

# Walking the line

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# WALKING THE LINE



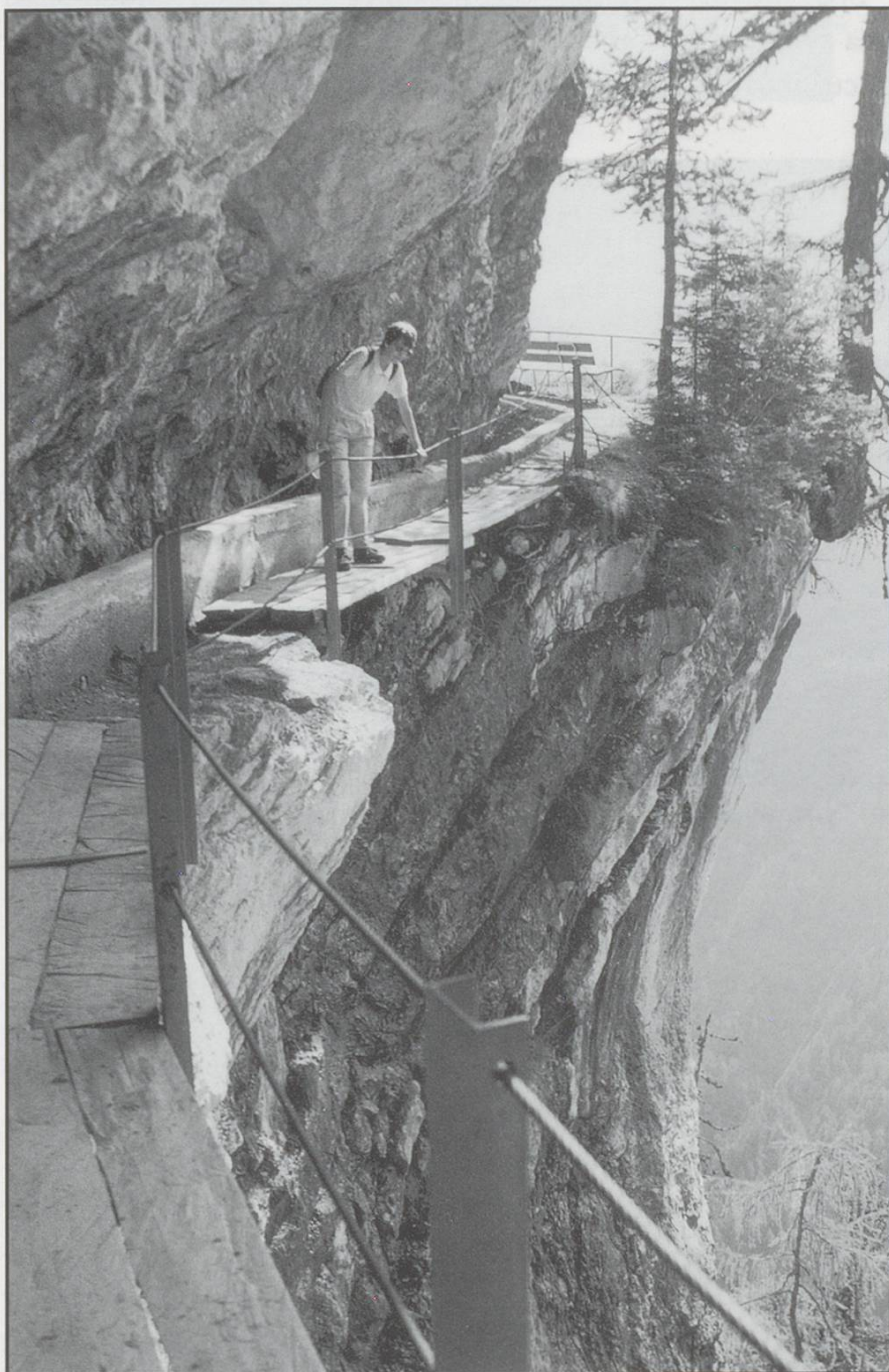
Continuing the occasional series of articles about walking in conjunction with the Swiss Travel System Pete Dyson and Lester Weeks offer some suggestions for getting the circulation going and for once getting you off the train.

Remember that these walks are suggestions and not detailed instructions. If you try any of them make sure you have a map, the proper equipment and that you are fit enough. The Champagne Air of Switzerland is rightly famous but like Champagne it can be heady and leave you breathless.

## Pete Dyson

## TAKING THE BISSE

A series of walks from their base in Crans-Montana provided Pete and his wife with some unparalleled walking in this popular part of Switzerland.



Looking over, literally, the Bisse du Ro. Photo: Pete Dyson

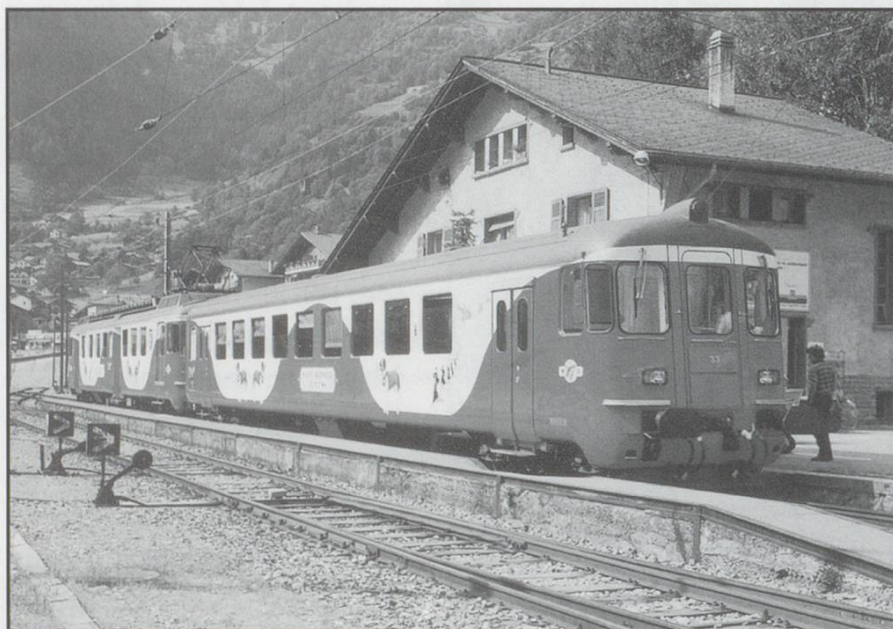
A "bisse" is an ancient aqueduct system that in olden times irrigated the vineyards, etc. and supplied water from the mountains to the peoples of the hamlets below. This area of Valais is renowned for them, and some are still active and some only in part. There were 21 listed in the Canton Valais Magazine, and what could be better than walking alongside one in this often hot district. With a couple of Co-ops it's another self-catering bonus. We stayed in an apartment about five minutes from the top of the 12 minute catapult funicular (non-stop) from Sierre (or via two differing bus routes) and on a clear day had a view south of the Rhône and about 80 snow clad peaks. We made full use of a Sion Pass.

### THE BISSE DU RO

One of the scariest walks, and certainly not for vertigo sufferers, involves the Bisse du Ro. There are only two

buses a day to the Rawil Barrage (Dam Lac de Tseuzier) and, as it was a grim morning, we chose to take the afternoon service. From Crans this involves a change at Botyre. As the bus approaches the Dam one can see what looks like a hairline fracture along the side of the Chetseron opposite. This is the path of the Bisse du Ro.

Leaving the bus on one side of the Dam, cross to the other side and head for the Vallon de l'Ertenze in the direction of Bellalui. You're on the Wildstrubel Traverse Path. It is important to follow the signs marked "Bisse du Ro" as others marked "Crans-Montana" will steer you clear of this spectacular path cut into the



A Martigny Orsières unit at Le Châble waiting to leave for Sembrancher. Photo: Pete Dyson

cliff face - the Bisse is on the cliff side - and some hair-raising sections include wooden walkways secured by safety rails and fixed cables in sheer rock and one has to duck several times whilst holding on to life - underneath the planks may be a 300m drop! From the Dam one should reach the pastures at Er-de-Chermignon in 45 minutes from where the East path splits in two - one up to the "Cry-d'Er"-the other along the Bisse. After what seems eternity you eventually meet civilization again when you cross a road and pass an artifi-

cial lake, Etang Grenom, just above Montana. Congratulate yourself for surviving three hours.

### **THE BISSE DU MILIEU VIA THE TOP OF THE ALPS**

We headed for Sion (worth investigating through its narrow lanes leading up to the Château de Tourbillon which dominates the town), before catching the bus to Super-Nendaz. It was a chairlift next up to Tortin, from where we changed to a cable car to the Col-des-Gentianes. This straddles two valleys - Verbier on the other side has a jumbo sized cablecar to it. The last cablecar section takes one up to Mont Fort at 3328m with quite the

best all round view of the Alps we have had in the country, with Mont Blanc on one side and Matterhorn on the other - almost touchable. We retraced our steps to Super-Nendaz from where we walked back alongside the active Bisse du Milieu from Planchouet into Nendaz, about two hours walk. From Planchouet we could have "bissed" to Veysonnaz as the aqueduct connects Nendaz and Veysonnaz. One had to pay for water in those days - what's different?!

### **ALPINES AND ALPS**

Another trip involved a change at Sion onto a local train for Riddes, where we picked up a very minibus to Mayens-de-Riddes high up the valley, transferring to gondolabahn up to Savoleyres, midst alpine flowers on a ridge with Mont Fort on one side, Mont Blanc on the other and Verbier below. We spent two hours wandering all over the place before we reached Verbier and chose the cablecar down to the station at Le Châble and changing at Martigny for Sion.



## **ALETSGLETSCHER**

For another spectacular walk, we got the train from Sierre to Brig where we transferred to the FO for Fiesch. Getting the cablecar up to Fiescheralp (half way stop to Eggishorn) we started on the Grosser Aletschgletscher walk. Head NE for Märjelensee, reached in 30 minutes. It affords wonderful views up the Glacier to the Jungfrau group with the Aletschhorn dominant



opposite. From here, one heads SW holding on to cables at times to Moosfluh (spot the Matterhorn ahead) eventually arriving at Rieder Furka. It's only a short walk now back to Rieder and one is spoilt for choice returning from this car-free paradise down to the FO at Mörel. This spectacular walk will set you back about five hours and a couple of rolls of film (I normally get through 36 a day on average.)

## **ON THE FINDELALP**

It's quite easy to get to Zermatt with a change at Visp from Sierre.

Take the Sunnegga funicular. A splendid walk from the top heads SE and we soon pass Leisee - the Matterhorn makes a classic reflection - then along the Findelalp past Grindjensee to reach the Findelbach. Then head directly West, coming out at Riffelalp station on the Gornergratbahn after 100 minutes. Make it three hours total by walking back into Zermatt.

## **GRIMENTZ AND ZINAL**

Finally, from Sierre head up to Moiry Dam on the bus. Then walk back to Grimentz, a hidden jewel of a village, mostly traffic free and about 90 minutes away. From here you can make your way into the Zinal valley above Ayer into Zinal itself on paths that parallel the road almost all the way. Allow about four hours for Moiry to Zinal but add to that time for exploring and sampling the delights of Grimentz.

**ABOVE:** Sion, with the château dominating the town.

**BELOW:** Grimentz village.  
Photos © Valais Tourism

Lester continues his series of walks making use of Postbuses and the mountain transport systems

The following walks make use of Postal Buses and various forms of mountain access, and it is wise to be well informed of timings, particularly last operations. Full details are in the *Kursbuch*.

In order that walkers might be better prepared for the ups and downs on walks where there are large variations in elevation, I have shown altitudes in metres.

### MELCHSEE-FRUTT

The base station of the LSM multi-cabin cableway is at Stöckalp, reached by Postal Bus from Sarnen+ SBB-Brünig. Melchsee-Frutt+ 1902m is a delightful place, offering scenic outlooks, gentle strolls, or more serious walking. Hotels and restaurants are to be found here too. A short walk around the lake could be just about 45 minutes, or take the good path to Tannalp+ 1974m in about an hour. Then there is the SSMB chair-lift to the Balmeregghorn+ 2230m (base station just across the lake) from which point a ridge walk via the Erzegg down to Tannalp+ with its small chapel and hotel takes about an hour. On the ridge the path is

not always well defined. Another alternative would be to follow signposting to Distelboden 1900m for the LDB cableway to the Bonistock+ 2160m. This is a plant-life protected zone and is at its best in spring and early summer. Walk down via Chringen to Tannalp in an hour. For the more ambitious, a round walk taking in all the above points without using the chair-lift or the cableway would take about four hours at a very conservative estimate. Check the last operation of the cableway back to Stöckalp!

Return to Sarnen+ SBB by cableway and Postal Bus.

### THUR RIVER WALK - WILDHAUS-LISIGHAUS/STEIN

Reach Wildhaus-Lisighaus+ (Note: this is NOT the main Wildhaus bus-stop) by Postal Bus from Buchs SBB+ or Nesslau+/Neu St. Johann+ SBB/BT. Take the minor road opposite the Post Office following signs towards the Oberdorf cableway. Beyond the base station a sign on the right points to the riverside path leading to Unterwasser+ and on to Alt St.

Johann+. Here cross the river and the main road and continue westwards along the village street. This becomes a track, passing a water mill and follows the right bank of the meandering river Thur. At Starkenbach the track crosses the river, but here continue along the footpath on the right-hand side. There are views across to the Churfirten, the seven bumpy mountains alongside the Walensee. Soon the valley narrows at Burg and the

Melchsee-Frutt.

Photo©ZentralSchweiz





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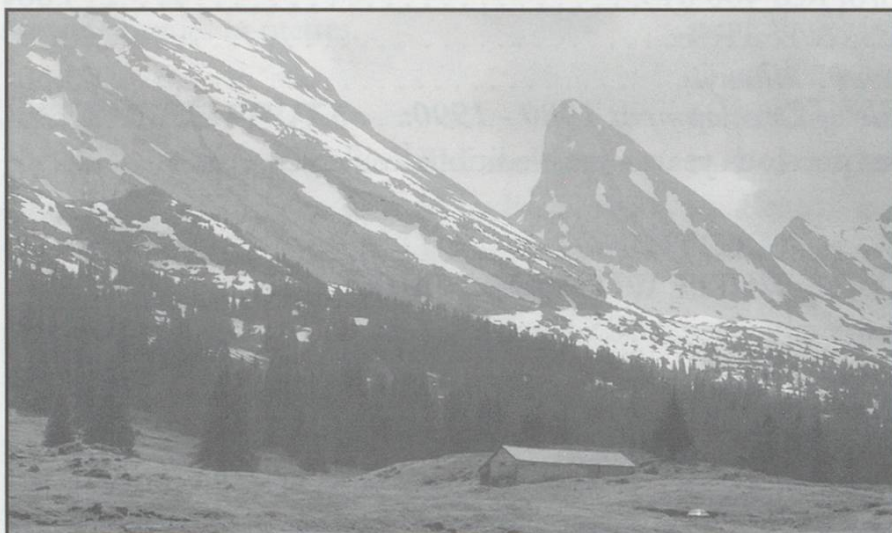
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Alt St. Johann. Photo: Lester Weeks



Churfiristen from Wildhaus.

Photo: Lester Weeks

path climbs steeply through woods over the Iltishag before dropping down to a minor road leading eventually to the village of Stein+. Walking time 2<sup>1/2</sup> hours. (One can continue via the path on the opposite side of the river to Nesslau+; a further hour is needed.)

Return by Postal Bus to Buchs SBB+ or Nesslau+/Neu St. Johann+ SBB/BT.

### **BEATENBERG / JUSTISTAL / MERLIGEN / (SIGRISWIL)**

Beatenberg+ 1121m can be reached via the funicular from Beatenbucht+, served by BLS ships and STI buses from Thun and Interlaken. There is also a Postal Bus service Interlaken-West/Beatenberg. From Beatenberg TBB+ (also the bus terminus) turn left on the minor road and continue into the Justiztal (it is said

that during WWII many Swiss treasures were hidden in caves here) to Gron+ 1124m where the road makes a u-turn. On the bend a signposted path follows the fast-flowing Gronbach down to Merligen+ 568m. If there is a lot of water about, the path may not be all that easy to negotiate lower down and is not particularly recommended in such conditions. The alternative route is to continue on the minor road to Sigriswil+ and thence by STI bus to the Thuner See at Gunten+. BLS ships and STI buses operate from both Gunten and Merligen to Thun and Interlaken.

Walking time Beatenberg / Merligen is 2<sup>1/2</sup> hours; about 35 minutes more would be required for the Sigriswil alternative.

### **LAUTERBRUNNEN / WILDERSWIL**

From Lauterbrunnen+ BOB take the subway exit to the car park. To the left of the car park building a steeply inclined, rather stony, path leads down to the Weisse Lütschine. Cross the bridge and proceed downstream parallel to river, road and railway. At Zweilütschinen BOB it is necessary, where our arm of the river is joined by the Schwarze Lütschine, to cross to the left side temporarily. At the station cross the tracks and regain the right bank. Eventually the path climbs to meet a minor road into the village of Gsteigwiler+. Continue forward crossing the rails of the Schynige Platte Bahn and down to Wilderswil BOB+.

Walking time is about three hours.



Piz Palu from Alp Languard.

Photo: Lester Weeks

## **MUOTTAS MURAGL / ALP LANGUARD**

The lower station of the Muottas Muragl funicular is to be found a few minutes walk from Punt Muragl RhB. Having reached Muottas Muragl MMB+ 2453m take the good path leading into the Val Muragl. After crossing the bridge over the Ova da Muragl there is a choice of two routes. The easier of the two is the right-hand path that follows a wide curve around the flank of the Schafberg. There are spectacular views up here above the tree line of the snow-topped mountains of the Bernina group and other mountains and glaciers all around. Take special care in places where there is loose scree. The path continues via the Unteren Schafberg until the green meadows and the upper station of the Alp Languard+ 2270m chair-lift is reached.

The alternative route from the Ova da Muragl bridge is via the somewhat sharply inclined zigzag path up to the Segantinihutte+ 2731m. (Giovanni Segantini, a famous Engadin artist, is buried here.) A safe path

leads around the side of Piz Muragl and Las Sours down to Alp Languard. The base station of the SPM chair-lift is about 15 minutes walk from Pontresina RhB+. Walking time for the Schafberg route is 3<sup>1/2</sup> hours and for the Segantinihutte route 2<sup>1/2</sup> hours according to local guidebooks, but in practice one certainly needs to allow more, taking into account the last operation of the chair-lift, likely to be around 17.30, regardless of season.

## **THE RIGI**

Rigi-First+ RB 1484m is the starting point of this walk and can be reached by the Rigi-Bahnen from Arth-Goldau SBB+. Take the uphill, rather stony path from the station to the Hotel Rigi-First and on a good path to Rigi-Kaltbad RB+ 1423m. A short detour via the Felsenweg should not be missed. This is sign-posted on the left and is literally a cliff-edge path, albeit well secured with railings. Continue past the Hostellerie Rigi and the partly concealed Felsenkapelle to Känzeli 1464m where a wide panorama opens up.





Rigi Staffel.

Photo: Lester Weeks

From here the path is fairly steep in a series of zigzags to Rigi-Staffelhöhe+RB 1552m and continues in less of an incline to Rigi-Staffel+RB 1603m where the two arms of the Rigi-Bahnen meet. Cross the tracks and follow the path, steadily rising, over mainly open country to the Kulmhütte+ 1676m. (Note: this is NOT the same place as Rigi-Kulm+RB.) There are outstanding views at almost every point on this walk. Descending now, a path

I wasn't sure about putting this picture in as it is a spectacular view photographed at a subtle time of day. I hope the printing does it justice. Mount Pilatus as seen from the Rigi. Photo: Lester Weeks

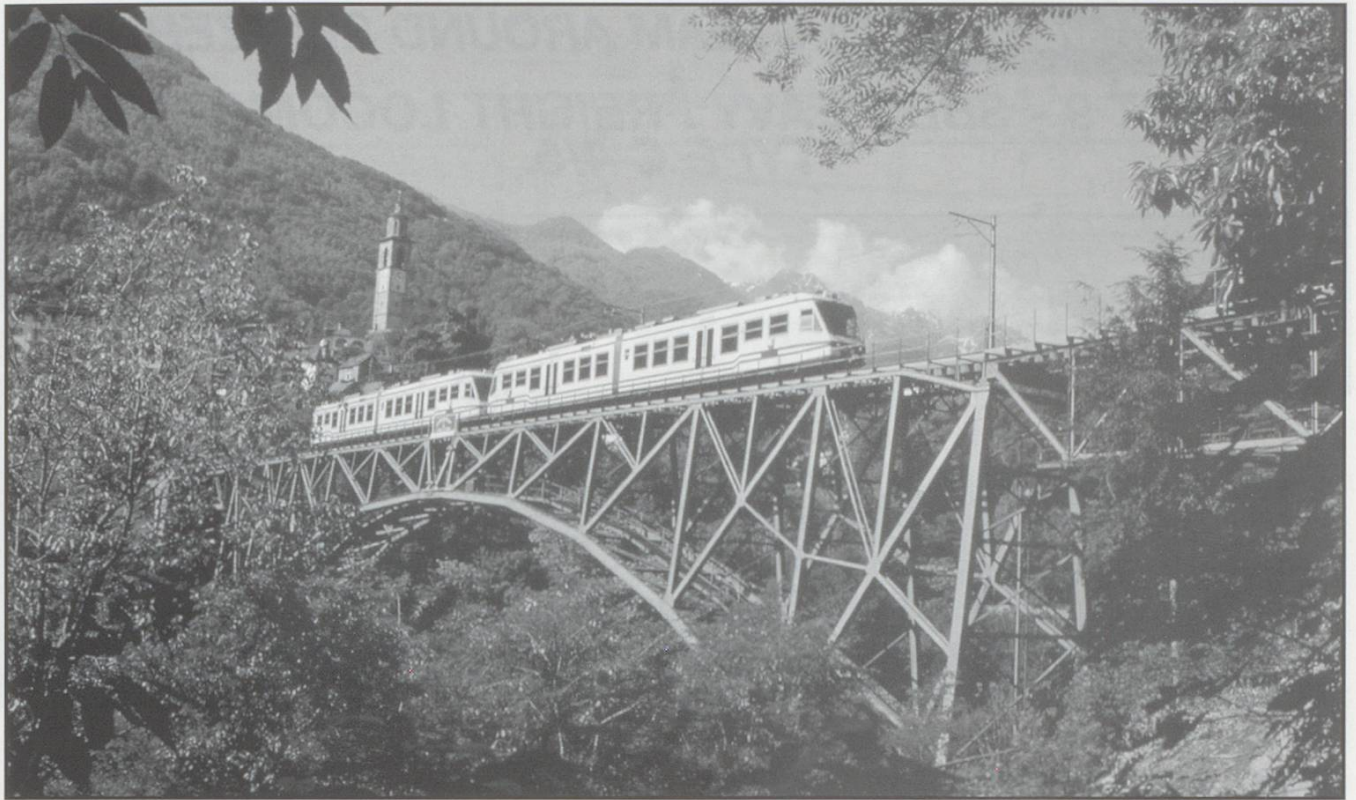
curtail the distance. An alternative, less taxing, entirely descending route, between Staffel and Klösterli via Des Alpes would reduce the walking time by about an hour. Rigi-Kaltbad can also be reached via the RB from Vitznau SGV or by the LWRK cableway from Weggis+SGV. In the latter case, the base station is 15 minutes walk from the lake at a considerably higher elevation. In addition to the SGV ships, Weggis has an SGV bus connection from Küsnacht am Rigi SBB.

snakes down to the Schochenhütte+ 1473m via Höreli. The way continues via Trib followed by a few zigzags to ultimately arrive at Rigi-Klösterli+ RB 1302m with its pilgrimage chapel of Maria zum Schnee and convent. Return to Arth-Goldau SBB+ via the RB.

Walking time is about four hours. Starting or ending at any one of the RB stations en route can, of course,

Note: + indicates food and drink available.  
+ placed after the railway name, e.g., Arth-Goldau SBB+ indicates a station restaurant.





David Stevenson

## DISCOVERING THE CENTOVALLI

The first in a series of suggestions on travelling in Ticino. Ticino is a delight, a sunny warm climate, Italian influences, beautiful lakes, I could go on. Many of us ignore it but just look at what you may be missing, and this is just the start.

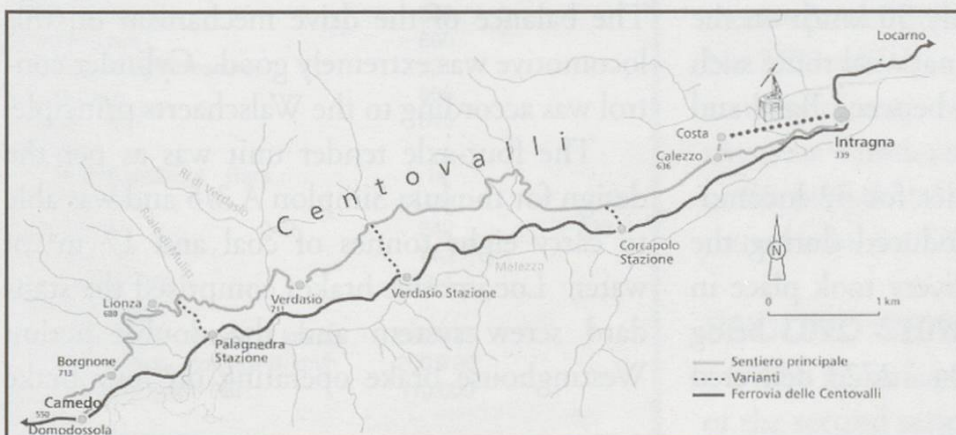
From whichever end, Domodossola or Locarno, take the Centovalli train to Camedo on the Italian frontier. As I have indicated so many times it is a fascinating and wild trip along gorges and over impressive viaducts.

From Camedo enjoy a spectacular view during the breathtaking walk from Camedo to Intragna, through the romantic Valley of the hundred Valleys (CENTOVALLI!). A short walk takes you from Camedo to Borgnone and to Lionza, from where one can follow a mule path to the hamlet of Verdasio and to Intragna. From there, the Centovalli train will

return you back to Locarno or Domodossola. There is even the possibility of a cable car ride from Costa to Intragna, albeit downhill! The walk is designed to start at Camedo as it is downhill most of the way.

There are some variations on the journey. The entire walk is estimated to take about five hours so should you become tired or not have enough time there are various points along the route which take you down to a different station, check for times, naturally. Fortunately there is at least an hourly service on the Swiss side. Restaurants are situated in Camedo, Borgnone, Lionza, Costa and Intragna. The

substantial middle portion appears to be refreshmentless so take some water. Ticino is much warmer on average than the rest of Switzerland. Finally do purchase a map locally as this just an outline.



**ABOVE:** A Centovalli train crosses the spectacular viaduct at Intragna. Photo©TicinoTourism