

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: 4 (1994-1996)
Heft: 2

Artikel: On the rocks : a ride on the ICE
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-855003>

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On the Rocks

A ride on the ICE
by Steve Horobin

Since the autumn of 1992 the Deutsche Bundesbahn's premier train, the InterCity Express (ICE) has been operating through services from various German cities to and from Zürich. The 1993 Kursbuch now shows three services per day from Zürich via Basel and onto German destinations.

On my visit to Switzerland last summer a trip on the ICE was a must. Having met up with and convinced two fellow SRS members (Ron and Allan Dawes) to join me, we made reservations and paid the SFr.4 supplement to travel on Thursday 24 June.

We made our way from our base on the Vierwaldstättersee via Kussnacht am Rigi and Luzern in good time to catch the 10:45 Zürich - Hamburg *Helvetia*, which duly left dead on time from Gleis 4.

Our first impression of our first class coach were favourable. The interior had an air of spaciousness, the decor, a mixture of blue,

ICE Helvetia at Basel Hauptbahnhof on 24 June 1993.

grey and pink, was tasteful. The comfortable seats are arranged in a 2+2;1+1 formation and are equipped with a foldaway tray and nine-channel radio, which you can listen to on personal headphones.

There is a designated storage section for baggage in each coach as well as a segregated family area, a toilet compartment at one end and a visual display unit showing destination, next stop and current speed.

Although the ICE is capable of 140mph on designated stretches of the DB, it does not reach anything like this speed on the SBB. The journey from Zürich to Basel takes about an hour, the same as a normal loco-hauled InterCity service. The ride is incredibly smooth and the train takes the many curves of the Bosberg line with ease. So much so that on arrival at Basel we were extremely reluctant to leave.