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Where to go for the unconventional!

Switzerland, one of the smallest developed countries in the world, is fourth in the international convention league table! Quite an achievement.

This was just one of the messages delivered last month to invited guests at London's Portman Hotel (and later in Birmingham) by the Association of Swiss Convention Centres, The Swiss National Tourist Office and Swissair.

Eighteen Swiss towns and cities were represented at the events which took place at the end of April.

The presentations were designed to promote conventions, incentive awards, trade fairs and professional or technical study tours to Switzerland — in fact, any type of travel arrangement for people with a common interest.

Invited guests from British industry and commerce were there to be convinced that Switzerland not only offers some of the finest conference and convention facilities in the world — but that she offers them at prices which represent real value for money. Pound for pound, franc for franc, dollar for dollar Switzerland has got it!

But let the ASCC, Swissair and the Swiss National Tourist Office tell the story in their own words!

The meeting was (more than ably) chaired by Mr Albert Kunz, SNT's General Manager.

He opened the highly professional presentation with a resumé of how Switzerland *really* originated.

It ran something like this — "God decided to take a walk through Central Europe. He met a man and introduced Himself to him offering to grant him three wishes.

"The little European thought for a moment and then listed his specifications.

"They ran as follows: 'Could I have high mountains with eternal snow?' 'Yes', said God.

"'Could I have meadows with

beautiful green grass?' 'Yes', said God.

"Finally, 'Could I have cows with lovely tranquil faces?' 'Yes', said God.

"A year later God came back to Europe. He liked the mountains, He liked the meadows and He liked the beautiful cows. He asked Mr Switzerland if he could have a glass of milk.

"Of course', said Mr Switzerland. God found the milk delightful.

"'Could I have another glass?' he asked.

"Of course', said Mr Switzerland, 'that will be SFr 1.20.'

But that milk would have been well worth the money. So are conventions and conferences staged in Switzerland!"

The principal speakers, Bruno Gerber, representing Davos (and also in his rôle as ASCC president), Rico Signore of the Swiss National Tourist Office and Swissair's Werner Eschle, John Harper and Geoff Dee put the message across.

It ran as follows:

Switzerland — in the heart of Europe — was, already, in the Middle Ages, a meeting point for traders, bankers and merchants from many lands.

Her first recorded convention took place in the 14th century — it was the Ecclesiastical Conciliar of Basle.

Switzerland is still a small country — a country of "human dimensions". It is about one third the size of England, or half the size of Scotland, or twice the size of Wales.

One can easily have breakfast in one corner of the country and dinner, the same day, in the opposite corner.

The excellent transport network makes this possible.

Although small in size, Switzerland is great in its diversity. With four languages and four different cultures, it appeals to all tastes and, in addition, English is almost a native language.

Whether you want your meeting to be in a cosmopolitan city, in a quiet mountain retreat or in a lake-side resort, Switzerland can provide the right venue and work out the details!

There really is no limit to the facilities that can be arranged by the SNTO working in close collaboration with Swissair and ASCC.

Although corporate and international conventions differ in many ways, by the nature of the trade or profession

they represent, they do have many similar ingredients in common.

The basic needs are travel, accommodation and facilities. It is certainly not simply a case of answering questions like . . . my organisation wishes to hold a meeting in Switzerland . . . for so and so many nights . . . for about such and such a number of persons. How much?

This partnership really can do almost anything humanly possible to make any firm's convention a memorable event. Sometimes it even achieves the seemingly impossible!

Almost 20 years ago the late Richard Dimbleby perpetrated what must be one of the best "April Fool" hoaxes on the British public.

He presented a programme about Ticinesi "spaghetti farmers" and the problems they faced in gathering their crop of uniformly straight and long spaghetti! The weather was all important!

The result — 2,000 requests for seedlings! And the point of this anecdote?

No problem is too big for this highly professional partnership.

It actually provided the facilities for this Dimbleby delight.

Could it not do the same for anybody else vested with the problem of organising a convention, a conference or corporate incentive scheme?

To answer this rhetorical question it suffices to report that all delegates were requested to deposit their business cards into a basket on arrival.

Why? — Simply because the partnership had organised a surprise raffle.

Mrs Judy Stent of the Singer Co (UK) Ltd, is now looking forward to a weekend for two, all expenses paid, at almost any Swiss resort of her choosing.

Mr David Neaves of Lawson Paragon Ltd is the proud owner of a magnificent new Swiss watch.

With surprises like that who could doubt that Switzerland can guarantee *your* company a most memorable convention?

As Mr Kunz put it — "the Swiss get up early but wake up late!"

Perhaps that sums up modern Switzerland's appeal to convention organisers all over the world! WGS



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