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The Route Described

by Alan Pike

Continued from p 28 June 1992 Swiss Express



The lower terminus of the Pilatusbahn at Alpnachstad: 16 June 1992

Photo Cyril Freezer

A few more statistics may be of interest before I give a brief description of the route.

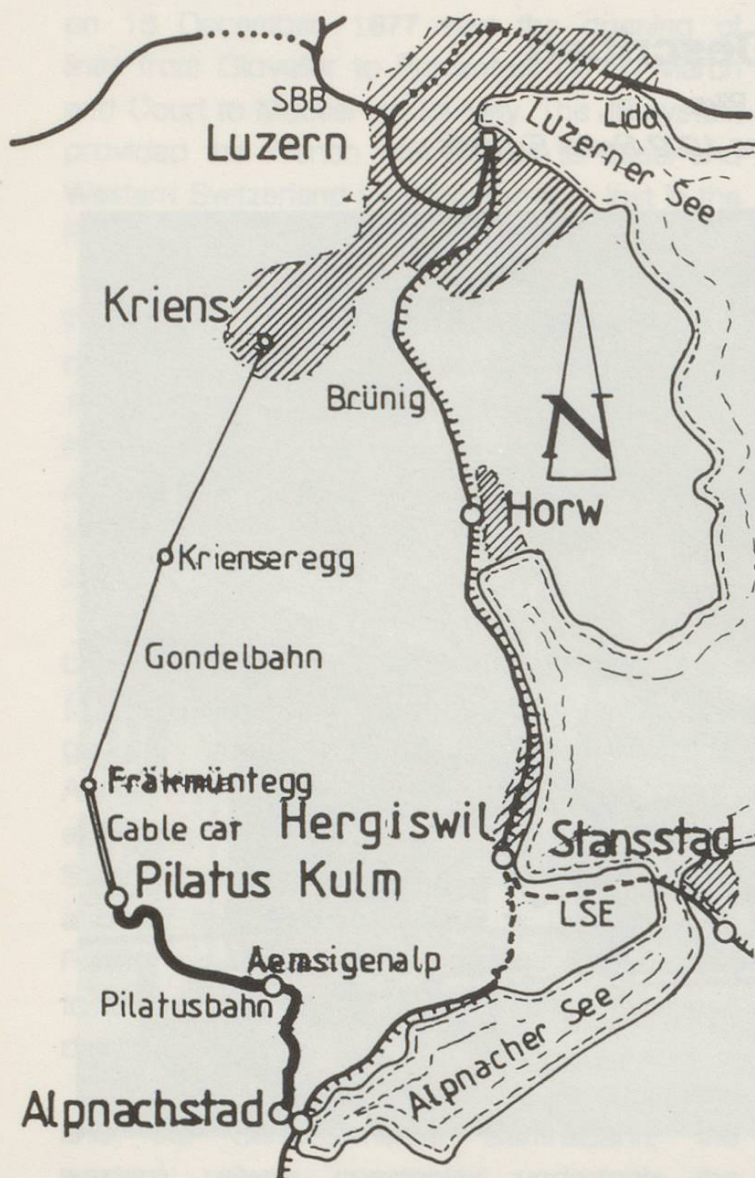
The lower terminus of the line is 441m above sea level, the upper terminus 2070m asl. The length is 4270m, of which over 1130m is on the maximum grade of 48%. 1610m of the route is curved, with the sharpest curve 50m radius. There are seven tunnels with a total length of 333m and three avalanche shelters totaling 120m. 23 bridges account for another 229m, the longest being at Wolfortbach at 25m. In my opinion the best way to visit Pilatus is to arrive by boat at Alpnachstad from Luzern. The imposing offices and station building stand out boldly at the foot of the mountain and it comes, perhaps, as something of a surprise that the platform rises in steps to match the slope of the

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bright red coaches which are waiting.

I would advise trying to get into the bottom compartment and sitting facing backward (ie, downhill) on the far side of the coach from that from which you boarded because, although you will be against the rock face for much of the first part of the ascent, you will be on the spectacular side when perched on the rock ledges on the approach to the summit and you will be able to look back all the way and watch the views unfolding before you. However, although I advise you to face rearward, I shall refer to the features of the line as seen from the direction of travel.

Soon after leaving the lower terminus, we pass the depot and workshops to the left. These shops are very well equipped to deal



The Pilatusbahn

with virtually all the maintenance required and it is the only place in which vehicles are on the level, giving them a most curious appearance.

Very quickly, the houses and the Brunig line, by which you can also reach Alpnachstad, appear like models below. The line then enters beech woods, crosses a small mountain road and begins to dive in and out of short tunnels. After about eight minutes we come to the Wolfort viaduct which spans a deep gorge, providing a sudden view to the right across the arm of the Vierwaldstättersee below and toward the Glarner Alps. More short tunnels and the nearby scene broadens into pasture with contented cows and alpine flowers. Here at Aernsigenalp is the passing loop and an opportunity is provided to watch the traversers which act as points.



The Pilatusbahn, as it sweeps up through the woods on the lower part of the line

Photo Alan Pike

Setting off again, we are soon among craggy outcroppings, then along the route of an old torrent, levelling out a bit before the Mattalp pasture, decked with flowers and a few stunted pines, often with its contingent of cows. Another tunnel and we are on the Eselwand, a sheer rock face out of which the line has been blasted. Far below, the tracks made by mountain walkers wind their way whilst above appears the summit.

If there is a following train, you may see the operation of points at the entrance to the covered station, which roll over to set up the route.

The saddle of the mountain has been levelled and is the site of the hotels. They provide restaurants and cafeterias as well as accommodation. There are numerous safe and well-made paths giving easy access to

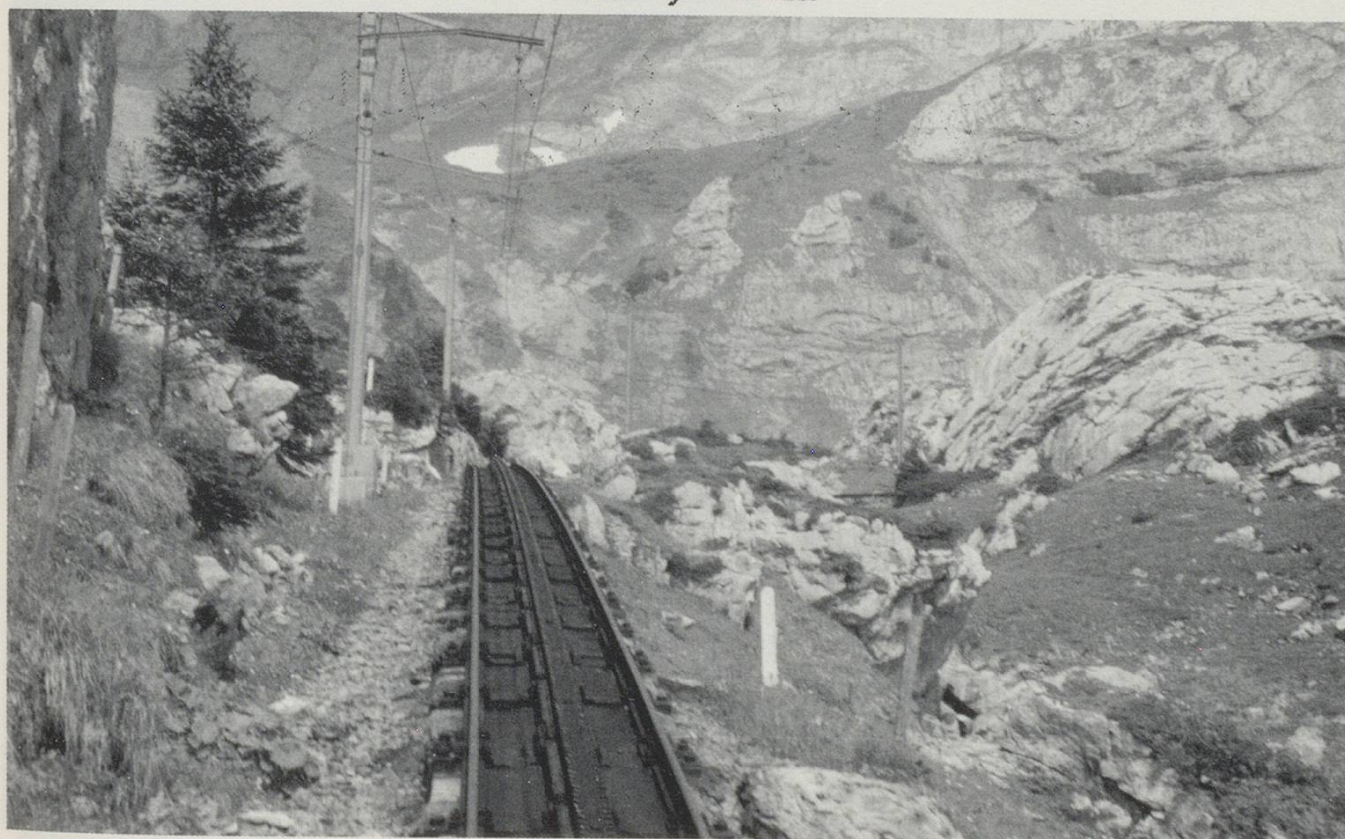
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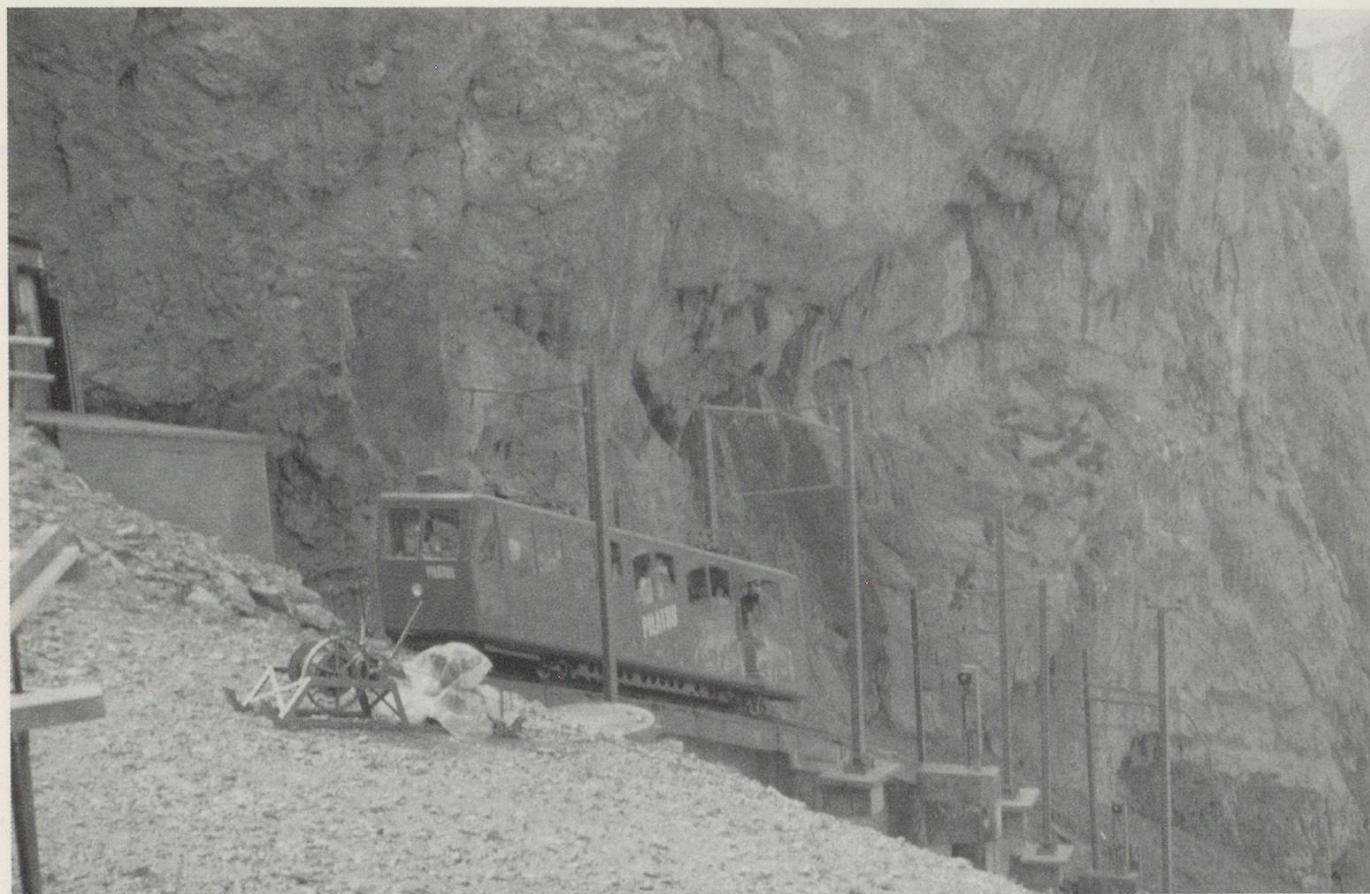


Above : Two railcars in convoy descending the upper section of the Pilatusbahn and crossing the Mattalp, taken from the fourth descending car : 16 June 1992

Below : Rugged scenery between Mattalp and Aemisigenalp : 16 June 1992

Photos Cyril Freezer





Above : Approaching the upper terminus of the Pilatusbahn : 16 June 1992

Below; : One of the Fräkmüntegg - Pilatus cablecars. : 16 June 1992

Photos Cyril Freezer





Above : The lower station of the Krienz - Fräkmüntegg gondelbahn : 16 June 1992

Photo C.J.Freezer

Below : The Krienz-Luzern-Bahn terminus at Krienz : 21 May 1991

Photo Alan Pike





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The Pilatusbahn

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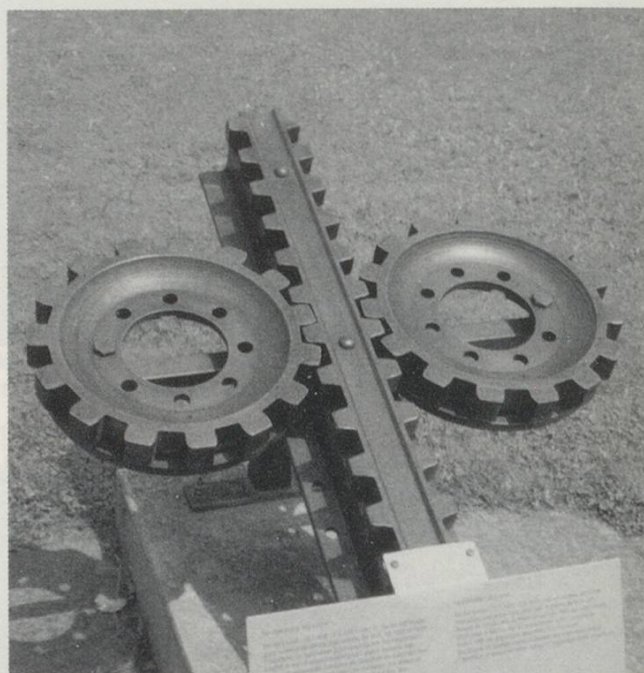
viewpoints which, on a good day, are difficult to beat.

An interesting way to return to Luzern is to board the large cable car at the summit which leaps an abyss on the east face of the mountain down to Fräkmuntegg. It lowers you 650m in a distance of 1450m to deliver you to a gondelbahn which swings just above the treetops to Kriens on the outskirts of Luzern. From here a trolleybus runs back to the centre, passing on its way part of the Kriens-Luzern Bahn, an industrial line which possesses an Em4/4 which for some reason is numbered 35.

This journey provides a round trip not to be missed but if the weather is not too fine it is often better to set out for the summit as early as possible before clouds build up.

Sources:

Pilatusbahn; Verna Gurtner; Peter Willen.



The arrangement of the Locher horizontal rack-and-pinion of the Pilatusbahn.

Photo Cyril Freezer



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