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Autor: Neale, Don
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So, you think it is terribly expensive to holiday in Switzerland, do you? It certainly isn't cheap but if you organise it the right way, you can manage a week or two's break over there far more reasonably than travel brochures would have you believe. Take my experience this year as an example.

My wife and I have holiday'd in Switzerland every year since Cyril Freezer took a small party of us and "showed us the ropes" back in 1982. Now we have retired, Joan and I stay in that delightful country for a month every year taking full advantage of a 1st Class Swiss Pass for the whole period. Expensive? Well, this year, it worked out at about £8.50 a day apiece and as we travelled something like 8,000 miles by rail alone, I reckon that is not too bad.

Easy Jet flew us from Luton to Zürich for £58 return so, as far as travel is concerned, we had value for money in anybody's language. Accommodation? Try self-catering. We enjoy its absolute convenience and year after year, we stay with the same delightfully friendly Swiss family. Lists of zimmers (rooms) showing available facilities and prices can be obtained from tourist offices in all the resorts and it was from such a source that we found our friends' address. Practically everything in the food line can be purchased from the local Co-ops or Migros stores. The latter is a sort of Swiss Tesco and the prices are very similar to those we pay here. Our advice is to mainly live on salads. Apart from doing you good, it is quickly and easily prepared and will allow you more time to catch that train, paddle steamer or Postbus.

And talking of Postbuses, some of the routes they take are out of this world. Don't miss them. From the Rhône Valley alone

many exciting trips can be made in conjunction with your rail travel. The Val d'Anniviers, the Barrage de la Grande Dixence, the Col de la Forclaz and the Col du Sanetsch immediately spring to mind. In other areas there is the San Bernadino run and the hair-raising Maloja Pass. Some of the more popular "touristy" bus routes over the major passes now have a sort of surcharge slapped on them. This is in the form of an "Alpine Ticket" and is obtainable from the driver. The Kursbuch shows which services are affected.

Now we love Switzerland for Switzerland's sake. The people are lovely and the scenery is unbeatable. We travel extensively by train because it is THE way to travel. It is so civilised and we really appreciate the way they operate. Connections are just that and the railways seem to go almost everywhere; to places where you just need your walking boots handy or where you may take a cable car to see some of the finest views in the world. Although we move about by rail so much and appreciate the handling of really long trains or enjoy watching freight movements, I must confess to a fair degree of ignorance as far as locomotive types are concerned. I wouldn't know a R5/5 from any other electrical box of tricks. I do, however, admit to a weakness to those things with chimneys and domes! As far as coaches are concerned, they are either very comfortable indeed or -well - otherwise. I must cite in this connection the cramped and rather tatty Cisalpino stock and the least said about the awful bouncy Nina units, the better. The double decker coaches are not too bad to ride in but, although I am not very long from north to south, I always seem to clout the old crani-

um on the tiny luggage rack when leaving my seat.

After a full day out - say a return trip over the Albula and Bernina Passes down to Tirano in Italy (we did this journey three times this year!) we find it very relaxing the following day to take a boat excursion. There are many choices on the well-known lakes and, in parenthesis, some of the steamers on Vierwaldstättersee have whistles just like Black Staniers! A very lazy trip is a sail down the River Aare between Biel and Solothurn and is worthwhile if only to see the storks nesting at Altreu.

If you can, pop over on the boat from Montreux to Bouveret and see the miniature

passenger-carrying line there. Real steam and electric outline locomotives are used around the intricate layout which is built to 5 inch and 7 inch gauges. Yes, Henry Greenly's standards are used world-wide! Sit and enjoy a coffee or an ice cream while watching all the activity and make a special note of the massive bridgework.

On a similar theme, it is worth spending an hour at the model railway exhibit near Interlaken West Station. The layouts, mostly built to 7mm scale (I think) are really imaginative floor to ceiling jobs and the scenic work is brilliant.

See you somewhere in Switzerland next year!



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