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Ivan Rodrigues of the Switzerland Travel Centre writes:

"We are pleased to inform SRS members that STC will be offering a 2-for-1 promotion on the 4-day Swiss Saver Pass and the 4-day Swiss Saver Flexi Pass in both 1st and 2nd class (applicable for minimum 2 people travelling together at all times). The 2-for-1 promotion is available for travel from 1st April until 31st May and 1st September until 30th November 2012. The promotional passes cannot be used outside of these dates. So we hope members can take advantage of this promotion and visit Switzerland in the Spring and Autumn seasons. SRS members can also benefit further with our 5% discount when quoting their membership number at the time of booking including flights, hotels and packages. The cost of Swiss Travel System passes in 1st class has marginally increased but standard class passes are cheaper compared to last year with the improved exchange rate. We hope to maintain fixed prices as long as possible but may have to continue to adjust them, should the CHF fluctuate against the GBP. Our rail department is ready assist you with your travel arrangements." 




Colin Camm

PHOTO: David Stevenson
A similar FLIRT unit.

Last October we chose to visit Nesslau-Neu St Johann which is located in the Toggenburg at the end of a delightful rural branch that leaves the Südostbahn (SOB) St Gallen to Rapperswil main line at Wattwil. Interestingly, although the first section from Wattwil to Ebnat-Kappel is served by SOB trains it is actually owned by the SBB.

Not too long after leaving Ebnat-Kappel on the 13.10 service from Nesslau to Wil our train, formed of SOB FLIRT unit RABe 526 047, was travelling at some speed on a fairly isolated section of line alongside the River Thur on the approach to an un-gated at-grade road crossing. Suddenly a car waiting on the roadway accelerated onto the track to be hit head-on by the train. Our driver put the train

into an emergency stop and sounded his horn continuously but could not avoid the collision as the vehicle driver was apparently intent on a, sadly successful, suicide bid. Being in the first coach of the unit, immediately behind the driver, we clearly saw the result of the impact. Debris and ballast cascaded past the windows as the car driver was thrown into the air from the sports car, the body coming to rest in the adjacent field. The excellent Swiss emergency services had already arrived on the scene and discreetly covered

the corpse before we left the train. The wreckage of the vehicle was pushed along the track for some distance wedged beneath the front coach that fortunately remained on the track. We passengers were assembled in the last coach, disembarked onto the trackside, escorted down a bank and directed across fields to an adjacent road near Ullsbach where a local bus was detailed to pick us up. Such was the speed and efficiency with which the incident was dealt, we were able to resume our journey to Luzern on the Voralpen Express from Wattwil only one hour later than planned. Following such a sad event congratulations should go to the SOB and the relevant Swiss organisations for reducing the stress of the situation to a minimum. 

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