

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: - (2004)
Heft: [1]

Artikel: A journey on the Voralpen Express : St. Gallen - Romanshorn
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-854775>

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Malcolm Hardy-Randall

Malcolm concludes his journey along the Voralpen line. A break from his normal Gotthard stamping ground.

(CONTINUED FROM SEPTEMBER 2003)

A JOURNEY ON THE VORALPEN EXPRESS



ST GALLEN - ROMANSHORN



The joint Bahnhofplatz terminus of the Toggenburgbahn and Appenzeller Bahnen in St. Gallen, 05/98.

Photo: Toggenburg

Outside St. Gallen's main SBB station, in Bahnhofplatz, is the terminus for the narrow-gauge Toggenburgbahn, a delightful way of seeing parts of the city as it travels along the road towards Trogen, which lies 10 km to the east. In the same area of the terminus and to the left is the metre-gauge Appenzeller Bahnen.

After a brief stop under the fine overall roof of St. Gallen Bhf the express starts the descent to the approach to the 1,466 metre long Rosenberg tunnel from which it emerges into the southern approach area of St. Gallen St. Fiden station. This is a junction where the SBB main line leaves to descend down to Rorschach and on to St. Margrethen on the Austrian border. Our route leaves the station and crosses over the short Galgentobel viaduct over the SBB line as it heads off to the west towards Romanshorn just 20 kms away. From here the route is all downhill with a ruling gradient of

just 18‰ as it continues on through beautiful open countryside.

On this section of the route the Voralpen behaves more like a local train as it just stops at every station until the final destination. The first of these stops is Wittenbach, a small industrial town, after which the train is quickly back out in the countryside that is full of orchards of apple and pear trees. Some are so close to the track that it is almost possible to lean out and pick them, but the driver will not slow down!

Every so often along this section the view on the right hand side is of the Bodensee, which seems to stretch from one horizon to the other, and also visible are the lakeshore towns of Horn and Arbon lying on the lake shore 200 metres below. In the distance can be seen the southern towns of Germany.

The express travels through Roggwil-Berg and on past the largest fuel tank storage area in



Journey's end at Romanshorn, June 2002. The station is undergoing a huge rebuild, meanwhile trains still come and go. A then MThB Seelinie shuttle arrives from Schaffhausen.

Photo: Malcolm Hardy-Randall

this part of the country at Häggenschwil-Winden. Fortunately this is not the main sight from the train but the commanding view of the Bodensee most certainly is. On through the countryside the train descends all the time through Muolen, Steinebrunn and Neukirch-Egnach, until it finally crosses the Wellerbach Viaduct and enters the southern approaches to Romanshorn station. This station was, until quite recently, a prime site for studying the old semaphore signalling system, but now the whole station area is undergoing a massive rebuild and modernisation which is almost complete.

After travelling 147 kms from Luzern around five lakes and over mountain passes, taking 2 hours 45 minutes in air-conditioned comfort, the express arrives in platform 3 of Romanshorn station. Here there are direct connections to Schaffhausen, on a route that travels alongside the Bodensee and River Rhein, to Zürich via Weinfelden and to St. Margrethen on

the Austrian border. The town of Romanshorn whose history is well documented has been a major trading centre since the 11th century. The station is situated right alongside the harbour from which there are hourly car/lorry ferries to Friedrichshafen in Germany just 40 minutes away. Regular passenger ferries (on which the Swiss Pass is valid) operate to Konstanz, Lindau, Mainau Island with its fantastic gardens or to Rorschach. it is a perfect place to spend a few days and make use of the unlimited travel offered by the various passes covering the railways and ferries of Western Austria, Southern Germany and Switzerland from Schaffhausen to St. Margrethen and of course the Bodensee, all for up to SFr40 per day.

Journey's end at Romanshorn, June 2002. The car ferry prepares to cross the Bodensee to Friedrichshafen in Southern Germany.

Photo: Malcolm Hardy-Randall

