

# Swiss Heritage Railway Takes Passengers to the Summit

The Swiss knew of Brienz Rothorn, as early as 1829, even before the construction of the Rothorn railway. The Rothorn – the summit of the meeting point of three cantons Lucerne, Bern and Obwalden – was marked off with the help of a granite stone as the key observation point of the Bernese Oberland after Faulhorn. It is not known as to how Rothorn, meaning red bugle or red horn, got its name, but dozens of mountains in Switzerland are known by the name Rothorn.



## Railway History

The Rigi mountain railway was completed in 1871 and in 1889 a committee was formed by likeminded people to include Bernese Oberland in the tourism map of Switzerland. The committee was led by A. Lindner, a German engineer who lived in Lucerne. He dreamed of building the highest mountain railway in the world. Lindner who constructed the Gotthard railway was a highly experienced engineer.

In the following year, the master builder T. Bertschinger from Lenzburg, who successfully built the Seetal railway, was made responsible for the construction work. The estimated project cost was two million Swiss Francs.

The work was started in 1889 after the license for constructing the railway was awarded by the Swiss Federal Assembly. The work force, mostly Italians, was accommodated in old cabins of alpine herdsmen and new barracks. Feeding them was a herculean task. However, the construction of the 4.7 mile railway track that climbed more than 5500 feet, passing through 6 tunnels, was completed in 16 months which included a winter season as well. The works locomotive reached the summit station Kulm on October 31, 1891.



Brienz Rothorn Bahn (BRB) railway operates three generations of steam locomotives that have been

developed over a period of 105 years. They are operated following the same fundamental rules and basic principles that have been laid down in 1825 on the basis of 200 years of history and development of steam locomotives. Today, a combination of steam locomotives that use coal and fuel oil as fuel and diesel locomotives are used by BRB.

The railway offers two types of special steam experience:

**Fireman's Course:** BRB offers visitors a chance to work as a member of the team that operates the locomotives up the Rothorn gradients.

**Footplate Ride:** Visitors are also offered a 2-hour footplate ride to get firsthand experience as to how the locos are prepared and to learn the principles of operation of locomotives. The accompanying BRB representative will ensure the safety of the visitor as it is not a simple yard ride. Footplate trips are offered on a daily basis from the June 6 to October 25 every year.



### **Other Tourist Attractions**

**Mountain Hiking:** Brienz Rothorn offers six different hiking trails and the visitor can choose one that suits his/her ability and level of experience. These are not simple Sunday strolls. Some of them are located at more than 7000 feet above the sea level.

**Rothorn Wildlife and Nature:** The Brienzer Rothorn treats nature lovers with a wide variety of flowers that are specific to the alpine region. Moreover, this region is well known for its indigenous ibex colony.

**Panoramic View from Brienzer Rothorn Summit:** A short walk from the station at Rothorn Kulm located at 7362 feet above the sea level takes visitors to the summit. The panoramic view has to be experienced to be believed.

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