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SWITZERLAND TOURISM CELEBRATES NEW OFFICE

Noting increase in visitors in 2010, Switzerland Tourism looks forward to what 2011 has to offer

Lindsay Kyte



Alex Herrmann, director of Switzerland Tourism; Ursula Beamish-Mader, media relations, Canada, Switzerland Tourism; Mirko Capodanno, account manager trade, Switzerland Tourism

In the new, bright, spacious office of Switzerland Tourism in downtown Toronto, Alex Herrmann, director of Switzerland Tourism, North America, Mirko Capodanno, account manager trade, Switzerland Tourism, Central USA & Canada and Ursula Beamish-Mader, media relations, Canada, Switzerland Tourism greeted guests with a smile. "We're so happy you're here," beamed Capodanno. "And we're so happy we're here."

This was Switzerland Tourism's celebration of their new office on February 3. Over wine, Swiss cheese and various snacks adorned with the Swiss flag, guests chatted and got to hear a little bit more about just how Canada and Switzerland are getting along these days.

"Canada is one of the top destinations for the Swiss and vice versa," said Herrmann. "We've had a very good year for Canadian traffic to Switzerland."

Herrmann said January to November 2010 saw 93,917 Canadian visitors to Switzerland, which is 8.2 per cent more than in 2009.

"The development has been a constant growth for the past five years," she added.

Herrmann also said the top seven locations for Canadians in Switzerland were Zurich, Geneva, the Lake Geneva Region, Lucerne/Central Switzerland, the Valais/Matterhorn region, the Bernese Oberland/Jungfrau Region and the Basel Region.

Beamish-Mader said Switzerland Tourism has many media events planned for 2011, including major gala visits and five media group trips.

Capodanno said he is ready for 2011 travel to Switzerland, armed with 2010's new products and itineraries. "We do whatever it takes to make a perfect vacation in Switzerland. Fix the cow bells so you can hear them, whatever."

Noting that Switzerland's peak tourism times are in summer, not winter, Capodanno said: "We have 6,300 kilometres of hiking trails and 8,500 kilometres of cycling. Heidi is still there. But she's a bit older. Now on the weekends, she goes into city," as he pointed to a picture of a dancing girl on the presentation screen.

Capodanno also highlighted the fine cuisine as well as the wines of various Swiss regions.

"Switzerland is a sexy country," Capodanno concluded, pointing at a picture of "Tony," one of Switzerland's top ski instructors, who is featured shirtless in a new ad campaign.

Where it is and how to get there

Switzerland is centrally located in the heart of Western Europe and offers one of the best public transport networks in the world, with access to over 450 museums with one single ticket: the Swiss Pass.

Travellers get 50 per cent reductions on many mountain railways and children under 16 travel free when accompanied by a parent.

In addition, visitors can send luggage from any Canadian airport directly to their holiday destination in Switzerland without having to take bags through customs. Switzerland's cities are close to the mountains with mountain top hotels offering a tasty treat and refreshments.

Switzerland offers a wide range of attractive accommodations, from typically Swiss hotels, youth hostels with family rooms, stay-in farm houses and thousands of rental properties. Switzerland is a multilingual country, with French spoken in various areas, such as the Lake Geneva Region or the Valais.

SWISS will continue their daily direct flights from Montreal to Zurich and Air Canada will continue their direct route to Geneva four times a week. Air Transat will again operate to Basel, once a week again starting next spring. In addition to that, Air Canada continues their direct flight from Toronto to Zurich. Edelweiss, a charter of Swiss Air Lines, will have increased capacity out of Vancouver. In addition to the exiting route Calgary-Zurich, two new planes will offer Vancouver to Zurich direct and Whitehorse to Zurich.

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