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Stoos – seeking the Stoosbahn!

Tony Bagwell



Eventually we found the new funicular, here approaching the top station.

All photos: Tony Bagwell

Knowing about the new funicular to Stoos from the March edition of *Swiss Express*, and spending two weeks in Bern with our daughter, it seemed a good chance for a visit. Using the SBB, normally excellent online timetable I planned this trip by train, Bern - Zurich - Zug - Brunnen and then bus. Sure enough all worked well, a bus was waiting at Brunnen, and off we went. However instead of ending up at the new funicular we were dropped off at an un-manned cable car. I didn't realise that there was an alternative route to Stoos! Several other people had also arrived with us, and from what we could make out from our limited French and German, they too were expecting

the 'nouveau', or 'neu', funicular. Eventually we risked riding up using our Swiss Pass, which fortunately turned out to be valid when we reached the manned top station. Explaining that we wanted to walk to the new funicular, we were given tickets and off we went. Stoos was very quiet, with the various buildings well spread out on the mountain, not the expected 'old-world' Swiss mountain village. There was the usual plethora of Wander Weg signs, some pointing to the funicular. The next problem was that they sent us to the old funicular! We could find no signs at all to the new one and the large maps on display weren't of any use in locating the multi-million franc construction. Eventually, having walked



ABOVE: The cable car that we unexpectedly arrived at – definitely not the new funicular.


RIGHT: The signs still point to the old dis-used funicular.



in what appeared a logical direction, more by luck than judgement, we found the top station. All very un-Swiss.

The trips down were scheduled at 10 and 40 minutes past the hour. By now it was just after 12:20 and the fancy new electronic timetable board showed departures in 2 and 17 minutes, apparently an additional one at 12:25 was standing at the platform. We joined the few others waiting.... and waited... and waited, but the automatic doors stayed firmly shut until just before the 12:40 trip. We boarded the lower-most 'cylinder' (which already had a large crack in one of the main curved glass panels) for the ride down. Personally I did not find it as spectacular as I was expecting, and we'd come a long way for a 4-minute ride. I could not fault the magnificent Swiss engineering that has gone in to the building of the line, the novel design, and its execution. However, the few francs needed to correct the signs and provide accurate timing information would finish the project, and prevent others having a frustrating visit. Later we realised that the SBB online journey planner had sent us via Brunnen for the Morschach – Stoos connection, whereas the connecting bus to the Stoosbahn leaves from Schwyz!

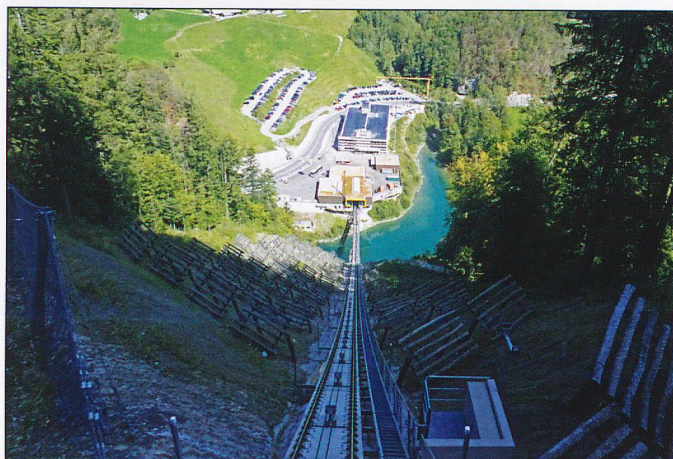
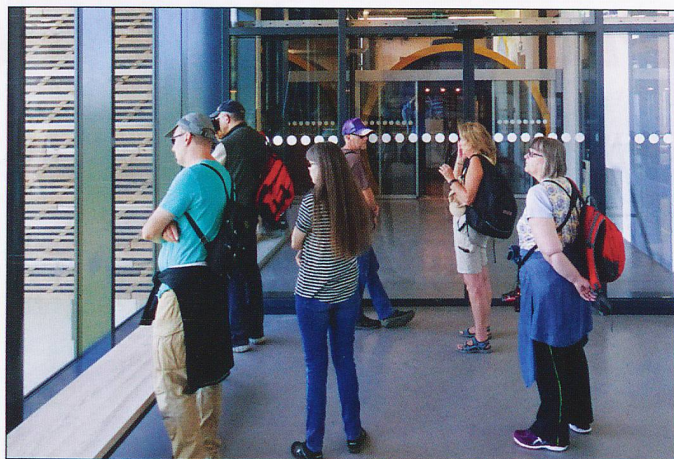
... and the silence of Stoos.

In a recent television travel programme comedian Frank Skinner rode up the new Stoosbahn. Although his commentary was intentionally humorous the photography did show this steeply graded route and its ingenious passenger accommodation in excellent detail. At the top, whilst commenting that Stoos was a scattered, car free (and deserted) community Skinner was filmed standing in an alpine meadow occupied by a herd of typical Swiss cattle all wearing the requisite bell. As he noted, car free does not necessarily mean quiet and peaceful! At the end of the piece his parting comment was *"Do all Swiss cows think that they suffer from incurable tinnitus?"* 

TOP: Some of the passengers awaiting the announced service that did not materialise.

MIDDLE: Exiting the bottom tunnel we are on the steepest part of the ride.

RIGHT: Approaching the base station across the lake.



ABOVE: Stoos itself is pleasant but not your traditional Swiss village – rather spread out.

RIGHT: Looking back up the new funicular track, the view we had expected to see when we arrived.