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FEATURE: Railways and Tourism

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(EJRCF)

2-2, Yoyogi 2-chome, Shibuya-ku,

Tokyo 151-8578, Japan

Tel (81 3) 5334 0623

Fax (81 3) 5334 0624

Email jrtr@ejrcf.or.jp

Email info@jrtr.net URL http://www.jrtr.net

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Editorial

Bridgehead for the Future

Mass tourism started in the 19th century with the development of railways. Today, tourism is the largest industry in many countries, but railways have lost their dominant position in the face of growth of motor and air transport. A complete reversal may be difficult, but railways should make some concentrated efforts to establish a bridgehead, because tourism is a rare economic area that is expected to grow further. Switzerland provides many good examples. Swiss trains are clean, comfortable and punctual, if not the fastest by today's standards. Good connections are assured at junctions between main and branch lines, and between trains and other modes of public transport. Switzerland's two major airports at Zurich and Geneva are served not only by short-distance suburban trains, but also by frequent long-distance inter-city expresses. Various discount round-trip ticket covering both federal and private rail networks are offered to tourists. Moreover, there is a solid national consensus to promote rail travel throughout the whole country.

Although hiring a car at an airport is a convenient and popular way of travelling today, driving in an unfamiliar country is often exhausting and dangerous. If adequate rail services with reasonably-priced tickets were available, many tourists would switch from road to rail.

T. SUGA

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