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TOURIST NEWS

SKIING ON GRASS – A SUMMER SPORT IN THE SWISS MOUNTAINS

You can go skiing not only on snow and water in summer but also on grass. For this you need 18" long skis resembling elongated roller skates. There are practice slopes for this sport in several Swiss resorts. The "Wispiillen" T-bar at Gstaad runs from June 22 to October 21; in Davos, the "Geissloch" lift to the Jakobshorn is operated from mid June to the end of October on Wednesday afternoons, Saturdays and Sundays. There are grass skiing runs near Radons at Savognin and on the Weissenstein (near to Solothurn) – information about the latter region is obtainable at the "Sennhaus" restaurant. The lower terminus of these lifts and sports shops rent out the necessary equipment. Moreover, the Swiss grass-skiing championships will be taking place at Davos on 5th August.

New Quality Signs on Swiss Hotels

For some time now, there has been a new sign at the entrance to Swiss hotels and restaurants – a golden ball encircled by a ring bearing the title "Swiss Union of the Association of Former Pupils of Hotel Schools" (Union suisse des associations d'anciens élèves d'écoles hôtelières). This sign guarantees the best reception and service available. The Union was founded in 1971 and has 3,000 members, all former students of hotel schools at Lausanne, Glion, Zurich, Lucerne and Geneva.

Genolier – New Convalescent Centre for Exhausted Managers

An ultra-modern clinic for the curing of the ills of modern civilization has just recently been opened near Genolier above Nyon on Lake Geneva (only 15 minutes away from Geneva Airport). It is the first of its kind in Switzerland and Europe but resembles more a luxury hotel than a hospital. Each sick room has a balcony with view on thylake, bathroom, telephone, radio and television. The clinic has physic-, hydro- and electrotherapy rooms for rehabilitation treatment after operations, heart attacks and accidents; other patients can use the gymnastic hall, sauna and swimming pool with underwater massage, etc. Cost: Fr. 170 to 225 per day excluding medical care.

Neuchatel – Wine Harvest Festival 1973

The traditional Wine Harvest Festival at Neuchatel will be held on October 6/7 1973.

The official opening ceremony will start at 15.00 on Saturday 6th October, followed at 16.00 by the children's procession and dancing, fanfare, etc., in the evening. At 14.30 on Sunday 7th

October 1973 the grand flower corso will be staged.

What do you do with Children and Car Drivers in Switzerland?

Two handy new brochures informing travellers about childrens' homes and motels have been published by the Swiss National Tourist Office. The brochure entitled "Child Care in Holiday Resorts" is a more detailed and improved edition in four different languages: German, French, English and Italian. It gives information on childrens' homes and nurseries in over fifty Swiss holiday resorts. It also specifies how, when and where parents can find well-trained attendants to whom they can entrust their children in order to enjoy a few carefree hours or days. The 1973 "Motellist" edition is in four languages and again divides up into the ten Swiss regions informing you about opening hours, prices, restaurants, car services, etc., in more than 100 motels all over the country. Both brochures are obtainable from the Swiss National Tourist Office, Swiss Centre, 1 New Coventry Street, London W1V 3HG.

Car-free holiday resorts in Switzerland

The following Swiss summer and winter holiday resorts can only be reached by mountain railway, aerial cablecar, chairlift or oblige car drivers to park their cars at the entrance to the village: Murren and Wengen in the Bernese Oberland, Braunwald in North-eastern Switzerland, Betteralp, Riederalp, Saas-Fee and Zermatt in the Valais and Klewenalp, Melchsee-Frutt, Rigi-Kaltbad and Stoos in Central Switzerland.

NEW CYCLING PATH IN AARGAU

More and more people want to go on quiet cycle rides away from busy thoroughfares. This wish has now been fulfilled by the Automobile, Motorcycle and Bicycle Association of canton Aargau and a 28-mile long cycling path awaits bicycle fans at Birr to the south of Brugg. There are also shorter, well-indicated stretches of 12 and 22 miles at a time on quiet roads at their disposal. These routes lead past sites of cultural interest such as the castle of Wildeggen (part of which belongs to the Swiss National Museum – with interiors from the 16th – 19th centuries) and the castle of Lenzburg (one of Switzerland's biggest castles and now a museum). Advance applications should be made for the renting of bicycles at SFR railway station.

MULE SAFARIS IN THE VALAIS

"Welcome Swiss Tour Valais" is organising an unusual kind of safari

together with Valais Tourist Office: riding through the Alps on the back of a mule. The safari which lasts seven days also comprises a guide and muleteer. The route leads from Mayen de Riddes (near Sion) via Nendaz, Veysonnaz, Hérémence and the picturesque Val d'Hérens; it continued on to Eison, Vercorin and through the Val d'Anniviers to Grimentz. Two people take it in turn to ride one mule and two mules carry the luggage. The all-inclusive price of Fr. 585 includes board and lodging, the guide and the trip to and from Geneva. More information obtainable at "Welcome Swiss Tours", av. Benjamin Constant 7, CH-1003 Lausanne.



1st AUGUST: SWITZERLAND'S 682nd BIRTHDAY

On 1st August, Switzerland celebrates its 682nd birthday. To mark this occasion, there will be firework displays, bonfires on the hilltops, and children parading through the streets with Chinese lanterns. In order to grasp the true meaning of this celebration, one should perhaps first take a brief glance at Switzerland's history.

Visitors to Switzerland may wonder what the sign "CH" on the back of cars stands for. It has a Latin significance – Confoederatio Helvetica – which means "Swiss Confederation". Before the Christian era, the greater part of the territory now known as Switzerland, was inhabited by a Celtic people called Helvetii, giving the country its name of Helvetia. In a war with the Roman Empire, Helvetia was defeated by Julius Caesar and the country remained Roman until 450 A.D. When the Roman Empire was invaded by the Barbarians, the western part of Helvetia was occupied by the Burgundians and the central plateau, the north west, east, and Alpine valleys by the Alemans; the language of the Burgundians evolved into French, while that of the Alemans was a German dialect which was to become the language now spoken by more than two-thirds of the population. At the beginning of the 6th century, Helvetia was incorporated into the Kingdom of the Franks, converted to Christianity, and later became a part of the Germanic Holy Roman Empire.

Everybody knows about William Tell, that legendary figure in Swiss history. He came from the canton of Uri, which together with Schwytz and Unterwalden signed the Perpetual Covenant at the beginning of August 1291 (hence, the Swiss National Day), as a defensive measure against the ambitions of the House of Habsburg, which at that time, reigned supreme in Central Europe and the Alps. From that time on, the house of Habsburg slowly lost ground, and in 1315, the cavalry of Duke Leopold of Habsburg was defeated by the Swiss confederate peasants at Morgarten (the peasants obtaining their liberty with the signing of the famous Pact of Brunnen.)

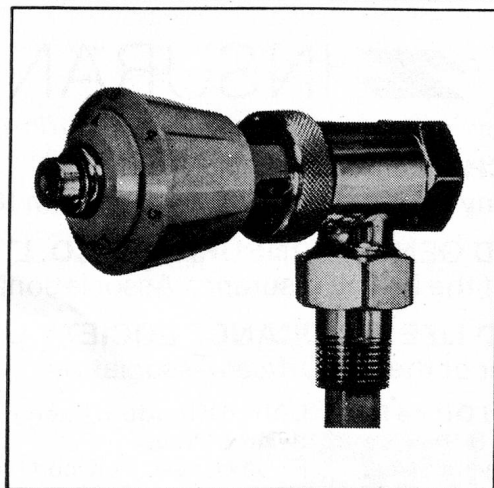
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In the centuries which ensued, battle upon battle raged as the confederate states liberated themselves from neighbouring powers. After the Habsburgs, it was the turn of the Burgundians to be defeated, when their duke, Charles the Bold, marched against the Swiss and was defeated at Grandson and at Morat. However, the Swiss mercenaries were to suffer defeat at the famous battle of Marignano against the invincible Francis I of France in 1515. This defeat kept them from further extra-territorial attacks and now the thirteen cantons of the Confederation settled down to a peaceful life contenting themselves with sending their troops abroad, whence the famous Swiss Guard, which still exists today. The sixteenth century evolved with the Reformation throughout the country.

Though thirteen member states were divided up by the Catholic and Protestant faiths, they became obliged at the same time to keep to a stable policy in both state and foreign matters. By the 18th century, in spite of interior strifes, Switzerland was known to the rest of Europe as an idyllic state. But with the French Revolution, the oligarchy and subjugated territories of the old Confederation were destroyed. The Austrian, Russian, and Revolutionary armies turned the entire country into one huge battlefield.

However, the federal régime was restored by a Mediation begun by Napoleon and ended in 1815 by the Vienna Congress. On this occasion, Switzerland's new constitution was decided upon just as it is today with its 22 cantons. In 1847, with the rupture between liberal and conservative cantons leading up to the "Sonderbund" civil war, the country's peace was threatened. Finally in 1848, the new constitution of Switzerland was established in a confederation of states reunited in a Chamber of Commons and Chamber of States. Since 1850, Switzerland has managed to remain peaceful and neutral. This is indeed of vital importance when one considers its position at the strategically vital crossroads of Alpine routes.

NEWS FROM THE CAPITAL

The "Last Judgement" at Berne Cathedral is being restored

The tympanum of the main portal of Berne Cathedral, the "Last Judgement" created by Erhard Kűng and Meister Albrecht around 1500 – considered a cultural and historical attraction of the federal capital in every tourist guide – is not looking its best at the moment. Iron scaffolding and numerous empty pedestals give a clue to what is happening. The 236 statues which make up the impressive sandstone sculpture have suffered heavy damage in the course of the centuries. Forty-eight figures, some life-size sculptures, must be replaced. This work, the exact copying of the weatherbeaten originals, has kept Walter Fuhrer, sculptor of the Cathedral Builders' Association, busy for nine years. Forty copies have already been completed; several are in a side portal of the Cathedral and are waiting there for the final accomplishment of the huge task. In about two years, everything should be ready: then the "Last Judgement" tympanum of the Berne Münster, one of the most important and richest church portals of the late Gothic period, will regain its original beauty.

A romantic journey by steam train around Berne

Those who still love the romance of the old steam engine will once again this summer have the chance of some beautiful train journeys around Berne. The popular steam train will be making trips in the Sensetal, that is, between Flamatt and Gűmmenen, from May to October every first and third Sunday in the month. "Der Feurige Elias" ("Fiery

Eli"), a beautiful old steam locomotive, is to be seen on the Solothurn–Zollikofen–Berne Railway (SZB) from May to October on every second Sunday of the month, and on the Berne–Worb Railway (VBW, Worb–laufen–Worb stretch) on the fourth Sunday of the month. For the journey in these original steam trains a (small) steam supplement is charged on top of the standard fare.

Curtain up on the Berne Theatre Season

The Berne Stadttheater (City Theatre) – which this year celebrates its 70th jubilee – keeps to its tradition this year in presenting all aspects of dramatic art: plays, operas, operettas and ballets. The 1973/4 season opens on September 15 with Max Frisch's "Die chinesische Mauer" ("The Great Wall of China"). The premières of theatre plays which follow are, in sequence: Pavel Kohout's "Poor Murderers", Shakespeare's "Hamlet", "Menschen glücklich machen" ("Make People Happy") – the world première of a play by Walter M. Diggelmann, "Der gute Mensch von Sezuan" ("The Good Woman of Sezuan") by Bertold Brecht, "The Wild Duck" by Henrik Ibsen, Georgio Strehler's adaption of the Gozzi fairy tale "Der Rabe" ("The Raven"), "Adam and Eva" ("Adam and Eve") by Peter Hacks, and Ostrovsky's "The Forest".

The series of great opera evenings begins on September the 22nd with Mussorgsky's monumental "Boris Godunov". New productions follow of Kalman's "Countess Mariza", Benjamin Britten's "Midsummer Night's Dream", Umberto Giordano's "André Chénier",

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