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Swiss Visits 2015

– Farewell to the Gotthard

Roger Ellis and John Jesson announce two proposed visits to Switzerland



SBB No. 11251 and an SBB Cargo loco double head a tank train on the Gotthard. All photos: John Jesson

Following the opening of the Gotthard base tunnel in March 2016 the passenger service will probably continue to use the mountain route until the timetable change in December 2016. However it is likely that some freight will start to use the base tunnel as soon as possible. Next year will, therefore, be the last summer that all traffic will be using the historic route. To commemorate this Roger Ellis and John Jesson are planning two visits during 2015. It is emphasised that they will not be organised tours (participants can arrive and leave whenever they like) but, rather, opportunities for SRS members to get together to share each other's company while taking pictures of trains.

The first, in June 2015, will only involve the Gotthard, using the IR train service, scheduled buses, and legs (!) to get to places with good views of the railway. As Monday is usually a poor day for freight traffic on this route we plan to gather in

Flüelen on Monday 22nd June 2015 having travelled there during that day. There will be a guide available each day until Sunday 28th June, but participants will obviously be able to arrive and depart from the venue as they choose. There will be the opportunity, for those willing to put their hands in their pockets, for a helicopter trip from Erstfeld to Göschenen and back, taking about half an hour and likely to cost CHF250-300 each. We are limiting the number of passengers on each trip to three, as this will allow all of them to get a good view. How many trips will be made depends on the number of participants, as these have to be in multiples of three. As the Hotel Frohsinn at Erstfeld is no longer available to us, we are planning on using the Hotel Sternen at Flüelen as a base. Accommodation is limited though, so book early.

The second visit will be in September. Although there will be the chance for some more photography on the Gotthard, the idea of this trip is to compare the delights of both the Gotthard and Lötschberg mountain routes. The plan is to spend a Friday, Saturday and Sunday on the Gotthard, then move to Ausserberg on the Monday, spending Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday on the Lötschberg before heading to Milano for the annual model

railway exhibition on Friday (a quieter day than the weekend days). The date of the exhibition has determined the dates. We intend to start on Friday 18th September, moving to Ausserberg (on the South Ramp of the Lötschberg) Monday 21st September, then travel on to Milano during the afternoon of Thursday 24th September ready for the exhibition there on Friday 25th September. Once again, Hotel Sternen at Flüelen will be the base for the Gotthard while, at Ausserberg, there is the Hotel Bahnhof, CH-3938 Ausserberg. There are several reasonably priced hotels in Milano within 10-minutes walk of Milano Centrale station – the Aosta (opposite the station, so a bit more expensive), Sempione, Mennini, Garda (cheaper, but the breakfast is not as good), and Flora.

Roger has quite enough to do already, so please advise John by post or e-mail if you are interested in joining either or both of the groups, and if you wish to take the helicopter trip. Although helping with the arrangements, for personal reasons Roger will not be participating in the June trip. It must be emphasised that all travel, accommodation and insurance arrangements are solely the responsibility of the individual participants. The Swiss Railways Society has no involvement in either of the visits other than to publish this article describing them. 

A south-bound passenger train makes the first of its three passes of the church at Wassen.

