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RUNDFART in the BERNESE OBERLAND

by Steve Horabin

For anyone staying in Interlaken or the Bernese Oberland I can thoroughly recommend an excursion that incorporates some of the most magnificent scenery and exciting modes of transport that would be ideal for the enthusiast and tourist alike.

Our journey starts at Interlaken Ost Station where the SBB, BLS and BOB combine in a joint terminus and where travellers on the Golden Pass route from Montreux make their final change onto the SBB metre gauge Brunig line to Lucerne.

We start at Gleis 1, joining the 10:31 BOB train, headed by one of the new ABH4/4^{II} class Triebwagen for a run through the Lutschine valley for Grindewald, passing through Wilderswil, home of the 80cm gauge Schynige Platte Bahn, where one can see the unusual manually operated level crossing gates. From here we run on to Zweilutschinen, where the BOB's main sheds and works are situated. Here the train divides, the front portion running to Lauterbrunnen where an end-on connection is made with the 80cm gauge Wengernalpbahn, with connections for the Jungfraubahn, as well as the funicular to Murren. Our section however continues to Grindewald and in a short time the first section of rack is reached.

At 11:09 our train arrives at Grindelwald, an attractive resort situated in mountain pastures, with the dramatic backdrop of the Eiger and Monch peaks. From here it is also possible to reach the Jungfrau by means of the Wengernalpbahn. We spend an hour or so before lunch watching the little green Triebwagens of the WAB shuttle up and down the 25% gradient between Grindelwald and Grindelwald Grund, where reversal is made before proceeding, in convoy, up the mountainside to Kleine Scheidegg, the summit of the WAB and the lower terminus of the Jungfraubahn.

It is now time to take a short walk from the Bahnhof to the Post Auto station where, after paying a 10SFr supplement on our Swiss Pass, we board the 13:20 Postbus over the Grosse Scheidegg for Schwarzwaldalp. This route has been claimed by some as the best Postbus route in Switzerland; the incredible scenery encountered as the bus leaves Grindelwald gives support to this statement.

The postbus grinds away in low gear, climbing into more delightful Alpine scenery, with the overhanging glaciers of the Wetterhorn seemingly only a fingertip away. Twenty five minutes later we reach the summit - 1961 metres above sea level - at Grosse Scheidegg.

The northern side is warmer and less barren, indeed it is typical chocolate box country. After a steep descent, Schwarzwaldalp is reached, where we make a change into a 1960's type Postbus. We continue descending, negotiating tight bends with the Postbus horn sounding at each blind corner. A little further on we pass the Reichenbach Falls, where Sherlock Holmes and Moriarty had their final meeting, and the 714m long funicular to arrive at Meiringen Bahnhof at 15:10.

Meiringen is an important station on the SBB Brunig line, the main sheds and workshops are situated here, and all trains reverse. There is plenty of rolling stock to be seen and a great deal of shunting is carried on.

From here, trains heading for Lucerne used to take on bankers for the steep rack section up the side of the Aare valley. With the advent of the new HGe4/4^{II} locomotives, this is no longer needed except on the heaviest trains. We are however going in the other direction and board the 15:46 Lucerne-Interlaken Ost train. This is headed by a red liveried HGe4/4^{II} and whisks us to Brienz by 16:00 where we make the final change of the trip, a mad dash to the landing stage to join the 16:05 departure on the 1914 built paddle steamer *Lotschberg* for the last leg of our journey back to Interlaken Ost.



Grindelwald-Grund train of the WAB on 9 June 1980.

Photo Steve Harrabin

As the *Lutschberg* steams off with a party of Swiss yodelling in the warm sunshine, an SBB locomotive on the shore sounds its whistle for departure, a fitting tribute to a wonderful day ☞



Post Auto station, Grindelwald.

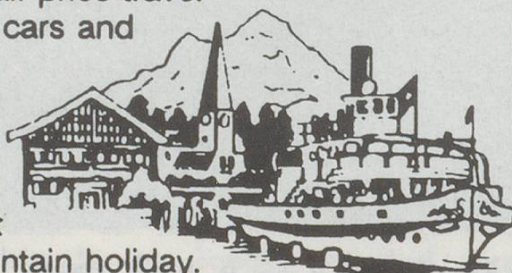
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Above: The entrance to the new underground Centovalli line station at Locarno, 11 June 1991.

Below: The interior of the new Locarno Centovalli station, 11 June 1991.

Photos C.J.Freezer

