

## Summits on the Air

# SOTA holidays in Bregenzerwald in summer 2017

July 15 to 22, 2017

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The Bregenzerwald (or Bregenz Forest) is a nice place in the western part of Austria. It's not far from Lake Constance and forms a part of the most western Austrian state Vorarlberg. As the name implies, there is much wood. The valleys are wide in the northern, lower parts of the country and narrower in the southern, more alpine parts. The Bregenzerwald region offers therefore gentle hills and smaller mountains in the North and alpine challenges in the South.

Our hotel was in Hittisau in the lower part of Bregenzerwald, located at 800 m.a.s.l. Since still being in the SOTA start-up phase, this matched fine with my preference for less ambitious summits. The German border and the Allgäu region are close, so the list of possible summits included also several DL/AL references.

Subtitles and positions contain clickable web links.

### [DM/BW-348, Gehrenberg](#)

This one is probably well-known to those wishing to activate a summit when attending Ham Radio in Friedrichshafen. Located 15 kilometers northwest of the fair, this hill of 754 m offers 8 points, so field trips are organized with a steady coming and going these days. I was #97 activating Gehrenberg.

We made a detour on the outward journey to Hittisau via the Lake Constance ferry to Meersburg and visited the place two hours before DD5LP's team activation. It's nearly a drive-in summit with several instructions how to get there on the SOTA website. I made only a short activation. If you'd like to enjoy the view from this hill, visit Gehrenberg tower, and you can see in good weather conditions Lake Constance and the Alps from there. There is a parking lot for the tower at the access road from Markdorf.

Gehrenberg was actually the one and only summit so far where I was not able to spot my activation by APRS2SOTA. Fortunately, I was prepared for this and could spot via SMS.

## [DL/AL-132, Hochgrat](#) [DL/AL-131, Rindalphorn](#)

Our real first day was a Sunday, so we expected Hochgrat to be very busy. You can take a gondola lift in Steibis near Oberstaufen. The lift with its yellow gondolas originates from 1973 and is marketed nowadays as nostalgic. It's not very fast but really beautiful and saves an ascent of 850 meters. Hochgrat summit is part of nature park "Nagelfluhkette" and offers to enthusiasts a 7 hours hike with spicy parts on the ridge to Immenstadt. There are 5 SOTA references on this mountain chain. Hochgrat is the most popular in Germany, because of the lift. The others are quiet ones since the access routes are quite long.



Our first summit Hochgrat is quite busy, the benches offer a nice view like on a balcony. The operator has found its place between the tourists, an electric fence and some old cowpats.

The summit is located at 1832 m.a.s.l., with an ascent of 125 m from the lift. There are two paths to the summit, one quite rocky on the ridge and a gentler newer one. The summit is quite crowded, so we set up the equipment some meters apart, behind a fence that I could use as a mast support.



View to the East from Hochgrat to Rindalphorn, our next summit.

You can see the second summit Rindalphorn clearly from Hochgrat. There is a saddle between the two peaks named Brunnenau-Scharte, 200 meters lower, and the descent to the saddle is very steep and marked with blue signs as an alpine trail, so don't hurry and don't forget your hiking poles. But the path is very well maintained with good support and no exposed parts. The last 50 m before the Rindalphorn summit are the most ambitious part, since this summit is quite small. I've used instead a secondary summit for my activation, just beside, with a saddle of 20 m in between and a long fence on it for my mast. Both peaks offer lovely sights, but don't lose track of time: the last gondola leaves Hochgrat at 16h30 – we got there 4 minutes earlier . . .



Beautiful molasse landscape seen from Rindalphorn summit. The arrow shows the position of the operator behind the fence.

Facts & figures (distances and time are always "one-way", measured in the mentioned direction):

- Activations so far: 31 for Hochgrat, 3 for Rindalphorn.
- Parking lot: [47.509754, 10.058585](#).
- From Hochgrat top station to Hochgrat summit: ascent of 125 m, distance of 700 m, 30 minutes.
- From Hochgrat summit to Rindalphorn summit: descent of 200 m, ascent of 200 m, distance of 2700 m, 80 minutes.

**OE/VB-473, Diedamskopf****OE/VB-342, Hählekopf**

Day 2 in Bregenzerwald and Monday. The weather forecast was good, no thunderstorms, slightly higher temperatures. We decided to do a popular one and its neighbor to the east, a secluded rarity with only two visits so far, both above 2000 m.

The Diedamskopf gondola lift starts in Schoppernau, located in the upper part of Bregenzerwald, and we got there after a car ride of about 30 minutes from Hittisau. Like Hochgrat this summit is always busy since it's an easy hike of only 10 minutes from the gondola. The platform with the summit cross has been renovated this year, and there are some steps with fence posts just aside, so you can easily sit there and do the activation. Within two minutes you have a small audience looking what you are doing – a good opportunity to explain how a technical hobby can be well combined with a nice experience in this beautiful nature.

Diedamskopf was the first summit where I did the minimal number of QSOs on 2m FM already, since I had made an appointment to call there some local SOTA friends. Some further QSOs with the big antenna followed for the audience.



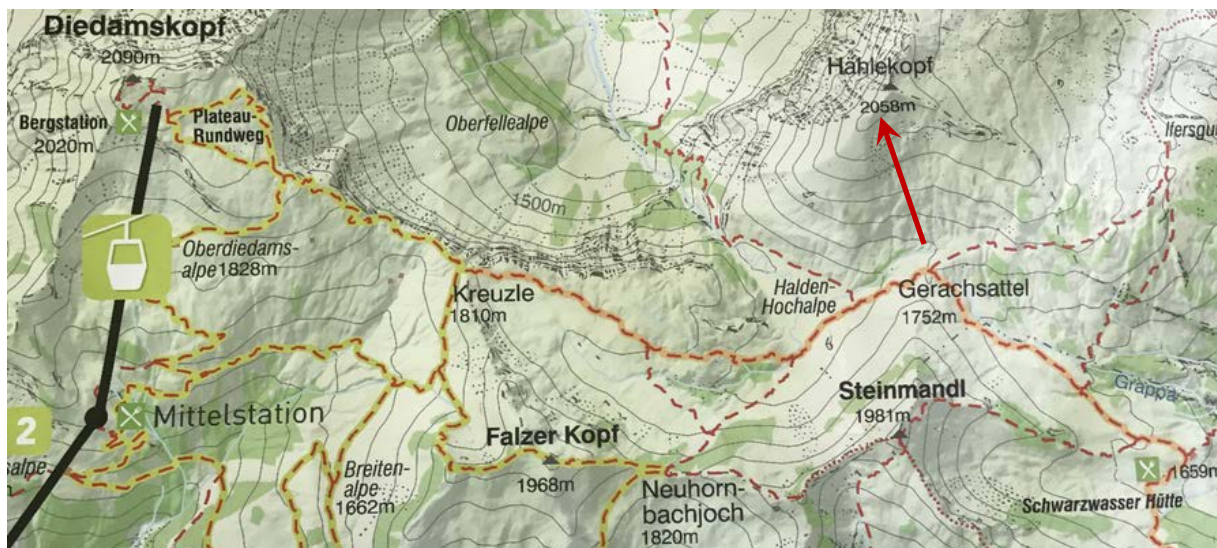
Diedamskopf summit including a renewed summit cross, the operator and his antenna.

You can see the second summit and most parts of the way from Diedamskopf, but don't disregard the time factor: it took us, including two breaks, three hours to get there. You get there via Diedsattel resp. Kreuzle, Halden-Hochalpe and Gerachsattel by following the signposts for "Schwarzwasserhütte". These landscapes unite the numerous sources of Subersach river and are an extremely peaceful and beautiful place. We haven't seen ever before such a big number of arnica and purple gentian. The ascent to Hählekopf is steep and exhausting, since there is no summer trail up to the summit. We ascended from Gerachsattel to the North with the route of the winter trail to the summit in mind. The summit can be reached also from Kleines Walsertal, a part of Austria accessible only via Germany.





View to the East from Diedamskopf summit. The arrow shows the second summit Hählekopf. It takes some time to get there.



A map at the top station of the gondola shows a possible way to Hählekopf.

Actually, I had planned to meet the same locals on the frequency to enable especially to HB9FVF, who had been #2 on this summit, a SOTA complete. Unfortunately, my APRS2SOTA released some misleading old spots again, so we have not met and I could not offer this match to Matt. The summit of Hählekopf forms a comfortable small platform, but there was no support for the mast, so my partner held it during the activation, and he did a good job.

It became obvious after the second activation that we were going to run into a time problem and would not get to the intermediate station in time to catch the last gondola to the valley. And yes – it took us two additional hours to descend to the parking lot and take there the last remaining car. We slept well that night, hi.

#### Facts & figures:

- Activations so far: 26 for Diedamskopf, 3 for Hählekopf.
- Parking lot: [47.316187, 10.007636](#).
- From Diedamskopf top station to Diedamskopf summit: ascent of 70 m, distance of 250 m, 10 minutes.
- From Diedamskopf top station to Hählekopf summit: descent of 370 m, ascent of 400 m, distance of 5500 m, 2 hours 30 minutes.

[OE/VB-505, Brüggelekopf](#)[OE/VB-494, Hochälpele](#)

We looked out for easier summits after day 2 with its long hikes and decided on Brüggelekopf and Hochälpele in the western part of Bregenzerwald. Some quick research revealed a chair lift, a restaurant, a beautiful view on Lake Constance and a very short hike to the summit for Brüggelekopf. Bingo, at least this one was made for us.

And we loved it! The chair lift starts in Alberschwende. The access road isn't well marked but you see the lift in the village from the main road. This lift is a very nostalgic, slow single chair lift, and your SOTA backpack travels behind you on the next chair while you listen to the birds singing in the wooded parts of your journey. We attached the mast to one of the red benches near the summit cross, talked to a Dutch family about SOTA and Switzerland, had some Apfelstrudel in the restaurant and simply enjoyed this cozy location. Take note indeed of the timetable of the chair lift, since it is operated only some hours around noon and at 1600 hours.



Brüggelekopf is something for activators enjoying compactness, a short way to the summit (between the two houses, quite steep indeed) and a restaurant with a veranda and a chair lift just nearby to be happy.

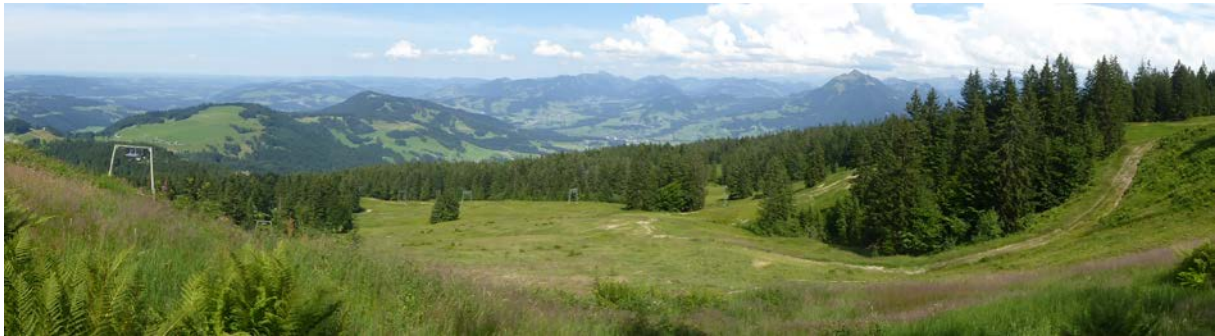


My partner took care of interested visitors when I was busy with the activation. A Dutch family enjoyed the SOTA idea and that we did this from such a beautiful place.

The hike to Hochälpele started at Bödele, just at the top of the pass road between Schwarzenberg and Dornbirn. You can park your car for free along this road and don't have to use the main parking behind the gate. Calculate about 80 minutes of hiking for an ascent of 300 m, with its last part in a wood. The summit on a ridge offers a beautiful sight over the lower Bregenzerwald, and it is at last



there, where you start to love this little paradise. The hut just below the summit was closed. There is a sign-post at the summit to support a mast, and we had a comfortable and pleasant activation, even on 2 m FM.



Hochälpele offers a nice view over parts of Bregenzerwald. We managed to see from there even our first summit Brüggelekopf, the red benches on the top and our hotel in Hittisau.



Nice flowers and some pine trees, like on many of the lower Bregenzerwald summits. The metallic red-white pole didn't cause any problems for the radiation during the activation.

#### Facts & figures:

- Activations so far: 19 for Brüggelekopf, 34 for Hochälpele.
- Parking lot: Brüggelekopf [47.450723, 9.837859](#), Hochälpele [47.420581, 9.810386](#).
- From Brüggelekopf top station to the summit: ascent of 20 m, distance of 100 m, 5 minutes.
- From Bödele pass road to Hochälpele summit: ascent of 300 m, distance of 2700 m, 75 minutes.

**DL/AL-137, Hochhäderich****DL/AL-278, Fluh**

The weather forecast promised a last day with good conditions all day long, so we took the opportunity to visit another part of nature park "Nagelfluhkette". The molasse rocks origin from the ice age and form long ridges. Two of them are just east of Hittisau in the "Alpenarena" ski region: Hochhäderich and Fluh, today both German summits of the DL/AL region. This is a border region, and you'll come across several border stones in the course of the day. Most of them show "Ö" for Austria (Österreich) on one side and "B" for Bavaria (Bayern) on the other side and a number. Thus, pay attention to be on the good side for your activation!

There is one big parking lot with a ticket machine at the Almhotel. All lifts are operated in winter only, so you take the mountain road to the south and reach the summit in about one hour. The road isn't steep, and the beautiful views start in the upper half. There is an alpine hut on the top, Berggasthaus Hochhäderich. It's closed on Wednesdays, but you can buy beverages outside and put the money into a box. The summit is just beside and offers a last steeper ascent of about five minutes. The summit is popular among hikers. There are several supports for an antenna mast; the German area is considerably smaller than the Austrian top.



Berggasthaus Hochhäderich is located just below the summit and the border to Germany. Both summits of this day were German references, Hochhäderich even a border mountain with a score for both countries until the elimination of duplicate summits. The map shows the distances from the central car parking lot at "Ghf Hochhäderich" at the Almhotel.

We went down to the parking lot on the same roads and continued to the northern part through the small Koyenmoos nature reserve towards Moosalpe and Steinernes Tor onto the next ridge. We took the trail on the ridge in the woods, and this was quite pleasant in the afternoon. The trail offers a constant up and down and we crossed the border again as well as several pastures with cattle on it. Check the maps to identify your arrival at the activation zone in the forest. We took a direct way back to the parking lot after the activation and descended via a zigzag trail visible on online maps to the main mountain road in the valley and enjoyed a stopover at Alpe Glutschwanden for two bottles of Almdudler.





The trail on the ridge hosted some cattle on the open parts. These here are mostly young cows of about one year only, and they can be quite curious. The activation took place in a nice and shady place nearby the ridge.

#### Facts & figures:

- Activations so far: 24 for Hochhäderich, 7 for Fluh.
- Parking lot for both: [47.488920, 9.987246](#).
- From the parking lot to Hochhäderich summit: ascent of 350 m, distance of 3000 m, 80 minutes.
- From the parking lot to Fluh summit: net ascent of 170 m, distance of 3500 m, 90 minutes.

[DL/AL-276, Attensberg](#)  
[DL/AL-275, Gehäuenholz](#)

General weather conditions changed for the 2<sup>nd</sup> last day of our stay in Bregenzerwald – it turned to muggy weather with possible rain showers even in the morning. But we had learnt that the region often offers better WX than elsewhere around, so we decided to pick up some easier SOTA summits around Oberstaufen, just outside the border. This would allow to terminate at short notice and to get back to the car in reasonable time.

We had picked up Salmaser Höhe, DL/AL-142, just east of Oberstaufen, as our starter. We had seen a toll road on the map and a parking lot at its end. Unfortunately, this road was marked “forbidden for cars and motorcycles” and “forestry and agricultural traffic allowed” directly after the railway crossing, so we returned and drove to Oberstaufen to check out Stauf, DL/AL-144, a hill with a communications tower just east of the center. But we skipped this one, too, because of the uncertain weather at that time – getting wet was not to our taste.



A panorama picture taken from Gehäuenholz. The red arrow marks the former position at Attensberg, only some kilometers to the Southeast. SOTA offers nice views from places you would probably never visit without SOTA!

So we took the next one, just 3 km to the West. Attensberg (this seems to be a typo in the database, since the field name on the map is Altensberg, and the summit itself is named Kapf) offers one point only, but it is a really nice and easy one – two meters more, and this one would have been a two-pointer. We drove to the parking of Café Paradies, and you can see from there some benches on the way up to the woods – take the upmost one, 300 m from the car park and 60 m higher, it's just inside the activation zone and has a fence in front of it. So you have a comfortable seat and a really beautiful outlook to the South when doing the activation. Unfortunately, there was a strong breeze that morning, and it was difficult to keep everything in place and understand your radio partners.



Struggling with the wind on Attensberg summit (left) and weakening knees on Gehäuenholz summit (right).

A second one-pointer, Gehäuenholz, can be seen northwestwards from Attensberg. We continued on B308 road to get there and parked at the hamlet of Vorderreute, near a chapel. A farmer asked us for the purpose of our walk and it seemed that he already has met there SOTA operators earlier. We

hiked up to the wood where I set up my station at a fence. The strong breeze had gone and it started to feel warm and comfortable. The activation was done in short time, since some black clouds quickly approached from Austria.

We decided to drive to Sulzberg, have lunch there and check the weather radar app. Sulzberg is located magnificently on a ridge above the lower Bregenzerwald and offers views that you can enjoy for hours. Not today – we didn't find an open restaurant there, and the rain really sat in, so we decided to stop for today and find a protected place offering a soup or some further Apfelstrudel. I've enjoyed the spa of the hotel for the rest of the day after the meal and updated the SOTA database carefully.

#### Facts & figures:

- Activations so far: 6 for Attensberg, 4 for Gehäuenholz.
- Parking lot: Attensberg: [47.547738, 9.997464](#), Gehäuenholz: [47.560368, 9.989664](#).
- From the parking lot to Attensberg summit: ascent of 60 m, distance of 300 m, 7 minutes.
- From the parking lot to Gehäuenholz summit: ascent of 100 m, distance of 800 m, 12 minutes.



### DL/AL-277, Auf dem Hochsträss OE/VB-501, Hittisberg

We had no specific plans for our last day but decided to continue our SOTA adventures since the weather conditions in the morning were quite favorable. We wanted to visit the Hochsträss ridge, just east of Sulzberg, and activate this border summit. We drove up from Riefensberg on a small road with marvelous prospects. The access from Sulzberg village to Hochsträss on road Gmeind is closed for traffic since it is a private road, like many others. There is a central car park nearby the church of Sulzberg, but we found a temporary place beside a wayside cross. The activation zone is quite large, and the border to Germany is marked well. There is a smuggler trail for children in the woods, so we had some girls, boys and their parents around, some of them wondering if we were part of the trail. We set up our own toys on a small clearance and enjoyed a nice activation.



Expect to meet such signs frequently: banned access road to Hochsträss resp. DL/AL-277 from Austria. But our feet take us to any location: activating finally in the woods nearby the border and a nice smuggler trail.

Since the weather was better than expected we discussed to do Hittisberg in the afternoon. A hotel manager had told us that both trails to the summit were very steep and only fine in dry times. We expected therefore a stubborn hill, and we were right. There is a nice trail to the foot of Hittisberg. The character of the trail changes abruptly there, so don't forget your hiking poles! It was quite hot now in the afternoon, but most of the way is done in the forest. The summit cross is not at the top but at a place with a wonderful view over Hittisau. The activation offered no further problems, there are trees, fences and an alp hut providing support for the antenna mast. The descent was a pain again in the upper parts, but it's manageable. Hittisberg rewards you with nice meadows on the top ridge with beautiful flowers and the peace of a secluded spot.



Finally on the top of Hittisberg. Forests often offer tables to SOTA activators!



Probably the most peaceful place on the ridge of Hittisberg: an alpine hut and beautiful meadows.

#### Facts & figures:

- Activations so far: 17 for Auf dem Hochsträss, 14 for Hittisberg.
- Parking lot: Auf dem Hochsträss: [47.524460, 9.919357](#) or nearby the church of Sulzberg, Hittisberg: [47.457870, 9.959781](#), in the center of Hittisau.
- From the wayside cross to Hochsträss summit: ascent of 30 m, distance of 1600 m, 20 minutes.
- From the parking lot to Hittisberg summit: ascent of 530 m, distance of 3500 m, 100 minutes.

**. . . and looking back:**

The Bregenzerwald holidays 2017 in Hittisau have offered to us a collection of 13 SOTA summits in Austria and Germany. My partner was also happy with this type of holidays since there is always something to see, do or help during the activations and the other time is regular hiking. There are further summits, so it's possible to spend again some time in this nice region later.

I based for all activations on Kompass maps, <http://www.kompass.de/touren-und-regionen/wanderkarte/>, and Google Maps, [maps.google.com](https://maps.google.com), and had no need for additional tools. The Kompass maps have a useful routing function calculating distances and ascents for a trail between two markers. They show contour lines and are helpful when looking up the activation zone. All summits have been spotted via APRS2SOTA, except for Gehrenberg.

The bunch of activations provided a nice tan, a healthy appetite for "3/4 Verwöhnpension" at dinner (it was excellent!) and always a deep sleep and dreams of unbelievable SOTA activations, hi.

Touristic information: <http://www.bregenzerwald.at/s/en/>.

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