

Centenary of the first conducted tour to Switzerland

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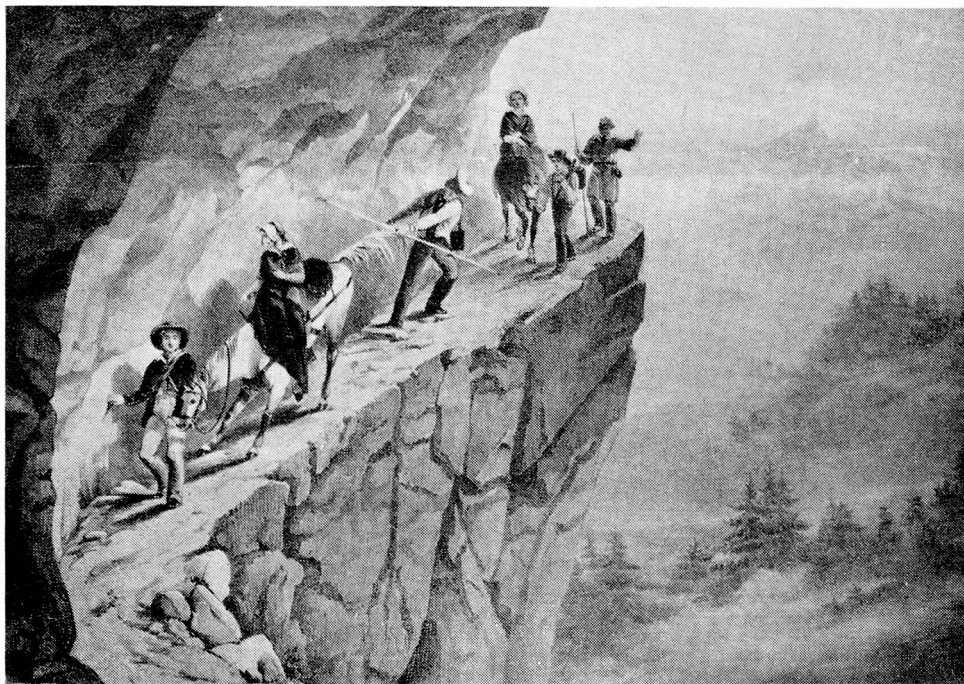
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CENTENARY OF THE FIRST CONDUCTED TOUR OF SWITZERLAND



Descent from the Gemmi a hundred years ago.
(By courtesy of Swiss National Tourist Office.)

The First Swiss Tour — 1863

On 26th June 1963 Switzerland is celebrating the centenary of the very first conducted tour of British holidaymakers to that country. This tour arranged and conducted by Mr. Thomas Cook of Leicester was the small beginning which started Switzerland's development as a great tourist country.

Twenty-two years earlier, in 1841, Cook had organised the first excursion from Leicester to Loughborough, and, by obtaining half-price fares for his party unwittingly laid the foundation for modern tourism.

The discovery that a full train was cheaper to run than one that was half empty spurred him to extend his excursion activities and he organised his first trip to Scotland in 1846. This was a difficult undertaking since there was no railway between the two countries. Undeterred Cook took his party to Fleetwood and then by steamer to Ardrossan, where they boarded a train to Glasgow and Edinburgh.

The first excursion was a great success and for the next fifteen years Cook was kept busy taking thousands of people to Scotland. The Trossachs and Loch Lomond which had till then been almost unknown became household names.

Suddenly an unexpected blow fell. The Scottish Railways withdrew the concession allowing Cook to issue his own circular tickets for the tours. Dismayed but not discouraged, Cook turned his back on Scotland and looked to the Continent for new fields to conquer.

He came to an arrangement with officials of the French and Swiss Railways for a cheap return ticket to Mont Blanc, as he put it, and organised an exploratory trip to Switzerland on 26th June 1863.

Thanks to the industry of a lady known as Miss Jemima who kept a journal of her group who called themselves the Junior United Alpine Club, we have a detailed record of this first Swiss Tour.

The party 130 strong, left London Bridge on 26th June 1863, at 6 a.m. for Paris, via Newhaven-Dieppe. Some seventy of the party remained in Paris and the rest went on to Geneva.

In Switzerland they travelled to Chamonix by diligence, and then, visiting the Mer de Glace, walked on to Martigny where they boarded a train for Sion. The next stop was Leukerbad. After spending the night here, they woke at 5 a.m. and watched the bathers in the mineral baths before starting up the Gemmi pass on muleback. On the other side of the pass lay Kandersteg, and from here they went on to Interlaken. After a quiet day they rose at 4 a.m. and walked over the Wengen Alp to Grindelwald. From Grindelwald they continued to Lucerne and then up the Rigi, arriving at the top at ten at night. The following day the indefatigable party rose at 3 a.m. to watch the sun rise. Finally they descended to Neuchâtel where they boarded the train for Paris. The cost of this 21-day tour was £19 17s. 6d.

The re-enactment of the first Swiss Tour — 1963

The tour so delightfully recounted by Miss Jemima will be re-enacted this year, and the party will be guests of Switzerland. The Swiss National Tourist Office in collaboration with local tourist and transport organisations have arranged an itinerary which will follow, as closely as possible, the route of the original tour. This time departure will be on 25th June 1963, from Victoria Station on the normal boat train. Crossing via Newhaven-Dieppe the party will go to Paris where they will board a train for

Geneva. In Switzerland old trains, steamers, sailing boats and diligences will return to service for the occasion; and horses, carriages and sedan chairs will carry the travellers over some sections of the route. Festivities on the way, such as a candlelight dinner at the Castle of Chillon and a Folklore Festival at Interlaken, will be in the spirit of the 1860's.

In Berne there will be an official reception by representatives of the Swiss Government, and the Swiss Alpine Club which celebrates its own Centenary in 1963, will welcome the Junior Alpine Club.

In order to give greater significance to the commemorative aspect of the present tour it will be conducted by Mr. Thomas Cook, great-great grandson of the original excursionist. Others of the party mentioned by Miss

Jemima will be represented by members of leading Amateur Dramatic and Operatic Societies of London. In order to re-create the authentic atmosphere of the 1860's the whole party will wear period costume.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Thomas Cook, J.P., great grandson of the founder of Thos. Cook & Son Ltd., and Lady Cook have very kindly agreed to be present at some of the major festivities during the tour.

The enthusiasm of the tourist of a hundred years ago will be re-echoed by that of the present party as they travel about Switzerland's beauty spots on this twelve-day tour, and the link with the past which they represent will emphasise in a dramatic manner the extraordinary expansion of travel opportunities that has taken place in the last hundred years.

[S.N.T.O.]

SWISSAIR NEWS

MORE SWISSAIR JETS ON U.K. SERVICES

About 90 per cent of Swissair passengers between Britain and Switzerland next summer will travel by jet. On the longer routes, *all* flights are by jet.

The twice-weekly morning service from Manchester to Zurich, operated last summer by piston-engined Metro-politans, will use Caravelles, cutting the flying time from three hours to 1 hour 45 minutes. Caravelle night-tourist flights from Manchester to Zurich, with a call at Basle, will start on May 14th.

On some of the scheduled Caravelle services from Manchester, four-engined Convair 990 Coronado jets — the modified version, the Convair 990A, is the fastest airliner in the world — will be substituted during the season.

Although official figures are not yet available, the signs are that Swissair traffic between Britain and Switzerland over the winter-sports period so far will show returns well above last year's.

The private-enterprise Swiss carrier has already assured shareholders that a good profit was made last year — again, no figures are available yet — and that a dividend will be paid. Even in the black year of 1961 Swissair managed to make a profit, although not enough to pay a dividend.

GOODBYE TO THE FLIGHT DECK

After 36 years' flying, Swissair Flight Captain Hans Ernst, aged 56, finished his career as an airline pilot on Wednesday (23rd January). His last flight was at the controls of a Convair 990 Coronado, one of the world's most advanced four-engined jets.

His log book now shows a total of 12,682 flying hours — equal to more than 18 months' non-stop flying.

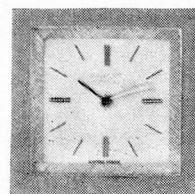
Captain Ernst was aged 20 when he obtained his licence for private and aerobatic flying. He served in the Swiss Air Force and in 1937 joined Swissair.

During his time with Swissair he has piloted the old Fokker F-VII-As, Junkers 86s, a whole range of Douglas aircraft, from DC-2s to DC-7Cs, Convair 240s and 440s and he capped his career by becoming a Coronado commander.

He will continue to work for Swissair as head of the Cockpit Crew Division.

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