

Charm of the Walensee

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CHARM OF THE WALENSEE

A Traveller's Impressions

The Walensee is a little-known lake near Zurich, to its south-east; it is the most attractive part of nature's road from Zurich to Chur or Choire, the capital of the Canton of the Grisons and an interesting old town. Before the railway age the stage-coach drove from Zurich to Weesen at the western end of the Walensee; then the passengers took the boat across to near Walenstadt at the other end, and another stage-coach took them on to Chur. But the Walensee is given to sudden, dangerous storms and there is a traditional recollection of the day when all the stage-coach passengers were drowned.

Weesen on its own signposts calls itself a *Städtchen*. In itself it has no particular virtue. But its beautifully enclosed harbour has unusual charm and — except for those storms — an extraordinary tranquility with *flâneurs* swans in the water and the cow bells ringing from the mountain slopes. It is one hour's journey by train from the big industrial city of Zurich, but is pervaded by an air of infinite remoteness. To reach Walenstadt the boat is still the most pleasant way in good weather and gives the traveller time to enjoy the alternating blue and green waters of the lake: this journey takes just over an hour. It can, however, never be counted upon, as the boat service, although it emphasizes its federal — not merely Cantonal — character on its time-tables, is strictly provisional: the time-tables only promise the service if the weather is fine and then not every day even in the season. Failing the boats the signposts announce 5 hours and 35 minutes to Walenstadt presumably on foot and the railway runs along the south coast of the lake. A new road has now been built along here too, to avoid the former not very safe ascent into the mountains which was forced upon motorists.

Not that Wallenstadt, which is an ancient and modern military centre, has any special attraction. But the village of Mühlehorn is worth a visit for the mill-stream cascading

into the lake and for the view from the local policeman's house which is called the Chalet Belvedere. One can boat and fish and swim here as elsewhere on the lake.

From the next village, Murg, motorboats can be persuaded to take one to the foot of Quinten, a tiny village on the northern coast in no other way accessible. It has an old church and a restaurant, with Quinten wine in very short supply, and again a lovely view over the lake. The name — there is a Quarten and an Unterterzen too on the south coast of the Walensee east of Murg — confirms the tradition of Roman outposts here.

The mountains rise as sheer rock walls of the Walensee and yet even Mühlehorn and Murg jut out so as to have sun most of the day, and Weesen enjoys virtually all the sun there can be. The northern shore of the Walensee basks in the sun on a fine day. Its great pointed crags are suitably called the Churfürsten or princes of Chur, and behind them rises the peak of Säntis. High up on the slopes near Weesen lies Amden, a winter-sports centre and easy to reach. South of Weesen, Schilt above Mollis is another good place for ski-ing, and farther up, beyond Glarus, Braunwald is a favourite; there are plenty of chair-lifts and the usual facilities.

The Walensee, whose northern shore belongs to the Canton of St. Gallen and its southern to that of Glarus, is thus not only the road to the Grisons. It is near, too, to Toggenburg and to Appenzell, and even to Schaffhausen to the north-west, and to the Lake of Constance. It should also be mentioned that it connects easily by the Linthkanal with the upper portion of the lake of Zurich and the beautiful old city of Rapperswil with its majestic castle.

The adventurous traveller can take any of these directions. In the spring the most interesting might be the road to Glarus, the capital of one of the remoter Cantons.

(By courtesy of "The Times", 15th December 1962.)

INN SIGNS AGAINST THE SWISS SKY

Hospitable Switzerland's landmarks are the colourful, artistically designed inn emblems which have become collector's items. A special type of collector is personified by the commercial artist, author and photographer René Creux of Paudex near Lausanne. For many years he has not only located and photographed the most remarkable specimens of this old folk art, but has also tried to get to know their secrets by listening to the stories told by the villagers and studying the environment and history of his pet inn-signs. As a result, René Creux has been able to compose the first complete book on the Swiss inn sign, its history and its cultural significance. He has done so in his joint capacity as a poet, an artist and a scientist. The book which has come out in French and German and will soon appear in an English version titled "Inn Signs against the Swiss Sky", has 280 pages with 31 colour reproductions and 144 black-and-white photographs. As a closing event in the Rousseau Memorial Year of 1962, the Swiss National Tourist Office, in collaboration with other Swiss institutions, is at present showing a travelling exhibition of inn signs which it considers to be symbols of traditional Swiss hospitality.

[S.N.T.O.]

BELLWALD, A NEW RESORT IN THE COUNTRY OF CESAR RITZ

On a sun-flooded terrace which commands a breathtaking view of the upper Rhone valley (Valais) the village of Bellwald (4,700 feet above sea level) is ready to welcome winter and summer guests. The region is ideal for ski-ing and offers best snow conditions from the beginning of December to the middle of March. A new hotel, a ski school with its own skilift, an aerial cableway, a skating rink, a variety of interesting ski runs and quite a number of comfortable chalets cater for all those who seek a real holiday off the beaten track. This part of the country also offers points of historical interest; a good hour's walk takes one to Mühlebach, the birthplace of Cardinal Matthaeus Schiner (1456-1522) who played an eminent part in European politics of his day when France and Italy were at sword's ends and the Valais held a strategic position. In Niderwald, neighbouring village to Bellwald, one may visit the house where another simple son of the mountains was born to later make his way to success in the world, Cesar Ritz (1850-1918), the actual founder of the modern hotel, who according to his wish is buried in the humble village of his fathers. Grand Hotels in all the big cities of the world keep up the tradition set by him who shaped the former inn into the luxurious modern hotel, meeting place of fashionable international society.

[S.N.T.O.]