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Miscellanea by: Cyril freezer

Our 1996 visit to Switzerland was based in Luzern, and booked through Ingham's Swiss Collection. We found their organisation extremely efficient with considerable attention to detail. We stopped at the Hotel Johanniter, Bundesplatz 18, just off Centralstrasse at the far end of the Hauptbahnhof. It is also very near a stop on the 4,5,6 & 7 trolleybus routes, very handy at the end of a long hot day. The hotel has been recently modernised and is well appointed with facilities for wheelchairs. The four course dinners were superb. As the package included a half price card, we booked an extra night and used the card to get to Luzern, our Swiss Passes coming into force the following day. The half price cards came in very useful for mountain trips, we effectively got the best of both worlds. Rigi 125As has already been reported, to celebrate the 125th anniversary of Europe's pioneer rack railway, Rigi Bahn vertical boilered loco No 7 has been removed from the Verkerhshaus, put back into running order by its builders, SLM, and used for a steam shuttle service between Rigi Staffel and Rigi Kulm. This utilised the original Rigi Bahn track, the parallel

Above: Rigi Bahn vertical boilered 'Lok 7' at Rigi Kulm, 14 June 1996. The driver's waistcoat is a joy to behold and adds to the period atmosphere. Photo C.J.Freezer

Arth-Rigi Bahn track being used for most, but not all normal services. A Sfr 5 supplement was charged for the single journey. An attractive souvenir ticket was issued in the special booths at Staffel and Kulm. When cancelled, the clipper punched out a '7'. The crew were in period dress, though one rather doubts if the original enginemen were quite as smartly dressed. The period illusion was momentarily shattered when the driver produced his walkie-talkie, another modification was a reduction to a single car in deference to Lok 7's age. In their heyday they pushed two cars up the mountainside. By sheer coincidence, we arrived at Rigi Staffel to find Arth-Rigi Bahn railcar No 7 on a works train waiting, so, briefly, there were two No 7s in the same place. At least, they were totally different and unlikely to be confused. The easy walk between Kulm and Staffel enabled sightseers to watch the period train as it made its way up and down the final section of the line. On our visit on 14 June the fine weather ensured that there were plenty of customers but even though the 10.50

from Staffel was reserved for parties, they managed to find room for us in the luggage compartment of the coach. This was a bonus, not only were we alongside the locomotive, but this was the only section of the train that wasn't crowded. Our enjoyment was heightened by the fact it was my wife's birthday. As Doris loves rack railways in general and the Rigi in particular, the steam-pushed trip made a fine start to what turned out to be a memorable day.

Luzern Verkerhshaus

In June the railway section was in the throes of a massive reorganisation, with stock arranged haphazardly and most of the models stored in wooden crates. On 17 June we were able to watch stock being rope-shunted by a PTT fork lift truck. The next stage is to provide a diagonal high level viewing platform crossing all lines of track. It may be an improvement for display, but it will cut down on space for exhibits. Two railcars have been stabled outside the Museum grounds. It is a credit to Swiss culture that the windows remain intact. By the time this appears, the Museum should be in better order. When the new work is complete there will be a Gotthard experience below ground. It is worth remembering that the Swiss Pass will get you a discount on the entry fee.

Luzern bridges

The Seebrucke replacement is falling behind schedule. Although all decking work was supposed to have been completed, in mid June there was still a gaping hole. One end of the Speurbrucke is currently detached from land. Access is by a temporary metal footbridge.

Märklin's latest

The SOB Re4/4IV 'adopted' by Märklin is even more effective in real life than it is in photographs, it really does look as if it is built from their answer to Meccano. One wonders if instructions for its construction, complete with a full list of parts, will follow. It does however pose a problem for Lima. Two ideas occur. One, rather underhand, is to offer the version without a motor, but this could be construed as knocking. A more subtle approach would be to make small revisions to the details so that the version featured original Meccano parts.

Bodensee crossing

We were pleasantly surprised when our Swiss passes were accepted on the ferry 'Romanshorn', despite the fact that this service is not so advertised. Whether this concession applies to

the German-based ferry is not known. We were slightly disappointed to discover that although the Zeppelin museum had been moved to a new and much more prominent site (in front of Hafen Bahnhof), it was not yet open on the date of our visit. It appears to have been greatly enlarged and is no longer on the top of a 5-storey building bereft of lifts! Friedrichshafen is well worth a visit in its own right. On a fine day the crossing makes a pleasant mini-cruise with all passenger accommodation on the upper deck. Both currencies are accepted on the ferries but you do need Deutschmarks to shop in the town. There are plenty of seats overlooking the Bodensee which, on a fine day, are perfect places to enjoy a packed lunch.

Technorama

Although the Verkerhshaus is widely publicised, the Technorama at Winterthur is little known. Situated at the end of the No.5 bus route, or a short walk from Oberwinterthur station, it is a smaller exhibition roughly comparable in purpose to our own Science Museum but with considerable attention to 'hands on' education. The main snag is that all the extensive information is in German. The technically minded should have little difficulty understanding the major features but inevitably some of the more subtle details are lost. From our point of view the biggest attraction is a superb collection of tinsplate railway models attractively displayed in a separate gallery, including with two working layouts, operated by a delay action push button. In this section the fact that the captions are in German is of little import, they are so terse as to be easily understood. The collection includes accessories and has a couple of O gauge train set displays, including a rack section. While Märklin products predominate, there are some models from other firms, including some early Bassett-Lowke (which may well have been made in Germany). As a matter of interest, there is a Gauge 5 model, the first example we have seen of this size. The collection is very extensive and imaginatively displayed. Unlike the other galleries, which on our visit were crowded with enthusiastic teenagers, the tinsplate collection is a haven of peace. Technorama is well worth a visit, but you really need to allocate at least three hours if you want to study every gallery in detail. There is a restaurant and the tickets allow for re-entry on the same day. We, unfortunately, had a plane to catch.