

A bird's eye view of the Gotthard North Ramp : David Adams takes the Erstfeld - Schwandi cable car

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The view south from Schwandi towards Amsteg. 460033 is approaching Shützen with IC672, the 8:31 Chiasso-Basel. The single line branch to the Amsteg "NEAT" site hugs the left side of the autobahn. PHOTOS: David Adams

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF THE GOTTHARD NORTH RAMP

David Adams takes the Erstfeld – Schwandi Cable Car

Regular visitors to Erstfeld may be aware of the cable car that runs from near the rear of the Hotel Frohsinn up to a shelf on the mountainside which overlooks the Reuss Valley. The top cable car station is known as Schwandi and the 8 minute journey lifts passengers 640m to 1,113m. There is just one intermediate pylon not far from the summit and up to that point there are marvellous views over Erstfeld station and village and also northwards to the Reuss delta and Vierwaldstattersee. The glacier opposite the Hotel Frohsinn can also be viewed in more detail from the top station.

The first cable car was introduced in 1914 and was powered by water tanks. On 26.11.1931 a modern system using electric power was introduced. A subsequent renovation in 1989 resulted in the system as it is seen today. The cable cars seat 4 persons and run on request on a one up one down basis every 30 minutes from 07.30 – 12.00

and 13.00 – 19.30. This is probably the cheapest cable car ride in Switzerland at just 10 SFr for an adult return.

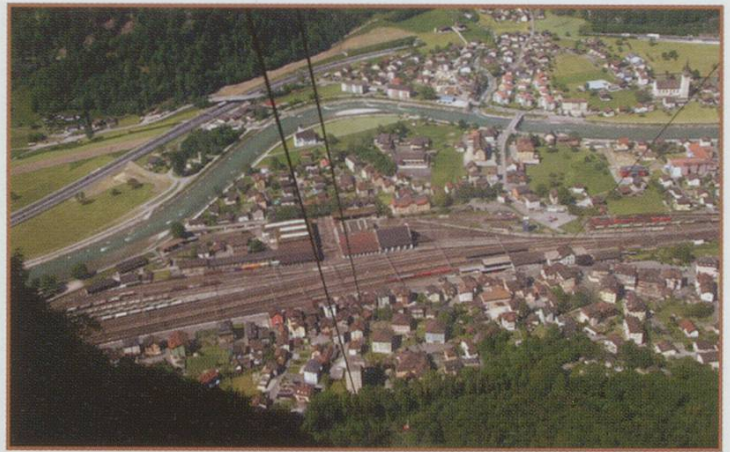
To go up from Erstfeld the operator at the top must be contacted by telephone. Only German appears to be understood, so for those who do not speak the language just say "Ich möchte hochfahren", then after receiving a reply join the cable car and close the door. A bell will ring just before departure. I found that a reply from the operator was not forthcoming until the actual scheduled departure time.

On arrival at Schwandi the fare is payable in cash and users may be surprised to find that the operator is an elderly lady, Miss Maria Farrer, who was born on 27.11.1918 and of course will reach the marvellous age of 90 this coming November. She lives by the top station with her dog and apparently never goes down to Erstfeld.

From the top station a path leads through a wood to Bergrestaurant Strengmatt which may open in the summer but “Geschlossen” (Closed) notices were displayed in May. After a short distance along this path the view south towards Amsteg and the Bristen opens up and trains can be seen from just south of Shützen all the way to Amsteg. The best time for photography is in the morning, probably between 09.00 and 11.00 and of course clear sunny weather is preferable. It is certainly a ride worth doing for the views over Erstfeld alone. So if you are staying at Erstfeld and the morning is sunny do give it a whirl, you will not be disappointed.

Finally I extend my sincere thanks to Paul Jans-Käch, the proprietor of the Hotel Frohsinn, for his invaluable assistance in providing local information.

TOP: *The view from the intermediate pylon. No less than five Ae6/6s are in this shot, 11510, 11417 & 610492 stored at the rear of the depot. In front of them is 11466 on a local freight and 11499 is outside the main depot building alongside an Re4/4 II.*



ABOVE: *View from cable car north towards Vierwaldstattersee in the right distance. The keen sighted may spot 843074 on a stone train in the “NEAT” sidings between Erstfeld and Altdorf, centre bottom of the picture.*

MOB 2002 IS SAVED Le Vaudois and Peter Bowen

Montreux Oberland Bernois' large DZe6/6 No. 2002 built in 1932 which has spent the winter on a siding at Saanen, following demolition of its shed at Gstaad in order to allow the construction of a subway there (see *March Swiss Express*), will be saved by the Blonay-Chamby Museum Railway. At their AGM members agreed their Electric Traction Group could begin negotiations with MOB for saving the loco. They are making it clear, however, that their present programme of rehabilitation of locos, automotrices and coaches will not be changed, so that it is unlikely that work will begin on 2002 for five years. Even the under-cover storage of a 17m vehicle

presents problems for them.

Because she is so large the vehicle is not ideal for their comparatively short line and so they want assurance from MOB that they will be able to run it on the “main line”. They are also seeking the remaining dismantled parts from sister loco No. 2001 which *Eisenbahn Amateur* reported last year as having been scrapped. Apparently although the bodywork has gone, several mechanical parts survive in store.

The group will have to seek considerable funds and sponsorship for what is bound to be a costly rehabilitation but the actual purchase price suggested is very reasonable – a one franc coin minted in 2002!