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It Doesn't Have to be a Train

by C.J.Freezer

Sometimes, when manning a Swiss Railways Society stand, one gets the feeling that one is more a travel agent than anything else since so many questions relate to journeys in Switzerland, where to stay, what to do and how to get there in the first place. Not infrequently the all important question of cost arises.

Most members are, I think fully aware that Switzerland is nowhere near as expensive as its reputation suggests, but there is no gainsaying the fact that if you decide to spend a fortnight using a first class Swiss Pass and elect to stay in comfortable hotels in the larger rail centres you won't have any change out of a grand. That you get full value for your money, with comfortable travel, good service, complete freedom of choice and superb scenery and fascinating towns thrown in, is equally undeniable. But if you don't have that sort of money, what then?

Since I reached official retirement age and changed my job description, Doris and I have taken to having two main holidays, a no reasonable expense barred fortnight in Switzerland in June and an economy tour in the Autumn, usually through Germany and invariably by means of a package coach tour. Last year we made a change.

It all stemmed from the fact that Doris wanted to spend more time in Lugano and although I agreed, I felt that it is a poor centre when using the Swiss Pass. Whilst we were pondering this, we were also ruffling through those enticing brochures to select our Autumn holiday. Doris passed over the Cosmos book, observing that there was an interesting trip to Interlaken. I took the book, turned the page and found an even more interesting one, an eight day trip with five nights in Lugano and one overnight stop in the Lake Luzern area. That settled the autumn break on the spot.

To be honest, it wasn't a rail based trip, though as we stopped overnight in Flüelen I did manage to fit in a little late night train spotting on the Gotthard. We also had one short train trip from Ponte Tresa as part of a round trip to Isola Bella on Lake Maggiore. In the main the object was to have a proper look at Lugano

and take in most of the package's excursions. The basic cost was £250 a head, and even with extras and spending money there was change out of £1000 for the two of us, which is comparable with any other similar trip. Had we extended the trip to a fortnight, we could have made good use of the local pass, which gives a 7 day coverage of the lake boats, local buses and some rail journeys, plus half price journeys through most of Canton Ticino.

These aren't the cheapest trips around. There are frequent offers in local papers for bargain price tours which, speaking from personal experience, are usually excellent value. In fact, were it not for the AGM, about now Doris and I would be on the shores of the Vierwaldstättersee on a trip advertised in our local free newssheet for a basic £99, departing direct from Hemel Hempstead. Who says Switzerland is expensive?

A Different Viewpoint

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duties at the other side of the bridge and I was ready to find a BLT route 11 tram to Aesch. A likely looking tram approached, but it was another special; a standard BLT artic but a most un-standard trailer - a pig. This trailer advertises a well-known bank and the rear end is a superb rendition of a pig's head, with tail lights in the nostrils. On the top is a giant coin being popped into the piggybank - where else - and the whole vehicle is of course painted pink.

I caught up with this refugee from Bournemouth at Aesch where it was berthed in the outer loop and was able to get a better photograph of it before walking through the town to the SBB station to return to Basel and dinner in the station restaurant.

To be concluded

For Sale: Marshall: Rlys of S & E Switzerland (mint), Willen: *Locomotiven der Schweiz 2: Schmalspurv Triebfahrzeuge* (1972 ad, h/b), Allen: Mountain Railway Guide to Central Switzerland. Offers please to Andrew Hyleman, 15f Greenfield Court, Dundee, DD4 0EF, by 15th April.