

News for motorists

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NEWS FOR MOTORISTS

New Road Map now Available

Motorists intending to enjoy Switzerland's scenic attractions will appreciate the new road map recently published under the auspices of the Automobile Club of Switzerland. On this handy sheet, good roads which enable tourists to avoid crowded highways, without getting lost, are clearly marked. Done at a scale of 1 : 400,000 (about 6 miles to one inch), the map provides a wealth of detailed information, thanks to the excellent printing job of Kümmerly & Frey, Bern, who are producing and distributing it. The map is available in all European countries and in the United States through good book stores, Automobile Clubs, etc.

In Switzerland particularly, the quickest and most enjoyable route from place to place is, nowadays, not always the broadest or the straightest. Measured in the horizontal plane, Switzerland is a tiny country. Except in the vertical, therefore — on the steep, winding Alpine-pass-road climbs — distances are conveniently short. Wherever possible, the trunk roads follow the valleys and rivers between the innumerable mountain ranges; and into these channels surge the torrents of motor traffic which converge upon the world's playground from all points during the holiday season. Not to mention nearly a million "native" motor vehicles, two-thirds of them private cars.

Fortunately, the Swiss major roads are good. But their capacity is not unlimited, and construction work on the new national network of motor highways is only just getting under way. For a number of years to come, therefore, some congestion at certain keypoints and bottlenecks on the existing main routes is inevitable.

When driving in a foreign country the motorist, quite understandably, is loath to leave the beaten track — the jam-packed trunk-route — and chance his luck on the so-called "secondary" roads. In Switzerland, however, these "secondary" roads (marked in plain red on this map as "good alternative inter-urban routes") are always a sound bet. For one thing, they are as often as not scenically quite as interesting as the official main roads, if not more so; secondly, they are — like everything else in Switzerland — well constructed and maintained; thirdly, they attract only a fraction of the major traffic, which means more relaxed driving, greater enjoyment of the natural beauties en route, and a more regular "time-motion" pattern of progress; fourthly, they are now the routes generally favoured and recommended by shrewd Swiss motorists, which means that there is no lack of good hotels, inns, restaurants or idyllic picnic spots on the way.

Scenic Routes to Central Switzerland

Most motorists entering Switzerland at Basel, for instance, on their way to Lucerne, make a bee-line for Olten and there look for the Lucerne signpost. Yet they might do better to take the more easterly route across country to Sissach and thence to Aarau, and a few miles before reaching Lenzburg branch off to the right on the "relief" road to Lucerne via the Seetal, which traverses lovely countryside and passes two idyllic but little-known lakes. From Zurich, too, there is an excellent alternative route to Lucerne; it circles the Uetliberg range in a wide

left-hand turn and joins the main road at Cham, by the Lake of Zug. Over in the West of Switzerland, where all roads lead eventually to the Lake of Geneva, the motorist will find on this map a whole network of "secondary" roads which open up an explorer's paradise. A glance at the Lausanne area as destination or starting-point from or for Neuchâtel or Basel in the North, or Berne, the Bernese Oberland and, farther east, Zurich, reveals a whole range of attractive possibilities. In a country like Switzerland which has so much of beauty and interest to offer at every turn of the road, "getting there" by car should, after all, be one of the most enjoyable features on one's holiday. This applies in particular to the man at the wheel, whose passengers, absorbed in the scenery, are too often apt to forget the mental and physical strain of concentration on main-road traffic. The driver himself is burdened with the additional responsibility of "getting them there on schedule" — as if the chosen resort or hotel would run away, or a belated arrival make his party any less welcome to a Swiss hotelier. It may take a little courage at first to quit the motorised herd, but after the first experiment confidence in Swiss efficiency at once returns: there are also plenty of filling stations and repair shops along the "relief roads".

Crossing the Alps

The southbound motorist en route for the sunny Ticino generally takes a "run" at the Alps, as it were, and crosses Switzerland's Great Divide via the St. Gotthard Pass. This is of course an excellent route and a thrilling "experience" for any lowland motorist, but unfortunately its popularity has made it one of the busiest roads in Switzerland, carrying big foreign passenger coaches and heavy commercial vehicles which slow down traffic when the road begins to ascend in narrow coils. For those who have not yet "done" it, the St. Gotthard is a must, but for the return trip northward the San Bernardino-pass-route provides an alternative just as fascinating. Marked in mauve on the map, it branches off to the right a few miles north of Bellinzona. Just before the village of Thusis the road enters the Via Mala, a deep gorge which attracts visitors from near and far; near Chur the route joins up with the main road to Zurich.

These are but a few examples chosen at random with the idea of giving the visiting motorist the confidence to cut loose from city-style bumper-to-bumper driving and start really enjoying his Swiss holiday in comfort from the moment he crosses the frontier.

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