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DIFFERENT DAYS FROM NEUCHATEL

- following the sun to south west Switzerland

Gerald Savine



'Italie' celebrating a sunny Sunday or just sailing past the Jet d'Eau, Lake Geneva.

This photo: Gerald Savine, remainder: Toggenburg.

The original plan for the trip to Switzerland was to visit a few places in the Neuchâtel Jura Region rather than chasing around on the trains all over the place. However, the first day at Neuchâtel was dull so a train was caught down to Geneva where the skies were clear and blue, ideal for photographing local buses and trolley-buses and a walk to the lake side.

The paddleboat "Italie" was boarded – such is the flexibility of the Swiss Pass – with no actual plan as to destination. After sailing to-and-fro across Lac Léman, and gaining some sunburn en-route, it was decided to alight at Nyon, a town many times passed through by train. The area between the station and the lake is medieval in places and especially attractive in the late spring sun, while the square in front of the recently restored chateau proved very pleasant.

Moving on to the station it was decided to travel on the metre gauge Nyon-St.Cergue-

Morez (NStCM) to the end of the line at La Cure. The railway, which originally started off in the road at the front of the SBB station, now starts underground at a very unattractive concrete station set at right angles to, and on the far side of, the main line station. Initially the line runs between high blocks of apartments, and out through industrial zones, into fairly flat countryside. When the foothills of the Jura were reached the train started to ascend backwards and forwards with increasingly good views across the plain between the mountains and Nyon. As the height increased the views over Lac Léman, and beyond to the Chablais area of France, became more spectacular until in the far distance on this clear afternoon one could see Mont Blanc. Passing through wooded countryside the little train eventually reached La Cure where the station is right on the Swiss/French border. The original continuation to Morez in France was closed in 1958.

During the winter this Jura landscape provides skiing but in the spring sunshine it was a pleasant pastoral scene. It was Sunday afternoon and I was amused by the French crossing over into Switzerland to buy at the duty free shop and the Swiss crossing the border to patronise the French duty free shop. I don't recall seeing a border post in Switzerland with so many customs officials! This metre gauge line into the Jura is well worth the trouble of a detour.

On the trip to Geneva the hill town of Orbe was spied in the distance from the SBB main line. Travelling to Chavornay the following day, with a photographic interlude at Yverdon-les-Bains en-route, there was quite a long wait at the junction for the train to Orbe as the timings seemed to favour the SBB service coming up from the south. The wait did enable the viewing of freight being moved onto the mainline from the factories served by the Chemin de fer Orbe-Chavornay (OC) a standard gauge line electrified at an unusual 750v. The main purpose of this short line seems to be to provide connections for both the factories at Chavornay and more especially those below the town of Orbe. The single unit train was well patronised as it left for Orbe, following the road to the medieval hill town which can be seen for miles (or should I say kilometres) around.

With just two intermediate stops the train quickly traversed the flat landscape until it reached Orbe where the journey became interesting as it climbed around the back of town to its destination. This town, perhaps a little rough around the edges - but fascinating for all that, could so easily be missed by the tourist. It has a pleasant riverside walk and long views across from the site of the

TOP. *The medieval château at Nyon.*

MIDDLE: *The NStCM train at La Cure, the end of the line with France just beyond the station.*

BOTTOM: *Don't be fooled, just to the left of the picture the place is heaving with people crossing both ways over the border at La Cure.*





A narrow street leading up to the château, Orbe.

The single unit train from Orbe arriving at Chavonne SBB Station.



BELOW: Shunting freight on the line to Orbe at Chavonne.



château of which only the tower and low walls survive. A useful leaflet guided tour around the town is available from the Hotel de Ville.

Having returned by bus to Yverdon-les-Bains across open rural country the next stop was the metre gauge Yverdon-les-Bains to Ste-Croix line that is operated by TRAVYS (Transports Vallee de Joux – Yverdon-les-Bains Ste-Croix SA). The modern two-car unit first progressed north parallel to the main SBB line, but soon veered west through industrial and suburban areas now so typical of both Switzerland and much of Western Europe. As the line approaches the Jura it starts to climb at gradients of up to 4.4% through wooded hills past the Aiguilles de Baulmes to the terminus at Ste-Croix 632m above its starting point. This community has very much the feel of a Swiss winter sports village although it also attracts walkers and cyclists in the summer. As time was short our return journey was made by the same train back to Yverdon-les-Bains to take the ride back along the lake to our base at Neuchâtel.

BELOW: TRAVYS (Transports Vallee de Joux – Yverdon-les-Bains Ste-Croix SA) at Ste-Croix.

BOTTOM: A special treat for the past editor; a rare bus outside Yverdon-les-Bain Station.

