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BERGBAHN LAUTERBRUNNEN-MÜRREN

Jason Sargerson continues his travels around Switzerland's minor railways.

All photos: Jason Sargerson

The metre-gauge Bergbahn Lauterbrunnen-Mürren (BLM) is now part of the Jungfrauabahn (JB) Group. Opened in 1891 it was electrified at 550V dc from the outset originally using small electric locomotives that were replaced within a few years. The line runs from Grütschalp to Mürren, a distance of 4.3km with a maximum gradient of 5% (1 in 20), along an alpine shelf some 700m above the valley of the Weisse Lütschine. Isolated from the rest of the JB system it is a self-contained operation with a small depot and workshop at Grütschalp. Until 2006 a funicular operated by the BLM connected the Berner Oberland Bahn station at Lauterbrunnen with the railway, but this was closed that year due to major maintenance issues and replaced with a cable car. As road access to Mürren is very limited the cable cars also carry freight on a lower floor and this is transferred at Grütschalp onto flat wagons coupled to the railcars for transshipment to the village resort. Any freight carried on these wagons has to be carefully positioned so the driver can see ahead.

The key equipment operating the line are three 48-seat SIG single-car Be 4/4 units delivered in 1967 that carry an orange and cream livery. A recent addition is an ex-ASm Be 4/4 with a slightly different configuration inside. One major disadvantage of this unit is the main windows do not open, so to ensure reflection free photographs from the train it is suggested that at least one of your journeys on the line is in Be 4/4 Nos.21-23.

The 14 minute journey high above the Lütschine Valley offers a magnificent panorama of the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau, that on clear days can almost appear to be within touching distance. The Sphinx at Jungfrauoch can be clearly seen between the Mönch and Jungfrau. The railway has a passing point at Winteregg, and follows the walking path all the way to Mürren. Trains terminate on the north side of the car free village, from where it is a ten minute walk through

the village to the cable car for the Schilthorn.

There are regular trains at either 30-minute or 15-minute intervals, depending on the season and the time of day. This is a spectacular mountain line providing part of the essential link between car-free Mürren and the outside world. 

ABOVE: BLM Be 4/4 No 22 travelling beside the scenic road between Mürren and Winteregg.

BELOW: Be 4/4 No 31 on the cross-over outside Mürren station. BOTTOM: A BLM Be 4/4 approaching Winteregg pushing its trailer with the container that will be transferred to the cable car.

