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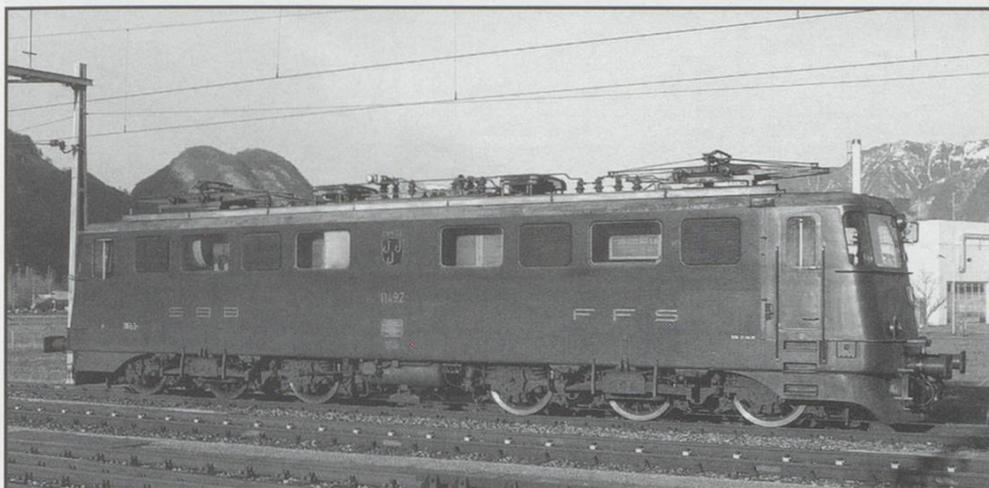
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FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE SWITZERLAND FROM THE OTHER DIRECTION

Kostas lives in Athens and is a regular visitor to Austria. Here he makes his first visits to Switzerland. The meaning of the title will become obvious as you read on:



Ae6/6 11492 waits at Sargans over the weekend for its next departure. 09/03/03.
Photo: Kostas Alexopoulos

This was my first brief visit to the Graubünden region in Switzerland. Having seen most of the MITV produced videos dealing with the RhB I had always wanted to visit the Graubünden area. During my annual holidays in Austria and using Innsbruck as my accommodation base, I always make a day trip to Zürich. This is easy since I take one of the ÖBB Euro-City trains, the EC 164 Kaiserin Elizabeth, which departs at 0839 from Innsbruck and returns with the ÖBB EC165 Euro-City train Kaiserin Elizabeth the same day.

My usual visit to Austria in March 2003 also gave me the chance to try to make a visit to Graubünden. In the period January-March Austrian Airways offers lower prices for airfare/accommodation packages and I always take advantage of this. The reason for not having visited Graubünden before

is that such a package cannot be booked in Greece. I wanted to stay at the Hotel Grischuna in Filisur, but an airfare/accommodation package using this particular

hotel was not possible. So I reverted to the tried and tested Austrian Airways airfare/accommodation package with Innsbruck as the accommodation base.

Before leaving for Austria I bought two Eurodomino rail passes, one for the ÖBB railway network (valid for 5 days) and the other for the Swiss Railway network (valid for 3 days). To the best of my knowledge there is no specialist railway travel office in Greece offering any of the Swiss travel tickets. The Eurodomino railpass, which is only available from the Greek State Railways, and is only valid for some railways, is very convenient. To travel into Switzerland I use both Eurodomino



Re 4/4^{II} 11109 rests at Sargans displaying its TEE livery. 09/03/03.
Photo: Kostas Alexopoulos



RhB Ge4/4^{II} at Arosa 09/03/03. Note the first class centre-entrance coach behind the locomotive.

Photo: Kostas Alexopoulos

passes, the ÖBB one for the Innsbruck - Buchs and Buchs - Innsbruck routes and the Swiss one for all the routes on that network.

For two of the three days when I visited Switzerland I used the ÖBB EC 164 leaving Innsbruck at 0839, while for the third day, I used the Landeck (Austria) to Scuol - Tarasp (Switzerland) bus. This bus leaves from outside Landeck ÖBB for Scuol - Tarasp RhB. I returned to Innsbruck (Austria) by the ÖBB EC165 (Kaiserin Elisabeth) train, which stops at Sargans station at 1833.

I left from Athens on Friday 7/3 arriving in Innsbruck via Vienna airport. Saturday 8/3 was spent in Austria. On Sunday 9/3 I finally left for Switzerland. Taking the usual ÖBB EC 164 train I arrived at Sargans station and continued to Chur in a Regional train. For a first taste of Graubünden I took the train to Arosa and greatly admired the scenic route. Once there I took a brief walk around the frozen lake, where many photos were taken and returned to Chur. I was impressed by the RhB service on this, my first experience of a Swiss metre-gauge train. From Chur I

took one of the numerous trains stopping at Sargans and waited there for the ÖBB EC 165 to return to Innsbruck.

On Monday 10/3 I went to Zürich to do some shopping at the Eisenbahn Centre model railway shop and some sight seeing. With the usual ÖBB EC164 train I arrived at Zürich at 1228. I discovered that the shop closed on Mondays and so, as the weather was good, I took a walk around the streets of Zürich. Before leaving for Innsbruck with the ÖBB EC 165 train I bought some maps of Graubünden.

Tuesday 11/3 was organised to visit another part of Graubünden. This time the entry point to Switzerland would be different and so, taking a train from Innsbruck I headed for Landeck ÖBB station. The bus for Scuol (Switzerland) left on time at 0935 passing through the high altitude Finstermunz pass. The scenery was very nice especially in the eleven hairpin road bends before Martina on the Swiss border. The bus typically arrived at Scuol RhB station on time and I took some photos of the station buildings and the locos and rolling stock that were there. Having de-



An Austrian Postal bus waits departure at Scuol-Tarasp for Landeck. Probably a Renault integral, the Austrian PTT operate some eccentric vehicles, having just purchased a very large number of Temsa coaches from Turkey. 06/03
Photo: Toggenburg

cided to return via the Albula I took a Scuol-St Moritz train stopping at Samedan and changed there for the Albula line. From Chur I took an SBB Inter-Regio train to Sargans and taking the usual ÖBB EC165 international train returned to Innsbruck, Austria.

On Friday 14/3 I returned to Athens via Vienna airport. My impressions from these trips to Graubünden were very favourable. I loved the scenery of the Engadin valley with the very interesting architectural style of Ardez, Guarda, Lavin and Susch RhB station buildings. If I take another short trip to Graubünden one of my destinations there will be one of those stations.

AND SO: A summer visit to Graubünden

I usually holiday twice a year and 2003 was no exception. Both of these holidays are railway related and since visiting Graubünden in March 2003 I wanted to go again during the summer. The main reason for visiting this area so soon was to take photos of station buildings in the lower Engadin valley.

Since I had not solved the problem

of booking a room at a small hotel in Graubünden, the previous tried and tested system of using Innsbruck (Austria) as a base was used. I left Athens on 17/7/2003 and, via Vienna airport, arrived at Innsbruck. I had planned for only a one day visit to Switzerland but in the end the one day became two.

On Saturday 19/7. I arrived at Scuol-Tarasp station having entered Switzerland in the usual way; Austrian Railways bus from Landeck (Austria) station to Scuol station via Martina. My plan was to take a train to Guarda station and from there continue by another train to Landquart via the Vereina tunnel. Unfortunately the ticket clerk at Scuol station did not understand when I asked for two tickets, Scuol-Guarda and Guarda-Landquart, and I was given two tickets for Scuol to Landquart (via the Vereina). The misunderstanding was cleared up and eventually I had two tickets, one for 19/7 and the other for 20/7. That meant that I would have to come to Graubünden again in Sunday 20/7! Taking a Landquart train I got off at Guarda. This station is a request stop and you have to press the

stop button before the train arrives to get off. Upon arrival of the train the small bus connecting the station with the village of Guarda was waiting. The picturesque village of Guarda is not near the station but on a hill and accessible only via a steep winding road. I chose to take the bus to the village but returned on foot to the station. The view of the Engadin valley from Guarda is fantastic especially in good weather. Thankfully it was nice and sunny and I took a lot of photos in the village. Before taking the train to Landquart I took photos of Guarda station building from every angle. I like the architectural style of the station buildings in the lower Engadin Valley. My intention was, and still is, to have detailed photos of the station buildings of Ardez, Guarda, Lavin and Susch. After arrival at Landquart, via the Vereina tunnel, I took one of the SBB trains for Sargans. Return to Austria was by the ÖBB EC train from Sargans to Innsbruck at 1833.

Sunday 20/7 had already been set for another visit to the Engadin valley. According to the Swiss TV channel programme the weather forecast was sunny and warm. The prediction was correct and using the same way to enter Switzerland; Landeck station (Austria) - Martina, I boarded a train from Scuol bound for Pontresina getting off at Lavin, the destination for the day.

The village is close to the station and being Sunday it was not surprising to find the streets deserted. After taking photos of the village and of the covered wooden bridge over the river Inn, detailed photos of the Lavin station building were taken. Before taking the return train to Landquart, I wanted to take photos of a train arriving or departing from Lavin from a location before the station. Having found a good spot I waited till a Pontresina train approached and took a nice photo of it.

Lavin is a request station and for the train to stop you have to press a button located on the station-building wall. There are two buttons, one for the Pontresina/Samedan bound

trains and the other for the Scuol bound trains. Apparently by pressing the relevant button a signal before the station lights up to warn the train driver to stop.

Another aspect of the way in which RhB runs these small request stations are the waiting room / toilet facilities. There is a very small waiting room with a miniscule ticket office and one toilet. A negative point for RhB management is that the use of the toilet is possible only if a 20-centime coin is inserted into the toilet door special lock. This is to be expected in a large SBB station, but definitely not in an RhB station in the country.

I feel I have to comment about the system for stopping the train at the RhB request stations. The need to eliminate unnecessary train stops has apparently led RhB management to introduce this system of pressing a button for the train to stop. This is fine for those passengers who use these trains regularly and are familiar with the system. However visitors coming to this part of Graubünden cannot be expected to know what to do.

Return to Landquart was via the Vereina tunnel. After getting off the RhB train I waited for an SBB train for Sargans. There are frequent trains from Chur in either the Zurich direction or St Margrethen. At Landquart though I saw something that puzzled me. While the RhB has its main depot there the passengers facilities are minimal, the same applies for SBB. I came to this conclusion, when I saw that the RhB and SBB ticket offices, together with the unusually minimal toilet facilities, are housed in converted containers. Apparently SBB does not consider Landquart important enough to invest in permanent facilities. I was not surprised to see that the minimal toilet facilities required the standard payment of 20 centimes for their use.

After getting off at Sargans I waited for an hour before boarding the usual ÖBB EC train to return to Innsbruck in Austria.



I really enjoyed this very brief visit to Graubünden. The weather was nice and I managed to take detailed photos from two out of the four station buildings I am interested in. Now I only have the station buildings of Ardez and Susch to photograph.

The two stations in the Engadin that Kostas was so keen to photograph. Above is Guarda and below is Lavin. Note the road up to the village of Guarda that Kostas walked down later. Both pictures taken in July 2003.

Photos: Kostas Alexopoulos

