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The bagpipes player

IT is difficult to imagine as one wanders along the quiet streets of Berne that this is a modern European capital.

The stalls of gaily coloured flowers and vegetables are protected by the arcades as also are the citizens going to and from their houses and offices – no need for an umbrella here.

The principal streets are free from traffic and the beautiful fountains, which are one of the main features of Berne, can be seen with ease.

There is a feeling of the Middle Ages about the town even now in the twentieth century.

The fountains alone are a splendid relic of Renaissance sculpture and are among the most famous in Switzerland, dating back to the 14th and 15th centuries in some cases.

During the years they have been moved from one site to another but today there are 11 standing which were sculptured in the 16th century and more than 20 without sculpture dating from the 18th and 19th centuries.

Throughout the years, these fountains have been kept in good repair and reputed artists have

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been commissioned to paint them – thus the original colours have been retained.

Their real function in life has been lost since the town water was piped at the end of the 19th century but they are regarded as a treasure of the past.

In summer time they are decorated with flowers in keeping with the window boxes of the houses which are bright with geraniums and petunias.

What is interesting about them is that they vary greatly in design. The sculptors were not all Swiss and indeed it is known that several were the work of Hans Gieg who came from Franconia in the 16th century.

Others, by the shape of the columns and capitals, reflect Italian taste and style. Perhaps even in those days it was interesting for workmen to cross the border and earn money in Switzerland.

On the whole, the statues are more secular than religious – so the fine statue of Moses standing

in the cobbled square before the 18th century Gothic cathedral is rather an exception.

Magnificently clothed in red and purple from an imposing classical column he faces the cathedral with his tablets. It has been thought by some people that this statue, together with the Samson statue in the Kramgasse, which dates from 1544 and is the work of Hans Gieg, formed part of a group of four which represented the cardinal virtues.

Just near the central station in the Spitalgasse is the fountain of the bagpipes player, also the work of Hans Gieg and thought to have been sculptured between 1544 and 1546.

A brightly painted purple column decorated with golden cupids who are separated from one another by golden geese supports the figure of the bagpipes player who is clothed in red.

A white goose stands at his side listening to the music. It is interesting to make a comparison with

Albrecht Dürer's engraving of a bagpipes player which is signed and dated 1514.

The Zähringen statue in the Kramgasse is one of the most impressive, both in its subject and in its position. The cobbled street slopes slightly downwards towards the old town and the city clock – Zytglogge with mechanical figures appearing as the hour strikes – forms an enchanting background.

A medieval knight in full armour stands holding the banner of the Duke of Berchtold, founder of the city of Berne and bearing the arms of the Zähringen. Between his feet and surmounting the column of the statue is a bear, the heraldic beast of the town.

There are many statues of knights banneret all over Switzerland but the detail of the chained armour of this knight makes it of particular interest, especially as the date 1542 and the arms are known.

But perhaps the most famous of all and certainly the only one that exists in Switzerland is the fountain with the ogre eating small children.

Dressed as a knight this gruesome gentleman sits on his

column. One child is in the process of being devoured, while another three are held as a reserve on his arm. It takes several minutes to discover that there are four more hidden away under his seat.

The fountain of Anna Seiler (1549) who founded the hospital named after her, is in the Marktgasse, the principal shopping street. When it was moved to its present site in 1785 from another part of the town the statue was put on to a new fountain, the column of which probably dates back to Roman times.

The original is preserved in the city's Historical Museum.

This removal of the fountains from one place to another and changing of names was considered quite normal in former times but what it has resulted in is a mixture of styles which however does not detract either from their charm nor from their harmony.

The Marksman fountain has borne several different names and has been reconstructed on many occasions. The figure dates from 1543, the column from the 18th century, the base from 1939 and the basin from 1783. The Marksman's Guildhouse used to be opposite the fountain and gave its name to the fountain.

Some subjects are topical and

can be seen in other towns.

The Justice fountain comprises a woman with her eyes blindfolded holding a sword in her right hand and the scales of justice in her left. Her blue dress is Renaissance in style with puffed sleeves and a golden corselet; the date is 1543.

At her feet are miniature representations of the four temporal rulers; the Pope, the Sultan, the Emperor and the Governor.

The best account of these delightful monuments is to be found in the series, Historical Monuments of the Canton of Berne by Paul Hofer.

Travel news . . . in brief

TRAVEL agents and home Prestel users can now key into some 30 pages of information put in by the Swiss National Tourist Office.

Starting with a short description of the country and its geographical location there are such items as travel formalities, transport to and within the country, snow reports, package tours and so on.

★ ★ ★

THE Hilton International Hotel near Zurich Airport is offering a new package arrangement including the rental of a car for one day with unlimited mileage as well as one overnight at the Hilton.

Prices start from Sfr 194 for a single room and from Sfr 229 for a twin-bedded room.

★ ★ ★

EVERY summer young guests from all parts of the world come to Switzerland to improve their knowledge of foreign languages.

Depending on the choice of school, they stay either in beautiful

cities, amid the enchanting mountains or in lakeside towns and villages.

The country has a long tradition of expertise in the organisation of boarding schools and other educational institutions. The various courses are described in the brochure "Holidays and Language Courses in Switzerland 1984", published by the Swiss National Tourist Office.

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ZURICH is offering weekend packages during 1984 with prices starting from Sfr 73 including two nights accommodation with breakfast, service and taxes, "Zurich-Pass" with more than 30 vouchers for reduced entrance fees or free tickets, drinks, transport, shopping etc.

★ ★ ★

THE summer edition of the Official Swiss Timetable, which shows the railway, lake boat and postal motor coach services throughout Swit-

zerland, as well as many aerial cableways and funicular timings, is on sale from the Swiss National Tourist Office at £3.50.

The edition is valid until September 29. Further features of the timetable are international connections, ticket and luggage rates and general information in English, French, German and Italian.

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"WELCOME to Switzerland" is the name of a newly published brochure of Swiss Federal Railways describing the various means of travel in Switzerland by railways, lake boats and postal coaches.

The main attraction is still the Swiss Holiday Card valid for 4, 8, 15 days and one month in second and first class.

One can travel during 15 days over a network of almost 5,600 miles for £62.50. In addition, many privately owned mountain railways and aerial cableways offer reductions of up to 50 per cent.

'Fantastic season'

GSTAAD, the resort in the Bernese Oberland, had what its tourist office director Georges Tauxe calls "a fantastic summer season" last year with a nine per cent increase in visitors.

The number of guests from the USA, Canada and Britain "is increasing regularly" he says.

Mr Tauxe says Gstaad's policy is to make better use of existing infrastructures instead of expanding at any price.

"We will always remain a little village with a lot of atmosphere, which everyone can afford", he declares.

Museum booklet

THE Swiss National Tourist Office has published a new booklet listing out-of-the-ordinary museums in Switzerland.

The listing covers 170 smaller museums and collections throughout the country, ranging from cats, clocks and cars to the cinema, salt and smuggling.

The locations of the museums are listed alphabetically, and the collections themselves are presented in 12 subject groups.

The 44-page booklet is available from the SNTO.

Music date

THE 44th International Chamber Music Festival will be held from July 13 until August 16 in the Engadine resorts of Maloja, Sils, Silvaplana, St. Moritz, Pontresina, Celerina, Samedan, Bever, Chamues-Ch, Zuoz and Bad Scuol.

Move to the pyramids

THE Swiss gastronomy group, Mövenpick Enterprises, has opened its second hotel in Egypt in the city of the Pharaohs, Luxor.

Situated on a 200,000 square metre peninsula jutting into the River Nile, it has been named "Jolie Ville".

Each one of the 320 rooms

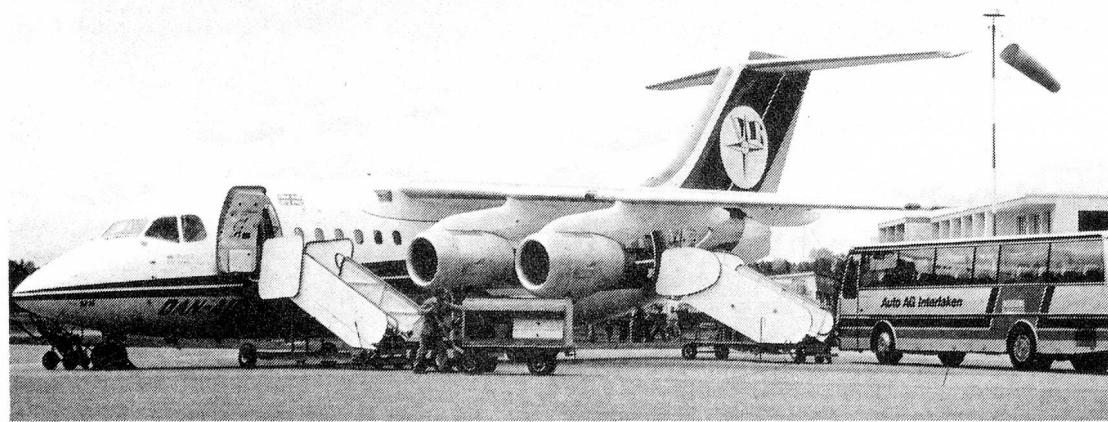
is fully air-conditioned and has a private bar as well as the use of two internal radio programmes.

A Mövenpick restaurant as well as indoor and outdoor bars are available.

Other facilities include a 25 metre swimming pool and two tennis courts.

Transport to the centre of Luxor is available by bus or by two hotel-owned boats.

With the opening of the "Jolie Ville" Luxor, the Mövenpick group now operates 17 hotels and 112 restaurants in Europe, the Middle East, the Far East and North America.



THE only airline which flies from Britain to Berne is Dan-Air. This enterprising independent company operates nine flights a week to the Swiss capital using the new BAe 146, the "whispering" jet.

The introduction of this aircraft cut flying time in half, and it has proved a great boon to visitors to and from Berne. Now holiday-makers bound for the Bernese Oberland this summer have a scheduled coach service to meet Dan-Air flights at Berne-Belpmoos Airport.

The service is operated by Auto AC Interlaken, and it connects with all London-Gatwick flights. The coach takes half an hour to Spiez, and in 50 minutes it is in Interlaken (East).

The fare is modest, £5 single and £6 single respectively. Children under six travel free, and those under 16 pay half fare.

Fly-coach from Berne

Seats can be booked and secured in advance when making Dan-Air reservations for Berne. Passengers without tickets are accepted if space is available, in which case they pay the fare in local currency.

Reservations for the return journey must be made at least 24 hours in advance - telephone 01-816 33 44 (Zurich) or 031-522 255 (Berne).

Both at Spiez and Interlaken the official coach stops are close to the railway stations, allowing easy access to any part of the Bernese Oberland.

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THE Swiss National Tourist Office has informed us that the

book "Switzerland and Her Glaciers from the Ice Age to the Present" is sold out.

There are some volumes left in German and French at the head office in Zurich, but no more orders can be accepted in London.

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LAWSON International Travel Services - a British company specialising in holidays for airline and travel industry personnel - has appointed a general sales agent for Switzerland and West Germany.

The sales agent is United Tourism Service of Frankfurt, and travel trade and airline staff in Switzerland will now be able to book arrangements with them.

Neuchâtel a canton of con

FOR an area of only 800 square kilometres, the canton of Neuchâtel has regions which are extremely different from each other.

From an altitude of 400 metres along the lake shore to the edge of the Jura forests at 700 metres, the lake slopes enjoy a climate favourable to vine growing.

It is there also that the settlements are most numerous, small market towns and villages stretching east and west from Neuchâtel, a charming open little town, the canton's capital.

Enclosed by mountain ranges, the Val-de-Travers and the Val-de-Ruz are suitable for agriculture and cattle raising. At a height of about 1,000 metres we find the very active towns of La Chaux-de-Fonds and Le Locle, as well as the long valleys of La Brévine and La Sagne and Les Ponts.

As for the Jura peaks, they reach between 1,100 and 1,400 metres rising to 1,439 metres at Mont Racine and 1,465 at Creux-du-Van.

A population of over 162,000 inhabitants is spread over six districts which include 62 communes. The smallest is Fresens, with 144 inhabitants; the biggest, La Chaux-de-Fonds, has more than 40,000.

Grape growing, fishing and agriculture are the staple occupations along the lake shore. Agriculture and cattle raising

âtel, on trasts



The wine festival in Neuchâtel

occupy some of the inhabitants of the Val-de-Travers and the Val-de-Ruz.

Cattle raising is also common in the uplands. But industry plays a considerable role in the economy of Neuchâtel. Apart from watchmaking, which is of prime importance, precision engineering, a cement works, a petroleum refinery, an asphalt mine, printing and publishing, chocolate, tobacco and mushroom growing employ a great number of people.

Commerce, banking and insurance also play an essential part in the economy.

Neuchâtel has a rich and lively culture, and not only in the large towns but also in the villages and hamlets concerts and theatre performances attract many people.

Several art galleries offer a wide choice of works and the museums enjoy a reputation which has spread far. Well worthy of mention are the International Watchmaking Museum and the Folk Museum at La Chaux-de-Fonds, the Watchmaking Museum at Le Locle, the Museum of Ethnography and the Fine Arts Museum with the Jaquet-Droz mechanical

figures at Neuchâtel.

The history of the canton of Neuchâtel is full of incident, but from its origins to the present it was animated by a desire for independence which grew continually stronger through the course of the centuries.

The name appears for the first time in an Act of 1011. The descendants of Ulrich II, who was one of the first noblemen to establish his residence in this place, called themselves Counts of Neuchâtel.

The people of Neuchâtel did not take long to ally themselves with the Swiss leagues. They were to be found alongside the Confederates at St-Jacques, as well as in the wars of Burgundy, Swabia and Italy.

With the marriage of Jehanne de Hochberg to Louis d'Orléans-Longueville, Neuchâtel was placed under the authority of the French sovereigns until the death, in 1707, of the Duchess Marie de Nemours, the last of the Longuevilles.

A new choice then put the principality under the protection of the Prussian King Frederik 1st, the heir to Châlon.

During this period the people of Neuchâtel developed their independence and founded the institutions of their small state.

During the Napoleonic wars a brief interlude allowed Marshal Berthier, represented on the spot by Marshal Oudinot, to take possession of Neuchâtel.

Nevertheless, after being restored to the King of Prussia, the principality also became a Swiss canton from 1815 on. However the revolution of the 1st of March 1848 completely freed the state from all foreign authority, conferring upon it the title and privileges of "Republic and canton of Neuchâtel".

The Jura under snow is the perfect country for cross-country skiing. Ski lifts, marked trails, several of which are lit, hotels, restaurants and mountain inns make these wonderful areas available under the best conditions. And that at a very short distance from the towns.

Moreover, most winter sports can be practised in the high valleys and along the ridges of the Jura, as well as in the completely equipped centres, whether it is a matter of horse-riding, skating,

tobogganing, ski-bobbing or just simply fine walks through snow and frost along paths specially made for this purpose.

In summer visitors can explore the peaceful soothing beauty of the Val-de-Ruz and of the Val-de-Travers, as well as the vast Jura meadows which encourage picnics.

A country of dreams, but also of a lovely reality for the lovers of horse riding, cycling tours and hang gliding.

As a crossing place between France and Switzerland, Neuchâtel has always had a first class hotel system.

And to an international cuisine of the highest quality can be added dishes specifically Neuchâtel, such as fondue, cheese pies, butter cake, cabbage sausage, Neuchâtel tripe, and, more local still, the lake fish.

The Neuchâtel wines – white, red and Oeil-de-Perdrix – are appreciated by the experts and deserve an honoured place in the range of Swiss wines. The liqueurs of the district – marc, kirsch, prune – pleasantly complete a brief reminder of what is best to drink in the district.