

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: - (2003)
Heft: [1]

Artikel: A new way there
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-855126>

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If only the weather had stayed like this in Switzerland. Departure from Stansted on a Ryanair Boeing 737.

MOST PHOTOS IN THIS ARTICLE
SEPTEMBER 2003 - DAVID STEVENSON

Last year Ryanair introduced a new service to Friedrichshafen from Stansted. My favourite part of Switzerland is the North East corner alongside the Bodensee, directly opposite Friedrichshafen. The seed was sown and as luck would have it a chance email from Rupert Chambers, a local SRS member from Upton, gave me the impetus.

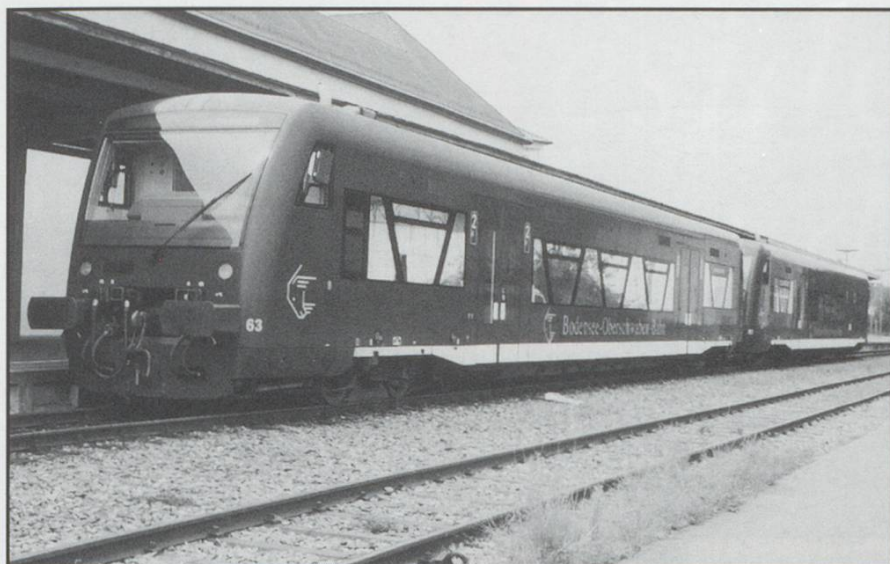
Following some bet with BA, Michael Ryan, the owner of Ryanair offered free seats to and from Germany on the 30th September 2002. Needless to say BA welched on the bet. I checked the website and there were no flights back. I had wanted to go out a few days before. Never mind. Then I thought again, perhaps there were still flights out, there were and I had five minutes to make a reservation. The booking came as something of a surprise to Gerry Savine, his wife Janice and my wife Deb. The round fare was £22 per person so I booked us all and told them the next morning. That's another story however, this is meant to be about the logistics

more expensive and summer weekends being cheaper than winter as the flight is used by many skiers to and from Austria. Some sample fares are annotated in the table.

Stansted has changed a lot over the past 20 years. I had prebooked parking over the internet as usual and having dropped the rest off at the terminal was back with them within 10 minutes. Check in for Ryanair is two hours before departure with a minimum of 30 minutes. We waited in the already large queue, checked in and went through as requested. There are loads of cafes, restaurants and shopping opportunities. Although duty free is not available to and from Germany some of the wine offers are good and we took some with us



The departure lounge for Ryanair flights at Stansted. Functional enough.



A Bodensee-Oberschwaben-Bahn train just after arrival at Friedrichshafen Hafen. Directly behind the photographer is the bus station and ferry dock as you can see below

as we were arriving too late in Switzerland for serious shopping.

Getting to the Ryanair departure gates is a long tedious walk, up and down, over and under. This has more to do with the airport and the stringent security rather than Ryanair, who are Stansted's largest operator, and have their pick of the gates. Then we started waiting. It seems that Ryanair flights on this service are habitually late owing to late arrival of the incoming flight. I asked a couple of passengers who looked like regulars and they confirmed this. When we eventually boarded we were about 45 minutes down and the pilot announced that it was an air traffic control problem coming in from Dublin. The plane was a Boeing 737 and had a lot of legroom, more than with easyJet, my regular flyer. The flight was uneventful and we landed about 45 minutes late. We were by the car-hire desk 10 minutes later and within 20 minutes were on our way. This is very good indeed and illustrates the advantages of the smaller airports.

If you are carless the station is about 50 yards walk across the road. The trains run hourly and take you direct to Friedrichshafen Hafen, which is about 25 yards from the

site, as does Friedrichshafen Airport and details are in the box. The railway and the ferries are part of the Euregiokarte Bodensee system and one ticket can take you as far as Sargans or Rapperswil. By road one just follows the signs which are fine until you get right into the town where care is needed as the multitude of directions mean the ferry sign is easily missed, likewise the airport sign when returning. There is also a regular coach service to and from Austria which leaves once the flight has arrived.

The ferry departure point is by the Zeppelin museum, written about in last June's *Swiss Express* by George Hoekstra, the railway station ramp leads right into it. Ferry tickets can be purchased from the office or from the ticket collectors on board, beware though as they do not take credit or debit cards. There is no need to prebook; you all get squeezed on



The harbour at Romanshorn. One of the dual-ended car ferries leaves for Friedrichshafen. July 2002

Photo: Malcolm Hardy-Randall

somehow. The boats are double ended like the Woolwich ferry and are comfortable enough for the 40-minute journey. We went out on a German and returned on a Swiss boat. The four ferries, two older and two newer are operated by a Swiss company

and a German company who each own two, one of each. Although the tariffs are joint there are differences in the price of refreshments, the German is very much cheaper. The prices of the meals are very reasonable and it is almost worth waiting for a German boat if time is not important.

The less said about the stay in Switzerland the better. In Friedrichshafen the temperature was 22° and it was sunny. As we docked in Romanshorn it started to rain and the temperature was 16°. It stopped as we left Romanshorn four days later and was sunny in Friedrichshafen. Have a look at December's Notepad for an idea what it was like.

On our return we had some time in Friedrichshafen, which is a pleasant lakeside town. Plenty of snackbars, cafés and restaurants and the market is right by the ferry



terminal/bus station/train station. We went out to the airport in plenty of time and checked in. We had a long wait, as the plane was late again, about 60 minutes this time. It was interesting to note that they were still accepting passengers up to about 15 minutes before **actual** departure time. The regulars know this and take advantage of the extra time available to them. The airport is very limited in terms of shopping although the café, restaurant and roof top kiosk are all good value.

Once again the flight back was uneventful and we landed in Stansted having made up about 15 minutes. It took a long time to get the bags, about 40 minutes and it was about an hour before we were heading home, this was despite me collecting the car whilst the others were collecting the bags.

So would I do it again? Probably not for the following reasons:

1. The time to get to Stansted from where I live makes for a very long day.
2. Ryanair are generally more expensive than easyJet and their terms and conditions are a joke. If



The very convenient station at the airport. A BOB (German BOB - one of two german BOBj18s at least) is in the station and a freight train heads North hauled by an ex. DR diesel.

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SAMPLE FARES FOR TWO ROUND TRIPS AT DATE OF WRITING – FEB 2003

	RYANAIR – FRIEDRICHSHAFEN	easyJet – ZÜRICH
11/4 out – 15/4 back	£207.12	£170.00
20/6 out – 27/6 back	£250.12	£180.00
26/7 out – 2/8 back	£207.12	£150.00

there is a problem you are on your own. easyJet are much better in this regard.

3. The choice of flights with easyJet is far better with many more departures.

4. It is far quicker to get out of Luton, East Midlands and other smaller UK airports than Stansted.

If I was going to do it again why would I?

1. A very cheap offer.

2. Car hire is cheaper in Germany, or France for that matter, and if I were going to hire one I would take this into account.

3. The speed of the smaller airport on the continent is a huge advantage, particularly if it is near where you want to go. We all know the stories of Ryanair and their eccentric choice of airports. Why go with Ryanair to

Barcelona when they land at Girona 60 miles away when it is cheaper with EasyJet and they actually land at

Barcelona. On the other hand if you are going to Girona or the Costa Brava it is a very good choice indeed.

I am glad I tried it though and the ferry is a delightful way to arrive in Switzerland, much nicer than Zürich Airport, especially with the Voralpen waiting there.

WEBSITES AND INFORMATION

www.fly-away.de - for the airport

www.bob-fn.de - for the railway services

www.euregiokarte.com - for the four country day ticket

www.ryanair.com - for the flights

www.loackertours.at - for the connecting bus into Austria. The website is not very good so I suggest you email them for information on flughafen-transfer@loackertours.at. Alternatively contact them at:

Loacker Tours GmbH

Bundesstr. 17 - A-6842 Koblach

Tel. ++43-5523-5909-0 - Fax. ++43-5523-5909-44

ANOTHER PHOTO FROM
GEOFF'S VAST COLLECTION

DUNSTER'S WAGONS



RAILWAY: SBB

CODE: Gs

NO: 1202020-9

TYPE: 2 axle covered wagon with wooden sides and four shuttered vents on either side.

LOAD: General merchandise with or without a ventilation requirement.

COLOUR: Brown.

DIMENSIONS: Length: 10580mm Width: 3020mm Height: 3986mm

Surface: 25m² Capacity: 63m³ Max. Weight: 25t Tare: 11.5t

TAKEN AT: Burgdorf Station on the 2nd June 1988.