

The place of the tourist traffic in the swiss economy

Autor(en): [s.n.]

Objektyp: **Article**

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

Band (Jahr): - (1963)

Heft 1423

PDF erstellt am: **09.08.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-686164>

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THE PLACE OF THE TOURIST TRAFFIC IN THE SWISS ECONOMY

The gradual rise in the living standards of a country usually sets off a trend towards the tertiary sphere of economic activity, that is the provision of services. Like most of the industrialized countries, Switzerland has not escaped this evolution, for in the hundred years between 1850 and 1950 the percentage of her working population engaged in activity of the tertiary kind passed from 10% to 37%. This being so, there is every justification for stressing the expansion of the tourist traffic in Switzerland in a year when almost everywhere the 250th anniversary of the birth of the great Genevese philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau is being celebrated. For was he not one of the first to praise the natural beauties of his country?

It is a truism that tourist traffic is an essential element of the Swiss economy. Its prime importance has never appeared so clearly as in the figures for 1961. The information furnished by the Federal Bureau of Statistics and the Commission for Economic Research shows that there has been an increase of 2.3 millions in the number of nights spent in hotels, inns, pensions, sanatoria and therapeutic establishments, the total being the record one of 30 millions. Furthermore, the net receipts from tourist traffic in Switzerland have for the first time exceeded one milliard Swiss francs.

Tourist traffic is an essential factor in the internal economy of Switzerland because it offers valuable support to agriculture and trade, particularly in the mountain areas, where a great many persons are dependent on it. But its importance is seen even more clearly if we examine Switzerland's foreign trade. With gross receipts of 1,820 million Swiss francs in 1961, the tourist industry takes second place after engineering and outstrips both the chemical and textile industries. If we deduct the 740 million francs spent by Swiss tourists abroad, the net revenue is seen to be 1,080 million francs — a sum far and away the largest on the asset side of the Swiss balance of payments on current account. The growing importance of the tourist traffic is also clearly illustrated in the following comparison: Whereas in 1952 net revenue from tourist traffic was 32% of the net total of invisible transactions, the figure ten years later is 57%. The expanding part the tourist receipts play in the "invisible" transactions results from the following table:

Tourist receipts in the Swiss balance of payments on current account

Year	Receipts (in million Swiss francs)	Expenditure (in million Swiss francs)	Net receipts	Net tourist receipts expressed as a percentage of all "invisible" net receipts
1952	1)	1)	360	31.85
1958	1285	515	770	46.78
1959	1420	575	845	48.23
1960	1580	640	940	48.80
1961	1820	740	1080	56.60

1) Not published

At a time when the Swiss balance of trade is becoming so unfavourable that it entails in its turn a large deficit on current account, everything must be done to expand this precious source of foreign exchange. The future of this vital branch of the Swiss economy depends not only on the world political situation, but also on the ways in which the Swiss hotels will succeed in defending their acquired positions by measures of modernization and rationalization. Furthermore, much remains to be done

in respect of communications especially of the road network, so that individual tourists and organized tours may reach the many resorts more easily and in greater safety.

Foreign competition is growing all the time, and no step should be neglected that can improve the services that have helped to make of Switzerland the tourist country par excellence.

(By courtesy, Swiss Bank Corporation Bulletin, November 1962.)

THE FERRYMAN HAS A SAY

Three ferryboats glide silently across the Rhine knee in Basle, only tugged by the current of the river. Instead of crossing a bridge wedged in between hooting cars and shrieking trolleys, the weary pedestrian settles down to a cosy chat with the ferryman in one of these boats guided by a cable, dreams into the water and arrives at the other side carefree and relaxed. The ferry driver has become a legendary figure, for if a tale sounds too unbelievable, they say in Basle: "Tell that to the ferryman!" If the traveller wishes to put over to the red barracks from the banks of "Big" Basle (just below the Three Kings' Hotel) aboard the ferry boat crossing the Rhine farthest downstream, he will do so in a brand new ship. The ferry driver who also owns the ship will tell him that a short while ago his boat celebrated its hundredth birthday — for a hundred years, day after day, in summer and winter time, the old one had been gliding from "Big" Basle to "Small" Basle over the Rhine. The city of Basle gave him this beautiful ship as a birthday present.

[S.N.T.O.]

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