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TWO TRIPS WORTH CONSIDERING

by Dave Howsam

Fascination of the Rhaetische Bahn

One week of our visit to Switzerland last year was to be spent in Davos at the Hotel Stolzenfels with fellow members of the Manchester Branch. Visits in previous years by various members had resulted in organised visits being arranged by the hotel proprietor, Andreas Jenny (also an SRS member) to the RhB works at Landquart. Each year for the past three years the trips have been improved. The second year saw a round trip from Davos to Chur, Landquart works and back to Davos in one of the red and cream corridor coaches As1154 to mark the 75th anniversary of the hotel. Last year the trip was made in ex MOB Pullman As1141 and a meal arranged in Chur.

Andreas and his wife Elisabeth excelled themselves last year and we found that, for the duration of our stay, a Rhaetische Bahn week had been arranged and that this had been advertised in *Die Model Eisenbahn*. The package was also available to Swiss Travel Service guests who paid a supplement for the trips made. The enterprise proved very popular and some of the outings with fixed accommodation were over subscribed.

We were blessed with glorious weather in Davos this year which set the tone for the whole of the week. On our first evening a welcoming drink was followed, after the usual excellent Hotel Stolzenfels dinner by the video *Die Rhaetische Bahn* giving general information on the line in both English and German. It is interesting to note that many of the guests for the trips were Swiss! A video was shown each evening.

The first outing was the walk from Davos Monstein to Weisen and on to Filisur. Day two saw the party travel on the Glacier Express to Disentis where, after a time for a meal and a look round, the return journey was made on the Glacier Express in the reserved coach, arriving for a late dinner at Davos. Tuesday afternoon was allocated to the works visit with an informed guide.

Having indulged in the above journeys on more than one previous occasion, your intrepid travellers from Manchester did not participate in these trips. Our first outing with the party was on the Bernina Express which we boarded at Filisur, travelling as usual from Davos in the reserved coach with swing plug doors. The train arrived late but as the journey time was almost three hours we had hopes of making up time. The spectacular journey was followed by a brisk walk in Tirano to the Veltliner wine cellars where, after a hastily conducted tour, we were entertained to a memorable meal of local specialties and wine. The group just managed to reach the return Bernina Express in time and the journey back was accompanied by the usual photography.

Andreas had a business commitment the next day and Elisabeth persuaded Steve Crebbin to lead the Preda-Bergun walk. Arriving at Preda by train, the oldest member of the party failed to alight. This, I hasten to add, was no fault of the leader! A copy of the full working timetable was available and the party soon split into groups as various vantage points were sought for photography. The party re-united for lunch at Albula Viaduct 3 and again progressed at their own pace to Bergun. Early arrivals at Bergun had plenty of time to sample the village and local inns before returning to Davos on the appointed train. We trailed in with a few minutes to spare, having managed to photograph every train bar one in the previous six hours.

The final day was reserved for the trip in Salonwagen As1141. We travelled by coach from Davos via the Fluela Pass to Scoul and then



Well worth the walk! RhB Ge6/6¹² heads the inevitable train of cement hoppers over one of the many magnificent viaducts between Preda and Bergun.

Photos Dave Howsam

travelled in style in the ex MOB pullman coach to St.Moritz. Here there was time to ascend Piz Nair for a pleasant meal in spectacular surroundings. All too soon the descent had to be made and it was time to return to our armchair seats and make our way to Davos via Filisur. A slight delay en route ensured some nifty shunting at Filisur.

The week's programme was so successful that this year's *Fascination of the Rhatische Bahn* is to be held on three separate weeks; 13-20th July, 17-24th August and 14-21st September and the programme each time is similar to that outlined above. For RhB fans it is heartily recommended and details are to be found in the hotel's half page advertisement in this issue.

Not Quite a Day Trip

Swissair offered Northern members within easy access of Manchester airport, a weekend break in Lucerne with free admission to all museums including the Verkehrshaus. The break, to take up unused aircraft seats, is available at a minimum of 72 hours notice providing seats are available, though more notice is usual.

Ever ones to have a go at something new, Jan and I decided to fly out on Friday December 28th. On a bright but cold morning the MD81 took off for Zurich 15 minutes late and arrived 15 minutes early after a superb flight, thanks to a hefty tail wind. A quick transfer through customs and we had ample time to catch the train to Lucerne where we arrived at 12:50 - less than four hours after setting out. Snow had been in evidence as we flew towards Zurich and more was on the ground between Thalwil and Zug but that in Lucerne had melted. The hotel selected for the break is usually a short walk from the station and after registering and depositing luggage in your rooms, the city is yours from about 13:30.

A quick visit to the Tourist Information Centre near the station can be made and then it is well worth while visiting the two model shops close by. Christmas decorations were still very much in evidence in the streets and there was a holiday atmosphere as the New Year was approaching. Churches

were decorated with numerous Christmas trees and roast chestnuts were sold at every suitable location. With frequent halts for coffee and other drinks, the local landmarks are visited - a stroll by the lake, the bridges and churches or the shops (remembering they close at 16:00 on Saturday). Of course the new station front had to be photographed as the arch (see December *Swiss Express* cover) now sports a clock. Beware the automatic door that waits for you before opening - witness the bruise. Darkness fell at 17:00 but there was still plenty of activity and we returned late to the hotel for our meal, braving the very cold evening and wondering what it would have been like on the *Fondue* boat which sails every Friday.

A more leisurely start than usual was made the next morning since the trip was made for relaxation. Rain fell, despite the cold; we were not destined to have snow. Had the weather been fine, a free guided walk would have been taken but the rain dictated a bus ride to the Verkehrshaus. There is always something new to see - on this occasion the Furka Oberalp steam locomotives from Vietnam - and some five hours later we walked back to the town along the lake side in bright sunshine. Longing looks were cast at Pilatus and the Rigi but they would have to wait for another visit. More walking round followed before returning (with suitable alcoholic refreshment) to our hotel for a meal.

After depositing the case at the Hauptbahnhof and collecting your boarding card for the return flight, the day is yours. We visited the Lion monument for the first time and then spent a couple of fascinating hours in the Gletschergarten. A stroll by the river brought us to lunch time, we elected for the Hauptbahnhof buffet, eating *rosti* overlooking the station from our window seat. There were many arrivals and departures and a great variety of stock, although many trains now appear to be push-pull. The

Continued at foot of next page

RHAETIAN RAILWAY FAN'S WEEKS



One week of concentrated railway pleasure: Bernina- Express, Glacier- Express, travel in salon carriages, visit to the main works, rail trips and much more. Accommodation in a good middle-class hotel in Davos. (Hotel contracted to Swiss Travel Service, 16th Season)

13.-20. July 1991
17.-24. Aug 1991
14.-21. Sept 1991

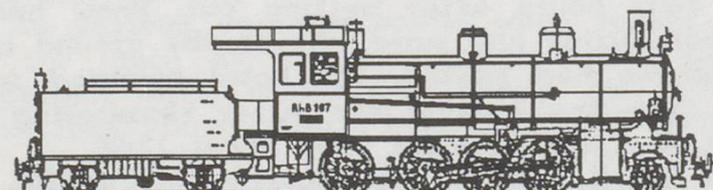
1 Week from £ 359 incl flight
RhB Programme £ 98 (extra
payable in Hotel)

For further information and bookings:

Mr. John Boyce, **Swiss Travel Service**, Ware Herts, Telephone 0920 46 39 71

Hotel Stolzenfels
Elisabeth and Andreas Jenny
CH- 7260 Davos Dorf

Telephone 01041 81 46 18 36
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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Swiss Federal Railway

The management of the SBB intends to set the maximum service age for electric locomotives at 50 years, and, if possible, less than this in view of the rapid technological developments. Besides the 100 Re4/4^{VI} locomotives now under construction a further 130 to 150 machines will need to be replaced from now until 1995. This also applies to electric motor coaches, as well as standard coaches and freight wagons where replacement will also be necessary.

The management has informed the press that Bahn 2000 will now cost about SFr.9 billion instead of the original estimate of SFr.5.5 billion. This increase is mainly due to pressure from environmental groups, the steady rise in costs and the adoption of even more advanced methods of train control.

The Zurich S-Bahn reports an average increase in passengers of 21%. The most spectacular increase, 150%, has been on the Sihltalbahnhof, which has benefited from its extension into the Haputbahnhof. Passenger numbers have continued to increase, a clear indication that a number of users have left their cars at home. The new rolling stock is reported to be satisfactory, though there have been a few teething troubles which have led the motoring press to criticise the new vehicles. However, other conurbations in the Confederation, Bern, Basel and Geneva, are examining the possibility of introducing rapid transit lines in conjunction with traffic unions.

Road Railers, similar to those used on USA railroads, are being tested on the Gotthard line. If they prove to be satisfactory, it is planned to introduce block trains.

Metre Gauge

Continual increases in traffic have forced the private lines to acquire new locomotives sooner than originally planned. Four metre gauge locomotives, similar to those on the RhB, using converter techniques for control, have been ordered by the MOB, BAM and AB.

The mixed gauge to be laid between Zweisimmen and Interlaken Ost, to enable through working between Lucerne and Montereux, with an estimated cost of about SFr60 million, is now being debated by the Parliaments of the Cantons though which these trains will operate. The Cantons have to vote the necessary credits to obtain the Federal subsidy.

SLM

Swiss Locomotive Works now have 150 locomotives and motor coaches under construction for Swiss railways apart from numerous locomotives and motor coaches for railways the world over ☐

Not Quite a Day Trip

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afternoon gave time to visit some more of the local museums before we caught the 16:10 for Flughafen to allow a little time for airport shopping before a very pleasant return flight.

For those wishing for a more hectic schedule it would be possible to take a trip on the lake on Friday afternoon and visit Rigi, Pilatus or your favourite railway line on Sunday. The offer is open until 24 March but a good response might mean an extension. A visit to a different location might be possible next year. Anyone interested is welcome to contact me for further information or advice ☐