

Tourist news

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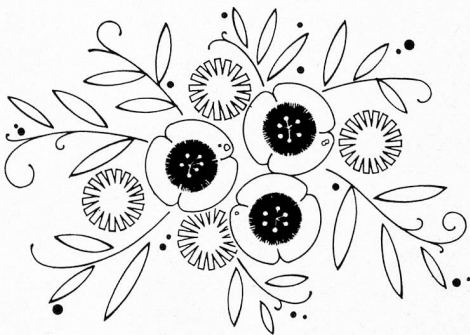
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TOURIST NEWS

Why the tourism boom ended

— by Professor JOST KRIPPENDORF of Berne, in an interview with TTG Europa correspondent Colin Farmer.

*** *Professor Jost Krippendorf is Director of the Swiss Tourist Federation — Switzerland's unofficial Ministry of Tourism. He is also Director of the Tourism Research Institute at Berne University, is a member of the Swiss delegation to the Tourism Committee of the Paris-based Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and is the author of four books on tourism.*



Crisis, catastrophe, confusion — these are just a few of the words I've heard over the past year to describe the state of the tourist industry in Switzerland. And they've been used by people within the industry itself... people who should know better.

Because in my view the Swiss tourist industry is currently in good or even in very good shape, particularly if one compares the situation in other countries.

It's true that overnight bookings in Switzerland have fallen over the last two

years. But that does not mean the tourist industry here is facing collapse. And it does not necessarily prove that less tourist revenue is coming into the country.

Switzerland's average per capita average income from tourism last year was nearly Sfr 840 — still the highest in the world. Tourism is still our second biggest employer and our third biggest earner of foreign currency.

And for those pessimists who insist on referring to the overnight figures, it should be pointed out that last year's drop of a few per cent in hotel bookings was almost counterbalanced by an increase in the para-hotellerie sector — holiday chalets, camping grounds and so on.

I agree that the Swiss tourist industry — like other sectors of the economy — has been suffering something of a recession. But this does not constitute a major crisis.

I've always maintained that something good comes out of a "crisis". It is only at such times that people take stock of the situation and take time to think things over. But when I suggested in the late 1960s — the boom years — that such a recession would be beneficial to the Swiss tourist industry, I was almost shot.

I said at the time that the boom couldn't continue indefinitely, and I predicted that the growth rate would have to slow down between 1970 and 1980 — which is exactly what has happened. It didn't need a genius to make that kind of a forecast; simple statistics showed that the boom had to stop sooner or later.

Over a 10-year period international Tourism increased by about 10 per cent each year. Had this growth rate continued we would have had by the year 2000 an annual figure of about three thousand million tourists — equal to the entire world population today! Obviously such a figure is unthinkable.

In my opinion, international tourism will continue to expand, but at a much slower rate. I think we can expect an average growth rate throughout the world of around five per cent a year for most of the remainder of this century.

Apart from proving one's argument with statistics, it is also a fact that the boom years were too much of a seller's market and not a buyer's market. When that happens you can do what you want with prices and service, and in the long run that is bad for everybody.

Switzerland owes its current relatively good position to several factors. Firstly, there's the strength of its domestic tourism — the holidays spent by the Swiss themselves in Switzerland. During the boom years of international tourism, many countries forgot the domestic market. Switzerland didn't — with the happy result that now the international market is going through a "crisis" the Swiss holidaymaker still accounts for nearly half of our overnights.

Secondly, in the international

market Switzerland has always tried to diversify, to spread the risk, rather than concentrate on attracting its tourists from just one source. In contrast, there's one other small European country which has relatively little domestic tourism. Foreign demand there accounts for between 80 to 90 per cent of the overnights, of which a further 80 per cent comes entirely from West Germany alone.

A third factor in Switzerland's favour is that our landscape has remained at least intact, if not untouched. The more tourists travel, the more experienced, the more selective, the more mature they get. And there's a clear trend these days away from those ugly, urban tourist complexes and compounds that have sprung up in recent years, particularly in some of the southern European and Mediterranean countries. I personally know of tourists who returned home early from such places this year because they couldn't stand it any longer.

And Switzerland has always tried to meet the needs of the discriminating, individual tourist. Instead of slipping into an anonymous, international style of tourism, we intend to play the card of individual tourism even more in the future because that is the way the trend is moving. Some other countries are now trying to switch from mass tourism to this individual style, but Switzerland already has considerable experience and know-how in this field.

That is why I'm very confident — in fact convinced — that the future is going to be a very bright one for the Swiss tourist industry. We can offer the tourist something that no other country can — Switzerland!

Geneva has 164 hotels — more than any other Swiss city or resort, according to a recent survey.

Lugano is second with 143 and Zurich third with 141.

Hotel prices held stable for 1976!

In spite of increasing costs, the hotel associations of the Swiss resorts of Crans-Montana, Gstaad (including Saanen, Saanenmüser and Schönried) and Interlaken have decided to maintain their 1976 prices at the present level. Switzerland thus continues to offer holidaymakers and business visitors excellent value for money.

SWISSAIR WINTER HOLIDAYS IN THE ALPS 1975/76

For the coming winter season Swissair is holding hotel allotments in twenty Alpine resorts in Switzerland, Austria, France and Italy to give holidaymakers a wide choice of accommodation and flexibility of dates. Used together with the new day flight excursion fares from the UK, advantageous arrangements are possible, combining for instance a short stay in a Swiss city like Geneva or Zurich with a week's holiday in a winter sports resort at reasonable cost. Sample combinations show three nights' accommodation in Geneva including breakfast and seven nights in Villars including half-board as priced from £92.85 and a similar combination of Zurich and Lenzerheide from £119.50, using first class hotels in the resorts.

For the economy minded Swissair has all-inclusive seven-day holidays in Gstaad with departures from London and Manchester every Saturday in January, priced from £99, including a seven-day season ticket on local cableways and skilifts.

Another special low-cost Swissair winter package combines a skiing holiday with the opportunity to visit the Winter Olympics being held at Innsbruck from February 4 to 15, 1976. The resort chosen is Fulpmes, about 12 miles from Innsbruck, and five departures from London or Manchester are scheduled between January 31 and February 12. The cost ranges from £77.50 for a four-day stay to attend the opening or closing ceremonies, including return air travel to Zurich, onward transport to Fulpmes, accommodation and breakfast.

Bookings for all the above arrangements can be made through travel agents or any Swissair office.



Lausanne-based incoming tour operator Welcome Swiss Tours is planning to expand its motoring holidays programme into the East European tourist market.

Sales Manager, Yorkshire born Miss Jill Harrison (left) said: "Discussions are under way with the national motoring organisations of Hungary and Yugoslavia, through whom we hope tourists will be booking our Swiss tours from next year."

"In West Europe, Italy will be participating in the programme for the first time in 1976 and we're also hoping to reach an agreement with the French motoring organisation."

The tours can currently be booked through the national motoring organisations of nine European countries, of which five — those in Belgium, Turkey, Sweden, Spain and Denmark — joined the programme only this year.

CHRISTMAS SHOPPING WITH A DIFFERENCE

Christmas shopping in a museum? The people of Berne have been doing it for years. Every November local craftsmen stage a sale of their work at the Gewerbemuseum in Berne's Kornhaus quarter, offering a wide selection of top-quality, low-priced, hand-made products from their own workshops. They are made from a variety of materials — glass and gold, pewter and porcelain, cloth and clay, and from silver, leather and wood. The annual sale gives the small craftsman a rare opportunity to present his work to a wider public — and gives local shoppers the chance to purchase out-of-the-ordinary Christmas gifts. The event has become so popular among bargain-hunting Bernese that turnover regularly tops a quarter of a million francs. This year's sale lasts from 21st November to 24th December.



A scene from the South Sea Islands? A palm tree paradise? No — this photograph comes from not-always so sunny Switzerland where these girls have been braving the Bernese climate to help publicise the South Sea Island weeks held by Moevenpick, the Swiss hotel and restaurant chain. Australian national airline QUANTAS co-operated in the promotion. From left to right — Moevenpick maids from Berne's Moevenpick-Waechter Hotel and Restaurant, Angela Ramboeck, Elisabeth Roethlisberger and Lilo Gruenig, with Trixie van Heeswyk from Australia.

New hotel guide will be official

BERNE. A new-style official Swiss Hotel Guide is being prepared to replace the current annual publication, first produced in 1896.

The new guide is expected to make its appearance in 1977 and, like the current guide, will be published by the Swiss Hotel Association.

The decision to change the style and format of the guide follows increasing criticism of the publication by the press, public and tourist industry itself.

Information contained in the current guide is so confusing, claim some critics, that "only the hotel telephone numbers can be easily understood".

The Swiss Hotel Association has appointed an 11-man commission to prepare the new publication. The commission is made up of representatives of the Swiss National Tourist Office, Swiss travel agencies, the transport sector and the hotel industry itself.

The commission has been evaluating the replies to more than 2,000 questionnaires distributed by the Swiss Hotel Association in Switzerland and abroad to tourists, airline companies, tourist offices, travel agencies and other users of the guide.

Said commission secretary Dr. Peter Kuehler: "The majority of those who replied asked for clearer prices and more precise details concerning seasons and hotel locations.

"The results of the survey also show that the Swiss Hotel Guide is better known and more intensively used among tourists and within the travel industry itself than had previously been realised.

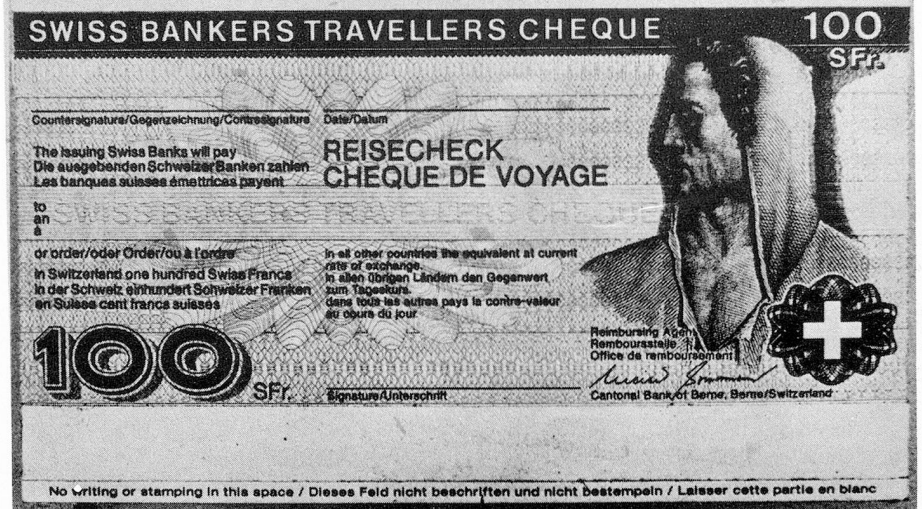
"Our task now is to produce a new guide which, in future, will serve to promote confidence in and provide prestige for the Swiss hotel industry."

The current guide lists the more than 3,500 members of the Swiss Hotel Association.

Three hundred thousand copies of the guide are distributed in Switzerland and abroad annually.

Swiss tour operator Airtour Suisse is organising a programme of one-week arrangements this autumn in the British resort of Bournemouth, in co-operation with British airline Dan-Air.

The arrangements costs Sfr 595 and includes the return flight Berne-London (Gatwick)-Berne, the rail journey to and from Bournemouth, one overnight stay in London and six overnight stays in Bournemouth.



Thomas Cook have announced that they can now provide the new Swiss Bankers Travellers Cheque. The new cheque is issued jointly by Swiss Bank Corporation, Swiss Credit Bank, Union Bank of Switzerland, Swiss Volksbank, and the Swiss Cantonal Banks. In a unique arrangement, Thomas Cook have been appointed official distribution, servicing and refund agents for the cheque worldwide outside Continental Europe. This co-operative arrangement has been made to unify the plans of Thomas Cook and the Swiss Banks for Swiss franc travellers cheques in order to produce a single cheque with maximum advantages for the travelling public. With Thomas Cook's assistance, the Swiss Banks have been able to launch the cheque immediately into a world market by using the well-established distribution, selling, servicing and refund network of the world's largest travel organisation. From 1st October, the Swiss Bankers Travellers Cheque have been available at most of the 840 offices and representative offices of Thomas Cook throughout the world, at branches of the Swiss banks involved — who will immediately stop the sales of their own individual cheques — and of Midland Bank, parent company of Thomas Cook, and through other major banks and stockist agents.

MORE EXPOS FOR BERNE

Berne is enjoying something of a boom as an exhibition centre, with a number of major events already on the calendar for 1976.

The 25th BEA Exhibition for Industry, Agriculture, Commerce and Crafts will be staged from 8th to 18th May and is again expected to attract more than 300,000 visitors. Then, from 15th to 18th August, there will be the ORNARIS Trade Fair with its extensive display of household products, arts and crafts, toys, giftware and fashion accessories.

GEMEINDE 76, the fair for public works and authorities, will be held from 31st August to 3rd September. The 24th SPISO Fair for Toys, Souvenirs, Boutique, Christmas and Winter Articles will take place from 5th to 8th September, and is expected to beat all previous records with more than 100 Swiss and foreign exhibitors and some 8,000 trade visitors. Another September attraction (20th to 25th) will be SAMA International 76, the trade fair specialising in the fields of assembly, automation and miniaturisation.

TOURISTS CAN SUFFER TOO!

Mrs G. M. Green, 15 Old Rectory Gardens, Farnborough, Hants.

Although this little anecdote is amusing, one cannot help feeling just a "twinge" of pity for Mrs Green!

WGS

Children will often go to great lengths to avoid being called "chicken" by their friends and enemies and while at school I was no exception to this rule — always willing to take a "dare" to prove that label did not apply to me.

However, as it now turns out, perhaps I should by rights have that sign hanging permanently round my neck. I don't like flying, feel very unsafe in small rowing boats and have never mastered swimming because I'm afraid of the water.

I discovered another frightener when we went on holiday to Switzerland.

We were staying at Davos, the well known ski resort, a town ringed by mountains of all shapes and sizes, many of them with ski-lifts, cable cars or funiculars pinned to their sides like braces on teeth. The town itself is already 5,000 feet above sea level.

We had hardly settled into the hotel before my husband was eager to be whisked up to a still greater height, to explore the mountain tops.

It was the ski-lift chairs which made me blench. The idea of swinging in space over the tops of the fir trees and rising steeply up an almost vertical series of rocks to a summit, was too daunting. Suppose the cable broke, or that lonely chair stuck half way!

Useless for everyone to assure me there had never been an accident — that the Swiss engineers were excellent. I preferred to be called a coward. So John went up the Rhinershorn on his own.

But I could not object to going to the top of the Weissfluh. "A funicular", said John, "anchored firmly to the ground. Safe as houses". I agreed I had no excuse to duck out of that one.

The Weissfluh is 8,000 feet above sea level, so in case it should be cooler up there, I put on trousers, a tee-shirt and a thick woollen jacket. It was then I discovered I had left my walking shoes in England.

I had one pair of high-heeled shoes, several pairs of light sandals and a pair of a certain doctor's exercise sandals. What to do? John waited impatiently outside the hotel. I slipped into the doctor's sandals and hoped for the best.

Stage one of the funicular lifts one smoothly up the mountain to the Weissfluhjoch, where there is a restaurant

and mountain paths to explore. We were going even further up, which meant another, smaller funicular, to the Weissfluh summit.

On this ride there was no grass to be seen, only black, rocky slopes and patches of snow and at the top, another restaurant and a narrow path, leading away round the back of the mountain.

After a quick cup of coffee, we started off along the path. I was, by then, beginning to feel a little dubious about my footwear. Looking around I saw that everyone else — man, woman and child — was shod in sturdy climbing boots and I had caught several curious glances at my feet. Oh well, I thought, looking at the path, it's not too bad. A bit rough, but perfectly possible for my rubber-soled wooden clogs.

"You going to be all right in those?" queried John, suddenly noticing my sandals. "Perfectly all right," I answered cheerfully and to prove it, I began to stride out ahead of him.

The sun shone brilliantly and although we were so high up, it was very warm. I soon stripped off my thick jacket. Everything was perfect, until we came to the snow field.

There was no way round it. It stretched quite 50 yards in each direction, with jagged black rocks rising up from its edges. It was a good 12 inches deep and the bootmarks of previous walkers led straight across its middle.

I couldn't turn back now. I took a few cautious paces and the snow seized eagerly on my bare toes. Every step sent more snow cascading over my exposed feet. "Good King Wenceslas were are you?" I muttered.

I quickened my pace and stumbled on. It was, unfortunately, impossible to run. Half way across the frozen waste I began to feel as if my toes were suffering from frost bite. I looked back, wondering about retreat, but it was as far to go back as to carry on and I couldn't just stand there, slowly turning into a block of ice.

At last I reached the end of the patch, clambered on to a large rock and kicked off my sandals, to let the sun coax some feeling back into my frozen feet.

Two men, coming along the path from the opposite direction — sensibly shod in heavy climbing boots — looked in stupefied disbelief at my bare feet and drying sandals. One of them cast his gaze heavenwards and muttered something. Perhaps it was as well that I can only manage first year German.

I then had to listen to a lecture from an embarrassed John on the advisability of packing the right kind of shoes for a visit to Switzerland.

Five minutes later, with now glowing feet, we continued along the

path, only to be faced in a very short time with a second snow field — even wider than the first.

I looked across the white expanse and calculated how far I could get before the cold bit once more. Over half way, surely. Press on. But this snow was even deeper and somehow not even as pressed down by previous walkers as the first patch.

Ankles, as well as feet, were frozen this time and at one point I stumbled off the path and sank up to my knees in snow, losing a sandal in the process. My efforts to retrieve it from the hole without falling in head first, caused John much mirth, but he did eventually rescue the sandal for me, before my bare foot turned quite blue. At the end of that snowy traverse, I collapsed on the black rocks, hardly noticing their sharp edges.

I can thoroughly recommend a walk through snow, almost barefoot, as a stimulating exercise for the feet. I completed the rest of the way feeling as if I was walking on air, and was not even dismayed to find that the way down the mountain was in a two-seater gondola car — sliding down a wire, high over the tops of the fir trees.

Paddling through snow is evidently good for moral, as well as physical cold feet!

SWITZERLAND'S POPULAR PARLIAMENT!

The new Swiss parliament will meet in Berne from 1st to 19th December for its first session following the recent general elections. Parliament meets four times a year, and the proceedings are always open to the public. Swiss and foreign visitors alike therefore have the opportunity to see Swiss democracy in action. In between the four annual sessions the parliamentary buildings themselves are also a popular tourist attraction, with free guided tours led by multi-lingual guides.

PRINCE'S SWISS SECRET

When Crown Prince Hassan Bin Talal of Jordan visited Switzerland recently he discovered what hundreds of thousands of tourists already know — that Berne is one of the most attractive cities anywhere. So after two days of talks with Swiss government leaders, our royal guest departed for an unknown destination — and returned unannounced shortly after as a tourist. The Crown Prince then went on strolling unrecognized along the arcades of beautiful Berne...