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Rigi-Kaltbad to Rigi-Schiedegg

by Stephanie Marriott

When talk turns to the railways of Rigi, the conversation tends to dwell upon the rack railways from Arth-Goldau and Vitznau which each ascend to the summit, Rigi-Kulm. In fact, these were not the only railways on Rigi; there used to be an adhesion line from Rigi-Kaltbad to Rigi-First and Rigi-Schiedegg.

This line was built in 1874; it is now closed and appears, from the books in my collection, to have closed sometime between 1930 and 1950. The line has been lifted, but the trackbed still remains as a very pleasant walk with no steep gradients and some beautiful views.

Start from Rigi-Kaltbad and take the level path out of Rigi-Kaltbad to Rigi-First. Walking this path, which goes around the south of Rothstock, gives some spectacular views over the lake and, if you are lucky, some interesting skies as the sun goes down.

At Rigi-First, pause to enjoy the view over Lake Lucerne. There are two paths to Rigi-

Above: Stephanie on the dis-used viaduct

Schiedegg; one follows the ridge and was popular in former times with the more energetic visitors. Take the path called the Hohenwegg; from here there are views towards the East of the Mythen, Glarnisch and the mountains of the Appenzell. There is also a good view of the line from Rigi-Klosterli. The route continues to Unterstetten, where there was a station. After this, the path crosses a solid bridge with views to North and South and then continues around the side of the hill and through the Weisennegg tunnel, which is short, but dark in the middle - luckily I always carry a torch, although it was not really necessary. There is a viaduct across the Dossentobel, after which the path follows the ridge to Unter Dossen and Rigi-Schiedegg.

The curves in the line follow the contours of the hill and provide ever-changing views of the distant mountains as well as different views of Rigi. While a good map is not required to follow the route, it is useful to identify the views.



Above: Husband Fred at a tunnel entrance. The photographs were taken as "happy snaps" but had I realised I would be writing this article I would have taken them without us in them.

All the while, depending on the time of year, the sound of cow-bells accompanies you, drifting up from the valley in some places, while being all too close at others.

As is usual in Switzerland, the route is amply provided with seats but it is an easy walk until very near to Rigi-Schiedegg. Here the path gets very steep; it is impossible to imagine any engine without cog assistance climbing it. In fact, at this point the path has passed the site of the old station, which was about 190 feet below the level of the hotel; no engines ever made this climb.

Rigi-Schiedegg has a hotel and a cablecar down to Arth-Goldau. If you do not like cablecars, then there is only one way out; on foot. The path beyond Rigi-Schiedegg leads to Gersau, but all of my books warn that this path needs a steady head.

It sounds dull to be returning along the same path, but the views look different; many of them were missed the first time as they were behind us.

The distance is about four miles from Kaltbad to Schiedegg; an eight mile round trip. There are panoramic views, especially from Rigi-Schiedegg, which need clear weather if they are to be appreciated at their best. Stout footwear is essential; the path is very good but large sections are covered with what appears to be railway ballast and this is very uncomfortable if you are wearing thin-soled shoes or sandals.

It seems a shame that this line closed, and an even bigger shame that it now seems largely forgotten and ignored. Despite my best efforts, I have failed to discover who built it, when it closed and why it closed. I can say that, according to a 1930 guidebook, there were six trains a day, the trip lasted 30 minutes and cost 4fr return.

Does anyone know any more than this?

About me.

I am an overweight, unfit, forty-year old woman who likes Switzerland, trains and especially Swiss trains. My husband is a



Above: Myself, to one side of the path which can been seen curving around the side of the hill.

member of the Society, but I read Swiss Express.

As you may have guesssd from the article, I have done this walk (on the day before my 40th birthday!); we started from the Hotel Edelweiss at Rigi-Staffelhöhe (highly recommended - our room had a view of the Vitznau-Rigi railway). I do not like heights, dark tunnels or cablecars, and at the end of the walk (which we did in both directions) my feet were sore from the ballast - I wore sensible, but well worn shoes and their soles were not up to the job!

Souces used;

Muirheads Guidebook 1930
Baedekers Guidebook 1899 and 1928
Cooks Handbook 1929
Lucerne and its lovely Lake 1926
Switzerland by Arnold Lunn 1928

Editors Note:

Husbands & Wives can have joint membership of the Society, but only one vote at the AGM.



SWITZERLAND TOURISM New Name - New Image

As from the 13th June the Swiss National Tourist Office changed its name to Switzerland Tourism. The new logo "The Gold Flower" stands for the traditional quality and hospitality which British guests have enjoyed in Switzerland since 1864. The name and image have changed, but the scenery, railways and warm hospitality will continue to delight visitors in summer and winter alike. They will concentrate on five central topics: Summer live (1995), Fascination Water, Cultural Delights, Winter Joys and Meeting Place Switzerland.