

# Beginners' Klettersteig course

by Ian Thorpe and Molly Joffe

Many months of excited anticipation came to an end in August 2019 when I arrived at the welcoming Landgasthof Seisenbergklamm in Weissbach bei Lofer to meet my fellow students, Molly and Martin from California, and Louise and Richard from Edinburgh, and our excellent Bergführer, Bernhard Hotz.



*Zahme Gams klettersteig - Molly Joffe*

We had changeable, generally cool weather all week, with occasionally damp rock to contend with, but we managed a full programme of activity. Safety issues were clearly explained and constantly referred to, with the help of the *Sicher am Berg (Klettersteig)* booklet issued to us all.

Members of our group varied in their climbing experience, and Bernhard did a great job of accommodating varying attitudes to challenge and exposure. We started on the local Klettersteig route (Zahme Gams, B/C), conveniently a very short walk from our accommodation. This was a perfect introductory route, but not without difficulties for absolute beginners. Completion, somewhat slowly it must be said, gave a real sense of satisfaction. We finished the afternoon with a relaxing hike to the local gorge, Seisenbergklamm, and enjoyed the beauty of its caverns and water rapids.

Day 2 was the most challenging from the point of view of the weather, with drizzle and the threat of thunderstorms, and our outing to the other Weissbach route, Weisse Gams (rated D), was curtailed. We effected a tactical retreat partway along the route, abseiling to the valley floor, and withdrew to discuss the virtues of so doing.

The following day involved a ten-hour hike to experience the different challenges of the kind of Klettersteig route encountered on a mountain trek in contrast to the local, sporting routes. We parked at 760m near Saalfelden, and first hiked to the Peter-Wiechenthaler-Hütte at 1707m. Above the hut, we followed the Wildenthal Klettersteig route to the summit of

Persailhorn (2347m). We were rewarded with sunshine and magnificent views from the top. The descent was challenging in places and took its toll, with aching muscles and sore joints in evidence the following day when, nevertheless, we returned in improved weather and completed the Weisse Gams Klettersteig.

Our last day was spent on consolidation work at Zahme Gams, using Klemheist tape knots in slings of varying lengths to provide footings and security on the trickier sections of the all-important steel cable. Afterwards there was an optional excursion to ride bikes to Lamprechtsofen, one of the deepest known caves, and tour its impressive interior labyrinths.

All too soon it was over, but we left with the confidence of having acquired the skills necessary to further explore the world of Klettersteig. Thank you from all of us to Bernhard, to the family owners and staff of the Landgasthof, and to AAC(UK) for financial support.



*Weisse Gams klettersteig-Richard Reeve*



*Weisse Gams klettersteig-Richard Reeve*

*The group at Peter-Wiechenthaler Hütte - Molly Joffe*

