

Bramble tours - or a dog's day out

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BRAMBLE TOURS - or a dog's day out

Bremgarten

ALL PHOTOS: Bremgarten



TOP: First stop of the day at Tavannes – grass and coffee stop.

RIGHT: This is me at Neuchâtel – not bad for an old dog?

It's a tough life being a guide dog – no, not one with a white stick but one whose job it is to guide railway enthusiasts around Switzerland. I thought there'd be trouble when my boss joined the SRS, and it's come true. Take a dull Wednesday in May, for example. I have to get him up early enough so we can be at Bern before 9am (a time all good dogs should still

be in bed), so we can meet a fellow SRS member and show him some of the delights of our country railways.

Having met up, off we set on the 9:12 to Biel (travelling 2nd class – there's no carpet on the floor – what's the world coming to?) and after a couple of smartish connections via Sonceboz-Sombeval I get them to stop at Tavannes. I know this is an interesting

place as there's a nice patch of grass outside the station with some nice smells – and the station hotel apparently does a good coffee. The next train is the 10:44 to Le Noirmont, but of course I have to drag them off the train at Tramelan so they can take some photographs. I spot a fellow

A fellow railway guide dog awaits his customers at Tramelan.



guide dog on the opposite platform but no time to chat before we're off again. The next connection to La Chaux-de-Fonds was full of school kids, but the lady opposite us seemed to take a shine to me and stroked my head to relieve the stress. Very kind I thought, I even went a bit misty-eyed but was assured it was just the low cloud on this part of the route. Yet another quick train change to Le Locle (it's not good for my old bones, you know) and we're off to Les Brenets for lunch. Again this has a very nice grassy area for me, but we have to go into "Le Regional" restaurant opposite the station for lunch. It's very nice inside with railway photos and murals, well worth a stop. At least they got their priorities right – my bowl of water comes before their food. Trouble is, I'll need that grass again soon!

The chaps have a mooch around Les Brenets station before I struggle back aboard the train to retrace our steps to La Chaux-de-Fonds. Then it's off down the branch line to Les Ponts-de-Martel and back. (I'm not sure who this guy "Les" is, but he's got a lot of places named after him). Next we travel down to Neuchâtel, but for some reason the visitor has to jump off the train at Chambrelien to take yet another picture – strange lot these railway buffs. Something to do with the train reversing direction; apparently they don't do that much in the UK.

At Neuchâtel we all do a new bit of line – well the modern metro-type funicular down to the lake-side. I can recommend this, as there's more very nice grass down there. Once back at the main station we catch the only late train of the day back to Bern where we say our goodbyes and I get to go outside for a quick sniff. Our visitor said

that he really enjoyed his day out. Then it's back home to a good meal and a long night's sleep in my bed.

It's a dog's life!



As we approach Le Chaux-de-Fonds we nearly run over a stupid lad – look at the girl's expression on the right..



The superb interior of Le Regional restaurant at Les Brenets – and the food is good too.



Oh No! – we've got to walk to the end of another platform at Neuchâtel to photograph yet one more Ae 6/6.