

Pilatus and its dragon : Swiss express reviews the recent developments at Mount Pilatus railways

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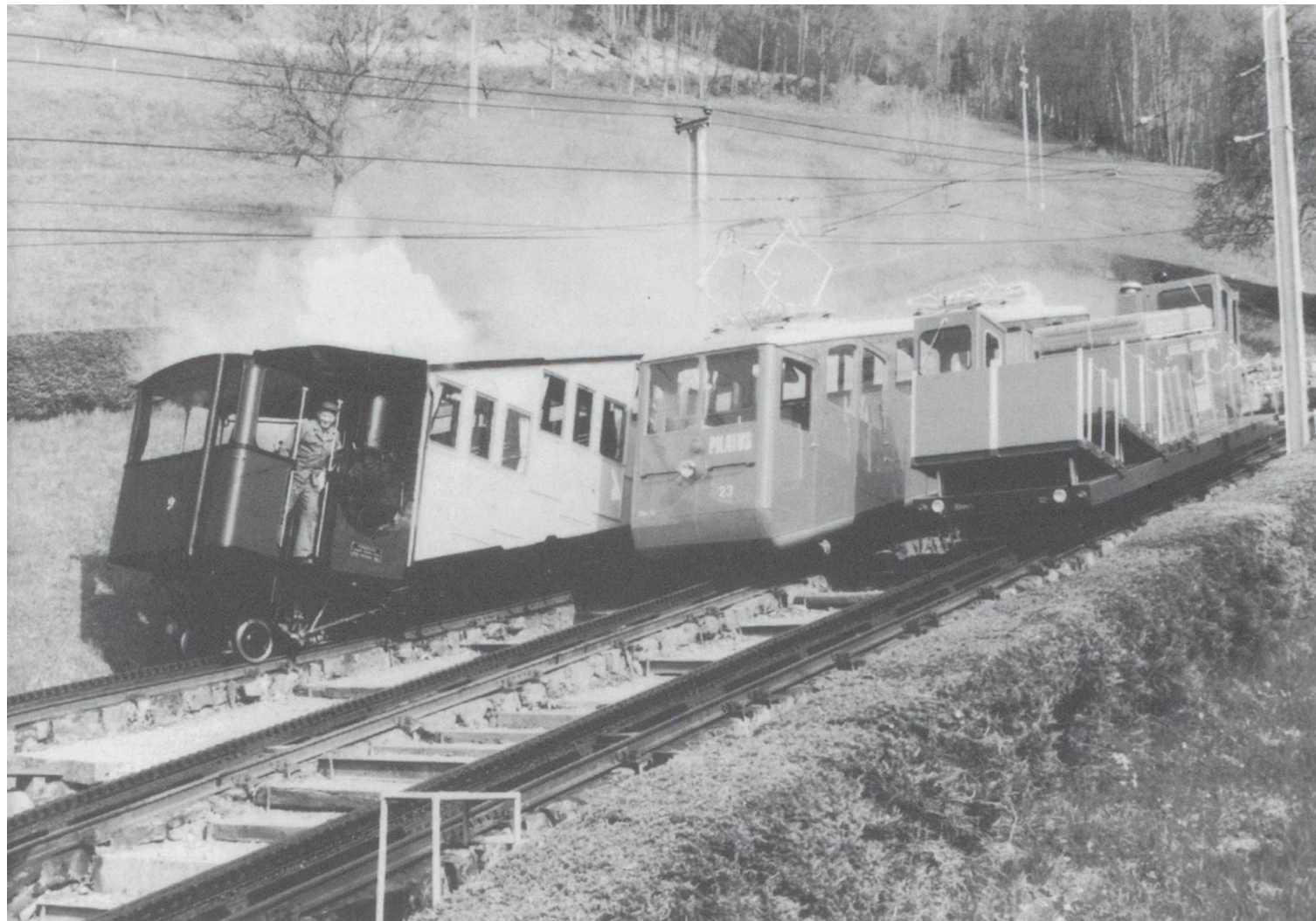
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Pilatus and its dragon

SWISS EXPRESS reviews the recent developments at Mount Pilatus Railways

Pilatus Railways have recently spent almost 2 million Swiss francs on improving their premises and services. These include;

- a redesigned arrival hall at Pilatus Kulm featuring new refreshment and shopping areas. The wall paintings by Claude Sandoz have been enlarged.
- Alpnachstad station has been modified to allow quicker passenger transit.
- video monitors in waiting areas provide passengers with information on the Pilatus region. Information about the weather conditions at the summit are conveyed to visitors at the valley stations.
- a new restaurant has been opened offering Adventure and Typical Swiss folklore themes.

The dragon

Mount Pilatus Railways has a new logo - a red rather fearsome dragon!

Pilatus are trying to break with the idea that

their's is just another mountain railway. They are attempting to provide a little individuality and air of mystery to their tourist attraction! The Swiss have various legends of dragons around Pilatus mountain - some of the flying variety and others wingless. The mountain was originally called "Fractus mons" (the broken mountain) but was changed to Pilatus following a legend about Pontus Pilate who was partly responsible for the death of Jesus Christ. The lake on the mountain was reputed to be the burial place of Pilate. His evil influence was held responsible for some of the terrible storms on the mountain. Only in 1585 was the mystic spell broken when a brave group of Luzern's people threw stones into the water and paddled over the lake. No ghost was seen and that was the apparent end of people's fear of the mountain.

Attractions

Pilatus Kulm boasts two hotels, restaurants, a sun terrace, a rock gallery and murals of the

dragons. At Fräkmüntegg there is a further restaurant and the longest toboggan slide in Switzerland. Krienseregg has another restaurant with views of the mountain, a children's playground and various footpaths. Alpnachstad has more refreshment facilities between the lake and the valley station.

Operation

The "Golden Round-trip" beginning and concluding at Luzern (435 metres) utilises a variety of transport to reach Pilatus Kulm (2132 metres). To or from Alpnachstad there is 90 minute journey on the SGV lake boats. Alternatively a 20 minute train journey reduces the travelling time. From Alpnachstad to the summit the "steepest cogwheel railway in the world" (48% gradient) is used. In the other direction a 5 minute ride on an aerial tramway between the Kulm and Fräkmüntegg links with a 30 minute journey to Kriens via a gondola. A short bus ride brings one back to Luzern.

The cogwheel railway commenced steam operation in June 1889. It changed to electric

traction in May 1937. The track gauge is 800mm with a difference in altitude climbed of 1696 metres. The journey takes 30 minutes uphill and 40 downwards. Passenger capacity is 40 per car.

The gondolas first opened in 1954 and rise 899 metres travelling at 4.5 metres per second. The 132 cabins take around 18 minutes for the journey. These are complemented by the aerial tramway which rises 717 metres and was opened in 1956. The five minute journey is taken at 6.5 metres per second.

The cogwheel railway is closed in winter from approximately the beginning of December to the beginning of May. The aerial cable cars were closed for maintenance between 2 November and 20 November 1998.

My thanks to Stefanie Rother for this information.

For more information please contact Pilatus Bahnen at Schlossweg 1, postfach, CH-6011 Kriens, Luzern. Or telephone 00 41 41 329 11 11. Their Internet site can be found at: <http://www.pilatus.com/>

Obwalden competition

Two pairs of tickets on Pilatus railways to be won.

This competition is open to all SRS current members and has been arranged with the co-operation of the Obwalden Tourist Office in Sarnen.

The tickets have been kindly donated by Pilatus Bahnen. The winners will travel in the front carriage next to the driver and he will explain interesting aspects of the ride during the journey.

All you have to do is answer the following seven questions correctly and be one of the two fortunate entrants to be drawn out of the hat.

To enter; please send a postcard to Peter Marriott, 3 Morebath Grove, Milton Keynes, Bucks MK4 1JN no later than 31 January 1999. The postcard should include; the seven answers, your name and address, telephone contact number and current membership number.

The winning entries will be drawn under the eyes of independent scrutineers. No correspondence can be entered into and the competition is open to all members except the editor and assistant

editor. The winners will be announced in the March 1999 issue of SWISS EXPRESS. If you like the idea of competitions in future issues of SWISS EXPRESS please let us know when you enter.

Questions;

1. Is the canton of Obwalden separated into two or three distinct areas?
2. Where is the capital of Obwalden?
3. What is the name of the Open-Air Zug that runs on the Brünig line on summer weekends?
4. Between which stations does this train run?
5. Which of the following towns are in Obwalden; Giswil, Meiringen, Stans, Weggis, Engelberg and Sarnen?
6. What is the name of the rotating cable car in Obwalden?
7. Which mountain railway features a dragon as its logo?

Clue - some answers are within this issue of SWISS EXPRESS, others are not!