

Observations from a recent visit to Switzerland

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Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal**

Band (Jahr): **5 (1997-1999)**

Heft 3

PDF erstellt am: **21.06.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-854493>

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Observations from a recent visit to Switzerland

by Stephen Barnes

Luzern-Immensee (via Küsnacht-am-Rigi).

Services are disrupted over the next two years to allow Bahn 2000 work in the Luzern area. This involves tunnel renovation and reprofiling for Inter-city double deck stock, as well as catenary renewal. The section Güttsch-Verkehrshaus is closed completely for tunnel renovation and the section from Güttsch (the junction between Luzern-Olten and Luzern-Immensee lines near the funicular to Güttsch hotel) to Luzern station is reduced to single line working (bi-directionally signalled already) to allow tunnel reprofiling.

The recently upgraded line between Rotsee (north of Luzern) and Rotkreuz will take additional services. Already most Luzern-Gothard IC/EC services are routed this way but from June 97 the local service Luzern-Flüelen will use this route, as will the Voralpen Express: Luzern-Romanshorn (SBB/BT/SÖB worked). The Voralpen Express will call additionally at Rotkreuz and Immensee. This latter junction station will also be serviced by Basel-Chiasso Schnellzüge and a Meggen-Immensee shuttle will serve Küsnacht-am-Rigi.

The Spanish Brötli Bahn Locomotive and train will ply between a temporary station at Verkehrshaus and Küsnacht-am-Rigi during August and September.

Inter City Push Pull

By mid February about 50% of Luzern Flughafen workings were being operated using EW IV stock with 460 and new EW IV Bt (driving trailers). Some of the working diagrams involve Luzern-Bern-Geneve Airport services too. These latter have always been interworked with Luzern-Zurich using Ew III Express stock.

The practise of strengthening formations at peak times by adding up to 4 or 5 EW II or I coaches to an EW III push-pull set has been replaced by creating a number of 3 or 4 coach sets of Bt, B, A or Bt, B, A, A Mark IV coaches. These are added (or left behind) at Luzern. Class 460 is always at the Zurich end. This results in strengthened formations having 2 brand new driving trailers (not a practise which would seem to be cost effective - perhaps to change in June when full PP working is introduced).

The Voralpen Express - which is two hourly over the Luzern-Romanshorn route is worked by an SÖB locomotive into Luzern. Stock is hauled out by an Ee 3/3 pilot to release the loco. This then takes out the return working some 30 minutes later. This is an improvement over the practise of 2 years ago when the loco laid over for 2 hours at Luzern but still not as effective as the push-pull working used up until the introduction of SÖB Bt EW IV stock.

Since the removal of all doorside handrails on EW I and EW II coaches (to prevent people grabbing them when running for a train) a new blue sticker has also been 'invented' and added to all doors. The pictogram shows a figure running towards a door which a red line (no smoking style) through it!

An article in the Neue Zürcher Zeitung (NZZ) on 13th February reported on discussions and ideas concerning the replacement of the Rigi railways (Arth-Rigi and Vitznau-Rigi) by a gondola bahn (cable car) system. Discussing this article with a Swiss friend suggested that it is highly unlikely to happen because a cable car does not have the capacity to cope with peak flows during the ski season. It is a 'political' matter too - in Goldau there is a cable car and chairlift manufacturer - they would like to have a showpiece on their doorstep!

The Seetal line is due to be converted to 'Kolibri' (RBDe 560) operation from the June timetable change. The original series of RBe 4/4 (1401-1406) being displaced to oust older BDe 4/4 (16XX series).

Quite a few DB Cargo bright red liveried wagons seen in transit e.g. steel 'hoods' and those with tarpaulin tops; container flats; vans. Also Italian Railways (FS) reliveried coaches - basically white with blue/green stripes on International services over Gotthard.

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