritz, Murren, Wengen and, as of recent date, at Saas Fee. Toboggan races for guests organised by the resorts are a big attraction (e.g. Murren and Preda on 17th February). But tobogganing is of course not only a holiday relaxation, it is an important competitive sport with Davos as its centre. Classes for budding tobogganists are held at Preda during Christmas and New Year. Swiss championships take place in the first week of February. This year, they saw for the first time a special event for juniors.

. . . or Ski-bob

Although the principle of ski-bobbing was discovered in the 1920s by an Austrian who developed an apparatus known as a "Veloski" (ski bicycle), the current trend into this comparatively new sport began in 1965. As it is far easier to master than skiing, it is a growing attraction to those who are discouraged by the difficulty and cost of skiing. The problem of hauling a ski-bobber up a slope has been solved in several resorts by adapting ski-lifts. Ski-bobbers also enjoy special runs in most places. This is particularly true of Crans-Montana, the Swiss Mecca for ski-bobbing and the village where the sport was first revived. Other winter resorts with separate ski-bob descents are: Adelboden, Amden, Anzere, Appenzellerland, Arosa, Bergun, Chateau d'Oex, Flims, Gryon, Gstaad, Haute-Nendaz, Kiental, Kleine, Scheidegg, Lenk, Lenzerbeide, Leysin, Moleson-Village, Ovronnaz, Pontresina, Rigi, Saas-Fee, St. Moritz, Savogni, Silvaplana, Tbyon, Tschierschen, Unteriberg, Verbier and Villars.

There are ski-bob schools at Arosa, Chateau d'Oex, Crans, Fiesch, Grimentz, Grindewald, Saas-Fee and Tschierschen. The Montana-Crans "Grand Prix" (3rd-4th March) and the 6th International Ski-bob Championships at Arosa (11th March) are the ski-bobbing highlights of the season.

. . . Or Cross-Country Skiing

Spring skiing in the uplands or higher altitudes is an unforgettable experience. Spring is a time of the year when one can have the Alps to oneself. Participants to cross-country skiing tours should be good skiers and in good physical shape. They should naturally set out with a guide who knows the area and its weather conditions. Four mountaineering schools organise three types of cross-country skiing tours every year. The schools of Pontresina, Grindewald, Fiesch and La Fouly organise tours lasting for about a week qualified as "easy, average and advanced". Thus the mountaineering school of Fiesch organise the three tours from 29th April to 5th May. One tour, of a fairly advanced level, costs 420 francs. This includes board and lodging and a guide. A slightly less ambitious tour for average skiers starting at Fiesch and reaching the Lotschenlucke via the Konkordia Hut, the Finsteraarborn and the Jungfrauoch costs 390 francs. An easy ski tour lasting one week is also being arranged in the Grindewald area.

Basle—Wealthy but not without Problems

Although Basle is Switzerland's wealthiest city with a per capita income of about 15,000 francs, its authorities have the greatest difficulty in balancing their budget. After having cut nearly a hundred million francs from the draft 1973 budget, the expenditure for the current year will top a billion francs and show a deficit of 138 million francs. Nevertheless, the losses for 1973 will be smaller than those of 1972 (185 million) and 1971 (161 million). With considerable federal prodding, the municipal authorities of Basle have done their best to keep their expenditure down to acceptable proportions and thus help to fight inflation.

The main reason (besides increased costs) for the budgetary situation is that Basle-Town, which forms a so-called Half-Canton, pays for much of the services enjoyed by the Basle-Country, its sister half-canton. Thus Basle spends 20 million francs a year maintaining a theatre of a very high standard for which Basle-Country only makes a symbolic contribution. 60 million francs are spent on the University, which caters for a wide outlying area. This is also true of the city's hospitals. Basle has recently opened

a new biological research centre costing 50 million francs, and will soon inaugurate a new theatre. Moreover, many of the people who spend the daytime in the city of Basle are commuters living in Basle-Country, Aarau and neighbouring French and German cities, in particular Mulhouse.

Attempts at obtaining some sort of compensation from neighbouring authorities have so far failed. The people of Basle recently accepted in a cantonal vote to increase local taxes. This provided about 50 million francs extra cash. But with soaring commitments and rising costs, the need for new revenue has prompted two left-wing political parties into demanding more taxation on the rich. They want a 50 per cent increase of Fortune Tax for estates of between 250,000 and 500,000 francs and a 100 per cent increase on estates of over 500,000 francs. They are also calling for a rise of cantonal income tax on high salaries (the maximum of 22 per cent on 115,000 franc salaries should be increased to a maximum of 33 per cent for earnings of 250,000 francs and over). On the other hand, they want to abolish income tax on low wages and allow married women to earn an income