

Switzerland

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Nagel Travel Guides

SWITZERLAND

Information with a capital I is the hall mark of this new guide book. It begins by telling you how Switzerland got its name, and as soon as you have flitted through the centuries and know that from *Swaiceri* and *Sweizer*, the people became *Eidgenossen* and are now simply *Swiss*, you are confronted with a few useful figures (*Sotto voce* as it were) about the size of Switzerland's territory, about Jura, Alps and Pennines. The big rivers and main lakes pass you by in quick succession, indicating in each instance area, depth and altitude.

We learn of the peculiar *Föhn* wind and the country's vegetation on our way to the population. In another aside we are informed of the strange phenomenon that in German-speaking Switzerland no German is spoken. By the time we reach the end of that part and are getting a bit suspicious on being told of "peaceful villas", of "quiet charm and dignity", "... one of the most beautiful countries in the world", we are taken on a ten-page historic tour (including the Wilhelm Tell controversy) which quickly absorbs our interest. A most useful table of Swiss historic dates — seven pages of them — close that chapter. I regret that its modern history finishes with the end of the war, and that nothing has been mentioned of developments since 1945. These would deserve mention at least as well as, say, the hurricane of 12th June 1926.

The chapter on Government and administration is particularly well written, followed by one on economy, agriculture, and the importance of industry. Banking, insurance and the Swiss merchant navy get a deserved mention. But what I find particularly praiseworthy is a dozen pages on Swiss culture and art, a field so often neglected in reference books. Science goes right back to the fifteenth century, finishing with the Basle legal historian Heusler (1834-1921).

Education covers a wide field, including Basle's Institute of Tropical Studies. Useful addresses are added where information may be obtained regarding educational establishments.

An astonishing wealth of detail is found in the chapter on gastronomy, which is treated according to areas. We learn about *Mistkratzerli* and *Gnagi*, *Pantlis* and *boutefas*, *busecca tripe*, *Maienfelder* and *Dézaley*.

By that time we have finished with the introductory chapter and start on Part A: Southwestern Switzerland. Here beginneth the sightseeing proper, again linked with local history and culture. A map of Geneva and suggested excursions, and that goes for every district and major town throughout the book. The introduction takes up some fifty-odd pages, but by the time we have arrived in the Poschiavo, we read page 302. We think we know everything worth knowing, and yet, we are presented with another seventy pages of "Practical Information" which includes camping, customs regulations, car transport through Alpine tunnels, main routes, postal services, passports and a host of details often found only after much searching and many fruitless telephone calls. There is even a list of hotels, whether you want to find one at Giessbach, Zurich or Le Sépey (the missing acute accent is one of the few inaccuracies in the book — surely a remarkable achievement indeed).

And even then, we have not finished yet — 64 plates of local maps provide a complete coverage of Switzerland's total area.

The Nagel Guide to Switzerland is a most useful companion for the tourist who wants to see as quickly as possible as much as can be crammed into a short stay. It is invaluable for the holidaymaker who wants to spend a lengthy vacation. It is particularly useful to tourists from Great Britain who have to manage on a much depleted currency allowance. And it is an exceptionally rich reference book for any discriminating English-speaking friend of Switzerland who wants to learn about Switzerland.

MM

NAGEL GUIDE — SWITZERLAND — published by Messrs. Frederick Muller Ltd., Ludgate House, Fleet Street, E.C.4. Price 32/6.

NEWS OF SWISS ACTIVITIES IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD

The well-nigh 300,000 Swiss living abroad, including dual nationals, represent a handsome percentage of the country's citizens. It is not surprising, therefore, that they play an active and important part in presenting the image of Switzerland in other countries. The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad have been much concerned in recent years improving the Swiss "presence" by better two-way traffic of information. For this reason, news of a meeting early in the year of the Co-ordinating Commission of official bodies and cultural institutions concerned with *Kulturwerbung* abroad was well received. The main subject under discussion were proposals of the Federal Political Department regarding closer co-operation between Embassies and Consulates, the Swiss Colonies and the institutions at home concerned with spreading information. A working party was formed to study the problem.

The two new Swiss Schools opened abroad in 1966, in Sao Paulo (Brazil) and Accra (Ghana), have been acknowledged by the Federal Government as deserving of a federal subsidy. This brings the schools up to nineteen.

The exhibition on "*Les Grandes Heures de l'Amitié Franco-Suisse*" (now at Coppet) was opened at the Palais de Rohan in Paris at the end of April. It was under the patronage of President de Gaulle and Federal President Bonvin.

At the Orangerie de Tuileries in Paris, the beautiful collection of masterpieces from Swiss collections (shown at the EXPO 1964) is on show this summer. It is under the patronage of the French and Swiss Governments.

At the end of last year, there was an exhibition on the Swiss school system in Copenhagen, followed by a Swiss book exhibition in Stockholm in January and February.

At the end of the year, the *Maison Suisse* in Lyons was inaugurated. It contains a hall, a *Stübli*, a library and the secretariat of the Swiss Chamber of Commerce.

The Zurich artist Willy Kaufmann was commissioned to make glass panels for the Church of San Francesco di Sales in Milan; the thirteen windows were blessed in February.

A young man from the Grisons, Reto Ganzoni, is responsible for the biggest tourist attraction on the Costa Brava, the "Tiffany in Playa de Aro, the largest *Discothèque* in Europe where 1,000 people can be accommodated.

Few people know that the Vice-President of the Chase Manhattan Bank and President of the Manhattan Overseas Corporation (New York) is Swiss by origin. His name is Alfred W. Barth. Another former Swiss, the late Albert Gallatin, Secretary of the U.S.A. Treasury from 1801 to 1816, has been honoured by a special American postage stamp.

[A.T.S.]