

In search of the Landwasser viaduct

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Objektyp: **Article**

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

Band (Jahr): **1 (1986-1987)**

Heft 5

PDF erstellt am: **17.07.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-853669>

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IN SEARCH OF THE LANDWASSER VIADUCT

By Glyn Jones

I was near to the end of a Swiss Travel Services Alpine Scenic Tour rail holiday this summer and was spending the last few days in Davos. This is a tour I can very much recommend to members as, due to its nature, travel is by a reserved first class coach; this usually meant travelling at the very end of the train and it was most useful for photography to have a view from the rear of the train. Incidentally it was also a unique experience to travel from Interlaken to Brig without having to change trains at Spiez, we just sat in the coach as it was transferred from train to train, making the Brig express a good five minutes late leaving Spiez. We had travelled to Davos from Zermatt on the Glacier Express, this being my first experience of the legendary Rhatische Bahn. I had previously limited my rail travel to the railways of the Berner Oberland and the Federal Railways, apart from one previous trip to Zermatt.

I wished to travel over the remaining interesting part of the real Glacier Express route and thought it would be a good idea to combine this trip with a walk to the base of the Landwasser viaduct being more interested in the construction and topography of the railways than the rolling stock. I therefore caught the 9.20 from Davos Platz to Filisur pulled by, I think, Ge 4/4 622

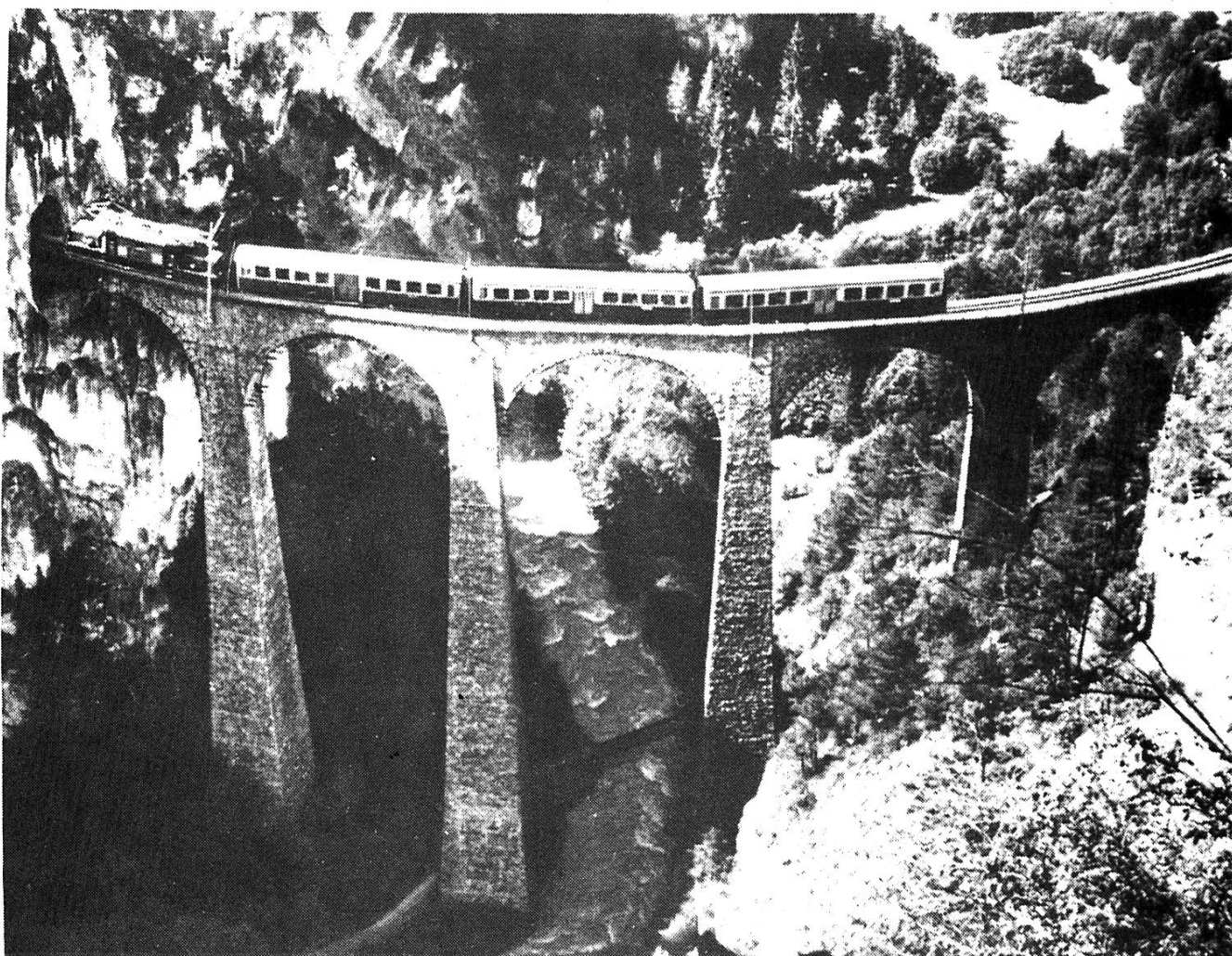
"Arosa") arriving at 9.55 and, armed with my Landescarte map enquired at the booking office as to the general direction of the Landwasser viaduct. With their help I set off in glorious warm sunny weather. There is a wanderweg signpost to the viaduct at the back of the station and the path is marked on trees by three horizontal bars: white, red, white one above the other. Apart from one wrong turning, which ended in a meadow surrounded by trees through which I could just make out the massive structure of the viaduct, it was a pleasant half hour walk to the river, although the grass was rather wet with overnight dew. I sat, camera in hand to await the arrival of a train, this must be a popular spot as everyone I met said, "Are you going to see the viaduct". It is amazing how far away a train is when you first hear it approaching the Viaduct. It seemed like several minutes before the first train appeared. This was a freight towards Filisur consisting of open ballast wagons and one box wagon. The next train (also heading towards Filisur) was a passenger train with two cars on a flat truck (with room for a third) at the rear.

It was a pleasant slightly uphill walk back to Filisur Station, again in glorious weather. Filisur station is away from the village and at a considerably higher level and it was, therefore, very quiet and peaceful. I decided to take a train in the direction of St. Moritz as far as Samadan and then return on the next train as far as Tiefencastel (at the start of the Julier Pass Road), finally going back to Filisur to catch my return train to Davos. This way I could cover the Preda Spirals, the Albula Tunnel, and the Landwasser Viaduct itself twice, once in each direction.

The train from Filisur to Samadan was headed by Ge 4/4 612 "Thusis" and was very full, mainly with tourists many of whom left the train, like myself, at Samadan. The Preda spirals were most impressive to travel over and through, but impossible to photograph from the train. Samadan is a very pleasant little town with an imposing Italian style Church, the station being very busy with trains to Pontressina as well as the main Albula line. I would

have liked to have spent more time there but I had to catch the next (13:20) train back which was, by contrast, almost empty. I had plenty of room to move around the carriage to photograph from the windows on both sides. This train was a double header using Ge 4/4 no. 617 "Llanz" and Ge 6/6 702 Curia. There were far better views of the Landwasser Viaduct than I had seen from the ground out of the left hand side of the train as we left Filisur with further glimpses through the trees as we headed towards Tiefencastel.

I alighted at Tiefencastel (another very quiet station built away from, and above the town); and caught the next train back to Filisur which was pulled by Ge 4/4 602 Bernina, managing to sit on the right hand side to get further views and photographs of the Landwasser. On returning to Filisur I was pleased to see Ge 6/6 Crocodile 407 was standing next to the station with an old carriage, a box wagon and a log wagon behind it. It was on the line from Bergun and had to move out of the station when the next train was due.



The Landwasser Viaduct. Photo S.N.T.O. London.

I had intended leaving the Filisur Davos train on the return at Wiesen to see the Wiesener Viaduct that is directly at the end of the station buildings, but as this would have involved a wait at Wiesen of an hour I would have returned to Davos later than I had intended. That will have to wait for another year. It is a two hour walk from Filisur to Wiesen so that may be a future excursion.

This has been my first encounter with the Rhatische Bahn but I can now see why it is so many member's favourite Swiss company.