

Holiday Observer

Objekttyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1984)**

Heft 1817

PDF erstellt am: **22.07.2024**

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Group offers

BERNE-based Ambassador Swiss Hotels, Switzerland's biggest voluntary chain, has published a special booklet with group tour offers.

It features 34 ASH hotels in 29 Swiss cities, towns and holiday resorts.

"Special emphasis has been laid on ideas for interesting excursions, entertainment, good food and all-inclusive arrangements", said an ASH spokesman.

For groups and clubs planning Swiss tours, the booklet contains suggestions for programmes of five to eight days, priced from Sfr 283 half board.

Swissôtel signs deal with Asia group

SWISSOTEL – the hotel management company formed four years ago by Swissair and Nestlé – has signed a cooperation agreement with the Hong Kong-based Peninsula Group.

A Swissôtel statement said the agreement would "provide a framework for the two hotel management companies to pool their experience and collaborate closely with each other in the corporate development, marketing and hotel operations fields".

Peninsula is to focus its future expansion on South and East Asia and the Pacific region. Swissôtel

plans to concentrate on the rest of North America, Europe and the Middle East.

The Swissôtel Group currently comprises four luxury hotels – Hotel International, Zurich; Hotel Belle-vue Palace, Berne; Hotel Président, Geneva and The Drake Hotel, New York.

It employs a total of 1,000 staff and generated a turnover of Sfr 100 million in 1983.

The Peninsula Group operates the leading luxury hotels in

Southeast Asia.

Among these is the Peninsula Hong Kong, opened in 1928 and renowned ever since as one of the world's premier hotels, and the much newer but no less prestigious Peninsula Hotels in Manila and Bangkok, which also have an outstanding reputation throughout the region.

Currently the group consists of eight hotels, including the first hotel in the People's Republic of China

De-luxe hotels boost quality

THE 36-strong Leading Hotels of Switzerland group has adopted strict new quality requirements.

The group's annual meeting has defined the minimum services which member hotels must offer. These include at least two restaurants, availability of meals until midnight and a 24-hour snacks and drinks service.

Guests must be able to have breakfast served in their room at

no extra charge. Direct-dial telephones and mini-bars must be provided.

Group spokesman Urs Meierhofer said: "By adopting these self-imposed quality standards, our group aims at setting new criteria for the top-class segment of the hotel industry.

"The new rules are particularly important at a time when services generally are being cut back".

New president

THE Swiss Hotel Association has elected Carlo de Mercurio, 55, as its new president.

Lausanne-based Mr de Mercurio, who started working life as an apprentice cook, runs his own group of hotels and became a hotel manager at the age of 27.

He is a former student of the Lausanne Hotel School, of which

he is president.

He is vice-chairman of the Swiss Tourism Federation – an influential body sometimes described as Switzerland's unofficial tourism ministry.

Mr de Mercurio succeeds Amsteg hotelier Peter Andreas Träsch, who has stepped down after nine years in office.

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Switzerland — holiday apartment slum?

SWITZERLAND could be faced with a "holiday apartment slum" problem by the end of the century, if remedial action is not taken, says Walter Leu, general manager of the Swiss National Tourist Office.

The number of apartments has risen from 10,000 to 90,000 since 1950, Mr Leu told the annual SNTTO meeting.

The occupation rate of those available for letting was only 20 per cent and most of them would age almost simultaneously.

The dilemma lay in the low occupation rate, which produced an inadequate yield. This in turn meant there were no reserves for renovations.

"Will the end of this millennium bring us a 'holiday apartment slum'?" Mr Leu asked.

"The idea cannot be dismissed out of hand if the existing offer cannot be better utilised... The emphasis must be on using up capacity and on renovation, and not on expansion".

Rival snapped up

EUROPE'S biggest holiday accommodation agency, Swiss-based Interhome, has bought up its smaller competitor Uto-Ring AG, which has a Sfr 1 million share capital.

Uto-Ring, with 70 employees, is based in Zurich and was 90 per cent owned by Indelec AG, a subsidiary of the Swiss Bank Corporation. The other 10 per cent was held by Swissair.

It administers nearly 1,400 holiday apartments, mostly in Switzerland, and last year had a

Back to Kuoni

AIRTOUR Suisse director Hans-Rudolf Egli is leaving to take up a senior appointment with leading Swiss travel company Kuoni.

Mr Egli, 51, will be returning to the company for which he worked from 1954 to 1979, when he moved to his present post. He is to become Kuoni's head of marketing and sales for Switzerland.

Kuoni has a 30 per cent share of the Swiss market.

On right track

THE increasing popularity of holiday rail travel in Switzerland helped Railtour Suisse push up its passenger figures by 23 per cent and its income by 28 per cent in 1983.

With a net profit of Sfr 47,063, a 10 per cent dividend is being recommended.

Railtour Suisse was founded in 1972 to promote rail tourism and its main shareholders are the Swiss Federal Railways, Berne-Lötschberg-Simplon Railway and the Swiss travel agencies.

Last year it sold holidays to 47,177 passengers and in the current year is looking for a 10 to 15 per cent turnover growth, sell-

ing through travel agencies and railway stations.

This year Railtour Suisse is introducing a new cheap rail ticket for young people under the name 'Rail and Roll', offering reductions of up to 30 per cent.

turnover of Sfr 14 million. Uto-Ring will continue to operate as a competitor on the market as an independent company, but will have access to Interhome's electronic reservation system and will be integrated into its administration. Each company will offer the other's apartments. Interhome operates in several European countries with about 15,500 accommodation units, as well as offering 4,270 beds in 305 hotels. Last year its turnover was Sfr 129 million.

In his present job Mr Egli is credited with taking Airtour out of the red, despite having to undertake large-scale write-offs.

His policy has been to put profits before turnover, cutting costs and dropping unprofitable destinations.

Airtour Suisse is owned by 200 Swiss travel agency shareholders and has 750 sales points in Switzerland.

Bathing ban lifted

LUGANO'S tourism authorities have welcomed the lifting of a ban on bathing at the resort's lakeside lido.

The area was one of several on Lake Lugano in southern Switzerland on which a bathing ban was placed 13 years ago because of health hazards due to pollution.

The ban has gradually been relaxed as the state of the water improved following the installation of treatment plant by local authorities around Lugano.

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I have been disappointed with the contents of the Swiss Observer for a long time.

I do appreciate that people have different tastes and needs for reading material, that advertising is necessary, but your magazine seems to lose more and more its appeal and somehow personal note for us Swiss people abroad.

Every month it takes me less and less time to read it!

Today I was sitting in glorious summer sunshine in the garden, when the postman brought me your July edition. "A Childhood Christmas remembered", a wonderful story, but surely the wrong season to publish it!

Has your stock of material run so low?

I'm convinced that there are many readers who have appropriate stories to tell, be it about their life in a foreign country, their holiday experiences, their ideas of upbringing of bil-

ingual children, their visits and impressions of fatherland etc.

Articles which one could enjoy, and perhaps even learn something, or identify with.

I'm convinced that there are many writers among us readers. And please do print Monika Brewster - Villager's Xmas story at Christmas! - Mrs R.V. Cole, Taunton, Somerset.

● Yes, there probably are many people out there with interesting stories - but they rarely send them to Swiss Observer!

Maybe some readers are shy of writing in English. If so, there's no need to worry, because mistakes can easily be ironed out in our office.

Swiss Observer is always glad to receive articles for publication, preferably typed double-spaced on one side of the paper. Photographs, where included, should be black and white glossy prints.

Editor

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