

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: - (2004)
Heft: [4]

Artikel: Zweimal ist besser! : Peter and his wife Mary enjoy a two location holiday
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-854785>

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ZWEIMAL IST BESSER!

Peter and his wife Mary enjoy a two location holiday



The Eiger, Kleine Scheidegg and Männlichen dominate the skyline as the Grindelwald bus heads towards Meiringen.
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My wife Mary and I spent an enjoyable time in Switzerland this summer, doing what we like best – walking and making best use of the public transport system wherever possible. As usual we booked through Kuoni Travel Ltd and took advantage of their excellent hotel deals by booking early. Inspired by the letter from Richard Hawkins in the September issue of *Swiss Express*, I thought members might like to read about a few interesting observations we made during our travels.

Our first 9 nights were based in Arosa where we arrived in rain on Saturday 21st August. Fortunately the weather improved and, for the remainder of our stay, we only had one completely wet day and that was spent wandering around Chur. Whilst there we were interested to see the major works underway outside the station, although we were surprised that the Arosa line is to remain in the square and will not be incorporated within the revamped station.

One great advantage of Arosa as a holiday base is the local guest card that is issued free to all visitors for the duration of their stay. This card is an excellent money saver as it provides unlimited free travel on the village bus service, the Weisshorn cable car, the Hörnli Express gondolas and the RhB as far as Langwies. This was of great benefit to us when we ascended the Weisshorn, intending to walk from the summit, and found that it was cloud covered. The obvious solution was to return to the middle station and walk from there – all at no cost!

During our stay the RhB's Chur - Arosa service was being maintained by three Ge4/4¹¹ locos, Nos.613 *Domat/Ems*, 616 *Filisur* and 618 *Bergün/Bravuogn*. Trains were often strengthened with the addition of an extra carriage or two, which provided work for the diesel shunter at Arosa! Returning from Langwies one afternoon, we were surprised when the train, hauled by No.616, came to a very abrupt halt just below Litzirüti station; after



BOB ABeh4/4 307 enters Grindelwald on 04/09/04. The unusual viewpoint looks very rural!

Photo : Peter Arnold

a few minutes the train restarted and entered the station; however, upon departure the same thing happened again but this time the train got under way again quite promptly! Whatever the problem was remained a mystery, but the loco continued in service the next day.

From Arosa we were due to transfer to Grindelwald on Monday 30th August for a further 9 nights. So, well before then, I enquired at Arosa station what time we should despatch our luggage. The response was that unaccompanied luggage transfer between these places could take up to 48 hours; needless to say, we decided to carry our luggage with us!

Whilst based in Grindelwald, where we enjoyed excellent weather, we visited several of our favourite places as well as getting in plenty of walking. We made good use of the excellent train services provided by both BOB & WAB. Having said that, this year we were not impressed by the connections at Interlaken Ost. On two occasions we saw the 0950 from Grindelwald, due in at 1025, making a late arrival. This meant that the connection with

the 1030 departure to Luzern was almost impossible. However this didn't matter as the arriving train from Luzern, also due at 1030, was late anyway! We avoided all the hustle and bustle by taking the 0920 from Grindelwald to Interlaken Ost. This gave us plenty of time to choose a seat in the Brünig line train before the last minute rush! I believe that these connections are to be improved with the introduction of the new timetable.

One of our journeys via Interlaken was on Thursday 2nd September to the BRB at Brienz for a ride up to the summit of the Brienzer Rothorn, undoubtedly our favourite Swiss mountain. Arriving at Brienz SBB, we were surprised to find that there is now a separate platform for each direction – presumably a part of the Brünig line modernisation. Crossing the road to the BRB station, we managed to avoid diesel power (and those horrible stuffy & uncomfortable fully enclosed carriages!) by hanging back on the platform at Brienz and waiting for a modern steam loco. However, we were disappointed to find that none of the



Mary Arnold demonstrates how to use the request system at Aareschlucht Ost. 07/09/04.

Photo: Peter Arnold

some car drivers, when they meet a post bus on a single-track road, often provide us with much amusement!

The excuse for this trip was to revisit the spectacular Aare Gorge. We took the MIB railcar from Meiringen to the new halt at Aareschlucht Ost, which is situated actually inside the railway tunnel. The pedestrian exit is through an automatic sliding door in the tunnel wall and leads to a new suspension bridge across the river. From there a path leads up to main road opposite the eastern entrance to the walk through the gorge.

During another of our BOB journeys I had seen activity outside the depot doors at Zweilütschinen where a new low entry 3-car set was parked. A group of men was obviously

original batch of steam locos was in service. Indeed, apart from the three modern locos, the only other steam loco in service was No.6 and that did only one return trip during the whole day. I noted a BRB poster at Brienz advertising yet another share issue, this one to help finance purchase of their fourth modern steam loco, second-hand from the MTGN, which will become No.16 in the BRB fleet.

Having visited our favourite mountain, Tuesday 7th September found us enjoying our favourite bus route, that from Grindelwald, via Grosse Scheidegg, to Meiringen. The antics of

carrying out tests with a forklift to load various sizes of packages through the luggage doors. It was not until our homeward journey on Wednesday 8th September, when this same unit was in a platform at Zweilütschinen displaying No.421 on the driving trailer end and surrounded by what looked like management staff that I realised that we were looking at something very new. I have since ascertained that this is the first of a new batch of articulated driving trailers (ABt 421-425) from Stadler. *(See Notepad and letters for more details)*