

Letters

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year 1957. A brief history of the particular company is given along with an explanation of the locomotive photograph under which it appears, including the name of the builder, works number and year of construction of the locomotive.

All SBB locos are shown in the front section of the book and listed by the major towns that they were based in. The photographs are mainly of locomotives at work with one or two hauling latter day specials, many photographs show old stock as well as visiting items such as the diesel unit of the SNCF with the roof mounted cabs. There are views of the old station in Bern along with coaching and freight stock that is now gone but not forgotten. Not to be forgotten are the replica and museum locomotives also covered. The section covering the Gotthard is split into the North ramp, Tessin, Chiasso and the Luino line. There are some spectacular views of the steam snow plough in action in and around the Göschenen station area being assisted by C 5/6 locos and of the diesel rotary snowplough Xrotm 99 being helped by an Ae 4/6 and C 5/6s' removing about a metre of snow off the line. Even the final days of the SBB steam loco are covered with views of some of the locomotives awaiting the breakers torch or being broken up.

After the SBB coverage comes the portrayal of the private railways with the various locomotives that were employed by them. Look out for the section on the Sursee - Triengen railway that shows views of their E 3/3 loco and the electrically powered SBB E 3/3 steam locomotive no 8521. For the editor of the *Swiss Express* Journal and other fans of the Bodensee Toggenburg are views of the steam festival that took place in 1965. In the SOB section are several views of the Knie Circus train hauled by a single Eb 3/5 with two Ec 3/5s as bankers. At the end of the book are views showing the German BR 03s, BR 23 hauling specials in Switzerland and those giants of the SNCF the 241P at Vallorbe and the SNCF 141 R 1244 on a special on the Gotthard.

The author Peter Willen admits that he caught the railway virus way back in 1948 and has had a very keen interest in the railways since that date which shows in the quality of the photographs used in the book. He has been involved with the railway industry throughout his working life. For the fan who enjoys looking at good photographs and studying the stock portrayed, this a book to have.

MH-R

LETTERS

FROM: A MEMBER (NAME AND ADDRESS SUPPLIED)

Swiss Pass at the Transport Museum

Although in the announcement in the March 2006 *Swiss Express* regarding the Swiss Pass it is noted that the pass is not valid for the Transport Museum in Luzern my experience is different.

I heard indirectly from a Tour Company representative in Luzern that the Swiss Pass *IS* valid for free entry to the Transport Museum. Subsequently visiting the Museum myself on 15 May 2006 I was readily assured that the Pass is indeed valid and I was given an entry ticket marked "Swiss Pass" and was waved through.

Although I knew of the 7% discount offer I actually bought my pass on arrival in Basel, rather than from London, but this shouldn't make any difference. I thought that it would be helpful to members if this could be clarified in the next issue.

FROM: GILES BAKER – BY EMAIL

Three items

1. Obtaining the Kursbuch

I usually buy one on Day 1 of my holiday in Switzerland. However you cannot now get the bus section over the counter and as I do not only travel by train this is inconvenient. The answer clearly is to follow the

advice on Page 3 of the March 2006 *Swiss Express* - or maybe members should lend their copies out at Branch Meetings to help with advance planning. I will offer mine at the East Midlands Branch! I guess that members may often plan trips whilst in Switzerland where the Internet is not freely available to them so a hard copy is useful.

2. Regional Passes

The offer on the Swiss Pass in the March 2006 *Swiss Express* notwithstanding, if you do not do a lot of country-wide travel in Switzerland Regional Passes can be excellent value - and they often cover more cable cars than the Swiss Pass does. The Lake Geneva one (which starts at SFr155 1st Class and is also available 2nd Class) covers you as far as Lenk free, with reductions on to Interlaken <www.mob.ch>. The Oberwallis Regional Pass that starts at SFr89 and covers you free to Disentis, with reductions to Chur, is also good value <www.mgbahn.ch>. There is also a Regional Pass for the Ticino. If you are going to the Oberwallis and Ticino, why not fly to Milan? The fare to Domodossola is only 11.50 Euro return!

3. Train vs Plane

David Stevenson made a comment in the December 2005 *Swiss Express* on the 'Train v Plane' debate that he had never received a refund for a late running train. In this April's *Via* magazine there was a comment about a Pan European scheme under which refunds must be given for delayed international journeys. I suggest that if readers do face such a delay they write to the ticket issuing company and ask for details of the scheme. However, my experience of delays of over an hour on international trains is that the occurrence is well under 1%!

FROM: RICO SIGNORE - BY EMAIL

PostAuto experience

George Hoekstra's article "100 Years of PostAuto" in the March 2006 *Swiss Express* reminded me of an interesting experience on my recent visit to Switzerland. For a moment, during the exchange detailed below, I had visions of travelling by a horse drawn carriage - like the famous painting of the Gotthard stagecoach by the Swiss painter Rudolf Koller!

In March of every year my skiing destination is Saas Fee in the Canton Valais and as my sister lives near Basel I make this my intermediate stop en route. Consulting the connections on the Internet I re-discovered that the quickest way from Basel to Saas Fee was by train to Goppenstein and thence by PostAuto to Saas Fee - a connection that is only available on Saturdays during the winter season. The big "R" in the Kursbuch signified compulsory reservation, giving a contact telephone number. No problem! I rang the number two days before my travel date, only to be told by a man with a very calm and quaint Valaisan voice: "Please remain in your seat at Goppenstein and carry on to Brig to board the postal coach for Saas Fee". "But", I objected, "I wish to travel from Goppenstein to Saas Fee by your service in order to shorten my journey time".

Just as well I have some experience of the Valaisan dialect. He then went on to explain that this service was only a trial one (I just happened to know that this service has been in the timetable for at least the last five years) and, once the NEAT is opened (i.e. the Lötschberg base tunnel connection), it will be discontinued anyway.

He also went on to say that these services only operate on Saturdays "But I am requesting a reservation for next Saturday" I noted. "Sorry, the service you wish to travel on is already fully booked, so please do not get out of the train at Goppenstein, stay in your seat and continue to Brig where, on the town side of the station, you will find your postal coach service to Saas Fee". Since I had absolutely no wish to waste time at Goppenstein I dutifully remained glued to my seat until Brig. However, there was a bonus awaiting - obviously expecting quite a lot of passengers (due to a cancelled Goppenstein coach?) an express PostAuto service was laid on, stopping only twice between Brig and Saas Fee, saving around 20 minutes in travelling time.

Incidentally, no doubt with NEAT in mind (see above), Visp Station has already been moved and is now much closer to the PostAuto station in Visp a move that cuts a tiresome 7 minute walk to less than 2 minutes.