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WALKING THE LINE - A PEDESTRIAN ISSUE

Some suggestions on walking in Switzerland with a railway slant. It is important to note that these walks are only suggestions, they are not, repeat not, detailed instructions for the walks concerned. If you give them a go make absolutely sure that you have a map, the proper equipment and that you are up to it. The higher altitude will have an effect and you should take this into account.

Pete Dyson WALKS AND EXCURSIONS BASED ON DAVOS



What can one say? The stunningly beautiful village of Sertig-Dörfli, the subject of a walking suggestion by Pete Dyson who took the picture on 1/7/1991.

Most of our self-catering holidays make full use of Utoring apartments which offer good facilities at cheap prices outside the main seasons. Our base here is the Guardaval situated above the Parsennbahn which passes in a tunnel beneath it. This is superb walking country and the following are recommended. By the way Utoring apartments are marketed through Interhomes in the UK (tel: 020 8891 1294, usual disclaimer).

1. SERTIG-DÖRFLI

Using the Jakobshornbahn in Davos to the summit, it is a 2 hr downhill walk past Witihürelä to the charming hamlet of Sertig-Dörfli. The path leaves from the top station and roughly follows the contours until under Witihürelä when the descent really starts. Turn to the left for the village when you reach the road. To make a full day you can extend the walk on the other side of the valley with a further 2 hrs. steady but easy climb up to Jatzmeder

at the top of the Rinerhornbahn which usually has its last run at 1700 hrs. down to Davos-Glaris. Once again the path roughly follows the contours round the Rinerhorn. It leaves the road to the left just past where the Jakobshorn path leaves to the right. Watch the time as it is a long walk down to Davos-Glaris.

3. STRELA - LANGWIES

The other path from the Strelapass heads towards Langwies Station. The difficulty on this one lies in the initial descent over loose scree from the Pass. Other than that it's an easy stroll downhill all the way via Dörfli and takes just over 2 hrs. On return to Chur one has the



The Parsennbahn can be seen in the background from the path enroute to the Strelapass. Photograph taken by Pete Dyson in 1989.

2. PANORAMAWEG AND AROSA

The Panoramaweg runs from Gotschnagrat to the Strelapass. Using the Parsennbahn the Panoramaweg crosses its path a short way up on the 2nd section. It takes about 75 mins. to reach the Strelapass to the south which is where the fun begins, especially if there is snow around. Two highly demanding paths head towards the Arosa district. The most difficult heads direct to Arosa via Latschuelfurgha and the hair-raising Tritt Stepladder before continuing on a gradual descent to the Plessur River below Arosa. The last 30 mins. of this 4 hr. hike from the Strelapass is a killer, as with tired legs it's a steep climb up into Arosa. It's a marvellous walk. You must have a map and proper walking boots/shoes for this stroll!

option of the RhB via Landquart or Filisur, or the spectacular Post bus ride direct to Davos via Lenzerheide. The latter gives a different perspective of the RhB especially between Alvaneu and Wiesen. Choose your stop right and it's a short walk from Schmitten to a viewpoint overlooking the Landwasser Viaduct.

4. THE WIESEN VIADUCT

Many times has the walk from Preda to Bergün been written about, but after doing it we caught the train back via Filisur to Wiesen where we alighted and walked back to Filisur over the Wiesen viaduct. It takes about an hour and affords dizzy views into the gorge below. If you want to make it an even longer walk (3 hrs.) alight at Davos-Monstein.



Bird's-eye view towards the north. In the foreground Davos-Platz with its sports and high altitude centre and (centre) Davos-Dorf with the lake. In the distance, the Wolfgang Pass and the alpine landscape around Klosters.
Photo: Swiss-Image Copyright by: Davos Tourismus

5. DAVOS - KLOSTERS

From Davos-Dorf and skirting its lake to the east it is an easy ramble via Drussetchawald under Alp Drussetcha down into Klosters although the Vereina tunnel has somewhat altered the course of this 90 min. walk. After the lake keep the road on your left as you descend. From Klosters catch the cable car to Gotschnagrät from where the Panoramaweg can be reached in 45 min. at the Parsennhütte. Höhenweg halt on the Parsennbahn is easily walkable in a further 75 min. from here on an almost level path. Alternatively take the DPB cable car from Parsennhütte to Weissfluhjoch and the Parsennbahn down to Davos.

6. THE PRÄTTIGAUHOHENWEG

From Klosters Dorf a gondelbahn whisks you up to Madrisa on the northern slopes where the Prättigauhohenweg starts. Heading west towards Landquart in the most beautiful

part of the Prättigau you can make the walk as long or short as you like. Küblis has a better train service than Fideris or Jenaz in this greener-than-green valley so you buy your ticket and make the best of the weather and your feet's condition.

7. VAL DAL BOTSCH

By using the bus over the Flüelapass en-route to the Stelvio Pass just across the border in Italy (skiing all year up here and a superb excursion in its own right especially if the route has just reopened for business after the winter closure) it is possible to go for a bracing walk of 3 hrs. or so in the Swiss National Park. Get off the bus past Il Fuorn at Car Park 8. The feeling of isolation as the bus disappears into infinity up a straight road leaves you with no option but to cross the road and head into a different world. With forest all around it was over an hour before we saw another human, but even-

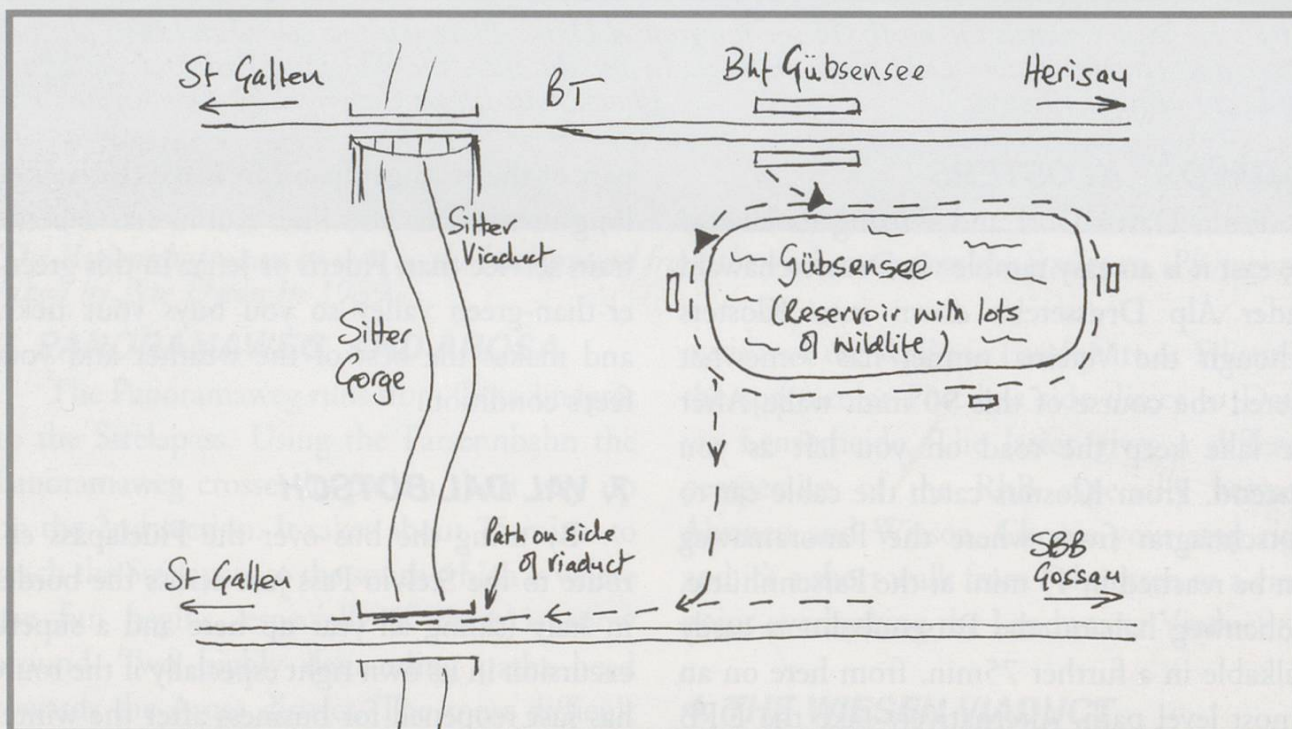
tually one starts a stiff climb to Margunet (400m above bus stop level) and can view herds of chamois and red deer in the not too far distance (do not forget your binoculars and/or long telephoto). From this viewpoint it's a descent (steep at first) into Val dal Botsch and eventually one emerges at Car Park 7. Then, if you cross the road immediately and turn right, you join a nature trail which after 20 min. or so takes you as far as Il Fuorn for the bus home. We got off at Zernez and caught the train to Bever where we changed onto the shuttle to Spinas at the southern portal of the Albula tunnel from where we walked back to Bever on a flat meadowland and forest path. It was a rewarding day.

8. AN EXCURSION FROM DAVOS

For a change, travelling well outside the Davos region, we made a most delightful excursion using all forms of transport. By rail via Landquart to Flums. Then catch the bus up to Tannenbodenalp and onward by cable car to Maschgenkamm. From here both the Säntis and Titlis can be seen on a clear day as well as several lakes. When you return to Tannenbodenalp, take the cable car to Unterterzen from where it's a short hop by rail to Weesen. Head for the Walensee which you have just sped along and catch the mini-ferry to Walenstadt on this very pleasant small lake (it can get very hot in places-the lakes a sun-trap). It's about 1200 m to its station from where you return to Landquart and finally back to base.

Trevor Sutcliffe

THE SITTER VIADUCT



A short excursion from St Gallen provides views of the highest viaduct in Switzerland, the Sitter between St Gallen-Haggen and Gübsensee. Make sure you get the right train as although there are lots between St Gallen and Herisau only one per hour stops and then only by request. As a rule it is the S4 to Uznach. Follow the arrows on the map onto the pathway at the side of the viaduct. This is an excellent position for a photograph. It is well worthwhile walking round the reservoir. The path is gravel and level except for the short section up to the station, mind you will probably be walking down this part!

Inspired by others who have written I would like to recommend a walk which I have found enjoyable even after 40 years of holidaying in Switzerland. This extended walk has to use some parts of the Swiss Transport System, which of course is a joy in itself.

Start off by taking either the train or the boat from Interlaken to Brienz. Then board the Brienz Rothorn Bahn for a delightful ride to the summit at 6500ft. Make sure, before you depart, that visibility at the top is cloud free. An uphill path is necessary to climb the final 1000ft to the actual summit but the effort is rewarded by superb views right across the Berner Oberland. The summit station's adjoining restaurant is excellent and very welcome after the exertion! It was at this point that I decided to walk all the way down to Lake Brienz rather than taking the train. An excellent path provided some stunning views.

A bonus was the discovery of some wild flowers including orchids.

I then had the idea of walking round the South side of the lake to return to Interlaken. After some lunch in Brienz and not being quite so fit as I used to be I only managed to make it as far as Iseltwald which is only halfway along the lake in the Interlaken direction. Here however I was able to board the Lake Steamer and return to base in smooth silent comfort.

A sad aside to the walk round the lake was the crossing of Giessbach Falls, the scene of the tragedy which befell an adventure group. They were engaged in a free-fall exercise down the falls but were caught in a flash flood from further upstream, and were then carried to the lake by the force of the water where they drowned. A rescue attempt proved fruitless.

A dramatic view from the top over the BRB line and down to Brienersee. Photo: Bob McIntyre



Another collection of walks from Lester which proved so popular the last time. As in the previous articles take note of the advice.

I have put together this further collection of Swiss walks all of which I have enjoyed during my times in Switzerland over the years. A reasonably fit individual should be able to undertake any of them. I should mention that, because many of the walks in this series depend upon Postal bus services, it is wise to check timings in the *Kursbuch* or in timetables obtainable from Post Offices in the area.

In Switzerland virtually all footpaths are clearly marked by signposts, of which there are two main categories - I give the German version - namely, *Wanderwege* (walking/pedestrian paths), with plain yellow pointers, and *Bergwege* (mountain paths), where the yellow pointers display horizontal red and white stripes. With a few exceptions, the former are suitable for almost anyone wearing 'sensible' shoes. Users of the latter, however, are urged to have suitable footwear and to carry food and drink and some form of weather protection as well as a map. There can also be tricky and/or hazardous patches. Here again, there are notable exceptions. Signposts point the way to one or more destinations, and about 95% of them also give the time required (without halts along the way) to reach the various points, e.g., 1^{1/2} Std. (1^{1/2} hours). Nowadays there are additionally, in some areas, separate bikers' paths with signposts to match.

ZUGERBERG / UNTER- & OBER-ÄGERI

From Zug SBB+, leave the station by the subway exit to the Baarerstrasse and board the ZVB No. 11 bus (on the station side of the street) to Schöneegg and thence via the funicular to Zugerberg ZBB+. On the Zugerberg there are myriad tracks and paths and it is important to be fairly clear about the route. At the time of writing (06/00) there is construction work making my normal route impossible. However, upon leaving the funicular upper station turn left then later right until a very minor road is reached. Turn right here and continue to Pt. 946 (marked on a signpost). Here take the left-hand track over a cattle grid (the signpost does not mention Unterägeri), but continue towards Buschenschappeli climbing slightly towards Hinter Geissboden. Continue lightly uphill, ignoring paths to the left that may be signposted to Ägeri via Gerstenrüti or Ramselbachbrücke over difficult terrain. At Vorder Bannholz take the intersecting track to the left leading through the Elsiried (although



Unterägeri.

Photo: Lester Weeks

this translates literally as a bog or marsh the track is perfectly OK) to Buel and eventually Unterägeri+. From Buel onwards the route is again on a very minor road. Much of the walk is through woodland, although there are some glimpses of the Ägerisee. Total walking time 1^{1/2} hours. A pleasant extension is a stroll taking about 3/4 of an hour along the lake shore to Oberägeri+. ZVB bus No. 1 runs back to Zug SBB+ from Oberägeri and Unterägeri.

SERTIG-DÖRFLI/CLAVADEL

From Davos-Platz RhB+ board the No. 8 VBD bus to Sertig-Dörfli+. (A yellow Postal bus usually operates this route and Swiss Passes are valid. They are not valid on normal VBD buses.) From the bus terminus walk back along the road and take the footpath on the right which climbs steeply. Never fear as almost immediately take a left fork and follow this path climbing gently in open country and through woods crossing various streams flowing down to the Sertigbach. A high point, about 130 metres above Sertig is reached when the path crosses the Witibach. From here on it is basically downhill to Clavadel+, before which the path joins a minor road. Two hours walking time is needed. Return to Davos-Platz by VBD bus No. 8.

BALLENBERG



The Brienzwiler entrance restaurant at the Ballenberg Museum. Photo: Lester Weeks

Switzerland's Open-Air Museum of Rural Living and Culture occupies an extensive area at Ballenberg+ near Brienz BE+. The museum opened in 1987 with a large collection of vernacular buildings re-erected there from various parts of Switzerland. Since then the collection has grown steadily. There are two entrances: the west entrance at Hoffstetten and the east entrance at Brienzwiler. Both are served by Postal bus from Brienz+ SBB. Walking between the two entrances by a fairly short route would probably take less than an hour

but, as there is much to see, one should allow up to about three to four hours. Fortunately there are plenty of places to sit and take a rest! Country arts and crafts, such as milling, baking, weaving, spinning, basket making, cheese making etc. are demonstrated in various buildings throughout the site. Farm animals are also to be seen. Restaurants are situated at both entrances and within the museum, which now incorporates an open-air theatre. The entrance price for the year 2000 is SFr14.00 for adults - less for children. Opening is from mid-April until the end of October daily 10.00 hrs. to 17.00hrs. Ballenberg has the potential for a very different day out.

LAUTERBRUNNEN/MÜRREN

From Lauterbrunnen+ BOB use the subway to reach the base station of the BLM funicular to Grütschalp. Upon leaving the upper station, take the steeply-inclined path on the other side of the tracks, which shadows the BLM railway line to Mürren. The route is basically up-hill in varying gradients until a high point is reached where the path crosses the Staub-Bach. From there on it is mostly downhill, past Winteregg+ (a good restaurant here) until Mürren+ is reached in about 1^{1/2} hours walking time. You could return via the Schilthorn cableway to Stechelberg and then by Postal bus to Lauterbrunnen+ BOB. (There is a fairly level path between the BLM station and the Schilthorn cableway, but you won't find it by following the signposting!!)

HABKERN/WALDEGG

To reach the starting point, travel on the Postal bus from Interlaken West+ BLS to Habkern+, but alight at a stop called Gruebi just before coming to Habkern Post. Looking back towards Interlaken take the minor road signposted to Bort which branches off to the right. When you reach another minor road turn right again, uphill and still towards Bort. At Bort turn left on to a path crossing the

Büelbach and continue with fine mountain views. The path becomes a minor road again before reaching Waldegg+ (a good restaurant here). Two hours walking time is needed. At Waldegg there is a choice of return travel.

1. The Postal bus back to Interlaken West+ BLS

2. The Postal bus to Beatenberg+. From here the TBB funicular descends to Beatenbucht for BLS ships or STI buses to Interlaken West (buses also to Interlaken Ost + SBB/BLS) or Thun SBB+.

for just one hour's walking time. The walk to Niederrickenbach+ however needs 2^{1/2} hours, although it is relatively easy going. The route to be followed is quite straightforward via Stafel+, Bärenfallen (where a series of zigzags ameliorate a steep drop), Marchboden and Ahorn. When I was last there the cableway from Niederrickenbach Dorf down to Niederrickenbach LSE had just two very small cabins. Don't despair, however, as the cabins run continuously when there is demand. Dallenwil+ LSE is another ten minutes walk away.



On the path from Klewenalp to Niederrickenbach. Photo: Lester Weeks

KLEWENALP/NIEDERRICKENBACH

The base station of the Klewenalp cableway is at Beckenried+ which is accessible by SGV ships from Luzern SBB+ or Flüelen+ SBB or by Postal bus from the latter or from Stans+ LSE. At Klewenalp+ there is, of course, a restaurant with a terrace. For those wishing just a short walk there is a signposted round-route

SCHWÄGALP/ROSSFALL/URNÄSCH

The starting point at Schwägalp is reached by Postal bus from Urnäsch+ AB or from Nesslau-Neu St. Johann+ BT/SBB. A good path commences at the base station of the Säntis cableway. No, you don't have to go up there! It continues via Steinhütten and Aueli before reaching the main road at Steinfluh. Don't go out to the road, but continue on the



View of the Sântis near Urnäsch.

path beside the Urnäsch River until it reaches the road again at Rossfall+. Here the road crosses the river and the riverside path continues via Gruenau to Urnäsch+ AB, which is, by the way, a very attractive village. Walking time from Schwägalp to Rossfall (Postal bus from here to Urnäsch) is 1 ¹/₄ hours, and on to Urnäsch an additional 1 ³/₄ hours.

LENZERHEIDE (and Alp Scharmoin)

Lenzerheide+ (Lai in the local dialect of Romansh) can be reached by Postal bus from Chur SBB/RhB+ or from Davos-Platz RhB+ .

I am not going to describe a walk in the normal sense, but rather point the way for a stroll. From the Bus Station, walking towards Chur, there is a rather good café/restaurant set back slightly on the left. From here a street slopes down towards a church. After the church take the initially-paved path to the right leading through woods to a lake marked on maps as Igl Lai, which translates as Heidsee. There are lots of paths and lots of seats for just relaxing and

View of Parpan from Alp Scharmoin.



Photo: Lester Weeks

enjoying the area. At one point, on a causeway across the lake, there is a restaurant with an outside terrace and at another spot a kiosk for drinks and snacks, etc. One side of the lake runs beside the main road where a subway under the road leads to the Parpaner Rothorn cableway. For a wonderful outlook one does not need to go to the Rothorn, but rather to the halfway station,

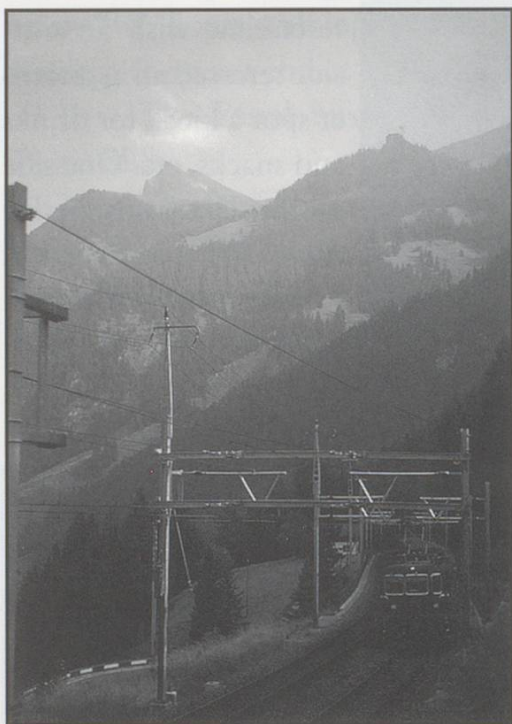
Alp Scharmoin+, where there is a restaurant with a terrace. For those so inclined, a meandering pathway takes you down to Lenzerheide in about an hour. The hour-long journey by Postal bus from Davos is quite spectacular and the shorter ride from Chur is very pleasant. Both are worthy of a trip in themselves.

Notes:

+ = Food and drink available.

+ After railway designation, e.g., Zug SBB+ = a station restaurant. There is good signposting on all of the above walks, added to which, one is unlikely to be alone even on weekdays. A map is always useful. One of the sheets in the BfL Landeskarte der Schweiz 1:25000 or 1:50000 series is recommended. Smaller scale maps are of little benefit.

HÖHENWEG NORDRAMPE BLS Along the Northern Ramp High-Level Path



The start of the walk, just off the main road on the outskirts of Kandersteg. September 1989.

Photo: Richard Pinner

The railway line through Kandersteg is one of the two main transalpine railways in Switzerland. It belongs to the BLS Company (Bern Lötschberg Simplon). Starting from Thun it leads to Spiez, then up the Kander Valley to just beyond Kandersteg, through the nine mile long Lötschberg tunnel, and finally through the Lonza gorge and along the southern slopes of the Lötschberg down to Brig in the Rhône Valley, where it connects with the main line through the Simplon tunnel to Italy.

With the help of the BLS, two high-level paths were established, one on the North side of the tunnel, from Kandersteg to the Kiental (Kien Valley), the other on the South side of the tunnel between the stations of Hohtenn and Lalden. These two paths are not only wonderful rambling paths; they give deep insight into the engineering marvels of the railway.

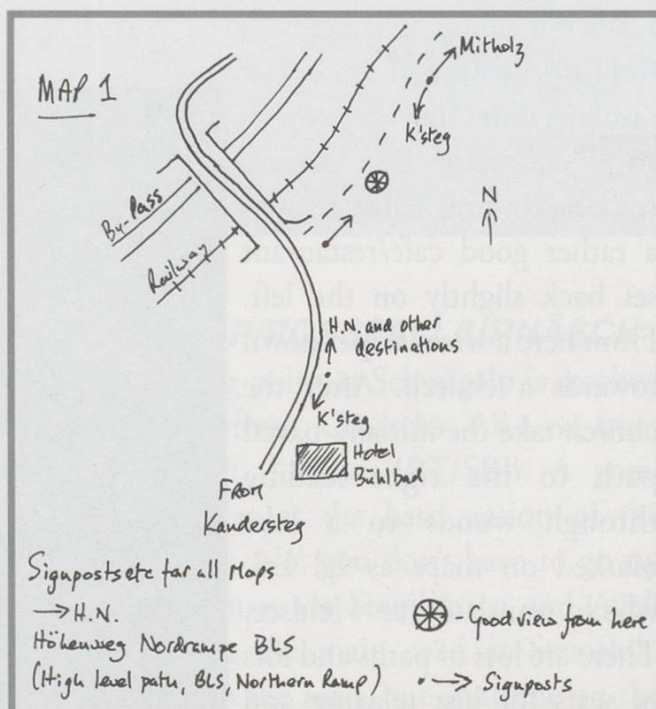
The path on the North side is called 'Höhenweg Nordrampe BLS' and these are the words you will find on all signposts. It leads along the right hand slope high above the Kander Valley and finishes above the entrance to the Kien Valley. The full length would take you about six hours, but you can come down from it to the villages of Mitholz or Kandergrund or the small town of Frutigen and return from there by bus or train.

For the purpose of this article the walk is described as far as Mitholz; if you feel fit and more adventurous, you can of course continue along the path and finish at Kandergrund or even Frutigen.

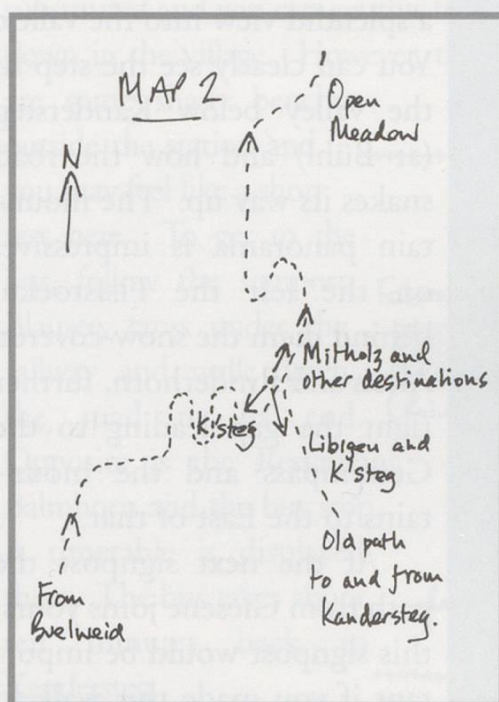
MAP 1.

Starting from Kandersteg, walk along the main road northwards, right out of the village past the last buildings until you come to Büel where the road starts to descend in large hairpins. Incidentally, you will find two spellings used on signposts and maps: Büel and Bühl. The signpost gives you about ten destinations pointing North; the important ones to you are 'Höhenweg Nordrampe BLS' and, where used, 'Mitholz' or 'Blausee-Mitholz'. Here you turn off the road to the right, following the narrow path along the railway.

You have a splendid view down the Kander Valley from here, as far as Frutigen and the Niesen in the distance. (The Niesen is the big, triangular peak you see so well from the Lake of



Thun; from here you see its other side and that it is really part of a long chain. A railway goes up to the summit, from the station of Mülünen, between Frutigen and Spiez.).



MAP 2.

You soon climb up a slope and join the older path from Kandersteg (via Libigen). Turn left here; a signpost directs you to Mitholz. For some time you will walk slightly downhill through woods; look for yellow paint marks on trees to show you the correct way. The woods are followed by open meadows, and these by woods again.

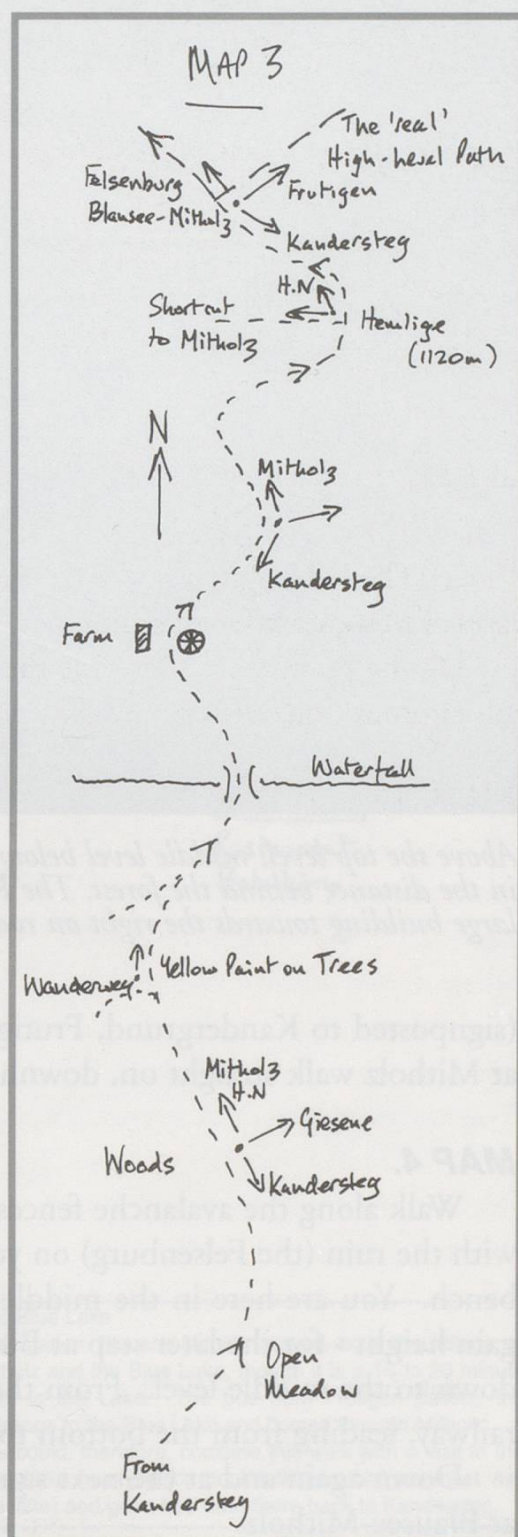
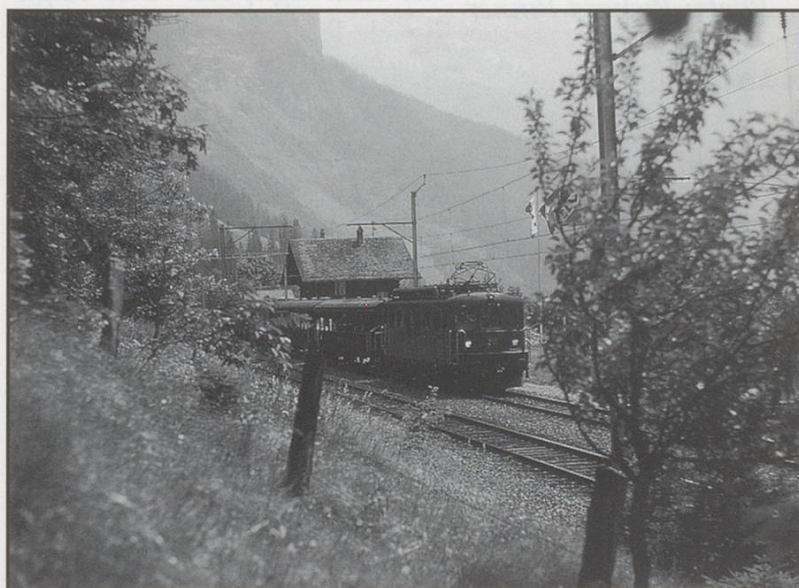
MAP 3.

At a signpost do not take the way to the right (to Giesene) but keep straight on; it is again signposted 'H ö h e n w e g

Nordrampe BLS'. You come to a fork; do not go down on the left; walk straight on. Yellow paint on some trees and the sign 'Wanderweg' (Rambling Path) will help you to find the correct way. At the next junction, again, do not turn left, but to the right; once again yellow signs will help you. You climb uphill for some time and then come to a stream which you cross by a new bridge (shown on the map with the word 'Waterfall' - this is just above the bridge).

On the top level near 'Wärterhaus'. July 1963.

Photo: Richard Pinner





Above the top level, middle level below (with train), bottom level in the distance behind the forest. The Restaurant Balmhorn is the large building towards the right on road. July 1963.

Photo: Richard Pinner

(signposted to Kandergrund, Frutigen and Rams-lauenen). If you decide to finish the walk at Mitholz walk straight on, downhill.

MAP 4.

Walk along the avalanche fences, cross under the railway, walk down across the meadow with the ruin (the Felsenburg) on your right, bear left down the meadow and you come to a bench. You are here in the middle of the great double loop the railway makes in order to gain height - for the later step at Bühl. You have crossed under the top level and are coming down to the middle level. From the bench you have a good view of the bottom loop of the railway, leading from the bottom to the middle level.

Down again and at the next signpost turn right along the road to the now closed station at Blausee-Mitholz.

Again, follow the yellow signs; you come to a farm building from where you have a splendid view into the valley. You can clearly see the step in the valley below Kandersteg (at Bühl) and how the road snakes its way up. The mountain panorama is impressive: on the left the Fisistöcke, behind them the snow-covered Altels and Rinderhorn, further right the gap leading to the Gemmipass and the mountains to the East of that.

At the next signpost the path from Giesene joins yours; this signpost would be important if you made this walk in the opposite direction as it would show you the correct way towards Kandersteg.

You walk downhill again until you come to the signpost at 'Hemlige'. To your left are a line of avalanche fences protecting the railway. A path to the left leads down to Mitholz and you could take this if you want to finish the walk now.

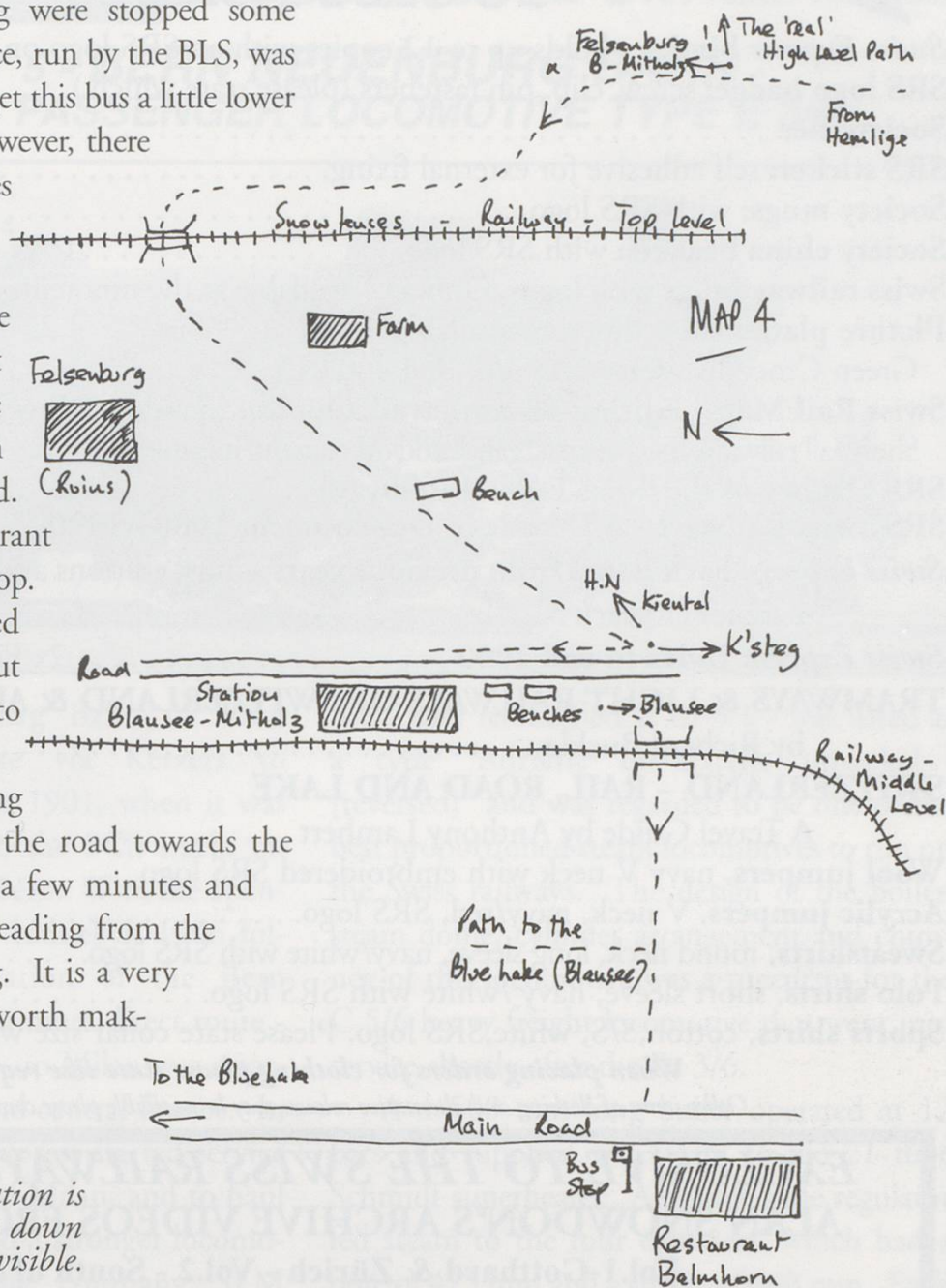
But, if you can, carry on to the next signpost. The High-Level Path now turns right

Unfortunately the local trains between Frutigen and Kandersteg were stopped some years ago, but a bus service, run by the BLS, was substituted and you can get this bus a little lower down in the village. However, there are some shady benches outside the station and you may feel like a short rest here. To get to the bus, follow the signpost Blausee, cross under the railway and walk down the road to its end. Opposite is the Restaurant Balmhorn and the bus stop. A timetable is displayed there. The bus takes about ten minutes back to Kandersteg.

If you feel like walking back, you could follow the road towards the Blue Lake (Blausee) for a few minutes and then take the footpath leading from the Blue Lake to Kandersteg. It is a very pleasant walk and well worth making..

At Mitholz. The old station is in the centre. The path down from the ruin is clearly visible.
May 1976.

Photo: Richard Pinner



The Blue Lake

The station Blausee-Mitholz served both the village of Mitholz and the Blue Lake, though it is a 15 to 20 minute walk to the Lake. The bus from Frutigen passes the entrance to the Blue Lake and comes through Mitholz. You could, therefore, combine this walk with a visit to the Blue Lake (every guide book tells you that you must visit this lake) and get a bus from there back to Kandersteg.