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Station to Station Walking* on the RhB

recommend some easy walks for the less energetic

David and Elizabeth Carpenter



An Allegra unit leads a train into Alp Grum on 08.09.14.

Photo: Elizabeth Carpenter

We are not great walkers, but do enjoy a gentle walk of about four or five miles. We are indeed fortunate that the Swiss railway system, particularly the metre-gauge lines, are very good at facilitating this with their frequent station stops. This enables us to combine our interests of walking and photographing trains very successfully.

Over the past few years, we have walked in stages the Rhätische Bahn (RhB) from the south end of the Albula tunnel at Spinas over the Bernina Pass down to Cavaglia. None of the walks we have done are strenuous and the general trend is either downhill or on the level - "train up, walk down" is our motto. However, where the walks use mountain paths indicated by red and white markings rather than hiking paths, sturdy footwear is definitely essential. Although it is possible to do the walks by just following the yellow fingerboards, we would recommend using a Wanderkarte such as the series published by Kümmerly & Frey for clarification of the route. This is also useful in finding possible photographic locations for taking views of the trains.

Below we list the "bite-sized chunks" we divided the Bernina line into, written in the direction we did the walks, with some brief notes. We would stress that these are easy walks and the more serious walker might like to combine some of the stretches or do them the other way round,

i.e. uphill. However, a word of warning, if you are going to stop and photograph trains then remember the estimated times shown on the fingerboards will be considerably extended!

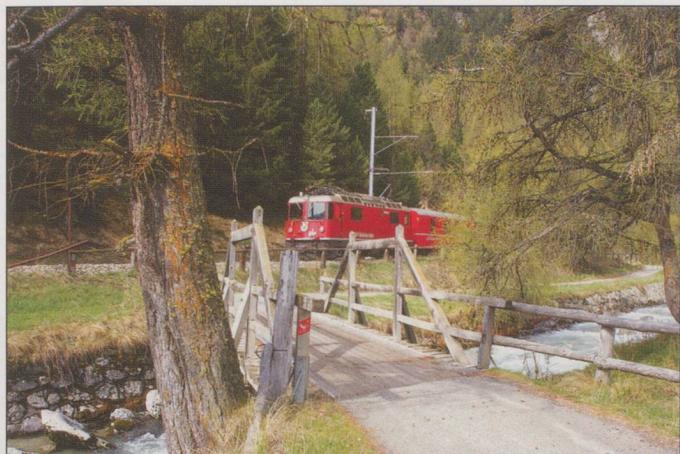


An RhB train proceeds up the valley to Spinas. Photo: Bremgarten

Spinas to Samedan. Gently downhill through the woods to Bever, then undulating to Samedan. No refreshments at Spinas, but a choice in Samedan.

Pontresina to Samedan. Mainly on the level. However, the last part of the walk into Samedan is not very interesting and we would recommend terminating the walk at Punt

Muragl and taking the funicular up to Muottas Muragl for refreshment and to enjoy the view.



RhB 4/4 II No. 619 between Spinas and Bever. Photo: Bremgarten

Morteratsch to Pontresina. Fairly level for much of the way to Surovas, with a final climb to the town at Pontresina. For this walk we went into the town at Pontresina which is quite interesting to look round and have some refreshment. You can miss this out and turn left on reaching the main road, which will take you straight to the station.

Bernina Diavolezza to Morteratsch. Slightly downhill at first, then steeply downhill at the end to reach Morteratsch. Café at Morteratsch adjacent to station.

Ospizio Bernina to Bernina Diavolezza. Level at first, then undulating. Café at Ospizio Bernina station. The café at Diavolezza cable car station was closed when we went in September 2008.

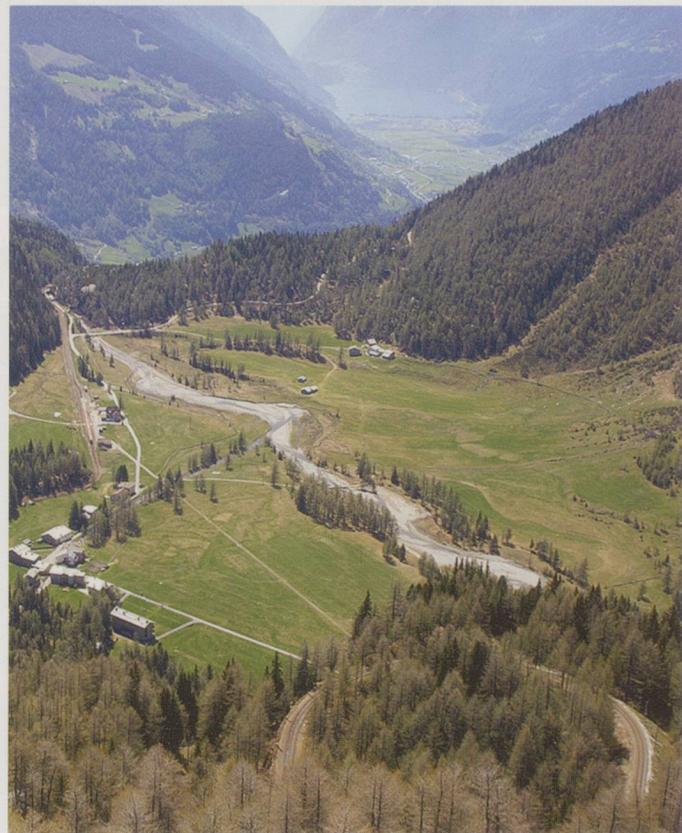
Ospizio Bernina to Alp Grum. Level for much of the way, with a slight incline beyond the end of Lago Bianco. Steep drop down to Alp Grum station at the very end. Cafes at both Ospizio Bernina and Alp Grum stations (run by the same person!). Also, the restaurant situated high above the station has a terrace with a good view of the horseshoe curve below.



Leaving Ospizio the path follows the railway. Photo: Bremgarten

Alp Grum to Cavaglia. Mainly downhill, steep in places. After crossing the railway below Alp Grum, the path divides with both ways signposted to Cavaglia. Take the higher route for an easier walk and more lineside photo opportunities. Café at Alp Grum station.

To go further south from Cavaglia would entail using a base other than our normal one of Chur due to the travelling time involved to reach the location. As a result, this year we started on the Arosa line walking from that terminus down to Litziruti. The walk is briefly described as follows.



The view from the path above Alp Grum looking down on Cavaglia.
Photo: Bremgarten

Arosa to Litziruti. Quite steeply downhill at first, then levelling out with a slight rise at the end. Turn right outside Arosa station and right again at the main road junction. Follow the signs to Untersee, shortly turning left downhill to the lake. Follow the road around the lake until you come to some yellow fingerboards, and from here follow the signs to Litziruti. When we did the walk this year there was a diversion just after crossing the railway, which took us downhill away from the normal path, but it met up with the original route near its end. There is a choice of cafes at Arosa, and a very good hotel restaurant at Litziruti.

On our walks we have found some good vantage points for photographs, which enabled us to photograph Swiss trains in different locations away from the station environment. We recommend some “station to station walking” to those who have yet to try it.

*Those familiar with London Underground operations will realise the title of this article is a pun on Station to Station Working, a method of degraded working during signal failures. It is similar to Temporary Block Working on Network Rail lines. 