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ALPINE RAIL SAGA

Eric and his wife enjoy a Saga Holiday in their favourite locations

Muottas Muragl. The classic view of the Upper Engadin lakes of St. Moritz, Champfer, Silvaplana and Sils.

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Knowing our love of Switzerland and of my interest in Swiss Railways our son, to our surprise, arranged a holiday for us operated by SAGA. None of the railway journeys were new to me, but they were mostly new to my wife, and we both enjoyed the holiday enormously.

Our flight to Zürich was followed by a rail journey to St. Moritz, with changes at Zürich Hauptbahnhof and at Chur. On arrival at St Moritz a coach, that was to be with us for the rest of the stay, transported us and our baggage to the Hotel Crystal, which in all respects was quite splendid. Amongst the excursions organised were a horse drawn trip to see the mountain flowers, a funicular journey to walk among the Alpine flowers at Muottas Muragl and another by coach through the Swiss National Park which entered both Italy and Austria.

The highlight of this part of the holiday was the journey on the Bernina Express to Tirano. The motive power was two RhB Bernina line Class Abe 4/4 numbers 49 and 42. We had a reserved coach for our party, all of whom were enthralled by the scenic delights, seen in perfect weather. Our return journey was by coach via the Maloja pass.

We left St. Moritz for Zermatt on the



Glacier Express, which was hauled as far as Reichenau by Ge4/4 No 651 Pontresina. We enjoyed an excellent lunch in one half of the two-coach restaurant unit. The last time I had lunched on the Glacier Express it was in a very old but rather splendid panelled coach! Changing engines at Disentis to the FO and at Brig to the BVZ, now both running under the title of Matterhorn Gotthardbahn, we were transported to another splendid hotel in Zermatt, the Christiania, with a balcony view looking on to the Matterhorn.

Whilst in Zermatt some more organised excursions included a trip up the Gornergrat and a journey to Klein Matterhorn involving five cable cars, varying from four-seater gondola cars to ones with capacity for 50 standees and finally an elevator. Although over 12,000 feet up in thick snow the temperature was in the 90s but with no humidity, it was very fresh and stimulating, unlike the temperature



Observation platform at the Klein Matterhorn.

Photo ©: Christof Sonderegger

in the upper 90s in Oxshott this summer (2003) which was unbearable!

A final excursion whilst in Zermatt took us by train and coach to Chamonix, starting off with the train to Täsch. From there the coach took us to Martigny where we joined the Martigny-Châtelard train to Chamonix, for some reason changing trains in Châtelard. Our journey all the way back to Täsch was by coach.

The SAGA holiday ended with a train to Brig and another on the BLS to Zürich, in both of which trains we had reserved seats.

My wife and I stayed in Switzerland for

another few days with Swiss friends, this time travelling everywhere by car. The nearest I got to the railways was on a journey to the glass factory in Hergiswil, when our road ran for some distance alongside the SBB Seetalbahn from Lenzburg to Luzern, keeping company with a very modern unit, No 520 005-0.

Our final journey to Zürich airport was by car, but I can commend the SAGA holiday experience to anyone who, like me is getting rather old, and who enjoys the business of organising a holiday being done by someone else who is experienced and efficient.



THE QUESTION IS

IF YOU WANT TO KNOW SOMETHING OR HAVE THE ANSWER TO A QUESTION POSED BY ANOTHER CORRESPONDENT THEN WRITE TO US OR EMAIL US AT SWISS EXPRESS. ADDRESSES ARE ON PAGE I OF THE MAGAZINE

FROM: GARTH JENKINSON - MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

Who owns these ex-SBB locomotives?

On Monday 2nd August 2004 at about 1645, my wife and I were sitting in a train in Potsdam station on the outskirts of Berlin. A special passenger train hauled by two ex-SBB Re4/4¹ locomotives passed us, heading away from Berlin. Unfortunately it all happened within a few seconds, so I had no time to note details or take photographs. One locomotive was dark blue, Mark 1 first series with end corridor connections, and still carried its old SBB number, probably 10008, on the side. The other locomotive was also Mark 1 first series, not blue but from the very brief glimpse I cannot now recall its colour. I'm unsure of the passenger coaches, which may have been dark blue and probably not of SBB origin. If any reader can provide more information on what this train may have been, and who now owns the locomotives, I would be very grateful.

FROM TONY ROWBOTHAM - ST ALBANS

Rail length

Would any reader be able to tell me what length were the rails used by the SBB in the 1930s?