

Various ways of St. James (with brochures available in PDF-format)

- A - Constance - Einsiedeln („Way of Swabia“)
- B - Rorschach - Einsiedeln („Way of St. Gallen“)
- C - Einsiedeln-Flüeli-Ranft - Brünig („Way of Central Switzerland“)
- D - Brünig-Amsoldingen („Way of the Bernese Oberland“)
- E - Amsoldingen-Romont („Way of Berne/Fribourg“)
- F - Romont-Lausanne-Genève („Way of Western Switzerland“)
- G - Lucerne-Rüeggisberg-Schwarzenburg („Lucerne Way“)
- H - Rankweil - Einsiedeln („Vorarlberg-Appenzell Way“)
- K - Schaffhausen - Tobel (Monastery way)

Contact address:

Verein Jakobsweg.ch

Postfach 151,

CH-3700 Spiez

Tel 0041 (0)33 655 04 00

Mail: admin@jakobsweg.ch

Accommodation see: www.jakobsweg.ch

Important pointer

Helpers and association members walked the route themselves to inspect it. As volunteers, they edited the brief route descriptions based on the state as encountered. The accuracy of the contents and specially the correspondence with the official Way of St. James way-posting cannot be guaranteed by the association „jakobsweg.ch » and the authors, also in the sense of a product guarantee. Pilgrims are therefore asked to follow the official Way of St. James way-posts if discrepancies occur, and to notify us.

Many thanks.

Texts : Winfried Erbach, Joe Weber and Klaus Augustiny (manuscript reader).

Translated from German by Hans Bamert

Pictures: Wolfgang Hörer / Winfried Erbach, and several others

Copyright: Verein „jakobsweg.ch“

On the Way of St. James in Switzerland



(4) Brünig - Amsoldigen **„„Bernese Oberland Route““**

Itinerary and directions for pilgrims

Signalisation - Via Jacobi

Sign in the direction of Santiago de Compostela
National Way of St-James No. 4 - Via Jacobi



Via Jacobi - shell shows in the left direction



Via Jacobi - shell shows in the right direction



Via Jacobi - french sign
Shell shows in the left direction



Via Jacobi Nr. 44
shell shows in the right direction



Signpost - Via Jacobi sign
on yellow background



Returning way

„Bernese Oberland Route“ from Brünig to Amsoldingen (Distance 63 km, walking time around 18 hrs)



Already in earlier times, the Way of St James led from Flüeli-Ranft via the Brünig pass and through the Bernese Oberland into the land of Fribourg. On the way through the Bernese Oberland, the pilgrims were accommodated in the Augustinian monastery of Interlaken and for the continuation of their trip they received the much-coveted Pilgrim's batz, a money gift. In the retreat of Saint Beatus above Lake Thun,

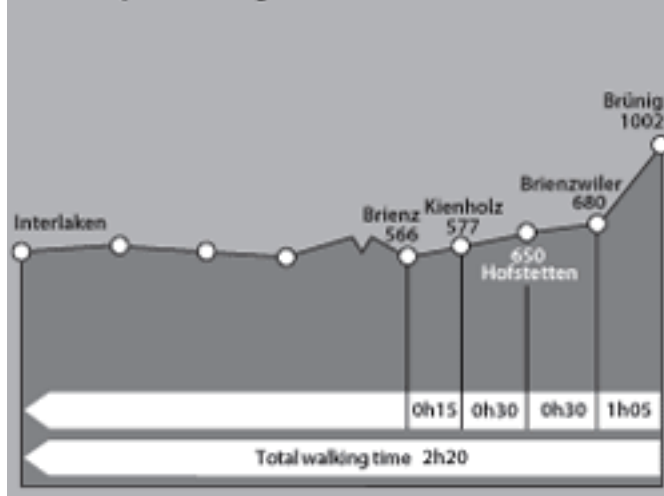
they found a friendly welcome, also repose and time for prayer in the churches along the route that are now over 1000 years old, such as the Augustinian collegiate church in Amsoldingen, where the basilica and crypt still stand today. Many a pilgrim also found accommodation with the poor mountain farmers along the way who shared the little they had with the pilgrims.

Still today, many pilgrims choose this route through the wonderful mountain landscape with snow-clad peaks reaching 4000m. They journey along the shores of the deep-blue lakes of Brienz and Thun with a unique backdrop of mountains, and roaring waterfalls. They experience God's mighty creation in good and in bad weather in close proximity. The high mountains, the glaciers, the green Alpine pastures, but also the lakes invite to quiet contemplation and meditation. Precisely in this quiet and impressive landscape, many pilgrims find a way to themselves and to God. Along the way they meet with "rustic", indigenous locals with whom they can strike up a conversation and from whom they learn something about their modest way of life in the mountains, and also of their worries concerning the preservation of the mountain villages and an unspoilt landscape. Pilgrims will also meet with holidaymakers from the most

Section Brünig-Brienz



Elevation profile Brünig-Brienz



Topographic maps of the section:
 Scale 1:25'000: numbers 1208 and 1209
 Scale 1:50'000 number 254

Brünig-Brienz

10 km, walking time from 2hrs 30 min to 3h30min (depending on physical condition)
 Demanding mountain section: Brünig 1002m, Tschuggen 1096m, Brienzwiler 680m

Brünig - Brienzwiler

The descent from Brünig to Hofstetten is at some places steep and slippery. For safety reasons, solid shoes and walking sticks are advisable. Pilgrims walking alone should if possible join others on this stretch. For less experienced mountain walkers, a recommendable alternative route leads via Meiringen to Brienz.

The railway station on the Brünig pass is starting point for the next stage. We follow the "Jakobsweg" signposts and walk at first on the main road to the big curve where we climb on a stairway up to a gravel path which leads us first over rocks and then atop the retaining



View into the Hasli valley



Pilgrims in Brienzwiler

wall of the main road. Then we follow a field path beside the road and after a short distance turn off to the right and across the sloping meadows of "Herwäg" and through a wood, we reach the extensive alpine pastures of "Bräch".

Now the path leads through the "Uoch" wood, and through rock ledges until we reach the turnoff to the lookout point "Tschuggen" (1096), the highest elevation of this stage. From the turnoff, we descend, and following the course of the brook that leads down to the village, we reach Brienzwiler lying 400 m lower (680m). Moss-grown blocks of stone and fern bushes border the stony path which at first descends quite steeply. The mountain path requires great precaution, despite the fact that lately, steps had been made with tree-trunks, barricades were erected and the railing was extended at dangerous places. Further down, we come to the old mule path with pack walls. Near the rock-spring "Andresen", the terrain opens and we enjoy the first outlook down to the village of Brienzwiler on the hillside, which we reach via "Halti" and the "Dorfweg". In the village centre, we come to the "Kreuzgasse" (lane). Old houses border the "Dorfstrasse" (village street), and we refresh ourselves at the stone fountain (child with dog). The inn "Bären" advertises its services with pilgrim's shells at the entrance.

Brienzwiler - Kienholz / Brienz

We continue on the Dorfstrasse and the Schlossweg. The Hofstetter-Strasse leads us through a small wood to the riding centre "Bifing". Here, we turn right and take to a broad field-path leading along the edge of a wood and across meadows with stables to the "Eis-



Village road in Brienzwilser



Hofstetten



„Lauenen“



„Lauenen“

tlenbach" (brook) with its broad scree- bed. We cross the brook, also the "Rütiwald", arrive at the Wylergasse leading us to Hofstetten.

Note: Pilgrims wishing to visit the open-air museum Ballenberg turn off to the left at the riding centre and take the carriageway along the edge of the wood leading to the entrance. (For information, see www.ballenberg.ch)

Hofstetten is part of the parish of Brienz. Several catastrophic torrential washes in the past centuries devastated big parts of the villages of Hofstetten, Schwanden and Brienz. Consequently, old mule tracks and pilgrim paths also disappeared.

Past wooden houses decorated with flowers, we come to the village square. We see the stone fountain with the figure of an owl, and at the "Scheidweg" (lane), a copper statue of a farmer with his horned sledge (typical transport means of mountain farmers). We come by the hotel restaurant Alpenrose, and walk a few hundred metres straight on towards Kienholz, past homely chalets. Then we take to a field path across the meadows of the "Allmend" (commons) to the "Studenwald" (wood). Before reaching it, we turn off to the right, cross a wood and come to an extensive, sloping meadow, the "Louwenen" or "Lauenen" above Kienholz. The panoramic view from here over Lake Brienz is overwhelming. The name of this place, "Lauenen", meaning "avalanche", dates from 1896 when big parts of the area were devastated by huge torrential mudslides. In August 2005, the disastrous catastrophe repeated itself when the "Glyssibach" and the "Schwanderbach" torrents inundated big parts of Unterschwanden, Kienholz and Brienz.

After the "Lauenen" and crossing a small wood, we turn off to the left and walk along the edge of the wood and the protective dams of the brook down to the cantonal road at Kienholz. Here, we decide which pilgrim route we want to follow on the way to Interlaken. There are two options:

Variant A: Along the right-hand lakeshore via Brienz, Ebligen, Oberried, Niederried, Ringgenberg. This is



Brienz on the lake

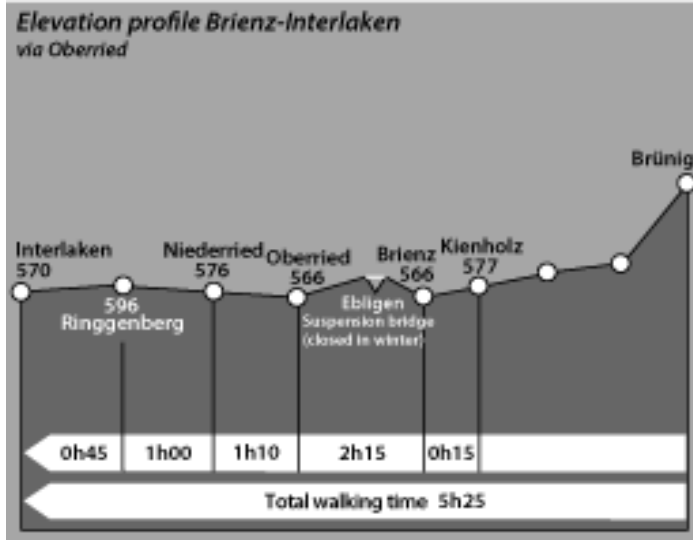
the route most pilgrims choose. Since the suspension bridge over the "Ebligengraben" (ravine) is barred from late autumn to spring, we recommend taking the route via Giessbach (option B) during this time. For information on route conditions, please contact the office of the municipal clerk ("Gemeindeschreiberei") in Oberried, phone (0041) (0)33 849 13 33.

If we opt for Variant A we follow the cantonal road for a short stretch, then turn left to take the railway underpass. Thus we reach the lakeshore path, past the youth hostel to the railway station and the boat landing pier of Brienz.

Variant B: Along the left-hand lakeshore via "Im Brunnen", Giessbach, Iseltwald, Bönigen. This is the less-travelled route, and also the bike trail.

If, however, we opt for Variant B, we cross the cantonal road and the access road to Axalp that brings us to the lakeshore and the camping site.

Brienz-Interlaken via Oberried



Topographic maps of the section:
 Scale 1:25'000: numbers 1208, and 1209
 Scale 1:50'000 number 254

Brienz-Interlaken (über Oberried)

19 km, walking time 5 hrs 10 min.
 Climbs: Brienz 574m, Ebligen suspension bridge 730m
 Oberried 586m, Fahrlouwigraben 780m

Brienz - Ringgenberg (

From Kienholz we follow the lakeshore path to the railway station and the landing pier of Brienz. We continue on the lake promenade until it joins the much-frequented cantonal road at the edge of the village. We cross the road and take the Dorfstrasse (in the direction of Ried and Ebligen) up into the village. There we turn left, come to the railway line which we cross, and come to the "Mülibach" (brook).

Note: Pilgrims wanting to see the interesting village church (the spire dates from 1130) on the former castle hill, turn right after the lake promenade, pass the violin making school and some old chalets, and thus come to the church. To reach the Way of St James again, standing before the church portal, they turn right into the lane, then turn left, following the signpost for Ried and Ebligen until the railway line.

After crossing the "Mülibach", the route takes us westwards through fields and woods to the clearing "Ried". From here we go through a forest, at first along a scree-filled ditch, then along a torrent to a theme route climbing up through a beautiful forest-landscape. The theme-route offers explanations on different types of trees. In a small wooden box we find a leaflet with interesting forestry themes. At the end of the theme route, we return the leaflet into the box provided so that hikers in the opposite direction can use it again. Above Ebligen, we come to the wild "Ebligengraben" torrent. We cross it on a gently swaying suspension bridge, about 1 metre wide and 70 metres long. The massive steel construction can be trusted without fear. Bikers must dismount and push their bike. This bridge is dismantled in winter because of the danger of avalanches. For information, contact the above-indicated address in Oberried. During that period we must, before reaching the Ebligengraben, descend to Ebligen on a quite



Brienz church road



Brienz village road



Suspension bridge



Bay of Oberried

steep path, cross the torrent, climb steeply up again on the opposite side to reach the "Jakobsweg" again. We therefore recommend taking variant B via Gießbach – Iseltwald between late autumn and April or May.

After the suspension bridge, we walk on the forest lane in a south-western direction until down to the "Forsthaus" (forester's house) at Oberried where we find a canopied resting place with grilling site and fountain. After a short stretch, our lane leaves the wood behind, becomes a macadamized road and takes us across pastureland to the "Hirschenbachgraben". After a short while, we pass the first houses of Oberried and come to the "Panoramastrasse". From here, the outlook over Lake Brienz and the mountains in the background is beautiful. Going westwards, we come to the modern church of Oberried, then we go down to the landing pier after having crossed the railway line and the cantonal road. The lakeshore path then takes us along the bay of Oberried. In the village-part "Derfli" we turn right, climb up to the cantonal road (Brienz – Interlaken) from which a paved road branches off to the right and takes us through pastureland up to the "Haberwald" forest. We follow the forest lane due west and presently come to a forest path. We follow it along the edge of the wood and then through the "Farlouwigraben" ravine. A notice board warns us of rockfall and avalanches. It is advisable to pass the place with caution and without prolonged stops. We continue through wood and clearings, the forest path gradually getting wider, down to the upper part of the village of Niederried. We descend through the village until shortly before the main road where we turn right onto a hiking path leading upwards. This path remains above the cantonal road and leads through the well cared-for "Rosswald" to a big quarry. Here we take the straight path bordered with pack walls and on which we come past wooden houses and stables to the first houses of Ringgenberg, and further down to the cantonal road. We follow it a



Walking trail to Ringgenberg



Ringgenberg Castle church



„Burgseeli“



Church ruin of Goldswil

short while, and after a detour to the railway station, we return to it. Shortly after, we turn off to the left and through the railway underpass we come to the castle ruin and the church of Ringgenberg. The reformed church was integrated into the old castle ruin in 1671-74 by the cathedral builder Abraham Dünz the Elder.

Ringgenberg-Interlaken

The new route alignment brings us, coming from the church, past the right-hand side of the old parsonage, and on the so-called "Katzenpfad" (cat's path) above the lakeshore directly to Goldswil and the railway bridge that crosses the river Aare. Before the bridge, we turn off to the right, walk beside the river, and always following the shore path we pass below the viaduct of the motorway and below the railway bridge and thus come to the Beurivage bridge at Interlaken.

Alternative route: A rewarding detour leads after the church of Ringgenberg on the right-hand side up into the wood to the idyllic "Burgseeli" (small lake). After this we descend again, pass below the ruin of the Goldswil church and come down to the shore path leading to Interlaken.

Interlaken/Unterssen

The Way of St James leads from the Beurivage bridge along the shore path of the river Aare into the small town of Unterseen. Pilgrims wanting to visit the tourism resort of Interlaken cross the river on the Beurivage bridge and, keeping to the left, reach the castle compound with the two churches and the former Augustine monastery of Interlaken. In the Middle Ages, the once-powerful monastery for monks and nuns, dating from the 12th century, had many possessions and during many centuries exerted a great influence on the whole region. In the 14th century, the sphere of control of the monastery extended from the Grimsel region across the region of the lakes of Brienz and Thun and as far as Bern.



Aare-Way



Former monastery of Interlaken



Castle church



Unterseen - „Stedtli“



Fameous Jungfrau snow mountain

Also the historic town of Unterseen on the Aare river was founded on land that at that time belonged to the Augustine monastery. Over the centuries, many pilgrims used the monastery with the hostel as starting point for the place of pilgrimage "St. Batten", today's Beatus caves above Lake Thun. The former hermitage of Saint Beatus was an important source of income of the monastery in Interlaken. After many disturbances and conflicts in the time of the reformation, the monastery was closed in 1552 for good, and used as a hospital and storeroom. Later, some new buildings were

added, and renovations were made (1741-51). Today, there is the reformed castle church, built 1901-11, with the spire dating back to the former monastery church, and beside it, the catholic church.

From the castle compound, the route leads past hotels and the open field of the "Höhematte", until it turns off to the right shortly before the Kursaal, to the river Aare. Using the Strandbad bridge, we join the Way of St James again.

Petronellenweg - a tip for pilgrims

To pilgrims who want to get to know the unique Alpine world of the Bernese Oberland, we recommend travelling the Petronellenweg on foot, leading through the valley of the river Lütchine to Grindelwald. From there, but also from Interlaken, there are many possibilities of side trips into the mountains. For information, please apply to one of the railway stations Interlaken Ost or Interlaken West, or to the tourist office in the centre of Interlaken.

Topographic maps of the section:

Scale 1:25'000: numbers 1208, 1209 and 1210

Scale 1:50'000 number 254

Section Brienz/Kienholz - Giessbach-Interlaken

18 km, walking time around 4 hrs 40 min

Climb: Kienholz / Brunni 577m, Engi / Giessbach 700m



Brienz-Iseltwald (10km approx 2:30h)

Unfortunately, this route is not marked with the "Jakobsweg" signposts. We therefore follow exclusively the yellow wayposts of "BernerWanderwege". Pilgrims are strongly advised always to follow the official hiking paths marked yellow, and not to venture onto unmarked shortcuts.

In Kienholz we cross the cantonal road and, using the access road to Axalp, come to the lake and the camping site "Aaregg". The outlook over the lake of Brienz westwards is just marvellous. We follow the road until the left-hand end of the lake, cross the river Aare and the motorway, and join the Axalp road again at a place called "Brunni". From the road, we turn off to the left to the hiking path leading up through the wood to the houses of "Engi" and to the Axalp road. We follow it a short while and then take the Giessbachweg on the right, leading westwards. Before we reach the big curves, we take a shortcut to the right, down to the well-known Giessbach falls, a beauty of nature of the first order. Huge masses of water plunge over



Brienz/Kienholz



Giessbach water falls



Iseltwald



Lake of Brienz



Iseltwald port



Bönigen

14 cascade down to Lake Brienz. Also the romantic "Hotel Giessbach", built in the jugendstil in the 19th century, is an ideal side trip and place for a rest. From there, the outlook over the lake, the chain of mountains and villages on the opposite shore is beautiful. The Giessbach can also be reached by boat from Brienz in a short time. A historic funicular leads up from the lakeshore to the hotel. From the hotel terrace, our path leads down the mountain. We cross the funicular at an underpass and presently join the romantic "Iseltwalder Uferweg" which we follow along the wooded lakeshore until the first houses of Iseltwald.

Iseltwald - Interlaken (11 km)

2-3 hours walking time

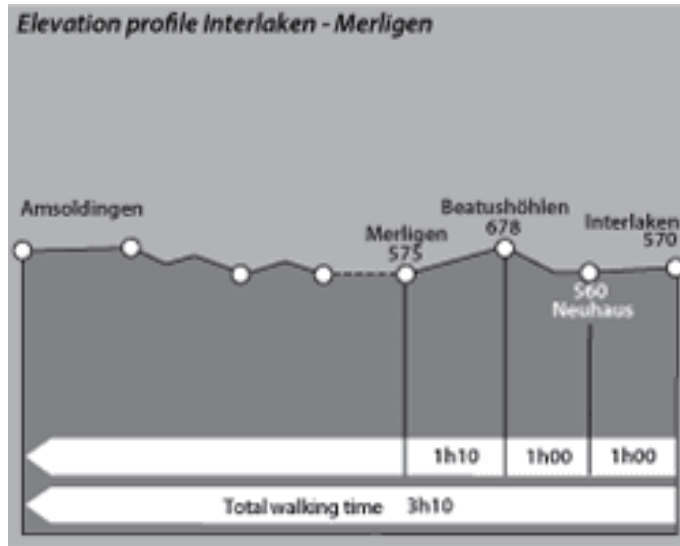
Following the shore and past cosy restaurants, we come to the village centre. Pilgrims are very welcome here, and inexpensive specialities are on offer. From the village centre (where the road to Interlaken joins it), we go westwards on the Dorfstrasse as far as the landing pier. Here, we turn off left and now southwards, and climb up over the sloping meadow to the bus stop "Mühle" below the motorway. On the quiet country road, we proceed westwards to the hamlet of Sengg, offering an outlook over the lake. On a paved road through fields and through the wood, and crossing the motorway below its viaduct, we walk down to the lake. We remain on the paved road (in part with sidewalk), and along the shore, we come to the first houses of Bönigen. Here, we change to the lake promenade to reach the landing pier of Bönigen. The old village of Bönigen offers picturesque narrow lanes and many beautiful farmhouse facades. The shore path from the landing pier to Interlaken is well-marked. The idyllic path leads across the river "Lütschine", past the bathing place to the discharge of the lake into the river Aare. From here, we walk along the river westwards passing below the railway bridge, past factory buildings and the area of the landing pier, to the railway station of Interlaken Ost. Near the former "Zollhaus" (customs post), we cross

the railway line (Bern - Interlaken line) through an underpass and go through a park to the Beurivage bridge. Here, we can go either across the Beurivage bridge to join the official "Jakobsweg" leading us along the river to the town of Unterseen, or we continue straight on and then turn off to the right into the castle compound where we come to the St Augustine monastery and the two churches. From the castle area, the route leads past hotels and the open field of the "Höhematte" until shortly before the Kursaal where we turn off to the right and the river Aare. Across the "Strandbad" bridge, we return to the Way of St James.

Section Interlaken-Merligen



Topographic maps of the section:
 Scale 1:25'000: numbers 1208 and 1228
 Scale 1:50'000: number 254



Interlaken – Merligen

15.5 km, walking time 4 hrs 10 min

Climb: Sundlauenen 559m, Beatus caves 678m, Balmholz 710m

Interlaken - Beatushöhlen (Beatus caves) 10 km



Unterseen (Äarli)

Along the shore path, we come past the bathing place to “Goldey” and then into the historic small town of Unterseen, built around 1280. Its house facades have a medieval air and date from the 17th century. At the picturesque “Stedtliplatz” with its church spire from 1674, we can learn the history of the “Bödeli”, the local name for the area between the lakes of Brienz and Thun, in the Jungfrau museum.

The route leads from the “Stedtliplatz” through the “Spielmatte”, past the general store (Stedtli) across the Helvetiastrasse and through the “Baumgarten”

quarter to the weir of the old “Aarmühle” (mill). From here we go westwards along the right-hand riverbank of the Aare, passing below the bridge of the feeder road to the motorway until Weissenau on Lake Thun. Turning right, we come soon past the historic ruin to the nature preserve Weissenau. In the Middle Ages, the boats of Lake Thun landed at shore here at the protected water castle. From the former imperial stronghold, the boat traffic on the lakes and the routes across the Alpine passes were supervised. From the tower, we have a fascinating outlook over the lake of Thun. Past the idyllic area of flat



Wooden boardwalk in Weissenau



„Neuhaus“



Bay of Sundlauenen



Luk-Stairs

marshland, we walk along the shore to the landing pier of Neuhaus. Starting from 1678, an important transshipment place was here for traffic from and to the eastern Oberland. The historic inn is a popular excursion destination. A historic warehouse stands beside it.

We continue to the right across the “Lombach” (brook), past the camping ground and approach the “Manorfarm”. In the Middle-Ages, the historic half-timber house was a wine storage of the Augustine monastery of Interlaken. At the forest edge, even before we reach the Manorfarm buildings we turn off to the right and join the original Way of St James, leading behind the manor-house up to the rock gallery above Lake Thun. Then we descend again to the picnic and bathing site “Gelbenbrunnen”. After about 300 m on the sidewalk of the slightly ascending Seestrasse, we turn left and traverse a wood downwards to the bay of Sundlauenen, its aspect suggesting a more southern climate. The pine-tree forest and the stony delta of the Sundbach are a popular excursion destination and invite to a rest. From the western part of the village, formerly the site of a vineyard of the monastery of Interlaken, we follow the lakeshore to the landing pier of Sundlauenen. Although the small landing stage is not always manned, the toilets, however, are always open. After a short ascent we reach the Thunerseestrasse which we cross. A small distance onward, we join the pilgrim’s path that soon continues as a stairway, leading upwards through rock ledges, partly secured by railings and stone walls. This exposed and formerly much-feared stretch hewn out of the rock was much improved by Oskar Luk in the war years, and for this reason is now known as “LUK-Treppe”. We climb up to a rise from where an easy path leads westwards to the Beatus caves and the ruins of a former pilgrim’s hostel (678 m.a.s.l.). Formerly, there also was a pilgrimage church higher up, with cloister and apartment for the priest. This was the parish church for the people of Beatenberg.

After the reformation, the pilgrimage church was closed. What remains today are vestiges of walls, and the small church bell. The burial place of



Saint Beatus who is said to have lived in the cave, was visited by many pilgrims in the Middle Ages. It was a place of self-communion and prayer. Today, the Beatus caves are still a meeting place for many pilgrims. Many people come to see the extended stalactite caves, and not a few of them because they have heard about the life of the Saint and the Beatus legend or because they believe in the power of the place. A side trip up to the village of Beatenberg (1121 m.a.s.l.) is strongly recommended.

Beatus Caves

Beatus Caves - Merligen (5.5 km)

On a comfortable forest path near "Chrutbach", skirting a quarry, we climb to the hillock of Balmholz. Above the quarry, we follow the path in a western direction through the Balmholz forest. On the newly covered bridge we cross the "Budelbach" (brook) and on the descending pilgrim's path above Beatenbucht, we come to the "Nastelwald" (wood) where we cross the funicular to Beatenberg. We continue down to the "Salzacher-Wald". We remain above the cantonal road and come to the first houses on the eastern side of Merligen. The beautiful village receives us with its well-tended front gardens and its southern ambiente. On the "Obere Dorfstrasse" that branches off in a sharp angle to the right shortly after the bridge, we come to the church of Merligen, well visible all around.



Bay of Merligen



Parish church in Merligen

Option: We follow the village lane down to the main road and turn away from it to the right and use the road leading up to the church.

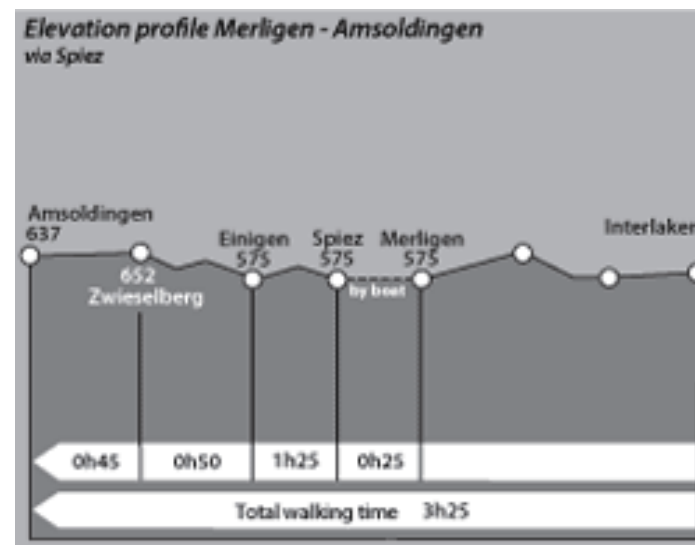
From Merligen, two possibilities offer themselves for the continuation of the pilgrimage:

Variant A: Via Spiez to Amsoldingen (14 km): By boat across the lake to Spiez, then walking via Einigen to

Amsoldingen. In winter, this option is open at certain days and times only, depending on the boat timetable.

Variant B: Via Thun to Amsoldingen (19 km): Continuing along the right-hand lakeshore via Gunten, Oberhofen and Hilterfingen to Thun, then via Scherzligen and Gwatt to Amsoldingen. This route is feasible also in the winter months, bar a few exceptions.

Section (Merligen) -Spiez-Amsoldingen (Variant A)



Topographic maps of the section:
 Scale 1:25'000: numbers 1207, and 1208
 Scale 1:50'000 number 253 and 254



Spiez castle with church



Castle of Spiez



Katzenstein and lake of Thun



Viwe from the Spiezberg

Spiez - Amsoldingen

13.5 km, walking time around 3 hrs 20 min.

The variant via Spiez is very popular with pilgrims. On arrival by boat we pass the restaurants "Welle" and "Pintli", turn off from the Seestrasse to the right onto a stairway that brings us to the castle. On the left of the stairway lane there is a small rose garden, and on the right, the 1000 years old castle church invites to a visit. The three-aisle roman pillared basilica with elevated choir (ceiling frescoes) and crypt was erected around the year 1000 on the site of an earlier church built around 700. In the front garden we find a bell with the engraved year 1023 indicating the year when it was cast. The house "Roselier" stands opposite. It was built in 1743 as an inn, but is a private house today. The castle houses a museum worth seeing, and the tower allows a good outlook onto the lake and the Bernese Alps. The Schlosstrasse begins beside the parking ground. We follow it past the "Gardener's House" and come to the "Kirschgarten" quarter. The Way of St James turns off to the right and after a few houses leads past the natural monument "Italian chestnut tree" to the vineyards. At the winegrower's hut, the winegrowing instruction path starts. Soon, we arrive at the "Katzenstein" (cat's rock), a mystic-seeming erratic block from the ice age. The granite block comes from Innertkirchen and was carried here by the glacier. It first appeared on a document in the 14th century and is protected since 1960. We continue, climbing 70 steps to the edge of the wood above the vineyards, then westwards along the crest of the "Spiezberg" until the path descends slightly to a resting site with fireplace. Here, we leave the wood and walk along the "Weidliweg" westwards through the town quarter and down to the Thunstrasse near the bus stop (and restaurant) "Kreuz". An underpass brings us safely across to Spiezmoos. After the railway underpass, we turn off to the Riederestrasse, which we leave soon after and turn off to the right onto the forest path which soon joins a broader forest road. After an ascent through the wood we come to



Church of Einigen



Kander river

the Riederestrasse and to the hamlet of Riedere. At the farmstead (fingerpost Kumm-Einigen), our route turns off to the right and leads us over meadows down to the railway underpass and further on to the Thunerstrasse. We follow this road (westwards) on the sidewalk, and after about 400 m we turn off to the right into the village of Einigen. From here, there are about 500 m to the church.

The church of Einigen dates back to the 10th/11th century and is one of the smaller of the 1000 years old churches around Lake Thun. For many visitors, this is a special place of spiritual power. We continue westwards and after a short stretch (at the fingerpost), we turn off to the right to reach the Strandbadstrasse. We follow it and turn off to the left shortly before "Kanderbrügg" (bridge over the river Kander). We cross the Thunerstrasse on a footbridge (near the bus stop Kanderbrügg), use the railway underpass and come into the Kander gorge. Following the fingerpost "Strättligsteg-Gwattegg", we cross the gorge on a metal bridge. In earlier times, the Kander river joined the Aare north of Thun (near Uttigen). As the Kander caused many inundations there, it was deviated into the lake of Thun through an artificial gorge built in 1711-1714. After the bridge we climb the steep western slope up to the Gwatt-Wimmis road, cross it and come on a broad carriageway along the edge of the wood to the "Strättligturm" (tower). The structure with the ring wall was constructed as powder magazine in the year 1619. From the tower we go to the crest of the ridge from where the "Burgunderweg" above

Gwatt takes us along the moraine ridge ("Strättligghügel") to Gwattegg. The view over Lake Thun and the look back to the Bernese Alps is just unique. Along the crest, there are some banks under linden trees protected from the sun. A stairway with 44 steps leads down to Gwattegg. Here we learn that the Kings of Burgundy reigned here from 888 to 1033 and that in this period, the famous 1000-years-old churches around Lake Thun were built.

Our route joins the Way of St James coming from Thun and leading to Amsoldingen. We follow it on a carriageway down to the left over pastureland and through a small wood until, after crossing the motorway through an underpass, we come to "Alti Schlyff" beside the "Glütschbach" (brook). We then climb up to the village of Zwieselberg, first following the road, then using a shortcut. We continue due west, at first on the Amsoldingerstrasse, then on a carriageway



„Strättligghügel“



Basilica of Amsoldingen

by the side of the wood and then through the wood until the pastureland to the east of Amsoldingen. The route then leads across meadows and along the edge of the wood into the village quarter "Galgacher" and there turns left into the village Amsoldingen. On the village road, we come to the pillared basilica, visible from far away, and also belonging to the roman churches around Lake Thun dating from the time of the reign of the Burgundy kings. Below the choir is the crypt, and beside the organ we find a room with old capitals.

Section Merligen-Amsoldingen via Thun



Topographic maps of the section:

Scale 1:25'000: numbers 1207, 1208 and 1228

Scale 1:50'000 number 253 and 254

Tip: From Thun to Amsoldingen approx. 2:30 hours. (N.B. Those who want to shorten the distance and want to avoid some steep ascents can take the sidewalk of the Seestrasse (Lake road) which on the lakeshore leads from Merligen to Oberhofen).

Merligen - Thun

12.5 km, walking time around 3 hrs 30 min

Merligen - Gunten

The right-hand lakeshore route of the Way of St James leads past the village church of Merligen, the cemetery, and past beautiful chalets until it forks to the right, near the "Stillebach" (brook) into the wood "Ralligholz". We come up to a rise, turn off left, and across meadows of the "Bärenegg" we come to the wooded mountain ridge above the castle of Ralligen. We enjoy the imposing view over the lake, into the valleys and to the Niesen mountain. We then follow a forest path westwards and above the cantonal road and come to the "Stampbachhaus", a former corn mill standing at the exit of a small ravine, right beside the Seestrasse. Here we follow the old stairway to the right up to a vineyard, where we turn off to the left onto the historic path above the "Seehalte" and leading to the road connecting Gunten with Sigriswil. On its sidewalk we descend to Gunten. A detour into the old part of the village with its beautiful church is worthwhile. Pilgrims wanting to avoid steep climbs and who can put up with heavy road traffic can use the safe and continuous sidewalk of the Seestrasse from Merligen or from the Stampbachhaus to Gunten.



Bay of Gunten

Gunten - Hilterfingen

From the village centre we climb a while on the "Aeschlenstutz" road and then walk for about one hour on the "Alter Oberländerweg" westwards through nice residential quarters and a deciduous forest to the "Oertlibach" (brook) which we cross in order to turn off to the right and downwards. We remain on the "Oberländerweg" leading us to the first houses of Längenschachen above the Thunstrasse. Here, the route turns off right into the village, and above the vineyards, we come to the eastern entrance of the village of Oberhofen and further on to the "Riderbach" (brook). We cross it and turn left down to the Thunstrasse on which we come to the castle. The imposing castle plant with its exotic park has made known the place Oberhofen far and wide. The museum houses historic objects around the Beatus legend and St James. On account of the mild climate and the beautiful gardens, this lakeshore area is also dubbed "Riviera of Lake Thun". Beside the historical "Heidenhaus",



Oberhofen



Castle of Oberhofen



Parish church in Hilterfingen



Park of castle Hünegg



Thun



Thun on the Aare river

formerly serving as wine cellar of the monastery of Interlaken, there are several other objects of interest. From the landing pier near the castle, we take a lane to the right up to the hotel Moy. There, turning left, we join the historic Oberländerweg and come to the church of Hilterfingen where we enjoy the outlook.

Hilterfingen - Thun

We keep to the path and come westwards to the imposing Hünegg castle with its museum for home décor and Art Nouveau. After the Hünegg park we walk for a short stretch on a historic path along lanes, then for some hundred metres along the main road as far as Hünibach. After crossing the Hünibach brook ("Hünibach is the name of both the place and the brook), we turn left and go down to the landing pier. Here is the start of the two kilometres long shorepath, leading at first along the lake, then along the river Aare into the town of Thun. Turning left and over the bridge near the Beurivage hotel and over the gangway of the river lock we come to the railway station of Thun.

Thun

The old part of Thun has a medieval aspect, and we enter it near the hotel "Freienhof" (former inn and warehouse). In earlier times, this house offered to travellers accommodation, protection and "freedom" ("Freiheit", hence Freienhof). The castle, built around 1190 by the duke Berchtold V of Zähringen, is the landmark of the town. The structure, several times enlarged in the course of the centuries, houses a museum in its tower, with exhibits from the regional history. The early-gothic hall of the knights is considered one of the most important medieval secular rooms of Switzerland. Also the town church is worth a visit. Its spire dates from the 14th century, and in the church is a Lord's Table from the year 1602. In the course of a leisurely sightseeing stroll through the town we see many historic buildings, the town hall, the "Platz" schoolhouse, the "Bürgerhaus" and the "Kornhaus" (granary).

Thun - Amsoldingen

6.5 km, walking time around 2 hrs 30 min.

After an impressive round of the town we leave the historic centre and walk from the station, first along the Aare canal, then the Seestrasse to Scherzligen. In this part of the town stands the legendary church "Santa Maria von Scherzligen". Together with that of Einigen, this church belongs to the oldest in the Bernese Oberland. It was first mentioned in documents in 761/62. The oldest parts of the roman nave date from the 10th century, the rare murals from the 13th to 16th century.



Thun -main shopping street



Church of Scherzligen



Basilica in Amsoldingen

From the church it is only a few steps to the Schadau castle with its beautiful park, a perfect place for a rest and an opportunity to visit an exhibition in the castle. The continuation of the route is on the Seestrasse to Dürrenast. A lane with little traffic leads southwards past the shipyard and the bathing place, through the sports ground and along the lakeshore to the Bonstetten park at Gwatt, right near the historical "Bettle-reiche" (old oak tree). To the west of the "Gwattliche Moos" we turn off in a south-western direction, cross the Frutigerstrasse near the country inn "Lamm", and also the railway line, and through a residential quarter and across pastureland, climb to Gwattegg. We follow the road southwards across pastureland and through a small wood, cross the motorway through an underpass and come to "Alti Schlyffi" near the "Glütschbach" (brook). From here we climb up to the village of Zwieselberg, first on the road and then using a shortcut. We continue westwards, first on the Amsoldingerstrasse and then on the carriageway beside the wood and into the wood until the pastureland to the east of Amsoldingen. The route then takes us across meadows and along the edge of the wood into the hamlet of Galgacher, to turn there to the left into the village of Amsoldingen. On the Dorfstrasse, we come to the roman pillared basilica, visible from far away. It belongs to the 1000 years-old churches around Lake Thun, dating from the time of the Burgundy dynasty. Below the choir is the crypt, and beside the organ is a room housing old capitals.