

Swiss Holiday Scene

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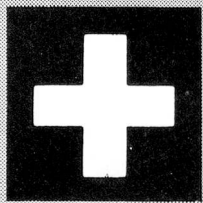
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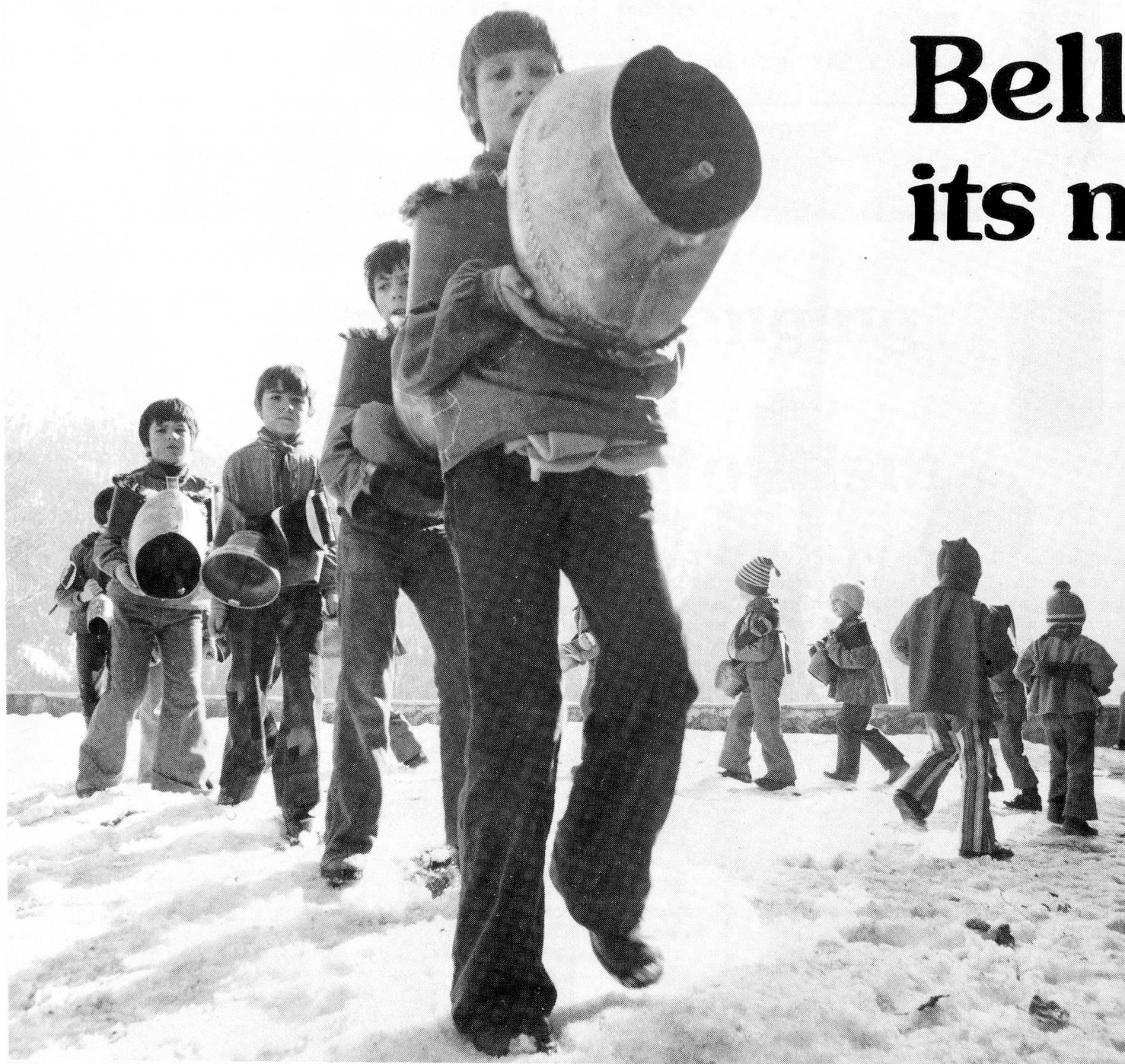
Swiss Holiday Scene

Compiled by the Swiss National Tourist Office



Traditional Romansch songs herald the spring in the Grisons . . . see following pages.

Bells its m



The procession sets off, the bells boom . . . and winter gets its marching orders.

Seek your own bit of paradise . . .

IF you had been suffering from the slightest twinge of homesickness during Britain's white January snows then an article which appeared in the Daily Mail during that month must have more than one tear of fond remembrance to the eye.

Travel writer Ann Leslie waxed lyrical about the joys of visiting Switzerland in the spring and summer months.

Her descriptions of the high

Alps, or Alpine meadows, of village life could easily have caused queues at travel agencies the length and breadth of the country.

Underneath a headline which declared "I've seen over 65 countries; none can compare with this one" she enthused about the roads, the scenery and, to a very mild degree, about the food.

Ann Leslie also poked gentle

fun at the British tourists who find their way to Switzerland. They are, she says "quiet and elderly, much given to cardies, cake-eating and the buying of cuckoo clocks and edelweiss-embroidered tea towels."

Encourage

To encourage would-be visitors (both British and Swiss) even further she also points out that since 1976 prices in the UK

have gone up by 65 per cent but only by 13 per cent in Switzerland.

Compared with taking a British holiday, the Swiss holiday now offers a much better deal.

However, the writer does keep one important piece of information to herself – the location of her favourite spot.

Her advice is to get a large scale map and seek out your own bit of paradise.

... give winter marching orders



IN early spring the villages in the Engadine and Oberhalbstein still lie deep in snow. But because the winters are so long in these high mountain valleys the people are anxious and happy to celebrate its approaching end, and this they do with Chalandamarz.

March 1, "Calendae Martis", originally New Year's Day when the Romans were masters in this region, became the Festival of Spring for the local Romansh-speaking folk.

For the young men of the villages Chalandamarz is a big day. The villainous winter must be exorcised and spring enticed from under the snow, and this they do with an ear-splitting cacophony of noise from cow bells, cracks of the whip and rattles.

In the early morning all the schoolchildren, armed with these noisy instruments, troop through the

streets, the heavy bells slung on broad leather straps swaying and booming in front of their chests in rhythm with their steps. And the bigger the bell, the bigger the young pride as the thunder of the largest mixes with the ring of the small and the tinkle of the smallest.

At the wide house doorways and in the shops sweets, cakes, fruit and money are collected for an evening feast or a trip for the schoolchildren. And they express their thanks in traditional Romansh songs which announce the fading of

winter and the coming of spring.

The exorcism of the evil spirit of winter stems from pagan times, but the customs have been adapted over the years to suit present day life. Although originally a festival for boys, today girls take an active part.

And although originally flour, chestnuts, beans and other food were collected from which the mothers prepared a big feast for the schoolchildren, today money is charmed from the people to provide for the children's entertainment.

Roses bloom again

THE Golden Rose of Montreux – the annual international contest for television light entertainment – will be staged in the Swiss lake-side resort for the 22nd time from May 8 to 15. Entries from some 30 countries are expected.

Organised by the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation in co-operation with the city of Montreux under the patronage of the Geneva-based European Broadcasting Union the festival will be held at the remodernised Maison des Congrès.

The festival is open to programme entries covering variety shows; light entertainment and scenario; programmes of songs, light music, jazz and pop music; and personality shows.

The international jury may award a Golden Rose, a Silver Rose and a Bronze Rose.

The same jury may also award a new special prize of the City of Montreux for the funniest programme entered. And the SBC can also place at the disposal of the International Jury an additional special prize.

Railway link

LUCERNE is cashing in on this year's 100th anniversary of the opening of the Gotthard trans-alpine railway link by offering visitors a special four-day (three-night) holiday at a total cost of Sfr. 293.

It includes a full day excursion through the Gotthard tunnel to Lugano, and a cruise on the lake of Lugano.

Lunch is served in a Ticinese grotto and dinner in the express train dining car on the homeward journey. Also included is a visit to the Swiss Transport Museum.

An extended version lasting seven days (six nights) also features a mountain railway excursion to the summit of either Pilatus or the Rigi. Prices range from Sfr. 520.

Events of the month

March 1	Sissach BL	Farmer's carnival
March 1-3	Basel	Basel Carnival
March 4	Sissach BL	«Chluuri» burning, ancient custom
March 7	Locarno	Fishermen's festival
March 7-9	Winterthur	Winterthur Carnival
March 20	St. Moritz	Country music rally
March 20-22	Ermatingen TG	«Groppen» carnival