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Tourist News

PROGRESS COMES TO LAKE SIGHTSEEING

The "Léman steamship company" has just received a new sightseeing boat commissioned in Austria at the cost of two and a half million Swiss francs. The "Chablais", as it will be called, was constructed at a boatyard in Linz, dismantled and transported to Switzerland in several trains. It is 150 feet long and will accommodate some 500 sightseers on its two main decks, one covered — the other in the open air. Three months will be necessary to assemble the "Chablais" at the yards run by the Compagnie Générale de Navigation sur le Léman at Ouchy. The boat will thus be ready for service by the tourist season and replace the "Major Davel", a real steam paddle-boat built in the 19th Century which was, alas, one of the last of its kind.

NEUCHATEL MAY HAVE ITS CASINO

A local restaurant group has applied for permission to build a casino in Neuchatel. This prospect is currently

under review among the city's local authorities and interested parties. While many object to the presence of a casino on moral grounds, others welcome an entertainment centre which could increase the liveliness of the town. The Communal Council has so far shown interest in the project but would like the Casino's profits to be used in favour of Neuchatel's other entertainment activities. It favours the building of a restaurant with music adjoining the gambling area, and visualises a traditional Casino-Kursaal. The site of the new centre has not been revealed.

The Federal authorities, which ban stakes in excess of five francs, generally allow each canton to have one casino. There is therefore no problem as far as Neuchatel is concerned as this would be the Canton's first such establishment.

The limited state law was introduced to prevent players from losing all but their last shirt. It has resulted in Divonne (near Geneva) being France's most important casino. Wealthy Swiss and foreign residents have also placed Evian and Constance in the very-top European casino league.

"Inter-Rail" Now Valid All the Year Round

From January 1, 1974, the "Inter-Rail" ticket for young people travelling in Europe is valid all the year round. During the past two years of its existence, it was only valid from spring until autumn. This ticket is only for 2nd class travel and costs Fr. 305 per month. Young people under 21 years of age can travel at half-price with it in their own country and for free in twenty European countries.

The Swiss Jura — A Haven for Cross-country Skiing

The Swiss Jura's rather harsh but dry climate, its long sunshine hours and rolling hills make it an ideal region for cross-country skiing. Thus, a large network of cross-country skiing paths has been established over the past few years. If you're difficult to please, try the Nordic-style loipe covering some 50 miles from l'Abbaye or Le Brassus. There are more of these ski-hiking routes in the Franche mountains on the Marchairuz

and Mollendruz, on the Chasseral and on the Tête-de-Ran. For competitive-minded skiers, "Pro Jura" has issued a special map indicating 21 cross-country skiing routes covering a total length of some 120 miles. Once you cover six stages, you already win a bronze medal. The maps can be purchased at railway stations, information bureaus and sports shops or directly from "Pro Jura", CH-2740 Moutier.

Relax in a Thermal Bath after A Hard Day's Skiing

This is doubtless the wish of many a skier and it's now possible in Switzerland. Loesch-les-Bains (4,233 ft.) the health resort in canton Valais, boasts not only four open-air thermal baths but also a newly-opened skiing region at Torrent. All-inclusive skiing weeks costing Fr. 370 upward are planned up to February 1 and from April 1 to May 15 (when snow conditions are still suitable). Europe's first high-altitude mineral and thermal open-air pool with artificial waves is at Vals (3,771 ft.). The sports centre of Flanz-Obersaxen-Laax-Flims is not far from there. Skiers can also enjoy the luxury of a thermal pool at Bad Scuol Tarasp (3,750 ft.) in the Lower Engadine. Just recently, the thermal pool was opened for winter use at Bad Ragaz, the departure point to the winter resorts of Arosa, Davos, Flums and Pizol.

New: Switzerland's Longest Lit-up Ski Run

Switzerland's longest ski run has just been opened at St. Cergue in the Jura. It has a 2,100 foot gradient and is also lit up at night. You have to count half-an-hour to get there from Geneva by car and forty minutes from Lausanne. In good weather conditions, it's open daily except on Sundays from 7.30 to 10 p.m. St. Cergue attracts night-time skiers with its 950 foot long illuminated run of the "Corps de Garde". Moreover, within an 8 mile radius around St. Cergue, there are 28 ski tows and chairlifts with a transporting capacity of 12,500 skiers per hour.

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