

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: - (2012)
Heft: 111

Artikel: Sion freight
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-854366>

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SION FREIGHT

Don Gatehouse



The SBB main line along the Rhône Valley from Lausanne to Brig does not handle a great deal of international freight traffic these days, with cereals and timber destined for Italy (via the Simplon Tunnel) being the two main commodities; however there is still a lot of domestic freight operated by SBB Cargo using the line. It is quite surprising what can be seen during a typical weekday but it is beneficial to have an idea of where, and when, to go in order to obtain the best level of interest during a particular period and I have used Sion as an example. It is the largest town in the area (and the capital of Canton Valais), so is well served by passenger trains on the route. On a typical weekday, overnight Postal, Cargo Express and Regional Freight services will have delivered their respective commodities to Sion during the hours of darkness and the associated local distribution and transhipment will be well underway before daybreak. Sion has a set of freight sorting sidings adjacent to the station platforms and both here, and in the immediate station area, there are loading bays/sidings where freight transhipment activities take place. To the south side of the railway there are several commercial premises that are still rail served - although it must be said they represent but a fraction of what it must have been like years ago. A shunting tractor is used during the day to position, deliver, collect and marshal wagons and containers as required. West of Sion is Châteauneuf-Conthey where there are freight

loading/transhipment facilities with transfers to and from Sion handled by the Sion based loco, whilst at Ardon there is a short branch that serves the nearby premises of Aproz Sources Minéraux SA that moves circa 90% of its bottled mineral water output by rail. Both of these locations generate the need for several train moves each day and wagons returned to Sion will be added to regional freight services that call later, as shown in the accompanying summary chart. The activities of the shunting tractor can vary from day to day and the timings of both the Châteauneuf-Conthey and Aproz moves may not be precisely as listed and will only operate 'as required'. 

All photos by Don Gatehouse



Sion Freight Services between 08:00-19:00 as at March 2012

[LT = Lausanne Triage Yard]

Sion Time	Train	From	To	Description
08:27	64115	Aproz	Sion	Re 4/4 loaded mineral water vans via Ardon
08:45-09:17	61227	LT	Sierre	Re 6/6 Regional Freight calls, only if required
08:51	64118	Sion	Aproz	Re 4/4 empty vans to Aproz via Ardon for loading
09:10	50108	Sion	LT	Re 4/4 Cargo Express vans, may be loco only move
09:35	56475	CHF	Sion	Shunter freight transfer from Châteauneuf-Conthey
10:41	64123	Aproz	Sion	Re 4/4 loaded mineral water vans via Ardon
11:23-12:40	61244	Visp	LT	Regional freight calls to collect wagons
12:49	64124	Sion	Aproz	Re 4/4 empty vans to Aproz via Ardon for loading
13:42	56515	CHF	Sion	Shunter freight transfer from Châteauneuf-Conthey
15:10	64130	Sion	Aproz	Re 4/4 empty vans to Aproz via Ardon for loading
15:37	64129	Aproz	Sion	Re 4/4 loaded mineral water vans via Ardon
15:58	56451	CHF	Sion	Shunter freight transfer from Châteauneuf-Conthey
15:20-40	61262	Sierre	LT	Regional freight calls to collect wagons
15:45-16:13	64131	St Triphon	Brig RB	Regional Freight will call, as required
18:22-47	60785	Brig RB	Basel RB	National freight calls to collect wagons
18:48	50938	Sion	Harkingen	Outgoing Postal service



Above Left: One of the several daily mineral water trip freights, Train 64115 from Aproz, via Ardon rolls into Sion behind Re 4/4" 11275. The vans will be added later to the rear of Regional Freight 61244 that would call at Sion en route from Visp to Lausanne Triage Yard.

Above Right: A March 2008 view of the yard at Sion where veteran Class Tem" 329 had just arrived with local wagon load traffic collected for onward movement via a later regional freight service to Lausanne Triage Yard. On left were empty vans for delivery to Aproz.

Opposite Top: A brace of DBS steel carrying wagons had been delivered to Sion by Train 61227 on Thursday, 8th March 2012 and the shunting tractor Tm 232 147 was propelling the wagons along the single line that would cross Rue de l'Industrie and Route des Ronquos to reach the premises of Pfefferié & Cie SA.

Opposite Bottom: Having collected a single empty van for return to the Feldschlösschen Brewery at Rheinfelden Tm 232 147 was being eased across the intersection of Rue de l'Industrie and Rue de la Dixence having just crossed the Rhone River bridge.

Swiss Tip Good ideas and information about Switzerland from travellers.

Passing through Davos? This is one of the most expensive places in Switzerland so it is good news that there is a newly opened 'avec' store at Davos Dorf station, which not only has a full range of fresh produce, bread, drinks, daily needs, etc, but also a small bistro with hot drinks, snacks and a place to sit and thaw out on a cold day.