

# The Centovalli : wetting the appetite

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*Two of the new ABe 4/6 units on the Centovalli negotiate one of the many viaducts on this spectacular international line.*

*Photo: Colin Jarman*

An ex BR friend and myself visited Switzerland in the first week of September 2000. In order to obtain a freedom of choice we purchased 8 Day Swiss Passes and travelled on 45 trains in the 8 days. All of them were well presented, all of them left on time and arrived at destinations within 2 minutes of time.

We were mainly based at Spiez and, one day, we travelled over the Gotthard to Bellinzona and, to avoid retracing our steps, we elected to return via Locarno and the Centovalli.

We had lunch at Locarno and then made our way under the long awning to the underground FART Station which must be the craziest bit of infrastructure on the Swiss Transport System. The trains always seem

to be stabled at the far end of the platform and then proceed through a dreary tunnel for 6 or 7 minutes. This seems to be a poor substitute for the previous arrangement of a tramway type journey alongside the lake and by the park.

*The viaduct at Camedo. 7/9/2000. Photo: Douglas Ellison*





The train left on time at 13.55 and consisted of a mixed rake including an old First Class coach at the rear which we were invited into by the conductor as the remainder of the train was crowded. We climbed slowly up the heavily wooded valley over some startling gorges and well above the green river with its succession of dams.

At Camedo we rolled into the frontier station and 3 very smartly uniformed young Italian Customs and Immigration Officers slid aboard. They called out "Deutsch" and turned swiftly without waiting for a reply, so we kept our heads down in the interest of European unity! I read somewhere that the Italians have in store a 5 years supply of all types of uniforms which perhaps explains why the team in this remote corner of the Country were as smart as they were. After rolling over the frontier bridge a young girl came into the coach wheeling a rather ungainly trolley with drinks, sandwiches etc. Sad to say nobody bought anything, possibly because no one had any Italian lira.



*Older stock arrives at ??????????????. 18/8/1990.  
Can anyone help with the location?*

*Photo: Steve Barnes*



*Trains cross at Olgia, see text below.*

*Photo: Douglas Ellison*

Trains crossed at Olgia 2; two crew members from each train met on the ballast and from the amount of earnest conversation and checking of papers I would imagine a meet on the Trans Siberian Railway would not have been more involved!! Documents were exchanged and the points and signals were changed without any apparent reference to Control. As we were now some minutes late, I

was worried about our connection with the main line at Domodossola but the train now speeded up considerably on very good track running across a plateau with quite a prosperous air about it, and I cheered up a lot.

We had a rather long station stop at Re and after this we wound our way along the valley side losing height all the time and with wheels squealing almost continuously. There were many villages on the other side of the valley with no obvious roads to them but no apparent

settlements alongside the railway.

Once at the bottom of the grade, The train sped over the level valley floor, finally passing the Depot with a wide variety of rolling stock, some of which looked a bit run down, and, miraculously it seemed to me, we ran into the subway station at Domodossola right on time.

The northbound main line train was standing at the station platform and left on time





without customs formalities. It crawled most of the way to Brig as massive tunnel reconstruction work was in progress either side of Iselle. But allowance is clearly built into the Timetable as we reached Brig on time and were able to leave there, again on time, for the journey over the Lötschberg and back to Spiez.

*Above: Old stock standing outside sheds near Masera. Still on the valley floor just East of Domodossola. 4/2000. Photo: Colin Jarman*

*Right: A train leaves Olgia for Locarno. 7/9/3000 Photo: Douglas Ellison*

*Below: Camedo, the Swiss border station. 4/2000. Photo: Colin Jarman*

