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Budget Holidays in Switzerland

by Peter Marriott

At the time of writing these notes the Swiss Franc stands at less than Sfr 1.80 to £1 and I wonder if it makes other SRS members feel, as I do, should we give Switzerland a miss for a year or so? Hopefully our poor rate of exchange will not continue for too long?

Whilst thumbing through some of the 1995 package tour brochures it appears that whilst 8 day holidays seemed to be the minimum norm last year, some companies, which will be familiar to SRS members, now retail 1995 5 day holidays at similar prices to the 1994 8 day prices.

It is interesting to see that the Swiss National Tourist Office is presently running a poster campaign at mainline British Rail stations featuring the slogan "Actions speak louder than words" encouraging holiday makers to consider Switzerland as an alternative holiday destination to the Costa Brava, Greek Islands or Florida. I fear the current fall in value of the pound against the franc will mean that the campaign may prove to be a little empty but I hope I am proved wrong.

In the past ten years we've used a variety of methods of travel and accommodation to reach and stay in Switzerland, some are, I hope, worth passing onto fellow members if they despair at the escalating price of taking a holiday in that country again. All is not lost.

Last year my wife and I decided to try a 10 day camping holiday in early September and the total cost of diesel (2000 mile round trip), use of a tent for 7 days, and three nights at French hotels en route, ferry crossings and insurance was less than £350 for both of us. We used Eurocamp sites at Brienz and Lauterbrunnen with two nights at the first and five at the second. Incidentally the Brünig line runs very close to the Brienz site so "trainspotting" is a daily occurrence! Camping is not everyone's cup of tea and some evenings we would rather have been tucked up in a hotel, but it is certainly a fresh air experience.

But for cost what can beat camping?

I understand Eurocamp (01565 626262) uses

sites in Switzerland and off peak their well equipped tents which sleep up to six persons can be rented, including the sea crossing, from approx. £200 for two weeks plus some site supplements. Eurocamp also have some mobile homes at some sites but these are a little dearer. Other camp operators include Sunsites (01565 625533) - see weekend newspapers for further companies. We used Premier Classe and Villages Hotels in France for our overnight stops. These are modern hotels with en suite facilities which sleep up to three persons per room and include colour TV. The price per room (in 1994) 149ff and 140ff respectively, with the cost of breakfast (buffet, eat as much as you like), extra 22ff per person. All our hotels were clean. There are other hotel chains providing similar pricing and accommodation arrangements. They're certainly worth trying and can be found on most major trunk roads throughout France. There's usually a restaurant nearby together with a supermarket. A lot of the Hotels of this type we saw were situated on out of town trading estates and just south of Metz we found one location with a choice of five hotels, two restaurants, a garden centre, supermarket and a petrol station.

One other budget holiday possibility for Switzerland are caravan and mobile homes, in Interlaken operated by Swiss Holidays (01903 743193). These range from £165 for 2 adults and car crossing and hire of the caravan for 7 days in April to approximately three times that amount in August.

I have no connection with any of the above companies apart from being satisfied customers of several of them. My only reason for writing this piece was to encourage those who have dismissed the idea of a Swiss holiday this year, to maybe consider alternative opportunities.

Whatever you do enjoy your trip!

Peter Marriott