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Autor: [s.n.]
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ZURICH ON FIVE DOLLARS A DAY

"Imagine a boulevard lined at one end with banks and squat department stores, which suddenly opens into a lake of the brightest blue, covered with sailboats and swans. Consider a city of enormous commercial fame, where stock markets and brokers' houses stand a five-minute walk from brooding forests and mountain chateaus. Think of efficient business activities carried on amid sidewalk cafes and tearoom conversations."

Zurich, the locale of these contrasts, is the city chosen for a first introduction to Switzerland, "land of contrasts," by the book "Europe On Five Dollars A Day." A South African student who had managed to do just that, except for the days spent in London, where he enjoyed a free room at my house, gave me his well-thumbed copy of the book, which has highly valuable information on every major town and resort of the old continent.

Compiled by an American couple, the book cannot hope to offer an exhaustive list. But it supplies sufficient information for those travelling on the Continent and planning their daily expenditure in advance. The book is re-edited from time to time and the 1971-1972 edition presumably takes account of fastly rising costs. Despite these rises it is still possible to stay in a particular town and live on 5 dollars a day.

Who would have believed it, there are still hotels (and not only pensions or hostels) where a single room can be had for 15 francs, with an extra 3 francs for breakfast. This is the case of the Hotel Iberia, at the Badergasse. Other hotels listed at Zurich's least expensive are the Rössli, the Bristol, the Limmathof, the Seilerhof Hospiz, the Alfa and the Burm. There is also the Pension Tschannen and the Pension Meir. The "moderately priced" hotels are those where a double-room, bed and breakfast and taxes are below forty francs. This is true of a series of hotels, such as the Limmathus, the Rothus and the Sternen Oerlikon.

Well researched, the book advises women travelling by themselves to put up at the Foyer Hottingen, Martahaus, or the Studentinnenhaus, where charges for complete board are a little over 10 francs a day. The only possibility for men in this category is the YMCA at the Methodist Centre Zelthof at a

cost of 18 francs for bed and breakfast.

The book details the various restaurants and has high regard for the "Urania Quick." Its authors are also impressed by the chain Frauenverein restaurants and strongly recommends the "Karl der Grosse" next to the Grossmunster Church. Those living on a "starvation budget" are advised to feed themselves either at the Touristenlager Limmathaus, the Volks Küche der Stadt Zürich (of which four are listed), and the Migros. Those operating on a "sub-starvation budget" have no choice but to go to the "ultra-modern, stunningly-designed youth hostel" at the Mutschellenstrasse, where they can sleep in 8-bedded rooms for four francs only.

For night-clubbing, tourists are recommended the Mascotte, La ferme and the Hazyland. "Swiss-style gemütlichkeit" is to be found at the Astoria Bundnerstube at the Nuschelerstrasse, and at the Hofbrau Wolf on the Limmatquai. The visitor is urged to loosen the strings of his purse at least once for a "big splurge" consisting in tasting Fondue Bourguignonne, "that renowned Swiss specialty." This can be enjoyed advantageously at the "Walliser Keller" of the Hotel Zürchhof at the Zähringerstrasse at the Hotel Zum Storchen.

"A trip to Zurich is like going home to Mother—to that secure haven where everything works properly, where you are cared for fondly in impeccably clean surroundings, and where your schedule—in keeping with the atmosphere—is orderly and moderate" we are told. Forever, "you can lounge about without a guilty conscience because there are, in my opinion, only four "must see" sights in Zurich. The rest are strictly elective."

Well, the "Big Four" are the Landesmuseum, the Kunsthhaus, the Rietberg Museum and the Grossmunster—and nobody can seriously question the wisdom of this choice. One may perhaps regret that the Bührl Collection of French impressionists, open on Tuesday and Friday afternoons at 172 Zollikerstrasse, is only mentioned as "suggestion." As for the "electives," they are: the Wasserkirche, the Helmhaus, the Meise Guild House, the Fraumunster Cathedral, St. Peter's Church and the Rathaus.

The Guide also offers a brief selection of hotels of the other main Swiss cities and resorts. The best bargains in Basel are the Hotel-Hospiz Engelhof and the Hotel Blaukreuz (by bargain is not necessarily meant the cheapest, but the best all-round offer).

In Berne these bargains would be found at the Volkhaus, the Kreuz and the Gfeller at Bärenplatz. In Geneva, the Cornavin, the Bernina, the Belmont and l'Hotel de l'Ours are considered as the most reasonable hotels. Should you follow the Guide's advice at Interlaken, then sleep at the Balmers Herberge in Matten "where for 1 dollar 30 a night we slept in a huge double-decker bed and recieved a continental breakfast." For large families, the Hotel Kolping Gesellenhaus in Lucerne is by far the best bet: for 12 francs a night they can find a bed in a spotlessly clean six-bed dormitory. The Guide acknowledges that in-season prices are high in Lucerne but recommends the Johanniterhof, the Pension Wirth and the Gambrinus, where rooms are only twenty francs a night of thereabouts. Finally, the places to sleep at in Lugano are the Hotel Ticino, the Albergo Hotel Garni Zurigo and the Hotel Garni Alba. The most reasonably priced restaurant is reckoned to be the Pestalozzi House on Pestalozi Street.

One must admire the attempt by a man and his wife to cover the touristic amenities of all the leading towns and resorts of Europe. Obviously the results of such an attempt are bound to present some shortcomings as every major town has dozens of hotels which have perforce to be left out in a private survey. The main disadvantage is that young tourists will be tempted to take a "by the book" holiday at the expense of the elements of chance and adventure. The Official guides (AA and Michelin) have the advantage of leaving the tourist with a choice of more possibilities. They do not quite have the engaging persuasion of a book which invites the reader to share travelling experience, as testified by the thousands of students who roam Europe with a copy of it in their haversack.

(PMB)

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