

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: - (2014)
Heft: 120

Artikel: Switzerland for the first time
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-854160>

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Switzerland for the first time

Simon Moore



TOP: A Luzern bound Golden Pass Express stops beside the lake at Brienz. LEFT: Old and new BLS locos head a car transporter train through Frutigen. RIGHT: An Re4/4^{II} No. 11109 heads home to Switzerland at Domodossola. ALL PHOTOS: Simon Moore

I was no different in choosing the destination for my first Swiss holiday than many before me, so in September 2013 I based myself in Interlaken in the Bernese Oberland region of Switzerland. I had planned my holiday so I could fit in trips to the Jungfrauoch, Schilthorn, and Luzern plus taking a boat ride on the paddle steamers on one of the lakes. As a lifelong railway enthusiast I decided to include a day-out photographing trains as part of my holiday.

After arriving at Zürich I boarded a Re460 bound for Bern and straight away I was enjoying a very scenic journey, and like any rail enthusiast my eyes were drawn straight to any yards that was passed to catch a glimpse of any locos that were about. My first day included a trip on Lake Brienz on the paddle steamer 'Lötschberg' that would celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2014. On reaching Brienz I watched the 'Golden Pass' train hauled by a Zentralbahn De4/4 arrive into the station on its way to Luzern, which was soon to become a rare sight. Not knowing what was at Brienz I soon saw steam on the horizon and headed for the Brienz-Rothorn Bahn station for a trip up the Rothorn, this very enjoyable day becoming a real highlight of my holiday. After a full day trip up the Jungfrauoch I was ready for a rest day so I headed for Frutigen. At Spiez, whilst waiting for a connecting train, I noticed a large number of vintage locomotives in the sidings to the rear of the station. After a chat with a BLS driver he informed me that over that weekend the BLS were having their 100-year celebrations on the south ramp of the Lötschberg Tunnel. Having boarded the train for Frutigen

I had already decided that I had to attend this celebration and felt very lucky to have booked my holiday when I did. Frutigen was a great day out with plenty of passenger and freight services along with scorching weather. I had planned a full day here but cut it to 3-hours because the sun certainly got the better of me, and decided to head back for a nice lazy afternoon in a beer garden!

As a newcomer to Switzerland, and having read about the beautiful journey over the Brünig line I headed off to Luzern on another day - a highly recommended trip. Whilst at Luzern I also visited the world-renowned Swiss Transport Museum, the Verkehrshaus, and enjoyed its massive collection of railway items, as well as planes, cars and other transport items. Having had the BLS driver tell me about the Lötschberg celebrations I was building myself up for this event and was really looking forward to it. Arriving at Brig my first thoughts were how well organised the celebration was, with seating areas set up on the banks of a viaduct for photographers and each station having visitor attractions. After taking in the atmosphere of the station, and spending a couple of hours in Brig itself, I decided that I would use my special ticket to head to Domodossola in Italy - the furthest station on the BLS line. In my opinion the ticket was great value for money and I feel very fortunate and privileged to have been able to attend the celebrations during my stay in Switzerland. The route of the BLS is an engineering marvel and certainly a great journey for anyone interested in trains. 