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From David Carpenter – By Email

At the end of the article by David Adams in the latest *Swiss Express* the Editor asked for other members to share their experience of recent train reliability in Switzerland. You might be interested in the following anecdote, which shows how committed to customer service the Rhatische Bahn (RhB) is.

On 17 September my wife Elizabeth and I intended to catch the 10.02 from Filisur, changing at Samedan and Pontresina to reach Morteratsch on the Bernina line. On arrival at the station, we saw a freight train with steam locomotive 108 as the penultimate vehicle. This consist left at about 09.45, with the steam loco working hard to provide assistance. Knowing that steam locomotives are more restricted in speed than electrics we did wonder whether this might delay our train and this proved to be the case.

The 10.02 left about 8 minutes late, and halfway up the Albula spirals we were stopped in the loop at Muot for nearly 15 minutes, waiting to cross the Chur train we would normally have passed at Preda. I calculated we would be 20 minutes late into Samedan, and knowing the connecting train should be on its way back to Pontresina by then, we did not expect to make the connection. We were rather surprised therefore, on the approach to Samedan to hear an announcement that passengers for Pontresina and the Bernina line should cross the platform to the adjacent track where our train would be waiting. What had happened was the RhB had provided a scratch set consisting of a loco and 3 second class coaches to work an additional service to Pontresina. This left as soon as the original train had returned back to Samedan. Furthermore, this train was unusually routed into track 3 at Pontresina, enabling a quick cross platform connection into the waiting Tirano train in track 4, rather than the usual transfer via the subway. The Tirano train left just 9 minutes late.

We realise that this might have been a pre-arranged contingency plan, but either way to provide an extra train in this way shows the extreme commitment the RhB has to customer service. Just imagine this happening in our own country! We were in Switzerland for a fortnight, making trips by train every day, and this was the only occasion on which things did not work exactly as planned. In our experience the service is as reliable as ever. Indeed in the October edition of *Modern Railways* it states that Swiss punctuality for the first 6 months of 2007 was at a record level, with 96.28% of SBB trains arriving within 5 minutes of time. Sadly for David Adams, he must have scooped much of the 3.72% of trains which were delayed.

From John Davis – By Email

Members may have noticed in recent issues an advertisement for the Hotel De La Paix in Interlaken. Having stayed there I would like to pass on our experience to others in the SRS. It is a very friendly, comfortable hotel situated a 5-minute walk from Interlaken West Station (l/h side of the Migros, Bernerstrasse, over the first cross-road, then 200yds on the right). The proprietors George (Swiss) & Gillian (English) are easy to get along with and although they are busy people are helpful in so many ways. Would we book again? Most certainly we would.

From Ivan Rodrigues – STC Rail Account Manager, London

On behalf of Swiss Travel System, Switzerland Travel Centre would like to thank those SRS members who have visited Switzerland this year. In 2006, the overall STS sales generated a record 52.9 million CHF. In 2007 another record year is forecasted as sales have increased by 3.7 million from January to June, a rise of 14% over the same period in 2006. Thank you for your support!

I would like to inform members of some changes to the STS product range planned for 2008. The 8 days Swiss Flexi Pass (and Saver Program Pass) will be discontinued owing to the lack of take-up. The other ranges will still be available (3, 4, 5 and 6 days within 1 month.) The other STS passes (Swiss Pass/Flexi Pass and Saver Program, Swiss Transfer Ticket and Swiss Card) will increase in price slightly in 2008. The Swiss Half Card price will remain unchanged.

Also changing is the supplement price of the Swiss Chocolate Train. Currently the supplement for Swiss Pass holders is 28 CHF. Next year this will increase to 39 CHF. The Swiss Chocolate train will continue to operate Monday, Wednesday, Thursday during June to October and daily from Monday to Friday in July and August.

The supplement for the Glacier Express will be 10 CHF from 9 December 2007 to 9 May 2008 and rise to 30 CHF from 10 May until 19 October. The Glacier Express will stop until early December. The cost of the 3 course lunch on the Glacier Express will increase from 38 CHF to 41 CHF.

In 2008, the Wilhelm Tell Express will celebrate its 20th birthday. Its re-launch two years ago made this boat/rail link between central Switzerland and the Ticino even more attractive. There are 2 northbound and 2 southbound services a day from May to October. A number of special events are being held to mark the anniversary. More info can be found www.wilhelmtellexpress.ch

Finally Switzerland Travel Centre is hoping to reintroduce the free upgrade from 2nd class to 1st class for 2008, due to the popular demand especially during February– April. We are working hard with STS and their partners to continue with this special offer. So watch this space for more information.

With best wishes to all SRS members for 2008.