

The reviews

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THE REVIEWS



The Chemins de Fer du Jura

La Chaux-de-Fonds-Tavannes & Le Noirmont-Glovelier

MITV, 55 minutes. Available through SRS sales, MITV and usual sales outlets. £19.95

It's not easy to review an MITV video, after all just how many superlatives are there? Frankly this reviewer has run out. The programme starts with some historical background, a visit to La Chaux-de-Fonds and the Horological museum. The background to the CJ is explained and soon we are away travelling up the street in La Chaux-de-Fonds heading for the Jura area.

A comprehensive tour of the network follows showing the railway and landscape typical of this unspoilt region. One surprise was the speed of the trains which seemed so fast that I checked the video. Having now travelled on the system I can vouch for the accuracy! MITV are noted for offering attractions other than just the trains and we are treated to: a visit to the Saignelégier Equestrian Festival, le Marché Concours, with some exciting racing. Walks round Porrentruy and St-Ursanne are included.

La Traction, based at Pré-Petitjean is included and there are great scenes with their ex- Douro Mallets. (See elsewhere in *SE* for details of trips this year.) The highlight comes when colour fades to sepia and the CJ's ex TBN motor car is attacked by 'Wild West Brigands' in the woods, guns are fired and hostages taken. Fantastic fun and all part of the CJ's active marketing department. Freight is not forgotten with views of the specialised locos hauling waste and rollböcke. The deeply rural section down to Glovelier is covered and betrays its origins as a standard gauge line. Combe-Tabellon must have been fascinating in steam days.

The legendary MITV weather, excellent filming by Sue Knight, sound by Chris Harnett, authoritative narration by Malcolm Brown on release from Radio 4 and some new music by Lou Stonehill make for a great show. Your reviewer had an early copy and visited the line on the strength of the video, he was not disappointed. Highly recommended.

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Insight Guide To Switzerland

370pp. Perfect Bound. Full colour throughout. Published by Insight Guides, PO Box 7910, London, SE1 1WE. £16.99, available at all good map and book shops.

Switzerland isn't just about railways, however much we like to think so. There are wonderful places and sights to see. The Insight Guide is an excellent way of planning where to visit before travelling. Its real strength however is the detailed background to Switzerland, its history, people, politics and religion. It doesn't pull any punches either with warts and all comments about Swiss life and times.

On first opening, the quality of the paper, printing and photography is evident. Good design also makes it easy to read and follow. Sensibly divided into sections dealing with history, the people, features, places and travel tips, there are also occasional 'box outs' and information panels giving greater details on particular points. It is not a guide to carry around. Use it for planning before you go or perhaps the evening before a day out.

Railways are not the *raison d'être* for the guide and perhaps because of this the choice of pictures is odd: 'Riding the St Bernhard Express at Orsières' is placed in the Graubünden section and the obligatory Landwasser picture is very poor in that it shows an RhB suburban EMU on the viaduct whilst managing to give no idea of the scale, height or the dramatic tunnel exit and with no mention of the Glacier Express, a must in almost every tourist's itinerary. It is mentioned elsewhere in a short two page section on railways written by Anthony Lambert. Lastly I would quibble with Insight's policy on covers which are usually a face of a local person. Nice picture but one goes to Switzerland for dramatic scenery not to look at beards.

All in all a very good background guide, well worthy of purchase for the historical and general sections alone. We should know more about Switzerland as this gives the context to the transport system we admire so much. Recommended.

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