

Are you sitting comfortably. Part 2, Jason Sargerson continues his review of Swiss railway seating

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Express, there is also a voltage switch sign on Platform 7 at St Moritz. I also photographed a voltage change signal at Aigle on the TPC in February 2018. The alternatives here are 850V or 1500V DC although I did not see the sign change and I am not sure if it does actually change now given recent alterations on TPC lines.



Selected voltage indicator at St. Moritz.



1500V DC indicator at Aigle.

Photos: Gordon Bannister


Caption corrections

Thanks also to those readers who pointed out the unfortunate error in the cover caption for our March issue. Airolo is of course situated on the erstwhile Gotthard Bergstrecke, not the old Lötschberg route. Judging by the position of the blind in the windscreen I think we can also safely assume the loco was propelling rather than hauling the train!

Members' advertisements

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Are you sitting comfortably

- Part 2 Jason Sargerson continues his review of Swiss railway seating.

All photos: Jason Sargerson

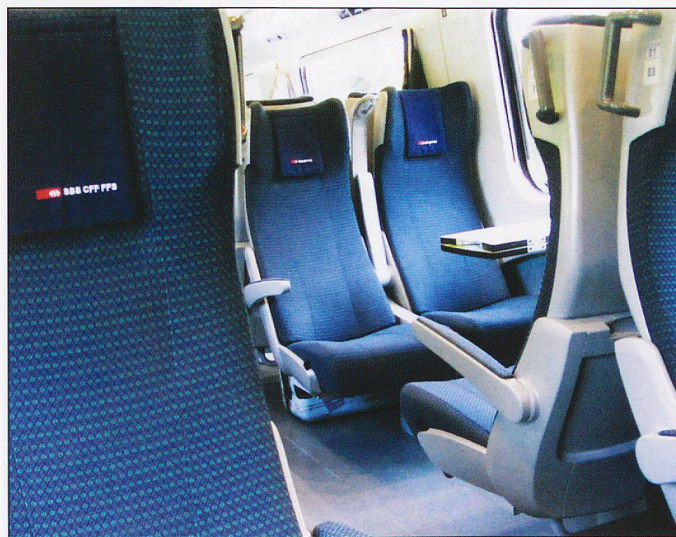
This is a follow on from my first article about seats on the trains in Switzerland. As I indicated previously, I am of average build and height, so if you are a large or tall person you may disagree with my opinions. On at least one of my trips to Switzerland I have a 1st Class pass, but usually I travel 2nd Class, and seats in both classes are covered here where I discuss not only the seat, but also the surrounding environment.



1. Class 500, 2nd Class.

The first seat is 2nd Class in the SBB ICN Class 500. It is a substantial, comfortable seat, with solid armrests, although with the narrower body of the coach - to allow for tilting - it is not as wide as others. The seats match the windows that

have a blind to reduce glare from the sun. The environment is relatively quiet, even though the train is motorised throughout. There is room for luggage beneath the seat or in between the seats and there is a sensible small folding table available.



2. Class 503, 2nd Class.

The second seat is a 2nd Class one in the SBB Pendolino Due Class 503. I find these seats a bit pretentious, they promise to be comfortable, but are not as good as standard seats. It is a tilting train, so the seats are narrower, but they also appear to be either lower or the windows are higher, so not as enjoyable as the Class 500 seat. The environment is basically quiet but there is some motor noise. There is no room for luggage under the seat, and limited space between

a cramped feeling. The airline-style seating has annoying fold down trays, other seats have a small table.

The third seat is a 1st Class one in a SBB IC 2000 double-deck coach. This is a comfortable seat with good headrests and correct angled back. It has folding central armrests and plenty of room for luggage both beneath the seat and between seats. The environment is very quiet, as the coaches are not motorised. The seats match the windows and the windows have sunblinds. Tables between the seats are small in some cases, but there are some that extend across both seats which makes it difficult to access the window seat.



3. IC2000 Double Deck, 1st Class.

The fourth seat is a 2nd Class one in an SBB IC 2000 double-deck coach. This is a comfortable seat with good headrests. It is more upright than the 1st Class seat and the environment, luggage space, etc. resemble that in 1st Class. When standing in the window seat, you must be careful not to hit your head. There is a small folding table between the seats allowing easy access to all the seats.



4. IC2000 Double Deck, 2nd Class.

The fifth seat is in an SBB Mark IV 1st Class coach. This is a very comfortable, adjustable seat with substantial armrests. The seat is angled back correctly and has room

for luggage beneath and between the seats. The seats match the windows and there is a window blind. The environment is very quiet, as the coaches are not motorised. There is a small fixed table between the seats to allow access to all the seats. There are solid handrails on the seats for movement along the carriage.



5. Mark IV Coach, 1st Class.

The sixth seat is in an SBB Mark IV 2nd Class driving trailer coach. These driving trailers were constructed later than the original Mark IV coaches and the seats are slightly more upright. The seat is comfortable, with significant armrests. Environment, luggage space, tables, etc. resemble the 1st Class provision.



6. Mark IV Trailer, 2nd Class.

The seventh seat is in an SBB Panoramic 1st Class coach. This is a very comfortable seat similar to the first class seat in the Mark IV coach. The seats match the windows and there are unusual large window blinds. There is room for luggage between the seats, but not beneath the seats. For some reason the coach was quite noisy for at least 30 minutes of my journey – possibly noise from the air conditioning unit. There is a small fixed table between the seats allowing easy access. The outer seats have folding trays for meals.

BOOK REVIEW

SWISS POSTBUSES

Author: Martin Fisher.

Published by: Swiss Express Publications.

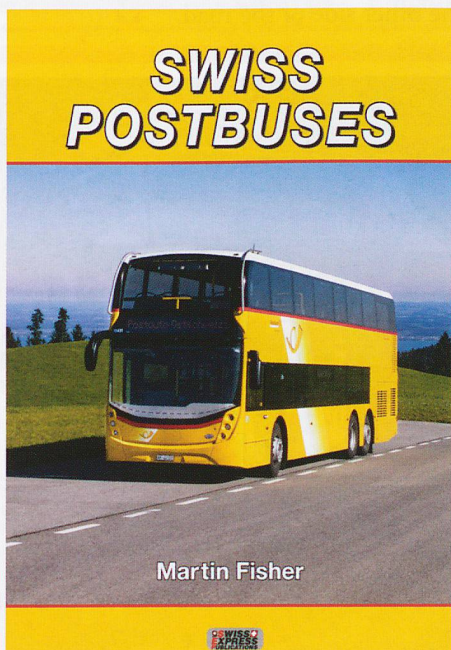
ISBN: 978-0-9926812-9-6.

Photographs in colour, also some black and white.

Hard Back A4 size, 208 pages.

Price: £28 at exhibitions,

£31.50 by post (*it weighs 1.4Kg*).



This revised and enlarged second edition of Martin Fisher's Swiss Postbuses gives three times the page space of its predecessor in its new A4 format. While many pictures are

repeated, a lot more have been added, and in particular many historic black-and-white photographs are included, bringing an impressive picture total of over 650.


The rather small maps in the first edition have been redrawn and are now far more readable. Notable are major new contributions from Malcolm Chase, editor of Buses Worldwide, and Fritz Jenni, a retired Director of PTT, which have strengthened the historical content of the book. The chapter about buses of yesterday is much enlarged and additional appendices provide more vehicle and ticketing information.

Whilst the Postbus undertaking has a good presence in many Swiss urban areas, it is the dominant transport provider in the southern part of the country and in particular the Alpine area, and there's no shortage of sunny scenic locations depicted. The mountain pass routes have been improved over the years such that pretty standard, though comfort-orientated, vehicles are currently used. It's serving the side valleys and hillside villages where the special vehicles can be found, often a demure-looking small coach or minibus, but with a powerful engine to make short work of steep gradients and tight bends.

A huge diversity of passenger-carrying vehicles is illustrated, from having half-tracks to being driverless, and it's pleasing that PostAuto is still buying specialised vehicles today, such as the Hess SwissAlpin low-floor midibus with optional roof glazing at the rear and gutsy Scania underframe, to the ADL double-deckers currently entering service, but sadly with little seat-cushioning.

The reader can combine the useful route descriptions in the book with timetables from the Fahrplanfelder website to plan interesting and scenic holiday trips.

This publication is an essential requirement for transport enthusiasts interested in Switzerland, and is thoroughly recommended.

Sholto Thomas. 



7. SBB, Panorama Coach, 1st Class.

The eighth seat is in an SOB Class 526 2nd Class coach. This is in the FLIRT units operated by SOB. This seat is a more Spartan than others, although comfortable for shorter journeys. It is less substantial than the other seats discussed here, with smaller headrests and firm armrests. There is room for luggage beneath and between the seats. The environment is usually quiet, although the coaches are motorised. There



8. SOB, Class 526, 2nd Class.

are no window blinds, however, the seats do match the windows. There is a small fixed table between the seats allowing easy access.

There is a trend emerging here with the more modern seats being less comfortable than the traditional ones. I intend to continue my survey of seats, looking at BLS stock and more SBB multiple units. 