

3300 km cycling country Switzerland : "Experiencing" Switzerland

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3300 km cycling country Switzerland

"Experiencing" Switzerland

There are maxi, midi and mini tours, nine of them in all: Switzerland is criss-crossed by new cycling lanes from North to South and from East to West.

Roads are straightened or widened, covered by noise-reducing surfaces, new railway tracks are laid out, cycling lanes marked, pedestrian stripes painted on the asphalt. The state is aiming at maximum safety for all traffic participants.

Mobility in the car was trumps

In the 1960s, technical progress was trumps and in those days a road-building project could not be big enough. In contrast to then the car no longer stands

Alice Baumann

in the foreground. This is how traffic planner Emil Pechotsch of the Berne engineering office "Emch + Berger" sums up the present credo. He belongs to that generation of traffic planners which worked out the Swiss motorway network and placed the car above all other interests. But today he says – with his eyes on the bicycle – "we consider the traffic and environment situation as one".

Criss-crossing Switzerland

Since the color green is no longer seen as a synonym for the political left but as a symbol of environmental protection for the population as a whole, and since Swiss tourism could do with a kick, an old dream has come true. Since Whit-sun of this year, Switzerland may be traveled extensively on a bicycle.

Nine marked routes with numbers and names like "the breathtaking" and "the leisurely". These lead past lakes and moors, fruit plantations and parks, meadows and woods, vineyards and hillsides, museums and churches, visiting and sleeping in picturesque villages and romantic old towns. Those who prefer the countryside can stay in the straw of a farm which offers

them bed & breakfast at a reasonable price.

Those who want to sleep in comfort must look for the bicycle-country quality labels which are carried by 100 hotels along the bicycle routes. A central bike/bed exchange (telephone from within Switzerland 157 02 04) tells you where there is still a bed free. This permits cyclists to stay overnight at a beautiful place quite spontaneously, a service found nowhere else in Europe.

Observing animals and plants

Since time spent cycling means observing nature, the Swiss cycling network is particularly suitable for families. This is all the more true since most of the routes have several different ways of covering a leg. Often the least

sporting or strong in a group is given the opportunity of using a boat or a train for a leg – either to make a change or to shorten the route.

Breathing space in the train

To coincide with the opening of this cycling network, Swiss Federal Rail has reduced its prices for carrying bicycles and has introduced a cycling pass (SFr. 195 a year, SFr. 10 a day with half-price pass, or SFr. 15 without). In addition 4000 bicycles are available for rent at 180 stations situated on the Rhone, Rhine, Alpine Panorama, Plateau, Graubünden, Jura, Aare and lake routes.

Everyone travels by bike

The opening of "cycling country Switzerland" was an important day. Although it was Whit Saturday, Federal Councillor Adolf Ogi could not resist the temptation to cycle across Parliament Square before the eyes of the Swiss people. The cycling magazine, "Move", wrote that the event was "as significant as the opening of the first motorway had been and of considerably greater importance and meaning for motorised traffic participants". In the days when four wheels were still indispensable...

More information may be obtained from
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