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BRITAIN SEEN BY A SWISS-AMERICAN

The following are impressions sent to his friends by a Swiss-American visiting Britain. The report is dated August 1974, from Lake Windermere, Westmoreland.

The Population Explosion (Travel Division)

We have all heard of, discussed and wondered about the "population explosion" but this is the first time I find myself directly exposed to an explosion of the travelling population. People on the move here in Britain are in such numbers that they must be seen to be believed. As a result you stand in line or "queue-up" as they say here, at least at certain times and points of heavy concentration, practically for everything: to get a cab, board a bus or train, talk to the head porter of your hotel, the reception clerk, visit the powder room, get a drink at a pub, etc., etc. In these circumstances, following an itinerary on a tight time schedule might, I suspect, be something of a nightmare.

While on the continent, hotels are half empty in some areas and their trade organizations discount any early improvement. There is obviously in progress a rush to the tight little islands of Great Britain from the Continent, the Americas and the Far East. Rather significantly the people from other lands include quite a number of Swiss.

Why do we experience this

unprecedented influx of tourists into Great Britain?

For one thing, the country does have great historical, cultural, scenic and other attractions. With the pound sterling worth less than U.S. \$2.50, vacationing here is relatively cheap. An all-expense seven-day deluxe tour by bus (inclusive of food and lodging) from London to Edinburgh then around Scotland and back along the West Coast to London is being offered by various travel organizations for less than \$258.00. No wonder these tours are all booked to September and the hapless late-comer, like myself, has little chance now to join a group of travellers and see, for instance, the beauty of Scotland.

Although the cost of living has increased here too, prices for hotel accommodation, food etc. have not moved upward as much as on the Continent and above all I noticed fewer instances of tourists ganging than in some places across the Channel. Also tipping, by and large, is not customary.

Then there is the virtual absence of the language barrier which makes many international travellers refrain from visiting Western Europe.

A further deterrent is the fear of war or warlike action breaking out in one or the other of the hot spots, susceptible to transform what was planned as a restful and joyous holiday into a nightmare.

And it does take a measure of courage and taste for adventure in this

day and age to travel far from home; but while visiting far-away and interesting places is not for the extra-cautious, the courage of doing it brings its rewards in stimulation and new experiences, their recollection helps to make the routine of normal daily living following the trip less commonplace. In addition the return from a stay abroad invariably brings with it, at least for me, the great joy of coming home to the good old U.S.A.

W.N.

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