

The reviews

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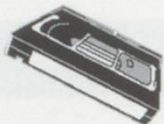
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THE REVIEWS



Austria & Switzerland Sighting File 2002

Author – B King. Published by the Intercity Railway Society and available from ICRS Sales, 192 Alvechurch Road, West Heath, Birmingham B31 3PW at £5.45 plus 35p postage. 147mm x 210mm, Laminated cover.

This booklet is one of a series produced by the Intercity Railway Society covering a number of European countries and is essentially a list of numbers of Austrian and Swiss locomotives and railcars split into classes and showing allocations. The Swiss part, which is the subject of this review, has sections covering the SBB, BLS and RhB.

It would appear that the bulk of the allocation information has been already commercially published elsewhere and in many cases is well out of date due to the 1999 sectorisation of SBB. The accuracy of the SBB stock list leaves something to be desired particularly as this is a 2002 publication and should be reasonably up to date. For example, a number of Re4/4's withdrawn in 1997, are still listed. Historic locomotives are shown in the main list but not identified as such, whilst the lists of heating locomotives and snowploughs are familiar. All BLS stock is listed with the allocated computer numbers even though in many cases, for example the Re4/4, the original number is still carried. Sadly the RhB lists are hopelessly out of date and have a remarkable familiarity. There is no mention of Tm2/2 95 – 98 introduced in 1998/9, whilst the Arosa line DC railcars withdrawn in 1997 are shown.

If you want a train spotting booklet that will give some idea of the stock of the SBB, BLS and RhB in list form only then this publication will go part way to fulfilling your need, but beyond that it is not recommended.

Chernex

The Thomas Cook Rail Map of Europe

ISBN 1 - 841570 76 1. Thomas Cook Publishing. £6.95

This is the 13th edition of this familiar map covering Europe from the Atlantic (including the UK & Ireland) across to Moscow. The main map is approximately scaled at 1: 3,750,000 but the second side featuring central Europe is scaled at 1: 1,500,000. By comparison the Swiss SBB Kümmerley & Frey map is scaled at 1: 301,000. The map is printed on good quality paper. The keys to the symbols used on the map are shown in English, French, German and Spanish.

The rail lines are shown clearly against a white background which is shaded and detailed to show mountain ranges, major rivers and the most popular beach areas (but there are not many of these in Switzerland). The major railway routes are shown by a bold line with a narrower line depicting the secondary routes. Unlike the SBB Kümmerley & Frey map covering only Switzerland it has not been possible to show all lines within the area covered by the map because of the small scale. High-speed lines are shown in red with scenic rail routes highlighted in green (most of the Swiss routes!). Main ferry routes, international airports and the main bus routes are also shown.

I have a series of these maps going back 10 years and it is good to report that this version is the clearest yet. It is also pleasing to see that Thomas Cook updates the map at regular intervals to reflect recent railway developments. On a recent visit to Europe I used the one daytime EuroCity service between Villach (Austria) and Udine (Italy) that was shown on my older map as a scenic line. I was very disappointed to find that most of it was in a tunnel. This latest version map shows that the route is now mainly in a tunnel and it does not carry the green scenic route highlighting.

For more information about this map, various Thomas Cook European guides and the Thomas Cook map of Great Britain see: www.thomascookpublishing.com

Peter Marriott

The New Glacier Express

Production by MITV. 2002. English/French/German/Italian/Japanese narration. DVD 2 disk set together with a route map. Digital Dolby Stereo. NTSC & PAL.

Although the DVD is a two-disk affair this is due to the amount of languages on offer and not extra material as experienced on film DVDs. Disk 2 does however have a slide collection at the end of Glacier Express 2 but I am unable to review these as I accessed the DVD through a dedicated machine rather than a computer to realise the superb colour and sound produced by MITV. The overprinted disk comprises the two editions of 'The Glacier Express' produced in 1995: Zermatt to Disentis; Disentis to St. Moritz. The quality and sound of the VHS videos was already excellent, particularly when played back through S-VHS editing decks, but the DVD takes this quality to new heights particularly in the sound department, being processed in Dolby Stereo. A feature not discussed much is the use of DVDs when modelling, as one can analyse a particular feature more intently and accurately on freeze than with the equivalent videotape.

The quality of MITV products is well known and this DVD uses great photography, clear sound and very clever editing to make this a superb record of the journey from Zermatt to St. Moritz. Although MITV are the "Spielberg" of video's of Switzerland this DVD version does have one annoying feature in that it replaces two videos and therefore the overall journey should be continuous and not broken in two as per the original VHS tapes. To have a feature on the RhB together with all the credits at the end of part 1 and a reprise on the BVZ and the FO at the beginning of part 2 is surprising and rather irritating and a point that MITV should look into on later copies. To those members that have not bought, or seen, 'The Glacier Express 1/2' on VHS, then you really have not experienced the ultimate in a luxurious journey from the Matterhorn's base at Zermatt to the 'Cresta Run' in St. Moritz. This is the Swiss railway fans dream of little red trains trundling up impossible gradients and curves, over massive viaducts, pretty stations with copious spring plants, meadows and snow fields with of course the obligatory MITV blue sky. This DVD has it all, and should be procured by all Swiss fans that have DVD capability at home or indeed anywhere!

Great Railway Journeys of Europe

Editor - Tom Le Bas. Published by Insight Guides 2002. Language - English. 150mm x 224mm. Perfect bound. ISBN 981-234-720-8 400 pp. £16.99

Great Railway Journeys of Europe does exactly what it says on the cover and brilliantly. The first 75 pages ooze quality and evoke memories of yesteryear as the author gives a potted history of railways around Europe as well as the wonderful ancillaries associated with the Victorian era. Station grandeur, exotic travel, Pullman, preservation interspersed with fabulous photographs beautifully reproduced on good quality glossy paper form the preface to the main event. Wonderful railway journeys from the UK to Poland and Scandinavia, including all of the larger countries are portrayed in excellent detail with photographs to match. The format of each journey chapter includes details of mileage, Thomas Cook timetable number, star attractions together with maps and helpful tips as well as a comprehensive analysis of the journey. This includes a potted history of the line in question, together with details of the main centres passed. Having travelled on several of the routes mentioned I can confirm that the author has done his homework well apart from calling the KWVR 'The Howarth Railway'. At the end of each country section there are details of heritage and preservation centres that although not exhaustive are certainly enough to keep the general enthusiast busy!

You may say "what about the Swiss element?" and you are right to ask. The scene was set when on page 8 a double-page spread of the 'Glacier Express' was produced followed by shots of Pilatus and one of my favourites, the Schynige Platte Bahn in the Bernese Oberland. The Swiss journeys begin with Geneva to Milan followed by Zurich to Chiasso. They continue with Zermatt to St. Moritz on the 'Glacier Express' with Tirano and Tarasp also fully explored. Luzern to the Jungfrauoch and Montreux to Lenk are the other journeys covered in this excellent publication. This book will suit both railway enthusiasts and holidaymakers alike as it has so much diverse interest and is a superb addition to your coffee-table collection.

G&T