

Across the Furstensteig to HB0/LI-008 Kuhgrat (with optional HB0/LI-011 Helwangspitz)

By Paul HB9DST, July 2019 (joint activation with Hugo HB9AFH)

If you get to eastern Switzerland and/or Leichtenstein, you should not fail to take advantage of one of the area's most famous and most interesting hikes: the Furstensteig. You will never forget this 1-km trail carved into the side of a mountain. You'll get a kick of adrenaline, but you're never in any real danger. The trail leads further on to HB0/LI-008 Kuhgrat with a possible side trip to Helwangspitz (HB0/LI-011).

The Furstensteig is one of the most famous trails and a classic hike in Liechtenstein. It's a special experience not to be missed if you can work it into your schedule. The trail is carved into the side of a mountain. More than half of the trail is secured with wire ropes to hold onto. The trail is generally at least 2 meters wide, but in spots it becomes quite narrow where you must really watch your footing. Thus this trail is recommended only for those who are sure of foot and are not afraid of heights -- and only when conditions are dry. But those who go across this trail will never forget it. It's quite popular and you will meet many hikers along the trail and also on Kuhgrat.

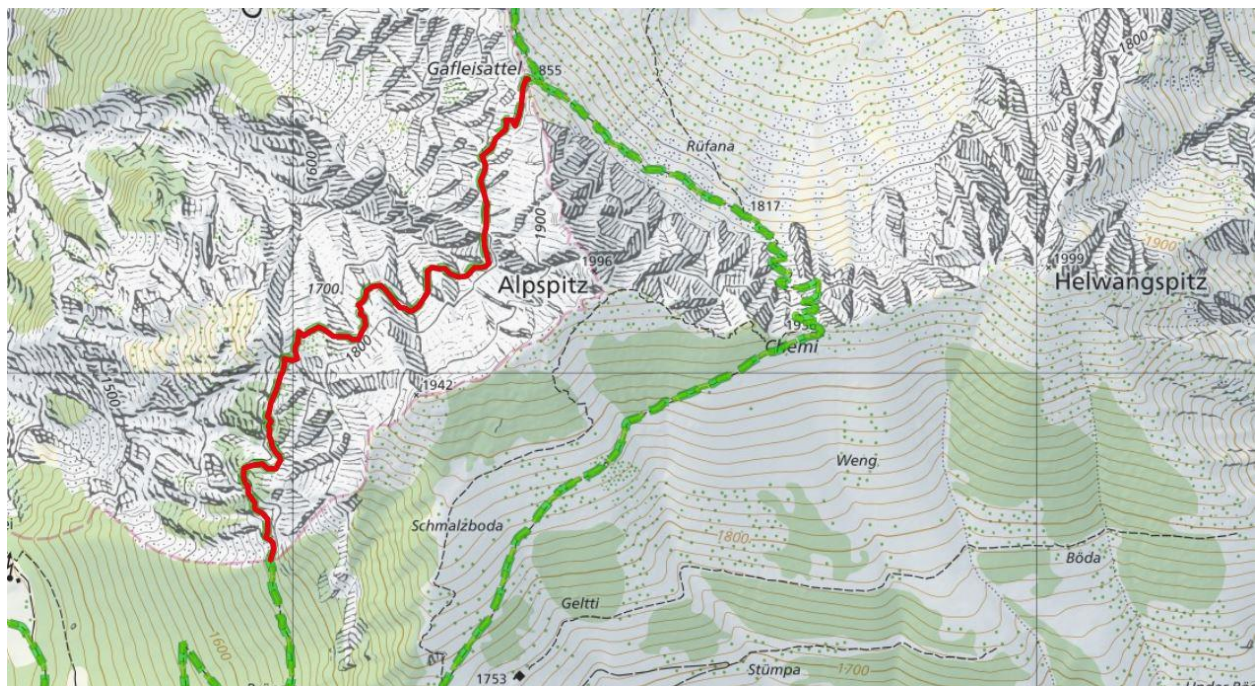
The starting point is the parking lot / bus stop at Gaflei Kurhaus (GPS 47.1422 / 9.5446), which also has a restaurant where you can get drinks or a bite to eat before or after your hike while waiting for the bus like we did.



Your first SOTA destination will likely be LI-008 Kuhgrat. The hike consists of three parts. A walk through the woods from Gaflei to the start of the Furstensteig, the Furstensteig itself up to Gafleisattel, and then the final section across a hillside and up to the summit. The total hike 1-way is 4.5 km with an ascent of 756 meters and it will take you between 2.5 to 3 hours depending on how much time you spend taking photos (which you will inevitably do).



The highlight, as mentioned, is crossing the Furstensteig, which is just over a kilometer long and involves an ascent of 217 meters. Without stopping for photos, it takes about 45 minutes to cross. But as noted earlier, it demands your full concentration and being sure-footed with no fear of heights.



Following are some visual impressions of the Furstensteig:







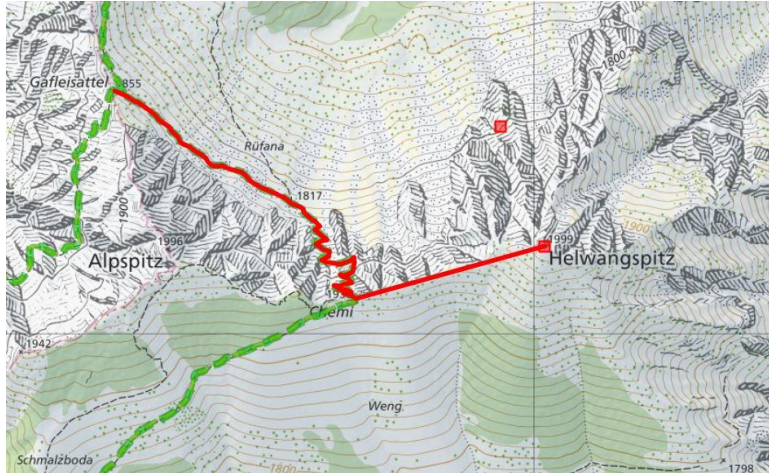




The Furstensteig trail section ends at the Gafleisattel, and from there it's another 1 hour hike and roughly 300 meters of ascent to Kuhgrat LI-008 (the peak in the center of the photo below). Technically, this section is trivially easy after what you have just crossed.



Another summit option from the Kuhgrat is return to the Gafleisattel but instead of following the Furstensteig the same way back, continue along the circle route, which brings you within easy reach of Helwangspitz HB0/LI-011 (the path shown below from the Gafleisattel). This is a distance of just over 1 km with an ascent of 196 meters.



Below, the Gafleisattel is in the middle of the photo on the right side of the ridge with Helwangspitz then to the left.



Finally, the loop route from the starting point at Gaflei to Kuhgrat, back to Helwangspitz and then back to Gaflei is a total of 10.6 km, and an ascent of 911 meters. Without allowing time for radio activations, the hike alone takes at least 4.5 hours.

