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Editor's Jottings

Having commented on the amount of Rhätian material in the last issue, what happens? I get more of the sort of topical material that can't be put on file. Admittedly, a lot is happening around the RhB at the moment but it's not the whole of the Swiss railway system.

During our visit in June we were able to travel on the new low-floor stock on the SZB and FART, the latter appear to have internal Italian styling and are very comfortable. They may look like trams from the outside, inside they're excellent interurban stock and gave us our best ride over the Centovalli to date.

We arranged our holiday through Time Off of Chester Close, Chester Street, London, SW1X 7BQ (tel. 071-259 8070, fax 071-259 6093). This concern will arrange flights and bed and breakfast accommodation in good hotels in a number of European cities at competitive rates, from our point of view these include Bern, Genève, Lausanne, Luzern and Zürich. They are very flexible so if, as we did, you also wish to visit somewhere not on their list they can extend the return date and leave you to make your own arrangements. In addition you can specify the preferred airport and flight times. The brochure illustrates and describes the various hotels briefly and, so far as our experience goes, accurately. They cater for travellers rather than tourists, dealing with the tedious business of making the bookings but do not provide couriers, guides or any other frills. You have to get your own Swiss Passes from SNTO. Both of our hotels were good, with comfortable well appointed rooms and a generous buffet breakfast, in Bern we were opposite the Hauptbahnhof, very close to the main tram exit, in Zurich we were in a very lively part of the city, a short run on the No.4 tram from the station. They said it could be noisy, but it was fairly quiet after midnight.

Whilst in Zürich we discovered a small group of shops in the station underpass, close

to the entrance from Bahnhofstrasse and above Gleis 1 and 2, which sell filled rolls and canned soft drinks and beer at very competitive prices. The "Milk Bar" also has coffee in a plastic cup at only Sfr.1.90; if it sells milk there was no obvious sign of it. It's a very convenient place to stock up with supplies for a long journey without an SGG Minibar.

Taking John Jesson's advice, we decided to dine at Olten one evening. Alas, the first class dining rooms were closed for renovation and the buffet hardly offered a gastronomic experience. However, Olten itself is well worth a visit apart from the obvious attractions of the station, there is a small old town on the other bank of the Aare, reached by an old timber roofed bridge (there is a more modern one, but who would use it in preference?). We returned to Zürich where the Hotel Frankiskaner did supply a gastronomic experience. For the first time I tasted shark and we ended the meal with a lemon sorbet with vodka. Or have I got it the wrong way round? It took a good long stroll around the older part of Zürich to walk off the after effects. With any luck the Olten dining room should be finished by the time you read this. But my favourite station restaurant for an evening meal is still the 2nd class buffet at Lausanne, first class French cooking, swift, courteous service and an excellent view of the trains from the small area set aside for full meals.

Be warned, the PTT are now making a surcharge on the tourist postbus routes, usually SFr. 5; details are in the Kursbuch. On our trip over the Flüela pass we each received a Postauto pin with the driver's compliments, as these usually retail at SFr. 6 upwards I think we got a bargain. While I've had one complaint about this already, I don't think it at all unreasonable to pay a small sum for these trips over and above the Swiss Pass since these services are mainly there for the benefit of tourists.