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Most readers will be well aware of the outstanding rail journey between Preda and Bergün on the Albula line of the RhB, either from personal experience of the train ride, the lineside path or previous articles in Swiss Express. In the summer of 1999 there were two new ways to see this route.

On Saturdays and Sundays from early July to the beginning of September the Rhätische Bahn fitted in to its already intensive timetable a number of special trains between Filisur and Preda using the open Aussichtswagens more commonly used on the Bernina and Arosa lines. These trains provided a wonderful opportunity to view the dramatic contours of the line and gave unrivalled views of the surrounding mountains and valleys. To speed from dizzy viaduct into black-dark tunnel and just as suddenly emerge into the bright sunlight of an alpine valley was an experience to be remembered for a long time and all for CHF15 one-way or CHF25 return.

On August 28 the trains were comprised of three Aussichtswagens marshalled between two bogie car flats and headed by GE6/6 704 Davos. The flat cars were included for a special reason which soon became clear. On the uphill journey the train was routed into the line nearest the station buildings at Bergün so that a large number of scooters could be loaded on to the flats. These scooters provide the second new way to see this route. Not motorised

scooters but push-along scooters of the type I had as a boy (and that's 50 years ago!). At Preda the scooters were unloaded and allocated to passengers who were to make the return journey to Bergün by scooter over the northern slopes of the Albula pass road. The intense concentration of these brave riders as observed from the open carriages on the descending train indicated that they were not going to have too much time to take in views of trains or mountains as they sped back to Bergün.

The RhB has to be praised for the enterprising ways they attract tourists to use the railway, in this case providing the experience of travelling through over 5 kilometres of tunnels, eleven viaducts in open stock over a route with a difference in height of over 2,000 feet. And this followed, if the traveller chooses, by an exciting scooter ride to return to base.

There is little wonder that in the publicity for these facilities the railway company use a number of ways to describe the trip. Railrider is almost too prosaic for such an experience, Roller Coaster seems to get nearer the mark whilst some passengers might agree with the leaflet which describes the trip as the High-Way to Hell! And the slogan for the scooters reads Just stand on and roll off.

It is to be hoped the exercise was worthwhile for the RhB and that the service will be provided again in future years.

Good contemporary pictures are always needed. Slides, prints or even very high quality digital images should be forwarded as soon as possible. They will always be acknowledged and returned after publication.



Above: RhB Ge6/6 II no.704 on the Railrider at Filisur. 28/08/99

Photo Neil Townend

Below: RhB Ge6/6 Crocodile no.412 on a Railrider train bursts from the tunnel heading into Bergün. 05/09/99 Photo. Dave Howsam ( and see later )

