

The Fondue tram of Bern

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Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal**

Band (Jahr): - **(2007)**

Heft 76 [i.e. 92]

PDF erstellt am: **23.07.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-854761>

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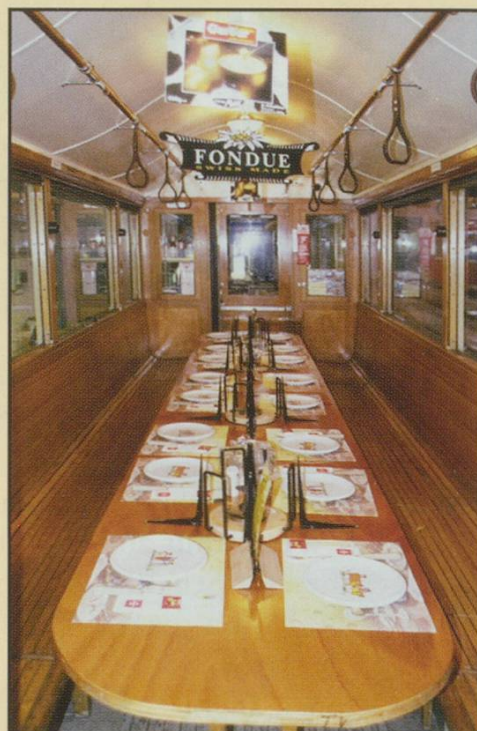
THE FONDUE TRAM OF BERN

Keith Scotland



The Fondue tram lit up and full of expectant passengers ready for its journey.

The table is set ready for the passengers to enjoy a pleasant evening ride through Bern. PHOTOS: Keith Scotland



There always appears to be a great co-operation between the official transport organisations and the enthusiast societies in Switzerland. This is typified by the operation of the Fondue Tram in Bern. The vehicle is part of the historical collection of Bern Mobil, the municipal transport authority. The fondue operation is run by the Tramverein Bern (TVB), who also provide the crew. The experience is one that should not be missed.

The tram is garaged at the old Burgernziel Depot. This is also the headquarters of the TVB, who rent part of the office block. It is rumoured that the whole depot will be closed and the site redeveloped in the next year or two. This will give the TVB a problem, not only of finding another meeting place, but also of housing the collection of old trams, buses and trolleybuses.

Every Tuesday and Thursday evening, and some Friday evenings, the Fondue Tram is prepared by the members of the TVB. At 18.30 the guests climb aboard and the tram sets off to run to Saali. Here it runs round the turning loop and back it goes to Burgernziel. During this short run, of about 15 minutes, "apéros" are served, with nibbles. On the return to the depot, TVB members then bring steaming cauldrons of freshly made fondue to the tram. Once safely installed on the table, the tram sets off again to run right through

the old town. The trip ends at 21.00. It is a marvellous, fairy tale sight to see the old tram, with its lights along the roof, gaily running through the streets in amongst all the service trams and the cars, with the passengers enjoying their meal.

As you can see from the photograph, the seats are longitudinal, so Verein members are on hand at both end platforms to serve the bread, and the drinks. The trip is very popular, and is an excellent way to unwind after a day's work.

The trip costs SFr 38.50 per head for fondue and dessert and is limited to 16 passengers, although 32 can be carried by using two trams. It is possible to hire the whole tram. Reservations are made via the Anzeiger Region Bern from 09.30 to 12.30 on 00 41 31 385 1244. There is a good web site with pictures of the tram at www.trittbrett.ch/tvb/fonduetram

The four-axle, four-motor tram, No.145, was constructed in 1935 by SIG MFO and, needless to say, it is kept in spotless condition. When not on the fondue run there are normally seats for 24 passengers along with 56 standees. It is 11.95 m long overall, 2 m wide, weighs 17.7 tonnes, and is equipped with hand, electric and rail brakes.