

## STAGE 12A

*St Niklaus – Grächen/Gasenried*

<b>Start</b>	St Niklaus (1127m)
<b>Distance</b>	5km
<b>Total ascent</b>	600m
<b>Total descent</b>	70m
<b>Time</b>	2hr
<b>High point</b>	Grächen (1615m) or Gasenried (1659m)
<b>Accommodation</b>	Plentiful options in Grächen, one hotel (with matratzenlager) in Gasenried
<b>Transport options</b>	Bus (St Niklaus-Grächen or Gasenried)

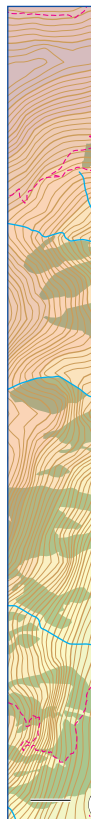
It's probably easiest to take the frequent bus from St Niklaus station to the centre Grächen.

This very short walk is an important linking stage, which brings you to the start of Stage 13B. Grächen can be a good overnight option for all onward options, with its frequent bus service to the valley.

From the village square below St Niklaus railway station walk right on Dorfstrasse and then turn left down an alley onto Talstrasse, before crossing over onto the descending road Eyeweg.

This leads to a bridge over both the main valley road and the Mattervispa river, which you cross and turn left, ignoring the Rundsweg signed right. After passing a number of houses, come to the Grächen road about 10min from the start.

Cross this and walk up a minor road, rising among more houses. It curves to the right and reaches a staggered crossroads. Once again cross over and continue ahead. When the road ends on the edge of woodland a footpath takes the onward route over a stream, then climbs among trees.



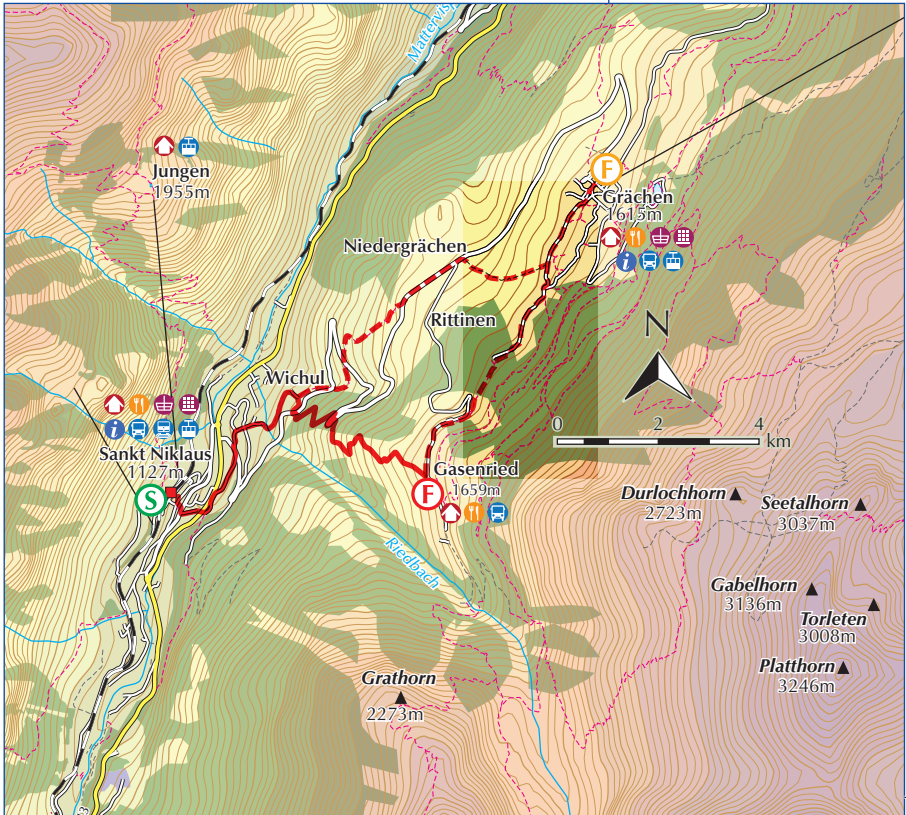
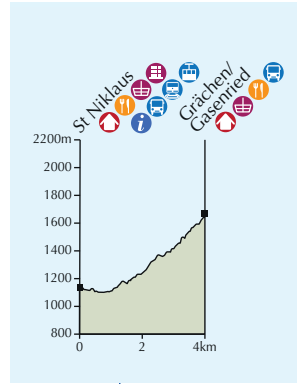


## STAGE 12A – ST NIKLAUS – GRÄCHEN/GASENRIED

On emerging from the woods this path makes a rising traverse of the steeply sloping hillside overlooking the northern outskirts of St Niklaus.

About 25min above St Niklaus come to the collection of old timber chalets of Wichul (1195m) where you bear right onto a narrow road. This curves sharply to the right about 50 metres later.

The route to Grächen slants to the left, signed 1hr 25min, rising among pinewoods, crosses and recrosses the road on the way to **Rittinen** (1455m, 1hr 15min), then continues via **Nieder-Grächen** 15min later, where







*Grächen is a small friendly resort set on a sunny terrace*

a footpath on the right next to the chapel climbs among chalets and haybarns. Turn left for the village centre.

There is plentiful accommodation in Grächen with several small hotels. It's a quiet resort and if time allows taking the lift to Hannigalp where there are fine views over the Rhône valley is a worthwhile excursion. There are also several short walks to enjoy if you are filling in time. There has been accommodation (Rosenlaui) in Gasenried, which gives a head start the next day, but check this is open and book before setting out.



### GRÄCHEN (1615M)

Sprawling along a sun-trap of a terrace on the east side of the Mattertal, about 500m above St Niklaus, this very pleasant resort attracts visitors in winter and summer. By judicious use of the Seetalhorn and Hannigalp cableways some tremendous viewpoints are easily accessible, but even without this mechanical aid, numerous footpaths give scenically rewarding walks. There are two classic long walks from here. The first is the **Balfrin Höhenweg** (or Höhenweg Saas Fee as it's also known), which makes a challenging high-level route to Saas Fee by a series of former shepherds' paths, and was opened in 1954. This takes 7–7hr 30min to complete. The other long route is the 31km **Europaweg** (opened July 1997) between Grächen and Zermatt, which now forms the last two stages of the Chamonix to Zermatt Walker's Haute Route. With plenty of accommodation choices, Grächen makes a good base for a walking holiday.

Accommodation, restaurants, shops, banks, PTT, bus (St Niklaus–Grächen). Tourist information: Tourismusbüro, 3925 Grächen (tel 027 955 60 60, [www.graechen.ch](http://www.graechen.ch)). Lower-priced accommodation: Hotel Alpha (B&B rates plus self-catering facilities (tel 027 956 13 01, [www.alpha-graechen.ch](http://www.alpha-graechen.ch)); Hotel Alpina, 10% discount for Europaweg walkers – password: 'Europaweg-Wanderer Tour Monte-Rosa' (tel 027 955 26 00, [www.hotelalpinagraechen.ch](http://www.hotelalpinagraechen.ch)); Hotel Garni Abendruh (tel 027 956 11 16); Hotel Sonne (tel 027 956 11 07); Hotel Pension Bellevue (tel 027 956 33 30), and many more.

### GASENRIED (1659M)

This low-key neighbour of Grächen is dug into the steep hillside a little further south. The village stands on two levels and consists of a number of typical Valaisian chalets and granaries, while just above it footpaths cut through steep pastures and forests to extend the views. The valley of the Riedbach torrent lies behind Gasenried, with the Ried glacier hanging in its upper reaches. As a holiday base, Gasenried would suit any walkers not interested in 'night life'. It's a quiet place with lots of opportunities for walkers.

Accommodation, restaurant, shop, PTT, bus (St Niklaus–Gasenried). Tourist information: Tourismusbüro, 3924 St Niklaus (tel 027 956 36 63). Hotel Alpenrösli, 28 beds, 10 matratzenlager places; open June–October (tel 027 956 17 81, [bnb-alpenroesli.ch](http://bnb-alpenroesli.ch)).



## STAGE 13

*St Niklaus – Europa Hut*

<b>Start</b>	St Niklaus (1127m)
<b>Distance</b>	12km
<b>Total ascent</b>	1300m
<b>Total descent</b>	160m
<b>Time</b>	5hr
<b>High point</b>	2327m on the trail before the Europa Hut
<b>Accommodation</b>	Herbriggen, Europa Hut
<b>Alternative route</b>	Stage 13B from Grächen

Alternative routes are discussed in the section introduction. This is the preferred of several good alternatives. After the recent long days and before the long finale into Zermatt it gives a slightly shorter day and allows time to take in the views and the fine hut and even drop down from the hut and check out the bridge some 100m below before the crossing tomorrow.

From the St Niklaus station, walk down to the village square and turn right, then immediately left down a narrow street to the old main road. Turn right and walk upvalley almost to the outskirts of the village (300 metres) just before a roundabout with a giant 'St Niklaus', where you turn to the right onto a minor road 'Birchmatten' heading slightly uphill.

The way now follows what is apparently the 'old' road through the valley, bringing you alongside the railway line and passing some typical old Valaisian houses, as well as more modern buildings based on traditional architectural styles.

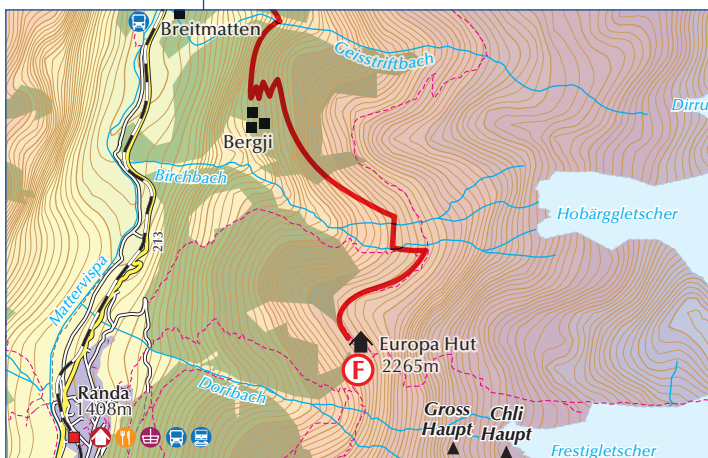
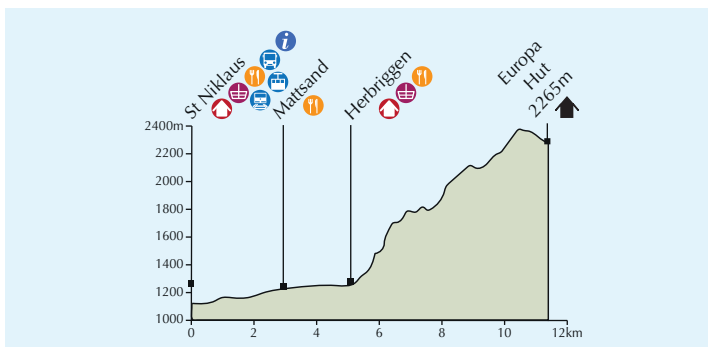
In 20min come to a group of old buildings and a small chapel; this is Ze Schwidernu (1163m). Continue ahead for 700 metres, to cross the Blattbach stream which cascades from the right, with the Topali Hut seen as a tiny silver box perched on a cliff 1400m above. In 40min briefly join the main road to arrive in Mattsand.











Drop down to the right crossing both the railway line and river to gain a fine view of the Breithorn upvalley. The road now skirts a large settlement reservoir, and when the tarmac road bears left round the southern end, go directly ahead on a continuing track. About 1min along this track pass a small picnic area on the left, and on the right a view up to a series of cascades pouring through the Tummigbach gorge. Shortly after this emerge from a wooded area to open meadows and





## STAGE 13 – ST NIKLAUS – EUROPA HUT

old haybarns, the village of Herbriggen across the river, and another lovely view of the Breithorn (1hr 20min).

### THE BREITHORN

A near neighbour of the Matterhorn, the Breithorn is a massive snow and ice mountain of 4164m, with a 3km-long summit ridge. By its standard route (the SSW Flank) it is said to be one of the easiest of the alpine 4000ers to climb. But it also has some difficult and dangerous lines, especially on the North Face. It was first climbed (by today's voie normale) in 1813.

At the far end of the meadow the track forks, with the left branch crossing the river to **Herbriggen** 1260m (accommodation, refreshments). Pass under the main road then up into the village.

From Herbriggen (1260m), take the signed path in the middle of the village and pass between houses.

*The square and church in the centre of the village of Herbriggen*





Cross meadows and climb into the forest and turn right at the path junction (1316m). This is the Europaweg path from Grächen (see Stage 13B).

The route climbs steeply before crossing the Fallzug stream and continues climbing in woods. After 30min, keep right where a path heads directly up the hillside.

Continue on the new trail and cross the Geisstriftbächji stream. Traverse towards the farm buildings of **Bergji**, but well before, keep left and follow the steep zig-zags to Houschbiel (2038m). The path traverses steep hillsides with a final steep zig-zag section to join the old Europaweg route at 2327m. Turn right and continue to the Europa Hut.

The trail after the Geisstrift has been newly created and is still likely to be evolving. We have not yet checked it on the ground. In the event of difficulties or closures, it is recommended either to return to Herbriggen or descend from Geisstrift to Breitmatten, continue along the valley to Randa and take the well-signed paths to the suspension bridge and then the hut (see below).

**EUROPA HUT (2265m, 6hr 30min)** Owned by the Randa gemeente, staffed from mid-June to mid-October, 42 places, full meals service (Tel 027 967 82 47, [www.europaweg.ch](http://www.europaweg.ch)). The hut is a fine timber-built refuge, opened in 1999, with views directly across the valley to the Weisshorn and upvalley to the Breithorn, Klein Matterhorn, Mettelhorn and Schalihorn.

### Alternative route via Randa

To walk from Herbriggen to Randa (see Stages 13A/14A) descend into the village. Turn left, south and after 5min cross in turn the road, railway line and Matternvispa, and turn left. Head south in woods and re-cross the river at **Breitmatten**. Walk along the riverside (the last 1.5km is a dusty quarry road) until Randa, then cross the railway line and soon emerge at the station (5km and +150m from Herbriggen).



### STAGE 13 – ST NIKLAUS – EUROPA HUT



To climb to the Europa Hut, turn right at the station, then left into Randa village (limited restaurants and even more limited shop). Walk through the village and as the houses begin to thin and the path steepens, turn right at **Z'Oberhyschinu**. Follow Europahütte signs through the woods – either climb the south bank of the Dorfbachli or cross to the north. If taking the south side come to the highly impressive 500m hängebrücke, cross over and climb for 40min to reach the hut (2265m).

*The Europa Hut,  
overnight halt on  
the Europaweg*



## STAGE 13B

*Grächen – Europa Hut*

<b>Start</b>	Grächen (1615m) (or St Niklaus (1127m))
<b>Distance</b>	16km
<b>Total ascent</b>	1200m
<b>Total descent</b>	550m
<b>Time</b>	6hr 30min
<b>High point</b>	2327m on the trail before the Europa Hut
<b>Accommodation</b>	Europa Hut (2264m)
<b>Alternative route</b>	The valley route via Herbriggen (Stage 13A)

The newly devised routing is very different from the older version of the Europaweg, which was formidable. The new version is still challenging walking, but without the exposure to rockfall of the former route. It takes 2hr to climb from St Niklaus to Grächen, slightly less to Gasenried, but it is likely that you either walked up the previous afternoon or took the bus. The route continues on tracks after Gasenried before dropping steeply through forest towards the village of Herbriggen then ‘bouncing back’ and climbing over 1000m to the Europa Hut on a new path. Some parts of the descent are slippery and new routes are being devised here, too. Changes are likely so ask locally.

**St Niklaus to Grächen**

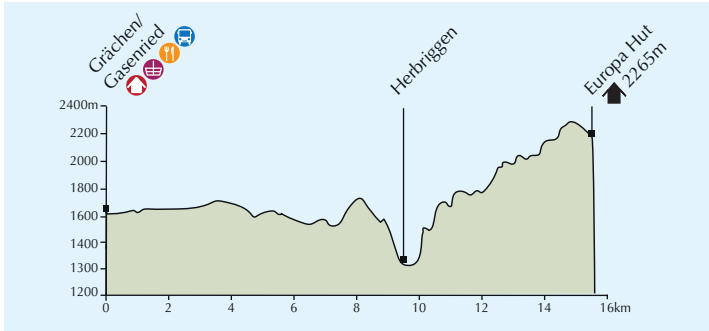
It is probably easiest to take the frequent bus from St Niklaus station to the centre Grächen.

**To walk to Grächen/Gasenried, see Stage 12A**

There is plentiful accommodation in Grächen with several small hotels. It's a quiet resort and if time allows take the lift to Hannigalp where there are fine views over the Rhône valley. There has been accommodation (Rosenlauri) in Gasenried, which gives a head start the next day, but check this is open before setting out.



## STAGE 13B – GRÄCHEN – EUROPA HUT



From the centre of Grächen head south on the main pathway towards Gasenried passing the last houses and hotels of Grächen before walking through woodland to **Gasenried** (1659m, 35min) and continue through the village to the Schalbettu chapel (1685m, 45min).

Head downhill on signs for the re-routed Route 27/ Europaweg, and cross the **Riedbach** stream. Continue down the track, which eventually becomes a path. Cross a rocky prow (1590m, 1hr 5min) and rise and fall around the 1600m contour. Drop to a junction (1518m, 1hr 30min) and continue on a level path before dropping down to cross the lower Grosse Grabbe gully, an obviously hazardous place so cross quickly (1500m, 1hr 50min).

Cross the gully and climb steeply for 150m, with significant and very helpful rope aid. This area is under cliffs and is muddy and slippery so care is required. Cross a log bridge with a gate on it (1700m, 2hr 15min) and start to descend a woodland path.

*The Ried glacier drains into a valley behind Gasenried*





Pass a splendid waterfall at 1550m, 2hr 25min and soon come to the path junction above Herbruggen (1316m, 3hr, +380m, -680m). **Herbruggen** is 50m and 10min walk below.

The route climbs steeply before crossing the Fallzug stream and continues climbing in woods. At 1670m pass a right turn that descends to Breitmatten and 5min later, keep right where a path to the left heads directly up the hillside.

The left hand path heads 1200m directly up to Galenberg before taking an old and damaged stretch of Europaweg to the hut. The path may not be open and takes c4hr and 9km to reach the hut after one of the sternest climbs imaginable. Best left alone.

Continue on the new trail and cross the Geisstriftbächji stream. Traverse towards the farm buildings of **Bergji**, but well before keep left and follow the steep zig-zags to Houschbiel (2038m). The path traverses steep hillsides and joins the old Europaweg route at 2327m. Turn right and continue to the Europa Hut.

The trail after the Geisstrift has been newly created and is likely still to be evolving. We have not yet checked it. In the event of difficulties or closures, it is recommended either to return to Herbruggen or descend from Geisstrift to Breitmatten, continue along the valley to Randa and take the well-signed paths to the suspension bridge and then the hut.

**EUROPA HUT (2265m, 6hr 30min)** Owned by the Randa gemeente, staffed from mid-June to mid-October, 42 places, full meals service (Tel 027 967 82 47, [www.europaweg.ch](http://www.europaweg.ch)). The hut is a fine timber-built refuge, opened in 1999, with views directly across the valley to the Weisshorn and upvalley to the Breithorn, Klein Matterhorn, Mettelhorn and Schalihorn.





