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This is really a follow-up to my article "Get Off The Train" which appeared in the March 1999 issue. It is designed to help those who may have difficulty with families who do not share their interests, or members looking for new ideas for their visits to Switzerland. The idea is that the transport system can be used to get to other areas of interest.

On this visit I was with my partner, Pat, and we decided to travel daytime from Derby to Luzern. This meant a start at 0505 followed by the Eurostar to Paris. Having had breakfast served at our seats, we then walked to the Gare de L'Est for the train to Mulhouse with a connection to Basel. Arrival in Luzern was just after 2000. A long day compared to flying, especially with luggage to carry, but it all went to plan.

On day 1 we went for an old favourite; Rigi. We caught an early ship to Vitznau and took the Vitznau Rigi Bahn to Kulm. The view from the top is super-panoramic but on this day there was some cloud. The walk down follows the tracks for some way before diverting off to the viewpoint at Känzeli. There is a choice of other routes but this one gives the best view along the lake. We then proceeded to the main village at Kaltbad. Here we arrived just in time to see both steam locos in action setting off for the summit. The walk from there to Scheidegg is on the trackbed of the former Rigi-Scheidegg Bahn and is on a rising gradient but not too severe. Do not expect the former luxury Scheidegg Hotel to await you at the end of the walk! There is however a cafe and don't be put off by what seems to be a run-down and possibly closed building. The owner is friendly and a good lunch of rösti and the first glass of that superior Luzern product; Eichoff Braugold was consumed. The owner wished us a good holiday in Switzerland (in German) and to complete the day we descended by the cable car to Kräbel, which also operates out of somewhat down market premises, and then

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on to Arth-Goldau by the ARB and Luzern. The Rigi leaflet has a map of the walks and all the timetables, but as always there are plenty of yellow signs.

Our evening meal was at the Wilhelm Tell, a permanently moored paddle steamer. This venue can be recommended and is worth a visit for the smell of fondue alone. The following day was bright and sunny and a return visit to the Hasliberg Dorfweg was made. Take the Brünig Bahn to Brünig-Hasliberg and following an inspection of the junk shop, the postbus to Hohfluh. The sign-posted walk is superb with opportunities to get close up to houses and gardens with constant mountain views. A good spot for a break is the Gasthaus Zum Post at Goldern. This is itself one of the historic buildings in the guide leaflet and the Coupe Denmark was most welcome, particularly with the mountain and glacier view from the terrace. Again a most friendly welcome, and in English. From Reuti there is a value-for-money cablecar to Meiringen. With Swiss Pass the single fare is a mere Sfr 2. A leaflet with map and descriptions of the buildings is available locally, but I have only seen it in German.

The weather forecast for day 3 was not so good, so we planned a morning only walk by taking the Brünig Bahn to Kaiserstuhl, thus becoming the only people I have ever seen alight from a train there. Then a pleasant and easy walk around the far side of the Lungensee to Lungern. We returned to Luzern to have lunch by the river and the Kapellbrücke. This is, of course, a rebuild but is now beginning to weather. I prefer the smaller but more genuine Spreuerbrücke dating from 1408. This does have a chapel unlike the "Chapel Bridge" which should maybe be called the "Water-Tower Bridge".

On Tuesday, we departed by way of Konolfingen and Thun and arrived in Brig. On arrival at the Victoria Hotel we were con-



FO HGe4/4¹ no.104 "Furka" at Brig crossing the front of the SBB Station.

Photo. Peter Rose

cerned to find that we had no reservation. It transpired that the hotel had advised our travel company in German that the four days were not available and it had been assumed that this was a confirmation! The owner was most helpful and we eventually opted for two days there and two in Lausanne, which she booked for us. I then tentatively inquired about a room overlooking the stations.

Frau Steiner appeared a little surprised at this request but gave us a choice of two, which must have amongst the best hotel room views in Switzerland with both stations, postbuses and mountains. I became such a fixture on the balcony that Pat was thinking of arranging for my meals to be served there.

In the afternoon we took the postbus to Blatten bei Naters for the cablecar to Belalp and the Aletsch glacier. The half-hour walk from the cablecar to the viewpoint and hotel is easy and rewards you with a panorama of the alpine massif across the valley followed with a stunning view of the glacier itself. The hotel offers refreshments on the terrace with superb views, but watch out for the herds of goats!

The following day was another repeat. Readers may recall my visit to the Bisse de Clavau and my not taking the "Lampe de Poche" advised by Valais Tourism. This time we were fully equipped. The walk starts from Icongne by taking the postbus from Sion and then following the signs. The first stages are downhill through fields and woods until a deep gorge is reached. Here the path crosses an extremely suspect bridge and clings to the gorge side on extended walkways. Then the tunnel is reached. Last year I had to pass through this in pitch darkness feeling my way as I went. Even with a torch it was scary although much shorter than I remembered. After that the walk along the Bisse, an old irrigation system, through the vineyards to Sion with high level views of the Rhône Valley is well recommended. Valais Tourism do several walking guides including one covering all the Bisses. They are available from London.

We returned to Brig and after a break at the very handy hotel we joined the postbus for a return trip over the Simplon Pass to

Gondo. This is more of a service bus than the other pass routes with no stop at the summit but it is nonetheless well worthwhile. There's even time for an ice cream before the return.

So on Thursday we packed our bags again and set off for Lausanne. The excellent Hotel Mirabeau is a short walk from the station and we were made most welcome. Having been given a map and advised about bus routes etc. we were soon at Ouchy awaiting the paddle steamer to Chillon. This is a most acceptable way to approach the chateau with views of the vineyards and trains along the side of Lac Lemman. The chateau itself is always busy but there are so many rooms and courtyards that it is possible to escape the tour parties.

If you need to avoid mass tourism then the plan for Friday would suit. The idea was to visit the chateau at Coppet on Lac Lemman. However, on arrival we found that it was closed on September mornings contrary to the details in the guidebook. So, after a walk around the pleasant lakeside village with Bern style arcade shops we caught the next train on to Geneva. This was our first visit to Geneva but by the end of a full week our feet did not want to go too far so we decided to concentrate on the old town area and give the UN etc. a miss. Detailed street and transport maps are available from the relevant offices at the station. We visited the Maison Taval, which houses an interesting historical museum and then after lunch inspected the cathedral. The best part for me was the archaeological exhibition under the cathedral with extensive remains of earlier buildings. We then walked down to the Jardin D'Anglais with a plan to take the ship back to Coppet. In the end we decided enough was enough and after sitting in the shade watching the world go by the jet d'eau, we took the bus

back to Cornavin and returned for a final dinner at the highly recommended Hotel Mirabeau.

Another advantage of staying in Lausanne was that we just had a short walk down to the station for the TGV to Paris. I had noticed that my ticket for Paris-Switzerland and return did not mention that it covered two persons and on the outward journeys the conductors queried it but accepted that it was OK as the reservations were for two. On the return the two conductors were not so easily convinced and we had the embarrassment of being hassled by them in a first class TGV carriage about travelling without a valid ticket. The ticket was taken away and we were told that it would be resolved on arrival in Paris but in the end it was returned with no comment or apology. The rest of the return journey passed without event.

None of these walks are too hard or need specialist gear, but stout shoes and weather-proof clothing are advisable. Do not do the Bisse de Clavau if you do not have a head for heights or are concerned about enclosed spaces, or at least only do the vineyard section. If you are in the Luzern area and want more of a challenge, I would recommend taking the funicular/cable car up the Stanserhorn and walking down. Excellent views and no-one else on the path.

All Swiss walks are well sign-posted with yellow signs for wanderwege and red/white for the harder bergwege and a range of walking maps are available at most kiosks and bookshops. The Kummerly & Frey series are good, clear general purpose maps. If you are still not sure ask for the Lonely Planet book "Walking in Switzerland" for Christmas and get ready to Bitte Alles Umsteigen.

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