

# Experience Kandersteg

## Public footpaths around the village

### 1. Bahnhof BLS



On 28th June 1913 the Lötschberg route was opened connecting Kandersteg with Bern, Brig and Italy.

Today Kandersteg is known for its car transport train through the tunnel. Since the opening of the NEAT base tunnel, Kandersteg has used the services of the Regio Express Lötschberg.

A special attraction is the steam tank locomotive "Simplon N°1", that was restored in 2010/11 and is on display. Its first assignment as a service railway locomotive on the north ramp Frutigen - Kandersteg was in 1911. Further details and information are available on site.

### 2. Stauwehr



Parallel to the railway building is the Bühl Kandersteg weir, which supplies traction energy to the power plant in Kandergrund by tunnels and pressure lines. Since 1991 the BKW Energie AG no longer delivers any electricity from the renewed system for the BLS. The weir in front of us passes water purified through raking and sedimentation tanks into the 4.2 km long headrace tunnel in the rock, to the water tower above the power plant in Kandergrund. This water tank can hold about 16'000m<sup>3</sup> of water. From here two pressure lines lead directly to the power plant's turbines.

There are also various bridges that were built in connection with the construction of the railway.

Just before the weir, there's a footbridge, which reminds us of this time. This bridge, built in 1908, was preserved and was accepted as an object worthy of protection in the Kandersteg inventory.

### 3. Höh



When the glaciers of the last ice age retreated, the pressure of the rock masses erupted throughout the alpine region and caused some massive rockslides.

About 9,000 years ago on the northern edge of the Fisistock-Doldenhorn a massive limestone mass measuring nearly one cubic kilometre broke. It fell into the valley, burst on the western flank and the debris crashed about five miles down into the Kander valley. A large number of huge rocks now provide possibilities for bouldering (climbing without a rope and harness). Traces of the impact are still visible in the Riseti region. Here it is only sparsely forested mainly with pines and juniper shrubs. The valley was filled up to 400 m with rubble as a result of this landslide. The starting point of the landslide is just below the summit of the Doldenstock. The trail of the slide can be clearly seen through the large, exposed and inclined surfaces.

There are varying ideas regarding the formation of the hills south of the train station. Either a small part of the afore-mentioned landslide travelled southwards or there was a later landslide that fell from the outer Fisistock. Certainly a small landslide from the north flank of the Doldenhorn contributed to the damming of the Oeschinensee.

There's a nice view of the village and the imposing mountains from the viewpoint at Höh. You can rest on the benches to pause and reflect.

### 4. Gesichter Allmibach



Over time the appearance of the Kander valley changed again and again. Where today rock and ice dominate the landscape, an ocean once existed. Even today fossils testify to earlier forms of life. Through unimaginably massive movements, the seabed unfolded and huge mountains were formed. Looking carefully at the massive rock walls, you may see part of the rock formations transform into faces, for example right here in the area of the via ferrata. The «Allmibach face» on the right side of the waterfall looks directly at you. The other two faces - "the old woman Allmenalp" and "the little Knorrlichesicht" can be seen left of the waterfall.

### 5. Kloster am Waldrand



The former Hotel Waldrand was built during the construction of the railway. This spacious Chalet in Bütschels became a Buddhist monastery "Dhammapala" in 1992.

The monastery houses a place for spiritual practice. It is primarily a habitat for monks, novices and occasionally for nuns. The monastic community runs meditation and study courses and between these events offers accommodation for short-term guests.

## 6. Klettersteig



In summer 2005 the spectacular via ferrata opened. It leads you through gorges and rock pillars, up a 350-metre high wall. Part of it can be seen from here using binoculars. The Allmibach finds its way down to the valley in several impressive waterfalls. This route is only suitable for experienced climbers. Being very sure-footed, having no fear of heights and also significant arm strength are prerequisites. Also it is recommended to check the current weather forecast for the region before starting out.

## 7. Internationales Pfadfinderzentrum



In 1923 the Boy Scouts World Association (WOSM) started with the construction of the Scout Centre Kandersteg, on the initiative of Lord Robert Baden-Powell. This was one of the first permanent international meeting places for scouts. Lord Baden-Powell often spent his summer holidays in Kandersteg and was obviously impressed with the place. He is considered as the father of the Scout Movement.

Currently it is one of three world WOSM centres. The buildings, including: the large main building, once accommodation for technicians during the tunnel construction; the Kander-Lodge, formerly the office during the construction of the NEAT base tunnel in Mitholz; and the holiday home Sunneblick; offer year-round accommodation for young people and young-at-heart scouts. In summer the large grounds of Moosweid with its camping site and barbecue areas provide an ideal site for unforgettable holidays.

Every year more than 10,000 scouts from 40 countries meet here. An international team, mostly comprised of voluntary girl and boy scouts, operates it and organizes a varied program for the guests.

## 8. Seilpark



The rope park, which was opened in 2009, is extremely adventurous with rope bridges, lianas and nets over well integrated nature trails. It's suitable for young and old, families, groups or school trips. Safety comes first. Trained staff are present at all times and the equipment is provided by the rope park. In addition to the two children's courses, there are six courses of various levels. There's also a kiosk, a panoramic terrace and barbecue facilities available. The sunny situation provides a memorable experience in this high alpine region.

## 9. Gesicht Eggeschwand



Looking towards the Gastern valley you will see a large face portrayed in the rock known as "The guardian of the Gasterntal" that looks over the road probably wanting to make sure that everything is okay. Immediately after this you will find the power station Alpbach. It started operating in October 2009 and its average annual production is sufficient to provide electricity for 2'750 households. The power plant, Kander Alp AG, is a partner company of BKW and Licht- und Wasserwerk AG Kandersteg.

## 10. Kanderfälle



The relatively steep and stony road from Eggeschwand to the Gasterntal leads through the narrow "Kluse" where the river Kander flows. The clear water roars over massive boulders and rocks.

## 11. Spycher



This storehouse at the bottom of the Kandersteg-Sunnbüel cable car station was built between 1510-1512. It has a lower and an upper floor and is the oldest existing agricultural building in Kandersteg. It was most probably built to accommodate travellers using the Lötschen and Gemmi passes. Since 1967 it has been part of the inventory of protected art antiquities of the canton of Bern and it was restored in 2011.

## 12. Lötschbergtunnelportal



The construction of the Lötschberg tunnel from 1906 to 1913 created a major north-south connection and formed the basis for the BLS car transport. During the construction phase Kandersteg provided temporary housing for many people. In 1910 there were about three 3,500 people. But already in 1920 less than 800 people were registered. On March 31 in 1911 the Lötschberg tunnel was knocked through. After four and a half years of hard work and a number of lives lost, the tunnel became a reality. The BLS started operating it on 15th July 1913.

A monument of the tunnel is the "Mäuse-turm" (built in 1907), which is just north of the portal. The former transformer house, with its horse stables, is similar in style to a Ticino tower house and is now used as accommodation for special occasions. The

tower belongs to the Scout Centre and can be rented.

### 13. Naturschutzgebiet



The impressive nature reserve "Filfalle" is a wetland of national importance. It was formed at the end of the last ice age when moraine accumulated as a result of melting glaciers. Small lakes formed which developed into marshes, which are permanently saturated. Despite the storage of excavated material from the tunnel construction, there are still meadows, and various types of bogs of special interest in many parts of this ecosystem.

Fens (or mires) have emerged due to either the silting up of rivers and lakes, or the boggy mineral soils. In the mountains these fens can be found in troughs excavated by glaciers or on the banks of the meandering river. The vegetation of the fens is characterized by a variety of sedges. In contrast, the higher bogs lend themselves to more flora and fauna. Their slightly curved surface above the water level is due to the formation of peat, which is typical vegetation in this area. The nature trail "Filfalle" is available for everyone. You can walk along a wooden pathway with its information boards and enjoy the unique moorland.

### 14. Ruedihus



The ornate Ruedihus is probably the most famous building in the Kander valley. It was built in 1753 and was considered the very best of the art of carpentry in the 18th century. Initially it was the home of the Landeswenner, the highest local official and provincial governor. The ground floor was used as a location for changing travellers' horses and mules. During the railway construction the house lodged a Catholic school for the children of the Italian workers. Also Catholic Church services were held here. After the railway construction the Ruedihus was used as a restaurant. From 1990 renovations were carried out according to historic preservation guidelines and the rooms in the guest house were furnished with antique furniture. A variety of traditional Swiss dishes can be enjoyed in the cosy atmosphere of this historical house. Since the beginning of the 20th century, Swiss people often had cottage gardens, which were not only important for their functional use but also their decorative appearance. The garden in front of the Ruedihus is a typical example. In addition there is an herbal garden (Ricola herbs) that is signposted with information boards.

## 15. Alte Sagi



Members of the Stoller family operated the sawmill for several generations until about 1975. The saws were powered by the water wheel. Today a button sets this in motion. The force of the water is impressively visible.

## 16. Muggenseeli



This is a communal conservation area. The sector south of the lakes was originally a vast marsh and bog area.

Before the invention of refrigerators, ice blocks were cut out from both of the small lakes in winter, which were stored long-term. The hotel industry used these for cooling food and beverages. Similarly, ice blocks from the Oeschinensee were transported by sledge down to the valley.

The environment is intricately connected. Here is an example of possible food networks (Fey 2003):

Of course the three above-mentioned subsystems are also strongly bonded together. Also there is the example of trout in the lake that is a source of food for both humans and other animals. Various animal species live in different environments, e.g. the larvae of certain insects such as mosquitoes or dragonflies are in the water. Also the Muggenseeli is a popular habitat for mallards. In early summer many people visit the ducklings and feed them with bread crumbs. The mallards' diet basically consists of water, plants, fruit and seeds. However worms, small crustaceans, insect larvae, snails, small fish, spawn, tadpoles or frogs wouldn't be rejected by the ducks. And not to be forgotten, man is also completely dependent on the environmental laws.

Benches invite you to sit and reflect on the beauty and value of nature. Being aware of one's roots is enriching to daily life.

## 17. Samis Hus



The oldest preserved house of Kandersteg is the Samis Hus. It was built in 1556. The residential and business sections stand side by side. This is a classic example of a "Frutigland" farmhouse from the 16th century.

The houses all had a basement, but no actual cellar because of the risk of flooding. On the first floor were the living room and the kitchen, and above were the bedrooms.

The business part was used as a stable and for storing hay. Recurring landslides and flooding flattened the Kander valley with deposits of debris and sludge. The resulting partially-filled ground floors became the cellars and had to be reclaimed with steps (now the basement stairs). Also the foundations had to be renewed.

## 18. Gesicht Wildfluh

---



As a result of continual pressure, rock layers have been folded or sometimes older rocks have been pushed above younger ones (at various points this is still clearly visible). All this reveals unimaginable forces and events from the past. Standing with your back to the Samis Hus you can see the "Wildflueh lion face": a large lion which has been immortalized in the rock.

## 19. Natur-Kinderspielplatz

---



The natural children's playground began many years ago with very simple equipment. In about 1994 a tower was built and this was extended in 2006. Children can play all sorts of games that stimulate different senses, especially the senses of sight and balance. Shrubs or pine cones and leaves which are lying on the ground stimulate the sense of touch. Scents of the forest provide a feeling of wellbeing through the sense of smell. The sense of hearing is activated by listening to the quiet sounds of nature. Pestalozzi divides the process of child development into three parts - "head, heart and hands", which represent "intellect, morality and practical skills".

## 20. Öschiwald

---



It is always worth visiting this impressive forest with its excellent vita parcours. The suspense of opposites such as light/shadow or growth/decay but also a plethora of colours and shapes provide a unique atmosphere. We mustn't forget to mention the idyllic, small Bubenseeli, whose name probably goes back to boys' water games. A great variety of trees and shrubs, velvety forest soil, boulders and mountain streams lead to lasting impressions. Time and again the sky, mountains, waterfalls and impressive rock walls can be admired between the trees. Dead, broken-down trees reflect the power of the weather elements. A great diversity of species of plants and animals complement this ecologically valuable habitat.

## 21. Gesicht Biberg



In the opposite direction, lying south-east, is the impressive Bluemlisalp-Doldenhorn-Fisistöcke that belongs to the UNESCO World Heritage "Swiss Alps Jungfrau-Aletsch". With good eyesight, facing south, you can see the little "Biberg face" in the rock. At the foot of this wall is the boundary line of the UNESCO World Heritage. North of the bridge you will find a notice board with information on certain animal species and their habitats.

## 22. Katholische Kirche



The advent of tourism called for catholic services. In 1904 they were initially held in the former schoolhouse. In 1906 the tourist office was able to make arrangements with the Catholic pastor from Thun to hold regular church services during the summer season.

The opening of the Lötschberg railway brought numerous guests from Italy to Kandersteg and therefore the number of Catholic residents increased. So the tourist board bought a piece of land near the Oeschibach and in 1927 built the Marienkirche using material from the former school. Later this was sold to the Frutigen Catholic parish who renovated and expanded the building in 1977.

The church, with the impressive mountains in the background, invites you to stop and think about man's responsibility towards creation and also to seek to deepen one's personal faith.

## 23. «Bundesrat Adolf Ogi»-Tanne



The most famous personality from Kandersteg is Adolf Ogi, who was born here on 18th July 1942. He was a member of the Swiss Federal Council from 1987 to 2000 and from 2001 to 2007 he was a Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace to the United Nations Secretary-General. Adolf Ogi received numerous honours and awards as well as an honorary doctorate from the University of Bern. He is also an honorary citizen of Kandersteg. Today he lives with his wife Katrin, in Fraubrunnen.

## 24. Dorfmuseum



The heritage museum was opened in 1985 and has been housed in the community centre since about 1996 and is run by the "Heimatverein". It documents the history of

the village of Kandersteg. The focus is on the influence of the Lötschen and Gemmi passes as well as that of the railway construction and tourism. Place has also been given to cover industry and sport. In addition, the private scout museum is integrated here. For opening times please ask at the tourist office.

## 25. Reformierte Kirche

---



The construction of the original "Marienkapelle" dates back to 1510. Soon after, in 1528, was the introduction of the Reformation, which resulted in a steady expansion of the chapel in the following years. The paintings on the pulpit and the ceiling date back to 1623, the stained glass was given in 1627, the baptismal font was built in 1689, the gallery was installed in 1882 and the organ was added in 1896. In 1910 the church added a tower and the aisle. The old church bells of the 16th century were taken down and replaced by three new bells that harmonize well with their high tones in this simple church.

## 26. Gesichter Bire

---



The Bire landmark in Kandersteg probably has the largest rock face in the area: "The large Bire face". Within this face "the little shy one" is hiding.

The mountains around Kandersteg have the highest composition of pure limestone in Switzerland. Nevertheless the local drinking water is practically free of lime. This water can absorb calcium but it has to have been relatively long in the soil. The Oeschinensee, which is fed by rain and melted water, is the electricity and drinking water reservoir for Kandersteg. The time that the water remains in the bottom of the lake until it reaches the drinking water supply in Weissenbach, is too short for it to hold much lime. After purification the very soft water is one of the best in Switzerland.