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Swiss Holiday Scene

LATEST figures show a continuing improvement in the Swiss tourist industry, with hotels reporting a 20 per cent increase in March compared to the same month last year.

There was only a slight increase in the number of Swiss visitors — 2 per cent — but the number from outside Switzerland showed a considerable jump of 35 per cent.

Germans accounted for the biggest increase — 871,000 overnight stays, a 59 per cent increase — while British visitors accounted for 80,000 overnights, which was up 34 per cent.

Figures for the first three months of this year show a steady increase in British visitors to Switzerland, with 232,000 overnight stays — an average increase of 20 per cent.

Summer in Gstaad

GSTAAD (Bernese Oberland) is again offering an attractive programme of summer events, including the International Tennis Championship of Switzerland (July 5 to 13), the 24th Yehudi Menuhin Festival with famous soloists and orchestra (August 5 to 28), and a National Horse Jumping Competition (August 16 and 17).

A leaflet listing all events and hotel accommodation is available from the Swiss National Tourist Office.

Weekly riding packages are also on offer until July 5 and from September 1 to December 21, with prices starting from Sfr. 380. Included in the cost are six days bed and breakfast, six days riding lessons and various reductions for the sports facilities in Gstaad.

Further information: Kur-und Verkehrsverein, 3780 Gstaad, Switzerland. Tel: (030) 4 10 55, Telex: 33767.

Jazz festivals

Montreux 14th International Jazz Festival: July 4 to 20.

Willisau (Canton Lucerne) Jazz Festival: August 28 to 31.

Zurich International Jazz Festival: October 30 to November 2.

THIS year's Fête des Vendanges of Neuchâtel will take place on September 27 and 28.

The programme starts on the Saturday afternoon with a procession of children in costumes. Admission will be free.

At 8.30pm there will be a grand parade of orchestras and bands at the Maladière stadium by the lake.

Later there will be dancing in the streets and in front of the Town Hall and orchestras and bands will play in the streets. Restaurants will stay open all night.

Astronomy courses

THE observatory "Calina" at Carona, near Lugano, will again stage a series of astronomy courses.

From September 29 to October 4 elementary beginners' courses will be held, where expert technical and scientific advice is given.

A special photographic course for people who have already attended one of the Calina courses is planned from October 6 to 11.

The "Calina" observatory is situated in a typical small Ticino village, only 5 km from Lugano.

Further information and bookings: Mr A. Kuenzler, Postfach 331, 9004 St. Gallen, Switzerland. Tel: (071) 23 32 52.

Stopover packages

SWISSAIR, in conjunction with the local tourist offices, is offering stopover packages in Zurich from Sfr. 35, Geneva from Sfr. 30 and Basle from Sfr. 39.

This includes one night's accommodation with breakfast, service and taxes, free or reduced fare city sightseeing tour, use of the public transport system and various other concessions for museums and excursions.

This package can be extended up to three nights and the offer is only available with air transport by Swissair or the scheduled services of any IATA carrier, flying to and from Switzerland. It is not valid for charter or group travel.

The package can also be used

with return air travel from the UK to Switzerland.

Bookings can be made through travel agents or direct with Swissair.

Holidays in Engelberg

THE summer and winter resort of Engelberg is offering attractive holiday arrangements for families and senior citizens until October. A ski-acrobatic (hot dog) course is also on offer from July 14 to August 16.

Guided rambles, climbing lessons, tennis lessons, fitness programmes and swimming are available as well.

Major events include:

□ July 12: Opening of Engelberg concert weeks.

□ July 25: Folklore evening with local costume group.

□ July 26/27: 10 Years Tug of War Club Engelberg; an international between Switzerland and Holland.

Further information: Engelberg Tourist Office, Engelberg, Switzerland. Tel: (041) 94 11 61.

Regional season ticket

REGIONAL holiday season tickets have until now been available for the areas of Montreux/Vevay, the Bernese Oberland, Lake Lucerne, the Grisons, Locarno/Ascona and Lugano.

The new Swiss tourist area of the Bernese Mittelland has now also been incorporated in this system.

The season ticket is valid for

They'll be dancing in the streets

On Sunday, September 28, at 2.30pm there will be a procession with floats and flower decorations. This will be followed by more festivities.

For further information contact the Neuchâtel Tourist Office, 1 Place Numa-droz, 2001 Neuchâtel, Switzerland. Tel: (038) 25 42 42.

15 days and offers unlimited travel on five freely-chosen days (half fare on the remaining days) on trains, lake steamers and postal motor coaches for the entire Bernese Mittelland, including the public transport systems of Berne and Bienne.

The cost is Sfr. 60, or Sfr. 45 in conjunction with a holiday ticket.

Motels in Switzerland

THE Swiss National Tourist Office has recently published the latest edition of "Motels in Switzerland".

Listed in regional order, the brochure includes information on more than 100 motels in Switzerland and Liechtenstein, such as addresses and telephone numbers, the months they are open, prices, number of beds and other facilities.

Holiday pass

FOR the coming season the tourist office of Locarno is issuing a Holiday Pass which costs Sfr. 32 with a validity of 14 days, giving concessions on various sport activities and other attractions.

The tourist office is also organising guided excursions, such as bread-baking in the Maggia Valley, sightseeing tour of Locarno, botanical excursion to the Brissago Islands, and rambling tours to the region of Cardada-Cimetta-Bietri.

The calendar of events includes celebrations of the 500th anniversary of the pilgrims' church of Madonna del Sasso.

FURTHER DETAILS

about any of the items reported here can be obtained from Swiss National Tourist Office, Swiss Centre, London W1V 3HG. (Tel: 01-734 1921).