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High Speed Trains to Switzerland; part 3 - ICE

Peter Marriott continues our series looking at Europe's high speed trains which serve Switzerland

Germany's Inter City Express (ICE) trains entered service in June 1991. Sixty ICE - 1 (i.e. mark I) train sets are already operating on the DB AG ICE network of 2300 km. The sets were built as two power cars and 14 trailers (total length 358 metres) but these are sometimes reduced to 12 trailers. Full ICE sets are twice the length of the French Railways TGV sets. One ICE set reached 406.9 km/h in tests but initially the trains in service were limited to 250 km/h. Since May 1995 this has been raised to 280 km/h.

About 20% of the ICE network uses new high speed lines with the remainder being upgraded existing routes. The train's comfort and reduced journey times have attracted passengers from air (36% of ICE users) and car (64% of ICE users). In 1991 3 million passengers used ICE trains but by 1994 this had doubled. The average distance between ICE stops is 95 km with ICE units covering around 500000 km per annum. ICE trains terminate at the Swiss destinations of Interlaken, Luzern and Zurich. For example the EuroCity "EC Thunersee" service links Interlaken

Ost with Berlin Zoo - with a ten hour 19 minute journey time for the 1083 km journey.

The restaurant carriage is known as the Bord coach and has a distinctive raised roof. It is located between the second and first class carriages and includes a Bord Treff bar area. The trains feature on board telephones and all seats have sockets for three radio programmes and three ICE programmes. Some carriages have "in seat video screens" with a choice of two ICE video programmes. A conference room, space for wheel chairs, baby changing table, handicapped persons toilet and ICE train managers compartment are further facilities provided. The on board magazine Zug gives details of the radio and video programmes. Additionally on each table a EuroCity leaflet provides information about connecting trains, distances, times, services offered by the on board ICE team etc. Helpfully the leaflets have a full explanation in English.

All ICE trains carry an ICE supplementary charge - the greater the distance travelled the



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Die Bahn kommt !



more the charge to a maximum of around £20 (first class). When using the trains on Swiss domestic journeys there is no additional charge.

The white train with a red band below the windows certainly look welcoming as they snake into station platforms. The windows carry a dark tinted reflective strip. Wardrobe hanging areas are included mid way in some of the first and second class carriages. In second class the seats are 2 + 2 formation with 1 + 2 in first class. All seats recline and adjust for height. Some carriages are arranged with open seating whilst others use traditional compartments. The individual reading lights even in second class are another nice touch. The use of light pastel colours on the seats and walls together with mirrors, glass panels at the carriage end and uplighters gives the carriage interiors a very light and airy appearance. Where the trains are limited to conventional tracks there is a little wheel squealing and carriage shake on the tightest curves but generally travel is quiet and smooth.

The future German high speed trains are intended to be more flexible than the ICE 1 trainsets. The first of the 44 second generation ICE 2 sets (which can be worked in multiple) entered service in 1997 and are intended to be composed of one power unit and seven carriages. Initially they were rostered as 12 trailing carriage and two power cars but when the manufacturing order has been completed they

will revert to 8 car sets to be worked as 8 or 16 car units. The 8 car ICE 2 will be 205 metres in length and carry 394 passengers. Externally the differences compared with ICE 1 are Scharfenberg couplers, new pantographs and higher front end lights.

Then from 1998 50 ICE 2.2 (now renamed ICE 3) sets (some of which will be multi-voltage for cross border connections) with a maximum speed of 330 km/h will enter service. These include tri and quadri voltage units for destinations in Holland and Belgium. The axle loads will be reduced to 17 tonnes with half of the axles being powered and the traction equipment spread throughout the train. It is envisaged these will be formed into 8 car sets capable of 330 km/h. Additionally 43 ICT tilting trains with a maximum speed of 230 km/h are intended to be commissioned from 1998 onwards.

Netherlands railways (NS) have ordered 4 ICE 3 sets from Siemens with quadri voltage capability. It is likely that these will eventually be used for Amsterdam to Switzerland EuroCity Express services.

For more information about DB ICE services contact; German Rail, Suite 4, 23 Oakhill Grove, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 6DU. Telephone 0181 390 8833. Switzerland Tourism maybe able to provide information about those services which conclude and commence within Switzerland. Their address and contact numbers can be found in their advertisement within this magazine.