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TOURIST NEWS

Swiss Tourism, yesterday, today and tomorrow

Zurich: — At a Press Conference the Director of the Swiss National Tourist Office, Dr. Werner Kämpfen, announced that, according to provisional statistics for 1962 compiled from the figures of Swiss hotels and similar establishments, the total of overnight stays registered was around 31.5 millions. This exceeds last year's figure by about 1.1 million, or 3.6 per cent. Taking into account the occupants of camping sites, holiday apartments, private rooms and similar accommodation not covered by the official tourist statistics — an approximate 15 million nights — the grand total for last year comes to over 45 million nights spent by tourists in Switzerland. The net revenue from tourism is estimated at 1,000 million Swiss Francs per year. The slight upward trend is expected to continue in 1963. Since the increase in the number of tourists will chiefly benefit new — and newly "discovered" — holiday places, the stability of the present extremely high figure is most gratifying. The exceptionally heavy snowfalls and cold spells in January, which caused some hold-ups even in the extremely weatherproof system of Swiss communications, produced a phenomenon which it was believed had been eliminated in the winter sports regions, viz. a sizeable "January gap", many visitors having postponed or even cancelled their holiday plans. Two tourist slogans campaigning for quiet, relaxing travel and holidays in Switzerland are now going the rounds. They are "Travel in Europe — Rest in Switzerland" and, in token of the Centenary of the Red Cross, which originated in Geneva: "Peaceful Switzerland — Open to the World".

Springtime in Sun and Snow

Davos: — The arctic temperatures and the heavy snowfalls of this winter, more severe than anything Switzerland has experienced for the past thirty years, are already creating ideal conditions for springtime touring on skis. The favourite high-alpine ski-ing regions of the Grisons, North-east and Central Switzerland, the Bernese Oberland and the Valais, with the thrilling glacier downruns of Diavolezza, Titlis, Eismeer, Jungfrau-Joch-Riederfurka and Lötschenlücke, will have perfect snow conditions until well into early summer. The Swiss National Tourist Office's slogan, "Back to Nature", has borne fruit, and ski-ing tourists everywhere are looking forward to blazing their own trails in virgin snow well away from the crowded pistes. A new discovery in this connection is in Oberwald, in the Goms district, a modest little winter sports place as resorts go, but an excellent base for high-altitude ski-tours in the Upper Valais.

The Conquest of Piz Corvatsch

Silvaplana: — Lovely Piz Corvatsch, the 11,000-foot peak with the glorious view over the Upper Engadine, was of course conquered many years ago — on foot. To use the word "conquest" in its more modern context is to mean but one thing: technical achievement — in other words, an aerial cableway. The cableway itself, which will open up the incomparable region of the famous Fuorcla Surley both for the skier and for the summer hiker, has not commenced operations yet. But construction work is going forward apace, so that the first section, extending up to the 8,860-foot Murtèl Saddle, is scheduled to open for traffic on 1st March, when the Engadine celebrates its Spring Festival, "Chalanda Marz". Then, too, the two ski-lifts Giand' Alva (to Hahnensee) are due to start

operating for the descent to St. Moritz and Murtèl from Margun-Vegl back to the middle station. And after the end of this year — or so the St. Moritzers hope — an all-the-year-round ski school will be established high up on these slopes, where there is never a dearth of good snow.

Interlaken: the Congress Venue.

Interlaken: — "Interlaken, Bernese Oberland — ideal for your next convention" is one of the slogans featured in a brochure issued by the Congress Advisory Bureau of the Official Tourist Office. The pamphlet contains, in a concise form, all the particulars every organiser of conventions and similar assemblies ought to know. "Nestling between the Lakes of Thun and Brienz, at the foot of the Jungfrau," says the brochure, "Interlaken possesses excellent rail and road communications and owes its world-wide fame as a tourist centre to its pleasant climate and its efficiently conducted hotels and inns." Its world-famous Kursaal, which the author rightly claims to be "the hub of social, artistic and cultural life in the Bernese Oberland", has a concert hall with accommodation for assemblies of up to 2,000 persons, and other large conference rooms, as well, thus providing ideal facilities for large gatherings of every kind. The Aula of the township of Interlaken, with its two theatres and assembly rooms, is a gem of modern architecture. Both the Kursaal and the Aula are equipped for simultaneous translation systems in six languages. Other assembly rooms in hotels and restaurants, each with a seating capacity of 500, are also available. Interlaken proper has more than 4,500 hotel beds, and 2,500 more in the immediate vicinity.

Villars, in the Alps of Vaud was one of the first mountain resorts to install an artificial ice-rink open all the year round. This has now been extended to include two roofed curling rinks. Thus, the famous game of curling can be played not only in every season but under ideal conditions, a novel type of control plant keeping the ice absolutely perfect.

"Zermatt 1962" is the title of the attractively presented Annual Report issued by the resort's Tourist Development Association. "The tourist year 1962 was a brilliant year", writes Director Constant Cachin. Approximately 550,000 hotel nights were registered by the 64 hotels of this world-famous Matterhorn village — the most southerly Alpine resort in Switzerland — which enjoys more than 1,800 hours of sunshine annually and derives its name from the Latin "Pratobornum".

SWISS OBSERVER

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