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Flying to Switzerland by Les Heath

On my last trip to Switzerland I broke my normal tradition of driving and decided to try another mode of transport. Much to the delight of my wife I agreed to fly over. The prospect of hanging about at airports has never inspired me to using this form of transport in the past so it was with great care that we sat down and decided from which airport we would be travelling. After much deliberation we decided to fly with Air Engiadina from London City Airport to Bern as hopefully, this would involve little waiting time.

One of the advantages of travelling from City Airport meant that we only had a 10 minute check-in time which was definitely more attractive than the normal 1-2 hours at the larger airports.

We arrived at the airport without any travel delays and were seated on the 'plane within 20 minutes of arriving.

When looking out of the windows of the aeroplane whilst waiting to take off, it is difficult to believe that the craft will become airborne before we reach the end of the runway, and the water surrounding it, which is not very long at City Airport but despite my fears this manoeuvre was carried out with great expertise.

In what only seemed a matter of seconds we were airborne and on the way to our destination of

Belp Airport, Bern. Once the aircraft had reached its required height, the Air Hostess efficiently began her task of offering every passenger a selection of the daily newspapers and when this had been completed, was soon back offering a selection of hot, cold or alcoholic drinks including Swiss wine. By this time we were well on our journey and enjoying the very smooth flight. My wife commented that she could very easily get used to this mode of transport (although I think it was the fact that she was being waited on that really appealed to her). Lunch was then served and I found this to be very filling and of good quality (to be expected from a Swiss airline). The journey took only 90 minutes and we were soon coming into land at Belp airport. The landing was very smooth and we arrived in Switzerland on a very hot, sunny, Saturday afternoon, it took less than 5 minutes to pass through customs etc.

Our journey back to Belp airport started with a very wet, overcast, morning. The rain soon altered to snow and within one hour two inches of snow had fallen in Interlaken (this was at the end of April). We had already made arrangements to go by boat from Interlaken to Thun and were surprised to find that we were the only passen-



gers on the boat! Unfortunately the journey to Thun was not as pleasant as we had hoped as the visibility, due to the snow, was very restricted.

The connection with the train at Thun was well timed and we were soon on our way to Bern.

A mini bus runs from Bern Bus station. We felt that the fare of 15 Sfr per person was a bit steep for the short 15 minute journey considering the cost of the airfare.

The journey back to London was equally enjoyable as the outward journey with the added bonus of clear skies (as the weather had improved by the time we departed from Belp Airport). We were again issued with daily newspapers, a selection of drinks and a meal and in no time were coming in to land at City Airport.

Opposite page: The terminal building at Belp Airport, you have a short walk through the building to the waiting bus connection to Bern station.

Top: Our Dornier 328 Turbo prop airliner, capacity 31 passengers, having just arrived at Belp airport it is just a short walk to the terminal building.

Bottom: The flight deck of the Dornier with the two Pilots going about their duties during the flight.

The Dornier 328 flies between 24,000 and 27,000 feet, this offered good views over the Swiss, French and English countryside with superb views of London as we circled to land.

If you live in the south east and are travelling to the Bernese Oberland or the Bern area I would thoroughly recommend giving Air Engiadina a try.