

Editorial

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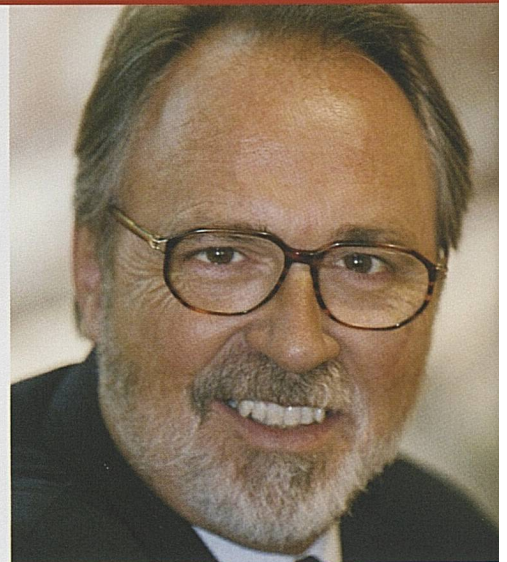
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Editorial.

“Holding our own
in stormy times.”

Dick F. Marty, President of Switzerland Tourism



Tourism in Switzerland has had a difficult year. Like hardly any other sector, tourism has been prominently affected by economic and political changes and visitor caution and hesitation. There is little one can do about it, although there are things we can do in other areas.

In a period of high price sensitivity, vacations and tours in Switzerland have become more expensive for foreign visitors virtually overnight, as exchange rates have yet again reached record heights. Along with tourism, the entire Swiss export business – an important mainstay of the national economy, our prosperity, and our development – is suffering as a result. As a tourism official and politician, one has to ask oneself whether a more differentiated currency policy would strengthen our export trade and whether things should move in the direction of the euro in the medium term, a currency used by 60 % of our foreign guests.

A strong Swiss franc and overcapacity have made vacations abroad cheaper than ever. Yet domestic holidaymakers have remained loyal, with demand remaining stable and high in 2002. Clear evidence, then, that we have the right product. If one looks back at the debates and reports of the previous year, the headlines are predominantly negative. This is wrong. So let us not talk down our strengths. Let us not be paralyzed by our weaknesses. Instead, we should see them as a challenge. Along with all our tourism partners, this is what we shall be doing again in 2003!



“Now more than ever!”

Jürg Schmid, CEO of Switzerland Tourism

2002 was a demanding year full of challenges. All the more reason, then, to counter the trend, maintain a clear presence, continue the dialog and develop new target audiences and sales channels with committed partners.

Our work was multifaceted and encouraging. Our “Mountains.®” campaign allowed us to highlight one of our core competencies, the nature experience, during the United Nations International Year of the Mountains. We employed creative ideas to conduct a dialog. In Germany this was done via Europe’s most popular children’s TV program, which is watched by millions of families. In the Netherlands, for example, we deployed popular “ambassadors” as multipliers. Elsewhere we supplied information and organized media tours, resulting in programs and publications such as an extremely successful edition of an Italian travel magazine. We cooperated with marketing intermediaries and organizers of events such as a snowboarding competition that attracted lots of young Britons to the Valais. We also maintained partnerships such as the one with the Chinese province of Lijang, where an Alpine

museum is under construction. Yet 2002 was also a time to lay the foundations for the recovery and growth phases to come. When better times return, we aim to be ready and stronger. The task now, therefore, is to form new alliances, to formulate offerings that are tailored even better to the various target audiences and to hone quality even more radically. If you cannot be cheaper, you have to be better. High prices must be backed by even higher quality on all levels. Service, product, distribution and communication. These are the things we at Switzerland Tourism are working on in association with our partners.