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BOOK AND DVD REVIEWS

Switzerland Without a Car

Author: Anthony Lambert.

ISBN-13 978 1 84162 281 1

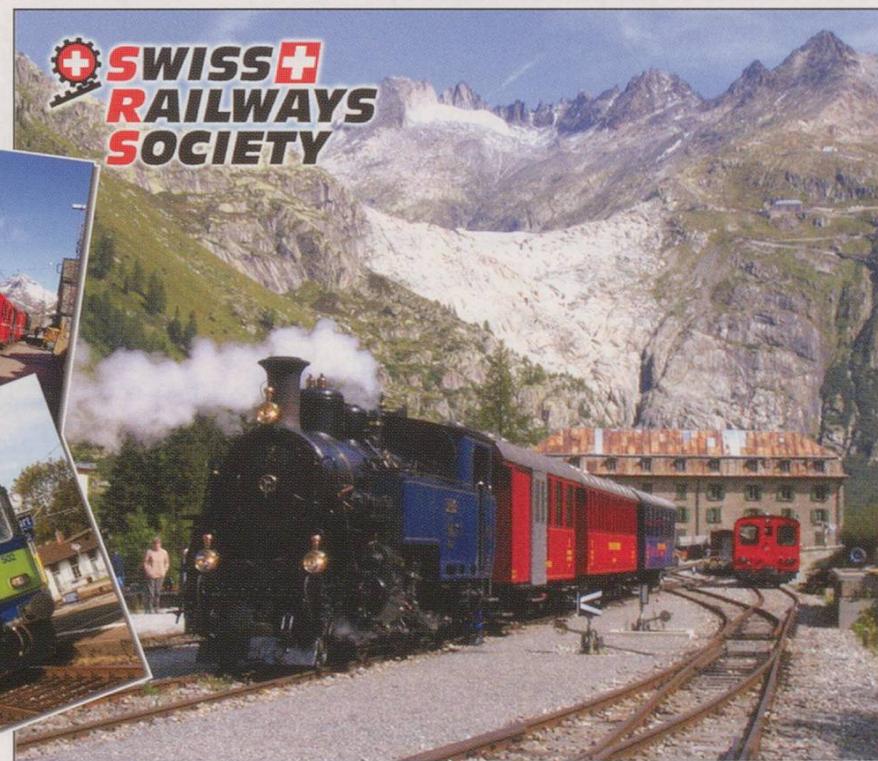
Published by: Bradt Travel Guides Ltd., 23, High Street, Chalfont St Peter, Bucks., SL9 2QE, UK. English. 356 pages, 20 in full colour. Format 215mm x 135mm. Softback. Price £14.99. SRS members who purchase a copy direct from the publishers at www.bradtguides.com will receive a 25% discount on the cover price if they quote Code: SWE25 when ordering.

This is the latest reincarnation, under a different title, of Anthony Lambert's book on exploring Switzerland using trains, buses, boats and bikes that first came out in 1996. This excellent publication starts with a general introduction to the country and its superb transport system, following which there are sixteen easily navigated chapters on specific regions and cities. There is a general map at the front of the book and each chapter comes with a fairly basic, but clear, map of the area that gives sufficient information to enable the reader to find their way around. There are also a number of pages of touristic photographs. I suspect that the introductory sections of the book will be

potentially of more use to the first time traveller to Switzerland, or for those who only occasionally visit the country, but there are many nuggets of information to be gleaned in the body of the book for even the most frequent of visitors. The sections in each chapter are keyed to the Table Numbers in the Kursbuch making them ideal for following the route as you travel down them. There are even recommendations as to the best side of the train to sit to get the most out of the journey. The author (an SRS Member) also gives some information of places to stay and where to find tourist information at each main location referred-to. That, in the fiercely competitive travel-book world, Anthony Lambert's book is now in its 4th edition is an indication of both its unique snature and its usefulness. In the opinion of many, myself included, Bradt guides are always a cut above the majority and this book can be recommended unreservedly to anyone with an interest in getting the most out of the Swiss transportation system whilst exploring the country. It should be added to the Kursbuch as part of your essential library that needs to be carried around when visiting Switzerland.

CA

*Set of 4 Coasters
and Mouse Mat.*



BOOK AND DVD REVIEWS

A Pictorial Guide to Alpine Railways

Author: Mervyn Jones.

ISBN 978 0 85361 690 0

Published by: The Oakwood Press (Usk),
PO Box 13, Usk, Monmouthshire, NP15
1YS, UK. English.

208 pages, with 143 illustrations in full
colour. Format 210mm x 150mm.

Softback.

Price £16.95. Available post free (UK only)
from Swiss Railway Society Sales - where
any profit helps to run the Society – or from
specialist retailers and Oakwood Press
www.oakwoodpress.co.uk .

Opening the envelope in which this book arrived there was an immediate "Wow" moment due to the splendid illustration on the front cover. It encapsulated what many SRS members find irresistible about railways in the mountains. But it was Italy – unsurprisingly, for this well produced book is about railways operating in some seven countries that straddle the Western European alpine chain, and of the 142 railways/routes covered just 33 are in Switzerland. In his preamble the author makes it clear that this is not a publication full of technical detail for railway enthusiasts, for this information in regard to France, Switzerland and Austria he refers readers to his parallel series of "Essential Guides", also published by Oakwood. This book concentrates on the picturesque nature of the Alpine railway scene and the 143 original photographs do this job superbly. In addition to these images (many full page) there are short descriptions of each route together with an eclectic selection of information about the places served. Example: like many others I knew about the Oberammergau Passion Play performed every 10-years but I was intrigued to learn that NATO has an Operational Training and Educational facility in the village! For those with access to the internet most of the short chapters finish with the appropriate website links. Despite its title this is not specifically a guide book to keep with you on your travels, but it is an excellent armchair companion to exploring the

railways that operate in the magnificent mountain scenery that it illustrates so well. Apart from the range of information it delivers if you were to just buy it for the photographs you will enjoy the book. **Editor**

DVD Review

Narrow Gauge in the Bernese Oberland

Produced by Jon Marsh Ciné Film and Video Services.

Running time 90 minutes.

Available from Swiss Railways Society Sales. Price £12.99 post free (UK only).

This DVD is divided into three parts, starting with a visit in 1981 recorded on ciné film and two subsequent visits in 1997 and 2009. The DVD is menu driven and the viewer can choose which sections they wish to watch.

The programme starts with maps of the area and there is a clear commentary throughout. The ciné section lasts for about 10 minutes and includes now historic colour footage of the BRB, SPB, BOB, WAB, JB, and BLM lines. The 1997 video was shot in Hi-8 format and a tripod appears to have been used throughout. There is much detailed footage of the BRB steam locos (new and original) plus a visit to the works at Brienz. This is followed by a short visit to Wilderswil to see BOB and SPB trains in action.

The 2009 section lasts for about an hour and appears to have been made with a digital camcorder. This includes a visit to the works of the SPB, BOB, BRB and Ballenberg Dampfbahn. There is footage of a visit to the Schynige Platte, and a journey on the WAB from Lauterbrunnen to Grindelwald with views of the Jungfraubahnen at Kleine Scheidegg.

The images throughout are clear and the viewpoints are well chosen with plenty of close-ups. Jon says that this production is very much his own personal view and that is true, but still worth seeing. There are a few errors which the keener viewer will spot. The DVD is supplied with a printed data sheet which lists details of the locomotives on the featured lines.

Brienzsee

Not so much a book review...



In my younger days it was said that "Stamp Collecting can expand into finding out more about another country"; however my interest in Swiss railways came through railway modelling. In turn this then lead me to the Swiss Railways Society and wanting to know more about Switzerland.

Most, if not all, of us have tourist books and maps about Switzerland which might include some of Switzerland's history as well as places to visit. But what if you want to know more? We are fortunate to live within 50-miles of Hay-on-Wye, a town full of second-hand bookshops which can be a treasure-trove for old book hunters – *and you can take that which way you want!* A little searching through the shelves can lead to books about Switzerland.

My first finds were a picture book, 'Die Schweiz' published in 1962, but far more interesting 'Switzerland - from Roman Times to the Present' by William Martin originally published in 1929, updated in 1970, and translated from French by Jocasta Innes. This book gives a real insight into Switzerland and her people. Another visit produced a 1950 Michelin map of the Genève - Bern region - with no motorways and possibly more open railway lines!

A sunny-day trip around Mid-Wales earlier this Spring ended at Hay and what was supposed to be a cheap day out turned out to be a little more expensive. We made the mistake of going into a bookshop. I found a section with a lot of books about Switzerland. This time I found another picture book, 'Gabrell's Schweizerbilder' full of pictures which I believe are from the late 1920's; going by the dress a very much more rural and possibly poorer society. But my best find was a copy of 'A Tour in Switzerland in 1841' by William Chambers (of dictionary fame). It is an original copy published in 1842! It's not a diary but a record of crossing Europe to and round Switzerland with descriptions of towns and cities on the way. So far I've only had time to read the first few pages, but I look forward to reading the other 85 close-typeset ones. How much have I spent? In all £36!

I can strongly recommend a visit to Hay-on-Wye, but don't forget to bring your money. *Or to be safe, leave it at home.*

Gerald Savine