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Swiss Holiday Scene

Compiled by the Swiss National Tourist Office

So winter goes up in flames

ON the first Sunday in February, when there are still no signs of spring in the Engadine, the youth of Scuol, assisted by the entire population, celebrate the first spring festival: the burning of "l'hom strom" - the man of straw, a symbol of winter.

This unique Swiss custom - which takes place this year on February 1 - is unknown outside the resorts of the Lower Engadine.

Though it certainly dates back to pagan origins it is preserved with great devotion. Early in the morning the lads of Scuol trudge from farmhouse to farmhouse collecting straw, which is bundled up into a roll of prodigious size and fixed onto a pole up to 30 feet high.

Until sunset this "hom strom" is under guard, to ensure that he is not consigned to the flames too soon by some over-keen lad, as has been known to happen.

The "hom strom" is then burnt to the accompaniment of folk songs, followed attentively by guests from far and near as night falls. And with that the winter is banished - at any rate symbolically - though winter sports can still be enjoyed in the mountains of Switzerland for weeks to come, even if the full rigours gradually begin to relax.



Gathering straw from the farms



With the whole village participating, the "hom strom" or straw man is burned

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Taking the luggage out of luggage!

SINCE last year visitors leaving Switzerland by air have been able to check in their luggage from Swiss railway stations direct to their destinations abroad. This scheme, introduced by Swiss Federal Railways and Swissair in partnership, has now been extended.

In addition to the original Fly-Luggage destinations using Zurich airport as a gateway, 21 stations in Western Switzerland now accept airline passengers' baggage for flights departing from Geneva. They include Lausanne, Montreux, Neuchâtel, Verbier, Villars and Zermatt. From nine of these new stations baggage can also be routed via Zurich.

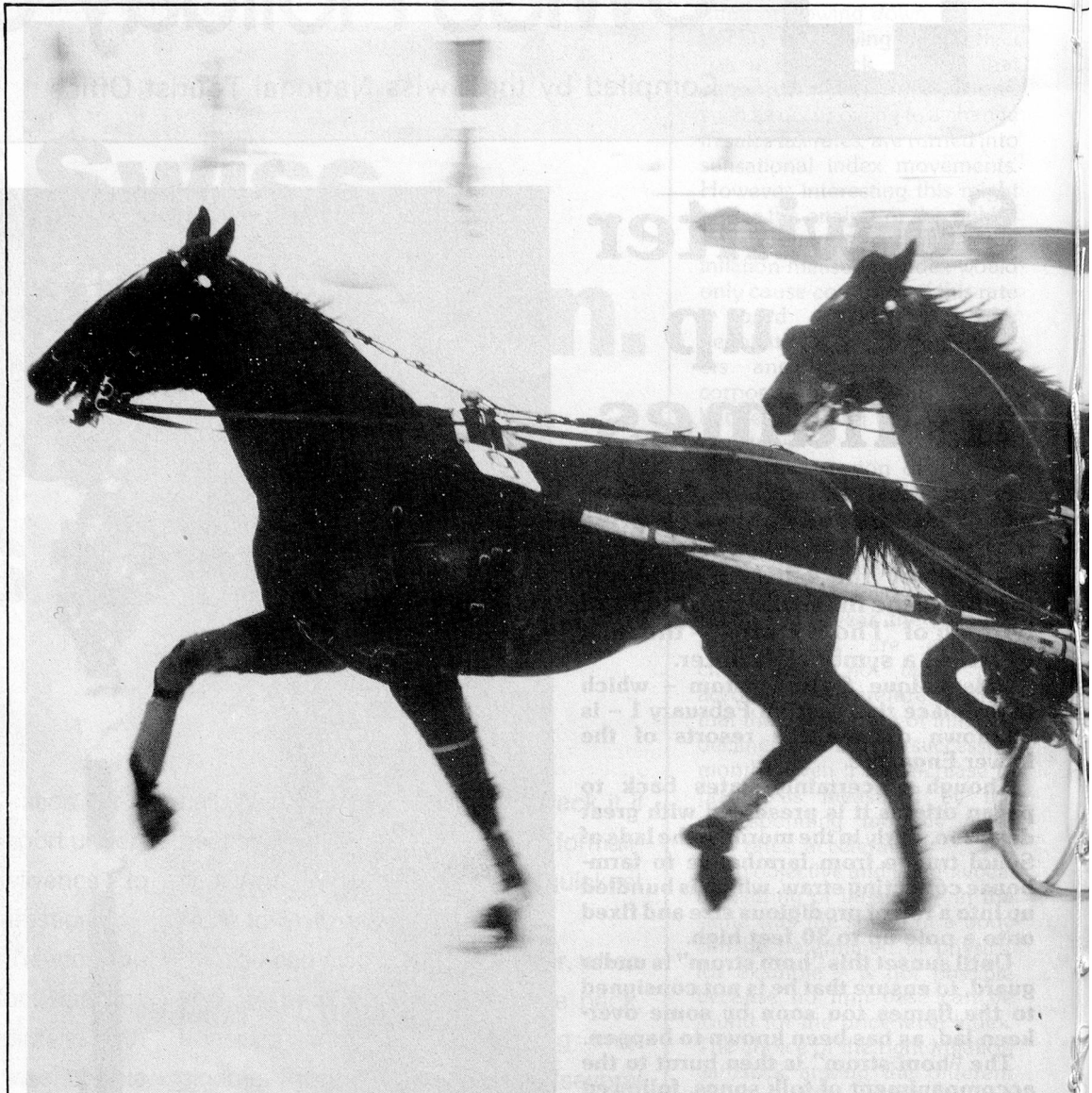
A further 18 new stations, including Flims, Kandersteg and Adelboden, have been added to the existing network using Zurich as a gateway, and another 14 follow on February 1. From that date, therefore, a total of 71 Swiss railway stations, including all the principal cities and tourist resorts, will be part of the scheme.

Direct

At a cost of Sfr. 6 per piece, baggage will be transported direct to the airport and transferred to the appropriate flight for collection by the passenger at his final destination.

Fly-Luggage is accepted for all flights out of Zurich and Geneva handled by Swissair, as well as for Balair charter flights. The service is not available from foreign airports to Switzerland, although incoming passengers can register their baggage to Swiss railway stations direct from Zurich airport and Geneva main station.

Leaflets with full details are available from Swissair offices and those of the Swiss National Tourist Office.



Horse-racing and ski-jöring over the snow-covered frozen lake of St. Moritz is a popular winter sport.

Holiday cards are made for

THERE is hardly a village in Switzerland, and certainly not a single holiday resort, that cannot be reached by public transport - railway, funicular, boat or postal coach.

The various timetables mesh so accurately that the official booklet in which they are all contained has often been compared to the movement of a Swiss precision watch.

The superlatives of Swiss transport are almost legendary: the highest railway station, the longest tunnel, the most powerful locomotive, the fully electrified railways . . .

To these has been added, since spring 1972, a new superlative which particularly

delights the holiday-maker: the "Swiss Holiday Card," a document for unlimited travel by rail, boat and postal coach. Or to be exact, on the whole network of the Swiss Federal Railways (1,810 miles), on 79 private railways (1,414 miles), on the lake boat routes (294 nautical or 339 statute miles), and postal coach routes (2,054 miles). All in all, no less than 5,600 miles of exciting Swiss trips!

In addition, reductions of 25-50 per cent are offered on many funiculars and mountain railways, among them such famous lines as those that scale the Jungfrauoch and the Gornergrat.

Who benefits most by the

Swiss Holiday Card? The born traveller who likes to set off without a fixed programme, who follows the mood of the moment and stops where the scene takes his fancy. Or the holidaymaker who prefers a chosen home-from-home, but likes to make a variety of excursions into the surrounding country. Both profit by the Holiday Card, for its price is surprisingly modest:

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lar weekend attraction in February

THE Swiss National Tourist Office has again published the useful booklet "Events in Switzerland Winter 1980/81 and later" which is available free of charge.

It not only lists winter sports events such as ski-ing, curling, or ice-hockey, but also contains details of cultural events, exhibitions, congresses, etc., and a preview for summer 1981.

Lucerne on special offer

LUCERNE is offering a three day package during 1981 with prices starting from Sfr. 64.-- including two nights' accommodation with breakfast, service and taxes, unlimited use of Lucerne's buses, guided walk through the old town on Saturdays, admission to the Swiss Transport Museum, the Picasso collection and the Casino and Flora establishments, as well as many reductions.

Further information: Official Tourist Office, Pilatusstrasse 14 6002, Lucerne, Switzerland.

Geneva hosts boat show

THE 5th International Boat Exhibition will be held at the Palais des Expositions in Geneva from February 6 to 15.

In 1979 more than 800 different makes from 25 countries were shown, and more than 74,000 people visited the show - the only international nautical exhibition in Switzerland.

Opening hours are 10am to 7pm (on February 11 and 13 until 10pm). Admission is Sfr. 6.-- for adults, and Sfr. 3.-- for children between 7 and 12 years and pensioners. A free catalogue is available.

A week of winter sports

THE resort of Poschiavo in the south of Canton Grisons is offering weekly winter packages from Sfr. 390.-- including demipension, transport to Bernina-Lagalb / Bernina-Diavolezza/Bernina-Hospiz and tickets for the skilifts Motta Bianca, Bügliet and Muottas Muragl.

A special Easter arrangement for four days is available from Sfr. 245.--.

Information and bookings:

Sculptures in the snow

THE SWISS Snow-Sculpture Competition will again be held at Hoch-Ybrig, Central Switzerland, from February 12 to 15.

Individual participants and groups of up to five people are invited to take part.

The maximum time allowed is four days, and snow and water only is to be used.

A jury will judge according to the quality of the sculpture, originality and use of materials. Holidays in Switzerland and flights to Canada can be won.

Poschiavo Tourist Office, 7742 Poschiavo, Switzerland.

Motoring rules in force

SPIKED tyres may again be used in Switzerland this winter until March 31. The maximum speed limit is 50 mph, and cars must show a circular plate marked "80" at the rear.

Driving on motorways (Nationalstrassen) and carriageways (Autostrassen) is prohibited with the exception of the N13 motorway between Thusis and Mesocco (San Bernardino road tunnel) and the St. Gotthard road tunnel between Goeschenen and Airolo, which is part of the N2 motorway.

Mountain bus on the road again

THE Upper Engadine Sport Bus is again operating until April 20 between Bernina-Lagalb and Sils-Furtschellas. It is running at regular intervals of 30 minutes connecting all the starting points

of the various mountain transports. This bus is also included in the general winter season ticket of the Upper Engadine.

The itinerary is: Bernina Lagalb - Bernina Diavolezza - Pontresina - Punt Muragl - Celerina - St. Moritz - St. Moritz Bad - Champfèr - Silvaplana - Surlej - Sils Baselgia - Sils Maria - Sils Furtschellas.

Grindel skilift extended

THIS winter the Grindel skilift at Grindelwald has been extended by 1,312 feet. At the same time the transport capacity is increased from 750 to 900 skiers an hour.

Latest from the resorts

EVERY Monday and Thursday (from early afternoon) up-to-date information on the snow and weather conditions of 50 ski resorts is available from the Swiss National Tourist Office in London. (Tel: 01-734 1921).

Events of the month

Feb 1	Bad Scuol	«Hom strom», old popular custom
Feb 5-9	Biel	Biel Carnival
Feb 14	Kaltacker i. E., Lauperswil i. E.	«Spinnet», old popular custom
Feb 14-20	Zurzach	Carnival
Feb 26	Appenzell	«Dirty Thursday»: Carnival
Feb 26	Baden	«Burning of the Fudlibürger», opening of Carnival
Feb 26	Brunnen	«Dirty Thursday»: Carnival music, parade, masked festivities
Feb 26	Einsiedeln	«Dirty Thursday»: Children's procession and masked balls
Feb 26	Lucerne	«Dirty Thursday»: Lucerne carnival procession
Feb 26	Rapperswil	«Dirty Thursday»: Carnival events and children's procession
Feb 26-March 1	Lausanne	Palais de Beaulieu: Spring second-hand market
Feb 26-March 4	Solothurn	Carnival
Feb 28	Appenzell	Carnival procession
Feb 28	Engelberg	Brunni carnival
Feb 28	Locarno	Old Town: Risotto feast, masked festivities, entertainment

or rovers

The Swiss Holiday Card can be ordered from travel agents and from agencies of the Swiss National Tourist Office. A passport or official identity card must be presented when ordering; a photograph of the bearer is not required. Exact details of the area of validity of the Swiss Holiday Card are given in a prospectus which includes a transport network map.

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