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GET OFF THE TRAIN - AGAIN But this time go by bike!



A great picture by Steve Horobin of the FO train descending the Schöllenen gorge and taken from the main road/cycle path. Sept. 1999

In the quest to get those perfect photographs or video film much of the debate in Swiss Express has been whether its better to take the car or use the superb Swiss transport system. Whilst not wanting to get into this debate I would like to suggest a way that utilises the best of the railway system and also gives flexibility to get out of the train and enjoy the best of the scenery and atmosphere.

Go by Bike! No I don't mean cycling all the way to Switzerland but when you're there rent one. This can be done with ease, most medium to large stations on SBB and private lines hold a considerable number. The bikes are of good quality and well maintained and one can hire a

country bike, a mountain bike, tandem and children's bikes, typical cost for a country bike being SFr 20 per day with an extra SFr 6 to leave your bike at an alternative station this is essential when cycling on a downhill route !

Cycling can be done by any one who is reasonably fit and with careful planning you can choose a route that will not exert you too much, you could choose a flat area such as the Bodensee or a down hill route as the Gotthard although sometimes you have to steel yourself against the fearsome gradients! There is a national cycle network of 9 routes that cover most of the scenic areas of the country and numerous local routes maps are readily available.

When hiring your bike you have to show proof of identity and supply an address in Switzerland, ie. your Hotel, after paying you are then given a receipt which, if leaving your bike at an alternative station, you get stamped as proof that you have handed it back. After you have completed the payment you will be directed to the cycle store and a railway worker will hand over your bike and help you make any adjustment that will make your journey more comfortable.

I have found that cycling is an excellent way of getting line side photographs and enables you to get to places you certainly would not get a car and would probably be too far to walk .

An idyllic scene from the cycle path in the Kanderthal. May 1997.

Photo: Steve Horobin

