

Summits on the Air

SOTA holidays in Montafon in summer 2018

July 17 to 27, 2018

by Markus, HB9DIZ

Welcome to [Vorarlberg](#) again after SOTA holidays in Bregenzerwald last year (see [report 2017](#))!

[Montafon](#) is the name of an alpine valley in the most western Austrian state Vorarlberg. It's not far from the borders to Switzerland and Liechtenstein. The valley branches off from the main route from Bregenz to Innsbruck at the alpine city of Bludenz.

We've been many times in Austria since my mother originates from there. We usually visit Montafon in winter times, because it is a paradise for ski downhill and winter hiking, but had opted this year for the summer period because of SOTA. Our hotel was located in Bartholomäberg nearby the church at 1100 m.a.s.l., like on a balcony above the main village Schruns. No transit traffic, but 100% splendid views!



Appetizing morning view from our hotel in Bartholomäberg towards the Swiss border in the background.

The SOTA summits around the Montafon valley are at alpine heights above 2000 m.a.s.l. and are not mainstream. You have to get there first! None of our summits had more than 7 activations so far.

This was the final agenda for our Montafon holidays:

1. Wed, July 18 ■ T4 OE/VB-330, Itonskopf
2. Thu, July 19 ■ T1 OE/TI-109, Valluga (summit platform)
3. Fri, July 20 ■ T2 OE/VB-380, Hoher Frassen
4. Mon, July 23 ■ T2 OE/VB-335, Muttjöchle
5. Tue, July 24 ■ T3 OE/VB-530, Tafamunter Augstenberg (a first activation!)
6. Wed, July 25 ■ T4 OE/VB-218, Kreuzspitze
7. Thu, July 26 ■ T3 OE/VB-203, Nördlicher Schafgafall

We did one hike resp. activation per day, as this was enough for us and enough to create a healthy appetite for dinner each evening.

The difficulty marks ■ (walking, T1 grade, Swiss hiking scale), ■ (mountain hiking, T2/T3 grade) and ■ (alpine hiking, T4/T5/T6 grade) have been determined based on our research resp. personal subjective local experience and express the highest level met.

Activating with a considerable backpack can alter your center of gravity. We chose therefore an alternative way back to the car on two hikes to bypass loose or slippery ground that might have been risky for me.

Subtitles and positions contain clickable web links.

[OE/VB-330, Itonskopf](#)

■ T4

Wednesday, day 1, and our starter hike already touched my personal limits resp. comfort zone. Since not a hiker by birth, I have a serious respect for alpine trails and their white-blue-white signs that disappears only slowly. But we tried and had success on Itonskopf because I had heard of an only short last difficult part to the summit ("Itonskopf 5 minutes"), good new steel ropes to the summit, and I had seen a video on Youtube showing some youngsters from the Netherlands, one of them going up to the summit in sneakers!



An overview for this hike via Rellseck, Monteneu, Wannaköpf to Itonskopf.

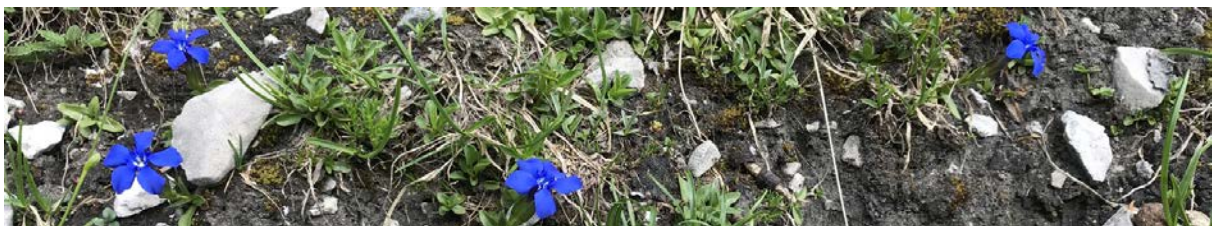
Wednesday was our day for that because our hotel operates the alpine hut "Alpengasthaus Rellseck" and they have a big mountain breakfast there each Wednesday from July until September. This gave us not only a solid base of food and beverage but saved us also 400 m of ascent because of the Rellseck shuttle bus for hikers leaving the village just beside our hotel (summer only, one-way fare EUR 6.50). The hiking trail led us eastwards and was pleasant with nice views. I had my hiking poles with me, and that was enough – nice meadows, sometimes a bit steep. We hiked via Monteneu to Wannaköpf, a nice and peaceful former SOTA summit (ex OE/VB-357) with a first sight of the small pyramid of Itonskopf and bypassed a part of the blue-white trail.



Still 30 minutes to the summit for my pace: light scrambling following a path on the left side of this small valley on the final ascent to the base of the real summit. We'd probably prefer the base of the creek next time. And we would not do this hike reversely from east to west, since we prefer such ascents on the way up.

Two portions of the trail justified the blue-white marks. The final ascent to the base of the small summit required some light scrambling. It was okay for me, but you progress slowly. The ropes on the last part to the summit were a good help. The signpost said "5 minutes" to the summit, we had 7, hi. The summit is very small with an excellent outlook on 360 degrees.

I took my place on the foundation of the summit cross and didn't leave it until the end of the activation. The summit cross is the only place to set up a mast, and I called additionally on 2 m FM. The start of the way back was a sort of pain for me on the first five meters from the summit cross to the start of the ropes, hi. Huh, I was quite happy to reach the bottom of the summit. A second time would certainly be easier for me, but I don't think that I am made for such summits!



Gentian: they are really lovely and that much blue – no printer can print this blue!



Itonskopf and the summit trail seen from Wannaköpf: the trail switching from blue-white to red-white at the bottom of the summit with a signpost to the summit and the summit trail (dotted line, secured with steel ropes). The arrow spots a hiker. This view of the summit looks terrible, but it is viable.

The descent continued on a red-white trail for 1000 meters difference in altitude, back to the hotel in Bartholomäberg. That took us roughly 3 hours. The first part brings you down through the avalanche barriers with some very steep steps to a small driveway and continues via Wieskopf, Almein and Fritzensee back to the village. We had started at 1000 hours at Rellseck and were back at the hotel at 1830 hours. Our mountaineers may smile, but what a day for us, hi!

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

- Activations of Itonskopf so far: 4.
- Waypoint: parking lot in the village of Bartholomäberg: [47.091593, 9.908841](#).
- Waypoint: bus stop for the hiker bus to Rellseck (EUR 6.50 one way) at Hotel Bergerhof: [47.092798, 9.906490](#).
- Waypoint: our trail head at Alpengasthaus Rellseck: [47.107202, 9.891690](#).
- [Youtube video](#) to see the last part to the summit in the steel ropes.
- [Youtube video](#) "Vorarlberg von oben": Itonskopf.
- From Rellseck to Wannaköpf: ascent of 550 m, distance of 3.3 km, 2 hours.
- From Wannaköpf to Itonskopf: descent of 50 m, ascent of 100 m, distance of 1.2 km, 1 hour.
- From Itonskopf back to the village of Bartholomäberg: descent of 1000 m, distance of 8 km, 3 hours.

OE/TI-109, Valluga

■ T1 (summit platform only, elsewhere ■ T4)

The starter hike was tough for us, so we opted for a much easier day on Thursday. The name of the solution was Valluga, the top summit of St. Anton. St. Anton is a famous ski resort in the western part of the state Tyrol, just on the eastern side of the Arlberg pass separating Vorarlberg from the rest of Austria.



A tourist's duties for the operator on the summit platform before the activation – Valluga, top of St. Anton!

This summit is 2809 m high and you take 3 gondolas to get there and pay EUR 29 per person for this trip up to the sky. The last gondola offers space for about 8 pax only, but it's a short track and takes only 2 minutes one way. The summit consists of a tourist area with 2 platforms. It's okay to be there with sandals or street shoes. There are hiking trails from the top, but these are white-blue and alpine immediately after the gate. We saw more than one person and even a family with a child there with bad shoes . . .



This is not a beggar collecting coins but OE/HB9DIZ/p operating his KX2 for SOTA from the upper platform on the Valluga summit. The mast is on the right side at the staircase railing and the wire reaches the operator and the KX2 from behind.

The upper platform is a small circle of about 8 meters diameter and the outlooks from this special place are marvelous. We had a beautiful day with only few clouds. How do you set-up for SOTA? You fix the mast to the staircase railing and fold up the operator somewhere at the railing of the platform on the ground. The place is not optimal for SOTA transmission since the giant metallic platform influences the radiation and other radio installations interfere. I had to listen very carefully but collected 5 contacts only.



The first TV and telephony link is still on place: repeater station Ulmer Hütte just beside the alpine hut and view of the passive reflectors on the real summit.

Valluga is a special place for radio enthusiasts since there are two big funny rhombic plates on a tower construction on the summit. These are passive reflectors of the first trans-Austrian TV and telephony link chain originating from 1955, connecting Bregenz to Vienna. The link gear was not solid enough to place it directly on the rough summit of Valluga, so there is a special repeater tower some hundred meters lower just beside Ulmer Hütte, beaming to these reflector plates, one of them directing westwards to Pfänder and one eastwards to Zugspitze. The first packet radio interlink from Bregenz to the rest of Austria 35 years later followed nearly the same chain and was an adventure as well for the OE9 and OE7 amateurs! Yep, those were the days . . . and everything is a 24/24 hours service nowadays.



Collecting some points for the Relax Award after the activation on a circle trail at Galzig with several funny benches.

We drove back to the intermediary station Galzig after the activation to have a late lunch and to follow a nice trail just around the transmitter site with nice views and lots of marvelous flowers.

Facts & figures:

- Activations of Valluga so far: 6.
- Waypoint: parking lot for the bottom station of Galzigbahn gondola lift in the village of St. Anton: [47.127995, 10.262973](https://www.galzigbahn.com/waypoint/47.127995,10.262973).
- [Youtube video](#) "Vorarlberg von oben": Valluga (border summit Vorarlberg/Tyrol).
- From Valluga gondola top station to the summit platforms: ascent of 0 m, distance 5 m, 5 seconds (10 seconds when crowded), hi.
- Trans-Austrian link chain (in German): <http://www.wabweb.net/radio/sender/rifu-1959.htm>

OE/VB-380, Hoher Frassen

■ T2

Ehmm . . . Valluga in a report about Montafon holidays? To be honest: there are very few summits around the Montafon valley itself that I'd be able to activate on a SOTA day trip considering my hiking proficiency. So, we selected even targets from neighbor regions, as long as we could organize them as a day trip.

Hoher Frassen was another one "outside" after Valluga. We had discussed this summit and its neighbor Breithorn, OE/VB-532, with our waitress, and she recommended Hoher Frassen for its broader range of outlook and the well maintained and viable trail. And the domestics know Frassenhaus, the hut at 2/3 of the way to the summit; the hosts Stefan and Dagmar are friendly, helpful and popular. They have a fan club supporting their slogan "Do gsi – schö gsi!" (been here, nice here).



Frassenhaus, 1740 m.a.s.l., seen from the second part of the way to the summit, is a popular hiking target for SOTA- and non-SOTA activists, located on its own ridge. View to the south to the main valley with the motorway A14 and the city of Bludenz nearby. Food and beverage from the hut may save some weight of your SOTA backpack.

The summit can be reached from the North, from Raggal what had been the preference of Tom, OE9TKH, who had been the last activator in 2016, or from the South, from Muttersberg, a sunny balcony above Bludenz. Since we would drive in from Bludenz with the car, Muttersberg was our choice. A second reason to prefer this version is the gondola lift Bludenz–Muttersberg saving 800 m of ascent (but 600 m still remain for your own feet).

The hiking trail is well maintained and quite popular because of the hut. The second part is a bit rougher, less maintained, about ■ T2+ from my point of view, and leads you through a zone of mountain pines. This part is steeper, especially the last turns before the summit, but well viable.



A first glimpse of the summit cross of Hoher Frassen appearing at the horizon.

The activation zone is quite large on both sides of the slight saddle where the access trail from Frassenhaus connects to the summit ridge. We preferred therefore to do the activation on the western part after enjoying the view from the main summit. There is always someone nearby the summit cross. There are more of these pines at the top to attach your mast. We took profit from

good conditions and even had a QSO with above-mentioned Tom being himself on a holiday trip in Tuscany as I/OE9TKH. It was great to meet you on the frequency, Tom!



View westwards down to the valley, about 1400 m deeper, and towards the Swiss Alpstein mountains in the background with Säntis, 2502 m.a.s.l., HB/AI-001, and the Austrian border city of Feldkirch. We enjoyed the marvelous views very much!



The operator enjoying the view from the summit at 1979 m.a.s.l. before looking for a suitable place for the activation. Views towards Walgau valley, Liechtenstein and Switzerland on the left side and to the Grosses Walsertal valley and southern parts of Bregenzerwald on the right side.

We took the same way down, since we had to hurry up suddenly because of some black clouds approaching from Switzerland. They even stopped the lift for twenty minutes because of these clouds just when entering the top station, but for nothing unfortunately.

Facts & figures:

- Activations of Hoher Frassen so far: 3. I don't understand this low number for such a nice summit!
- Waypoint: parking lot for the bottom station of Muttersberg gondola lift located in the northern part of Bludenz: [47.166785, 9.821098](#). Frassenhütte: [47.189743, 9.827506](#).
- [Youtube video](#) "Vorarlberg von oben": Muttersberg and Frassenhütte.
- Ascent of 600 m (350 m to the hut and further 250 m to the summit), distance of 2000 m to the hut and further 900 m to the summit. It took us 60 minutes to the hut from Muttersberg top station and further 40 minutes to the summit.

OE/VB-335, Muttjöchle

■ T2

Saturday and Sunday didn't offer SOTA day trips because of the uncertain weather. We made a visit to Hensler on Saturday, a location with nice views and a restaurant at the southern slope of Dünserberg (ex OE/VB-449 and 470), accessible with an old small cable car from Schnifis. On Sunday we attended the Daniel celebration commemorating the silver mining tradition of Bartholomäberg and an organ recital of a holiday guest in the church of Schruns (and ice cream and cake at Café Frederick nearby the main square).

We had still some moments of rain on Monday morning, but we dared heading out for trip #4 at 10 a.m. Muttjöchle, 2075 m.a.s.l., is a summit east of Itonskopf, separating Silbertal from Klostertal. You could hike to Muttjöchle even from our hotel, but this would be a hike of numerous hours. Our plan was therefore to do it from Sonnenkopf, a winter and summer resort with a gondola lift located nearby the motorway A14 in the Klostertal valley.

Rainfall had stopped when we got out of the car at the bottom station, but it was overcast with some fog here and there. Sonnenkopf is the land of bears for children starting with teddy bears and a red-white decoration in the alpine style already in our gondola. More bears followed at the children's park nearby the top station.



Greetings from the land of bears let us forget the rain drops on the windows. No sunshine but fog at the top station!

The first sign post advised 1 hour to Muttjöchle. The trail starts easy-going, and we met even a couple with a stroller. But we didn't meet many hikers because of the uncertain weather. The trail is well marked, it will be steeper in the final part. So, I recommend hiking boots and poles despite the easy beginning. It was the easiest hike of these holidays beside the Valluga platform.



View to the top of Muttjöchle on the second half of the hike. But the summit didn't approach for a longer time!



The operator on one of the summit benches. No sight to nowhere – we could have seen to Bartholomäberg without fog!

The activation went well: 21 SSB contacts, the top result of these holidays. Starting with Reinhard, HB9DHA, and continuing with all the familiar voices of my top chasers: G0RQL, EA2LU, OK2PDT, DJ5AV, G4OBK, PA1BR, EA2CKX, G0FEX, PC9DB, SA4BLM and even N1GB from the other side of the pond. Thanks to you all for making me feeling like at home even in the mist! A leaflet said that the ascent to Muttjöchle is rewarded with fantastic views to Rätikon, Verwall and Silvretta – not today.

We took the same way back to the gondola lift and a warm meal in the summit restaurant. Many elderly ladies chatted around us there, it was like QRM in the contest, hi. Still no sunshine! But don't think that you can't get a sunburn in the fog – a reddish face greeted me from the mirror in the evening!

We had visited Muttjöchle some years ago even in the winter period, a long time before my SOTA activities. There is a really beautiful winter hiking trail from Sonnenkopf taking you about 100 minutes with regular winter boots. Highly recommendable for a SOTA winter bonus at sunshine!



Winter paradise @Muttjöchle, OE/VB-335 (January 2014).

I sent my spots via APRS2SOTA and had no access to SOTAwatch to see your comments or frequency change requests. Désolé!

Facts & figures:

- Activations of Muttjöchle so far: 8.
- Waypoint: parking lot for the bottom station of Sonnenkopf gondola lift located nearby motorway S16 at Klösterle (Klostertal): [47.128992](#), [10.056179](#).
- Ascent of 230 m, distance of 3000 m, hiking time 70 minutes.

OE/VB-530, Tafamunter Augstenberg ■ T3

Having wrapped up the hike to Muttjöchle and prepared the next day, the silly idea came to my mind to investigate a bit about the Vorarlbergian SOTA summits and to look-up where all these not yet activated 10-pointers with funny names were located. The last one on this list was Tafamunter Augstenberg. Twenty minutes later I was sure to have found the target of the hike of the next day. Try a first activation? Me, really? Yes, me – silly, but true!

There are two ways to reach Tafamunter Augstenberg (or simply TA to keep it short). One is to start in Partenen, the last village of Montafon valley, and to take Tafamuntbahn, an aerial cableway of the hydroelectric power company Illwerke, to the top station. A very steep alpine trail (T4) approaches the summit via the abandoned hut Versalhaus from southwest.

The other possibility was more to our taste because of the supporting infrastructure: starting at Alpengasthaus Zeinisjoch nearby the recently modernized water reservoir Kops. You have to get there first. It took us 70 minutes by car from Bartholomäberg. There is even a public bus from Schruns, but there are that many bus stops on the way that you will hardly ever arrive. A car is slowed down by the 34 hairpin turns of Silvretta–Hochalpenstrasse, a magnificent panoramic toll road (ticket fare EUR 15 per regular car). So, don't start too late!

Our first stopover was Alpe Verbella, about 50 minutes from the car park. This is a mountain pasture hut with several barns and lots of cattle around. They sell simple rural snacks and beverage. The toughest part of the trail was at the beginning, when we quit the gravel road after 10 minutes. The way up was steep and a few meters of the trail just traversing above a dry water course had been washed out. We met only very few people, most visitors follow the beautiful valley to Heilbronner Hütte located at the border of Vorarlberg and Tyrol nearby the picturesque Scheid-Seen lakes.



The small hut can be seen from the car park. It is a reference point to switch from a mountain bike to hiking if you have your bike with you. The access road is the gravel road starting at Verbella Alpe. The yellow circle shows a short slightly difficult part. It was okay on the way up to the summit, but we took the alternative way downwards via the gravel road.



The remaining way to TA was not difficult but took some time: a really beautiful wide alpine valley up to Jöchle at the horizon.

At Jöchle the steep trail from Tafamunt and Versalhütte joins. You can choose there between TA to the north and a second (non-SOTA) summit with more views to the Montafon valley and the Silvretta toll road to the south. Still 20 minutes, and you are on the wide summit of TA. We enjoyed the beautiful open landscape with rocks and ponds reflecting other summits! A herd of brown and white sheep was there and made it to a place to forget everything around you.

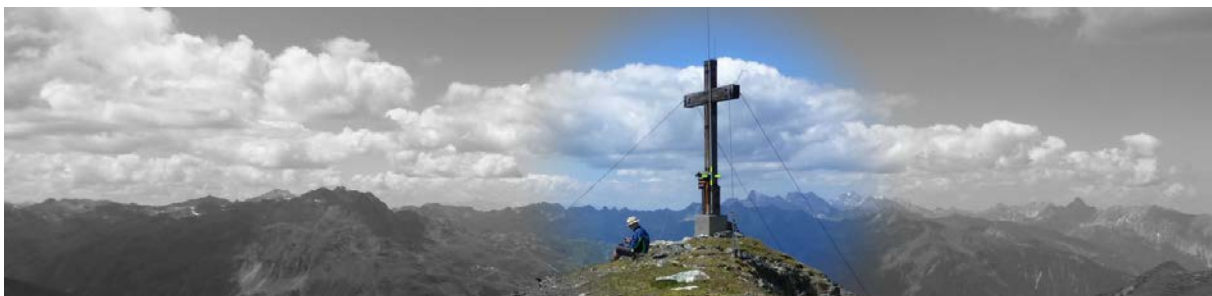
There is only the summit cross to support your mast beside possibilities to stick it between the rocks. The activation started well, when the SWR suddenly went up, but the built-in antenna tuner tuned it away. I was just trying to understand the two friends from South Tyrol when a sudden shout from my partner let me look up . . . and see the mast broken and the wire down on the ground. No wonder why one of them had said that my signal had been better some minutes ago; but I simply had to laugh that the QSOs had been possible considering that cable tangle on the ground!



The operator activating TA on the summit ridge and this new variodirectional wire antenna on the ground.

Yes, this had been really a summit for me to do a first activation, viable in every sense, with only one slightly difficult place. We went down to Jöchle and saw some hikers on the other summit. It took more time through the steeper rocky parts just below. There are several paths there and we should have taken the same as on the way up. We traversed soon to the earlier mentioned hut since we wanted to bypass the difficult part on the descent. The gravel road led us back to Verbella Alpe and a rural snack. We were back at the hotel in Bartholomäberg two hours later.

Wow, that was the luck of the late bloomer and is somehow now "my" own summit! Not one of those hundreds of new Italian 1-pointers just beside your garden, but a real summit in the real alps, hi. We shared the news in the evening at the table with Isabella. Of course: she had already been there!



Remembering the first activation of SOTA summit OE/VB-530, Tafamunter Augstenberg.

My first activation of TA disappeared a bit behind the masterpiece of Matt, HB9FVF, and Manuel, HB9DQM. They had invaded Austria spontaneously on the same day, climbed to the top of Zimba, the local Matterhorn, OE/VB-095, and disappeared afterwards as silently as they had come in. Without mobile internet connection abroad, I had discovered this activation only later, back at the hotel. It would have been an easy S2S on 2 m FM! Congrats, guys! You do great stuff that is only for

my eyes and not for my feet. They short-circuited even Martin, DK3IT, who had developed the same project and realized it only 8 days later. Hm, such is life, hi!

Facts & figures:

- Activations of TA so far: 1 – mine, waiting for more!
- Waypoint: car park nearby Alpengasthof Zeinisjoch: [46.978069, 10.126303](#).
- Youtube videos "Vorarlberg von oben": [Water reservoir Kops](#), [Heilbronner Hütte](#).
- Ascent of 660 m, distance of 5700 m, hiking time 50 minutes to Verbella Alpe and further 100 minutes to the summit.



The summit of Tafamunter Augstenberg and the flock of sheep seen from below.

OE/VB-218, Kreuzspitze

■ T4

There are two popular trails from the top station of the Golmerbahn gondola lift to the hut Lindauer Hütte: a direct hike for everyone and the more alpine ridge hike Golmer Höhenweg via Geissspitze. The trail to Kreuzspitze leaves the ridge trail on a saddle just before you reach Geissspitze. This last part is not very long, but it is not an official trail without sign posts or hiking marks. It is only a narrow sheep trail with a considerably steep slope to the south and 2-3 short parts with light scrambling. This justifies the T4 classification.

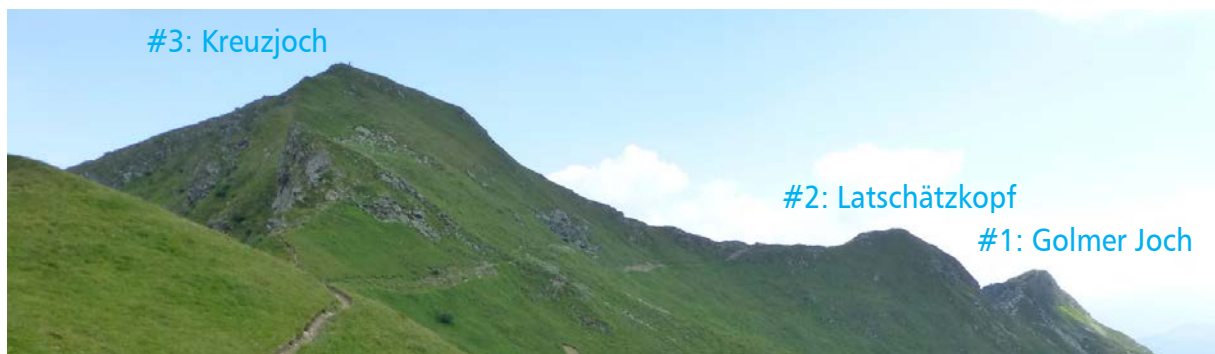
We started the day trip at the big parking lot of the gondola nearby Latschau and rode on sections 2 and 3 of Golmerbahn to the top station Grüneck. You gain some height first and follow then several ridges for about 2.5 hours to the mentioned saddle. This Golmer Höhenweg offers a great variety of intermediary summits and trails, it's like the pearls on a precious necklace.



Looking back to summit #1: Golmer Joch, 2124 m.a.s.l.



Looking ahead to summit #2: Latschätzkopf, 2219 m.a.s.l.



Looking back to summit #3: Kreuzjoch, 2261 m.a.s.l. You can hike via the summit, but there is a bypass trail at the base of the summit. We took the bypass to save energy and time for later.



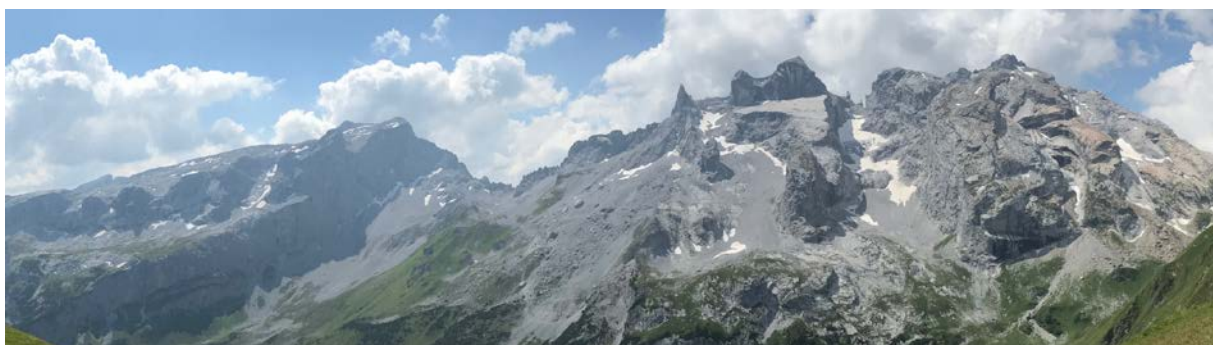
Looking back to summit #4: Wilder Mann, 2291 m.a.s.l., also bypassed.



Looking ahead to the mentioned saddle (cf. arrow sign) where the last part to Kreuzspitze branches off from the trail to Geissspitze (the summit on the left) and Lindauer Hütte.



Something special, seen when looking ahead to the summit of Geissspitze – you name it, hi?



The panoramic view to the border giants just opposite is stunning, from left: Sulzfluh (HB/GR-120), Drei Türme (three towers/peaks, OE/VB-528) and Drusenfluh (OE/VB-045).



First insights to the last and most difficult part to the summit in the background. We immediately went ahead, me on alarm level 4, progressing step by step, moving only one leg or one pole, hi. It took us about 60 minutes to Kreuzspitze.



The trail leads around Zernewerkopf, a small summit, first, then towards a saddle and the final ascent to the summit across a rockier section with light scrambling. But the path is viable at good weather conditions, and we did it – see the operator on the way back, smiling again. SOTA creates experiences!

I had expected to contact countless chasers waiting years for someone activating Kreuzspitze . . . what a dream! The conditions at noon proved to be conservative to difficult, but I had finally seven contacts in the log.

Phew, what a day – for me at least! Back to Golmer Höhenweg safe and sound. A big surprise waited for us on the way back between Wilder Mann and Kreuzjoch that even topped the SOTA adventure. We suddenly heard a funny noise and located that to a bird. But where is it? It took us some time to identify the source. Can you see them?



Mama snow grouse with 5 chicks – all well camouflaged.

It took us some time to hike back the whole ridge trail to the gondola, but we had still enough time until the departure of the last gondola at 1700 hours to eat two big sundaes at the summit restaurant Grüneck. Back at the hotel, we enjoyed dinner and discussed the details of an eventful day with Isabella.



View from above to the Golmerbahn top station Grüneck, with the main village of the Montafon valley, Schruns, in the center and our widespread village Bartholomäberg on the left.

Facts & figures:

- Activations of Kreuzspitze so far: 3.
- Waypoint: car park of Golmerbahn at Latschau: [47.075224, 9.872327](#).
- Waypoint: saddle nearby Geiss Spitze, junction of the sheep trail: [47.044150, 9.821735](#).
- Net ascent of 450 m (frequent up and down on the ridge trail), distance of 5700 m, hiking time 150 minutes to the saddle and further 60 minutes to the summit.

OE/VB-203, Nördlicher Schafgafall

■ T3

Day #9, hike #7 – we had selected some days ago a nice and special one to be our last hike: Nördlicher Schafgafall. This summit is located nearby Lünersee, a splendid water reservoir at about 2000 m.a.s.l. Lünersee is the end of the neighbor valley Brandnertal nearby the Swiss border and a gem within the surrounding mountains. It was a splendid day with many tourists, so we had to wait about 20 minutes at the bottom station. There is only one cabin going up and down, but it's a big one, and they provide a fast and reliable service.

We immediately started our hike to escape from the masses, because Lünersee is a magnet for tourists. Most of them do the trip around the lake, but you can imagine from the pictures that there are lots of hiking ideas for addicts and other aficionados in this area. A first step brought us 90 meters higher where the trail to Lünser Krinne and Rellstal left the main route around the lake.

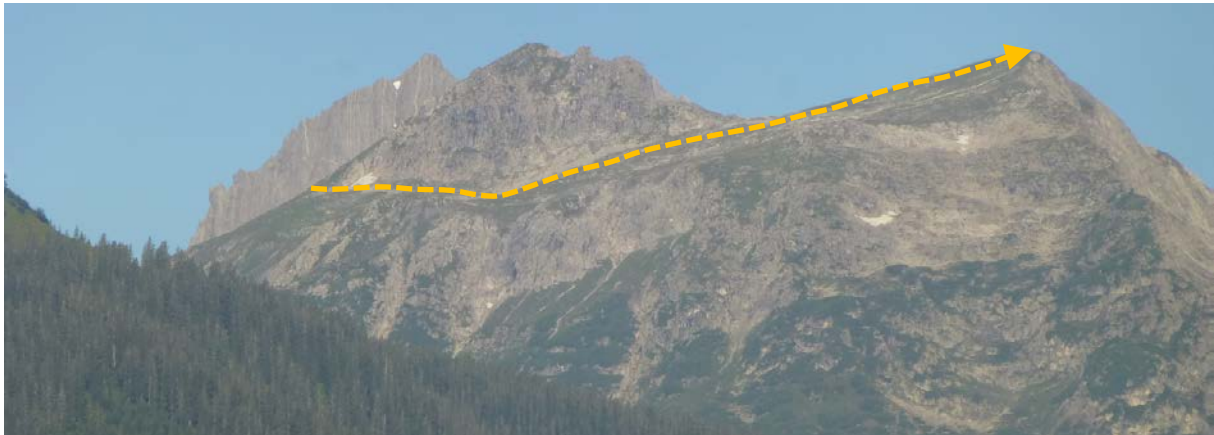


Lünersee seen from our summit Nördlicher Schafgafall between Südlicher Schafgafall on the left and the massive wall on the right. The top station of the cable car and the big restaurant Douglasshütte are located on the right hand, at the end of the lake, nearby the dam. Behind Seekopf is located Schesaplana, the highest summit of the Rätikon summits group (2965 m.a.s.l.). Schesaplana and the Kanzelköpfe behind Nördlicher Schafgafall are part of the border Austria–Switzerland.

The proper trail to the two Schafgafalls branches off shortly later. This one is not a maintained hiking trail, and there are no sign posts. You can see the trail from below, but you can miss it all the same, since there is not a real junction. The trail is steep and unsteady, but it is viable with a pair of good hiking poles. You gain height quickly until you reach the base of the first rocky Schafgafall. Some steps before, across a slope, there is the difficult part of today where the trail is washed out. We decided later to bypass this place and to descend to the trail ascending to the col Lünser Krinne from the north.

The trail is on the slope for about five minutes. The terrain widens and makes room to a slightly rocky but very comfortable ascent to the summit. And this open space is absolutely peaceful and of simple beauty! My partner has even seen some Edelweiss.

Schafgafall is a funny name for a mountain. Gafall means fall hazard in the local dialect, so this must be a place where sheep can fall or fell. But we didn't meet any dead sheep or similar. They even graze sheep on the gentle slopes nowadays.



The two Schafgafalls were the only hiking target of these holidays that we could see from our veranda. View from the east with the SOTA summit on the right and the rocky Südlicher Schafgafall in the center. The summit in the background on the left is Seekopf, an impressive wall just nearby Lünersee. The final ascent around Nördlicher Schafgafall to the SOTA summit is marked on the picture.



Gentian and even Edelweiss, seen on the descent from Nördlicher Schafgafall.



It was time for the activation. There is a pole at the top to attach your mast. 13 contacts on 3 shortwave bands were ok for me. The last contact of the day and of these SOTA holidays in Montafon was a QSO on 2 m with Egon, OE9NFI, a local from Vorarlberg. He'd already been my 1st contact eight days before, from Itonskopf, so these two QSOs have been like a bracket around a beautiful holiday experience with some personal SOTA achievements.

Facts & figures:

- Activations of Nördlicher Schafgafall so far: 5.
- Waypoint: car park of the cable car: [47.066687, 9.755097](#).
- Waypoint: trail head to the Schafgafalls: [47.057736, 9.764373](#).
- Ascent from Douglasshütte : 420 m, distance 2700 m, hiking time 105 minutes.



. . . and looking back:

I'd like to thank Tom, OE9TKH, Manuel, HB9DQM, and Paul, DL6FBK, for their advice and support on specific details since they had already activated in the region – and to Isabella, waitress at our hotel Bergerhof in Bartholomäberg and Montafon brand ambassador: she'd immediately qualify for a SOTA Mountain Goat "honoris causa" with her broad hiking experience!

I based for all activations on Google Maps, maps.google.com, and MapOut mapout.app/de/ for iPhone and verified sometimes also on Kompass maps. That was okay for me since the hikes were too difficult. MapOut offers a download function to use the maps at full details offline, a layer function to display additional info like our SOTA summits and a very fast graphic rendering. It bases on OpenStreetMap which is not always very precise e.g. for contour lines but showed many hiking trails and your position. All summits have been spotted via APRS2SOTA.

The bunch of activations and the good even brilliant weather provided again a nice tan, a healthy appetite for Peter's cuisine at dinner and always a deep sleep and dreams of further unbelievable SOTA activations, hi. We had always good SOTA- or hiking stories to tell to the Zörner family from Berlin at the next table.

Touristic information: <https://www.montafon.at/en>.

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