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Autor: Harris, Mike
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On the Bummel! by Mike Harris

I have a terrible problem, it's not contagious but I am an incurable pamphleteer. I can walk into a hotel or station lobby with nothing in my hands yet exit moments later with a whole stack of pamphlets, brochures and the like, I just can't help it!

On rare occasions some of these snippets of information really prove useful, the following is a recent case in point. During a trip to Switzerland in May 1995 I picked up a small SBB leaflet with alpine flowers on the front (you guessed it... along with a load of others) from the BOB station at Wilderswil. On looking closer the leaflet unfolded in to quite a nice synoptic map of the Swiss rail system with useful information on the reverse (in German) about places to see and things to do. Not speaking German I wondered about what the writing on the cover meant, "10 Frankli Kostet ein Maibummel am Samstag oder Sonntag via Zwieriwil im Regionalzug nach Gmetlikofen, Vom 22 April bis zum 8 Mai 1995 gibt's die Maibummel - Tageskarte für nur 10 Franken". I guessed that

this was a special ticket, costing 10 Francs and usable on a Saturday or a Sunday between 22 April and 28 May 1995, but was I right? In any case what is this Maibummel?

Well it was a special ticket, costing 10SF (with use of the Half Tax Card) and it was only available on the Saturdays and Sundays between the dates shown but it was valid across the whole of the regional rail network excepting IC trains and certain others, primarily the main mountain pass routes. It also seemed to include some of the lake steamers and possibly the tram networks in the main towns too as well as the post buses.

And Maibummel? Well apparently "bummel" is "to tramp" and it seems that in May it has been customary for school children and their teachers, youth groups and families to get out into the countryside for walks. The SBB have just helped the process along a bit by offering such a good ticket offer.

For the "poor" tourist this ticket was really useful as it enabled several journeys to be

undertaken during the day at nominal cost. On one of our days Chris and I travelled widely (or should that be wildly) around on the BOB, SBB and BLS systems simply to get to know this beautiful area of the Bernese Oberland. I used it as an excuse simply to ride the rails and take plenty of video film of the journey.

We met another couple who had also travelled on the Maibummel Karte from Wilderswil to Lenk and who thought that it would be perfectly possible to achieve a day out in Montreux with careful planning. So it seems that the answer is to get yourself armed with a timetable and plan in advance if you fancy going any great distance just to ensure that you can make the return journey. Obviously you are not precluded from using Saturday's ticket as the outward journey and simply buying a ticket for Sunday to return home if you wish to travel a great distance and stay over. The World is your oyster, well as far as the Swiss border anyway.

As for us, we had already planned another Maibummel Karte outing to get us to Kandersteg and the Eisenbahn Erlebnis Pfad

(Railway Adventure Trail), though this was to be more "adventure" than "railway trail" and I hope to write something on this soon.

Hopefully the SBB will run this offer again and I recommend SRS members to use it. You can just travel around, as we did, you can go somewhere specific, as we did, or why not go for the distance record! You can use the day to get all those pictures/video shots from different angles and locations to make your films really interesting without worrying about the cost of fares up and down the line. Basically and perhaps, most importantly, you can just simply enjoy using the trains.

Just one cautionary note though, do be careful about where you can and cannot use the ticket and what is a "Regionalzug" and what isn't. For example the "Regionalzug" from Lauterbrunnen to Wengen is not a "Regionalzug" for the purposes of the Maibummel Karte and it cost us the fare and some embarrassment.

So happy bummeling in 1996 everyone!

Andy and Alex
send their good luck and best wishes
to
Les Heath
on the publication of his first book titled
"The Montreux - Oberland Bernois"

premier
print

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year
to all Members of the Society