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Holiday Opportunities

A winter-holiday pack in a plastic wrapper found its way into the Swiss Observer's letter-box. We are not sure whether Swissair or the Swiss National Tourist Office have to be thanked for this thoughtful reminder on some of the winter-sports opportunities open to those who plan to enjoy the Alpine sun this season.

A leaflet in the pack contains details on "off-peak" holidays in Switzerland organised by Swissair. Keeping abreast of our times, Switzerland's national carrier has now engaged in package holidays in competition with the many specialised firms. A glance at the leaflet shows that these holidays are no longer cheap. Rising costs in Switzerland, the fall of Sterling and increased air fares contribute to push the lowest price of a one-week holiday for one person to £72. Such a holiday can be enjoyed on a bed-and-breakfast basis at the Hubertus Hotel in Klosters. On the top of the range of holidays offered in that particular resort by Swissair, one can enjoy a week at half-board in a room with bath at the Silvretta for £129. Hygiene is by all standards an expensive business, since a room *without* bath in the same hotel is charged only £100. A most important point to note is that ski-lifts and ski-lessons are included in these prices. These are the extras which can prove expensive and inflate holiday costs. The holidays are arranged in the off-peak season, mainly in January.

Similar holidays at comparable prices are also organised, to and from London and Manchester at *Lenk*.

Another brochure contained in the pack comes from a new organisation called Waymark Holidays (295 Lillie Road, London SW6) specialising in alpine excursions. Their "Ski-Wandern" package takes the holidaymaker on rambles around several out-of-the-way resorts, such as Les Breuleux, in the Franches Montagnes. A ten-day holiday in that particular resort costs £104. Two parties are planned, one in February and one in March. Other holidays are organised in Saanen, Muenster, The Tannheimertal, Les Rousses and Bizau.

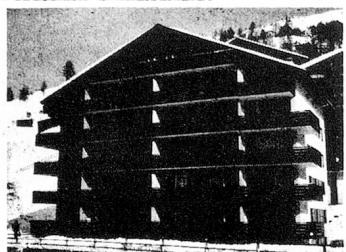
This highly original formula gives the opportunity to people of all ages to enjoy the countryside in winter. Using equipment provided for in the package, parties of about sixteen persons for each holiday are taken away from crowded ski-runs and lifts into a world of white meadows and snowy woods. Waymark Holidays should offer most interesting opportunities to those who place interest on outdoor activities — walking, mountaineering, sailing, bird-watching, skiing and ski-wandern. Each party is in charge of a competent leader.

A very comprehensive range of possibilities is offered by Swiss Travel Services (Bridge House, Ware, Herts.), a firm specialising in Swiss holidays. Here are some of the possibilities advertised in their brochure: Adelboden — 15 days from London from £137 to £190 in January and from £144 to £215 in February depending on accommodation required (ski-lift tickets not included). Costs for 8 days range from £89 to £119 in January and £95 to £132 in February. Wengen — 15 days from London cost from £119 to £216 in January, and from £134 to £238 in February.

Cheaper weekend opportunities (£49 for four days and three nights at Interlaken, exclusive of season ticket) are also on offer. Flipping through the brochure, we found that the most expensive holiday was for a fortnight in February with a room in the best category at the Grand Hotel Belvedere in Davos: £341.

With the availability of cheap inclusive flights, renting a chalet can also be an attractive opportunity. Swiss Chalets-Inter Home Ltd. (10 Sheen Road, Richmond, Surrey), present a vast number of opportunities. Every chalet and holiday apartment has its picture in the brochure. Rents vary immensely and it is almost impossible to give a general idea of expenses involved. Still, we can take two chalets at random. A handsome chalet at the "Les Esserts" part of Verbier enjoying a good view, plenty of sun, consisting of a living-room with dinette and one couch bed; a dining-room; one room with two beds;

one room with two normal beds and a set of two bunk-beds; a kitchen with all appliances including toaster; a bathroom with WC, separate WC and balcony, cost £59 a week in November-December, £109 a week at Christmas, £79 a week in January, £83 a week in February, the same in March, £89 at Easter and £79 in April. To this must be added 85 francs for final cleaning and 3 francs a day for Local Tax and electricity. A three-roomed apartment of the first floor of the new apartment house "Pirata" in Zermatt offers the following facilities: a well-furnished living-room with rustic dining corner, 2 divans, a balcony with view of the Matterhorn, one twin-bedded room, one bedroom with 2 x 2 bunks, modern kitchen with electric cooker, oven, fridge, bathroom with WC, separate WC, fitted carpets, vacuum cleaner, iron, deck-chairs, use of washing machine. Rents per week are the following: November-December £50, Christmas £124, January £83, February £124, March £124, Easter £124, April £83. 80 francs are charged for final cleaning and other charges amount to 1.50 francs a day. Both the above premises are let for six persons. This means that costs vary from £8 a week per person to £20 a week, which appears an interesting proposition.



above: chalet at "Les Esserts" in Verbier.

below: Apartment House "Pirata" in Zermatt.

In a recent information hand-out, Swiss Chalets-Inter Home, which was founded in this country, said that "although reliable figures for 1973/74 are not yet available, it is already evident that no increase (in business) can be expected in England". The company, whose head offices are now in Zurich, are confident that their last season will show a 40 per cent increase in turnover. But they note that this increase is due to every market except Britain.

Finally, Swissair have introduced a scale of reductions for groups of adults travelling together on Swissair Inclusive Holidays so as to encourage group bookings. Thus a person organising a group of 11 to 15 persons enjoys a 50 per cent reduction. A person organising a party of 32 and over enjoys two free places.

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