

## Chlingenstock (HB/SZ-017) and Fronalpstock (HB/SZ-018)

by Paul, HB9DST / AA1MI, updated July 2020

*SUMMARY: Highly recommended hike across a ridge from one SOTA to another. It's not overly difficult, yet you get the full Alpine feeling with spectacular views. Visitors love it! And on top of that, you get to ride on one of the world's most unique funiculars.*

This is one of Switzerland's most popular ridge hikes and attracts tons of people. The trail is not normally dangerous at all (when dry – avoid rainy days) and is suited for anyone who is reasonably fit. In recent years, local volunteers have been very busy upgrading the route; in spots where there might be any danger, they have added chains to grab onto, and on steep sections they have built in steps (1000 of them!). The route takes 2 to 3 hours depending on your condition with a vertical ascent of 300 meters or so. Because of the new improvements, it's well suited for senior citizens, families and groups taking an excursion. In fact, it has become extremely popular, on weekends I compare it to an "autobahn". If you're looking for quiet and solitude, this is not your best choice. But if you have limited hiking experience and would like to get a taste of hiking in Switzerland, this is a great idea. There's a reason why these two summits have been activated so many times. Personally, it's a place I love to take guests, and they love it.

But let's start in the valley where there are several parking lots and even a bus stop directly at the funicular base station. The Stoosbahn was put into operation in December 2017 and has a unique design. The five passenger cars are circular in shape and rotate as you move – so that no matter how steep the route the passengers are always absolutely level. It runs 1.7 kilometers and ascends 744 meters (2441 ft), has a maximum gradient of 110% (48 degrees!!!) and is the steepest funicular railway in Europe. Note: you can buy a day pass that gives you a round trip on the Stossbahn and unlimited use of all chair lifts.

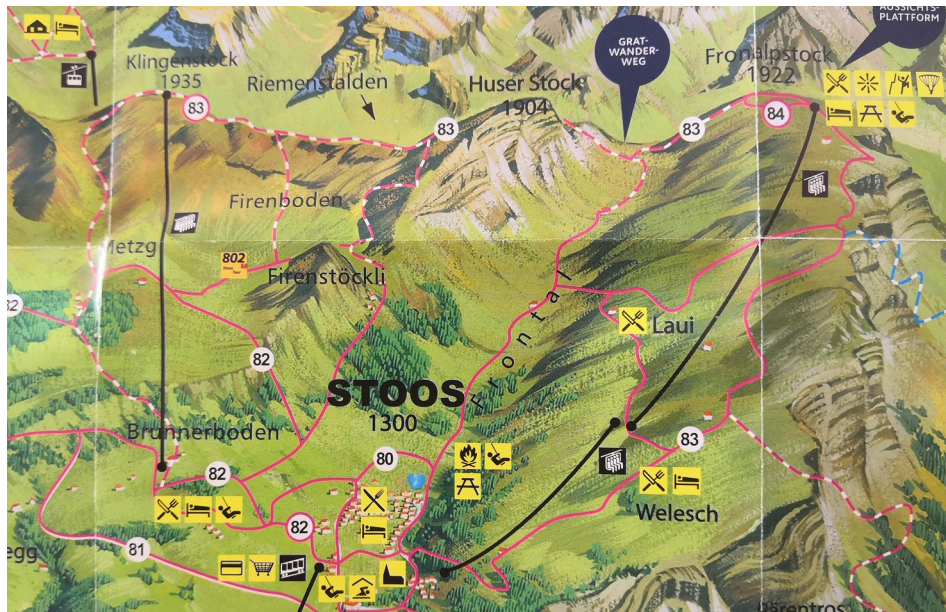


From the Stossbahn upper station, you hike for 10 minutes to the first chair lift which takes you up directly into one activation zone (Chlingenstock), hike for two hours to another activation zone (Fronalpstock), then take a chair lift down to where it's a short walk to the Stossbahn for your return trip. The fact that you start and end in the same place makes this ridge hike particularly attractive to visitors and locals alike; most ridge hikes take you from Point A to Point B, but then you have to somehow get back to Point A to get to your car again.



As an alternative, you could also do the hike going counterclockwise (Fronalpstock to Chlingenstock), but I recommend going clockwise for two reasons. First, when hiking along the trail, you get better scenery looking down on Lake Luzern. Second, there is a restaurant at Fronalpstock with plenty of outdoor and indoor seating, and after doing two activations you certainly deserve a beer (or if it's a windy, chilly day a coffee or hot chocolate and a chance to warm up), and if you come with others who are not hams, they have a nice place to stay while you're on the air.





Chair lift up to Chlingenstock (SZ-017).



*View of the SZ-017 activation zone (the cross barely visible at the summit) a few minutes from arriving at the summit station.*

On the chair lift to Chlingenstock, you get a good view of the activation zone, which is literally two minutes from the summit station. There is a summit cross, but I would advise against lashing an antenna mast to it – this summit can get very crowded, making it difficult to string an antenna. Instead, I lash my mast to a post at the far end of a large picnic table and then strung my wire down the slope away from the people.



*HB/SZ-017 activation zone. I was there on a rare weekday with relatively few people. I lashed my antenna mast to the far right side of the picnic table to keep out of their way.*

Next you start the 2-hour hike to the other SOTA at Fronalpstock. According to a brochure issued by the community, the hike follows 4.7 km of well-prepared trail, with 1000 steps so you don't slip on steep



passages, and there are also 400m of chain fences. The trail goes up and down, up and down. Over the entire route you ascend 350 vertical meters, and most of this comes at the very end: the final stretch before you reach the top is an ascent of 200 meters. This is a very pretty hike with wonderful views of Lake Lucerne and many other mountain peaks. One of them is Grosser Mythen, HB/SZ-019, which is another of my top recommendations for visitors (see separate PDF report I wrote on that activation). In addition, there are several absolutely lovely spots with picnic tables where you can have a snack and enjoy the scenery.



*View of the ridge hike as seen from Chlingenstock. Towards the right you can see a tiny dot on a summit; this is the chair lift/restaurant at SZ-018 Fronalpstock. In the foreground is one of the volunteers who maintains the trail, which is always in very good shape.*



*One of several spectacularly placed picnic tables along the ridge route.*



*Two of the visitors I took along this trail, Paul KB9ILT and his XYL Chris, taking a break along the trail and enjoying the scenery. They spent a week in Switzerland, Paul activated a number of summits, but he said "This hike was the highlight of the entire trip."*





*The trail goes up and down...here a section starting back up...*



*...and here's the final ascent (roughly 200 vertical meters) to get to SZ-018 Fronalpstock.*

The activation zone at Fronalpstock is quite large, and you will have no problem finding a place to stretch out an antenna. The only possible hazard consists of curious cows who might be grazing in the activation zone at the same time and who won't hesitate to come visit you.



*My operating position in the activation zone of HB/SZ-018 Fronalpstock; in the background the chair lift station and the restaurant.*



*A curious cow checking my SWR while operating on Fronalpstock.*



After the activation, enjoy a beer or snack at the restaurant that is right next to the activation zone (it's probably even in the activation zone, but overrun with people). Then ride the chair lift back down to Stoos (note: you have to change from one chair lift to another in the middle of the ride down, all included in the price). Hike back to the funicular station, ride it down, and either hop in your car or wait for the bus (runs every half hour in the mid to late afternoon). This double-activation is an all-day trip, but well worth it! And it's even a good one to bring your spouse or partner along. It doesn't get much better than this in terms of beautiful SOTAs.



*View of Lake Lucerne from the Fronalpstock restaurant deck.*

Switzerland offers several very attractive ridge hikes from one summit to the next. Two others that immediately come to mind are Brienzer Rothorn (OW-010) to Arnihaaggen (OW-024), and Stätzer Horn (GR-105) to Piz Danis (GR-104). The one described here, though, is perhaps my favorite.