

Switzerland gives the tourist value for money

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ALPINE FLOWERS CHARM VISITORS TO HIGH SLOPES

EDELWEISS GROWS UPON BEETLING CLIFFS, CROCUS BLOOMS UNDER SNOW

An attraction of a Swiss vacation that never fails to charm visitors is the millions of vari-coloured little flowers which carpet the valleys and mountain slopes from June to August.

The exquisite Alpine flowers have always cast a romantic spell over mountaineers. Many have endangered their lives to reach them, and some have fallen to their death.

These tiny, fragile flowers—whose seeds have been sown far and wide by the mountain winds—grow in the most unexpected places—in the midst of inhospitable rocky fastnesses, on the most sterile soil, next to snow and ice, in spots exposed throughout the day to the blazing sun. When the snows melt in the high valleys in spring, the crocuses are found flowering beneath them.

The famous edelweiss that grows on dangerous cliffs is only one of thousands of varieties to be found in the Alps. The rich, deep-blue of the gentians peeping out from under rocks is particularly beautiful. Contributing to the gay splashes of colour are the lichens and saxifrage, which live on almost nothing; the catch-fly, which blooms in wild crevasses; the houseleek, growing on the highest peaks amid sun and wind.

List is Endless

Then there is an endless list of others—the anemone, the primula, auricula, bluebell, daisy, primrose, soldanella, violet, bugle, aster, king's cup, arnica, wolf's bane, old man's orchid, columbine, Turk's-cap lily, poppy, lady's slipper, wood pink, assfoot, hairy daphne, nettle-leaved speedwell, dog's tooth, red mountain lily, blue lettuce, dwarf milfoil, rock orpine, Alpine columbine, larkspur, spring snowflake, liver-leaf hepatica, beaked lousewort, glacier crowfoot, bearded bellflower, bird's-eye primrose, black masterwort, Alpine toad-flax, cut-leaved groundsel, great grass-lily and one-flowered wintergreen.

There are many, many more, and it's fun, on an afternoon's walk through the valley to see how many you can identify.

THREE SWISS WHO BECAME FAMOUS U.S. CITIZENS

From the earliest days Swiss have emigrated to the United States and many have become well-known citizens of their new homeland.

Albert Gallatin, a native of Geneva, was Jefferson's Secretary of the Treasury. He negotiated the treaty with England after the war of 1812, and succeeded in having all the fortresses along the American-Canadian border dismantled.

Louis Agassiz, the famous geologist, Harvard professor and founder of Agassiz Museum in Cambridge, Mass., was a native of Switzerland. And so was Gen. Johann August Sutter, founder of the colony of New Helvetia, where many of California's most famous gold mines were later discovered.

300th ANNIVERSARY OF THE LOWER ENGADIN

The people in the region of the Lower Engadin will celebrate this summer the 300th anniversary of the acquisition of its freedom from Austria. The official celebration took place at Bad Scuol-Tarasp-Vulpera on June 22nd, 1952. The morning was reserved for the reception of the guests and the official ceremonial act, whereas in the afternoon the main procession "The Lower Engadin 300 years ago and today" with 700 participants took place. The festival play "La Changun da la liberta" ("The Song of Freedom") by Men Rauch was presented on the typical Engadin village square, the "Bugl grond" in lower Schuls.

SWITZERLAND GIVES THE TOURIST VALUE FOR MONEY

With the outbreak of war in Korea, an upward trend in International prices set in. Switzerland, however, followed this upward movement only in a relatively modest degree. This is shown by the following facts: the Swiss cost-of-living index (August 1939: 100) average 159.1 in 1950 and 166.7 in 1951—a rise of only 7.6 points or 4.7 per cent. At present the cost-of-living index in Switzerland appears to be becoming stabilized at around 171. Prices in foreign countries, which two years ago gave Switzerland the reputation of being an expensive country for tourists, have to a large extent moved up to parity with the Swiss price level, and in some cases beyond. In order to support this statement with hard facts on matters concerning the tourist, the Swiss National Tourist Office has carried out a comparison of prices on a uniform basis in collaboration with nine of its agencies in European countries. In nine of the countries which play an important part in international tourism—France, Italy, Austria, Western Germany, Great Britain, Belgium, Holland, Sweden, and Spain—the prices a tourist of the middle income groups has to pay for transport by various means, for food and accommodation and also for certain extras and other expenses in big resorts, were ascertained and compared with the corresponding prices in Switzerland.

On the basis of the total of 10 tourist regions (nine abroad and in Switzerland), 10 different price positions were established, the first being the cheapest and the tenth the dearest.

As far as transport prices are concerned, on a second-class return journey by rail over a distance of approximately 190 miles, including a meal in the dining-car, Switzerland occupies sixth place, while for third class she is fifth. It should, incidentally, be noted that the Swiss Federal Railways are not only among the best-equipped in the world, but are also probably the only State Railways in Europe which in 1951 were able to close their accounts with a clear profit. The significant price concessions offered to the tourist in the way of Swiss Holiday Tickets are not taken into account in these calculations. The use of municipal tram and bus services, and taxi journeys of over three miles, give Switzerland the same position. The price of petrol in Switzerland, at 63 centimes per litre, gives Switzerland sixth place and is considerably cheaper than in four other important countries, some of which grant a special rebate to the foreign tourist.

In long-distance motor-coach travel Switzerland comes into the highest, in other words the dearest, price category. The reason for this is easily discernible: both the Swiss Post Office Administration and the private firms which also operate motor coaches, have made compulsory, with a view to maximum safety on the Alpine roads, the use of only the best—and consequently the dearest—coaches, and also highly-qualified driving staff.

In a large Swiss resort in the middle-price range, dinner, bed and breakfast cost 15 francs. This puts Switzerland in fourth position—dearer, though only by a small margin, than three countries and cheaper than the other six, for similar amenities. For full board and lodging Switzerland takes fifth place—exactly half-way down the table—with a comprehensive charge, including service charges and taxes, of 18 francs on the average. The relevant prices for board and lodging present a very similar picture in the lower price group too, i.e., for tourists of modest means. In this connection it cannot be repeated too often that more than three-quarters of all hotels and “pensions” in Switzerland, reckoned by the total of beds, fall into the middle and lower price groups.

The investigation by the Swiss National Tourist Office has also extended to the so-called extras and additional expenses of the visitor. Thus for purposes of comparison 15 different items were examined, such as food in restaurants, odd drinks, cigarettes, the popular afternoon tea, a visit to the cinema, cabaret or theatre and so on. From these 15 items an average for each country was worked out, in which Switzerland occupied the very favourable fourth position.

To sum up, it can be said that this enquiry by the Swiss National Tourist Office shows quite clearly that, as far as the price of transport,

food and lodging is concerned, Switzerland is a medium-priced country. If one takes into account the great variety of attractions offered by a visit to Switzerland and the undisputable first-class quality of all tourist arrangements and amenities—things which cannot be expressed by statistics and classifications—Switzerland can be recommended with a clear conscience as a country which offers the tourist excellent value for his money.

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