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New Coaching Stock for Rhätische Bahn Albula line on test

Alan Conway and Tony Cutler



RhB Ge 4/4 III No.648 with the new Albula line coaches under test at Bever.

Photo: Tony Cutler

In recent months the RhB has received its first rake of coaching stock (with the exception of the driving trailer), based on the Allegra design, for Chur - St Moritz-Albula line services. The coaches were seen undergoing test on various occasions during early March hauled by Ge4/4 III No.648 'Susch', now returned to its fleet livery. On other occasions the rake was seen at Landquart coupled to an Allegra unit. Various tests were being undertaken with some coaches containing weights simulating a full passenger load and many electrical cables could be seen hanging up inside, with technicians using laptop computers to monitor performance. On 1st March No.648 hauled the test train into Bever heading towards Chur occupying the nearest platform. Passengers, including us, awaiting a Scuol Tarasp-Pontresina service were rather bemused to work out how we should reach our train. As the service train arrived one of the on-board technicians opened a set of doors on either side of a test coach inviting us to climb up, pass through and down the coach, to

reach our train - being careful of various equipment lying on the floor!

The new rakes are to be introduced in stages from the end of 2016, with all in service by the end of 2017. They are due to be worked in push-pull mode using the existing Ge4/4 III locomotives at the St Moritz end and an Allegra style driving trailer at the Chur end. Rake 5701 has been delivered and comprised of:-

- Bi 57601. This coach features roof windows and deep side windows on the first third of the coach, with six folding seats (three per side) laid out facing the windows for the benefit of photographers. There are 41 other seats + 2 wheelchair places
- B 57401 seats 64 2nd class + 1 bike space & buggy places.
- B 57301 seats 64 2nd class + 1 bike space & buggy places.
- B 57701 seats 32 2nd class + a multifunctional space with 14 tip up seats and/or 10 bike spaces.
- AB 57201 Seats 16 2nd class and 29 1st Class + 1 bike space.

- A 57001 seats 34 1st class + 1 bike space.
- Driving trailer Ait 57801 (not present) seats 27 1st class + 2 wheelchair and 1 bike spaces.

When we were in Graubünden we used the BÜGA monthly ticket. Although valid for a month this can work out cheaper even if only using it for a week or two. The 2nd Class monthly ticket is CHF 220 (£156) whilst 1st Class is priced at CHF330 (£234), which for our 12-day stay only worked out at CHF27.5 a day (under £20) a bargain. We were often the only people in a 1st Class coach and this is useful if you want the drop down windows open for a photo opportunity. A single ticket on SBB to take you from Zürich Airport to



Coach Bi 57601.

Photo: Tony Cutler

Chur is CHF44 (£31) 2nd Class. The ticket office at Chur issued us our BÜGA tickets very quickly, with the required details taken from our passports. Names are printed on the ticket with a 'ZZZ' Tourist code – a photograph is not required just a signature. The ticket clearly states 'valid with photo identification' (like all Swiss Passes) so keep your passport handy although we were only asked for it twice during the seventy-two trips we made.

Whilst there we noted:

- The building work to improve the passenger facilities at St Moritz station remains in progress, with the Bernina line platforms completed. There is now no facility for shunt moves beyond the platforms, and the run-round is to the same style as at Tirano.
- Ge 4/4 II No.619 'Samedan' has lost its '100-year Bernina' livery and now carries a blue-based livery for 'sudostschweiz'. Its 'Samedan' name and crest, not carried whilst in Bernina livery, has been replaced.
- Allegra Abe 8/12 No.3512 now carries an all-over (except cab areas) corporate advertisement celebrating 125-years of ABB in Switzerland.
- All of the Abe 4/4 II railcars Nos.51-56 are now in red RhB fleet livery without all-over advertisements.
- Remaining members of the Ge 4/4 I fleet were seen during our visit - Nos.605 & 610 at Samedan on 2nd March, and No.603 seen through the doors of the Landquart roundhouse on 3rd March.
- All seven Ge6/6 locomotives were noted during our stay normally hauling freights, but surprisingly Nos. 702 and 707 were also seen on a number of occasions working Chur-St Moritz passenger services. 

1. Coach Bi 57401. 2. Coach Bi 57001. Photos: Tony Cutler
 3. RhB Ge 4/4" No.619 'Samedan' shows off its new advert livery having replaced the 100 year Bernina celebration livery previously carried at Scuol Tarasp on 27 February 2016.
 4. Allegra unit 3512 at Klosters Platz on 2 March 2016 in an advertising livery for ABB celebrating 125 years in Switzerland.
 5. RhB Ge 4/4" No.613 'Domat Ems' heads towards Trin with more Valser water for the distribution depot at Untervaz Trimmis on 24 February 2016.

