

Home affairs

Objektyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1954)**

Heft 1233

PDF erstellt am: **30.06.2024**

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HOME AFFAIRS.**(Holiday and tourist traffic in Switzerland.)**

by MAX NEF.

Simultaneously with the school holidays, tourist traffic in Switzerland has started on a vast scale. If only the fine weather, which has at last replaced the cold period from which not only we but also the rest of Europe has been suffering, continues to last, then it looks as if this season will bring with it new record figures for the holiday-land of Switzerland. There are certain holiday resorts which are completely "sold out" beforehand in regard to accommodation for the peak weeks, and it is hoped that this will prove favourable for the "out of season" period.

Up to last year, the proportion of Swiss visitors in the total figures for holiday tourists, showed somewhat of a decline. This was due to the increase which had taken place in foreign travel on the part of the Swiss. In view of the fact, however, that meanwhile, and especially recently, cost of living has gone up in the neighbouring foreign countries, while, in some of them, the prices are now higher than those in our own country, one of the principal attractions of holidays abroad has now disappeared, so that the number of visitors to our health and holiday resorts from Switzerland herself, is expected to be greater once more, than was the case during the last few years.

But, it is the number of foreign visitors which has increased in such a steady and satisfactory fashion. Already last year, the number of nights spent here by visitors had increased by more than a half, in comparison with 1950. This increase relates to visitors who come from countries belonging to the European Economic Union, to an overwhelming degree. Tourist traffic from the remainder of Europe, namely from the Eastern countries, Yugoslavia and Spain, which was never of any particular importance to Switzerland, has shrunk some more. Among tourists from Overseas, those from North America continue to head the list.

This increase in the number of visitors travelling to Switzerland from the countries belonging to the European Economic Union is due to a number of measures which have worked out in Switzerland's favour. In addition to the more liberal attribution of currency for travel abroad, the introduction of an international clearing system has also contributed towards facilitating the free choice of where to go to for one's holiday. Furthermore, various countries have abolished the necessity of getting visas, which has also made things easier for tourism. And, last but not least, the fact that economy in those countries which suffered from the war has now become stronger and more sound, has once more made possible foreign travel for large strata of the population. This explains, inter alia, the revival of tourist traffic from Great Britain and France to Switzerland, and, more especially it is the reason for the marked increase in visitors from Germany. The fact that this stream of visitors comes from almost every country in Europe, is of particular importance to Switzerland, in view of the fact that each country, so to speak, has its own favourite spots in our country, which it has always frequented. In this way compensation is achieved, which helps to make good former bad seasons in certain regions.

From the economic standpoint, it must be noted that it is naturally not only the hotels and pensions which reap advantage from tourist traffic. One must also take into account the nights spent in chalets, in private rooms, in the houses of relations and, in the present era of motor-car trips and camping, in tents, although these do not figure in the statistics on tourist traffic from abroad. This explains the fact why the total payments made through the Clearing Office to the countries belonging to the European Economic Union, was much higher than the corresponding number of nights spent in Swiss hotels, etc.

Foreign visitors also indulge in the purchase of various articles, and this is of direct advantage to the touristic regions, and is particularly welcome because these regions are, for the greater part situated in outlying districts which have not been able to benefit to the same extent as our industrial regions, from the industrial boom which has been prevailing for several years.

One must not conclude, from all these facts, that the Golden Age has come back suddenly to the Swiss hotel industry. In spite of the satisfactory increase in visitors, the yield from tourist traffic does not yet harmonise with the higher cost resulting from the general rise in the cost of living. The wages, more especially have become a heavy burden in this business, and building improvements and the necessary renovations in respect of installations, can only be carried out with difficulty. Moreover, the season in most of the holiday resorts only last for a few weeks, and thus does not bring in sufficient receipts to cover costs spread over the whole year. What is of urgent desirability is an increase in the number of visitors during the periods before and after the peak season and also a development of winter activities. Thus, the Swiss hotel industry, although it is, at present, running on top gear has a good many worries, which it is striving, however, to overcome by means of an enterprising spirit, and high quality service.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS.

Mr. Jean Scheuermeier, late of "Floral House", 21, Hanway Street, W.1, begs to inform his many friends and clients that he has now acquired new premises at 23, Museum Street, W.C.1 (Tel. MUSEUM 8111), where their continued support will be much appreciated.

Kettners Restaurant has no music and is not luxurious . . . but the Food and Wine are superb.

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