

Travel fair frings a royal visitor to the swiss stand

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Travel fair brings a royal visitor to the Swiss stand

THE World Travel Market, first held in 1980, has now become an annual fair. Two years ago it occupied 3,000 square metres of the National Hall at Olympia, and 9,450 trade visitors and 4,500 public visitors attended.

Last year the exhibition area was more than doubled and moved to the Grand Hall, for the tourist boards, airlines, hotel chains, tour operators, shipping lines and car rental firms quickly realised the value of such a fair.

Trade attendance increased to 14,000 visitors, and there were 7,000 public visitors on the last two of the five days when the exhibition opened to the public.

From all accounts, the 1982 figures show a big improvement on last year.

The World Travel Market was officially opened by Princess Alexandra on December 1. Lord Boyd-Carpenter, president of the WTM Advisory Council, accompanied the royal tour.

Not only was the travel trade from all parts of the world well represented and clamouring for business but seminars were held,

and special sections were devoted to technology at work in the world of travel.

The British Tourist Authority ran workshops for overseas travel agents and tour operators, and there were performances on the centre stage by traditional dancers from many countries as well as presentations of medieval music, folksongs and carols, including a cowboy group from Texas.

Various competitions were organised, and the winners of the main awards for outstanding performances in their fields of activity were presented by Princess Alexandra. Kuoni Travel won first prize for best specialist holidays.

The main exhibitors were

national tourist boards, airlines, tour operators, coach companies, hotel chains and allied travel businesses. But there were stands of insurance brokers, car hire firms, computer and credit card companies, radio rental contractors, art and craft centres, guide and travel book publishers.

There was a Dutch cheese farm, Grand Canyon Helicopters, Kibbutz Inns of Israel, Niagara Falls Boat Tours and, believe it or not, the Folies Bergère.

British exhibitors were much to the fore and included British Rail, Belfast Car Ferries, Dover Harbour Board, National Bus Company and Luton Airport. There were also National Trust, Thames

and Chilterns Equestrian Holidays, the GLC (operating a model of the Thames flood barrier), UK Waterways Holidays, several stately homes and castles, the University of Surrey, the Wedgwood Visitor Centre and the London Tourist Board.

Models of Big Ben were on show and among the picturesque attendants was a guardsman, busby and all. "England means business" was the slogan.

Other costumes seen at various stands were kilts and cowboy outfits and even South Carolina old world crinolines.

Drinks of every kind were offered, and some stands ran raffles while others had TV sets for informing the crowds.

"Discover America" was USA's slogan, and a vast number of stands were taken up by the States' representatives.

Readers will by now have gathered that the World Travel Market 1982 was a trade fair of remarkable proportions. But will they believe me that in spite of the aforesaid, one of the most impressive shows was put up by Switzerland?

I had my first glimpse of the exhibition hall from the gallery. Straight away I recognised the Swiss corner for a huge chandelier of glistening outsize snowflakes cascaded down to the entrance of the Swiss section.

Five men had spent two days putting up the snowy cascade which was 20 metres long, 6 metres in diameter and weighed 400kg. Around the bottom of the giant mobile, a row of large shields bearing the Swiss cross brought colour to the structure.

All the Swiss stalls, over 30 of them, were of simple uniform construction, with red backgrounds and all along the avenue



Princess Alexandra, in conversation with Mr Albert Kunz of the Swiss National Tourist Office



Princess Alexandra with the Swiss Ambassador and Madame Caillat at the SNTO stand

between them the same Swiss shields were hung like inn signs.

The tables had white cloths with "Switzerland" in red across the borders, and even the chairs were uniform. The Swiss section was easily recognisable and all the stalls were under the slogan "Switzerland – it's worth it."

A coffee stall offered genuine Swiss coffee (donated by Jacobs) and there was Swiss chocolate and "Biberli". A row of cow bells gave the café a special cachet.

The Swiss National Tourist Office participated for the first time, and occupied a floor area of 278 square metres. There were 140 names on the Swiss

participants' list, representing the SNTO in Switzerland and in London, Swissair, a dozen hotel chains (like the Ambassadors, Moevenpick, Nova Park etc) and above all the individual regions, holiday resorts and conference centres, competing with one another with beautiful posters.

Among those places which had stands of their own were Zurich, Basle, Interlaken and Baden, as the only Swiss spa.

The whole picture of Switzerland – as a holiday land both in summer and in winter, as a conference centre with excellent facilities for conventions, fairs and exhibitions, as a country with an

impressive transport system from the Swiss Federal Railways to chairlifts and lake steamers – was very comprehensive. If there was a problem it would have been "embarras de choix."

When Princess Alexandra opened the Travel Market, she visited 12 stands, including the Swiss.

In the presence of the Swiss Ambassador and Madame Caillat, and Mr Albert Kunz, manager of the Swiss National Tourist Office in London, a girl in Grisons costume presented the Princess with a greeting from Switzerland. The Princess as patron of the Children's Country

Holiday Fund, was offered a gift of a holiday for six needy children who would be spending a vacation at Les Diablerets in June.

If Switzerland did not convince the international tourist trade and the British travelling public that her high standards of quality and price (due to a comparatively low rate of inflation) were being maintained, and that excellent value for money could still be had in superb surroundings, it certainly was not for the want of trying.

It certainly proved the truth behind the slogan: "Switzerland – it's worth it!"

Mariann Meier