

Alpine huts in Switzerland

Autor(en): **[s.n.]**

Objektyp: **Article**

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

Band (Jahr): - **(1966)**

Heft 1507

PDF erstellt am: **19.07.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-696320>

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SWISSAIR PROPOSES FARE CUTS

A 25% reduction on normal air fares, available to young people aged 12 to 21 for travel throughout Europe, is among proposals to be put by Swissair to the IATA Traffic Conference in Honolulu this autumn.

The airline will also propose generally applicable, world-wide fare reductions for students together with relaxation of some current restrictions in this field, and the extension of family fares with 50% reduction to the whole of Europe.

Swissair does not consider first class travel a pure luxury and would like to see the facility available to wider circles at reasonable cost. It therefore favours a general cut in first class-fares on long-haul routes, such as the North and South Atlantic, to the Far East and Africa. An increase from 30 to 40 kilos in the first-class free luggage allowance will also be proposed.

On North Atlantic fares, Swissair is to propose an improved three-tier rate structure, taking account of seasonal traffic fluctuations. The proposal includes the extension of the popular 21-day excursion fares to 28 days' validity, and special excursion fares for travel at weekends.

On the South Atlantic, the airline favours a 20% cut in economy class fares to and from South America in the off-season.

Swissair will further propose special fares up to 40% below normal economy class designed to promote inclusive tours for individuals and groups from Europe to India, Pakistan, Nepal, Ceylon and the Far East.

Commenting on the above proposals, Dr. Walter Berchtold, Swissair's President, said that the company had for a long time been following an unchanged, well-proven policy of progressive fare reductions, partly in the form of particularly attractive tourist excursion fares. The rapid expansion of air transport could not have been achieved without a constant lowering of fares. However, a reasonable relationship to the development of costs must always be maintained. The downtrend in tariffs must not endanger the economics of air transport; it was made possible only by constant improvements in efficiency and careful planning.

ANTIQUe SILVERWARE IN JEGENSTORF

Jegenstorf Manor, northwest of Berne, has opened its gates and beautifully restored and furnished baroque rooms to an exhibition of antique Swiss silverware which will continue until mid-October. Over 400 items dating to the period between 1650 and 1850 and collected here from all over the country speak for the art and craftsmanship of the old silversmiths but also for the refined taste of the noble families and societies and the mighty guilds who had such articles made to order. A particularly interesting aspect of this exhibition is that many items have not come from museums but out of private homes where they are still used. A very excellent illustrated catalogue and guided tours are helpful for the broader public to understand and truly admire the different highly ornamented centre-pieces, tankards and goblets, dishes and platters, snuff-boxes and tableware. This exhibit was organised by a few unselfish connoisseurs who since last autumn scanned the whole of Switzerland for suitable items and prevailed upon the owners to part with their treasures for a short while and let the public enjoy them.

[S.N.T.O.]

ALPINE HUTS IN SWITZERLAND

As a result of the "Year of the Alps" organised by the Swiss National Tourist Office in 1965, mountaineering has taken a decided upswing. This trend is expected to continue during the summer and autumn 1966. Holiday-makers planning mountain hikes of several days through Switzerland's Alpine paradise seem to have taken at heart the slogans "Back to Nature" and "Holidays in the Mountains Count Double". Guidebooks and local pamphlets are most helpful for setting up individual itineraries, the length of the trip depending entirely on personal wishes. For accommodation is no problem. In the mountainous parts of Switzerland, the Swiss Alpine Club (SAC) and other associations have erected enough huts to accommodate a total of 7,000 seeking a place to rest their weary limbs after a strenuous but unforgettable day.

The Largest and Smallest Huts of the Swiss Alpine Club

The four men who first scaled the Jungfrau in 1811 made their approach from the upper Lötschental over the glacier which these days attracts ten thousands of skiers every year; they had to spend a night in a makeshift hut of rock and snow. To protect themselves against the cold they spread coats and covers over their Alpine sticks. In their diary, they noted that they had felt quite cosy in their little "hut".

In 1863, the Swiss Alpine Club (SAC) was founded in Olten, and that same year the Grünhorn hut (8,040 feet) at the foot of the Tödi in the Glarus Alps was built to accommodate ten. In the course of a century, 150 SAC and other huts were erected. The largest of them are: Weissmies (accommodation for 116, Mountet (115), Britannia (113), Christallina and Coeno (110 each). Further seven huts can accommodate 100 persons each. There is room for twelve in shelters at the Lagginjoch and similar bivouacs at the Schalijsch and the Chalingrat can accommodate eight, though comfort is little.

Building Club Huts costs Money

In its budget, the Swiss Alpine Club which today has over 48,000 members in its 92 sections earmarks Fr.220,000.— a year for the construction of new huts and the extension of existing facilities. This sum covers approximately 40% of the total yearly expenditure by the SAC for its major programme which is the club huts system. In other words, the SAC through its sections spends some 500,000 and 600,000 francs a year on its huts. The constructions are not only more solid, more spacious and more comfortable but, due to the general increase in building costs, also more expensive. In the "good old days" — the S.A.C. looks back on a 103-year history — accommodation for one person cost between 800 and 1,000 francs; today, building costs per person in the high Alpine region are at 5,000 to 8,000 francs.

[S.N.T.O.]

OUR NEXT ISSUE

The "Swiss Observer" is published every second and fourth Friday of the month. Our next issue will appear on 9th September. Articles and reports received after 25th August will be published in the second issue in September only (23rd) as the Editor will be away at the Assembly of the Swiss Abroad in Berne.