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In September 2002 David Edwards visited Switzerland staying in Martigny and exploring some of the less well-known railways in the area. In this and forthcoming issues David describes his trip in words and with a series of digital photographs. We start with the Martigny lines.



ALL PHOTOGRAPHS:  
DAVID EDWARDS

ABOVE: MC Nos 3 & 5 at Martigny  
4th September 2002.

RIGHT: MC Nos 7 & 602 (A French unit) at Châtelard 4th September 2002

BELOW: MC No 3 at Martigny 4th September 2002.



Our flight left Birmingham airport at 10:00 arriving at Zürich at 13.00. This left plenty of time to buy drinks and sandwiches before catching our train at 14:13 arriving at Martigny exactly on time as usual. The hotel Du Stand was just a 20-minute stroll from the station and after booking

in and unpacking provided a very pleasant evening meal.

The following morning we made our way to the metre gauge platform of the Martigny-Châtelard railway and boarded one of the latest units on the 08:40 train to Chamonix-Mont Blanc. The line at first follows the SBB tracks along the valley floor

and then alongside the road to Vernayaz passing the depot on the right hand side before entering the station. Immediately after leaving the station the line curves left under the main road and engages the rack for the steep climb out of the valley. The power collection also changes from overhead to 3rd rail.

The views over the valley are amazing and in no



ABOVE: MC No 3 at Chamonix 4th September 2002

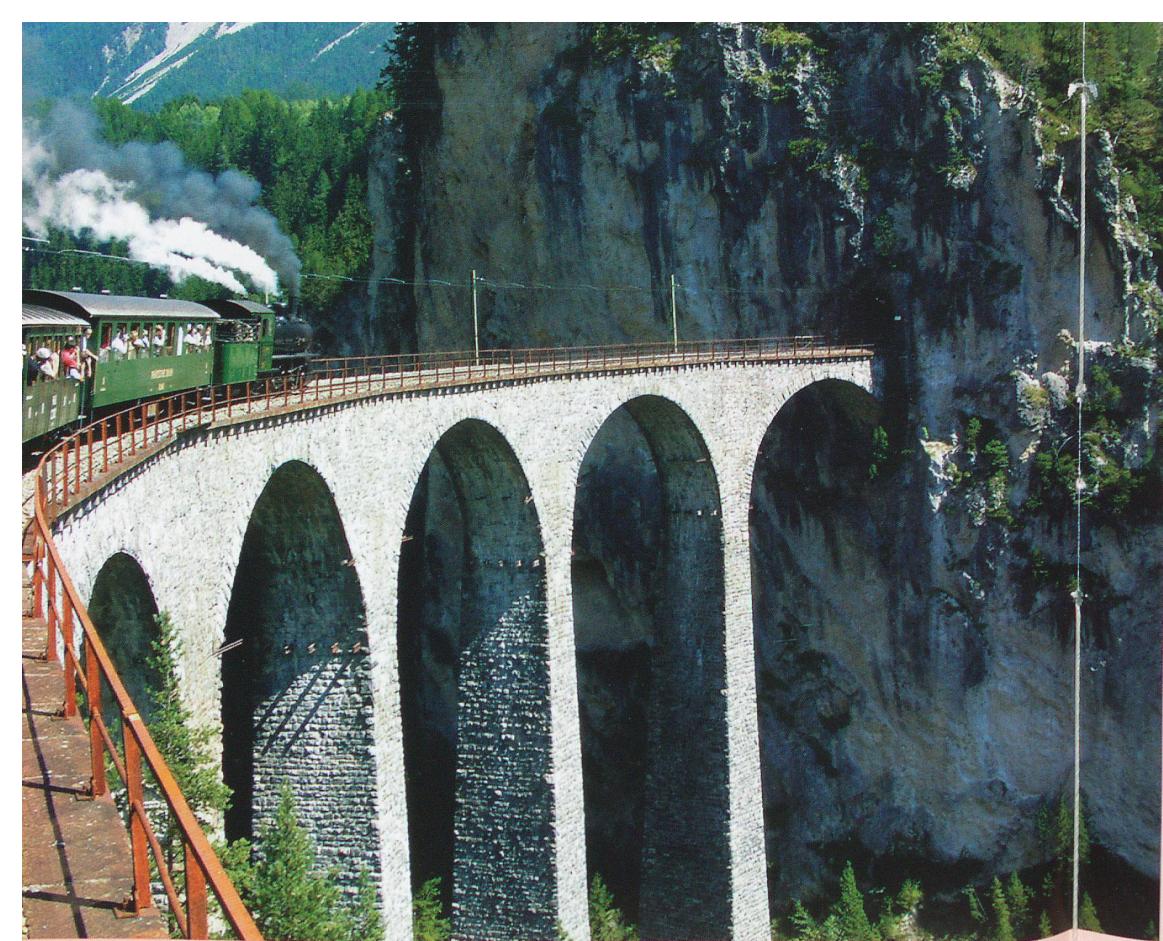


LEFT: MC No 602 at Chamonix 4th September 2002

BELOW: MO RABe 527 511 at Sembrancher 4th September 2002.

time the railway is hugging the side of the mountain as it steadily climbs towards the border with France. All the stations are clean and tidy as we have come to expect in Switzerland and the ride is smooth and comfortable. At Châtelard the Swiss driver in his smart uniform left the train to be replaced by a French driver in his very casual jumper and jeans for the rest of the journey. As





ABOVE: The special train of historic coaches and wagons heads across the Landwasser headed by G4/5 107, 22/08/2002. See the article on page 7.

Photo: Brian Mason



ABOVE: The new livery on the SOB. Pictured at Wattwil by Malcolm Hardy-Randall in 09/02.

RIGHT: The Titlis revolving cable car.  
Photo © Titlis Rotair

LEFT BELOW: A TGV crosses the Berner Seeland in winter.  
Photo © BLS





LEFT: ABDe4/4 No 5 & No 6  
Orsières at Orsières 4th  
September 2002.

BELOW: MO ABDe4/4 No 7  
Martigny at Orsières 4th  
September 2002.

soon as we left the station there was a definite change in the standard of the ride and the train rocked from side to side over the weed-infested track. The stations also took on an appearance of dereliction and neglect as if no one really cared any more. Chamonix itself is a really nice town with flowers decorating the streets and plenty of places to sit and relax and admire the views of Mont Blanc. Our return journey to the border was aboard one of the French units, which was scruffy and quite old fashioned with really dirty toilets. What a relief to change trains at Châtelard to a Swiss trailer in its beautiful refurbished condition with much better visibility for the rest of the journey.

Back in Martigny at the other end of the station is the standard gauge branch line to Orsières and Le Châble where we boarded a brand new NINA type articulated railcar number 527 511 for our next journey. What is noticeable about these units is the feeling of extra space and visibility, due I think, to the absence of corridor connections as such. In fact they are more like an articulated-bus

than a regular multiple unit and giving easy access between each car. The wide loading gauge makes it possible to have five seats across the width of the train.

The line itself parallels the SBB track towards Brig before a sharp right turn up the valley passing the outskirts of Martigny and out into the pleasant undulating countryside. At Sembrancher the line splits with one track continuing over a large viaduct to Le Châble and the other following another valley to Orsières where a number of units were stabled. Although not one of Switzerland's most spectacular lines the MO provides a very useful service to the local people and an easy access to the mountains for skiing in the winter months.

