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The new 'Arosa Express'

Peter Marriott reports on the introduction of the Arosa Express.

Photographs by Les Heath

Members will already be aware that Graubunden is the largest of Switzerland's 26 cantons and the Rhatische Bahn is the largest of the private Swiss railways. It has only recently come to my attention however that about 80% of Graubunden's population of 168000 depend on tourism for their livelihood. It is even more interesting to learn that Arosa's 2600 population are 98% dependent upon tourism for their livelihood. The RhB carries over 9 million passengers each year and 900000 tonnes of freight on its metre gauge track.

With the importance of tourism to the Graubunden it was not surprising see large crowds in Chur and Arosa on 29 November 1997 to take part in the triple celebrations on that day;

- a) the 25.6 km metre gauge Chur - Arosa branch of the RhB was re-electrified from 2200v DC current to 11000Kv 66.7Hz AC. It will thus henceforth use the same current as used on the majority of the RhB network.

- b) the new Arosa Express service was inaugurated between Chur and Arosa
- c) the local electricity company celebrated it's 100 years anniversary

Page 24 of the June 1996 issue of Swiss Express contained some information about the Arosa branch as part of Brian Hemming's excellent Private Railways series. To reiterate some of the relevant facts the line opened in 1914 as the Chur Arosa Bahn. It was absorbed into the RhB in 1942. The line climbs 1157 metres without the use of rack and pinion with a maximum gradient of 60%. The line winds its way through the streets of Chur and then up the Schanfigg valley. The Langweis viaduct (at a height of 96 metres with a 287 metre span) is one of the highlights of the journey. Over 35 million passenger journeys have been made on the line between 1914 and 1996. There are currently more than 11000 passenger trains annually but additionally over 40000 tonnes of freight are carried each year on the line.



Opposite: Basking in sunshine at Arosa Bt 1703 in the splendid 'Arosa Express' livery.

available on all services. The Arosa Express carriages have been painted bright blue emblazoned by large Arosa floral symbols along the sides. The train will be marketed alongside the familiar Glacier Express, Bernina Express and Heidiland Bernina Express services.

The 1997/8 winter timetable features 10am and 14.50pm departures from Chur to Arosa with 13.00pm and 17.00pm return times from Arosa. The fastest journey time is that of the first train of the day which takes 53 minutes. In winter the train will make two return journeys each day but this will be increased to three in summer.

Until I attended the opening ceremony of the Arosa Express I am ashamed to admit I had not visited Arosa. Now I can report it is well worth a visit because it has three small lakes in the

The new Arosa Express train comprises of;

- a driving second class trailer
- second class carriage
- composite carriage
- Panoramic first class salon
- and a bar car/luggage van
- motive power is either a RhB Ge 4/4 I or Ge 4/4 II locomotive.

The Arosa Express rolling stock (which is partially new bodies on existing chassis) was built at the RhB Landquart works at a cost of SFr 2,714,000. The interiors use vivid colours on the upholstery and the seats in the salon car are arranged with some group seating areas. Seat reservations are possible on the train which is designated a non-smoking service. Drinks will be

environs of the town which provide a feeling of space to the mountain resort. A two section cablecar is situated next to the railway station for the ride to the 2653 metre Weisshorn.

Rincovision have produced a drivers eye recording of the Chur to Arosa journey. The video was made in 1990 and follows the climb of an ABDe 4/4 in autumn. Watch out for the hairy sheep (or is it a goat?) that strays onto one of the viaducts causing the train to make an additional stop. The tape is useful for those wishing to visit the line for the first time, modellers who wish to study the station layouts or those who just enjoy the ride.

I cannot conclude these few words without



expressing my thanks to various persons who supplied information and assisted with the research for this article; Peider Hartli (Rhatische Bahn), Lorraine Dalton and Russell Palmer (Switzerland Tourism) Bob Zanotti (Swiss Radio International), Jeannette Hug (Rincovision), Hans Kubler (Hotel National, Interlaken) and Les Heath

Above: The 'Arosa Express' crossing the Wiesen viaduct travelling to Arosa for the first time.

Below: The old town is used to trains passing by but, this is the first Ge4/4^{II} that has ventured up this line to Arosa.

(for his suggestion that I join him to the unveiling of the 'Arosa Express').

