

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: 4 (1994-1996)
Heft: 7

Rubrik: Mailbag

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Video & Book Review

Behind the Scenes - SBB 1 - Bellinzona Main Works. MITV Ltd.

This film is aimed at the enthusiast but is worthy of a much wider market. It gives a fascinating insight into the way in which the SBB maintains its Ae6/6, Re6/6 and many of the Re4/4 up to the top level, Revision 3, which is virtually a rebuild.

Many of the operations require a high level of skill which is well illustrated. Engineers who view it might well be given food for thought. A high degree of self discipline among the members of the relatively small workforce is apparent.

Scenes are not confined to the works. The film is interspersed with shots of locos, for which Bellinzona is responsible, going about their daily tasks.

The non-technical should get this video because the commentary is in easily understandable terms making it a useful adjunct to the general knowledge of railways. This appears to be the first in a series of such films which would be most welcome.

The high quality we have come to expect from MITV is fully maintained.

Highly recommended.

SLEEPERS, DINERS & PULLMANS: Trains and vehicles of the International Sleeping Car Company. Robert Spark; Trafton Publishing, Evelyn Way, Cobham, KT11 2SJ. 64pps A4 Landscape; 153 b+w, 5 colour, 12dwgs. ISBN 0 947890 08 4. £12.50 post free UK.

This book is ideal for two kinds of reader, the busy person who wishes readily to obtain essential information about the Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits but does not wish to plough through a massive tome, and the modelmaker, who is provided with 1 : 160 scale plans of 12 vehicles backed up with detail photographs.

The landscape format enables the wide variety of good quality photographs to be presented to the best effect. Captions are concise but informative.

This book, by one of our long-standing members, is of good value and well recommended.

AJP

Mailbag

Budget Holidays in Switzerland

Peter Marriott in his article (June 1995) suggests that camping is an excellent way of having a low cost holiday in Switzerland. Might I suggest another way, that of a coach holiday? Last autumn half term my wife and I spent four nights in Interlaken with a night in France for £250 per person half board.

During our stay in Switzerland excursions to Bern and Luzern were organised. These were optional and so train enthusiasts could easily spend their days on those important matters.

While the journey may be longer than by air or rail this is another alternative for those who wish to have a low cost holiday observing those interesting railways.

Christopher Elliott, Caversham, Reading

Budget Holidays - 2

Having just returned from Switzerland this week, I was most interested in Budget Holidays by P. Marriott. We rented a very pleasant luxury apartment in Oberhofen facing the lake of Thun, the Niesen and albeit across the lake the trains. The apartment booked through 'Lakes & Mountain holidays' of Fareham was excellent in every respect, the price included our ferry tickets. It is a very small company providing a personal service.

However when one arrives in Switzerland a very different scenario emerges, gone are the days when streets were clean, in both Thun and Interlaken paper and cigarette stubs were much in evidence, the hotels and restaurants lacked customers for instance Schuh's at Interlaken normally packed had only 40 people on our visits. The reason is cost, quite apart from the weak pound. To give an example my wife's watch needed a new battery, the best price was 20 Swiss francs at 1.80 to the pound £11.11 three times the UK price. On Swiss Teletext we got some idea of the problem, their Hotel industry is the third largest exporter (in currency terms) and the new Hotel Tax is being blamed for the Tourist Industry's rapid decline. To our great surprise even the Japanese were saying at these prices it's not worth it. Don't get me wrong we enjoyed our holiday, until recently we went annually, then every two years, my gut feeling is to extend this to three: if visitors keep away they may realise that they have severely maimed if not killed the goose that lays the golden egg.

Peter Morgan, Orpington, Kent