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Dan Air record on Berne route

British airline Dan-Air expects to carry more than 16,000 passengers on its London (Gatwick)-Berne route this year - 10% above the 1976 figure.

Marketing and development manager Mr. Brian Brett said the record results had been achieved "despite the massive competition from charter operators out of Zürich, Geneva and Basle."

During Dan-Air's first full year of operation on the route - in 1973 - the number of passengers totalled less than 3,000.

Dan-Air is the only airline operating between Britain and the Swiss capital. From this month the carrier will be operating three winter flights a week on the Berne route - on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays - departing London (Gatwick) at 0920 and arriving Berne at 1250. The return flight leaves Berne at 1330 and arrives London (Gatwick) at 1500.

A fourth flight - on Sundays - will be introduced from 18th December, with the same departure and arrival times.

British Air Ferries is expanding its Southend-Basle service this winter.

From November the airline is operating five return flights a week - on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday - compared with three last winter.

Said British Air Ferries Basle manager Mr. Philip Hampson: "This winter we are operating the only Saturday afternoon flight out of Basle to anywhere in Britain."

"And our Southend-Basle flight on Saturdays and Sundays will operate two hours later than during midweek, to better serve our weekend passengers returning to Switzerland."

Weekday flights depart Southend at 1200, arriving Basle at 1510. The return flights depart from Basle at 1610 and arrive in Southend at 1720.

On Saturdays and Sundays, the BAF flight departs from Southend at 1400 and arrives in Basle at 1710. The return flights leave Basle at 1810 and arrive in Southend at 1920.

TOURIST NEWS

WINTER ON THE LAKE OF LUCERNE

To show tourists that lake, mountains and a trip by a ship can also be a worthwhile experience in winter, the Lake Lucerne Navigation Company is issuing special tickets until 17th March, 1978. They are valid for all services and classes and cost Sw.Fr. 9. Reduced-rate winter tickets are also available for the connecting services of the Vitznau-Rigi Railway.

NEW FOOTPATH ON THE PIZOL

The Pizol Massif has become a popular region for walking mainly because of the five-lake walk. For this year's autumn season the mountain railway companies and the Bad Ragaz Tourist Office have laid out a new footpath. It leads from the terminus of the Laufböden chair-lift to Pardiel, via the "Vilterserseeli". This walk high above St. Gall Rhine Valley lasts about an hour-and-a-half and can be extended by means of a descent to Valens and the Tamina Gorge.

WHEN THE ONION REIGNS

The fourth Monday in November is the day when the housewives of Berne, the Swiss capital, buy their winter supplies at the traditional "Zibelemärit" or Onion Fair. In the city centre squares and streets nearly 40 tons of onions, many plaited into artistic designs, are offered for sale at more than 300 stalls.

Traditionally most of the stall holders come from the neighbouring Canton of Fribourg, for the story has it

that it was Fribourg folk who helped the people of Berne rebuild their city after its mostly timber buildings had been devastated by fire in 1405. In gratitude they were given the privilege of holding a fair in the city once a year.

Nowadays other goods are sold as well, and all the fun of the amusement fair can also be enjoyed in the form of shooting galleries, roundabouts and swingboats. The famous "Zibelewäie" or onion flan is served at stands and in the crowded restaurants. In the Hotel Metropole there is a contest to see who can peel and cut the most onions in an hour. The present records stands at 39 lb.

Fight against noise

Swissair's Board of Directors has decided to place a firm order for 15 newly developed McDonnell Douglas DC-9-80 aircraft. Deliveries are planned between March 1980 and March 1981. Swissair has reserved options for a further five DC-9-80 aircraft. In addition, to meet the rising demand for capacity prior to the delivery of the DC-9-80s, Swissair is to buy another two DC-9-51s.

The 135-seat DC-9-80s will be equipped with Pratt & Whitney JT8D-209 refanned engines and will thus be one of the world's quietest civil aircraft. The new aircraft will allow Swissair to renew and complement its present fleet of DC-9-32/33s and DC-9-51s for operations in Europe.

If it does not prove possible to lower the noise level of the DC-9-51s by a later engine modification, the replacement of the DC-9-51s including the two newly ordered units will be given foremost consideration.

Skiing into Wintertime

Pre-season skiing courses are immensely popular with both beginners and experienced skiers and also increasingly with cross-country skiers. Many sports enthusiasts take an early week's holiday to train on the snow slopes at the beginning of the season, tuning up for a winter of their favourite sport. Another advantage of December weeks are the economy prices. This winter some of the smaller resorts are joining the traditional winter sports centres in offering one-week arrangements which cover accommodation, half board or full board with luncheon vouchers, instruction in alpine and, in most cases, also nordic skiing, and a ski pass.

SECOND SWISS PLANET BATHWAY OPENED

Following the example of Burgdorf, Laufen has now become the second Swiss town to provide a planet pathway. Those who follow the pathway are shown the solar system on a scale of 1:100 million, namely the sun, moon and the nine planets and the distances between these heavenly bodies. The idea of the planet pathway is also to tempt the visitor to take a walk through an extremely attractive section of the Jura countryside.

The route from Laufen Station to Liesberg Station is 8½ miles long and has a total slope of 580 yards. This excursion into space lasts for 3½ hours in all but it can be curtailed at the halfway point, by Bärschwil Station.

Direction indicators make it impossible to stray from the right path. Incidentally, a walk through the little town of Laufen, on the River Birs, with its town gates, St. Catherine's Church and the local museum which houses a Roman and local history collection, can be thoroughly recommended.