

Alps 2003

Itinerary details and route descriptions

Day 6 Sunday 31 August
Kandersteg to the Gemmipass (2322m)

Possible ascents ... Üschenegrat and Plattenhörner

The Gemmi is an ancient crossing between the cantons of Bern and Valais, and over the centuries it's been traversed by countless thousands of farmers, traders, pilgrims and tourists. Despite the cable access on both sides, nothing can detract from the sheer splendour of the panorama that greets those who arrive there. The curious valley that leads to the pass from the upper station of the Eggeschwand-Sunnbüel cable car is a noted flower garden. Mountains and glaciers wall it, and shortly before reaching the Gemmi you pass alongside the grey limestone-bordered Daubensee. The Wildstrubel rises to the west .. the Altels and Balmhorn to the east. Kev Reynolds describes ...

Distance: 15 km
Height gain: 1138m
Likely time: 5½ hours

Leaving Kandersteg wander up-valley as far as Eggeschwand (1225m) where the cable car swings up to Sunnbüel (1930m). There are two footpath routes to choose from ...

1. Continue along the road beyond the cable car station until it makes a hairpin bend to the left to enter the Gasternal. The footpath to Stock and Sunnbüel begins at this bend and works its way among trees and shrubbery, climbing very steeply, and in 3 hours from Kandersteg arrives at the upper station.
2. From the car park by the lower cable car station, walk through the Klus gorge into the Gasternal as far as Hotel Waldhaus, then take the path heading off to the right. It takes you up the left hand side of a narrow cleft on a series of tight zig-zags, made safe in places by fixed cable. It works its way ever higher among woods and emerges at last in the upper valley of the Schwarz Bach just south of the upper station and restaurant.

You could, of course, take the cable car, which would eliminate the 710m ascent and its associated 2½ hours climbing! You can find out more at

www.kandersteg.ch/english/sport/bahnen_sunnbuel.html which has a live webcam link, then click on “mountain-railways + buses” for times and costs.

The way from the upper station is straightforward and signposted. Continue up-valley on a well-trodden track past the alp pasture of Spittelmatte (1875m, 15min) and across a stony region before coming to Schwarenbach (2060m, 1hour, refreshments). Between Spittelmatte and Hotel Schwarenbach is the cantonal boundary between Bern and Valais.

Leaving Schwarenbach, you steadily gain height over rocky ground and come to the shallow Daubensee, sometimes semi-frozen in midsummer. Skirt this along its eastern shore and then climb beyond it for about 10 minutes to reach the Gemmipass (2322m) with its magnificent views and abundance of wild flowers in summer, and where we're booked in to the Berghotel Wildstrubel.



The phone number there is 0041 27 470 1201 and you can read all about it at www.gemmi.ch.

Possible ascents

If the weather is with us, we can look at ascending from Eggeschwand to the Üschenegrat ridge above Sunnbüel and descending to Hotel Schwarenbach, then ascending from the Daubensee to the Plattenhörner ridge to the east of the Gemmipass and try to reach its highest point at 2845m. This would be a day of exploration where we can do a lot or a little according to the conditions.
