

A "world tour" through Switzerland with the Holiday General Season Ticket

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A "world tour" through Switzerland with the Holiday General Season Ticket

It was a journey with a General Season Ticket that revealed to us that Switzerland is a world in miniature. There can hardly be any other country on the face of our globe in which such a wide variety of scenery can be found within such a small area. We saw a northern world of ice and rock towering above the luscious southern chestnut woods of the Ticino; fertile plains adjoining the barren limestone rocks of the Lägern, pampas-like blankets of loess stretched out at the side of the broad valley near Basle, and extensive forests in the midst of cultivated and populated country. Reminiscent of the Texan Colorado, rivers snaked far below us at the bottom of deep cañons in the Freiburg region. We even saw a "Swabian Sea" (the Lake of Constance) and — believe it or not — a desert, in the vicinity of Wetzikon in the Zurich Oberland. It is true that this desert extends over an area of some 120 square yards only, but it nevertheless displays the typical desert formations and desert flora merging, at the margins, into the scrub typical of the steppes. But the specimens of scenery which Switzerland offers us are not always so diminutive. And that is why we were so pleased to enjoy the facility afforded us by the General Season Ticket of travelling into the more remote areas of the country without having to worry about the cost of the ticket and wonder whether the trip would be worth it. In this way we discovered an abundance of riches which we should otherwise have disregarded. How many of us, for instance, have seen the French-Swiss Jura with our own eyes? Yet there is surely no more beautiful tract of country for those who walk with their eyes open, receptive to their surroundings. The broad country of Ajoie, the wild forests of the Mont Terri, the old town of St-Ursanne with its famous church, the Doubs Gorge; who could stroll through these places and not feel that he had seen and experienced more than if, in the sweat of his brow and with his feet cut and bruised, he had clambered up an Alpine peak the fascination of whose indisputable height is offset by the fact that it is frequently found to be very bare and somewhat boring — at least to those of us lesser mortals who have not the inclination or the skill and experience to appreciate the joys of climbing for its own sake? From the Delémont-Belfort line, which serves this region, a picturesque old local railway formerly branched off at Glovelier. It was one of the museum pieces of our railway system, especially as regards its rolling stock, but is now used for goods traffic only. For passenger traffic it has been replaced by a 'bus service to the Franches Montagnes; but the journey can be made on foot, too, until the modern network of the Neuchâtel Railways is reached at Saignelégier. Since we were in French Switzerland, our travels brought us to the Lake of Geneva. Already the view over Lausanne as the train emerged from the Puidoux Tunnel presen-

ted us with the splendour of the Lake; the eye swept over endless vine-clad slopes and the expanse of unfailingly bright-blue water, to climb the rocky slopes, slightly veiled and distanced by the haze, of the French Alps on the other side. But neither Lausanne, Montreux nor Geneva opened up the scenic beauties of the region to us so strikingly and intimately as did the many little towns and villages which we could pick and choose as we liked with the aid of the General Season Ticket; places from which numerous little railways provided transport into the Vaud and the Valais, as from Nyon into the high Jura Alps as far as La Cure, or from Morges to the military centre of Bière and to L'Isle in the Valley of Veyron. From there, Alpine tracks brought us over the mountain to the Lake of Joux, where the Brassus—Vallorbe railway picked us up once more. Then a little train with red carriages took us through a delightful gorge from Vevey to Châtel-St-Denis, where we linked up with the Fribourg Railways and were so conveyed to the well-known Montreux-Oberland Railway. Finally, we travelled on a local railway from Bouveret to St-Maurice. Here it really was worth while to make full use of the facility which the new Holiday General Season Ticket afforded of distributing the "free-travel" days over a fortnight and spending the intervening periods walking or resting, without being tied to one locality.

In another part of the country we passed through a region less frequently selected as a holiday centre but certainly suitable as such, namely, the agricultural district of Eastern Switzerland, which has in summer a charm all its own. The train seemed to be cutting a path through the bushes and across the meadows, so luxuriant was the foliage and so luscious the grassy meadows, and the stalks of the corn in the nearby fields bent over towards us as we passed. All of us know how pleasant it is when, heavy with the sleepiness born of the noonday heat, we lean out of the carriage window till the wind tears our eyes wide open to gaze over the neat pattern of the fields, where a waggon is being loaded with corn, or over the newly-mown meadow where the hay is being raked into heaps; it is then that we savour to the full the comforting thought that, for the time being, we are gentlemen and gentlewomen of leisure. Or we alight at some out-of-the-way village and set out along narrow footpaths until we succumb to the urge to stretch out at our ease on some grassy bank, with the daisies and the crow-foot waving over our heads and the blue sky smiling down on us. What more could the heart desire?

But the highlight of the General Season Ticket was a tour of Switzerland from Zurich via St. Gall, Coire, Disentis, Brigue, Lausanne and Biel (Bienne) back to Zurich, starting at 4.36 in the morning and getting back at 11.01 in the evening, changing only twice — and with direct connections — at Coire and Brigue and using between these two places the St. Moritz—Zermatt "Glacier Express". This journey might almost be termed a "stocktaking tour" of Swiss scenery. But it was not only during the actual holiday that the General Season Ticket provided

us with so much pleasure. We found it a particular agreeable task, armed with the time-table, to work out a general plan of campaign in advance, for in this way we were able, by plotting our proposed route on the map, to taste the joy of anticipation which, as is proverbial, is the greatest joy of all. The problem of finding the ideal way to spend the fortnight was like one of those puzzles which can be solved by a variety of combinations. On the other hand, those who prefer to feel absolutely free can discard all plans and travel "into the blue" by the simple process of getting into the first train that comes along and leaving it to fate — and the railway "powers that be" — to determine their destination.

So now, who wouldn't like to start on a "world tour" through Switzerland, free to travel when and where he pleased and without having to trouble his head any further about the cost of the ticket?

H. Ch. Bi.

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— une présentation d'«Egmont», de Goethe, musique de Beethoven, dans une adaptation française inédite de M. Pierre Sabatier.