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FROM THE MEMSEC - Dave Howsam



As we entered our 25th, Silver Jubilee, year it was decided to put three simple questions to members using the 2005 subscription renewal form. We hoped that the resulting data would show the affinity our members have with Switzerland and create a positive image of the Society with Swiss railways, organisations and companies.

You may recall the simple questions posed were: -

- How many times did you visit Switzerland in 2004?
- How many days were you in Switzerland?
- How many people were in your party?

From the raw data returned business trips were discounted and groups where our member was not the leader were disregarded. The information gathered, whilst not statistically sophisticated, is reliable and, if anything, understated. We had 315 positive responses from our subscribing members. It is very reasonable to assume that this is only about 60% of the members visiting Switzerland in 2004 as many, despite holidaying in Switzerland, did not fill in the short questionnaire and a substantial number of members, who I know travelled to Switzerland in 2004, renewed their subscription without using the form containing the said questionnaire, i.e. they had prepaid, renewed at exhibitions or branches etc.

We found that a total of 513 visits were made covering 4332 days by a total of 810 visitors.

Of the 315 responses made 66, or 21%, travelled alone. The 66 single travellers stayed 904 days on 110 visits with an average stay of 8.2 days, whilst on over 400 visits 250 Swiss Railways Society members took almost 500 visitors and stayed approximately 3430 days.

This means that roughly 11,000 person-days were spent in Switzerland by our members and their fellow travellers. This is a considerable number and is equivalent to every one of our members spending more than eight days in Switzerland every year! In the light of my earlier statement regarding non responses from known visitors the figure could well be 18,000 person-days.

A more detailed analysis revealed that 87 members visited more than once in the year - on average 3.3 times each. The average number of visitors per trip when not travelling alone was 3 and it seems, on average, this was for 8.4 days although 67 trips were for 4 days or less.

The Society was aware of the commitment of its members to Switzerland, its railways, transport and indeed all things Swiss but the figures revealed still came as a very pleasant surprise!

We trust that the above statistics will enable the Society to foster new links with Swiss bodies and that knowledge of the trends shown will help to strengthen the relationship and co-operation between the Swiss Railway Society and the organisations with which it already has connections.

I would like to thank all members who took the trouble to respond to the questionnaire including all those who indicated that they *wished* they had been to Switzerland in 2004!

helvetic.com

This is not an advert! Helvetic are a new budget airline which has started operations between London Luton & Zürich, and currently fly twice most days. They have filled

the gap left by easyJet when they pulled out of Zürich due to the very high landing fees, poor slots and frankly sloppy handling by the airport there; something I experienced more than once. Helvetic claim to offer fares starting at about £13. However, when I checked a couple of flights, by the time one had added on the surcharges, airport taxes and other things a flight for 2 out of season to and from Zürich came to about £400. It should be possible to find cheaper flights given a bit of research through the website, but they don't fly on a Saturday and only have one flight on Sunday so one pays one's money and takes one's choice. I bring it to members attention as it is another route which may be worth investigating. For me for the moment, I'll stick to easyJet. Get a load of the purple colour as well, even the orange is better!!

Toggenburg