Across and Around Switzerland, by Train

23 February 2011 to 7 March 2011

Dewi and Eufron Williams

**Our trip to the UK, using frequent flyer points, also
allowed us to visit Switzerland with no extra expenditure
of points. So we flew to Geneva armed with Swiss Passes
which gave us unlimited travel on trains, buses, trams and
lake boats for 15 days - though we were only in
Switzerland for 12 nights/13 days.**

Warning: this was written by a train-lover and contains gratuitous verbosity and full-frontal train exposure.
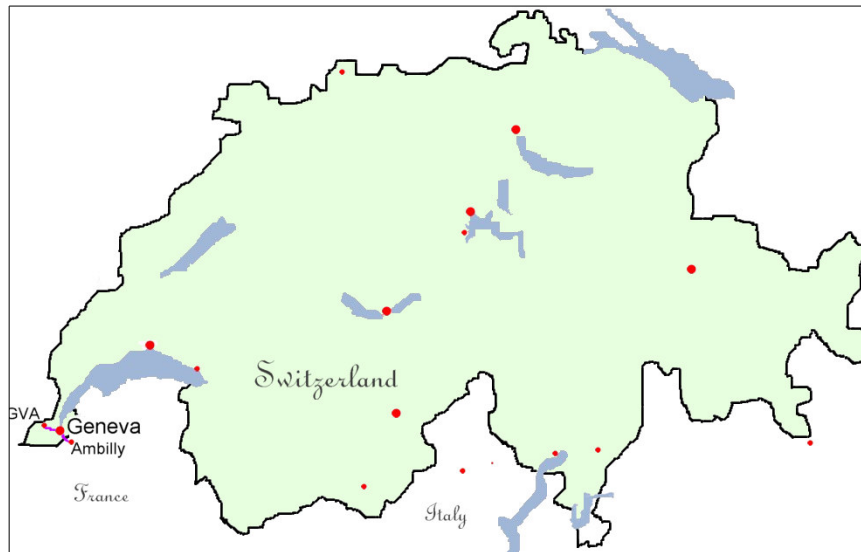

On the way to Grindelwald: the Eiger (I believe) with the Shreckhorn to the left.

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Geneva

Arriving in Geneva

We arrived at Geneva airport (GVA) and promptly left the country, as we were staying across the border in France, at Ambilly. This was because I, wrongly, believed that the Geneva trams ran across the border into France and I wanted to see how an international tram route would work. The trams dn't cross the border but a bus route on the French side runs into Geneva. If you drive a car, you have to drive through the entry channel at the border checkpoint at Moillesulaz, but if you're on the commuter bus, the border doesn't exist.

The hotel, in Ambilly, France, wasn't bad, but there weren't too many things near it. It was a walk to a cash machine, to get Euros. It was a longer walk to the "Casino" supermarket, to buy bread and cheese.

Photo above: looking through the car channel at the Moillesulaz crossing: France is in the background.

At left: the Geneva tram, to take us back to the main station area, was waiting when we got off the bus.

I tried to ask the bus driver to inform us when we got to the "Ambilly Cross" bus stop, but he waved to the ceiling. In fact, all the buses and trams we travelled on had standard TV-type colour LCD screens up at the ceiling. Between stops, they displayed commercials and public-service announcements, but just before the stop, they displayed the name of the coming stop, and after the stop, they showed the names of the next few stops, and the destination of the vehicle.

CERN

Several months earlier, there had been plenty in the news about the Large Hadron Collider in the incredible circular tunnel at CERN, the European Centre for Nuclear Research. And of course it figured in *Angels and Demons*, the precursor to *The Da Vinci Code*.

I'd tried to book online for a place on a tour, but hadn't had a reply. So off we went, by bus and tram, to see the place for ourselves.

The reception centre, on the left, is nowhere nearly as glamorous as the impression given in *Angels and Demons*. However, it turned out that there was going to be a tour of one of the testing sites, and it would start in a few minutes, and there was one place left on it! So Eufron volunteered to sit and wait - she did a lot of this on our trip - while I took the tour.
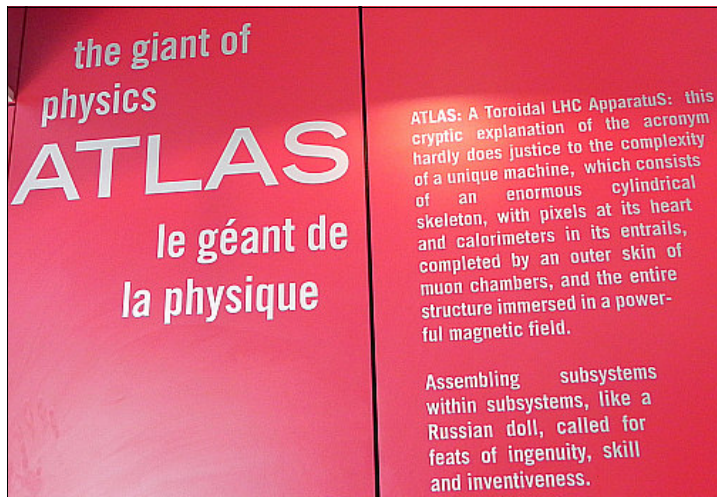
Before going on the tour, we were given a brief lecture (in a formal lecture room) about CERN, the Large Hadron Collider, and the ATLAS experiments going on there.

The Collider is in the form of a circular tunnel, 27km in circumference, that straddles (or, "underlies") the Swiss-French border on the outskirts of Geneva. Two evacuated tubes, one for each direction of a stream of protons, lie within the tunnel. Superconducting electro-magnets provide intense magnetic fields to constrain the protons to move in a circle. Each time a group of protons goes around the loop, it moves through an accelerator which gives the whole group a boost. After thousands of times around the loop, the protons are moving at near light-speed.

There are four test stations underground, on the loop. Above each, on the surface, is its control room. The reception centre is across the street from the Atlas control room. This experiment is trying to find minute asymmetry between matter and antimatter, and to find the Higgs boson - if it exists.

The outside of the ATLAS control room, left, has a huge mural of the instrument and detector cluster that lies in the actual ATLAS test site, far below.

the giant of physics

ATLAS

le géant de la physique

ATLAS: A Toroidal LHC ApparatuS: this cryptic explanation of the acronym hardly does justice to the complexity of a unique machine, which consists of an enormous cylindrical skeleton, with pixels at its heart and calorimeters in its entrails, completed by an outer skin of muon chambers, and the entire structure immersed in a powerful magnetic field.

Assembling subsystems within subsystems, like a Russian doll, called for feats of ingenuity, skill and inventiveness.

This blurb about ATLAS is written on the wall of the entrance lobby to the control room. Tourists are only taken in as far as the lobby.

Looking through the huge thick glass windows between the lobby and the actual control room, we saw something the looked like an updated version of the Space Shuttle Launch Control room - big screens on the wall, many operator stations with smaller screens - and lots of people.

I did ask the question: with all these workstations with big screens, keyboards and mice, why are so many people using laptops?

Well, when an experiment is in progress in the room below ground, all the stations are staffed, but in fact they are all waiting for something to happen - some event that was not expected. If such does happen, they can leap into action right away to analyse the results and suggest what changes should be made to the test.

But until the unexpected happens, they work on their theses, their reports, or even catch up on emails - on their own computers.

Near ATLAS is a permanent exhibition about CERN - housed in this dome.

Geneva Old Town

After CERN, we took bus & tram back to the centre of Geneva and looked for somewhere to eat. On a side street off the Rue du Mont Blanc we found an Italian place for a light lunch. Then we started walking to, and around, the Old Town.

The Rue du Mont Blanc leads to the Pont du Mont Blanc, which we crossed. On the way we saw the Jet d'eau, one of Geneva's recognizable features.

At the edge of the Old Town we found this public water supply, in the Place du Molard.

Across the other side of the Place, behind Eufron is the Molard Tower, which once guarded the Old Town.

Upwards, ever upwards - climbing the Rue du Perron in the Old Town. There were hardly any other people around, even though it was a mid-week (Thursday) afternoon.

Eufron outside the Societa Dante Alighieri (which tries to disseminate the Italian language and culture) on the Rue du Perron. There are more steps to ascend.
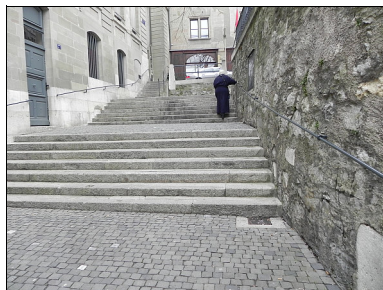
At the top we came to the old Arsenal, as well as the Hotel de Ville. The arcade under the Arsenal houses old cannons, and mosaic pictures of scenes from Swiss history.

Above, a square, or *place*, by the Cathedral in the Old Town.

And on the left, looking down on the Taverne de la Madeleine, said to be the oldest eating establishment in Geneva.

Another old building in the Old Town.

We walked down from the Old Town, passing a park where people were playing chess and checkers on oversized boards (on the ground).

Geneva: United Nations

At the foot of the Old Town, we caught a tram to the European headquarters of the United Nations. This is more the administrative headquarters, rather than the Security Council and General Assembly in New York.

The UN is in the Palais des Nations, originally built for the League of Nations.

In the Place des Nations outside the UN, there stands a huge statue of a chair. It's not immediately apparent, but one leg is broken. The statue is meant as a reminder of all the land-mines that are scattered all over the globe.


After NOT getting into the UN (you have to be in a group to get in), we took the tram back to the station, and another tram to the French border, and then the Annemasse bus to what we thought was the bus stop for the "Casino" supermarket.

We overshot by one stop. Incidentally, I kept raising smiles when I used the Canadian French word for bus: "autobus". The modern French French word is "bus".

However, we did manage to purchase two delicious quiche for our evening meal at the patisserie next to the supermarket.
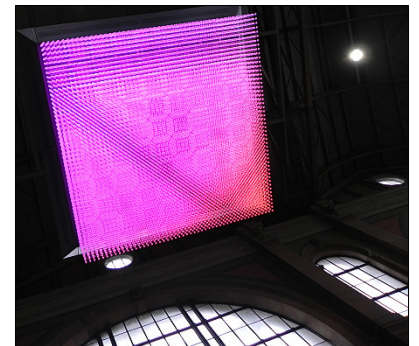
Chur
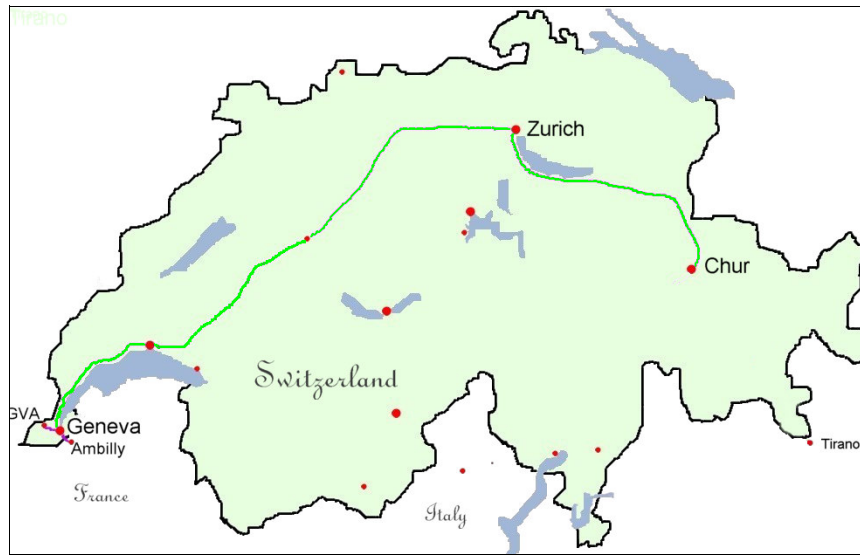
Our plan had been to take the 9:45am train to Zurich and spend a few hours walking around the city to get the "feel" of it before continuing. However, the weather was wet and miserable so we took a few photos and then got on the next train to Chur

Zurich

The concourse of the Zurich HBf station was not as I had remembered it from 64 years previously: the interior had been completely stripped, leaving a huge pedestrian area.

I took some tram pictures to compare with those of long ago. This is a "Cobra" tram, named by the manufacturer for its ability to snake around the tight curves in the old town. But in this picture, it really does give the appearance of a snake, body held off the ground, ready to pounce. (The prototype was so noisy, the riders called it "Rattlesnake", not "Cobra")

Mounted up in the roof however was a display of a myriad plastic rods, each with a coloured light (LED?) behind it: the display could present different patterns, a play of light in fact.
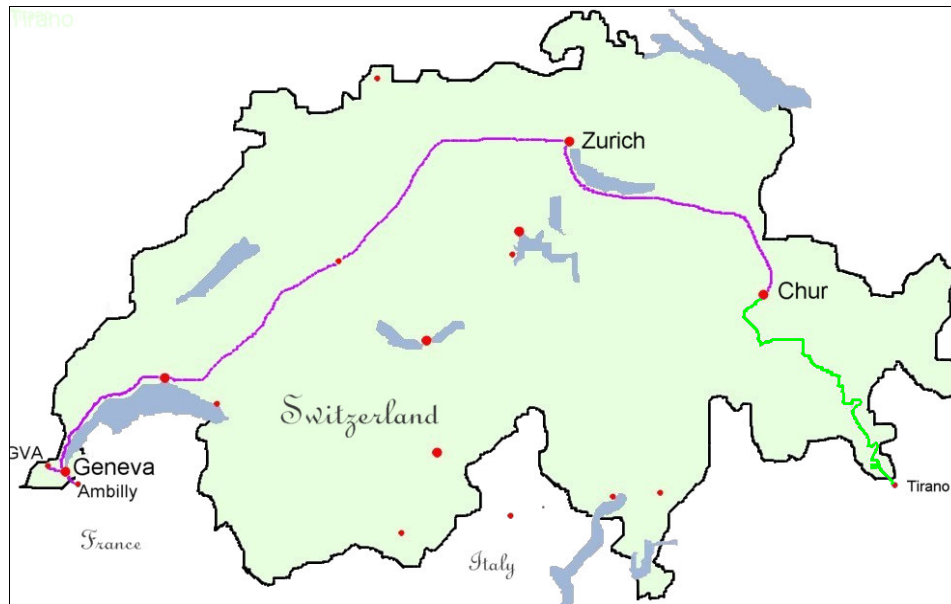
Chur

Chur is said to be the oldest human settlement in Switzerland, and has a well-preserved Old Town. However, our hotel was further from the centre of town than we had expected - a bus ride - and so we didn't get to walk around the Old Town. The hotel's location did have a couple of advantages - it was close to a Spar local supermarket (bread and cheese!) and had a McDonalds built in - very handy since there were no other restaurants around. On the day after we arrived, we made a day trip to Tirano, Italy, on the scenic Bernina Express train. The whole train was made up of "Panorama" cars, with huge sight-seeing windows.

Chur to Tirano (Italy) and back

We were to travel on the Rhaetian Railway, a narrow-gauge line which, in Chur, has a couple of platforms **outside** the main railway station - at the curb in the bus station, in fact. One of the lines from Chur runs through the streets to get to the edge of town (a "stadtbahn"). This train is just crossing a roundabout.

(below) Eufron on the Bernina Express.

We'd reserved seats only on this train and on the Glacier Express. For other routes, we could go to the station and get on board any train - we just waved the Swiss Pass when the ticket inspector came round.

It was a beautiful day, but the bright sunshine caused many reflections when taking photos through the panoramic windows - wide, tall windows, curved to the contour of the train at the top, ideal for sight-seeing.

At first our route seemed pretty straightforward, but when we left the valley of the Rhine we started climbing, going over viaducts and through tunnels. We crossed the Landwasser viaduct heading straight for the rock wall, but there was a tunnel entrance which we went into.

Now we were seeing snow, and not just in sheltered spots.

The train took us higher and higher, through snow-covered valleys and through some small towns. There were many cross-country skiers, and the trains had ski racks, just as you enter the passenger car

At first it wasn't obvious that the track had hair-pin curves and it zigged and zagged to gain height. Then we spotted the same view again, but closer, and we realized that we could see other parts of the route, that we had just traversed.
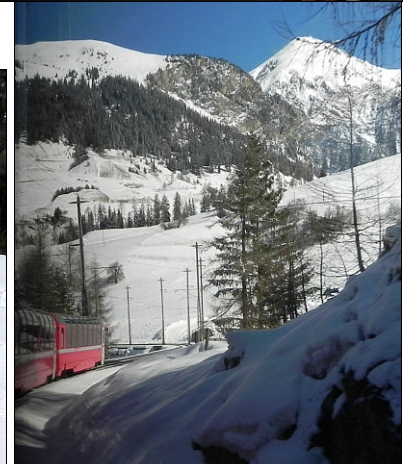
Near the highest point of the line (at the Bernina Hospice) we encountered the snowblower that keeps the tracks clear - an elderly but still-working snowblower, powered by a coal-fired steam engine but pushed into snowdrifts by a modern electric locomotive.

Then we started our descent, running through the streets of La Prese, and running alongside the lake there.

After Brusio we had to lose height quickly, so we had a spiral descent into the valley. Our train swings to the left, then to the right over the viaduct, around, and finally goes under the viaduct we had just crossed over. My hand was intended to shield the lens from the full sunlight, but unfortunately got included in the picture.

The actual border station was at Campocologno but we didn't stop: the train kept going, finally using the streets to get to the terminus at Tirano.

We always have one picture of Eufron at the door of a train or bus. This was on our arrival in Tirano. Note: although she's at the driver's cab, she did not actually drive the train!
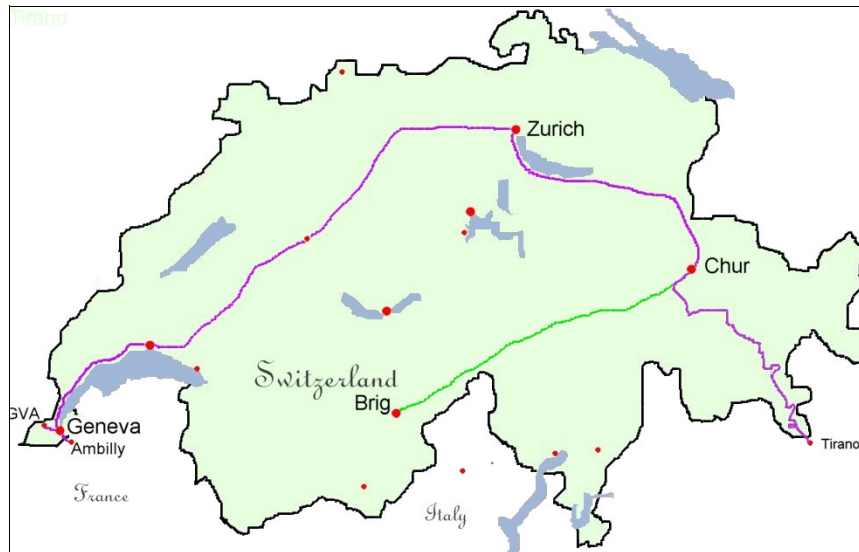

Tirano itself is on the floor of the valley, with mountains all around and vineyards on all the lower slopes.
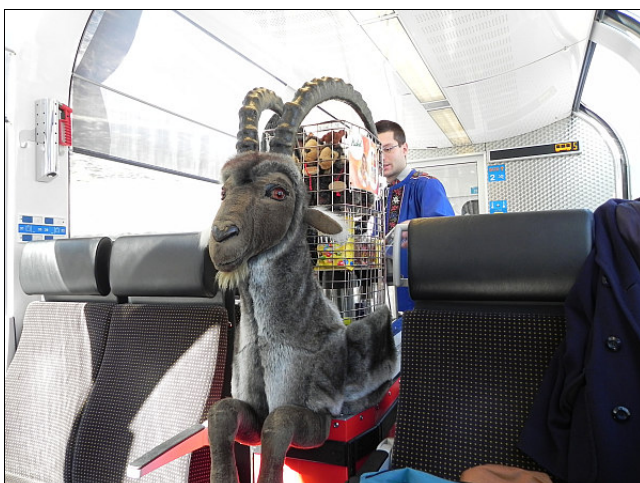
Back on the train for the return to Chur, the attendant brought round his refreshments trolley once more. The front of the trolley was in the form of an ibex, a long-horned mountain goat that is regarded as a mascot of this part of Switzerland.

Brig

The following morning we left for Brig on the Glacier Express, the "the world's slowest express train". But before even boarding, we had a surprise - people dressed in carnival costume, in the station concourse. We didn't find what this was about until we got to Lucerne.

Our route took us along the Rhine valley, starting in the comparatively low lands, with towns and churches and farmlands.

At Disentis, we had what nowadays is an unusual experience: changing the locomotive when the train passes from one railway's territory to another.

It's because the Rhaetian Bahn loco relies on adhesion to get up the slopes: the Matterhorn-Gotthard-.

Bahn loco also has a cog-wheel drive for the rack-and-pinion mountain-climbing sections of track.

Inside the train, we were comfortable in our reserved seats, with our baguette and cheese for lunch.

But in the adjacent section was a group that had booked a full table d'hote meal, and they ate and drank their way across Switzerland!

As in Chur, there is a large SBB (Swiss Federal Railways) train station. But most trains of the "other" railways don't go into the main station, but have platforms in the street outside. Our hotel -   the Victoria - was very close to these platforms. The SBB station has eyes painted on it, which look across at the Victoria. It's a family-run hotel, and we had a couple of delicious meals there, including rösti, a Swiss speciality of julienned potato cooked in a pan.

The main Post Office building is across the street (the Bahnhofstrasse) from the hotel, and there's a plaque quite a long way up the side of the building.
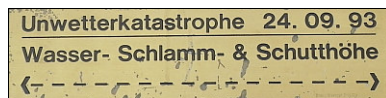
It seems that they really did have very high water, a few years ago!

From our hotel, it was easy to walk up the slope to the Old Town.

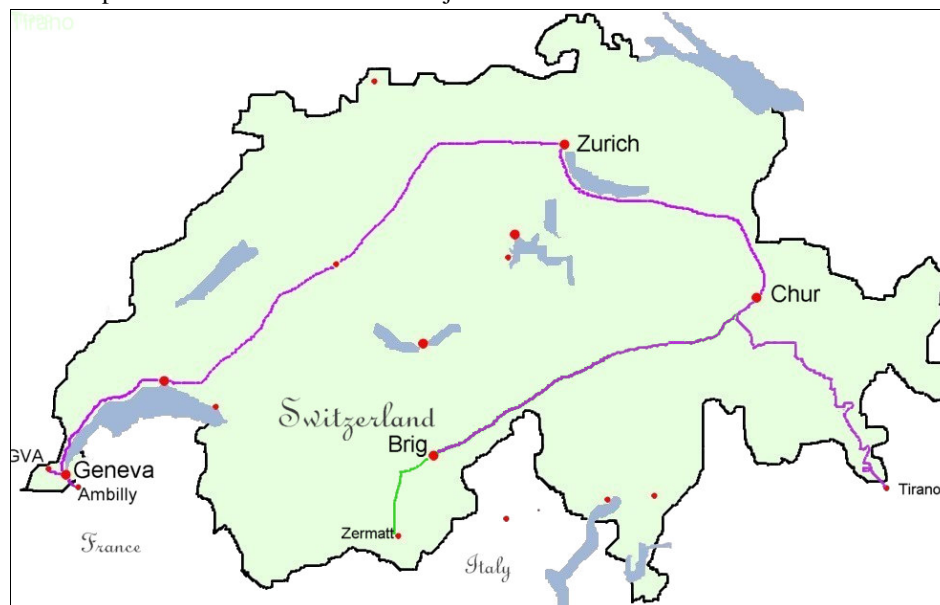

The ibex motif showed up again

And finally we found a monument to the first person (a Brazilian) to fly across the Alps.

Brig to Zermatt and return

Zermatt was another of those places that we'd heard of so we just had to visit.

Starting off, there was no snow - but the river was flowing swiftly, creamy turqoise because it was composed of glacier melt.

As we climbed higher, we came into snowy areas - and we picked up and set down many ski-ers

Eventually we came to fresh snow, deposited overnight: the scenery was a real winter wonderland, with mountains peeping through the mist.

We never did find out whether this mirror was to aid the train crew, or for the walkers and skiers.

On getting out of the train at Zermatt, practically our first view was of a McDonalds! But it was built to blend in with the local architecture.

We had to decide whether to go higher into the mountains on the Gornergratbahn (different railway, different station in Zermatt). We sought advice at the tourist bureau, and they warned us that the weather at the top wouldn't allow us to see much, so we didn't use the train, we walked around Zermatt.

Zermatt does not allow internal combustion engines in the town, so nearly all vehicles are small battery-powered electrics. There were taxis everywhere, plus vans delivering baggage to hotels, and even a garbage truck. Horse-drawn vehicles are allowed however, so some hotels depend on them.

We spent quite some time walking around the town, seeing the rink right in the middle of the town, with a pick-up hockey game one end and family skating at the other.

On the way back to Brig we noticed the many avalanche galleries that we had to pass through.

Brig to Domodossola to Locarno to Bellinzona to Lucerne (Luzern)

We decided to take a roundabout route to Luzern, rather than the more direct SBB route.

For the first segment, we followed the route of the Orient Express. With our 15-day Swiss Passes, we could walk in from the street in Brig, go directly to the platform and board the next train, go through the Simplon tunnel under the Alps, and get off in Domodossola in Italy: no need to find the ticket office, and no border-crossing formalities! To go across the grape-growing country from there to Locarno, we used the metre-gauge cross-country line, almost a light rail growing up: the start and end of it are no longer in the street or parking lot, but in tunnels under the main stations. This is the Ferrovie Autolinee Regionali Ticinesi, known by its acronym.

There was a slight surcharge (a couple of Euros) to travel on this train because it had "panoramic" windows: very large, suitable for sightseeing.

And so the sightseeing began. Old castles, villages, Alpine looking houses, and odd buildings which turned out to be restaurants. In the background we always had the snow-topped Alps.

And there were grapevines - lots and lots of grapevines

Back in Switzerland, this area is known as "Centovalli", the "Hundred Valleys" and it certainly seemed that way. Stations and buildings often had the name of the valley shown on them.

In Locarno, we looked for take-out coffee to have with our bread and cheeses. The closest place was a McDonalds! but it was a hazardous street crossing away, especially difficult when carrying two cups of coffee.

About half-way, we came to Santa Maria Maggiore, which is where the Swiss and Italian crews building the line joined up - a sort of last-spike place.
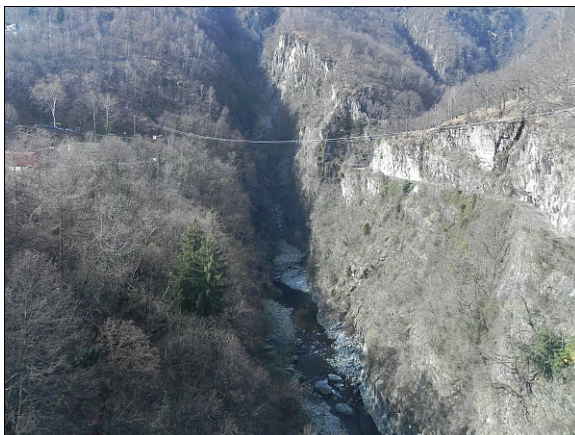
The SBB train from Locarno took us to the main north-south line at Bellinzona, where we could get a train to Luzern. This goes through the Gotthard tunnel, crossing under the line from Chur to Brig. The Gotthard tunnel is fairly high up the mountains: once again we went around spirals to gain height (up to the Gotthard Pass - photo above). A new tunnel is being dug, starting much lower down the mountain, bypassing all the spirals and hairpin bends. We saw some of the workings for it.

Lucerne (Luzern)

On arriving in Luzern, we made our way to our hotel, which was the old jail in the Old Town. We actually took a trolleybus part of the way, then realized that we still had just as far to walk. From then on, we just walked to and from the river and the Bahnhof area. The Old Town was a bit disconcerting, since the street level of each building had been converted into a modern store such as the United Colors of Beneton. Still, that did mean that there was a Co-op grocery store almost across the street from the Jailhouse hotel: we did not go hungry.

Back down the hill to the river and station we walked, across the old wooden Kapellbrucke, which is also known as the Elf (eleven) bridge. I don't know what happened to the first ten bridges!

In 1947, I'd had a holiday in Hergiswil, a suburb and a vacation spot a few km. from Lucerne, and I wanted to see what changes had happened during the 64 years since my visit, so off we went.

1947

The glass factory was still there, but had turned bright blue and had become a tourist attraction.

2011

The station itself was totally different: no more walking across the tracks and boarding from the ground level: there were buildings, an underpass, and high-level platforms.

The one thing that had remained completely the same was the safety procedure to ensure that a switched-off overhead wire really was "dead". The two-man procedure was: Lock the switch in the "off" position, clamp one end of the ground cable to the track, and hook the other end onto the overhead line, using the long pole.

To Basel and back

The next morning, we started walking along the river bank. It was wet, it was miserable. When we got to the station, we decided to go *somewhere* for the day. There was a train for Basel leaving in a few minutes, so we headed for that platform.

In Basel, we consulted the tourist office (in Switzerland, the main station in each of the bigger cities has a tourist office built-in) to find "something interesting". We settled on the Town Hall (Rathaus) and headed that way, by tram an on foot.

The sun was shining and it was a beautiful day, and indeed the Rathaus was well worth a visit. The bright sun caused strong shadows and caused difficult photography - and I wanted to photograph *everything*. The whole building has many paintings - indeed, there's hardly a wall that does not have a scene from history painted upon it.

The Rathaus is in the Old Town, so we walked around that area - always uphill, of course.

The cathedral is at the very top of the town, with a rectangular "square" in front of it.

We found that there was restoration work being performed on the cathedral, and we were able to look and gawk at what was being done.

Then it was time to walk down the hill and find a tram to take us back to the main SBB station.

Basel seems to have a very good tram system with new, stylish rail vehicles, as well as older cars with trailers - some of which are a garish purple.

We rode on one of the new, very long, multiply-articulated cars. At an intermediate stop, a team of half-a-dozen or so inspectors got on, and checked the tickets of all passengers. At least one person was hauled off the car because her ticket was not valid.

Alpnachstad

When we returned to Luzern, there was still time to go to the station beyond Hergiswil and possibly take the very steep Pilatusbahn up to the top of Mount Pilatus.

However, the Pilatusbahn was closed for the season: there wasn't another person in the whole area.
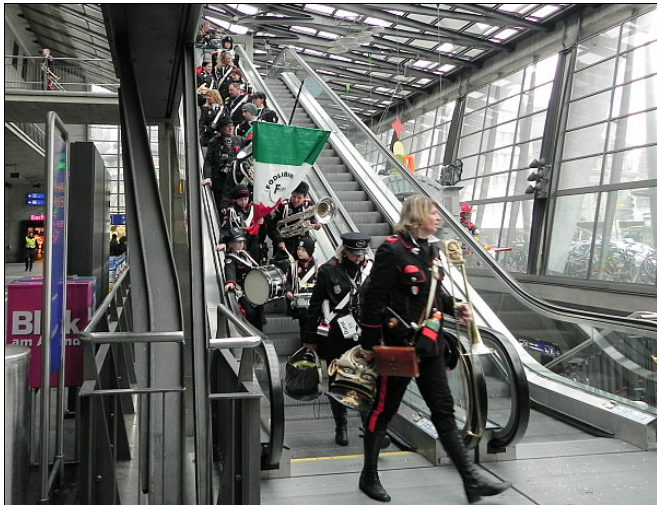
Interlaken

Leaving Luzern

We left Luzern on the day that the Carnival (the Fest) started. It would start with a huge parade, with marching bands and floats and groups from many places, all dressed for carnival. Several bands were staying at the Jailhotel. Some bands started practising at 5 am - noisily. As we checked out, the front desk staff seemed a bit apprehensive that we old codgers would complain about the noise, but our attitude reassured them - "You're only young once".

We walked to the station of course, through the crowds of people joining their groups, practising, checking, assembling floats, and so on. Crowds were pouring from the suburbs and from other cities. One small bus rolled up and stopped: it had the title of a retirement home on the sides, and out climbed a large group of older people, with their walkers, wheelchairs and canes. They were determined to take part in the parade!

At the station there were bands trying to march down escalators.

One band consisted entirely of Elvis impersonators.

As our train to Interlaken passed through suburban stations, we saw yet more carnival-goers.

To Interlaken

From there, the line goes up one side of a valley to Meiringen, and down the other side: downhill all the way to Interlaken.

Soon though we were heading out of the urban area, into the Alpine regions, on the route that is being publicised as the "Golden Pass" line.

In fact, the line goes through several passes. The first is the Brunig pass, where we hit snow again.

This gave us great views of upland meadows and farms, and views across to various peaks that we hoped to get to on the next day.

At Interlaken, the train arrives at the East (Ost) station, which is also a terminal point for several of the city bus routes. We were booked at the Toscana hotel, and we had its address. The drivers of the 101 and 103 buses almost fought it out, giving us advice as to which bus to take. What we hadn't realised at this time was that various streets were dug up and buses had been re-routed. We ended up taking the 102.

The Toscana, where we'd booked a couple of nights, is another family-run hotel with its own restaurant (and children "helping" in the restaurant), again with good food. It's on the riverside plain on which most of Interlaken is built. Again, if we had known . . . .the Toscana is not far from Interlaken West station, and we could have got off the train there and walked! Never mind, we got there.

After settling in, we walked around a bit. On thing that we discovered was that across the street from the East station there was a good Co-op supermarket, and this Co-op had a coffee shop which served excellent chocolate cake to go with the coffee. In the grocery department there was a counter with a sign that obviously meant "reduced for quick sale". It had a packet of Gorgonzola cheese! Of course, it had a strong aroma, but it was ripe and delicious. That, and a baguette, would sustain us on the following day.

The Jungfrau district

We'd planned a day going to the really high mountain area: the Jungfrau, the Eiger and a few others. From Interlaken, we could go one way up to Kleine Scheidegg, which is where the Jungfraubahn starts, and come back another way. So next morning, we set out early, by bus to the East station and by train to Grindelwald, as the first stage.

All around Grindelwald, there are mountains, rocky mountains covered in snow. It's a tourist town, a bit like Banff, but there are mountain railways that start right inside the town.

Grindelwald station:

The Ibex appears here, too.

After exploring the town, we're back to the station for the next train - going up higher to Kleine Scheidegg.

The rack-and-pinion train to Kleine Scheidegg came up a steep slope into the station, pushing a snow-plough ahead of it. We headed downhill through Grindelwald town before climbing again.

All around this area there are little trains, ski-lifts and gondola cars to take skiers (and climbers) to where they want to go.

We seemed to travel along the edge of the tree line.

At one station where we stopped, almost everybody used little sleighs - I wondered whether, as in Zermatt, there were very few wheeled vehicles allowed.

Another of the little sleigh-riders.

Close to our destination, we got a good view of the "Top of Europe", the highest railway station in Europe, on (or in) the Jungfraujoch. The railway is in tunnel for most of the way, with occasional look-out windows cut through the rock.

The train makes its entry into Kleine Scheidegg by going **UP** the "Beginners" ski-slope.

At this point we had to decide: whether to go to the top or not. We'd been warned that in times of snowfall, all we'd see would be - whiteness. Where we were, the sky still had patches of blue, but we sought advice from the ticketing people. They all shook their heads and said we'd be taking a chance, viewing could not be guaranteed, but they would sell us tickets if we wanted.

Regretfully, we decided not to chance it, especially as we were having such a good time riding around all these other places on the mountains.
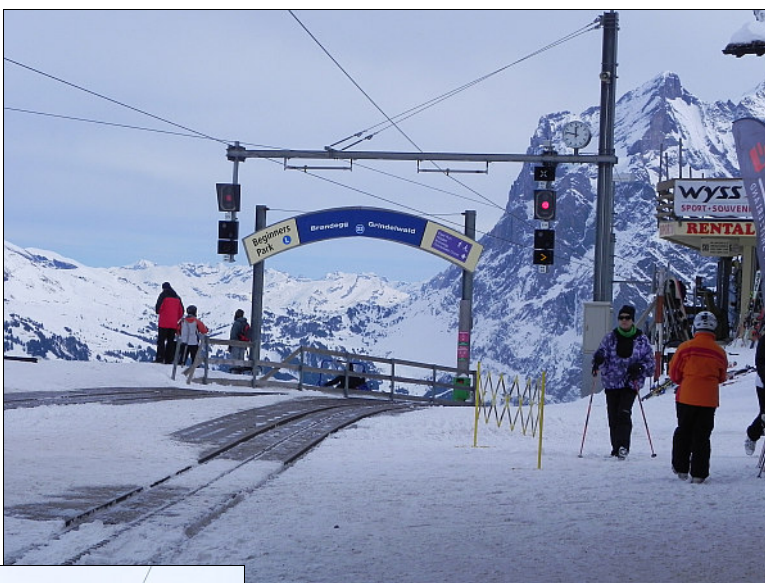
Of course, being in tunnel, the trains to the top run in any weather. As well as passengers, the trains take up all the supplies needed for the restaurant at the top, and brings back garbage and waste. This tank car is probably taking fresh water to the top

This whole area must have a very high skiers-per-hectare ratio. Just why there is a teepee there, I don't know.

Having decided that we would not go to the top, we wandered around Kleine Scheidegg and then made our way to a train down to Lauterbrunnen. Even more skiers were coming in on the arriving train.

We quickly descended to lower altitudes. On the way, we passed this well-fenced area. The fences didn't look as though they would stop an avalanche, but perhaps, being so closely spaced, they could stop an avalanche from forming.

When we got down as far as Lauterbrunnen, the scenery was already looking more like a suburban junction rather than an alpine railway. We did encounter a small girl loading a pony into a rail car, in a scene reminiscent of a Thelwell cartoon.

So far, most of the trains that we had encountered were very modern, powered door, saloon-style interior. But on the way down, our B-O-B (Berner-Oberland-Bahn) stopped at Wilderswil, and on the next platform was the train to Schynige Platt. It probably was quite modern, but the style was very old, with slam-door compartments.

It was still early afternoon when we got back to Interlaken East. It was too early to go back to the Toscana and just sit around, so what should we do? Well, there was a train leaving to Bern, so we jumped aboard (one of the great advantages of the Swiss Pass). It takes less than an hour to get to Bern, and we enjoyed the views on the way.

Now comes something so incredible that I can hardly believe that we did it. On arrival, instead of exploring the city, I said, "Okay, let's go back to Interlaken" - and that's what we did. My only excuse is that we must have been tired after the alpine tourism!

Arriving back at Interlaken, after a quick visit to the Co-op for food and snacks for the following day (and a visit to the coffee shop there) we decided to walk back to the Toscana.

There's a bridge across the river, quite close to Interlaken East station, so we walked over there to the station for the Harderbahn, which ascends to the Harder Kulm, a peak of "only" about 2000 metres. Alas, the railway was closed for the winter, so back over the bridge we went, and walked around the big green-space in the city (the Hohe-Matte) to reach the Toscana.

By the time we got back to our room, the sun was setting in the city, but from our window, we could still see pink sunlight on the mountains.

Interlaken to Lausanne

At last we were going to have a train which left from Interlaken West. We walked to the station of course: past the Post Office, across the street from McDonalds. On the way we passed a bronze sculpture: the title might be "The Traveller", but it is in the same style as "The Secret Bench", in front of the Archives in Ottawa.

We got to the station nine minutes early: the train arrived on time, of course.

This part of the journey to Lausanne was handled by the BLS: the Bern-Lotchberg-Simplon railway. The route ran along the side of the Tunnersee, until we turned south.
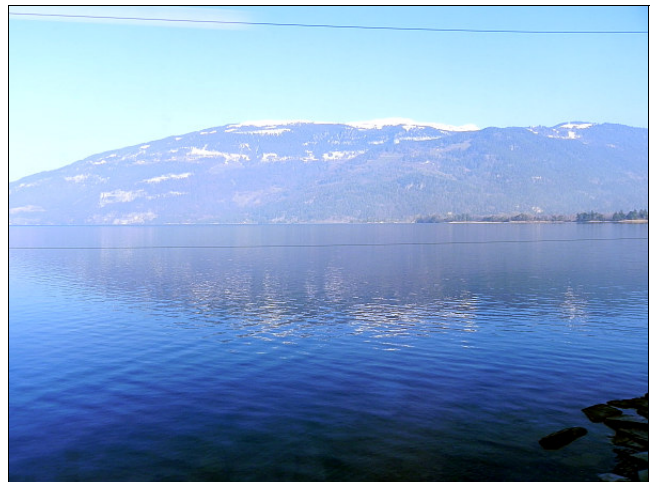
We found ourselves going through what we would have thought of as "typically Swiss" landscapes: upland meadows, small towns.

At Zweisimmen we changed to a metre-gauge train, run by the M-O-B railway, but still part of the "Golden Pass" route.

That train terminated at Montreux, where we switched to the SBB for the final run into Lausanne. We were very glad that we travelled light, each having a small pull-along case.

Lausanne

Lausanne likes you to know that it has the "World's smallest fully-automatic Metro". We were glad that it was small, because we'd booked a hotel at the end of the line - just a few minutes from the centre of town.

Being automatic, there was no need for a driver or a driver's cab, so you can stand right at the front and look out. In the darkness of the tunnel, the front glass window makes a good mirror, so I could take a picture of myself taking a picture, while Eufron amusedly looked on.

I could also take a picture of the train rushing into one of the stations.

Our hotel was at the end of the line, but it was so close to the terminus that you came up the steps from the Metro and walked straight into the entrance. The hotel also had a pub-style restaurant, with specials on pizza at the weekend. For us, it was "pizza quatre saisons" or "pizza quattro stagione".

However, before pizza, we went back to the Metro and went to the other end of the line at Ouchy, the waterfront of Lausanne.
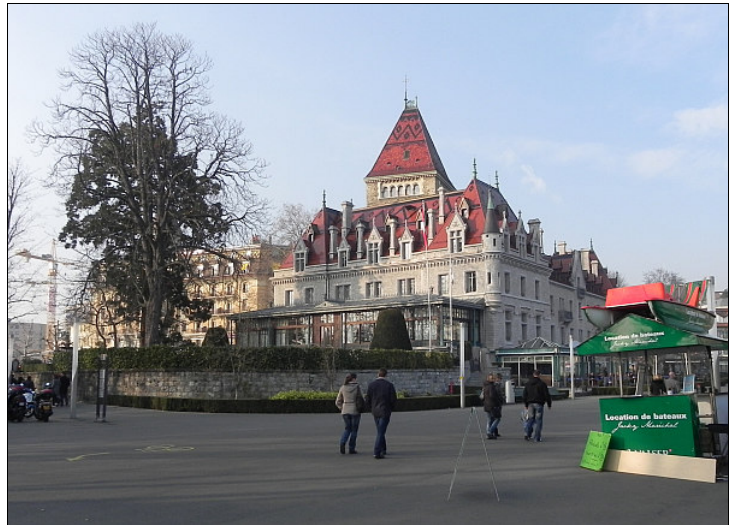
At Ouchy, we found, not only the Chateau d'Ouchy, but also trolleybuses that had trailers: not articulated buses, but electric trolleys that pulled a separate trailer. I never did get to ride one, however.

Ouchy

We'd planned to spend our final day on a boat ride along Lake Geneva, otherwise known as Lac Leman. We had an excellent breakfast at the hotel, and then considered. The boat to the Chateau de Chillon was scheduled to depart at 12:30, but the waterfront had seemed so pleasant on the previous evening that we decided not to explore the city of Lausanne, but to spend the morning just sitting around at Ouchy.

The trees growing at the little park on the quay seemed odd, yet familiar. We talked about them with the people in the tourist bureau: from the similar French word, we realised that they were plane trees, similar to the many plane trees in London.


The little carousel attracted many Sunday-morning parents (and grandparents) with children. To the right of the carousel is the boat that took us along the coast, owned by the CGN - la Compagnie General de Navigation sur lac Leman. On Sundays a big Sunday lunch was served on board, but we weren't prepared for that.

Eufron enjoying the sunshine at the waterfront park.

Chateau de Chillon and return

We were eating our baguette-and-cheese on the way to the Chateau (2 hours 20 minutes) and seeing the sights at all the stops we made on the way, and on the ride from one quay to the next and I forgot to take any photos on the outward journey. I did remember to take a few on the return trip.
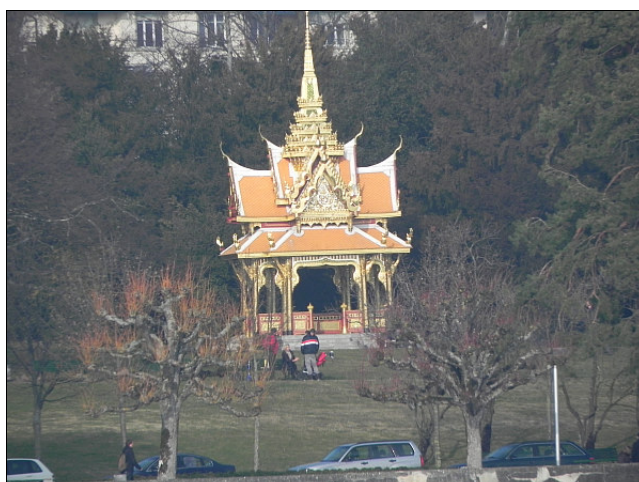
Top row: Le Chateau de Chillon, ski train from Montreux to ? Rochers de Naye?
Middle row: may be Vevey-Marche, and Vevey-la-Tour
Bottom row: Terraced vineyards near Cully, and Chinese-looking bandstand at Lausanne.

Geneva and Home

The next morning: enjoy the excellent breakfast buffet at the Union Hotel, pack up, check out, three or four steps to the Metro, go to the SBB station, and there get a train right through to Geneva airport (GVA). And then a pleasant (though long) flight home.

We'd had a wonderful twelve-night visit to Switzerland. We were tired, but it had been a great change from our usual daily activities.

About the only mistake we'd made was in booking a hotel a little too far from the centre of town in a couple of cities - Chur, in particular. The extra few bus stops formed a mental barrier against boing back and exploring the Old Town.

The Swiss Passes (train, urban transport, and many of the boat trips) worked very well. Just climb on board and flash the pass - no waiting in line to get a ticket.