

Stockhorn BE-103 / Cheibehore BE-148

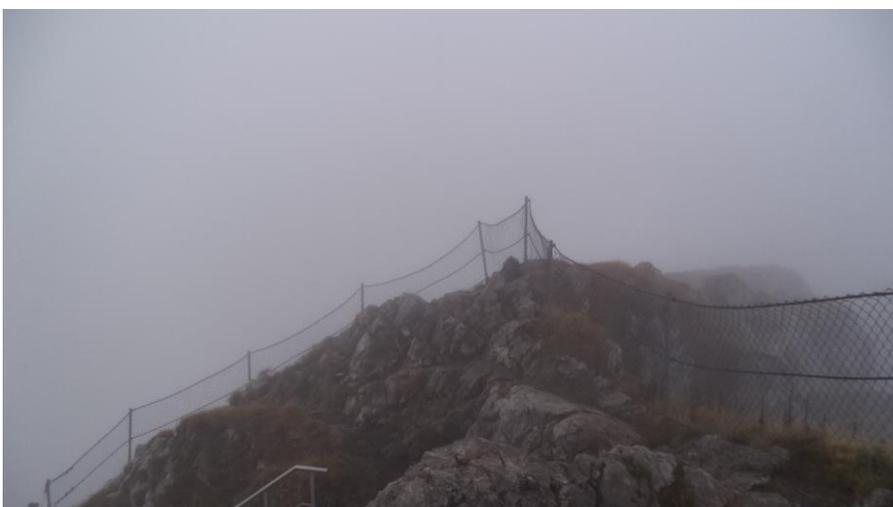
October 9, 2013
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Meteoschweiz predicted the first big snow of the season for the next day, likely marking the end of "high mountain SOTA" season. For today, they also predicted partly sunny skies in the mountains. This sounded like a good opportunity. No such luck -- it was dense fog all day long, at times even a slight drizzle. I wasn't the only one who was fooled, the cable cars were full, and there were plenty of other people on the trails, many complaining about the weather forecast.

I've long had my eye on a multi-activation trip based on Stockhorn, so this was a last chance. I took the train through Spiez to Erlenbach. (Note: the Regio Express from Bern splits into two new trains at Spiez; the forward section continues to Brig, make sure to be on the rear section, which changes direction and goes up the Simmental.) Waiting for me there was the shuttle bus (CHF 2.00) going up to the cable car station, less than 2 km away. I didn't realize how easy and fast the walk actually is, so most people walked the route and still made the next cable car, which runs every half hour. Once I rode the cable car past the middle station and to the top, I climbed the path for the last 30 or 40 meters to the actual summit and set up my antenna.

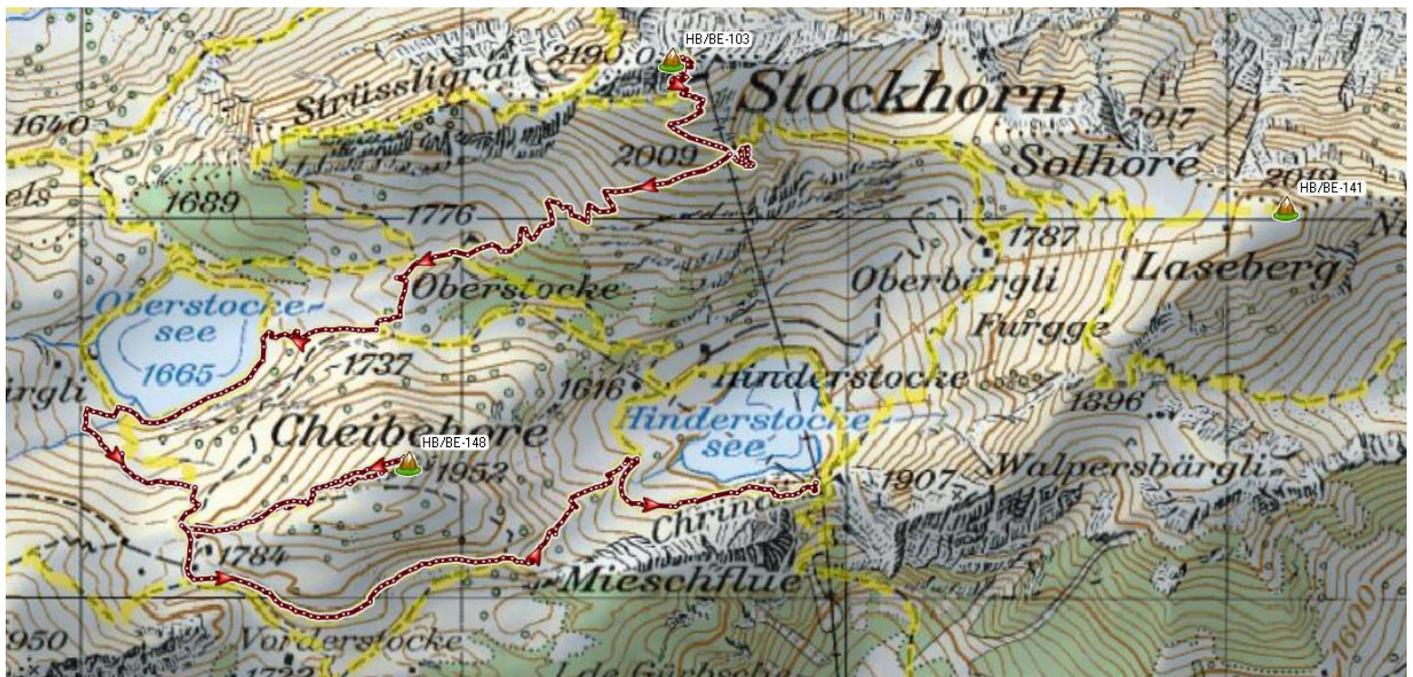


View from the Stockhorn summit station up to the actual summit.



The corner where I lashed my antenna to the fence.

After that activation, I packed up and started down and to the east towards my next goal, Laseberg, BE-141. As I mentioned, it was foggy and damp in spots. During the day I found that almost all the trails are T2s and can even be done comfortably in the rain. However, the trail from Stockhorn leading east to Solhore is an exception: it involves a steep, rocky exposed section. I started my way down, being very careful, when I came across another hiker. He told me that it gets even steeper, that it was wet, slippery - - and very dangerous. He said going up was OK if you're careful, but going down was asking for a disaster. Heeding his advice, I started back up knowing I would have to give up BE-141 this trip. (You can see on the map where I doubled back.) He also pointed out that this particular steep, exposed section gets little sun, so when the snow comes tomorrow this section of the trail will be essentially impassable for the next six months.



Fortunately, there was a Plan B: Cheibehore, BE-148. Actually, on a day with good weather and enough time, it would be possible to do all three in one day without too much exertion (maybe next summer...). The trails towards Cheibehore, as noted, were quite good with many other people taking advantage of the last day before snow set in.

Note: just south of Oberstocke see the trail marked in yellow on the hardcopy hiking map and on my GPS map is incorrect; I followed the well-marked, easy trail shown on my track. At the top of the col above the lake where you turn for the approach to Cheibehore there is a sign that says "Vorsicht". From what I could see through the fog and from the map it didn't look terribly exposed, so I decided to proceed and go up until I got uncomfortable.



The sign at the col warning that Cheibehore is to be approached with caution. The warning is a bit of an exaggeration.

The trail is not terribly well marked, especially in the fog, and I missed the section where you cross over a stone wall and go up to the summit along the ridge. As you can see on the track on the map, I approached a bit to the south. (I wasn't the only one because I saw occasional traces of previous hikers.) All went reasonably well until the final ascent, the last 25 meters, which were quite tricky in the wet conditions. It would have been impossible to get down the same route. But once I got to the top I saw the actual trail, which I followed on the way down. It wasn't really bad at all, and I think the Vorsicht sign was a bit of an exaggeration. Perhaps it's there to warn "Sunday hikers", but we SOTA activators have seen far worse without any warning signs. Yes, it's a T3, but nothing especially dangerous, even in the wet conditions. Time from Stockhorn to the Cheibehore summit: 1 hour 59 minutes, including my detour towards Laseberg. The Oberstockensee is at 1665 meters, and Cheibehore is 1952, so just less than 300 meters to climb.



The view up towards Cheibehore from the col.



This trail marker does not mean "continue following the stone wall" -- it means "cross the stone wall here" (if you can see it through the fog).



My antenna pole latched to a dead pine tree just below the summit, where there is no summit cross or any handy places to support a mast.

The activation went smoothly, I just had to deal with sitting in wet grass, but that's why I always carry a large garbage bag. The hike back to the Chrindi cable car middle station was uneventful. This leg of the trip was up and down some hills and took a few minutes more than an hour.

I wish it had been a sunny day -- I expect there would have been some great scenery in this area. But now I'm familiar with it and know what to expect the next time around.