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BUSINESS BOOM IN THE ALPS

Although Switzerland's national tourism account is moving into a deficit, the growth of the established resorts and the creation of new resorts progresses relentlessly. The Alps are still as attractive as the Mediterranean and "white gold" is as gilt-edged as ever. Every resort improves from one year to the next. The following are some of the innovations reported in a recent SNTO bulletin.

In *Andermatt*, a new cross-country ski-ing course illuminated at night has been added to an already-existing six mile long course. *Arosa's* "Excelsior" and "Walhotel" have each included heated indoor swimming pools among their amenities, thus bringing the total of swimming pools in the resort to seven. A new chairlift up to the Brüggerhorn was opened. The resort's ski school now incorporates a ski-hiking and cross-country ski school, helping beginners to put the existing 10 mile ski-hiking trails to good use.

Eight chairlifts and ski-lifts will be constructed within the next few years to open up the Trubelstock in the *Montana-Crans-Aminona* area. *Chandolin* is at 6,567 feet the highest winter sports village of the Valais and is surrounded by 13,000-foot peaks. This resort, formerly known to summer vacationers, already has three ski-lifts and will soon become a skiers paradise with the planned opening of a network of 12 ski-lifts and aerial cableways communicating with the ski slopes of St. Luc.

Six new ski-lifts will operate in *Davos* this winter: three on the Parsenn, two on the Jakobshorn and a double ski-lift in the Rinerhorn area. The Sport-Hotel Central will follow the trend and be equipped with a heated swimming pool. *Disentis*, the famous spa and summer resort is also investing heavily on winter equipment. A cableway to Caischavedra and three ski-lifts leading further up to Piz Ault will be inaugurated in December.

Engelberg has instituted its winter sports fitness test, passed under the supervision of an instructor for the cost of 15 francs, and attested by a card and

a badge. *Evolene* in the Valais is a rising and young resort with ambitious projects. A ski-lift to Tsaté has been opened last year. Further means of ascent are planned to Arbey, Nouva and the Pic d'Arzinol, 9,840 feet. At *Friesch*, aerial cableways will be built at Bellwald and Lax within the next four years.

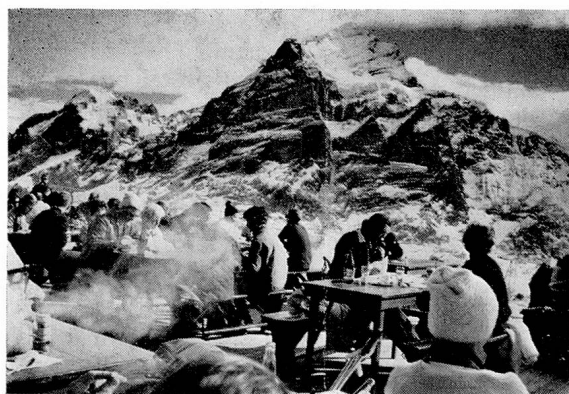
Flims offers with the "White Arena" perhaps the vastest ski-ing spaces in Switzerland. Two new ski-lifts will be operational this winter, plans for an aerial cableway from Startgels to Grauberg drawn up. *Flims* has a new first-class hotel, the Baudet Hotel. A seven-storey garage parking for 728 cars has been built between *Flims Dorf* and *Flims Waldhaus* and an artificial sun has been mounted above the indoor swimming pool of the Park Hotel.

Hoch-Ybrig is a new holiday and sports centre near Oberiberg, tapped in 1969 to be Zurich's offering to the Winter Sports Olympics. The area is equipped with an aerial cableway and six mechanical ascents. Cableways to *Laucheren Stöckli* and *Chäseren* (start-

from *Villa* to *Hitzeggen* opened last December will be the first stage towards the building-up of an ideal ski-hiking region. A new self service restaurant for 400 people will be opened at *Kleine Scheidegg* in the Jungfrau region to accommodate an ever-growing throng of tourists. *Kandersteg's* Park Hotel now has an indoor swimming pool and a curling school with a Canadian coach.

Klosters has banked on the sportiveness of old age and equipped itself with four curling rinks. *Lenk*, in the Bernese Oberland is furnished with a special ski-bob run, a six mile ski-hiking trail, and plans to supplement its nine mechanical ascents with two cableways and three ski-lifts within the next few years. *Melchsee-Frutt* in central Switzerland, a resort hitherto off the beaten track and with only 360 hotel beds (*Klosters* has 2,000) is going to change its ways with a new cableway reaching up to *Stockalp* and a self-service restaurant.

Murren will shortly have a chairlift connecting *Winteregg* to *Maulerhubel*. *Rigi* has improved its "Sie und



Skiers picnic in the shadow of the Jungfrau
(SNTO)

ing at *Weglosen*) are in the planning stage. A 1,000-car multi-storey garage is already available at *Weglose*. It is possible to acquire a combined winter sports season ticket valid in all the resorts of Schwyz.

At *Ilanz* in the Grisons, a chairlift

Er" run and was endowed last season with a new cableway linking *Küssnacht* to *Seebodenalp*. In *St. Moritz*, a hotel (the *Engadin-Kulm*) has once again installed an indoor heated swimming pool. With the opening of the *San Bernardino Road Tunnel*, the village

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of *San Bernardino* has become easily accessible. It has hotels, parking lots, self-service restaurants, sun terraces, ski-hiking trails and still much scope for expansion. The main mechanical ascent opened last winter is the San Bernardino-Confin cableway.

Scuol-Tarsp-Vulpera continues to offer water cures, but added a cableway climbing to Piz Champatsch among its ski-ing infrastructure. Finally, *Stoos* plans to speed up its funicular railway, still the steepest in Europe.

COMMENT

THE HITCH HIKING DISEASE

A few years ago a driver stopped on the brow of a hill to pick up a hitch-hiker. A car that was following him swerved and collided with an on-coming lorry. Result of the incident: Two smashed vehicles and a dead man. The affair was raised during Question Time at the Commons and an incensed parliamentarian cried out that the hitch-hiker was a "modern kind of tramp".

An increasing number of motorists probably share similar feelings owing to the explosive growth of hitch-hiking. The fact that hitch-iking is practised so generally must however mean that it is condoned and that many drivers are willing to give them mileage charity. No law prevents hitchhiking at present but if the trend continues, one can expect to see a conservative (and conservationist) politician present a motion banning this way of wrangling a journey. The proneness to offering a ride varies from country to country. The Swiss are apparently very ungen-

erous. The French are even worse. But the Germans and the British are reputed to be unstinting drivers. What tends to increase the reticence of many motorists is the actuarial liability they take upon themselves by giving rides to hitch-hikers. In the event of an accident they will be held to pay for whatever injury costs their passenger may demand.

There is no way for a hitch-hiker to predict how long he will have to wait for a ride. It's an irregular business. One hitch-hiker thumbed a ride from Barcelona to Geneva, fell on the right car and took just over 24 hours. Another required four-and-a-half days to cross France and emerged from the adventure worn out and harrassed. One will boast that his longest wait was three hours, another may have spent over a day in the same spot. There are a few elementary requisites for success in hitch-hiking, so obvious in fact that one wonders how they can so often be ignored. They are: To be suitably posted (namely, on a spot where cars drive slowly and can stop without danger); to be seen well in advance; not to be lumbered with a dozen bags; to be preferably alone; to have a reasonably clean and sympathetic appearance.

Despite these stringent requirements, we took quite a few hitch-hikers in the course of a 400-mile drive across Switzerland. Leaving Geneva for Lausanne on a stifling hot afternoon, I counted 19 hitch-hikers slumped on their bags staring at the steady stream of cars with outdrawn hands and bored faces. At Nyon, I picked up my first passengers. Two natives going to Lausanne and probably not bothered to wait for the omnibus train. They typified the local hitch-hiker, who travels between two neighbouring towns for reasons of immediate convenience. They are more readily picked up because they have no bulky baggage with them. They will wait as long as the next postal bus or train doesn't arrive.

The other kind of hitch-hiker is the international one, who travels on the motorists charity, because he is devoid of the means of travelling otherwise. There are of course exceptions. We have heard of a case of an American lawyer who travelled first-class from New York, stocked his specially sewn pouch with travellers cheques, and set out on a hitch-hiking tour to savour the free life of the modern highway tramp.

But the great majority of hitch-hikers adopt this frustrating way of travelling because the choice is either that or staying at home. At Moudon, I gave a lift to a Swedish hitch-hiker. He was a 19-year-old student journalist coming back from Spain. But for the goodwill of motorists, he would never have left his native Scandinavia. It had taken him two days to come

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