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Going Around in Circles Number 3



TOP: A scruffy Italian loco at Chiasso Station. Photo: Bremgarten
BOTTOM: A boat ties up at Porlezza. Photo: Michael Farr

TOP: The outside of the stylish Chiasso Station. Photo: Bremgarten
BOTTOM: The magnificent scenery across the lake at Lugano. Photo: Bremgarten

The third of Steve Buck's articles about his Ticino trips

As part of the days-out series, one of the guiding factors was to travel after breakfast and return before dinner using a SwissPass, which meant that the travel part of your excursion could be done at no cost. This one is different because we venture into Italy and therefore you will need to pay for your travel there, and to do it in Euros. It is also wise to carry your Passport, for although Switzerland is currently a signatory to Shengen and it is unlikely you will have to show it, carrying personal identification is normally a requirement in most European countries. Anyway you will need to have your passport to accompany your SwissPass. Their citizens, of-course, have the convenience of Identity Cards.

We start off from Lugano by catching the 09.34 to Chiasso where we arrive at 10.02. On exiting the station turn right alongside the station building. There is a bus stop about 100m up on the same side where you catch the service No.1 to Como centre at 10.17. This is an Italian bus so you have to buy your ticket before boarding, usually from the local news or tabacco shop. When we have done this trip, we have usually walked across the frontier into Italy and bought our tickets there at €1.30, as not all the buses run to or from the SBB station. On arrival in Como at 10.44 you have just over an hour to get a coffee, look at the Cathedral or shops before making your way to the harbour where at 12.00 you board your boat for the cruise up Lago di Como to Mennagio that costs €10.40 each. The ship has a restaurant on board,

but you may prefer to eat your own picnic as you enjoy the scenery.

On arrival at Mennagio, which has a very pretty lakeside promenade, at 14.20, you need to make your way to the bus stop on the Via Lusardi, by turning left from the landing stage and along the promenade until you get to the Hotel Bellavista on the Via Lusardi, and turning right being very careful on the almost non-existent footway (the Bible says something about the quick and the dead - on Italian roads if you aren't the first, you will be the second), make your way to the second bus stop, in the layby on the corner of Via Dante Alighieri where at 14.35, a C12 bus of SPT will come to take you to Porlezza and Lugano. Once again you'll need to get your tickets from the newsagent on the corner of Via Calvi before you board the bus. This bus arrives at Porlezza at 15.03. Here you have a choice; you either stay on the bus and arrive at Lugano Cassarate at 15.32, where you need to change onto one of the local buses to avoid the long walk into town, or get off at Porlezza and using your SwissPass catch the 16.35 boat back to Lugano where you arrive at 17.35. This boat only operates in fine weather, so you need a good day for this excursion.

In previous years this excursion has been operated as part of the "railway" programme meaning you could buy your ticket at Lugano for the entire trip and pay for all your travel in Swiss Francs, but you still need some Euros for drinks, etc. 