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Autor: Nalpanis, Philip
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Walking with the RhB – Part 1

Philip Nalpanis introduces some more (energetic) walks in the Upper Engadin



Alp Grüm from Sassal Mason along Walk 3.

All photos: Philip Nalpanis

I've stayed in Pontresina several times and done many walks in that area using the RhB and other local transport. Following David and Elizabeth Carpenter's article 'Station to Station Walking on the RhB' in *Swiss Express* 121 (March 2015), I'd like to suggest some walks for the more energetic. Not all follow the RhB lines but some do provide opportunities to photograph the trains along the route of the walk. All start and/or finish at RhB stations; some also use the excellent network of local and post buses.

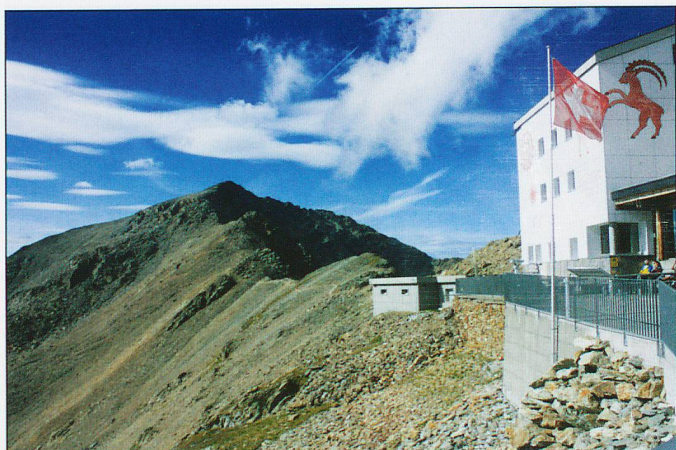
First of all, though, another walk in the spirit of the Carpenters' article – downhill most of the way!

Preda to Bergün/Bravuogn, Filisur and the Landwasser Viaduct. A new route has been created following the railway, the 'Bahnlehrpfad' ('railway teaching path') – this appears on the yellow signposts. At intervals along the route are boards (in German and English) telling the story of the Albula line and the people who built it. The first section gives opportunities to photograph trains on the Albula viaducts, or emerging from the tunnels. Allow about 2 hours to Bergün/Bravuogn, about 3-hours on to Filisur (this stretch includes a detour to a viewpoint above the railway), and a further couple of hours to the Landwasser viaduct and back to Filisur. You could split this walk over 2 or 3 days and include a visit to the excellent 'Bahnmuseum Albula' at Bergün/Bravuogn.

For the remaining walks you should be suitably dressed and equipped. Take note of local weather forecasts and plan accordingly: being on a mountain in a thunderstorm is "déconseillé" as the French say! Also take a map, preferably one with main paths (those signposted) overprinted in red. If possible always let someone else know what you are about to attempt as accidents unfortunately can happen.

1. From Bernina Diavolezza - Munt Pers. Surely one of the easiest 3000m summits in the Alps! Train to Bernina Diavolezza, then the cable car. From the top station turn right and it's a bit over an hour's walk to the summit of Munt Pers, Mixed RegioExpress and Glacier Express crossing Albula II viaduct.





Munt Pers from Diavolezza.

mostly on a good path but with a couple of rocky sections (one short, one longer). Return by the same route and stop for a while at the Diavolezza refuge to drink in the stunning views of Piz Palü and Piz Bernina. Be warned, the price of drinks of the liquid kind here matches the altitude! You could walk up to Diavolezza, and/or down from it, but it's a rather desolate valley spoilt by the "ironmongery" of the cablecar pylons and by a bulldozed track, so I don't recommend it.



Piz Palü and Pers Glacier from Munt Pers.

2. From Bernina Lagalb - Piz Lagalb. From Bernina Lagalb cross the road and take the slowly ascending path up the lonely Val Minor to Lej Minor. Continue on the path to a col, then climbing and descending a short way. After passing two small lakes, turn left towards Ospizio Bernina and the station.




Val Minor.



Lej Minor.



Train by Lago Bianco, near Bernina Ospizio.

3. From Ospizio Bernina - Lagh da Caralin, Lagh da Palü and Cavaglia. From Ospizio Bernina station, follow the path south eastwards alongside Lago Bianco and the railway to the end of the lake. Cross the dam, descend the steps at the far end and turn left to climb a track to the Sassal Mason refuge. This is a good place for a coffee, with a splendid view down to Alp Grüm and the horseshoes of the line below it, looking for all-the-world like a model railway. Follow the path beyond the refuge, ignoring the turning left towards Alp Grüm, until you reach Lagh da Caralin, which has formed in recent years at the foot of the glacier. Continue to Lagh da Palü and then descend to Cavaglia station (alternatively, re-ascend steeply to Alp Grüm if still feeling energetic). 



Train by Lago Bianco.

Four more walks follow in the next edition of *Swiss Express*.