

The Swiss Express

compiled by:
Blaine Bachman

from information provided by:
Jim Fischer
Markus Giger
Georges Huber
Manfred Luckmann
Bob Tomasko
Bruno Walser
John Whitby

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Introduction

This brief paper is an attempt to gather the list information contributed on the Swiss Express trains and present it in cohesive format. It all started with a few questions:

1. What was the typical consist of the Swiss Express?
2. It appears that the car with the "blind" end (no diaphragm) is an end car. Was there one of these at each end?
3. There were other messages referring to a "pilot" car; is there a "driving trailer" with this train?
4. Regarding the Minitrix (N scale) models of this train; in one of the boxes there's a bit of sprue with what appears to be a two-piece vestibule door attached. The door has tabs on the back that hold it in place on the face of the diaphragm, but that doesn't seem a likely place for a set of doors. What's this for?

The Concept

At its inception, the Swiss Express was an exceptional new concept for the SBB. The initial plan was to build the cars with a tilting mechanism in order to allow higher speeds and greater passenger comfort. Three cars were constructed with this technology, but it didn't work properly. Nevertheless, the design still retains the distinctive aerodynamic cross-section profile; the car sides taper in to the roof line.

Another unique feature was the application of semi-automatic center couplings (but traditional buffers were installed as well). The grand plan was that semi-automatic couplers would be installed on all European rolling stock in the 1970s. Ultimately, this *en masse* conversion did not occur.

Finally, the Swiss Express cars were equipped with special diaphragms that were airtight. This feature eliminated the need for vestibule end doors. A removable panel closed off the last diaphragm in a consist.

The entire consist, including the Re 4/4^{II} electric locomotives that provided the dedicated power, was painted in an orange and creamy gray scheme with medium gray roof. Swiss Express engines were equipped with a single scissors-type pantograph.

The Consist

The equipment was delivered between 1972 and 1975 and included coaches in 1st and 2nd class configuration, restaurant cars, and unique 1st class/baggage cars with a blind end (no vestibule diaphragm) at the baggage compartment. The baggage cars were fitted with large sliding doors (one on each side) to ease access to the baggage compartment.

Qty	Type	Description
6	AD	1 st Class w/baggage & blind end
6	WR	Dining Car
25	A	1 st Class
35	B	2 nd Class

The typical Swiss Express consist was 14 cars long and arranged in the following order:

Qty	Type	Description
1	AD	1 st Class w/baggage & blind end
5	A	1 st Class
1	WR	Dining Car
7	B	2 nd Class

The last 2nd class car had the panels at the end to close off the rear vestibule. During these years, an Re 4/4^{II} in matching paint always led the train.

The Service

In the beginning, the Swiss Expresses plied the main trunk line between Geneva and St. Gallen. Sputniks in Swiss Express colors, each having one regular and one automatic coupler, were used as adaptor cars for moving Swiss Express cars around with standard locos.

After some years, and following complaints about vibration, poor ride quality, and excessive noise, the trunk service was replaced with new cars (EW IV) hauled by regularly-equipped locos.

Demoted

The Swiss Express rolling stock was moved into push-pull service on secondary lines. Around 1986, seven 2nd class cars (B) were rebuilt as driving trailers (cab cars - Bt) and one A was equipped with a luggage compartment and blank end (like the other six AD cars. The couplings were changed at the extreme ends of the train (the cab end of the Bt and the blank end of the AD) to the standard European screw couplings so they could be coupled to any other cars or locomotives.

At the same time, the restaurant cars (WR) got standard couplings, standard diaphragms, and new colors and were assigned to the regular pool.

The push-pull consists included:

Qty	Type	Description
1	AD	1 st Class w/baggage & blind end
2 or 3	A	1 st Class
4	B	2 nd Class
1	Bt	2 nd Class driving trailer

Modeler's Notes

1. A true Swiss Express consist with less than 8 cars (as today) never ran in regular service
2. Dining cars in Swiss Express paint were only used in 14-car-trains
3. The first three prototype cars (two 1st class, one 2nd class) were debuted with Re 4/4" 11103 in 1972 and were seen throughout the system
4. During 1973-74, the prototype cars, augmented by the first restaurant car, continued to tour the country
5. Some cars were used for exhibitions; two cars burned; one car got bent at an angle of about 150° in a shunting mishap (a typical model railway accident: one truck goes one way, meanwhile the turnout is thrown and the other truck goes other way - a mail car stopped that move)
6. Swiss Express-painted dining cars and driving trailers did not exist at the same time
7. Evidence suggests that the restaurant cars have been repainted in two-tone dark gray and operated by 'Mitropa Suisse' (which is a subsidiary of the German 'Mitropa') and no longer by 'SSG' (Schweizer Speisewagen Gesellschaft) which still operates most of the other Swiss restaurant cars.
8. In recent years the Swiss Express cars are pulled by red 4/4's (Luzern-Geneva airport) and have also been seen behind green units, so you can be prototypical with your models without the orange loco
9. EW IV coaches are frequently added to a string of the orange cars (at the end, not breaking them up) with the occasional green baggage car as divider between the orange and green sections
10. It's also not uncommon to see the orange control cab in mid-train with these extra coaches

In other words - almost anything goes!