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## **INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION 2018: LUGANO AND PONTRESINA, SWITZERLAND**

**28<sup>TH</sup> MAY – 1<sup>ST</sup> JUNE 2018**

Thanks to the kind cooperation and generous support of SBB, the Swiss Federal Railway, RhB the Rhaetian Railway and ATG with SBB, Siemens and Thales as Gold Sponsors and the generous sponsorship of numerous international and local companies, the 2018 International Technical Convention will begin in the City of Lugano, situated in the southern part of Switzerland and end in the village of Pontresina, situated in the picturesque mountainous area in the south-eastern part of Switzerland.

The IRSE Swiss Section has developed a programme to display our strengths, particularly in the area of building and operating very long railway tunnels.

Lugano is the largest city in the holiday region of Ticino with a Mediterranean climate. The core feature of the first part of the 2018 Convention is a visit to the world-famous Gotthard Base Tunnel, which, at 57 kilometres, is the longest and deepest railway tunnel in the world. As a result of the long-term planning and operation of one of the most impressive feats of construction so far in the 21st Century, Switzerland has shown itself to the world to be a centre of excellence for the design, construction and operation of extremely long tunnels. During the Convention, you will be shown the unique operating concepts used for these tunnels, and introduced to the various safety systems used, including ETCS Level 2. You will also visit the construction site of the Ceneri Base Tunnel, which will allow the participants to thoroughly inspect a comparable new structure.

On Thursday, you will travel from Lugano to the beautiful Engadin Region and the village of Pontresina. There, you will visit the construction site of the new Albulatunnel, so, again, that the topics of tunnel construction and safety on the construction site of RhB will be seen. Participants will also get to know about the outstanding achievements of the Swiss railway engineers of the past: the Albula and Bernina railway lines (UNESCO World Heritage site) are both also on the programme of the IRSE Convention 2018 with their famous, historic structures.

### **Gold Sponsors**



## **PROGRAMME**

A detailed Programme booklet will be delivered to all delegates and guests prior to the Convention 2018. The outline is given below:

### **Monday 28th May 2018 (Lugano, Switzerland)**

Evening reception and registration of the delegates and guests at the Hotel Paix de Lugano, Welcome Aperitif and finger buffet. Registration opens at 1700.

### **Tuesday 29th May 2018 (Lugano, Switzerland)**

IRSE delegates - Morning: Opening ceremony, technical presentations to delegates and preparation for the upcoming site inspections and visits. Afternoon: IRSE delegates will have a site visit to the construction site of the Ceneri Base Tunnel.

Guests will be taken on a tour of Swissminiatur. There in an area of 14,000 m<sup>2</sup> you will be able to admire more than 120 models at scale of 1:25 which represent the most important buildings, monuments and transportation systems in Switzerland. In the afternoon guests will travel to the top of Monte Generoso to enjoy a stunning view.

In the evening, delegates and guests will be invited to dinner in the Hotel de La Paix, Lugano.

### **Wednesday 30th May 2018 (Lugano, Switzerland)**

IRSE delegates: All day Visit to the Gotthard Base Tunnel. The Programme includes a visit to the Operation Centre and various items of signalling interest. Delegates will travel through the new Gotthard base tunnel under ETCS Level 2 signalling, and back through the old Gotthard Pass route by a panoramic special train under traditional Swiss signalling, all narrated by Oskar Stalder, HonFIRSE.

Guests will be taken on a memorable boat cruise on Lake Maggiore and to lunch in a local rustic "Grotto", following which there will be free time with the opportunity to explore Lugano and have time for shopping.

In the evening, members and guests will be free to make their own arrangements.

### **Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> May 2018 Transfer from Lugano to Pontresina**

Members and guests will transfer via the famous Bernina railway line (RhB - a UNESCO World Heritage Site) from Mediterranean Lugano to Pontresina situated high up in the mountains.

In the evening, members and guests will be invited to dinner in the Hotel Saratz in Pontresina.

### **Friday 1 June (Pontresina, Switzerland)**

IRSE delegates: All day visit to the new narrow gauge Albula Tunnel under construction and the Albula Railway Museum. We will go into the tunnel and will be introduced to the challenges of building long Tunnels.

Guests will be taken to the breathtaking Diavolezza mountain (2973 m/9754 feet above sea-level) by cable car.

Evening: Convention Gala Dinner in the Convention and Event Centre, Pontresina

## PRICING AND BOOKING ARRANGEMENTS

The fees payable are shown on the Application Form enclosed with this notice. IRSE Members are welcome to bring a guest to the Convention on payment of the appropriate Convention fee. Applicants who are permanent residents in Switzerland will need to register separately since the Swiss travel system ticket, partially sponsored by the Swiss Railways, is only available to people who are permanent residents outside Switzerland. Swiss residents must therefore book using a separate application form. This will be sent to all members of the IRSE Swiss Section with instructions on how to proceed.

## TRAIN TRAVEL AND INCLUDED TRAVEL PASS

In addition to all the events mentioned in the Programme, the fee also includes **free travel on the Swiss General Pass network from Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> May to and including Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> June**. This includes most public transportation in Switzerland except mountain railways<sup>1</sup>. Participants will receive this travel pass in advance, which allows them to travel from any point of the Swiss border to Lugano on any route with any number of stopovers, and back at the end accordingly within the time of validity. This is a very special offer of the Swiss Travel System, not available on the open market, and it is an integral part of the Convention, as this ticket is mandatorily required for all train travel during the week for everyone.

## HOTEL ARRANGEMENTS

Details of the Hotel arrangements are given on the separate Hotel Booking Form, which accompanies this notice.

For those who wish to make their own accommodation arrangements in Lugano separately from those offered by the IRSE, then it will your responsibility to make sure that you are at the departure point for all visits and events.

The resort of Pontresina is closed at the time of our visit. The Hotels we are using are opening especially for our visit, and it will not therefore be possible to book accommodation in Pontresina other than via the IRSE Hotel booking form.

All enquiries about hotel arrangements should be referred to David Street by telephone +44 (0)1249 460898 or email [david-street@btconnect.com](mailto:david-street@btconnect.com).

## TRAVEL to Lugano and back from Pontresina

Delegates and their guests are responsible for making their own travel arrangements to Switzerland. Lugano, is located approximately 200 km south of ZRH (Zurich international Airport, Switzerland). The timetable for public transportation in Switzerland can be accessed on line at from <https://www.sbb.ch/en/>, or by the Deutsche Bahn Navigator Travel app. Please allow at least half a day for travelling between any airport to/from the Convention sites.

## VISAS, PASSPORTS AND INSURANCE

Switzerland is not a Member of the European Union, but is a Member of the European Economic Area and the Schengen Area, and, as such, offers free passage to all EU Citizens issued with a valid EU passport or EU recognised national identity card.

On Thursday, during the journey from Lugano to Pontresina, delegates and guests will briefly cross the border between Switzerland and Italy. Switzerland and Italy are both part of the Schengen area <https://www.schengenvisainfo.com/>. All delegates and guests will be responsible for obtaining any necessary visas to enter both Switzerland and Italy, which may include a Uniform Schengen Visas (USV), a Limited territorial validity visa (LTV) or a National Visa for Switzerland and Italy.

If your national authorities require you to be issued with a letter of invitation to visit either Italy or Switzerland, please apply for such a letter to the IRSE Office in London.

Delegates and Guests should make sure that they have adequate arrangements for travel and medical insurance whilst in Switzerland.

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<sup>1</sup> The Rhaetian Railway is not a mountain railway in this context and IS included. See this link for details of what is included: <http://bit.ly/2zYRb3x>

## **CURRENCY**

The currency in Switzerland is the Swiss Franc. Major credit and debit cards are accepted at most locations in the Swiss area. Nevertheless we recommend you carry a small amount of cash on you.

## **BURSARIES**

We are offering a limited number of bursaries for younger members (under the age of 35 at the time of the Convention), to assist with the cost of attending. An application form will be available on the IRSE website (<http://www.irse.org/events/public/annualconvention.aspx>).

## **APPLYING FOR YOUR PLACE**

Delegates wishing to attend the Convention are requested to complete and return the Application Form to the IRSE Office in London as quickly as possible. Alternatively, online booking via the IRSE website will be available shortly.

Electronic versions of the application form and the hotel booking form are available on the IRSE website at the following address: <http://www.irse.org/events/public/annualconvention.aspx>. Please also use this link for accessing the online booking system.

Applications will be processed in a “first come first served” basis. Any applications beyond the maximum number will be placed on a waiting list pending any cancellations. This is likely to be a very popular event, so early booking is strongly recommended.

Any enquiries concerning the Convention program should be directed to the IRSE Office – details in the header for this Notice. For additional information about the Convention see <https://www.irsecon18.ch/>.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS IS 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018. BOOKINGS RECEIVED AFTER THIS DATE WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.**

Ian Harman IRSE Convention Co-Ordinator