

Lüschkopf (HB/GR-102) and Tguma (HB/GR-103)

June 8 - 9, 2014

Summary: Until cable car season starts, there are few options for early summer activations in Graubünden (HB/GR-xxx). These two were snow-free and good choices -- and the bus to Glaspas started running this weekend.

Marge had a gift certificate from a travel agency she had to use up fast, so she invited me to go along to St. Moritz. Knowing me, she also knew this would involve some SOTA activations. A quick search of the Internet showed that the cable cars don't start running for the summer season until June 21. So I had to look for alternatives.

I first checked the list of all GR-xxx summits, which for the most part are high. In fact, there are 345 GR-xxx summits. Of these there are three 2 pointers, one 6 pointer, 17 8 pointers, and the rest are 10 points (and the 10 pointers would certainly still be covered in snow at this time). Further, of all the GR-xxx summits, only 43% have been activated -- which means the others are far, far beyond anything I could ever attempt. OK, next step: which GR-xxx summits have been activated most? One that caught my eye was GR-115 Piz Cumpasc, which involves a short train ride from St. Moritz to Passo del Bernina, the highest point of the train before it heads down into Italy. That would be a pretty ride, and from the looks of it GR-115 (about 2600m) would be feasible. Except for snow at this time of year. And I was right in that assumption. From our hotel in St. Moritz, we could see that there was plenty of snow above the tree line at about about 2100 m. Also, the person at the hotel desk told us Piz Cumpasc would be impossible due to the snow.

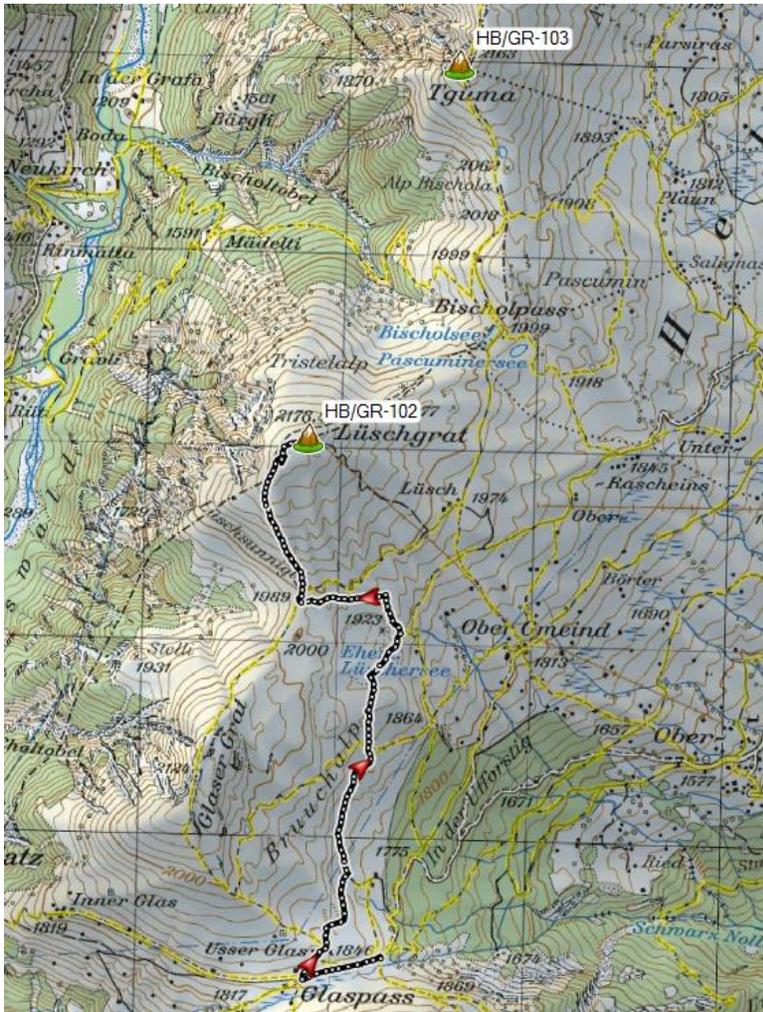


View from our hotel window -- plenty of snow above the tree line at roughly 2100 m.

So, among the frequently activated summits I next started looking at GR-102/GR-103. Lucky for us, the bus going up to Glaspas, the departure point for these hikes, just started running this weekend. So, on our way up to St. Moritz we took a side trip to Glaspas. The bus departs from the Thusis train station

and runs only sporadically, so watch the schedule and be sure to allow sufficient time so you can catch the last one back down at 3:50 p.m.

From this departure point, the hike to GR-102 Lüschkopf takes you through a valley (although as an option there is a somewhat more difficult ridge route along the Glaser Grat to the west), and then the final third of the hike is relatively steep. It took us 1 hour 43 minutes, 4.1 km, and climbing 406 m total. It wasn't technically difficult, and there were plenty of hikers out that day. Note that there is no summit cross, but I did find some fence posts that I could use as a mast support. We had plenty of time before the only bus trip back into the valley, so I had a leisurely activation while Marge enjoyed the scenery and napped. There was also time for a beer at the restaurant at Glaspass before the bus left.



GPS track to HB/GR-102; note that the next day's destination (GR-103) is at the top of the map.

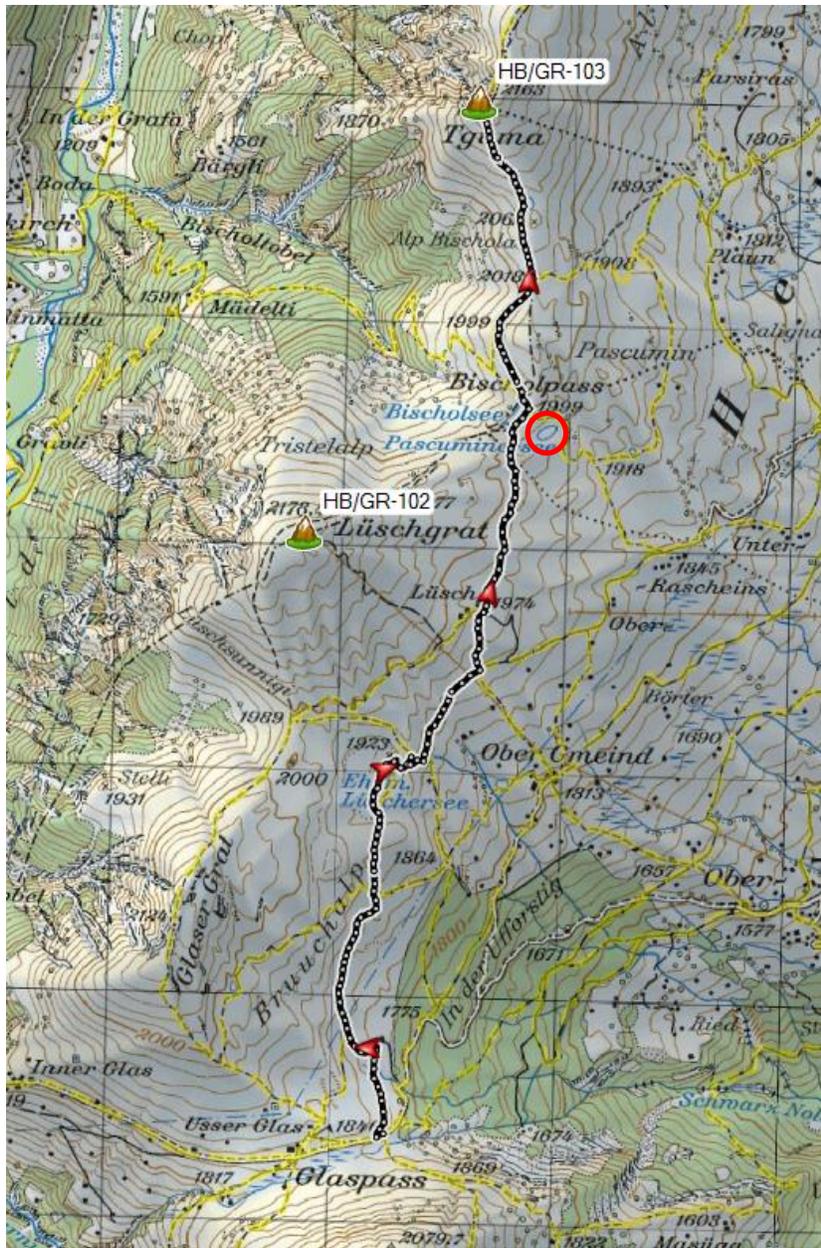


GR-102, our destination on the first day, from Glaspas. Note the total lack of snow -- likely because this Pentecost weekend was the warmest in recorded history.

We then took the bus back down to Thusis and caught the train to St. Moritz. This section of the railway has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage site -- only one of three railways to have that status; the other two are in Austria and India. ("The line across Albula and Bernina, now more than a century old, is regarded as a truly unique masterpiece of the railway engineer's art.") There were plenty of tunnels and bridges and wonderful scenery.

We spent the night in St. Moritz (which in the pre-season time was quite dead of activity -- no matter, we were tired). We woke up, had a leisurely breakfast and took the train back to Thusis and the bus to Glaspas once again. This time Marge opted to stay in the general area, reading a magazine on a bench overlooking the mountain scenery and then having an ice cream at the mountain restaurant, while I did the activation.

GR-103 is much the same, except an extra kilometer longer (total 5.3 one way) -- up and down in the valley, and the final third a steep approach to the summit (total altitude 434 m, and at a fast pace it took me 1 hour 40 to reach the summit). Here there was a summit cross for supporting my mast. Because we got a later start (reaching Glaspas at noon) and the last bus down to the valley is at 15:50, I had an abbreviated activation and then walked as fast as I could to get back -- if you miss that bus, there are few options (hitchhiking?). I actually made it back with plenty of time to spare.



GPS track to HB/GR-103 with the Pascuminersee circled in red.



GR-102, the previous day's summit, from Bischofpass.



GR-103, the second day's summit, from Bischofpass.

On the way to GR-103 you pass by Bischofpass and the nearby Pascuminersee, a small mountain lake. On this day, there were more than a few people at the lake to sunbathe and swim. So, if you have a partner or family, they could join you this far for the easier portion of the hike and enjoy the lake while you continue on to make the activation.



People enjoying an early summer day at the Pascuminersee.

Certainly it is possible to do both activations in one day, but it would be a very long, tiring day. What I would instead recommend is to book a room at the Berggasthaus Beverin, located right at the Glaspas. Do one activation leisurely, spend the night at the hotel, and the next day do another leisurely activation. We used the restaurant to get refreshments (cold beer, ice cream) after the activations.



The summit cross on GR-103. On the left, the high snow-covered peak is Piz Beverin, GR-101, which is feasible for experienced hikers with plenty of endurance.

Along these lines, across from the hotel is Piz Beverin (HB/GR-101, 2998 meters). From this side it looks almost impossible, but there is a hiking route on the rear side of the summit, and it has been activated six times. However, this is a very ambitious hike (T3+) due not only to the length of the hike. But if you stay at the hotel and are an accomplished hiker with great endurance, that would be another option.