

ON THE “VIA ALPINA” – LONG-DISTANCE HIKING TRAILS



Großes Walsertal / © Helmut Tiefenthaler

Day 1: From Hochkrumbach to Schröcken

Walking time: 2 1/2 hours

Starting point: Hochkrumbach, bus stop Gasthof Adler, 1,675 m. How to get there: regional bus No. 40 (until 16 Jun) / No. 42 (17 Jun – 8 Oct).

Finish: Schröcken centre, 1,269 m

Difference in altitude: ascent 190 m, descent approx. 500 m

Description of route: to familiarize walkers with the Tannberg area, the route first runs from Hochkrumbach to St. Jakob chapel at the Simmel look-out (1,740 m), continuing via the Hochtannberg pass (1,676 m) to lake Körbersee and via the high-lying valley of Auenfelds and Batzenalpe (1,560 m) to the small Walser village of Schröcken (1,269 m).

Places to rest: Hochkrumbach, Körbersee, Batzenalpe (snacks during alp time), Schröcken

Day 2: From Schröcken via Schadonapass to Buchboden

Walking time: 6 3/4 hours

Starting point: Schröcken, 1,269 m

Finish: Buchboden centre, 910 m

Difference in altitude: ascent approx. 950 m, descent 1,080 m

Description of route: From Schröcken centre take a leisurely walk along the young Bregenzerach river up to the foot-bridge, then continue uphill to Schadonapass and Biberacher Hütte (1,846 m) to the rearmost Grosses Walsertal. Take the high-altitude trail via Fürkele (1,925 m), Alpe Oberüberlut (1,585 m) and maisaess Unterüberlut. The day's leg ends at the Walser hamlet of Buchboden (910 m) in the Grosses Walsertal.

Places to rest: Schröcken, Biberacher Hütte, Buchboden

Day 3: Buchboden – St. Gerold, pilgrimage on the Walserweg trail

Walking time: 5 1/2 hours

Point of departure: Buchboden, 910 m. **Finish:** monastery of St. Gerold, 848 m.

Difference in altitude: ascent approx. 390 m, descent 450 m

Description of route: Follow the leisurely regional Walser trail along the river Lutz. You reach the next small Walser settlement at the hamlet of Garsella (735 m) in the valley. From there, cross the mountain

pastures and the rough Waldtobel uphill to Blons (903 m), continue down to the fierce Rüfitobel, before reaching the provostry of St. Gerold (848 m) after a short ascent.

Places to rest: Buchboden, Garsella, Blons, St. Gerold

Day 4: St. Gerold – Feldkirch

Walking time: 5 3/4 hours

Starting point: provostry of St. Gerold, 848 m.

Finish: Feldkirch centre, 458 m

Difference in altitude: ascent 140 m, descent 580 m.

Description of route: Follow the Walser trail through a gorge forest and grass-covered hills to the village of Thüringerberg (877 m) at the entry to the Grosses Walsertal. The trail continues on the sun-exposed face of the Walgau, passing the idyllic villages of Schnifis and Röns, to Satteins (panoramic trail with wide views into the valley and the Rätikon mountain scenery). From Satteins, walk along the shores of the river Ill starting in Schildried, reaching the gate of Feldkirch (458 m) via Stein and the Ill gorge at the foot of the Schattenburg fortress.

Places to rest: St. Gerold, Thüringerberg, Schnifis, Röns, Satteins, Stein, Feldkirch

“Via Alpina” is a new international long-distance hiking trail which traverses the Alpine ridge on a length of more than 5,000 km, running through eight Alpine countries between Trieste and Monaco. Along the main route and its variants, the different Alpine regions unfold their natural and cultural diversity in unspoilt authenticity. Unlike other long-distance hiking trails, Via Alpina is designed as a European culture trail.

Between Bavaria and Liechtenstein, the route runs right across Vorarlberg, from Hochtannberg to Schröcken and Schadonapass to Buchboden, continuing along the Grosses Walsertal and the Walgau to the Rhine valley. It is a transversal route for sophisticated hikers wanting to explore the natural and cultural landscapes of the Alps as unspoilt as possible and on safe trails. Via Alpina runs through mostly untouched mountain scenery to the broad main valleys, passing mountains and valleys. A certain degree of physical fitness is required for the trail across the Schadonapass. From Buchboden, the walking itinerary can be cut short by using the bus. Along the way, there are selected inns and comfortable hotels for accommodation.

The 4-day tour is also offered as a “Hiking without Luggage” package (information/reservation: www.bodenseeCity.com).

Tips/places of interest:

Day 1: Views of imposing mountain peaks such as Widderstein, Biberkopf, Karhorn and Braunarlspitze. The Hochtannberg pass forms the European Rhine/Danube divide.

Day 2: In 2000, UNESCO designated the Grosses Walsertal a biosphere park for its largely intact landscape that is characterised by mountain farming.

Day 3: Buchboden as well as St. Gerold are traditional sites of pilgrimage. Blons: avalanche documentation centre and commemorative trail in memory of the avalanche victims of 1954. St. Gerold is a hospitable place of encounter and meditation and a much-frequented cultural centre. Make sure to visit the church with a modern choir wall fresco, the foundations of the earlier Roman church with an unearthed tomb of St. Gerold, the premises around the monastery courtyard.

Day 4: Feldkirch, well-preserved medieval town, streets lined by covered arcades, gates and peels. Not to miss: Schattenburg fortress (13th century, today a local museum and restaurant), St. Nikolas cathedral, Katzenturm tower, Mühle- and Churertor gates in the old town.

