

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: - (2013)
Heft: 114

Artikel: A week in Spiez August 2012
Autor: Weaver, Phil
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-854203>

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A WEEK IN SPIEZ AUGUST 2012

Phil Weaver



Work in progress relaying and rebuilding on the BLS main Line at Mulenen. 22/8/2012.

All photos: Phil Weaver

When is a week in Spiez a disappointment? Well if you really like Switzerland, never... but if you want to see only a few trains then any week last August. The reason? The line south of Brig was closed during August 2012 for urgent tunnel and track maintenance (at Iselle) so for my week's stay this year there were no freight services, although there was still the local 'pick up' once or twice a week still with Ae6/6 haulage. So, at times, it was like a ghost station once the passenger trains had departed. On one of the roads beyond the platforms were lined up three generations of BLS motive power enjoying a well-earned sabbatical. The loco depot was also full of BLS stock. The enforced closure enabled the BLS to also re-lay some of their main line and rebuild the station at Mulenen with single line working over about 4km. Having said all that, there are still quite a variety of passenger trains to be seen. On the BLS side there are the 'Lotschberger' sets on the old classic route via Kandersteg to Brig; Re4/4s on the 'Golden Panoramic' service from Interlaken to Zwiesimmen and other local services, NINA sets, again on some local services; Re465s on weekend relief services to Brig via Kandersteg. On the SBB side there is both single and double decker stock with Re460 power and ETR 610 Pendolinos on Basel-Milan services. For the third time we stayed in a very comfortable hotel at Hondrich, just eight minutes from Spiez by bus, via the very aptly named Siberiencurve! It is very comfortable; the evening meals are superb; the landlady speaks very good English, but its main claim to fame is that the price of a large beer has only increased 10 cents in the last seven years!

Did any other members who visited Switzerland in 2012 feel, like me, that it was very quiet? There were no queues on the Rigi, Schilthorn and Schynige Platte and a lot of the trains were comparatively empty. When we arrived at Bachalpsee, on a walk from Schynige

Platte, there were about half a dozen people there. We passed about another ten on the way to First, and had the gondolas down to Grindelwald to ourselves. In the times we have been there previously it was always very busy, especially at weekends. The lake steamers were busy, but never enough to deny us a couple of seats at the front. I presume the world financial situation and the massive strength of the Swiss Franc were the main culprits. Also on the Rigi they were re-laying track at Rigi Kaltbad, with no trains running on the Vitznau section of the line. This meant the only access by train was from Arth Goldau and access from the Lake Luzern side was via the cable car from Weggis and a walk to or from Rigi Staffel. There were also shuttle buses from the base station at Weggis to the ship station. 

RIGHT: Work in progress 2. Relaying on the Rigi at Rigi Kaltbad. 24/8/2012.

BELOW: A line up of BLS Re 465s, Re 485s and Re 4/4s at Spiez station during their enforced summer holiday. 26/8/2012.

