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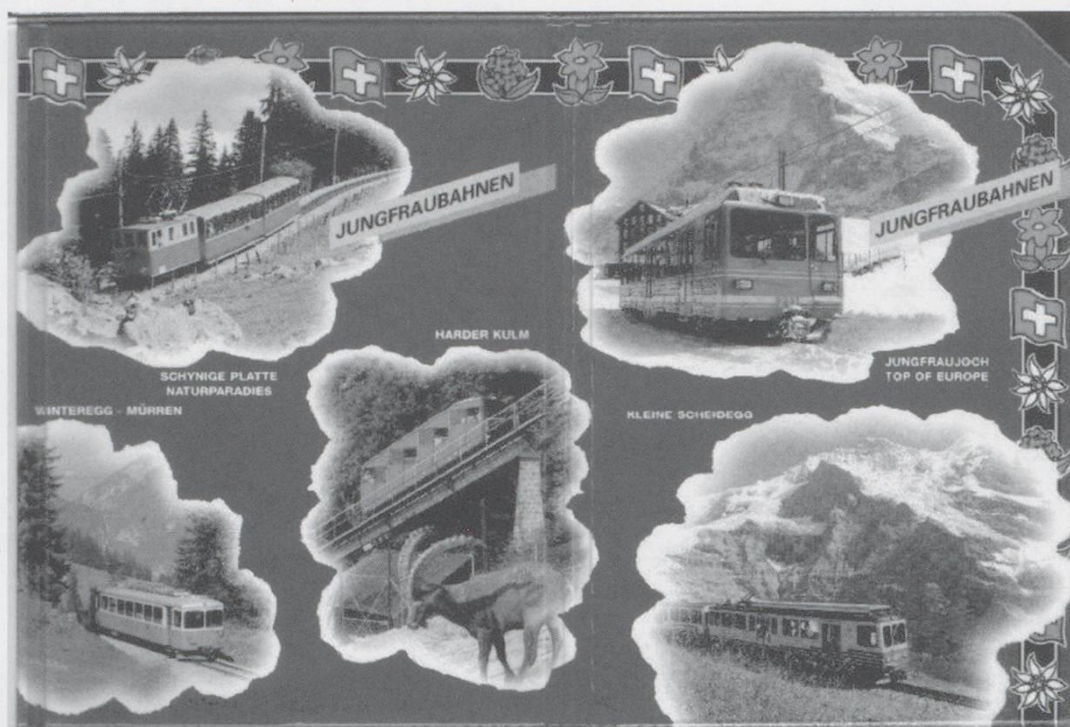
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When my wife and I went on holiday to Wengen in 1991, with Inghams, included in the price was the Swiss Half Fare ticket. The ticket came in a dark blue plastic wallet with three parallel light blue lines with arrows facing right. On it was written Swiss Transport Enterprises, in German, French and Italian. Little did I realise what this was to let me in for?

In 1994 my family and I went on holiday to Ringgenberg, near Interlaken. We bought our half fare passes at Zürich. This time they came in a wallet with a colourful design on them. One was a Robot and the other a One Armed Bandit/Pinball machine design. In 1995, back to Wengen, with Inghams. This time we used our previously obtained wallets, in preference to the standard blue ones, to hold our passes. On the train from Zürich, I noticed other passengers all seemed to have these wallets, but they all seemed different. My Robot wallet was a little worse for wear, as for the previous year it

had been used to hold my Network South East card. One day while at Interlaken West, I thought I'd see if I could get a new one. I went to the ticket office and picked an empty booth. I tried to explain that my wallet was falling apart and would it be possible to have a new one. A new one was given to me, and so started my new hobby, collecting these wallets. I tried the same trick at various stations, and most times obtained a new wallet. At the end of the holiday I had obtained about 5 or 6 different wallets. On subsequent holidays and trips to Switzerland, I used the same method and my collection grew, but only one at a time. Sometimes at large stations I would go to several ticket booths. I even got my parents and a friend to do the same, when they went on holiday!! Inevitably, I began to get quite a few wallets the same. This year we went on holiday, and stayed in Frutigen. Swiss Passes were obtained. Another new wallet before I had even left. A change of tack was tried on this

holiday. Time to come clean in the hope of boosting my collection. This time I stated that I collected the wallets, and asked if it was possible to have one. Again at Interlaken West, I tried this method. What a result. The BLS officer went away and came back with half a dozen. I thought he was going to give me a choice, but he actually gave me them all, saying that was all the different ones he had. This method worked every time, without fail, although I normally only received one. The other exception was at Glion, near Montreux. This was my first ever destination in Switzerland. A 1964 School trip. I started talking to the station master, telling him that I last came here in 1964. He replied that he started working at the station in 1963. I asked for my customary wallet, which he gave me. Another swap. Then he said had had some special ones. These held the tickets vertically, so I assume they were for regional passes. He gave me a whole set of these wallets depicting various pictures of grapevines. I now have 34 different standard size wallets and 10 vertical regional pass wallets

I do not know the history of these wallets, but a lot of them carry advertising on them. These include Elvia, Tages Anzeiger, Migros and City University. Some railways issue their own. The only examples of these I have are the Jungfraubahn and the Regionalverkehr Mittelland. Most of them are photographs, some abstract art and some bizarre. My favourite? A Tages Anzeiger one with a picture of alpine flowers and a mountain background. (*see below*)

Also, in conjunction with collecting the wallets, I have been picking up the small cards, depicting places to visit and transport to ride on. These fit perfectly into the wallets and add another dimension to my hobby. These, since 1996 have been available in all stations, along with other leaflets, but this year I could find none. Have they been discontinued?

I hope you have enjoyed this little look at something different about the railways of Switzerland. If anyone else collects these wallets, perhaps we could start up a Swapping service, or if you are going to Switzerland maybe you could bring me back a couple.

