

An Appenzell holiday

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AN APPENZELL HOLIDAY

Brian Grumbridge



ABT No.143, B248 and BDe 4/4 No.43 travelling west from Gonten after recent snowfall with the 15.40 to Gossau on 26/10/ 2010.

ALL PHOTOS: Brian Grumbridge

I have been travelling to Switzerland for holidays over the past 50 years but an area that I had never been to was Appenzellerland, however in October 2010 I set off to rectify this.

Appenzell is formed of two Half Cantons – the mainly Catholic Appenzell Innerrhoden (AI) and the mainly Protestant Appenzell Ausserrhoden (AR) – the whole totally surrounded by Canton St Gallen. Appenzell town (pop 5,500), capital of Innerrhoden, lies 785m high some 10km south of St Gallen – although 20km by train! Herisau is the capital of Ausserrhoden. Visitors staying in the same hotel in the area for three or more nights receive the Appenzell Card (Appenzeller Ferienkarte). In addition to free train and bus travel (and some cable car trips) in the OSTWIND area of NE Switzerland the card also offers free entry to some local facilities.

Until 2006 the Appenzellerbahn (AB) only consisted of the metre gauge lines radiating from Appenzell town however the AB Group now also includes several other lines. The Trognerbahn (TB) from St Gallen through Speicher to Trogen; the Rorschach-Heiden-Bergbahn (RHB) and the Bergbahn Rheineck-Walzenhausen (RhW). The AB Group also manages the Frauenfeld-Wil-Bahn (FW) some 30km to the west.

The original 26km Appenzeller Bahn was built in stages between 1875 and 1913 and runs from the SBB Zürich-St Gallen line at Gossau SG, through Herisau, Urnäsch (with its 180° reverse curve) and Jakobsbad, to Appenzell. Many of the stations on this stretch, and the whole AB, are unmanned request stops. Side trips from this section of line include:- Herisau to Stein (AR) by PostAuto to sample the six types of Appenzell cheese at the Cheese Dairy (Schaukäseerei) with its good

restaurant and adjacent Folklore Museum (Volkskundemuseum); Urnäsch to Schwägälp by PostAuto, then the cable car to the top of Mt Säntis (2502m) for amazing views, or visit the Museum of Appenzell Customs (Brauchtummuseum) in Urnäsch; at Jakobsbad the cable car to Kronberg (1663m) from which there are a large number of hiking routes down into the valley – to walk off some of that cheese! Children and chocoholics will want to travel to Flawil, one station west on the SBB line from Gossau, where regular buses run near Schoggiland, the home of the Maestraini chocolate factory.

From St Gallen to Herisau Südostbahn (SOB), trains run along what was formerly part of the Bodensee-Toggenburg-Bahn (BT) and over the Sitter viaduct. Opened in 1910, this is 99m above the floor of the river valley and is one of the tallest railway bridges in Switzerland. Many of the local services in the St Gallen area are now operated by Turbo electrical multiple units of the class RABe 526.7 with their extremely colourful and modern interiors.

Thurbo RABe No.526 789-3 to Schaffhausen at Kreuzlingen (with No.526 790-1 to Herisau on its left) 16/10/2010.





BDeh 4/4 No.15, B292, B291 and ABt No.123 having arrived at Appenzell with the 09:37 from St Gallen on 15/10/ 2010.



ABt No.116 and BDeh 4/4 No.16 waiting to take the 1228 from Altstätten Stadt to Gais on 24/10/2010.



CFe 3/3 No.2 and coach C13 at Appenzell station 20/10/2010.

From Appenzell a 6km extension of the metre gauge line was completed to Wasserauen in 1912. Originally called the Säntisbahn, and later the Appenzell Weissbad Wasserauen Bahn, it merged with the AB in 1947. In the late 19thC various projects were considered for a railway from Wasserauen to the top of Mt Säntis although all fell through. Eventually Mt Säntis was reached in 1935 by the spectacular cable car from Schwägalp. Excursions include:- the PostAuto from Weissbad to Brülisau for the cable car to Hoher Kasten

(1795m) with its revolving restaurant, an alpine garden, and many walking routes back down; from Wasserauen the 10 minute cable car ride to Ebenalp (1644m) where it is a relatively easy walk along a mountain path to the prehistoric Wildkirchli caves, the Äscher guest house perched in the rock face, and walks further down to the Seealpsee. The 32km AB route from Gossau to Wasserauen is now treated as a single entity with a generally half-hourly interval Pendelzug service utilising BDeh4/4 units N0s.41-45.

The AB metre gauge line from St Gallen to Gais originally opened in 1889 as a tram route and runs mostly alongside a main road. The section from Gais to Appenzell was opened in 1904 and the route from St Gallen was then known as the Appenzeller Strassenbahn. It merged with the Altstätten Gais Bahn in 1949 becoming the SGA (St Gallen-Gais-Appenzell-Altstätten-Bahn), and then with the AB in 1988. The first section of the route from central St Gallen to Riethüsli utilises Riggerbach rack to overcome a maximum gradient of 10%. This is another half-hourly Pendelzug operation using BDeh4/4 units N0s.11-15. The rack section is planned to be replaced by 2015 in a CHF90m project that includes building the Ruckhalde tunnel and linking the AB tracks to those of the TB at the Hauptbahnhof, when modern tramway-type equipment will be able to work right through from

Trogen to Appenzell. As the TB is electrified at 1000v and the AB at 1500v dual-voltage equipment (or a voltage change) will be needed.


The 8km line from Gais to Altstätten Stadt opened in 1911, and although it is metre gauge the use of the Strub rack system on the 3km of 16% grade between Stoss AR and Altstätten results in non-standard units BDeh4/4 N0s.16/17 being utilised on the hourly service. Until 1973 this line extended as a tramway through the streets of Altstätten to the SBB station. Travelling around on the AB you may come across the historic unit CFe 3/3 N0.2 which still carries its original designation BDe 2/3 on its bogies. This has been restored over the past decade by the AG2 Appenzell Railway

Historical Association (www.ag2.ch) and, along with coach C13, goods wagon K104 and summer coach C3 203, is available for hire for weddings, birthday parties, company outings etc.

The Trogenerbahn was originally a tram route that opened in 1903, but now operates as a light railway although much of the 10km route is street running. With a maximum gradient of 7.5% it is the steepest adhesion railway in Switzerland. Normally operated by single Be 4/8 units Nos. 31-35 its normal 30min frequency doubles at working day peak times when other

units can often be seen. A short walk uphill from Trogen station is a Pestalozzi Children's Village (Kinderdorf Pestalozzi). This one was set up to provide a home for some of Europe's numerous war orphans by Swiss philosopher Walter Corti, who was inspired by the Swiss social reformer Johann Pestalozzi.

The 7km standard gauge Rorschach-Heiden-Bergbahn opened in 1875. Trains from a fleet of modern and vintage stock run hourly from Rorschach Hafen, over SBB metals to Rorschach, then use Riggenbach rack to surmount the 9% maximum gradient on their climb to Heiden for views over the Bodensee. It is a gentle walk from the station to the museum and memorial commemorating Henry Dunant the founder of the Red Cross and winner of the first Nobel Peace Prize who spent the last 23 years of his life in Heiden. Frequent PostAutos travel directly to St Gallen from here. Riggenbach rack is also used by the single BDeh 1/2 of the 1200mm gauge Bergbahn Rheineck-Walzenhausen on its 2km climb between the towns in its name. There is a half-hourly service on this, one of the shortest railways in Switzerland.

I can recommend the family run Hotel Café Adler, which serves excellent fondues in its cellar during the early evening, as a place to stay in Appenzell. Also to be recommended is Anthony Lambert's book "Switzerland without a Car", published by Bradt Travel Guides Ltd., which is organised according to the table numbers of the Swiss railway timetable. 



BDe 4/4 No.44 in OSTWIND blue, B246 and ABt No.144 arriving at Gonten for the 16.47 departure to Wasserauen on 19/10/2010.

Be 4/8 No.34 waiting to depart with the 17.02 Trogen – St Gallen on 24/10/2010.



ABt No.113, B294 (and BDeh 4/4 No.11) negotiating the tightly curved approach to St Gallen on the rack section from Riethüsi with the 12.38 from Appenzell on 24/10/2010.



BDe 4/4 No.47, B244 and ABt No.146 arriving at Jakobsbad after fresh snowfall with the 14.47 Gossau – Wasserauen on 26/10/2010.



ABt No.141, B247, B236 and BDe 4/4 No.41 with the 10.33 Appenzell – Gossau on the tight curve approaching Urnäsch on 21/10/2010.

BDeh 3/6 No.25 at Rorschach Hafen having arrived at 15.28 from Heiden on 23/10/2010.

