

**Trek**  
in  
**Austria**

**I. The Stubai Circuit (Stubai Runde)**

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The Stubai Alps are in the Tyrol, an historic county which once belonged to the Austrian Empire. After the First World War the Tyrol was split with the southern half being acquired by Italy. The Stubai mostly lies in Austria today but the very south of the massif lies over the border in Italy. This circuit goes round the main valley, The Stubaital, around which the Stubai Massif forms a horseshoe. The entire Stubaital valley is in Austria.

The route is a classic and has been popular for a few decades as it's quality spread. It has been called The Stubai Horseshoe, Stubai Rucksack Route and Stubai Circuit. I prefer the latter as it translates from the German name "Stubai-er Runde". There is another more demanding tour crossing many crevassed glaciers in the Stubai and which overlaps this Stubai Circuit. It is called the Stubai Glacier Tour or in German "Stubai Hoehenweg". It is also a weeks tour. This PDF does not do that one.

Although the Stubai mountains are wild, the long history of mountaineering and trekking have made it a popular destination over the last century. So most huts have evolved from a rustic shelter to a large lodge in a series of incarnations.

Despite the relatively wild landscape there is not a huge amount of wildlife in the Stubai. During the walk you pass a number of marmot colonies, but ibex and chamois are infrequent, with the former

being introduced after being hunted to extinction just decades ago. There are wild flowers but not in the abundance one finds in the limestone areas of the alps. Much of the tour is above 2500m and the terrain is often barren scree.

There is some alpine pastoralism with cows occupying summer pastures in the side valleys and sheep driven up to the high alps for the summer. A few of these high sheep alps are on the circuit such as the Seducker Alm. In the Stubai this traditional livelihood seems to be on the way out as tourism grows. Nowhere is this more noticeable than around the Dresdner Hut where there is a cable car bringing day trippers and skiers up to use the summer ski tows on the Stubai Glacier.

The Stubai circuit is a 7 day trip around the main valley of the Stubai Alps. It does not go up any high mountains in itself, but rather skirts round the flanks of them, crossing the ridges which radiate down from the summits. Many of these rocky ridges are quite steep and on virtually every day there are cables and chains to help you over some passages. Many of these cables are overkill and a harness is not necessary for this. However, there are opportunities to climb some mountains you pass, some of which involve easy glacier crossings and some scrambling, and a basic knowledge of mountaineering is required. You can add a day's duration for each mountain you intend to climb.



Day 1. The Tyrolean Grey Cattle is a typical alpine breed from Tyrol. They are a robust, good-foraging, fertile and long-lived breed. They are excellent milk producers and are also good for beef.



Day 7. Tyrol Mountain Sheep are a coarse woolled breed, belonging to the Lop-eared Alpine group, which is kept for meat production. They are found on the higher pastures through the summer.

# The Stubai Circuit



Alpine Avens, *Geum Montanum*, thrives on rocky pastures. It's flower leaves a feathery cluster.



Common Houseleek, *Sempervivum tectorum*, is a native of the alps and likes gravel and screes to 2800m with good sun. It has a rich folklore and is been cultivated on roofs also.



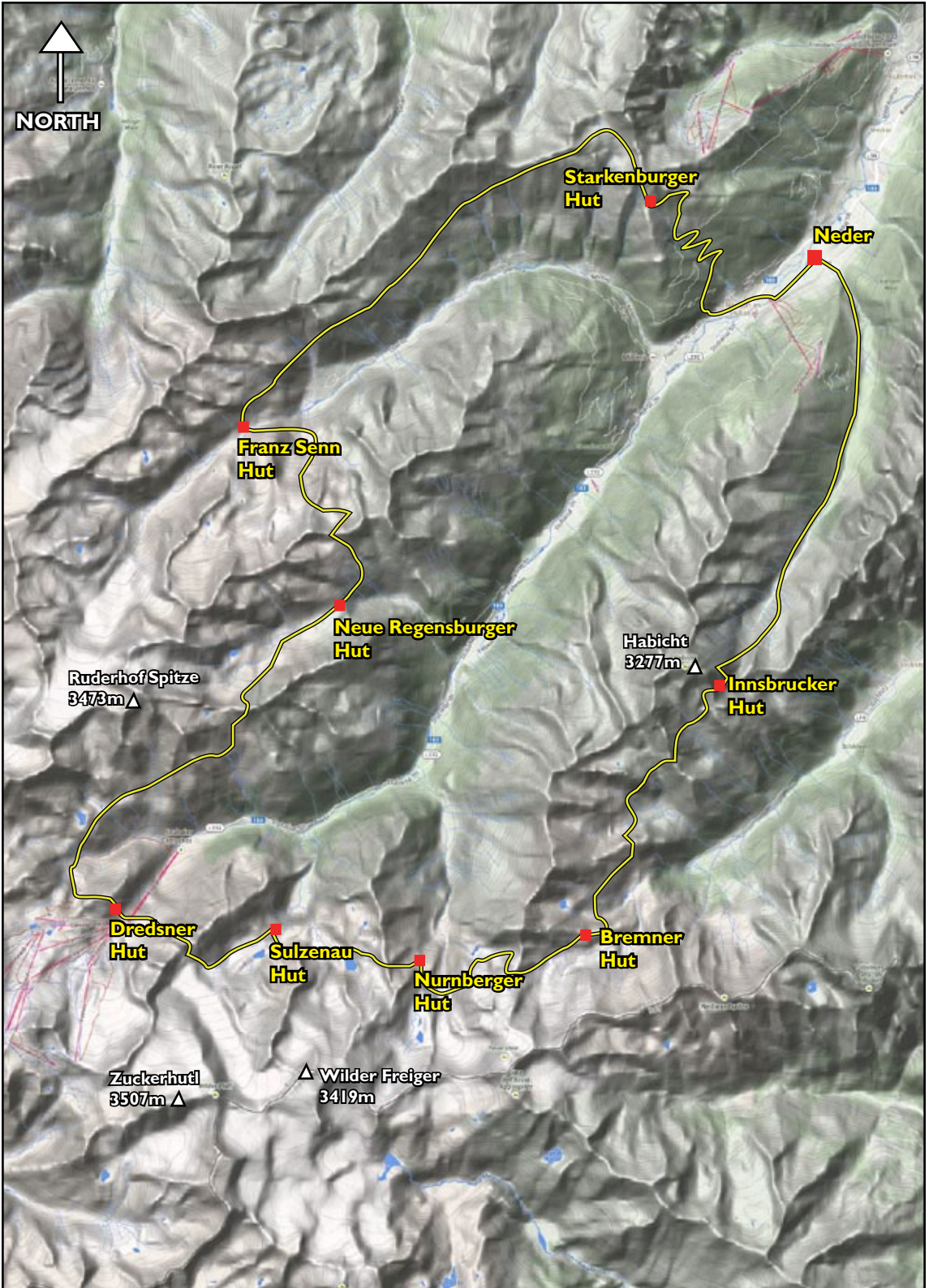
Alpine Moon Daisy, *Leucanthemopsis alpina*, grows in low clumps in stony places to 2800m.

The heart of the trek is the middle third from Bremner Hut to Dresdner Hut. Each leg here is roughly 3 hours so it is easy to double up and shave a day off the usual 9 days. A further day can be gained by omitting a night at Starkenburger Hut and descending to the luxuries of Neder. Due to great transport connections to Neder from Munich or Innsbruck the entire trip can be done in a week with adjacent weekends.

The mountain huts are large, sleeping 150-200 people. During the peak month from late July to late August it is imperative to book;- even for a dormitory bed (*lager*). During late June/early July and September you could get away with not booking, but if you want a private or 4 bed room you must book well in advance. The huts provide a la carte meals or the very good, large portioned set dinner and breakfast for half the price. They will also provide a packed lunch. The huts here are essentially rustic hotels in the mountains now.

Perhaps the best time to go is early/mid July or early September. In June crampons/ice axe are essential as many passes and slopes are covered in snow. During August the huts are busy as everybody flocks here for the continental holiday season. In September the crowds have gone and the weather is often stable.

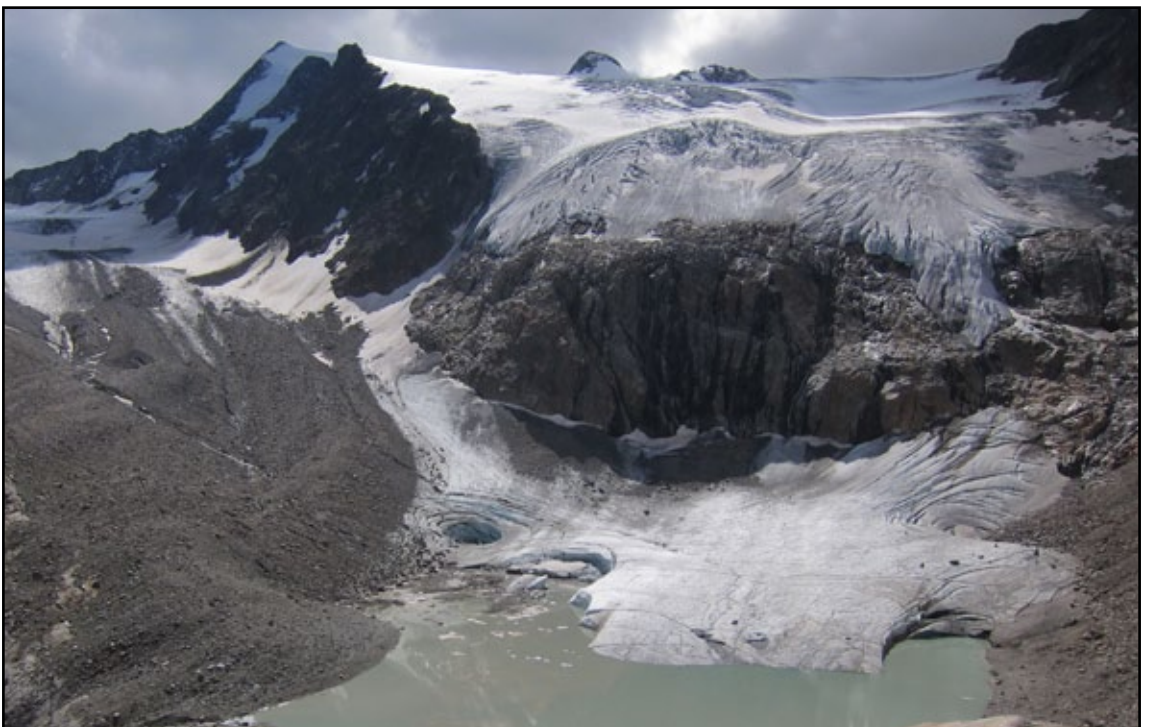
There are many map choices for this area. The simplest is in the Kompass Wanderkarten series. The map name: Stubai Alpen WK 83. It covers the entire area at a scale of 1:50,000. The ISBN number is 9783850267052. There are many guidebooks to the area. However the Cicerone guide "Trekking in the Stubai Alps" by Allan Hartley has detailed information on this circuit. He calls it the "Stubai Rucksack Route". In addition this book has information on climbing a few of the easier mountains. Plus the book has detailed information on the harder Stubai Glacier Tour if a future visit beckons. ISBN: 9781852846237.



Map of The Stubai Circuit (Stubaier Runde). The other notable trek in this massif, The Stubai Glacier Tour, (Stubaier Höhenweg) overlaps this circuit slightly to the south and is more demanding as it crossed many glaciers. The main valley is the Stubaital and it leads down to Innsbruck which is downstream of Neder.



Day 4. Wilder Frieger, 3418m, seen from the tarn on the descent from the col at Niederl, 2627m, and just above Grunau See lake beyond the tarns lip. The Grunau See is a small lake formed by a dam of lateral moraine. The very feasible route to the summit goes up from the the See Scharte pass on the very left.



Day 4. After lunch break at Sulzenau Hut the path climbs up a moraine filled valley with a beautiful green lake and another lake emerging from under the retreating Sulzenauferner Glacier. This glacier flows down the north flank of Wilder Pfaff (left) and Zuckerhutl (centre) the highest point in the Stubai at 3505m.



Day 1. A group of Haflinger horses by Karalm Alp in the Pinnistal valley just before the climb up to the Pinnisjoch saddle, 2370m, (centre) and the Innsbrucker hut. Halflinger horses are from the Tyrol and were originally used as pack horses.



Day 1. Looking back down the Pinnistal valley to the summer alp farms on the valley floor and Neder far below in the main Stubaital valley in the distance. The photo is taken from near the Pinnisjoch saddle and the Innsbrucker Hut, 2369m.



Day 2. A km before the Bremer Hut the path splits with a fork contouring round the Lauterer Lake with a steep scramble and the other dipping into the valley and climbing up steeply, as above.



Day 2. The superbly located Bremer Hut, 2413m, sits on a small plateau overlooking the Gschnitztal valley alps. While to the south of the hut are 3000m mountains and the remnants of glaciers.



Day 3. From the Bremer Hut the route goes west up stoney alps and over the Simmingsjochl Pass, 2764m, where there is a small cabin, or Zollhutte, which was once used by the border police.



Day 3. The descent down the west side of the Simmingsjochl pass is quite steep and even in September there are likely to be some snowfields. There are great views to Wilder Prieger, 3419m.



Day 3. Looking back up the west descent from the Simmingsjochl. The route which is protected with cables initially comes down steeply from the centre, to the snowfield on the left and then comes down the left of it to this meadow.



Day 3. The Nurnburger Hut, 2280m, is a large comfortable hut with many smaller rooms and a few dormitories. The sumptuous dining room is in a traditional wood style with many carvings and even the hall and passages have many old features.



Day 5. A small tarn just half an hour's easy climb above the Dresdner Hut en route to the col on the west side of Egesengrat, a large knoll with a good viewpoint. The small mountain in the centre right is the Grosser Trogler, 2902m. There is an alternative route from Sulzenau to Dresdner hut over this mountain which takes an hour longer than the standard route over the Peiljoch saddle, 2676m, on the very right.



Day 4. En route from Sulzenau hut to the Peiljoch saddle the route leaves the pastoral valley floor and traverses a small buttress to gain a lateral moraine ridge. This buttress was an exposed scramble but is now aided with a metal platform.



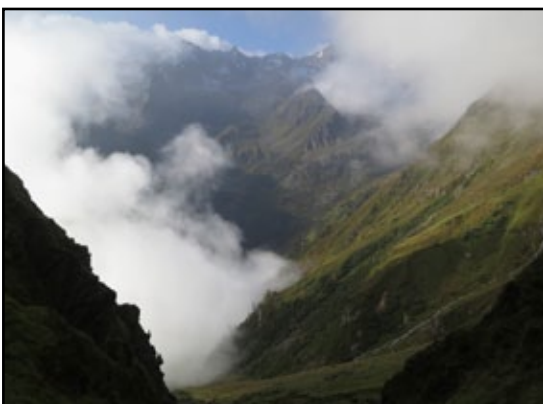
Day 5. Looking south over some tarns near the Muttersee lake. The prominent mountain to the left, Schaufelsspitze, 3332m, can be climbed from the Dresdner hut in an easy day by ascending the summer ski area to the right of the peak.



Day 5. Looking the Falbesonertal valley near the Neue Regensburger hut to the Grawagrubenniederer pass, 2888m. The steep descent from the pass is down the rock band then a snowfield to scree.



Day 5. A view of the Neue Regensburger hut from the meadows at lower end of the Falbesonertal valley. This valley is a hanging valley with a steep drop down to the main Stubaital valley beyond.



Day 7. Looking down into the Oberbergtal valley from the steep pastures near the Seducker Alps. The Oberbergtal is a side valley to the Stubaital. The Stubai's high peaks are in the distance.



Day 7. The final ridge before the long descent to Neder in the Stubaital valley. Beyond this ridge is a short 200m descent to Starkenburger hut and then another 1200m more in the forest to end.



Day 6. After Neue Regenburger hut the path contours round the very steep meadows at about the 2300m level before it starts to climb up the 400m to the Schrimmenneider pass. To the right under the mist are the forested flanks of the Stubaital valley which descend for 1000m to the valley floor.



Day 7. The final descent from Starkenburger hut plunges past the tree line at about 2000m and into the larch forests. These forests are kept thin to allow grass to thrive on the forest floor. This grass is cut and stored in small haylofts as fodder for the animals in the autumn after the snows have covered the higher pastures but before the winter snows cover everything and the animals retreat to the barns in the valley.

# Stubai Circuit (Stubai Runde)

Day	Start	Finish	Km	Up	Down	Time	General
1	Neder	Innsbrucker Hutte	10	1380	10	5	Leave Neder and head SE up the road beside the stream. After a short km the road turns to a track as it starts to climb through the forest for a couple of km climbing gently to the alp at Issenangeralm where there are some cowsheds and a cafe. The track continues up through the thinning forest into a deep valley which is lined by steep Dolomite mountains. After another couple of km you reach the alp of Pinnisalm where the spruce and larch are now replaced by pine scrub. After a further couple of km you reach the alp of Karalm, 1747m, where there is serving. The pastoral track stops here as you now enter a deep grazed bowl and start to climb zigzags up the east side of the bowl gaining height quickly as a view back down the Pinnistal valley one has just walked up unfolds with glimpses to the main Stubaital valley. After a more level traverse the good trail climbs again in a further series of zigzags to the Pinnisjoch saddle, 2369m. Here a fantastic view suddenly unfolds. The lively Innsbrucker Hutte lies just a few metres beyond and is the goal of the relatively easy first day
2	Innsbrucker Hutte	Bremer Hutte	9	940	890	7	From Innsbrucker Hutte contour round the hillside on a rocky path high above the Alfairalm alp and the Gschnitztal valley far below. The route crosses over a couple of small rocky spurs to reach a large bowl carved into the mountains with green pastures of the Glattealm alp below. Skirt round this bowl, all on the south east side of the main spine of mountains, and climb up to a pointed spur called Pramarnspitze, 2511m. The route now descends the far side into a large pastoral bowl called Traualm alp. There are some steeper sections with cables as you drop down to the first of three side valleys which feed Traualm alp. The path contours across steep hillside between the first second and third side valleys before climbing again over a rocky spur, Hoheburg, about 2540m which separates Traualm alp from Simmingalm alp. Drop steeply down to the last alp and cross it before the last 200m climb up a steep rocky face to finish the rollercoaster day and reach the well appointed Bremer Hutte, 2411m. Beyond the refuge are an array of glacier clad mountains over 3000m.
3	Bremer Hutte	Nuernburger Hutte	5	480	590	4	Head west up the pastoral valley of Am Hinteralmming, with glacial debris scattered about. To the south are a couple of 3000m peaks clad in small glaciers. You do not go over the obvious col but veer north up the steep rocky valley side to the Simmingjoch pass, 2764m. Here there is a great view to the Wilder Freiger, 3418m, and its heavily glaciated flanks. You can also see the large Nuernburger Hutte from here. From the small police hut now descend steeply down a couloir, then a zigzag of scree to reach a flat grassy hanging valley covered in tarns and bog cotton. From the lip of this Shangri La there is a steep descent down crags and buttresses, with some steep sided traverses across the hillside. Many of these sections are cable assisted but none are difficult. Eventually the path traverses into the valley to cross the tumbling glacial Langtal stream on a bridge. After the bridge there is a walk up across slabs with the occasional easy cable to reach the huge Nuernburger Hutte, 2278m, full of history and character with a wonderful outlook in all directions.
4	Nuernburger Hutte	Dresdner Hutte	8	900	880	6	It is feasible to combine 2 of the 3 short days at the south end of the circuit; such as this. Leave the Nuernburger Hutte and climb steeply due west up to the Niederl, 2627m which takes an hour. After taking in the glorious view descend down the west side initially steeply with cables and then easily past a few small tarns and a spectacular glacial green lake hemmed in by moraine. From here it is an easy walk down across the rock strewn pastoral valley floor to Sulzenau Hutte lodge, 2191m, which has been visible since Niederl. After Sulzenau Hutte walk west up the open valley for a km before climbing up the north valley side, passing over metal platforms to gain a moraine ridge above the alluvial floor. Follow the moraine ridge up past marmot colonies until you have a great vista over 2 glaciers flowing down Wilder Plaff, 3456m. The path now climbs steeply to the Peiljoch, 2672m. The descent to the Dresdner Hutte, 2306m, is quite steep in places but these are secured by cables. Unfortunately the area around Dresdner Hutte is polluted with cable cars and ski equipment
5	Dresdner Hutte	Neue Regensburger Hut	12	920	940	6	Climb quite steeply up west of the Dresdner Hutte, 2302m, gaining 200m to reach a col. On the other side drop north down to a track and continue down it for a good km until it crosses a stream. Leave the track here and start to traverse up the broad basin climbing for a good km to reach the junction to Mutterbergersee lake. Dont take it but continue along the near level to another lake in a km. The path now starts to traverse up across pastures to a craggy ridge and then a slightly higher craggy ridge just beyond by Schafspizl, 2760m where there are stunning views to the big glaciated flanks of the Stubai giants just skirted in the last couple of days. There is a small cable assisted descent from here before the last easy push up to Gragwabruennieder pass, 2888m. The north side of the pass is quite steep for about 200 vertical metres with the frequent cable to reach snowfields above the rocky terminus of the Hochmoosferner glacier. From the glacial debris it is a delightful 3 km saunter down the pastoral valley to rustic, busy Neue Regensburger Hutte, 2287m.
6	Neue Regensburger Hut	Franz Senn Hutte	7	520	660	5	From Neue Regensburger Hutte head NE along a pastoral path which contours across the hillside for a good km high above the steep grassy slopes leading down to the Stubaital valley. After half an hour turn left and start to climb for a further one and half hours across pasture and boulderfield as you climb the 400m to the Schrimmenneider pass, 2714m. There is a small excursion possible here up to Besslerjoch, 2830m which affords even better views over the Stubai Mountains. The descent down the north side of the pass is across scree initially before dropping down into a bowl with lingering snow patches. There is a small climb over a rock ridge to escape this bowl followed by a longer descent dropping 250m to the scrub line. The route now heads west for 3 km on a virtually level path for 3 km as you contour around the hillside high above the Oberbergtal valley which is a side valley of the main Stubaital valley. This side valley comes up to meet the contouring path and where they meet is the large comfortable Franz Senn Hutte, 2149m, in a high alpine pasture.
7	Franz Senn Hutte	Neder	21	660	1830	9	From Franz Senn, 2149m, climb slightly to the north and then contour along the steep grassy hillside high above the Oberbergtal valley. The path undulates for a good 2 hours before it reaches the idyllic Hoch Seduckeralm Alp, 2249m, where there is a charming cabin with serving and even accommodation. After Seduckeralm the path traverses up across the hillside for a good 3 km to reach a saddle on a main ridge at Sendersjochl, 2477m. The path follows the ridge for a couple of km climbing to Steinkogel, 2589m, then descends across an open stony bowl to another pass, Seejochl, 2518m, by a tiny lake. It is only a 2 km traverse now across a huge scree slope under dolomite type crags to a ridge when the Starkenburger Hutte reveals itself some 200m below. The 1200m descent from Starkenburger Hutte, 2237m, takes you from alps to dwarf pines then larch forests with small hay lofts and glades. It continues down to spruce forests before spilling you into the charming town of Neustift, 1000m. It is just a km along a riverside track to Neder to complete the circuit.
			72	5800	5800	42	