

VORARLBERG HUT-TO-HUT TOUR - RÄTIKON AND SILVRETTA ALPS

July 12th - 25th 2010

Allan and Lesley Witton, John and Judith Willson, Paul Shufflebottom,
Tim Pattison, Roger Hand, Ian Thorpe, Elizabeth Musgrave



On Vergaldner Joch with the peaks at the head of Garneratal beyond



Trekking from the Lindauer hut to the Tilisuna hut,
with the Three Towers and Drusenfluh on the skyline



Tea on arriving at the Wiesbadener hut,
with Piz Buin and the Vermunt glacier

OUTLINE ITINERARY AND WALKING ROUTE SUMMARY

Our travels got us to the Douglass hut by lunchtime of the second day, so we started with an easy half-day walk up the minor peak of Shafgafall and a circuit of Lünensee. The following day we had a whole-day excursion to Schesaplana, at 2965 m the highest peak in the Rätikon group, and the highest point we reached.

For the first half of our trekking route we followed that section of the Rätikon Höhenweg from the Douglass hut to Gargellen, to which we added a whole-day excursion to Sulzfluh (2818 m) and a walk up to a minor peak on the Swiss frontier from the Tilisuner hut.

14 days			3 days travel	1 free day	10 days walking					Time	
				Height	Distance	Ascent	Descent				
				m	km	m	m	Actual	Guide	Naismith	
July											
M 12	Air/rail	Manchester > Zürich > Bludenz Hotel									
T 13	Bus	Brander Tal									
	Cable car	Douglass Hütte (DAV 150)	1976								
	Excursion	Shafgafall and Lünensee circuit		2414	8	470	470	3-20	----	2-20	
W 14	Excursion	Schesaplana from Douglass Hütte		2965	12	1020	1020	5-30	4-30	4-10	
T 15	Trek	Lindauer Hütte (DAV 160)	1744								
		via Verajoch		2330	11	580	810	3-30	4-00	3-10	
F 16	Trek	Tilisuna Hütte (DAV 140)	2211								
		via Schwarz Scharte		2336	6	660	190	2-40	3-00	2-20	
	Excursion	Otkopf		2319	1	120	120	40			
	Day's total				7	780	310	3-20		2-40	
S 17	Excursion	Sulzfluh from Tilisuna Hütte		2818	8	690	690	3-30	4-30	2-45	
S 18	Trek	Gargellen via Sarotler Pass	Hotel 1424	2389	10	320	1110	3-30	3-30	2-30	
M 19	Free day	Gargellen	Hotel								
T 20	Trek	Tübinger Hütte (DAV 120)	2191								
		via Vergalden Joch		2515	13	1140	370	4-30	4-30	4-30	
W 21	Trek	Madlener Hütte (DAV 80)	1986								
		via Schweizerlücke and Saarbrücker Hütte or via Hochmaderjoch		2745	11	730	940	5-10	5-00	3-30	
				2505	9	380	590		4-30	2-30	
T 22	Trek	Wiesbadener Hütte (DAV 200)	2443								
	Excursion	Vermuntgletscher			8	520	60	2-40	2-30	2-30	
	Day's total				2	70	70	40			
					10	590	130	3-20		3-00	
F 23	Trek	Madlener Hütte (DAV 80)	1986								
		via Radsattel		2652	12	640	1100	5-20	----	3-30	
S 24	Bus/rail	Zürich	Hotel								
S 25	Air	Zürich to Manchester									

Grand Totals:	Distance		Ascent		Descent		Time
	102	km	6960	m	6950	m	
	64	miles	22,800	ft	22,800	ft	41 hours
Daily averages:	10.2		700		700		4h-05
	6.4	miles	2280	ft	2280	ft	

A Trek is a linear walk from one place to the next with full packs

An Excursion is a return walk without full packs

Sulzfluh Summits are in bold

DAV Deutschen Alpenverein (German Alpine Club) hut with number of places

Walking Times (excluding stops)

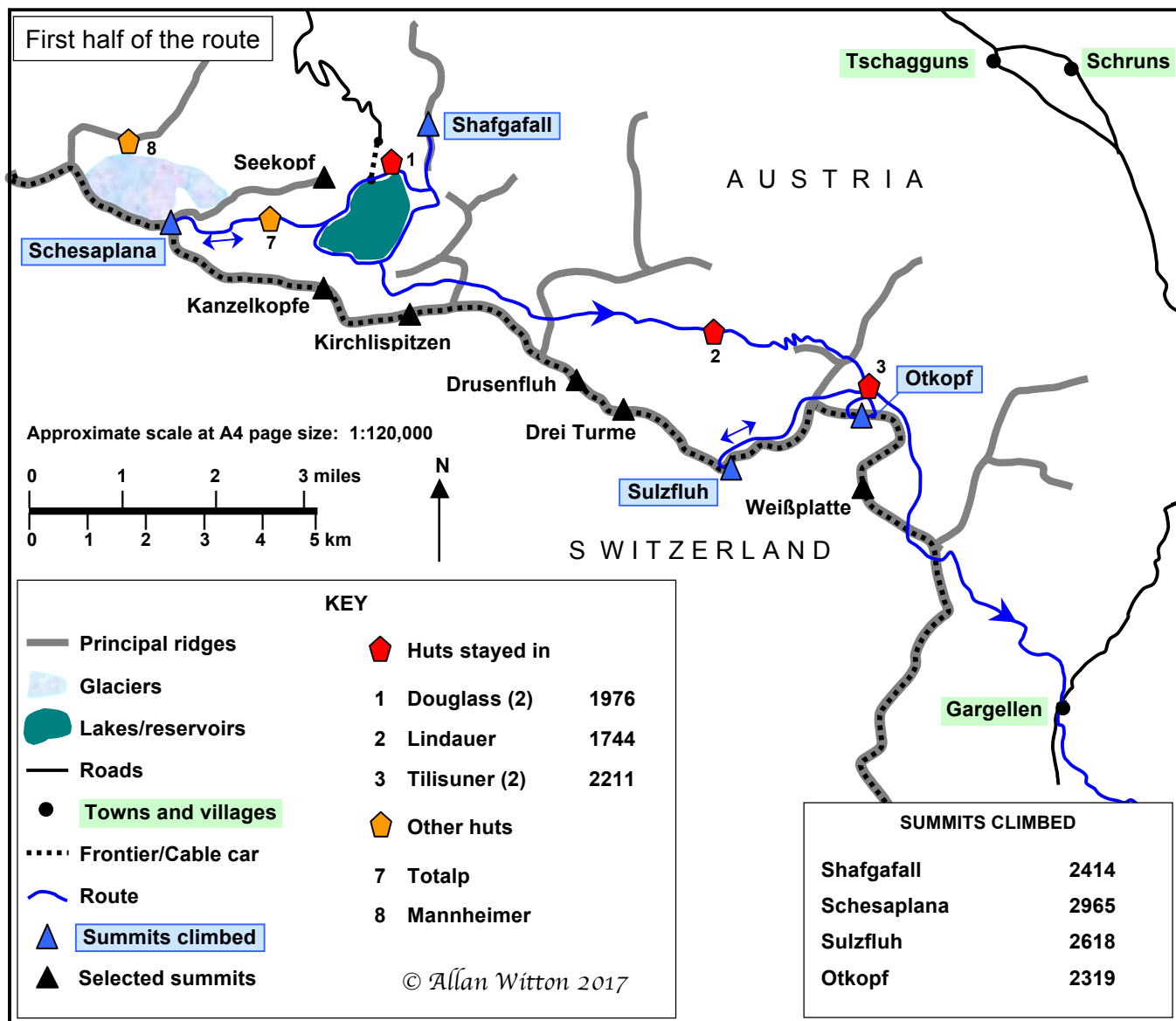
Actual: For the slowest of our group; lead times were often considerably shorter, especially on big climbs

Guide: Times according to *Alpenvereinshütten* (the Austrian Alpine Club 'Green hut book')

Naismith: According to Naismith's Rule: 12 minutes/km and 10 metres/minute for ascent

Our average walking time was 29% longer than Naismith's.

SKETCH MAPS OF THE ROUTE



On Sulzfluh



On Platten Joch



Crossing the Kromer glacier



Above Lunersee



On Platten Joch



On Schwarz Scharde



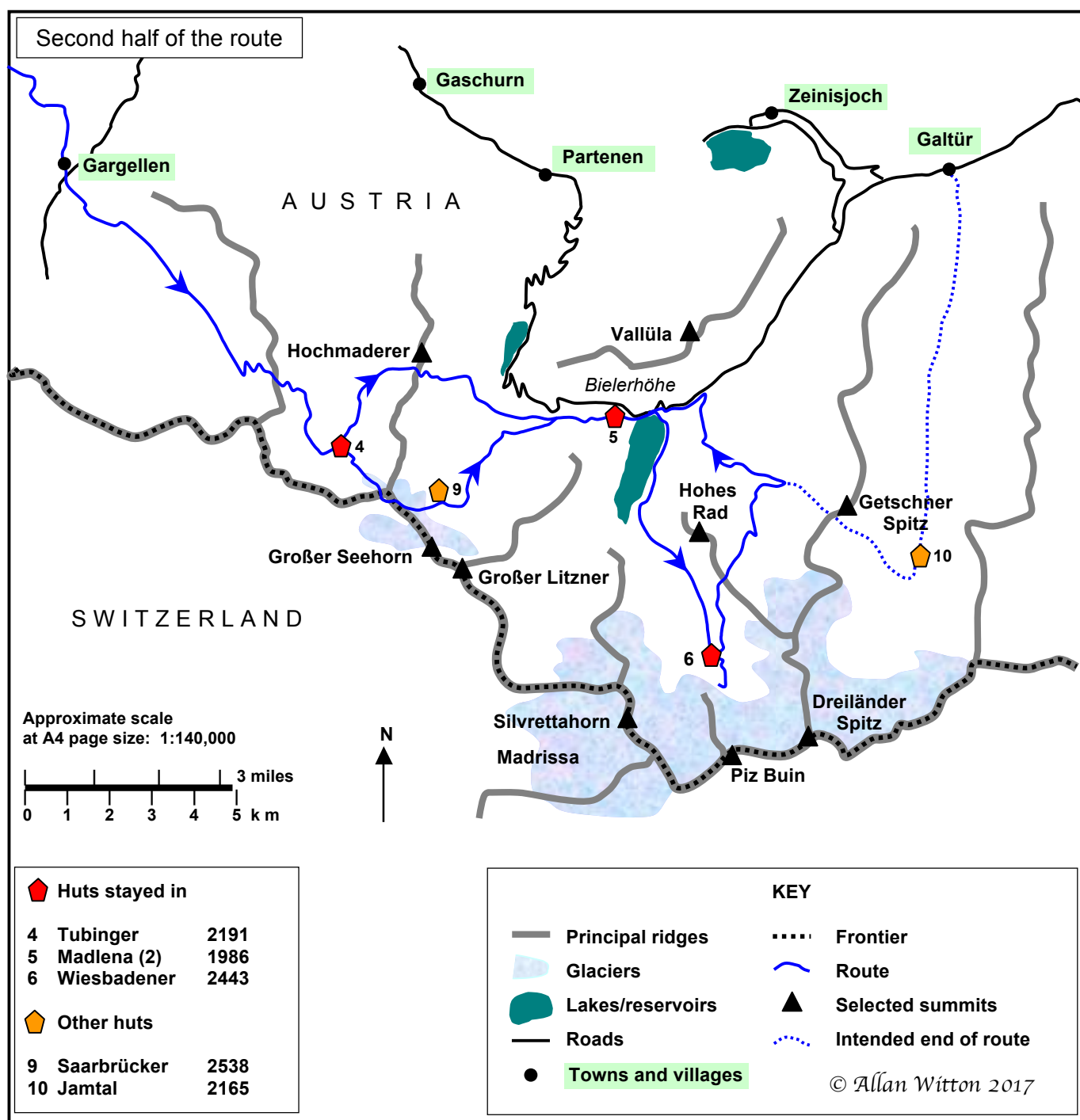
On Schafgafall



Above Gargellen

The second half of our route was continuous and went through the Silvretta Alps from Gargellen to Bielerhöhe. Six of the party made the interesting crossing of the Platten, Schweizer and Kromer glaciers between the Tübinger and Saarbrücker huts en route to the Madlener hut, while the other three went over Hochmaderer Joch.

From Bielerhöhe the loop via the Wiesbadener hut had to be cut short when a storm prevented the planned crossing of Getschner Scharte to the Jamtal hut to finish down Jamtal to Galtür, and we retreated to finish back at the Madlener hut at Bielerhöhe.



Purple Saxifrage
(*Saxifraga oppositifolia*)



Glacier Mouse-Ear
(*Cerastium uniflorum*)



Kerner's Lousewort
(*Pedicularis kernerii*)



Creeping Avens
(*Geum reptans*)

The Alps from the air
approaching Zurich,
with the Swiss Alps on the left
and Mont Blanc on the far right



Arriving at Bludenz



After pizzas at Antonio's it was a dash back to the hotel in a downpour.



Miss 'wet T-shirt' 2010!

Tuesday 13th	Bus Cable car Excursion	Brandner Tal Douglass Hütte Shafgafall	1976 2414	and Lünersee circuit
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We caught a bus to the head of Brandner Tal, and took the cable car directly up to the Douglass hut.

In the afternoon we made the excursion up the minor peak of Shafgafall and then followed the path round Lünersee

At Lünersee



Lünersee, the Douglass hut with the craggy top of Lünerkrinne and the conical peak of Shafgafall.

Our ascent route went behind Lünerkrinne and up the uniform slope of Shafgafall.

The afternoon excursion sets off across the dam





Lünersee, the Douglass hut and Seekopf (2698)



A variety of Trumpet Gentian

On the summit of Schafgafall
with Seekopf beyond and the
following day's peak, Schesaplana
just visible behind Seekopf



Giant Yellow Gentian (*Gentiana lutea*)



Kanzelkopfe beyond Lünersee,
with the Douglass hut,
Seekopf and Schesaplana



A variety of Aconitum
(*Aconitum variegatum*?)



Kirchlispitzen towers above the route for two days later



Dumplings with sauerkraut

Summary

Distance	8 km
Ascent	470 m
Descent	470 m
Walking time	3h-20
Total time	4h-40

Total Time is the time between the start and end of the day's walk.

The excursion began with a walk along the lake, then an easy path up to the Totalp hut, followed by a steep and quite challenging ascent over rock and snow to Schesaplana, at 2965 m (9730 ft) the highest point in the Rätikon Alps, and the highest on our route. The route was waymarked all the way to the summit.



Ascent from the shore-side path of Lünersee



Drusenfluh comes into view behind Kirchlispitzen



The Totalp hut, with the snow and rock slopes leading to Schesaplana beyond



Retrospective view of Lünersee, the Totalp hut and Seekopf



A species of *Doronicum* and *Viola*





An easy snow slope on the approach to the summit



On the summit with a view down to Lünersee



The start of the 1020 m (3350 ft) descent



Nearly down to Lünersee, with the nearer Kanzelköpf and the more distant Kirchlispitzen

Summary	Distance	12 km	Ascent	1020 m	Descent	1020 m	Walking time:	5h-30	Total time:	7h-30
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Thursday 15th	Trek via	Lindauer Hütte Verajoch	1744 2330
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Cloud billowed round the mountains throughout the morning as we followed the easy hut-to-hut path over the grassy cols of Verajoch and Öffapass, beneath the towering limestone peaks of Kirchlispitzen and Drusenfluh.



Breaks in the cloud as we trekked up to Verajoch, beneath Kirchlispitzen



Lunch on Öffapass



Sardines on crispbread - yummy!



View up a glaciated couloir of Drusenfluh



Mountain bikers on the same route as us



It developed into a warm, sunny afternoon as we descended from Öffapass towards the Lindauer hut.



Our summit for two days later, Sulzfluh, comes into view on the right skyline



Retrospective view of Öffapass, with Drusenfluh disappearing into cloud



The Lindauer hut



Drinks with an Englishman who was the resident cowherd for the cattle brought up for summer grazing



Kleine Sulzfluh and the northern cliffs of Sulzfluh from the Lindauer hut

Summary

Distance	11 km
Ascent	580 m
Descent	810 m
Walking time	3h-30
Total time	6h-30

Friday 16th

Trek	Tilisuna Hütte	2211
via	Schwarz Scharte	2336
Excursion	Otkopf	2319

It was a brilliant day of superb views as we climbed the dozens of tight zig-zags up the ridge of Bilkengrat to Schwarze Scharte, then dropped easily down to the Tilisuna hut.



Al-fresco breakfast



The Drei Turme from the Lindauer hut



The Three Towers and Drusenfluh from the Bilkengrat



The northern cliffs of Sulzfluh from the Bilkengrat



On Schwarz Scharle



View from Schwarz Scharte with the Lindauer hut far below, and Drusenfluh and Schesaplana on the skyline



Descent to the Tilisuna hut



The following day's route crosses the limestone plateau to the dome of Sulzfluh.

In the afternoon we made the short excursion to a minor, un-named peak (2319) on the Swiss border with fine views of the southern cliffs of Sulzfluh and Weißplatte. I shall refer to the peak as Otkopf!



En route to Otkopf, with the Tilisuna hut and Tilisuna-see



View into Switzerland with the cliffs of Weißplatte



Snowy descent from Otkopf



Globeflower (*Trollius europaeus*)



Summary	Distance	7 km	Ascent	780 m	Descent	310 m	Walking time	3h-20	Total time	7h-00
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It was a fairly short 'whole-day' excursion comprising a long, gradually rising traverse of the huge, barren limestone massif of Sulzfluh (waymarked all the way) followed by some easy snow slopes leading up to the summit. Views were restricted somewhat by cloud and swirling mist, but there was the bonus of close-up views of a group of ibex and some chamois.



Ascending the limestone plateau leading to the summit cone



Spot the flower and waymark



A large group of ibex were totally unperturbed by our passing.



The snow slopes leading to the summit rocks



On the summit of Sulzfluh, at 2818 m (9,246 ft) the highest peak climbed by the whole party



More cloud on the descent ...



... but a sunny interval revealed the Three Towers and Drusenfluh



We arrived back at the hut just before a fierce storm began, which left paths awash and hail the size of marbles.

Summary	Distance	8 km	Ascent	690 m	Descent	690 m	Walking time	3h-30	Total time	5h-20
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Sunday 18th

Trek	Gargellen	1424
via	Sarotlerjoch	2389

It was predominantly cloudy again as we followed the undulating path close to the frontier, with a short stretch in Switzerland, by way of Grubenpass, Plasseggengpass and Sarotlajoch, then finished with the long descent to Gargellen.

The section through Switzerland, between
Plasseggengpass and Sarotlajoch



A rest stop on the continuous 960 m descent to Gargellen



Gargellen below cloudy skies



Haus Wulfenia had very comfortable accommodation and served excellent food.

Summary	Distance	10 km	Ascent	320 m	Descent	1110 m	Walking time	3h-30	Total time	5h-00
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It was a beautiful day and most of us went by bus to St. Gallenkirch in the main Montafon valley in the morning.



Gargellen, beneath the peaks of Ritzen spitzen on the left and Madrisa on the right



St. Gallenkirch





St. Gallenkirch church



Allan and Lesley relax outside Haus Wulfenia.



Delicious and artistic food – but we could have done with a big bowl of chips!

Tuesday 20th	Trek via	Tübinger Hütte Vergaldner Joch	2191 2515
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It was a glorious day for our longest walk and biggest ascent, and easy going all the way. We started along the gently rising track up Vergaldatal, then up a zig-zag path to Vergaldner Joch with superb views in all directions.



The long track up Vergaldatal



Vergalda Alm, where cheese-making was in progress



The steep climb out of Vergaldatal



On Vergaldner Joch, with a retrospective view of the distant Sulzfluh and Schesaplana

After a short and easy scramble down from the col a fine balcony path led over the intervening rock band via Mittelbergjoch to the head of Garneratal and the Tübinger hut.



The path down from Vergaldner Joch crosses the middle-distance rock band via Mittelbergjoch.



The steep scramble down from Vergaldner Joch



Over Mittelbergjoch the Tübinger hut (centre image) at the head of Garneratal comes into view.
The following day's route goes straight up from the hut and over snow to Platten Joch.



The Tübinger hut



'That beer tastes good!'



Tired feet after a long day!



Plenty of chips this time!



Evening sun outside the hut

Summary	Distance	13 km	Ascent	1140 m	Descent	370 m	Walking time	4h-30	Total time	7h-20
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Wednesday 21st

Trek	Madleener Hütte	1986
via	Schweizerlücke	2745

Those on the glacier route had our most exciting and spectacular day: kicking steps up the steep snow of the Platten glacier to the Platten Joch with its spectacular view of Grosser Seehorn, scrambles over the three cols of Schweizerlücke, Mittelrücken and Kromerlücke with snow routes over the Schweizer and Kromer glaciers between them.

Paul, Ian and Elizabeth took the balcony route high on the east flank of Garneratal and went over Hochmaderer Joch.

7 a.m. and some people are still asleep!



A beautifully clear morning as we prepare to leave



The start of the snow ascent to Platten Joch

Though the map marks it as a glacier, the snow we ascended was just old snow-beds, and at the time of our ascent (9.30) was just firm enough for us to be able to kick nice steps - a most enjoyable ascent.



View back over Garneratal to Vergaldner Joch





Glacier Buttercup (*Ranunculus glacialis*)



On Platten Joch with Kromer Spitz, the rock tower of Großglockner, Grosser Seehorn, Kleine Seehorn and the See glacier

The 'path' from Platten Joch and Schweizerlücke is a well-waymarked rocky traverse, and the crossings of the upper sections of the Schweizer and Kromer glaciers were on easy snow amongst large boulders well above the crevasses lower down. It was a really interesting and enjoyable route, with the only tricky bit being the descent from Mittelrücken on a steep and rather loose earth path.



The scramble between Platten Joch and Schweizerlücke



Crossing the head of the Schweizer glacier



Approaching the sharp col of Mittelrücken



View from Mittelrücken to our final col, Kromerlücke, across the head of the Kromer glacier



Crossing the Kromer glacier with Mittelrücken behind



The climb to Kromerlücke

Having crossed Kromerlücke we left the glaciers behind and descended steeply to the Saarbrücker hut for a soup lunch followed by a long and easy walk down to the Madlener hut.



On the steep path down to the Saarbrücker hut



Großlitzner and the Litzner glacier
from the path down to the Madlener hut



All together again after a marvellous mountain day

Summary	Distance: 11 km	Ascent 730 m	Descent 940 m	Walking time 5h-10	Total time 8h-20
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Thursday 22nd

Trek Wiesbadener Hütte 2443

Excursion Vermuntgletscher

It was an easy and spectacular walk round the Silvretta Stausee reservoir and up Ochsental to our highest hut, the Wiesbadener hut, set beneath Piz Buin, Silvrettahorn and the Vermunt and Ochsentaler glaciers.

Another beautiful morning, with a view beyond the Madlener Haus to Hochmaderer and Hochmaderer Joch



The easy walk round the Silvretta Stausee reservoir

We opted for the higher level path rather than following the valley-bottom track, to give us better views.



Alpine Clover (*Trifolium alpinum*)



Above the head of the reservoir and beneath Lobspitzen



Piz Buin, Silvrettahorn and the Vermunt and Ochsentaler glaciers come into view



Yellow Saxifrage (*Saxifraga aizoides*)



The Ochsentaler glacier



Arriving at the Wiesbadener hut



Betony-leaved Rampion (*Phyteuma betonicifolium*)



Tea in front of the Wiesbadener hut



Alpine Toadflax (*Linaria alpina*)

We set off for the short walk to the knoll of Grüne Kuppe, between the Vermunt and Ochsentaler glaciers, but our progress was blocked by the outflow stream of the Vermunt glacier, which carried too much water to cross.



Mountain Houseleek (*Sempervivum montanum*)



The outflow stream of the Vermunt glacier



A species of *Doronicum*, with a view down Ochsentäl to the Wiesbadener hut



It turned out to be our last meal in the mountains.



Evening sun on the Vermunt glacier



Summary

Distance	10 km
Ascent	590 m
Descent	130 m
Walking time	3h-20
Total time	5h-30

Friday 23rd

Trek

Madleener Hütte
via Radsattel

1986
2652

Our planned crossing to the Jamtal hut via Getschnerscharte, at 2839m m (9315 ft), the highest col on the proposed route, had to be abandoned in a thunderstorm and we retreated to the Madleener hut with a significant detour due to an un-crossable rain-swollen river.



It was a pleasant morning, but the forecast wasn't good.



The path rising steeply from the hut



Sunny intervals as we crossed Radsattel, but still threatening



Oooh! Is this bridge safe Allan?

As we reached the path junction to turn east up to Getschnerscharte the rain was torrential and thunder was booming overhead, so we took the path down instead.

Unfortunately where this path crosses the Bieltal Bach (which we crossed by bridge higher up) there was no bridge and the river was too swollen to attempt a crossing. So we went down steep, pathless and saturated mountainside east of the river to reach the road and then walked back up to the Madlener hut.

The point where we retreated in a thunder storm



The un-crossable swollen Bieltal Bach



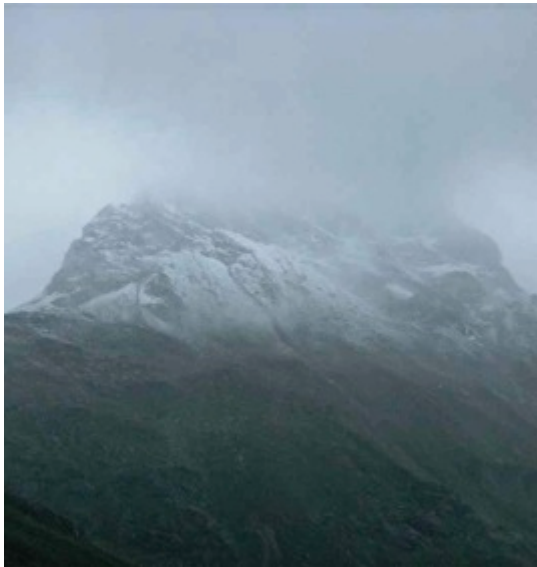
Still dreadful weather down at the road ...



... but we were warm, dry and well fed back at the Madlener hut

Summary	Distance	12 km	Ascent	640 m	Descent	1100 m	Walking time	5h-20	Total time	6h-30
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We took a bus to Schruns, three trains to Zürich for an overnight stop, then a plane back to Manchester.



Still dire weather in the mountains
with new snow on the peaks



At the bus stop, and in spite of the rain it's big smiles
all round now that the walking is over!



Tim finalises the accounts.



And we finish in Zürich as we started in Bludenz – with a pizza!

MAPS

	Scale	Sheet	
Freytag & Berndt Wanderkarte	1:50,000	371	Bludenz - Klosters - Brandnertal - Montafon

This covers the whole Rätikon group almost to Gargellen. It has clear cartography and gives a good overall view of the area, though it doesn't have a great deal of topographical detail. It was fine for general planning and adequate for following the route.

Alpenvereinskarte	1:25,000	26	Silvretta
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The excellent Alpenvereinskarte series doesn't have a sheet covering the Rätikon group. Sheet 26 covers the second half of our route from Vergaldner Joch. It has clear and accurate detail and is ideal for precise navigation.

GUIDES

This list includes guides I have referred to over the years of organising Treks in Austria from 1985 to 2013.

Walking in Austria	Kev Reynolds	Cicerone	2009
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This is a comprehensive and detailed guide to day-walks and multi-day tours in 10 of Austria's main mountain groups. In the section on the Rätikon Alps Route 3 describes (briefly) the ascent of Schesaplana from the Douglass hut, and Route 5 *The Rätikon Höhenweg Nord* (3 days) covers our route to Gargellen, without the Sulzfluh excursion. In the section on the Silvretta Alps, the five day-walks described (Routes 8 - 12) cover sections of our route, but not the whole trek from Gargellen.

Walking in The Alps	Kev Reynolds	Cicerone	2005 (2nd Edition)
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This marvelous book is a comprehensive and inspirational guide to all the main mountain areas of the Alps. It is a must-read for anyone interested in the Alps and alpine walking. Each section has a summary of several multi-day tours with brief outline details and sketch maps.

Die Alpenvereinshütten Band 1 Ostalpen	OAV	2005 (9th edition)
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This is the Austrian Alpine Club 'Green Hut Book' which gives full details of the huts (including contact details), together with times for hut-to-hut walks and for ascents to nearby peaks (though no route details). It is updated periodically and is essential reading for planning any hut-to-hut tour in Austria.

Walking Austria's Alps	Jonathan Hurdle	Cordee	1988
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This describes eleven multi-day hut-to-hut tours. Tour 2 *Rätikon/Silvretta* is an ambitious 7-day tour from the Douglass hut to Ischgl. Our route was based on this tour, but with added summit excursions, and we intended to finish at the Jamtal hut, rather than continue to Ischgl.

Mountain Walking in Austria	Cecil Davies	Cicerone	1986
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This describes a few day walks, and some extended tours in eighteen of Austria's mountain groups. In the Rätikon Alps section Routes 1, 2 and 3 describe the whole of the first half of our route except for the Shafgafall and Sulzfluh excursions. There is no hut-to-hut tour in the Silvretta Alpo

TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION

Organisational details such as transport links, cable cars and details of the huts are not included as they are readily available online.

I produced the first illustrated version of a 2010 log in the autumn of that year as single A4 pages in Word using full size images, and then printed and bound it. The total size for all 34 pages was 480 MB.

This version, with the addition of digital sketch maps, a detailed route summary, some extra images, and a list of 3000 m points was produced in 2017 on an Apple iMac using Word for Mac 2011, with iPhoto and Preview for editing the images. Special thanks are due to John, Paul, Tim, Roger and Ian for passing on copies of their photos; our camera jammed after taking the group photo on the summit of Schesaplana on the 3rd day, so none of the subsequent images are ours. The images used are low resolution versions which still display fairly well at A4 page size. The average size of the 175 images is about 53 kB, giving a total file size of about 10.3 MB, about the same as 3 original images.

Thanks to Dave Shaw who identified the flowers.

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Version 2

OLD TREKKERS' TREKS 3000 m POINTS

I first had the idea of producing a list of the 3000 m points that the OTT have reached in 2011 while we were on the summit of Petzek (3283 m). I couldn't remember the last two digits of Hohe Riffler's height (3231) and hence which of them was higher, making it the second highest peak we had reached by 2011. I have since produced versions for the earlier logs 2007 - 2010.

All are summits except where marked § for high points on a ridge.

Feet	Metres	Height	Year	High Point	Ascentionists	Whole party ascent
11,000	3350					
	3340					
	3330	3333	2006	Schaufel Spitz (10,936 ft)	Allan, John	
10,900	3320					
	3310					
	3300					
10,800	3290					
	3280					
	3270					
10,700	3260					
	3250					
	3240					
10,600	3230	3231	2007	Hohe Riffler	Allan, John, Tim	
	3220					
	3210					
10,500	3200					
	3190					
	3180					
10,400	3170					
	3160					
	3150	3152	2008	Piz Boè	Allan, John, Roger, Lesley, Judith	
10,300	3140	3144	2009	Le Taillon	Allan, John, Tim, Roger, Lesley, Judith	
	3130	3134	2007	Schönbichlerhorn	Allan, John, Tim, Nigel, Lesley, Judith	
	3120					
10,200	3110					
	3100					
	3090					
10,100	3080					
	3070					
	3060					
10,000	3050	§ 3050	2006	Gamsspitzi (S)	Allan, John, Paul, Lesley, Judith	10,000 ft
	3040					
	3030	3032	2009	Petit Vignemale	Allan, John, Paul, Tim, Roger, Nigel, Lesley, Judith	
9,900	3020					
	3010	3006	2006	Rinnen Spitz	Allan, John, Mark, Judith, Julie	
	3000	3005	2009	Grand Fache	Allan, John, Tim, Roger, Lesley, Judith	
				3000 m points	Party members	Total party
2006	Tirol – Stubai Alps			(3)	Allan & Lesley, John & Judith, Mark & Julie, Paul	7
2007	Tirol – Zillertal Alps			(2)	Allan & Lesley, John & Judith, Tim, Nigel	6
2008	Dolomites – Alta Via 2			(1)	Allan & Lesley, John & Judith, Roger	5
2009	Pyrenees			(3)	Allan & Lesley, John & Judith, Paul, Tim, Roger, Nigel & Jane	9
2010	Vorarlberg – Rätikon and Silvretta Alps				Allan & Lesley, John & Judith, Paul, Tim, Roger, Ian & Elizabeth	9
No 3000 m point reached.				Total Treks	A&L: 5 J&J: 5 Tim: 3 Roger: 3 Paul: 3 Nigel: 2 Ian & Elizabeth: 1 Mark & Julie: 1 Jane: 1	