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WALKING THE LINE



Continuing the occasional series of articles about walking in conjunction with the Swiss Travel System, Pete Dyson offers some suggestions for getting the circulation going and for once getting you off the train.

Remember that these walks are suggestions and not detailed instructions. If you try any of them make sure you have a map, the proper equipment and that you are fit enough. The Champagne Air of Switzerland is rightly famous but like Champagne it can be heady and leave you breathless.

Pete Dyson

TALES FROM THE TALS

Walks and excursions from Flims



Rhine Gorge, Chur bound train approaching Versam from Conn to Valendas footpath. 3.7.97

Photo: Pete Dyson

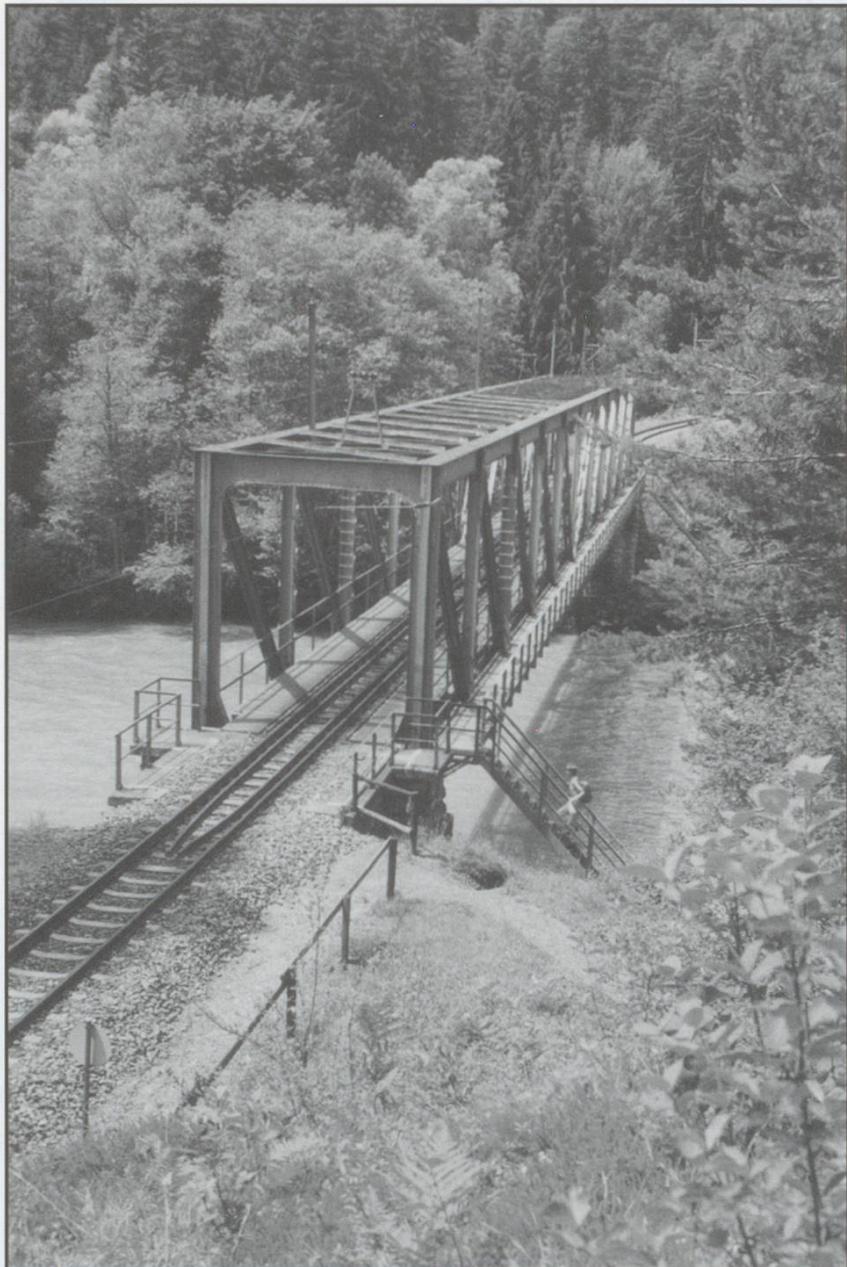
Based in Flims Dorf, one had the convenience of Migros and Co-op Supermarkets to satisfy our self-catering requirements, besides being set in glorious scenery. There are five walks described from the village and also, by using the Ilanz area Bus Pass, some unusual valleys to explore. Firstly the Dorf walks.

THE RHINE GORGE

1. By heading towards Caumasee in the woods it's only a shortish walk to the view of the Rhine Gorge to the southeast. Head east from here to Conn and then for about 1500m by taking the path to the right each time. The

path goes downhill all the way in a Southerly direction (ideal for wild strawberry picking) until it crosses the Rhine on the RhB bridge "River Kwai style." From here its 1km alongside the Rhine and RhB to Versam station which is a kind of stop-over for white-water rafters. The views looking down into the Gorge are indeed impressive and the RhB looks like H0m gauge track. It's about a 150-minute walk. Incidentally there is an entrance fee to Caumasee but you can use the entry tokens for a cup of coffee - quite a novel idea.

2. One of two variants from the top of the gorge near Conn but turning southwest one



Bridge over (Kwai) Rhine below Conn, near Versam. 1.7.97. Photo: Pete Dyson

gets different views of RhB and Rhine by heading towards Sagogn, where the possibilities are either a return by bus direct, or by the footbridge over the Rhine catching the train from Valendas Station.

FLIMS-TRIN

Another variant uses the same route as "1" for the 1500m past the Conn track, although there are so many paths through the forest one doesn't have to duplicate at all. Incidentally, every single signpost in the Flims / Laax area has an identity number and with the local *Wanderkarte* it's impossible to get lost. Anyhow, back on track again, ignoring

the Versam path, east towards Trin and then south down to Trin Station. Beware however as this station has a sporadic service so one can head either towards Chur or towards Ilanz whichever comes first. With a Swiss Pass who cares? Both walks should take the fit walker about 150 minutes

NORTH FROM FLIMS

1. For an entirely different prospective use the Cassonsgrat chairlift/cable-car. The Segnes-Hütte was our target but the path down from the summit was closed by heavy snow and so we had to descend to Naraus at the foot of the cablecar before climbing steadily up to a plateau surrounded on three sides by mountains of scenic grandeur. From here one uses the *Panoramaweg* - quite a long stretch of ridge walking to Runca and eventually Flims Dorf. Four hours will be needed to traverse the path but beware of stampeding cows at Naraus.

2. By catching the bus to Bargis it's downhill most of the way to Mulin on the Chur road. Return via Crestasee to Flims Dorf. It is a three-hour ramble but this path is dangerous when wet, especially up to the Burgruine Belmont viewpoint.

TALBUSES

The remaining trips use the Ilanz Bus Pass, which can be used from Flims Dorf Post.

1. Catch the bus up the Valsertal to Zervreila where on the opposite side of the dam the Zervreilahorn stands out like a sore thumb. From here one can walk up the valley to Canalbrucke over the east end of the Dam



Entry to Thalkirch village. 9.7.97

Photo: Pete Dyson

one way and back the other. We rated the Safiental as one of the Switzerland's best-kept secrets. Try to allow 3 hours to explore.

4. Catch the Vrin bus at Ilanz but alight at Villa. From here get the chairlift up to Hitzeggen, having first checked that it is operating, it does not operate daily all the season. (When we travelled in mid July it was only 4 days a week.) From

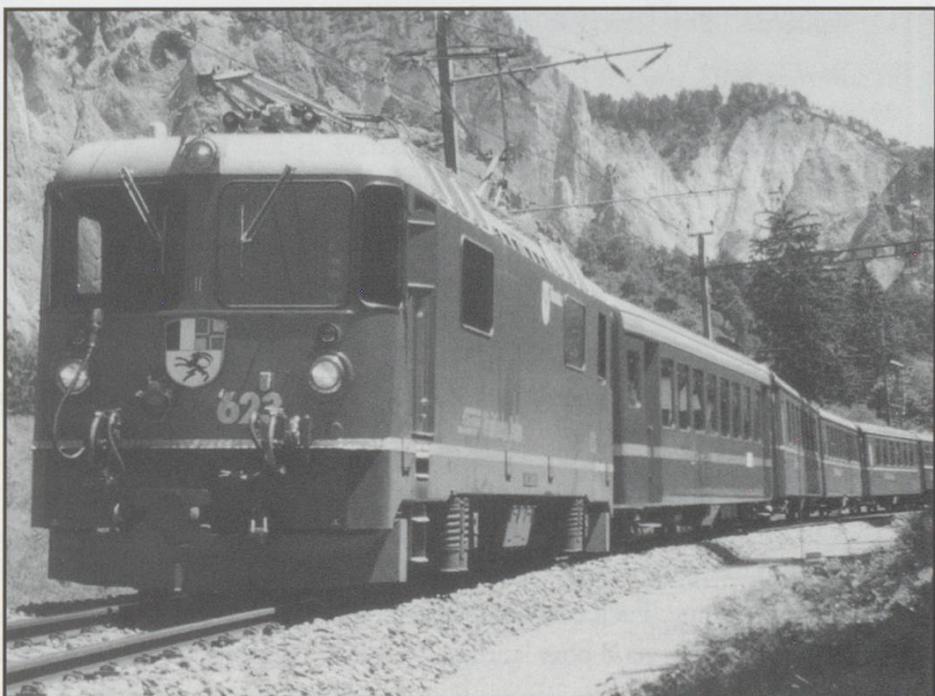
or, after an hour's stroll up and down the path, walk back into the fascinating village of Vals, itself about an hour away. From here one returns to the equally fascinating Ilanz, the first town on the Rhine. (*Note from Ed: There is a very nice town walk available from the Tourist Office.*)

2. An absorbing trip up the Lumnezia to Vrin with its skull gallery by the Church of 1675AD leads to a pastoral walk back down the valley taking about 200mins to Uors on the Valser route after initially crossing the river at Vrin and then keeping on the right hand side of the valley until it merges with the Valsertal.

3. The Safiental is seemingly a no go area for tourists. They don't know what they are missing in this unspoilt beautiful valley. The bus route starts from Versam Station although recent route alterations make it possible to travel by bus from Ilanz via Versam to Thalkirch instead of using the train and changing - why not go

Hitzeggen a 360 degree panorama can be had including up and down the Rhine, the Flims "landslide" and the Valsertal and Lumnezia previously described. After soaking up all this scenery, head west through Obersaxen to Meierhof from where one returns to Ilanz. It's a 90-minute walk but beware of tufts of grass, which can be unstable if hopping over them to avoid liquid manure.

My wife had doubts about staying in this region but was bowled over before we even got off the bus on arrival and for RhB fanatics (I'm one) it's a bonus even with heavy bus use.



Train Leaving Versam for Ilanz 1.7.97.

Photo: Pete Dyson