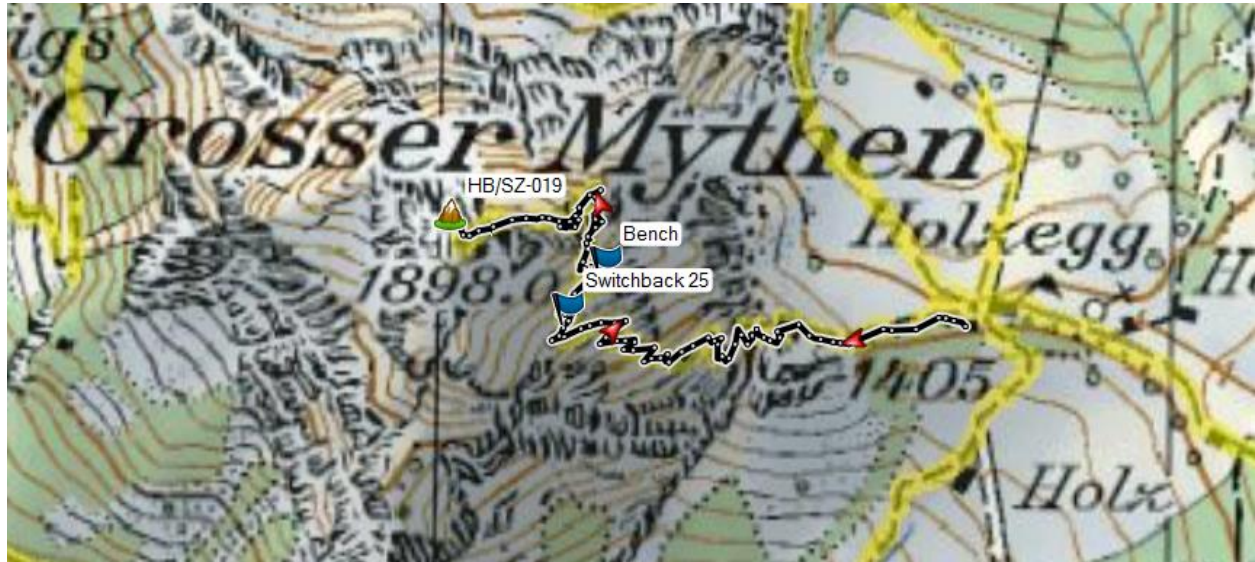


SZ-019 Grosser Mythen

May 21, 2014; perfect early summer weather

Summary: If you visit Switzerland, this summit is an absolute highlight and should be very high on your list of places to activate. In my opinion, it's the quintessential Swiss SOTA. A non-trivial climb, but well worth the effort!

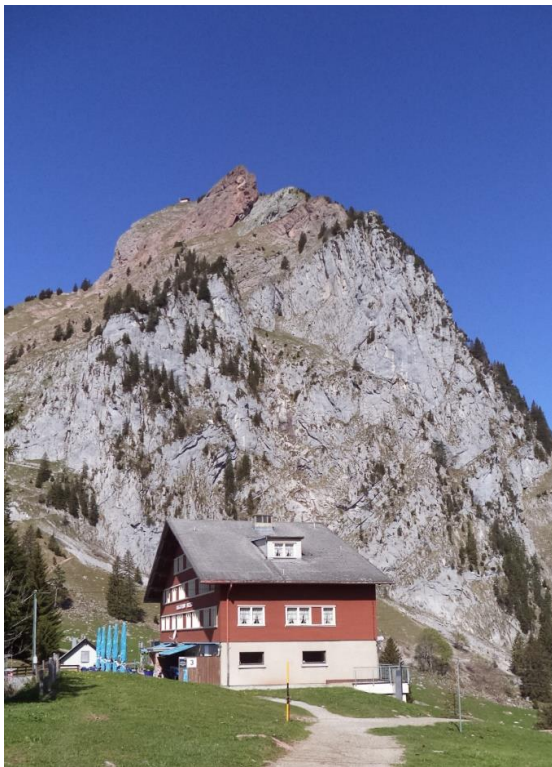


Most Swiss are as familiar with the Grosser Mythen as they are with the Matterhorn. It's an iconic peak, and almost all of the locals I know in German-speaking Switzerland have been to the top at one point or another; it's almost like a test of citizenship.

Transportation: There is a parking lot in Brunni at the station for the cable car (round trip, CHF 15.00) along with a bus stop. It does not take long at all to get here from Zurich or Lucerne; take the train to Wädenswil, change to the train for Einsiedeln (while there visit the magnificent monastery cathedral) and then a bus whose final stop is the cable car station.



View of Grosser Mythen from the cable car station (left) and the cable car (holds 15 people, runs at least every half hour or more on demand).



View of the cable car summit station/restaurant and Grosser Mythen. The summit restaurant is barely visible as a dot on the left side. At this point, you're likely to ask yourself, "What in the world was I thinking when I decided to activate this summit?!?"

The peak: Grosser Mythen juts up from the surrounding landscape like a pyramid of rock. The climb is just shy of 500 meters. The hiking signpost at the cable car summit station says 1 hour 20 minutes; I took 1 hour 25 -- and according to my GPS track, my moving time was 49 minutes and resting time was 36 minutes. Sure, I took time for photos, but I was glad to have the breaks! And there's no law that says you can't take even longer if that's your speed. There is a restaurant at the top (supplied only by helicopter, so the already high Swiss prices for food/drink are even higher). From the summit you have absolutely spectacular 360 degree views.

The trail: This is a steady 1.6 km climb up a somewhat narrow trail dug into the side of the mountain. There are 47 switchbacks going zig-zag the whole way up. People of all ages hike up this peak, but you must be reasonably fit. Do NOT attempt this summit if it is wet -- the rocky trail is downright treacherous in those conditions, and in many cases there is no railing or chain, so a fall would mean severe injuries if not death. In fact, if there has recently been rain or imminent rain in the forecast, the trail is closed. (See the photo below which has the phone number to check about the status.) In addition, it is very rocky the entire way, so be sure to wear sturdy footwear. I have seen people attempt it in sneakers/trainers but I'm sure their shoes are shot afterwards and their feet hurt; I've even seen one idiot macho try it in flip-flops. Hiking poles are highly recommended to help you keep your balance on the ascent and descent, especially if you have a backpack full of radio gear. There is landmark, a well-known stone bench, at 1730 meters about 2/3 of the way up (see the waypoint "Bench" on the GPS track).

A few impressions during the climb up:



Sign: "Use mountain path at your own risk."



Sign indicating the trail is open with the phone number to call for information and status.



Some of the 47 switchbacks are marked -- I've done only 25 so far?!? See the waypoint "Switchback 25" on the GPS track. It's at an elevation of 1694 meters, somewhat more than half way up.



The stone bench (see waypoint "Bench" on the map), about 2/3 of the way up, and the view to the summit from the bench.



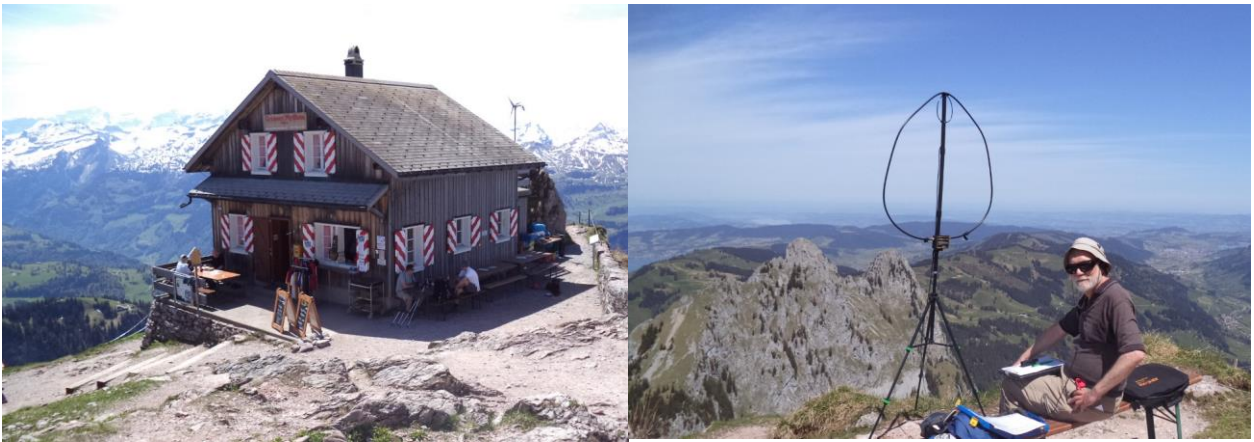
Perhaps the trickiest parts of the entire climb



Finally there!!!

HINT: Do NOT attempt this summit on a weekend or on a holiday -- it simply gets too crowded, almost like an autobahn. This has several disadvantages. First, it is much easier to go up and down the narrow path when there are only a few people; when it is crowded, letting people move ahead of you or letting people coming down while you are going up pass by is a pain and will really slow you down. Second, when people move to the side to let someone pass by, they sometimes dislodge rocks that fall down towards people on the bottom portion of the trail. In fact, one time I was there with a fellow ham on a Sunday, and twice a fist-sized rock flew within a foot or two of his head; we turned back and activated another summit that day. Finally, the activation zone is relatively small, and on a weekend it will be full of people. Finding space for an antenna without bothering other hikers will be difficult at best.

Activation zone: As noted, this is very small. It consists of a few meters on all sides of the restaurant (with picnic tables) and the actual summit area with the flagpole and summit cross. Because of this limited space, you might have some trouble setting up a dipole. I recommend using a vertical or, in my case, a magnetic loop.



The summit restaurant with limited space for antennas. I put my loop on the far side away from the restaurant near the flagpole. In the background: Kleiner Mythen HB/SZ-020, only for very skilled hikers.



Looking down on the cable car summit station from near the peak of Grosser Mythen.

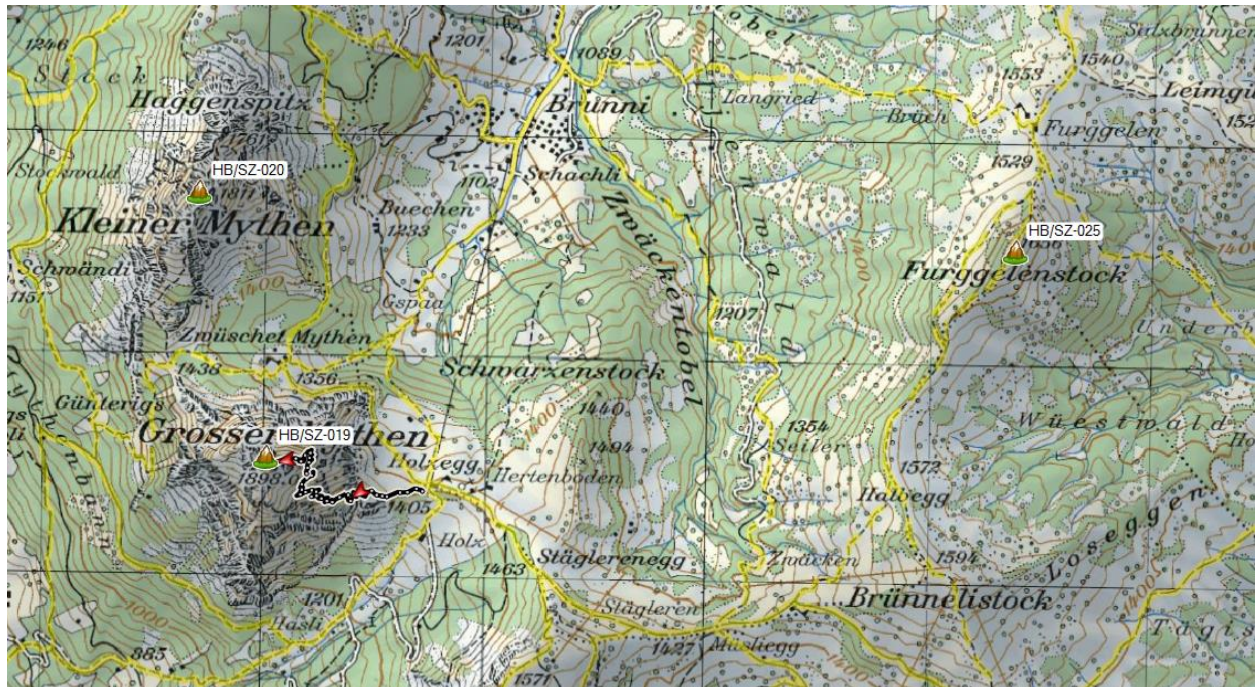


View from the summit looking southwest onto Lake Lucerne



View looking northeast including HB/SZ-025 (in the middle), an easy activation.

Further activations: If you have the time and energy, there is another nearby peak. Because it is so close by, you first might be tempted to hike up Kleiner Mythen HB/SZ-020 -- but think twice. Despite its name "Smaller Mythen", it is technically much more difficult and suited only for very experienced hikers; at the time of this writing, Grosser Mythen was activated 12 times, and Kleiner Mythen only 4 times. A far easier alternative is Furggelenstock HB/SZ-025, about 4 km away, and basically a gentle climb with no exposed areas at all.



I doubt, though, that you will want to do a second activation. When you reach the summit of Grosser Mythen, you have an unbelievable sense of satisfaction. The views are so fantastic, you'll just want to sit there and enjoy the scenery and atmosphere for as long as you can -- perhaps after having bought a cold beer to reward yourself for your efforts! For myself, I typically have that beer after the descent at the restaurant next to the cable car summit station.