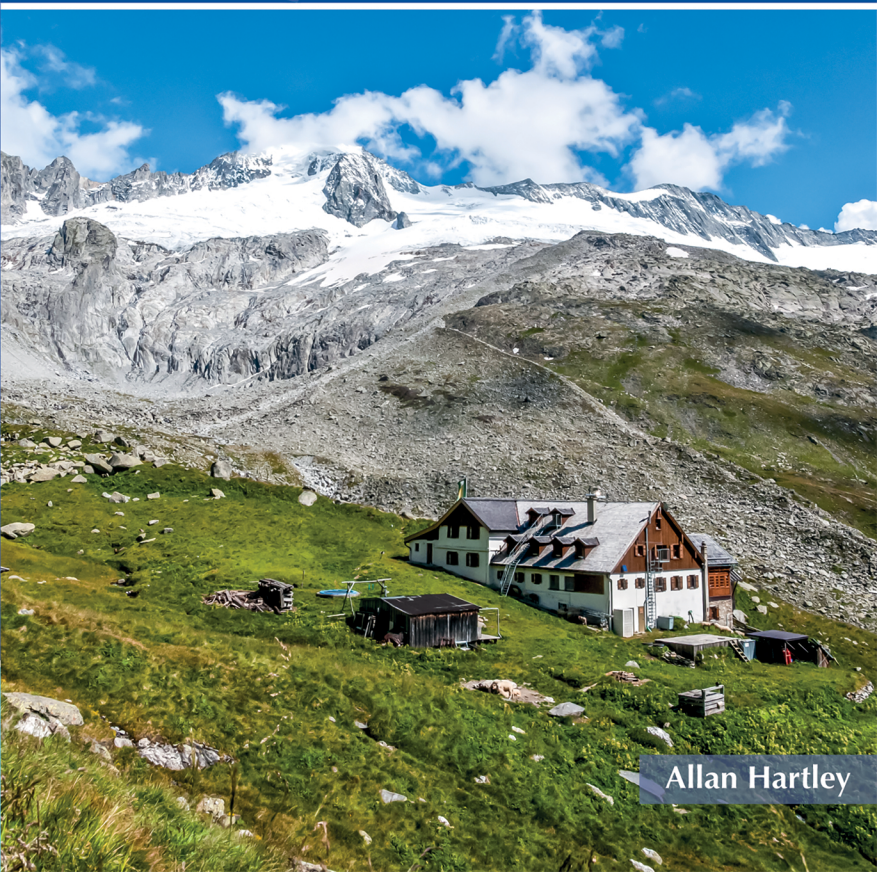


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# TREKKING IN AUSTRIA'S ZILLERTAL ALPS

The Zillertal Rucksack Route, South Tirol Tour,  
Peter Habeler and Olperer Runde



Allan Hartley

# TREKKING IN AUSTRIA'S ZILLERTAL ALPS

THE ZILLERTAL RUCKSACK ROUTE, SOUTH TIROL  
TOUR, PETER HABELER AND OLPERER RUNDE

by Allan Hartley

**CICERONE**

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### Acknowledgements

To the many members of the Austrian Alpine Club (UK) who have accompanied me on trips to the Zillertal over several decades.

*This book is dedicated to my late wife Marilyn and our mutual friend Helmut Meier, a dear friend and companion on many an alpine journey, who was sadly killed in a tragic accident while descending from the Dristner in the Zillertal.*

### Note on mapping

The route maps in this guide are derived from publicly available data, databases and crowd-sourced data. As such they have not been through the detailed checking procedures that would generally be applied to a published map from an official mapping agency. However, we have reviewed them closely in the light of local knowledge as part of the preparation of this guide.

*Front cover:* At Furtschaglhaus looking towards the Grosser Moeseler 3480m (ZRR Stage 5)

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**Updates to this guide**

While every effort is made by our authors to ensure the accuracy of guidebooks as they go to print, changes can occur during the lifetime of an edition. This guidebook was researched and written during the COVID-19 pandemic. While we are not aware of any significant changes to routes or facilities at the time of printing, it is likely that the current situation will give rise to more changes than would usually be expected. Any updates that we know of for this guide will be on the Cicerone website ([www.cicerone.co.uk/1063/updates](http://www.cicerone.co.uk/1063/updates)), so please check before planning your trip. We also advise that you check information about such things as transport, accommodation and shops locally. Even rights of way can be altered over time.

We are always grateful for information about any discrepancies between a guidebook and the facts on the ground, sent by email to [updates@cicerone.co.uk](mailto:updates@cicerone.co.uk) or by post to Cicerone, Juniper House, Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road, Kendal, LA9 7RL.

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## STAGE 1

Mayrhofen to Karl von Edel Hut

<b>Start</b>	Mayrhofen (632m)
<b>Finish</b>	Karl von Edel Hut (2238m)
<b>Distance</b>	4km
<b>Ascent</b>	285m
<b>Descent</b>	Negligible
<b>Standard time</b>	About 3hr from Mayrhofen

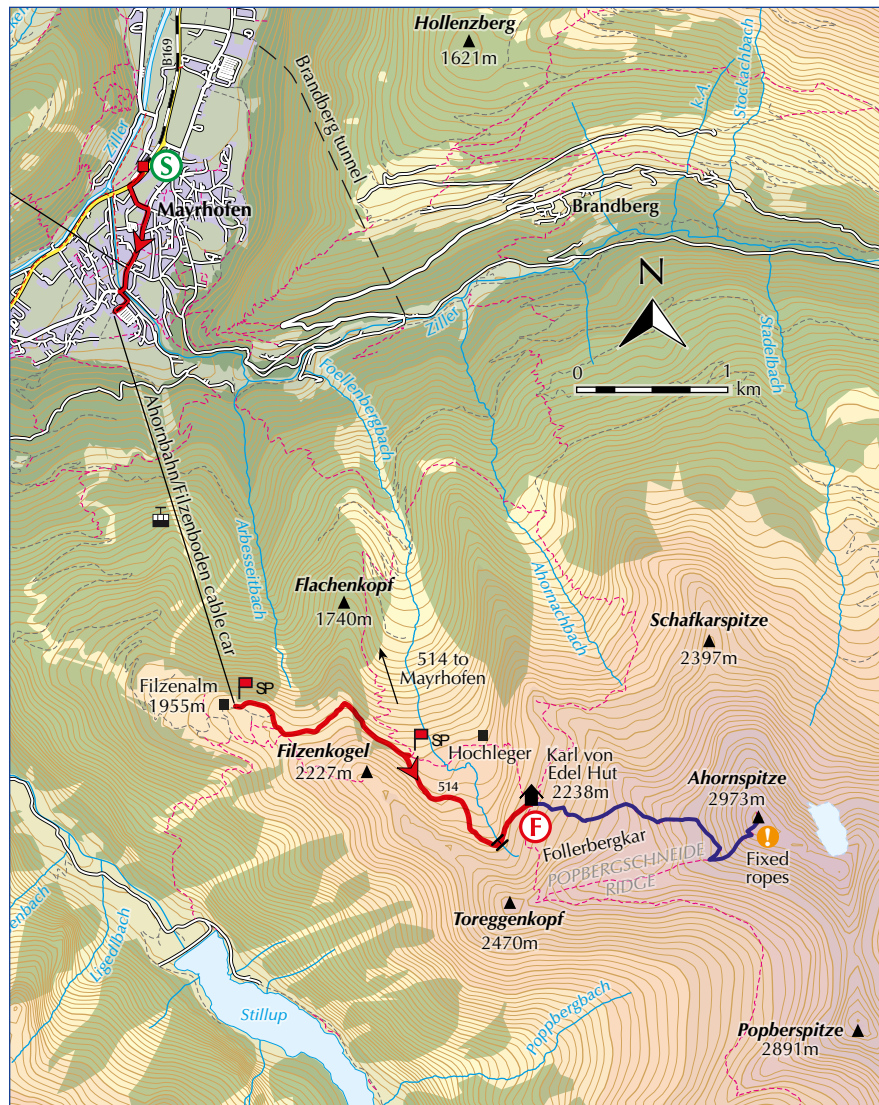
A pleasant introductory walk to the Zillertal Rucksack Route.

From Mayrhofen's combined Zillertalbahn railway station and bus terminus, cross the main road and turn right, heading S up the main road into Mayrhofen. After approximately 200 metres, turn left before a garage-cum-filling-station, following the road to the town centre and passing the very grand Elisabeth Hotel on the right-hand side and Mayrhofen's main post office a little further on.

From the post office, turn right at the road junction and continue the urban walk uphill for around 15min, passing lots of shops and expensive-looking places until you reach the Penkenbahn cable-car station on the right-hand side. Pass this and continue up the high street to a bridge across the river. Turn left just after the bridge and follow signposts for the Ahornbahn/Filzenboden cable car, which you will reach after a further 5min.

En route on the *Hauptstrasse* (main street) you will pass the alpine school and mountain guides office owned by legendary Austrian mountaineer **Peter Habeler**. Peter, with Reinhold Messner from the South Tirol, took the then mountaineering world by storm with many audacious ascents, including the first oxygen-free ascent of Mount Everest. However,

## STAGE 1 – MAYRHOFEN TO KARL VON EDEL HUT



their skill is best summed up by their 10-hour ascent of the North face of the Eiger at a time when even the most competent of climbers would take at least two days.

Meanwhile, at our modest level, when purchasing your ticket remember the all-important *Gruss Gott* (good day) and ask for *einfach bitte* (one-way ticket). Show your OeAV membership card to obtain a modest discount.

Banners of the DAV  
and Tirol at the  
Karl von Edel Hut

The cable-car ride takes around 5min and provides excellent views across Mayrhofen as you are whisked high above the Zillertal valley in a cable car that boasts of being the largest in the Tirol and is akin to a double-decker bus laid flat on its side.

From the upper cable-car station and restaurant at **Filzenalm** (1955m), proceed onto the grassy terrace, past



the children's adventure park, and follow signs for Route 514 and the Edel Hut.

The route follows a well-marked path E, then SE around the jagged ridge of the Filzenschneide into a rock garden with boulders of house-sized proportions from where the hut at the base of the west ridge of the Ahornspitze is clearly visible (signpost). **1hr** From this point forward, further description is not required, as in summer the trail is a very popular day's outing from Mayrhofen and is a much-frequented tourist route to the **Edel Hut**. **1½–2hr**

## EXCURSION

### *Ascent of Ahornspitze (2973m)*

<b>Start</b>	Karl von Edel Hut (2238m)
<b>Distance</b>	3km
<b>Ascent</b>	735m
<b>Grade</b>	F
<b>Standard time</b>	Ascent 2–2½hr; descent 1–1½hr
<b>Note</b>	For map, see Stage 1

The problem for the Edel Hut is that it is, unfortunately, very much a one-mountain hut, unless you are a day-tripper from Mayrhofen or en route to the Kasseler Hut. That aside, the Ahornspitze is a fine mountain in its own right, offering something of a challenge on its upper slopes and with some of the finest panoramic views in the region.

Having dumped much of your gear at the hut, you can make a lightweight ascent as an afternoon excursion through the mountain's west flank via the Follenbergkar, which, roughly translated, means 'rocks and boulders fallen off the mountain'. It is otherwise a straightforward route up and down a popular mountain. Enjoy!

The route starts off following an old, well-marked trail E along a glacial moraine with signs along the way telling

There are great views here across the Stillupgrund valley towards the Kasseler Hut.

South summit of the Ahornspitze, with the snow-covered Schwarzenstein in the far distance

would-be climbers to *Weg am Blieb* (keep to the path). After about ¾hr you will reach a *Gesprutt* (route closed) sign blocking off the old path, which was obliterated by a rock avalanche in 2002, and directing you S across the stone-strewn couloir to a small but obvious col on the **Popbergschneide ridge**. **1¾hr** ◀ Be careful hereabouts as the ridge is very exposed.

From here on, follow the obvious rocky ridge E, with good scrambling here and there. It is very exposed in places and requires a good head for heights. After a short hour the ridge steepens considerably just below the rocks that form the true summit. The lower second summit is visible just 100 metres away. Descend the rocks into a gap (fixed wires) and scramble up once more to the large summit cross. **About ¾hr** (2½hr from the hut)

From the summit excellent **views** abound in all directions, especially to the south towards Mayrhofen and the long Zillertal valley. Elsewhere,

the snow-capped peaks are just a little too far away to provide any serious interest, apart from the Grosser Loeffler to the south and the Grossvenediger, the fourth highest peak in Austria, to the east. Closer at hand, Brandberger Kolm can be seen to the north-east. To the east is the Zillergrund reservoir, and finally those with sharp eyes, perhaps assisted by binoculars, will be able to locate the Plauener Hut and Reichenspitze.

From the summit descend via the same route, taking a little more care as you scramble down the steep rocks. Once at the little col, take time to recce the route to the Kasseler Hut, as the first part of the route along the Siebenschneidenweg around the Popbergkar couloir and boulder field is clearly obvious. **1–1½hr**

## STAGE 2

### *Karl von Edel Hut to Kasseler Hut*

<b>Start</b>	Karl von Edel Hut (2238m)
<b>Finish</b>	Kasseler Hut (2177m)
<b>Distance</b>	12.5km
<b>Ascent</b>	750m
<b>Descent</b>	800m
<b>Standard time</b>	8–10hr

This is a fitting way to start the Zillertal Rucksack Route proper. Not for the faint hearted, this first-class, long-distance trail traverses the hillside high above the Stillupgrund valley, across challenging terrain and ever-changing scenery.

First established during the 1970s by members of the DAV Wuerzburg and Aschaffener Sektionen, and not surprisingly named the Aschaffener Hoehensteig, the route is now more popularly known as the Siebenschneidenweg, the Seven Ridges Way.



Despite the warning sign, *Nur Fuer Geubte* (only for the experienced), outside the Edel Hut, which I am sure puts off a number of very capable groups, this is a very good long-distance walk. Although it is long, it will satisfy most enthusiasts as the length of the walk is a good measure of personal fitness. The route traverses high above the steeply sided valley of Stillupgrund, roughly on the 2300m contour line, and provides excellent scenery throughout its length.

Once past the little col of Popbergneider, just beyond the Edel Hut, your attention will be firmly fixed on the south, towards the splendid Grosse Loeffler (3379m) and across the valley to the sharp-pointed peak of Gigalitz and the obvious col of the Lapenscharte.

### CAUTIONARY NOTES

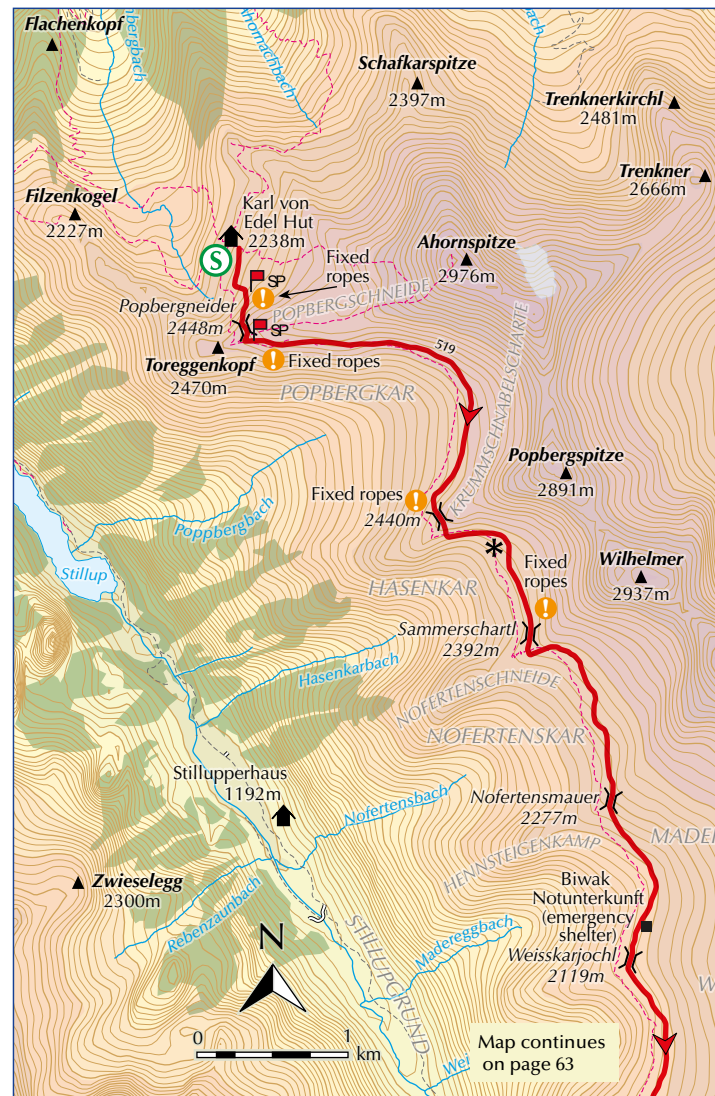
The suggested time required for this walk is 10hr, which reflects advice given on the signs outside the Edel Hut; this comprises 8½hr for the journey, plus 1hr for stops and ½hr for any mishaps. Essentially, you need to be on your way no later than 06:00.

Arrange with the *Huettenwirt* for breakfast and thermos flasks to be left on the dining room tables for an early start.

The sign outside the hut warns that this is an extremely long walk and should only be undertaken in settled weather by experienced and properly equipped people. In the event of bad weather, the only escape routes are on the north side of the Nofertenschneide at the Sammerschartl, then later at Maderegg Alm, when it would be easier and safer to return to the Edel Hut than descend the very steep forest trails into Stillupgrund, which is made more complex by having to cross a number of difficult streams. Once past the Nofertensmauer rock wall, you are committed to completing the walk to the Kasseler Hut, although there is the added assurance of shelter at the Biwak Notunterkunft should you require it.

While the route is characterised by the crossing of seven ridges and spurs, it is crossing the many boulder fields and negotiating the fixed ropes and steep grassy slopes that absorbs time and saps your concentration.

Should the weather be against you, you can always miss out this section by going straight to the Kasseler Hut. See 'Hut directory', 'Kasseler Hut', 'Day walks' for the route description.







At the Popbergneider, en route to the Kasseler Hut

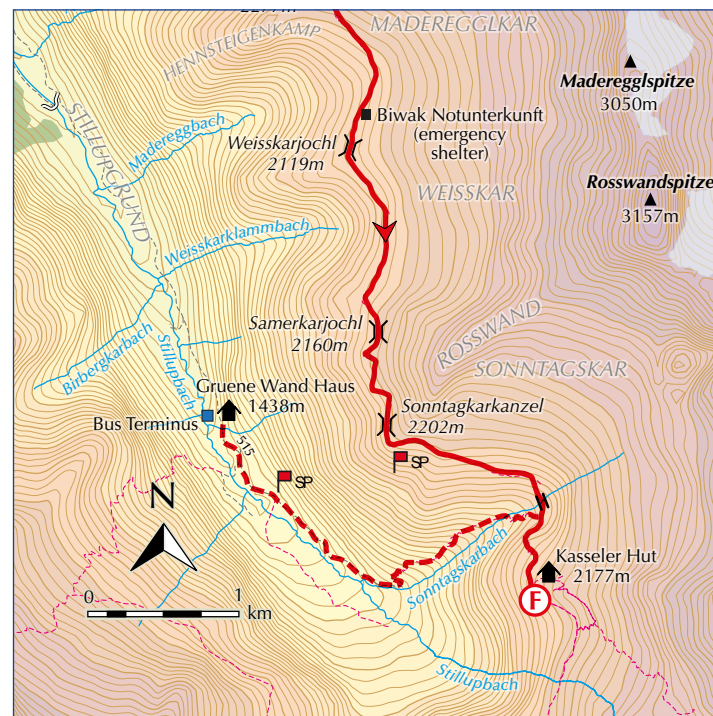
Excellent views and scenery unfold as the route starts to open up.

From the hut, follow Route 519 (signpost) on a good path heading S, climbing gradually first then more steeply to the little col, visible from the hut, called the **Popbergneider (2448m)**.  $\frac{3}{4}$ hr ◀

From the col, descend very steep rocks and grassy slopes, aided by fixed wire ropes, and head E towards the large open combe of the **Popbergkar**. Cross this in a wide arc, first E then S through boulder fields to the foot of a rock face. A short and difficult scramble, aided by fixed ropes, follows to gain the ridge just to the east of the **Krummschnabelscharte col (2440m)**, on the south-west ridge coming down from the Popbergspitze (2891m).  $1\frac{3}{4}$ hr

Cross the col, descend steep rocks diagonally across the rock face, aided by fixed ropes, and again head first E then S across difficult open ground of large boulders and blocks across the Hasenkar couloir until stopped by the near-vertical rock wall below the col of the **Sammerschartl (2392m)**. Climb slowly up the 100m of very steep, rocky slabs, aided by gymnasium-style ropes,

## STAGE 2 – KARL VON EDEL HUT TO KASSELER HUT



to gain the col and Nofertenschneide ridge on the south-west ridge of the Wilhelmer (2937m).  $1\frac{1}{4}$ hr

From the col, descend steep rocks, aided by fixed ropes, and cross the less-demanding Nofertenkar boulder field to the rock wall of **Nofertensmauer (2277m)** on the Hennsteigenkamp ridge. **1hr**

### Exit routes

Should you be forced to consider abandoning the route, you should do so at this point as it is the only place on the route that will allow a descent. Descend W on the north side of the col to pick up forest trails at Nofertenalm, following the exceedingly steep tracks to the alm at



- four hut-to-hut treks in Austria's Eastern Alps • the snow-capped peaks of the Hochfeiler and Grosser Moeseler
- welcoming huts and the charming town of Mayrhofen



With shapely peaks, good paths and some of the best mountain huts in the Alps, few areas can match the Zillertal, in the Austrian Tirol, for a classic Alpine experience. This guide describes four popular hut-to-hut tours, ranging from six to nine days. Also included are optional day excursions from the huts (some involving low-grade mountaineering) to climb local peaks, including the Zillertal's highest summit, the Hochfeiler.

The Zillertal Rucksack Route, also known as the Berliner Hoehenweg, links eight huts without crossing glaciers or difficult passes. The shorter Peter Habeler Runde Tour and Olperer Runde Tour also offer fantastic trekking. The Zillertal South Tirol Tour traverses the whole range along the Austrian-Italian border and is more suited to the experienced mountaineer.

- comprehensive hut directory included
- huts open mid-June to late September

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