

Winter-sport news from Central Switzerland

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WINTER-SPORT NEWS

FROM CENTRAL SWITZERLAND

Andermatt (9,735 feet)

Andermatt is the main winter-sports centre in the St. Gotthard region. A new overhead cableway leads to the Gemsstock (9,840 feet). The extensive open slopes are ideal for ski-ing. On the other side of the valley, along the Oberalp road — leading to the Grisons — the ski terrain is just as good, and here the heights of the Calmet are accessible by ski-lift. Nättschen and Gütsch also afford enthralling downhill runs. There are eleven hotels and five pensions and opportunities galore for relaxation and enjoyment after a day on the *piste*, at the ski-school or on the skating or curling rinks. Guided mountain- and ski-tours are organized in the spring.

Einsiedeln (5,248 feet)

For over a thousand years pilgrims have flocked to Einsiedeln and its famous Monastery Church. Situated in wonderful ski-touring country, well suited to the average skier, Einsiedeln is also a winter-sports centre in its own right. Amenities include a skating rink, a curling rink and three ski-lifts. The hotels and pensions are excellent and moderately priced.

Engelberg (9,840 feet)

The name of Engelberg is synonymous with winter-sports in the Central Alps. This progressive resort, situated in a beautiful, sheltered valley beneath the imposing Titlis massif, has twenty hotels and pensions (1,900 beds). Standards of comfort are high. Winter-sports facilities include the funicular to the Gerschnialp, the twin overhead cableway to Trübsee, and two ski-lifts to the Joch Pass (7,288 feet). Another cableway, to Risti-Brunnen, serves the sunny side of the Engelberg valley. Safe and varied *pistes* lead from all these heights down to the valley. Apart from this there are a further seven ski-lifts, three curling rinks, a well-equipped natural ice rink, several toboggan runs and a network of good footpaths to tempt the rambler. Finally, the evenings at Engelberg are gay and carefree.

Flühli (2,932 feet)

A pleasant little winter resort in the peaceful Mariental and the birthplace of some of Switzerland's best skiers. Starting point for ski tours on the Schratzenfluh. Visitors are well cared for at the two hotels. A ski-lift takes you to Blasen, where there is a choice of good downhill runs, some easier, others for the expert.

Hospental (9,840 feet)

With its Roman tower guarding the passes leading north, south, east and west, Hospental, at the foot of the St. Gotthard, has for centuries been a haven for travellers in the Alps. The road from Andermatt, flanked by high banks of snow, can be used throughout the winter; but no traffic disturbs the peace of this idyllic mountain village and its homely inns. A ski-lift operates to the 6,232-foot-high Winterhorn, where snow conditions remain good until the end of April. Apart from offering good winter-sports facilities, Hospental is ideal for rest and recuperation.

Klewenalp (6,560 feet)

High above mountain woodland and Alpine pastures lie the extensive ski fields of the Klewen Alp, accessible from Beckenried by cableway in only nine minutes. In winter the view of Lake Lucerne and the snow-covered valleys is indescribably beautiful. "Downhill only" enthusiasts have three ski-lifts at their disposal. Two hotels, ski huts and numerous chalets offer accommodation to suit all tastes, off the beaten track and away from the noise of traffic. Both beginners and advanced skiers will find many different runs to their liking and there is fine touring to be enjoyed in the Brisen area.

Lungern — Schönbühl (6,560 feet)

Lungern on the Brunig route in the Bernese Oberland is a health resort with good winter-sports facilities. The reliable ski terrain on the Brienzler Rothorn is accessible by cablecar. The trip by cablecar is in itself an unforgettable experience, for in no other way can one enjoy such splendid and ever-changing views of snow-bound Alpine villages and the majestic Oberland massifs. This is newly developed ski country, full of excitement for those who like to stray away from the beaten *piste* and leave their tracks on virgin powder snow. Accommodation in Lungern is as good as any to be found in a Swiss mountain village.

Melchsee-Frutt (9,184 feet)

Melchsee-Frutt is a high Alpine valley nestling between the peaks of the Brünighaupt and the Glockhaus, the Hoher Stolen and the Rotsandnollen. The overhead cableway from Stöckalp passes above snow-laden forests before reaching Melchsee and its frozen lake — a paradise for skaters. Two ski-lifts lead to the nearby Balmeregghorn and Erzegghorn where a variety of splendid *pistes* await the skier.

Melchtal (3,200 feet)

A typical Alpine village, Melchtal lies in a breath-taking winter setting. Accessible by ski-lift, the nearby Rüti Alp is the starting point for delightful ski tours and a variety of downhill runs. Melchtal is much patronized by Swiss holiday-makers and they should know a good winter-sports centre when they see one! The two hotels are simple but good and their tariffs are modest.

Oberiberg (5,904 feet)

Known as a health resort for hundreds of years, Oberiberg was discovered by winter-sports enthusiasts at the turn of the century. The nearby Hesisbohl, the Ibergeregghorn and the open slopes around the village are classical ski areas. Today, Oberiberg has three ski-lifts and its hotels cater for 200 guests, while additional accommodation is obtainable in chalets and holiday camps. The winter sunshine figure is above the average. There is a postal motor-coach service from Einsiedeln.

Rigi (5,904 feet)

Who has not heard of the Rigi, one of the sunniest places of Central Switzerland? The red coaches of the Vitznau-Rigi Railway and the blue ones of the Arth-Rigi line are familiar splashes of colour against the dazzling white snow. The skier hurtling downhill over crisp powder snow, the skater cavorting on the ice, and the curler testing his skill with the "stone" all agree that there is no place like the Rigi in winter. Visitors have the choice of fourteen hotels. Ski-lifts serve the Rotstock and the Scheidegg (for easier *pistes*) and the Dossen (for advanced runs). The panorama from the Rigi is unique — especially when the lake and the lowlands lie shrouded in a 600-900-foot mantle of mist, and one stands, basking in warm sunshine, beneath the blue immensity of the sky. If you are not keen on winter-sports you can still be happy on the Rigi, where a network of footpaths afford excellent rambling.

Sörenberg (6,822 feet)

Hardly known twenty years ago, Sörenberg became one of the most popular winter-sports centres in Central Switzerland after the installation of half a dozen ski-lifts. Numerous well-marked routes lead through nicely varied ski country back into the valley. *Piste* bashers and off-the-*piste* skiers are well provided for at Sörenberg. Non-skiers can enjoy themselves while skating, tobogganing, curling and rambling. The hotels are comfortable, and good private accommodation is also to be had.

Stoos (6,298 feet)

Some fifty years ago the advantages of Stoos in the winter became apparent to the locals. Today, Stoos attracts the whole of Switzerland. Efficient ski-lifts serve the Fronalpstock (6,304 feet), Häuserstock (6,232 feet) and Klingenstock (6,237 feet), and there are also ski-lifts to the ski-schools practice and nursery slopes. The downhill runs are most inviting. After enjoyable hours in the winter sunshine, high above Lake Lucerne, keen *après-skiers* need not fear dreary evenings — there is plenty of gaiety. Stoos is reached by bus from Brunnen and Schwyz, and by cableway from Schlattli. Motorists can leave their cars in heated garages or in parking sites at Schlattli.

[S.N.T.O.]

THE SIMPLON PASS

Brook and Road

Were fellow-travellers in this gloomy Pass,
And with them did we journey several hours
At a slow step. The immeasurable height
Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
And in the narrow rent, at every turn,
Winds thwarting winds bewildered and forlorn,
The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,
Black drizzling crags that spake by the wayside
As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
The unfettered clouds and region of the heavens,
Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light —
Were all like workings of one mind, the features
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree,
Characters of the great Apocalypse,
The types and symbols of Eternity,
Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.

*William Wordsworth.***HOW THE CANTON OF GLARUS PIONEERED
IN SWISS SKI-ING**

The first pair of Norwegian skis to appear in the Canton of Glarus is reported to have done so in the year 1868, and it was a Glarus businessman, Christoph Iselin, who in 1891 at the age of 22 began to practise the brand new art of "ski running" — as it was called then — so assiduously that he soon gathered a group of friends about him, and together they established the first Swiss ski club on 22nd November 1893 in Glarus. An entry in the Minutes of the ski club, written in Iselin's own handwriting, tells about his first attempts to walk on the long, strange boards:

"In the winter of 1891, with my interest sparked to the point of enthusiasm by Nansen's book 'Through Greenland on Snow Shoes' I fashioned a pair of odd and very primitive skis and did some practice runs in the dead of night or during snow storms — and only then. For anyone who had had the audacity to exercise with such strange equipment in the public view would have found himself in a woeful plight. Without any doubt he would have fallen prey to the scorn and ridicule of the populace and would have risked being called a madman or finding himself lampooned by joke smiths at carnival time. This was in the year of our Lord 1891 . . ."

Iselin soon realised that he was not going to be able to make further progress merely on the basis of having read Nansen's book, and in December 1892 he found an instructor in the person of a Norwegian engineer, Olaf Kjelsberg, who was then living in Winterthur. Together with another Norwegian, Kjelsberg visited Glarus, bringing along three pairs of genuine Christiania skis. This visit enabled Iselin to get in some excellent practice sessions, and Mr. Krefthing, the second Norwegian, caused quite a sensation by making 25-foot jumps over a wall that stood about 2 feet above the level of the snow on the lower side.

Cross country ski-ing, as a winter sport, made its debut in the Canton of Glarus at the end of January 1893 in the guise of a special ski race held under the motto "Skis versus Snow Shoes". The snow shoes then in vogue in certain mountain areas in Switzerland were made of gut thong webbing held within wooden frames and fastened to the sportsman's feet in order to increase the area of support between his feet and the snow. The course laid out for this race took the contestants up over the 5,250-foot-high Prugel Pass, and when the race was over it was clear for all to see that the skiers had won hands down.

True to their pioneering tradition, it was people of the Canton of Glarus, once again, who took the initiative in the construction of the first Swiss ski-ing hut which was inaugurated in December of 1903 in the Spitzmeilen region in the Canton of St. Gall.

Other mountain areas in Switzerland have also had their ski-ing pioneers, but for the most part their influence has been more of a local nature. One of them, a Dr. Herwig, in Arosa in 1883, made the first attempts — even though unsuccessful ones — to use Norwegian snow shoes. In the same year, two school children in Davos received Norwegian skis as Christmas presents. Some 14 years later, one of these same persons, a Mr. W. Paulcke from Freiburg, Germany, became the first person to cross the Bernese Oberland on skis.

(From "Switzerland" Review, S.N.T.O.)