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A railway with tradition – Schynige Platte



On our September trip to Switzerland Kurt and I often stood at Stans railway station at 6.00am ready to travel up to 2 hours by train to our destination. This time the plan was to go to Interlaken to visit the Beatus Höhle which had featured on the front page of *Helvetia*, then off to Van Danikens Jungfrau Park and then head home. However plans changed on the way home when I noticed our train stopped right beside Wilderswil. I had read about Schynige Platte Railway and saw it waiting to do the last run to the top. So once again we moved at speed and purchased our subsidised tickets just in time to get aboard. Kurt was a bit dubious but he would soon be pleasantly surprised. As usual, the sun was smiling upon us.

We and a few paragliders, who hopped off 2/3rds of the way up, were the only ones on the train up. The views were to die for, and when the triple peaks Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau loomed in snow-dusted splendour in front of us, we gasped. They were truly magnificent and felt so close. Well worth the change in travelling plans – that night we got to Stans at 11.30pm. Now read on so you can glean some of the information about where we had been. Ed

The idea of building a railway to Schynige Platte was born in 1880. The Schynige Platte was already a popular destination. It took ten years for the project to take shape and for the federal authorities to grant a concession. On 14 June 1893, the facility began regular operation. In its first year of operation it transported 40,000 passengers. Up to the end of 1913, the trains were run using steam locomotives. From 1914, travellers were riding on the newly purchased electric locomotives, which were extremely modern at the time.

Today, this exact juncture in the history of technology, when electricity began to replace steam power, can be comprehended based on the Schynige Platte Railway. All of the trains in operation here are still exclusively the electric locomotives from this pioneering time, and they are now over a hundred years old. The railway system also offers an insight into

countless details that have long disappeared elsewhere. As in the past, the locomotive pushes the cars upwards instead of pulling due to a steep incline, 25% at maximum. There are no electronic signals at any point along the route. The trains are sent to the track personally by the station master. At train crossings, all track switches have to be operated by hand. We saw this taking place.

Even the rail infrastructure itself still mainly originates from the beginning of railway operation. This means that the majority of the overhead line masts are still made from wood and have the original curved cantilevers. Engineering structures such as supporting walls, tunnels and smaller bridges, as well as the side edging of the ballast bed, are built from quarystone, some of which are even made with dry-wall construction.

The Schynige Platte Railway travels from Wilderswil up to the vantage point of Schynige Platte. The 7.3 kilometre cogwheel route climbs a height of 1,420 metres. The variety of natural attractions en route is impressive: forests, Alpine pastures and marvellous views of Lakes Thun and Brienz. During the trip to the summit station, passengers are treated to an uninterrupted view of the triple peaks: the Eiger, Mönch & Jungfrau. Schynige Platte is positioning itself as Top of Swiss Tradition with the "Nature Cinema" and the alphorn players.

History of Schynige Platte Hotel:

May 10, 1894: the original Alpenrose Hotel was no longer able to cope with the increasing stream of visitors, and in 1894 the Schynige Platte Mountain Hotel was built. July 25, 1898: Four years later – in the early hours of 25th July 1898 – the building was completely destroyed by fire! May 3, 1899: The Schynige Hotel, which still stands today, was completed. May 25, 2015 The modern section of the hotel opened and offers guests the most spectacular view of the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau, the Lutschen Valleys and Lake Thun, as well as an imposing glacier panorama. With its sun terrace, the restaurant now seats over 300 guests.

The Schynige Platte is also the starting point for the popular hiking trails to Loucherhorn, Faulhorn or First which is connected to Grindelwald by a gondola lift.

It's Alpine Garden has 650 species of alpine plants in it. The gardens were started in and took 2 years to plant and organise before opening in 1929.

