



HIKING ON THE TRACKS OF THE WALSER PEOPLES

The Walser trail, featuring a total length of 300 km, crosses the canton of Grisons. 6 out of 23 stages of this cultural heritage trail lead over isolated passes and through idyllic side valleys around Davos Klosters. These stages provide an ideal entry to discovering the world of the Walser peoples, their history and culture.

Around 1280, farmers from the Canton of Valais immigrated and founded twelve farms in the higher parts of the Landwasser valley. The lack of flat pieces of land and the need of relatively large grassy areas for livestock farming forced the settlers to establish their houses scattered here and there. This is why regions that were cultivated by the Walser are characterised by dispersed settlements. The immigrants received large civil liberties from their feudal lords, the barons of Vaz. This personal responsibility in early ages as well as the struggle for survival in the rough surroundings shaped the people. Thus, the «free» Walser watched over their rights closely but at the same time remained open-minded.

Walser houses in the region

The Walser trail in Grisons is a project of the canton's Walser heritage association. It was opened in 2010 and is marked as route number 35 of the network of Cultural Routes of Switzerland. The hiking trails lead to important evidence sites of this fascinating ethnic group. Along the Walser trail, especially in rural areas, hikers come across fantastic samples of original farming establishments. The farmyard including house and stable forms the centre of a «Heimet», an agricultural holding. In Davos and the Prättigau Valley, log construction houses made of either round or square timber are the most common. Other reminders of the immigration period are the wooden «Spiicher», granaries built on stilts or wooden legs to protect the harvest from moisture and mice. Beautiful ancient «Spiicher» can be found in Davos Monstein, Wiesen and in Klosters Monbiel.

Monstein – the «Jewel in the Crown»

Stage 13: Filisur – Monstein. Distance 12,5 km, Ascent 1000 m, Descent 400 m; Time 4 h 45; grade medium, fitness level medium. Variation: Schönboden – Station Wiesen – Jenisberg

The suggested variation from Schönboden via Wiesen Station is particularly recommendable since it also includes Wiesen Viaduct of the Rhaetian Railway, which can be accessed on foot. The railway bridge built in 1909 is 88 metres high, 210 metres long and counts as a masterpiece of early engineering. A quite steep ascent leads to the peaceful Walser settlement of Jenisberg offering fantastic views of the Landwasser Valley. The trail passes former metal mining establishments, where lead and zinc were mined from Middle Ages. Guided tours allow a visit to these former mining tunnels. The intact Walser village of Monstein hosts evidence of the old culture of the Walser peoples, such as the «Gretahuus» built in 1644 or a «Seelapalgge», a soul timber. This piece of timber closes an opening in buildings and was only ever lifted to help the soul of a deceased find its way to after life. There are two protestant churches in the small village, the Old Church, built in 1669 and St. Peter's Church, built in 1897. In order to cap their neighbouring villages, Monstein inhab-

itants acquired two new bells in 1895. When, upon inauguration of the bells, they turned out to be too heavy for the spire, the Monstein people were forced to build a new church.

The Hotel Ducan not only offers overnight accommodation, but also serves local specialties with the «Monsteiner Bier», produced in the brewery across the road.

Über urzeitliches Flachmeer ins Sertigtal

Stage 14: Monstein – Sertig. Distance 12 km, Ascent 1960 m, Descent 730 m, Time 5 h, Grade medium, Fitness Level medium.

The high-alpine hiking trail leads through the Ducan region, which used to be a flat sea some 230 million years ago. On an altitude of more than 2700 meters a.s.l., palaeontologists of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in Zurich excavated fossils of fish and small dinosaurs. The hike provides breathtaking views of the Ducan glacier and leads to the most known side valley in the Davos region, the Sertig Valley. The waterfall detour was chosen deliberately because Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, a world famous painter, eternalized the valley and its waterfall in many of his expressionistic paintings. Nowadays, the striking little church «Hinter den Eggen», built in 1699, is a popular place for wedding ceremonies. Here, professor Schwab, founder of the World Economic Forum, married his wife. And so did NHL-star Joe Thornton in June 2009 when he married Tabea Pfendsack.

The Davos of the early Walser peoples

Stage 15: Sertig Dörfli – Dischmatal – Davos Platz. Distance 17 km, Ascent 860 m, Descent 1120 m, Time 6 h, Grade medium, Fitness Level medium. Variation: Sertig Dörfli – Clavadel – Davos Platz.

During Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Times, Davos emerged to an important trading zone between North and South. Cheese, cattle, sheep wool fabric and ore gained from the Silberberg mine were exported to South Tyrol. Salt and corn were imported over the Flüelapass from Tyrol and pack mule trains from the Valtellina brought wine over the Scalettapass. The hiking trail leads along these pack train routes to the Dischma Valley. From the Tällifurgga, the trail initially leads down, through steep terrain, to the Alp with the same name. The Ruedisch Tälli presents itself beautifully rocky, barren and criss-crossed by countless waterways. The «Ruedisch cloud» which often floats in the sky over the valley on hot days, is entwined with a Walser myth. Rumor has it that once upon a time, an alpine herdsman cursed the exhausting act of turning over the hay: «if only the devil came and took the hay!» Shortly after, a black cloud appeared and a landslide swept the hay down into the valley. Since then, a single cloud of rain has often appeared over the alp in the summer. The Dischma is the least known of the three side valleys in Davos. Even though time has left its marks on it, the restaurant/guesthouse Dürrboden in the back part of the valley is still intact. The path along the crystal-clear Dischma stream offers a unique nature experience. The variant from Sertig Dörfli to Clavadel leads through a beautiful alpine forest. This route is particularly recommendable on hot days. Clavadel lies on a sun terrace above Davos. Here, the walker finds two of the last witnesses to the health resort of Davos – the Zurich Rehabilitation Clinic and the Dutch Asthma Centre. The original scattered settlement of the Walser of the 13th century – divided into 12 neighbourhoods – can be seen in the rural Davos, the so-called «Unterschnitt» with the fractions Wiesen, Glaris or Frauenkirch. From the middle of the 14th century, Davos developed into an important trading centre between north and south. The economy was dominated by livestock farming (cheese, cattle export, sheep wool cloth) and mining on the silver mountain near Monstein in the «Unterschnitt» area (until 1848, export of ore to Hall, Bolzano, Bormio and Sondrio, grain and salt imports from Tyrol via the Flüela Pass, wine imports from the Valtellina via the Scalettapass. Politically, Davos was the suburb (main town) of the Ten Courts Federation founded in 1436. Until 1643, the Davos rural amateurs were also state officers. Davos remained the capital of a sovereign state for over 400 years until Grisons was founded in 1851. Parliamentary and municipal assemblies were held in the large room of the town hall, which is still preserved today.

Route to the former political fraction Arosa

Stage 16: Davos Platz – Maienfelder Furka – Arosa. Distance 16 km, Ascent 1'150 m, Descent 950 m, Time 6 h, Grade medium, Fitness level high. Variation: Davos Frauenkirch – Stafelalp – Maienfelder Furka – Arosa.

The hiking trail leads along a beautiful mountain path over meadows and through light forests to Stafelalp, which was founded by the Walser people about 500 years ago. In the middle of the various houses and stables there is a 250-year-old Walserhaus, where an inn was established in 1936. In the rustic restaurant there is still cooking on the wood stove, the dining room is lit by petroleum lamps. The German expressionist Ernst Ludwig Kirchner lived on the Stafelalp and created important works here, which you can marvel at in the Kirchner Museum Davos and learn everything about the well-known artist. Works of art along the route also accompanies the hikers from Frauenkirch to Stafelalp. On the Sculp-

ture Trail you can see works by international artists created during the regularly held sculptors' symposia. From Stafelalp the route leads to Maienfelder Furgga. On the descent to Arosa, one can well imagine the queasy feeling Sir Arthur Conan Doyle – the father of Sherlock Holmes – had. In the winter of 1894, he mastered this descent on skis together with local guides. In a humorous and ironic article in the «Alpine Journal» he wrote, among other things, «It seemed to me as if a parachute was the only instrument that could have been of use to us...» They managed the descent on a rather bulky sled made of skis. This first English report on a ski tour was one of the cornerstones of the British's enthusiasm for skiing and Davos. From here Arosa was also settled after 1300 AC. Until well into the 19th century, Arosa remained a remote farming village. Politically it belonged to Davos until 1851. The upswing of the settlement, which shrank to 52 inhabitants, began in 1883 when the German physician who had recovered in Davos discovered it as a climatic health resort and opened the first lung sanatorium in 1888. After the First World War, the development into a world spa continued.

Through rural Walserland

Stages 17 and 18: Arosa – Medergen – Sapün – Langwies / Langwies – Fondeier Tobel – Blackten – Fondei, Strassberg

These two stages lead through a rural area, which is considered an insider's tip for people on the track of Walser culture.

Klosters – Tranquillity after a turbulent History

Stage 19: Fondei, Strassberg – Grünsee – Casannapass – Klosters Dorf. Distance 15,5 km, Ascent 740 m, Descent 1470 m, Time 6 h, Grade medium, Fitness level high.

At the Durannapass, the hike crosses a flat moorland area of national importance before descending on the Praettigau side over well-developed Alps to Klosters, the third and last tourist hub on the Walser Trail Graubünden. Here you can still find traces of the Walser settlers everywhere – a visit to the Nutli-Hüschi Heritage Museum provides additional insights into the hard everyday life of the Walser farmers. The 13th century Romanesque church tower of the Church St. Jakob is the oldest building in the village. The history of Klosters, which also evolved into a Walser settlement, is marked by turmoil of the Reformation, subjugation by the Austrians, liberation struggle and redeeming. 540 of the 900 inhabitants died during the plague. From 1652 to 1702, 50 «witches» were executed. And still in 1799 Klosters was visited by 1500 marauding French soldiers. It was not until 1803, when Grisons became a Canton of the Confederation, that peace and tranquillity came to life, for which Klosters is appreciated.

Along the old Pack Mule Track

Stage 20: Klosters Platz – Schlappiner Tobel – Schlappin Dörfji Normal Route. Distance 6 km, Ascent 560 m, Descent 90 m, Time 2 h 30, Grade medium, Fitness level medium.

This easy hike leads through an early Walser settlement area. We follow the old pack trail to Schlappin. At the beginning of the 14th century German-speaking Walser – probably from Davos – settled here. For more than 300 years an annual settlement with its own chapel existed here. Today a dam of the Schlappin hydroelectric power station above Klosters Dorf, erected in 1926, replaces it. Hikers find peacefulness and relaxation in the nearby Berghaus Erika. The building is closely associated with the history of Otto Kreuzeder. The master tailor, cook and avid pilot was the airfield manager of the former airfield in Davos. In 1952 he already lived in the «Erika» during summer. In March 1955 the «Alpine pilot» landed for the first time on a snowfield next to the inn in Schlappin. The former host of the «Erika», who died in 1982, is regarded as a pioneer of Alpine aviation.

Walser culture on a 300 km trail

These are just a few stories that can be discovered with the book «Walserweg Graubünden». Along the 300 km long trail, hikers discover many more magical places with their myths and legends.

Nützliche Links

Walser trail:

www.walserweg.ch

Walser Association Grisons:

www.walserverein-gr.ch

Flyer «Dr Wäg zun dä Walser»:

www.kulturwege-schweiz.ch/fileadmin/routen/ViaRegio_Walserweg/Flyer_Walserweg.pdf

The Book about the Trail: «Walserweg Graubünden» by Irene Schuler / ISBN 978-3-85869-421-8

published by www.rotpunktverlag.ch

Kurzportrait Destination Davos Klosters

Davos Klosters ist eine der bekanntesten Feriendestinationen der Welt und besitzt das kompletteste Ferien-, Sport- und Meetingangebot in den Bergen. Obwohl der Kontrast zwischen dem urbanen Davos und dem idyllischen Klosters nicht grösser sein könnte, haben beide Orte, die nur zehn Autominuten voneinander entfernt liegen, eines gemeinsam: Die faszinierende Bergnatur begeistert.

www.davos.ch | www.klosters.ch

Weitere Informationen

Basistexte, Facts und Figures sowie Hintergrundinformationen erhalten Sie in unserem Mediacorner.

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