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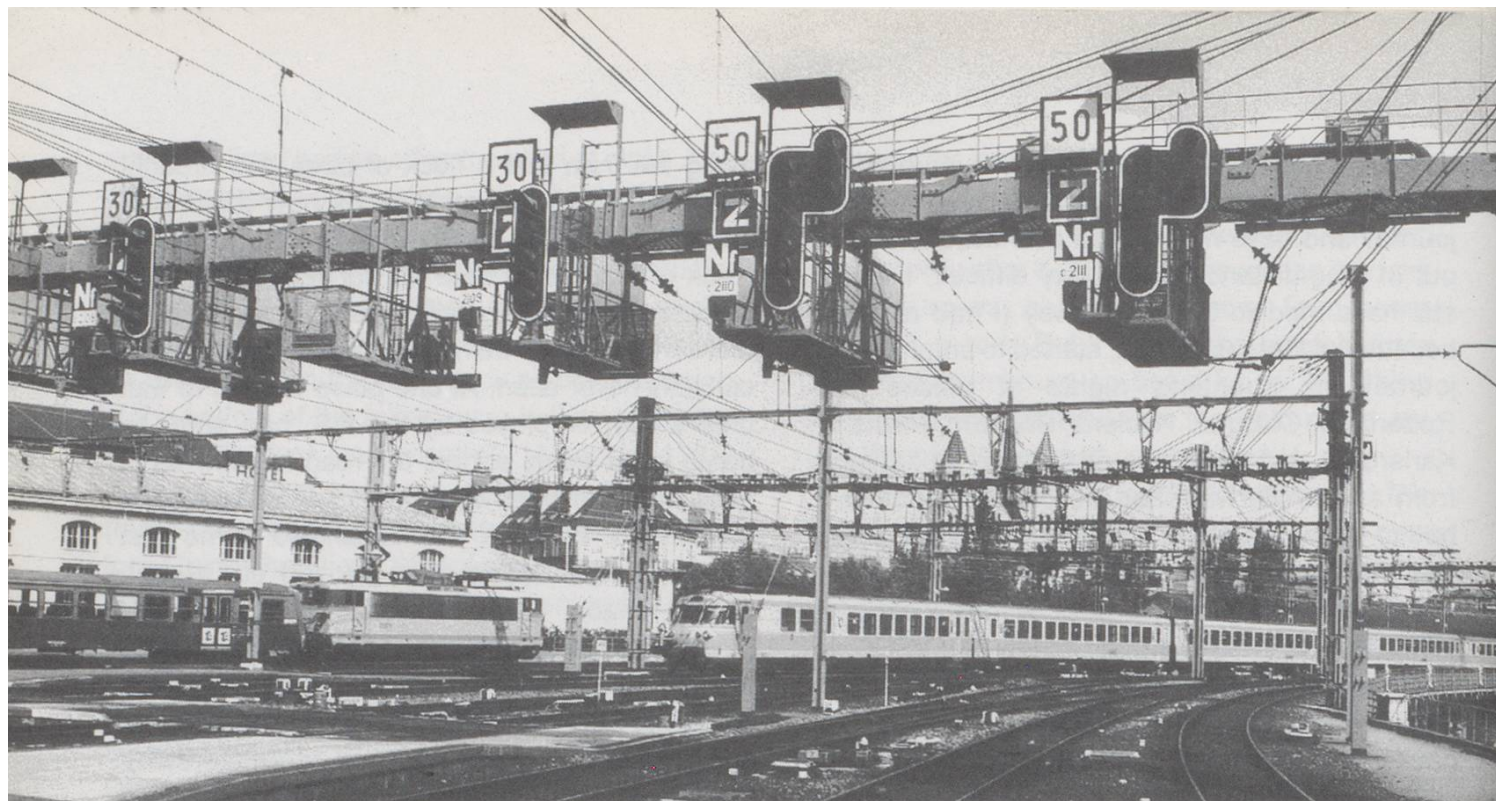
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Day trip to Dijon, or Dijon: Gateway to Switzerland

by: Geoffrey Dunster & George Hoekstra, photos GH

A French city in Swiss Express?? Yes, Dijon, which is only a few hours away by TGV (2 hours from Lausanne or Neuchâtel and 3 hours from Berne) has a lot to offer for the railway enthusiast as well as for the gourmet.

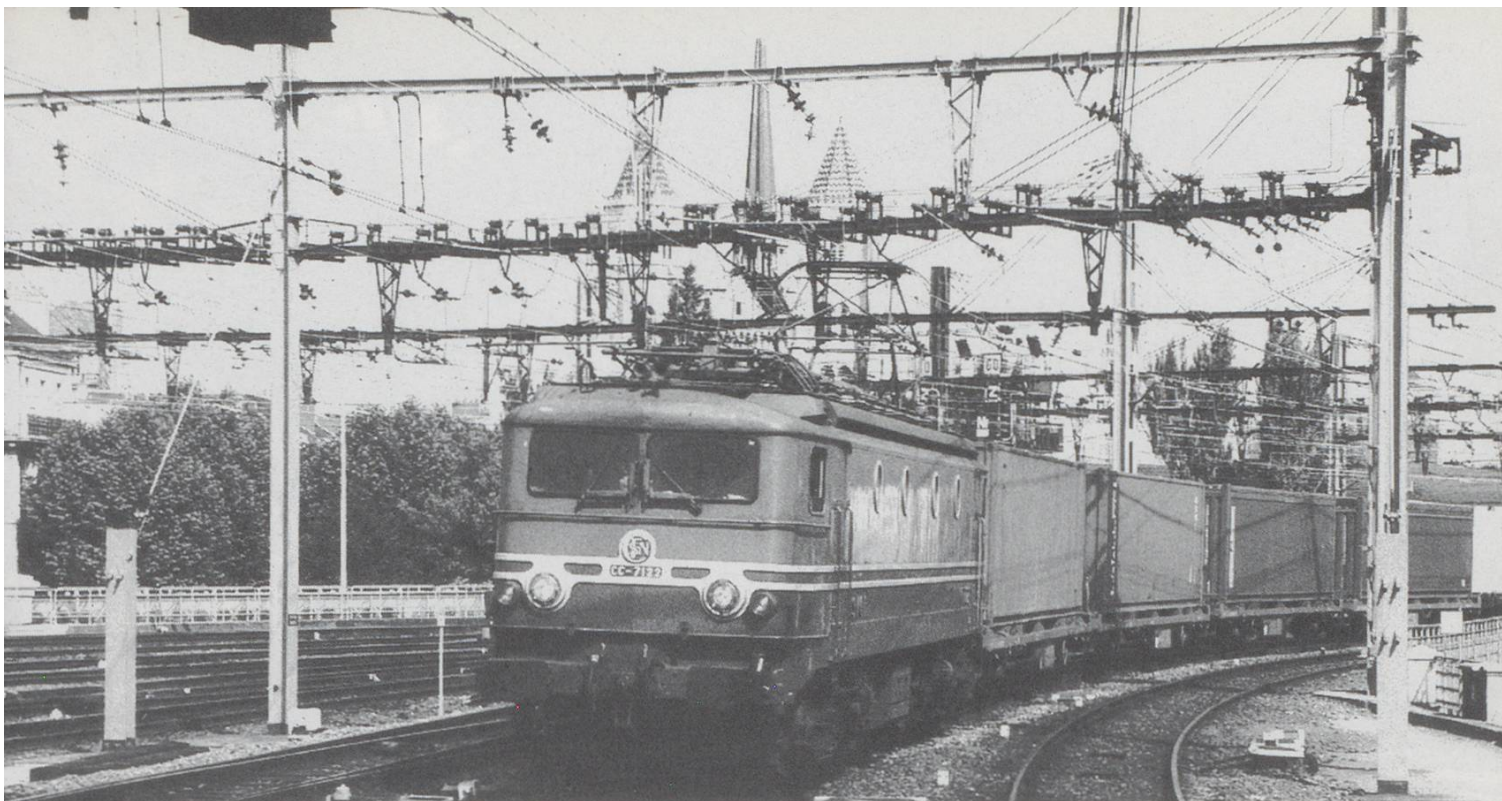
Through the excellent services of the "CIE pour le développement des TGV France - Suisse", the Company that is responsible for marketing the nine hard-working special 3-voltage TGVs that provide the service between Lausanne/Berne and Paris, we were able to sample some of the delights Dijon has to offer.

First, for the railway enthusiast. The routes out of Dijon-Ville offer two different currents (1500 V DC and 25,000 V AC), as well as diesel operated lines: plenty of different traction! After it took us, especially George, more than 2 hours to sample a bit of what Burgundy has to offer - in the "Chapeau Rouge" in the rue Michelet 5 - we stood on the platform for exactly one hour, from 16.15 until 17.15. During this time, we did see no less than 32 trains arriving or departing, including a fair number of freights. Locospotter Geoff took down the following numbers: 25671, 26178, 22306, 25678, 22238, 72035, 72060, 7254, 6562, 26207, 25687, 8136, 7122, 67458, 6543, 22219, 8214, 7395, 25674, 63193, 7412, 348, 8577, 67363, 26201, Turbo 5715, TGV 24, 112, 113 plus EMUs... As you can see, the "parade" is supplemented by dmu's, emu's, TGV's and

even one of the gas-turbine sets like the ones that used to run to Boulogne (they are now being phased out). Some idea will be given by the pictures. The large signal-gantry and the cathedral in the background provide a nice frame. As long as you stay on the platforms proper and do not trespass onto the rail-crossings, you may take pictures of as many trains as you wish, provided you have a valid ticket to prove you are a bona fide SNCF-Traveller! Now for the City of Dijon itself. From the station, it is only a 15 minute walk into the centre, which is mostly a pedestrian zone. The town is in the Duchy of Burgundy, which at one time was larger (Belgium to Switzerland) and more important than the whole of the rest of France. The buildings in the town show off this prosperity and styles to cover the whole scale from the 14th century until today. It was nice to see some of the older timber-framed buildings being restored to their former glory.

As for the delights of all the food and drink, there is a saying "to live like God in France"..., well, He would have chosen Burgundy.

How to get there. The easiest way from Britain is to make a stopover on the way. All TGV's from Paris to Lausanne/Berne stop in Dijon. From Switzerland, it is the same the other way around. If you fly into Switzerland and have a Swiss Pass (and who would be without it??) it costs only a little from the border: If you book at least 30 days



Opposite page: Dijon. One of the gas-turbine sets meets TER (local authority) train.

This page: Top: Dijon. A real 'Oldie' CC 7122 on a modern intermodal container freight.

Bottom: A Mosaic roof in Dijon.

ahead, you can get a special "Joker 30" price of CHF28 return from Vallorbe, or CHF 38 from Neuchatel (2nd class only), inclusive of TGV-Supplements! There is also a special excursion fare of CHF50 (2nd) and CHF60 (1st) from the border, including a city tour and free admission to museums (which are all closed on Tuesdays). This offer is available every day until 31st October 1996 bookable a few days before travel,

provided there is space on the TGV. Ask for "Dijon Bienvenue".

In conclusion, for the railfan, historian and/or gourmet alike, we can fully recommend this peek across the border into the fascinating city of Dijon. We thank Mr. Hans Peter Leu of CIE TGV France Suisse for arranging this excursion for us and YOU!

Geoffrey & George