

Boats and trains : the Neuchâtel - Biel region

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Objektyp: **Article**

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

Band (Jahr): **2 (1988-1990)**

Heft 7

PDF erstellt am: **10.07.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-855317>

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BOATS AND TRAINS. THE NEUCHÂTEL - BIEL REGION.

By A. Peyton.

What follows is a montage of several visits to the area; the enthusiast will be able to make a selection from the suggested excursions, planned with the aid of the Swiss Railways timetable.

Kerzers, 28 kms west of Bern, is the crossing point for the Bern to Neuchâtel and the Lyss to Lausanne routes. The signal box, elevated to give a very clear view of the unique crossing of the SBB and the BN lines, was fitted with the Bruchal designed electro mechanical signal system built by Signalfabrik Wallisellen (Now called Integra Signum) but since 1987 this is being replaced by the latest Domino system.

Much of the line between Bern and Kerzers is single track, yet much of the traffic is of an international nature with TGV's etc to and from France via Pontarlier, making it an ideal line for the modeller who likes variety on the layout.



Triebwagen BDe4/8 of the STB at Gümmenen.

Photo. A. Peyton.

Gümmenen, about halfway between Bern and Kerzers, stands at the western end of a huge viaduct - the mind boggles at the maintenance costs, if BR's problems over the Settle to Carlisle line are any guide - with magnificent views over the surrounding countryside and excellent prospects for walks; there is a railcar connection over the 11.4 km long private line belonging to the Sensetalbahn, STB. This line follows the Saane river to just north of Laupen from where it enters the beautiful Sense valley through which it continues to the STB terminus at Flammatt on the SBB Bern to Fribourg mainline.

Murten a picturesque walled town on the shore of the Murtensee, 8 km south of Kerzers on the Lausanne line, is an ideal place to spend the day or sail around the lake on one of the many regular steamers. Several times a day a steamer calls at Murten before entering the Canal de la Broye leading to Lac de Neuchâtel, where it is possible to travel down to Yverdon in the south or north via the Zihl Kanal to the Bieler See and the city of Biel on its northern shore.



RBS Be4/4 Railcar and Tram unit at Worb.

Photo. A. Peyton.

Between Kerzers and Neuchâtel lies the town of Ins, whence a charming metre - gauge railway - the Biel Täuffelen Ins Bahn - runs through the fields and woods as it climbs the 4.8% gradient to Täuffelen from where it descends equally as steeply to Biel. It is recommended that one makes the journey by one of the small boats, that leave from the pier by the park - just 10 minutes walk from the station - which ply their way along the Aare river past the town of Grenchen to Solothurn, the Cantonal capital that has a centre very reminiscent of the centre of Thun. The way back to Bern is either, via the metre - gauge RBS (Line SE) which meanders its way through the countryside and the outskirts of Bern, or by the standard gauge line belonging to Emmental Burgdorf Thun Bahn which follows the Emme river to the town of Burgdorf and thence along the SBB mainline to Bern.

The RBS is a fascination in itself, the four track terminus is located below the Bern Hbf from where line "W" runs to Worb Dorf, the return being made on line "G" - Worb to Bern Kirchenfeld - to Helvetiaplatz and a bus ride back to the Hauptbahnhof. The other routes are: the "SE" from Bern to Solothurn and the "Z" from Worblaufen to Unterzollkofen. The RBS has a total track length of 55.90kms; 10.3kms is double track, 2.5kms is street running and 7.6kms is multigauge 1435/1000mm. RBS stock is multi-coloured as 800v DC powered stock is Blue/White, 1200v DC stock is Orange/Cream, the Be4/8 stock is painted Orange and freight or service vehicles are Red or Brown.