

# **SWITZERLAND'S JURA CREST TRAIL**



#### **About the Author**

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Based in Sussex, Ali continues to venture into Switzerland on a regular basis, to visit the Jura, a place very close to her heart. Having lived in the southern part of the Jura for some time, Ali is very familiar with the local area and enjoys summer and winter activities on the mountains around Lac du Joux in particular.

## **SWITZERLAND'S JURA CREST TRAIL**

**A TWO WEEK TREK FROM ZURICH TO GENEVA**

**by Ali Rowsell**

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[www.cicerone.co.uk](http://www.cicerone.co.uk)

Printed in China on behalf of Latitude Press Ltd  
 A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.  
 All photographs are by the author unless otherwise stated.



Route mapping by Lovell Johns [www.lovelljohns.com](http://www.lovelljohns.com)  
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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. Any updates that we know of for this guide will be on the Cicerone website ([www.cicerone.co.uk/945/updates](http://www.cicerone.co.uk/945/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.

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, although naturally we have reviewed them closely in the light of local knowledge as part of the preparation of this guide. There are other accommodation providers besides those mentioned in this guide: the suggestions listed here represent a selection of the more convenient options along the route.

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*Front cover:* On the ridge descending into Saint-Cergue (Stage 13)

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### Acknowledgements

The process of writing a book such as this is a complex task, made far easier by a number of people who helped along the way. Many local Swiss, in town and on the trail, helped make my days in their country very special. Some patiently gave directions or passed on their knowledge of the local areas, some wanted to converse and practice their English, which brightened the days when walking alone. Ian, a fellow International Mountain Leader, in particular provided me with detailed in-country mountain information, alternative routes, local specialities and alternative camping locations. I would like to thank Clair, Sofie and Laura for joining me on many Jura rambles and for keeping me company and entertained along the route. Last but not least, I would like to thank those who inspired me to take on this venture: my aunt, Patsy, who enlightened me into the art of travel writing; my parents, Sue and Dick, alongside Lara for encouraging me to persevere and let others know about the places I am passionate about.

## Mountain safety

Every mountain walk has its dangers, and those described in this guidebook are no exception. All who walk or climb in the mountains should recognise this and take responsibility for themselves and their companions along the way. The author and publisher have made every effort to ensure that the information contained in this guide was correct when it went to press, but, except for any liability that cannot be excluded by law, they cannot accept responsibility for any loss, injury or inconvenience sustained by any person using this book.

### International distress signal *(emergency only)*

Six blasts on a whistle (and flashes with a torch after dark) spaced evenly for one minute, followed by a minute's pause. Repeat until an answer is received. The response is three signals per minute followed by a minute's pause.

### Helicopter rescue

The following signals are used to communicate with a helicopter:

Help needed:  
raise both arms  
above head to  
form a 'Y'



Help not needed:  
raise one arm  
above head, extend  
other arm downward



### Emergency telephone numbers

OCVS (Organisation Cantonale Valaisanne de Secours): tel 144

If telephoning from the UK the dialling code for Switzerland is 0041

### Weather reports

tel 162 (in French, German or Italian), [www.meteoschweiz.ch/en](http://www.meteoschweiz.ch/en)

**Mountain rescue can be very expensive – be adequately insured.**



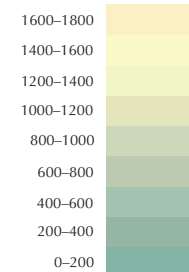
## ROUTE SUMMARY TABLE

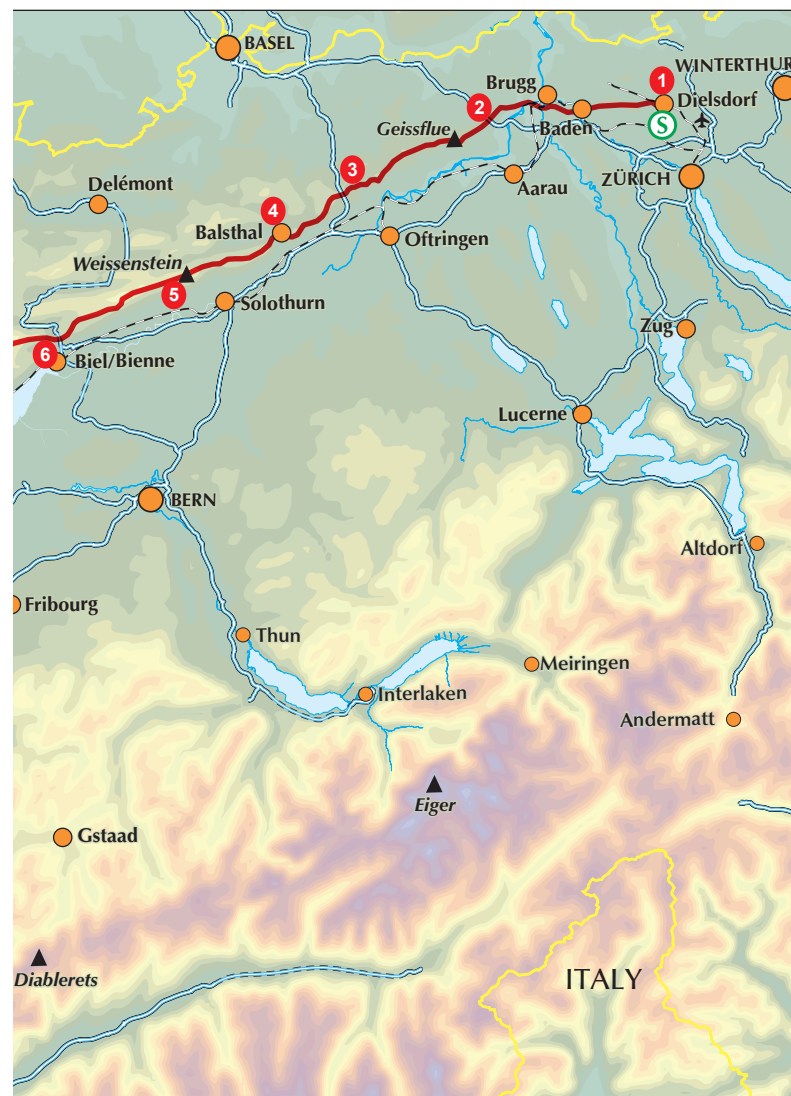
Stage	Start	Time	Distance (km)	Total ascent (m)	Page
1	Dielsdorf	9hr 30min	30	1120	46
2	Neustalden	9hr	29	1170	58
3	Hauenstein	7hr	21	1000	67
4	Balsthal	6hr 30min	19	1250	77
5	Weissenstein	7hr 45min	24	800	85
6	Frinvillier	6hr 30min	18	1300	92
7	Chasseral	5hr 45min	19	680	99
8	Vue des Alpes	6hr 45min	22	760	105
9	Noiraigue	10hr 30min	32	1700	113
10	Sainte-Croix	7hr	24	850	123
11	Vallorbe	4hr 30min	12	820	133
12	Col du Mollendruz	5hr 30min	17	950	145
13	Col du Marchairuz	5hr	17	480	153
14	Saint-Cergue	6hr 45min	26	800	162
<b>Total: Dielsdorf to Nyon</b>		<b>98hr</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>13680</b>	

## Symbols used on route maps



### Relief in metres







*The end of the journey at Lake Geneva (Stage 14)*

## INTRODUCTION

*View east from the highest peak of the range, Mont Tendre (Stage 12)*



The Jura Crest Trail, one of seven Swiss national long-distance walking trails, delivers wondrous panoramas as you ascend, traverse and descend summits and mountain passes along the 310km trail. The day-to-day journey can be a challenge, with up to 1700m height gain in one day, but when you take in the immense views of the Jura range, the peaks and ridges of the Alps on the horizon, and across the Rhône valley, the sense of achievement more than compensates. Exertion apart, the trail does provide an enjoyable and relaxed trek as due to its location and access points, should you wish to, you can descend at any time.

That is, if you can pull yourself away. The route is a rolling showcase of natural features including deep gorges, mountain streams, glistening lakes (including the largest mountain lake in Switzerland above 1000m), tranquil forests, extensive alpine pastures and craggy exposed cliffs. A great pleasure of the Jura Crest Trail is derived from the many changes in its character as it moves from the north-east to the south-west. Throughout the Jura, nature reserves and protected areas are enforced to ensure wildlife and flowering plants are safeguarded. Made up of limestone, perfect growing conditions exist for a wide variety



### INFORMATION AT A GLANCE

- **Currency:** Swiss Franc (CHF), although the euro is commonly accepted, especially at large hotels.
- **Formalities:** Western European and UK passport holders do not require a visa to enter Switzerland, whereas citizens of Canada, the USA, Australia and New Zealand can stay for up to three months without a visa.
- **Health precautions:** Healthcare in Switzerland is private, therefore expect to pay if you require treatment. It is important to be adequately insured. The European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) grants access to healthcare at a reduced cost, although it is possible that arrangements may change after the UK leaves the EU.
- **International dialling code:** Contacting Switzerland from the UK using a phone, dial 0041, ensuring you ignore the initial 0 on the remaining telephone number. Dialling a phone number in the UK from Switzerland is the same, except the dialling code is 0044.
- **Languages:** Two languages are spoken along the Jura Crest Trail: German from Stages 1–5, and French from Stages 6–14, although English is understood and spoken throughout.
- **Phones:** Phone boxes can be found throughout Switzerland, many of which are operated by phone card, which can be purchased at post offices, train stations and convenience stores.
- **Tourist information:** Switzerland Travel Centre is the main tourism company based in the UK, working directly with Switzerland Tourism and Swiss Federal Railways. See [www.switzerlandtravelcentre.co.uk](http://www.switzerlandtravelcentre.co.uk).

of flowering plants, and wildflowers are a particular point of interest here with over 950 flowering plant species.

### THE JURA CREST TRAIL

The Jura Crest Trail, linking Zurich with Geneva, is also known as the Jura High Route (Swiss Route 5). At 310km in length and with over

13,500m of ascents on easy hiking paths, the trail requires a medium level of fitness. The route passes through two language regions – German and French – with the language border lying at Montagne de Romont (Stage 5); as the border divides cantons, the language merges and you will find some German-speaking on the French side and vice

versa. The Jura Crest Trail interlinks through two cities along the route – Baden and Brugg – enabling access to a range of accommodation and transport to assist with the planning of your hike. Alongside mountain villages and passes, with bus routes and simple accommodation, there are also descents through small towns where provisions can be picked up on route.

The trail is regarded as the Swiss classic long-distance path, with way-markers plotting the route as early as 1905, making the route fairly easy to navigate. Transport provisions at the beginning and end of the route are very good. The start point, Dielsdorf (15km from Zurich), and the finish point, Nyon (26km from Geneva), are both near to international airports and

train stations that are connected with most countries in Europe. Regional trains are easily linked with local trains and post buses to provide widespread and regular transport from most of the start and finish points of each stage, as well as along the trail where small towns and mountain passes are crossed.

The Jura mountains form a range of ancient folded strata creating an arc from the Rhine valley in the north-east to the Rhône valley south-west, along the border between Switzerland and France. The word Jura originates from the Latin term *juria*, meaning 'forest'. The Jura has also been regarded as the Jurassic Alps because of the geological timescale in which they evolved. Characteristic of the Jura are combs,

Looking east towards the Lägern ridge from Baden (Stage 1)



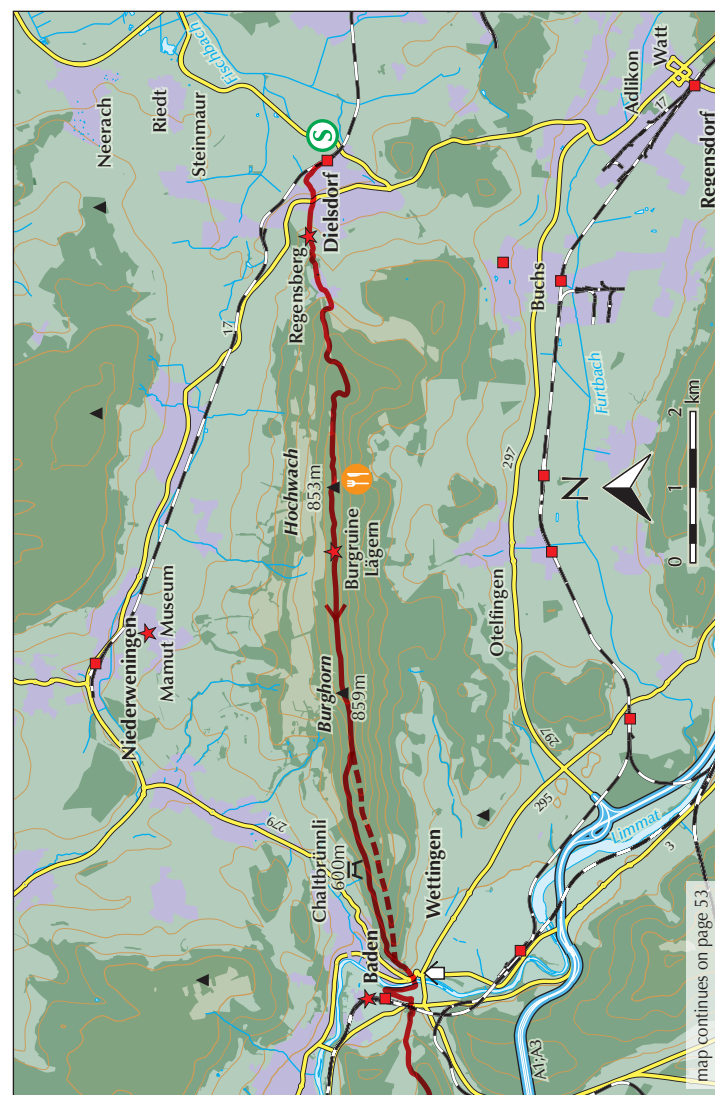
# STAGE 1

## Dielsdorf to Neustalden

<b>Start point</b>	Dielsdorf (428m)
<b>Distance</b>	30km
<b>Total ascent</b>	1120m
<b>Total descent</b>	950m
<b>Grade</b>	Moderate to hard
<b>Time</b>	9hr 30min
<b>Terrain</b>	An exposed ridgeline; the Burghorn path is categorised as Bergweg and is narrow and rocky
<b>High point</b>	Hochwacht (849m)
<b>Accommodation</b>	Jugendherberge Baden (Baden) 12km, Jugendherberge Brugg (Brugg) 25km, Gasthof Bären Bözberg (Neustalden) 31km
<b>Transport options</b>	Trains to Dielsdorf from Rapperswil and Niederweningen (regular, daily), linking with the regional Swiss railway line; buses to Regensberg (hourly); buses from Neustalden to Brugg, Frick and Bözberg (regular, daily)

The first stage of the Jura Crest Trail is arduous, mainly due to its length rather than the terrain. However, it is a pretty stage characterised by towns and villages along the route such as the medieval hilltop settlement of Regensberg, and the lively cities of Baden and Brugg. The route is interspersed with gentle slopes, meandering rivers and lush vineyards and the area has been famous since Roman times for having Switzerland's most mineral-rich springs.

**Dielsdorf** is a small town providing access to the Jura Crest Trail via the numerous transport options located in the centre of the conurbation. Famed for its horse-racing track, the leading equestrian centre in Switzerland, as well as for having a 400-year-old oak tree with an 11.5m-high trunk in the nearby Schwenkelbergwald forest, Dielsdorf provides ample amenities and accommodation options to begin the Jura Crest Trail.

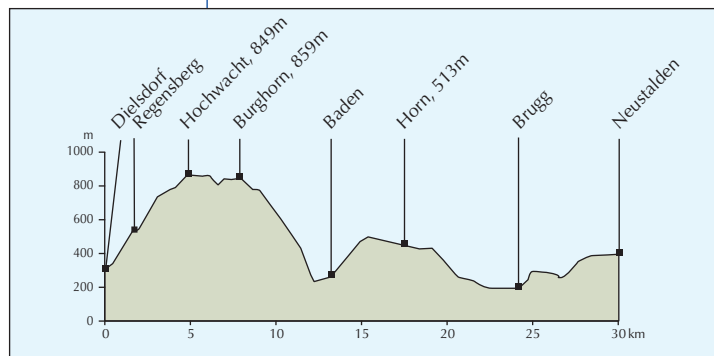


This is the official start to the route.

From the train station at **Dielsdorf**, turn right as you exit where a yellow Wanderweg (German word for trail) post with several yellow hiking signposts can be found. ◀ Take the road west gradually ascending to the main road, walking approximately 100 metres to the yellow hiking path sign identifying the footpath (named Bahnhofweg) right, through a housing estate. Follow the footpath for 250 metres, continuing straight on the path, veering around to the left, cross over onto a cobbled road that goes behind the restaurant and guesthouse Löwen.

Follow the path along the pavement until you ascend to the main road. Turn right and cross over the pedestrian crossing, heading onto a narrow cobbled lane ascending steeply before continuing up a narrow cobblestoned footpath named Vorderer Breistelweg to garden allotments. Cross over the paved road to continue on a gravel footpath between small isolated orchards, vineyards and allotments. As you near the top of the path, veer right onto Breistelweg passing a small nature reserve as you ascend steeply to the village of **Regensberg**.

**Regensberg** has a long-standing history as a hill-top fortified settlement. It was founded by Baron Lüthold in 1245, but in the following decades relations between the city of Zurich and the barons soured, as did relations between the barons



and the Habsburgs due to conflict over the ownership of lands in the local area. War ensued with the combined Zurich and Habsburg forces victorious and, in 1302, the barons sold Regensberg to the Habsburgs. The appearance of the town belies this shaky start. Today it is a picture-perfect example of Swiss-German architecture, with Schloss Regensberg, the manor house, sitting at its centre.

*Approaching the medieval village of Regensberg*

Enter the town at the east end, passing into the main square of the Oberburg (upper castle) and water well where you have full view of the Rundturn (round tower), the only remnant of original castle. As you near the castle ruins, turn left and pass through the gate between the Oberburg and Unterburg (lower castle), following the cobble road downhill to the main road. Cross over heading south-west gradually ascending the paved road (Staldernstrasse) for 250 metres, veering right before taking the footpath directly north. The path is narrow and rocky, sweeping left through woodland before joining a



The ridgeline is great for trekking in spring and autumn because of the abundance of wildflowers and mostly deciduous woodland.

gravel road separating the forest on the left and an alpine pasture on the right. At the top of the clearing there is a picnic area and fire pit, before the road narrows slightly into a forest road, gradually ascending. Follow the yellow markers, turning right at the T-junction to join a more defined road up to the **Skyguide Lägern Radar station** and **Restaurant Hochwacht** (853m).

The road narrows into a hiking path with some areas of mountain trail (red/white signs on yellow hiking paths) along the forested ridgeline towards the Burghorn. The trail is partly difficult to access due to steep, narrow and sometimes exposed tops. You need good footwear, a head for heights in a few locations and to be aware of the dangers of slipping or sudden changes in the weather along this ridgeline. ◀ After approximately 500 metres you pass the **Burguine Lägern**.

A metal information plaque on a wall at **Burguine Lägern** details the ruins of a hilltop castle and fortification, used during local feuds of the 13th century. During this time, a small settlement would have existed here, alongside fortifications for potential threats in the area.

Continue along the ridge to the exposed summit of the **Burghorn** (859m) where commanding views can be taken in of the majestic Alps to the south and the rolling Jura to the north. Gradually descend into the woods along the Lägern saddle on a wider footpath until you reach a warning sign informing you of dangerous exposed steep sections ahead. The Jura Crest Trail begins its gradual descent right, down the footpath.

#### Alternative route along the ridgeline

There is an option here to take the mountain trail ahead, along the ridgeline to Baden, but it is steep and very exposed. At 3km it is shorter than the main route, but the terrain means that it takes a similar amount of time. This route is not too dissimilar to a British grade 1 scramble, whereby the use of hands and feet may be needed due to

the knife-edge ridge and level of exposure. This is classed as a red-white mountain trail (Bergweg).

Take the footpath down through the woods then onto a gravel forest road past the picnic and fire pit site at **Chaltbrünnli** (600m). After 3km the forest road reaches a hairpin bend to the right with isolated views over Baden. Take the footpath descending to the left of the bend, to the top of a long set of stairs with views of Baden's historic centre. Descend to the main road, passing the historic museum of **Baden** before continuing down to the underpass that brings you out at the Holzbrücke, a traditional wooden covered bridge that was built in 1809, passing over the River Limmat. ▶

**Baden** is a mineral-rich thermal spring town and cultural centre, revived from its industrial past. It was popular in Roman times, when the town was known as 'Aqua Helveticae'. Today, at just 20 minutes from Zurich, it is a popular commuter town.

Brugg is 9km from this point with a walking time of two hours.

*A covered bridge leading over the river into Baden*



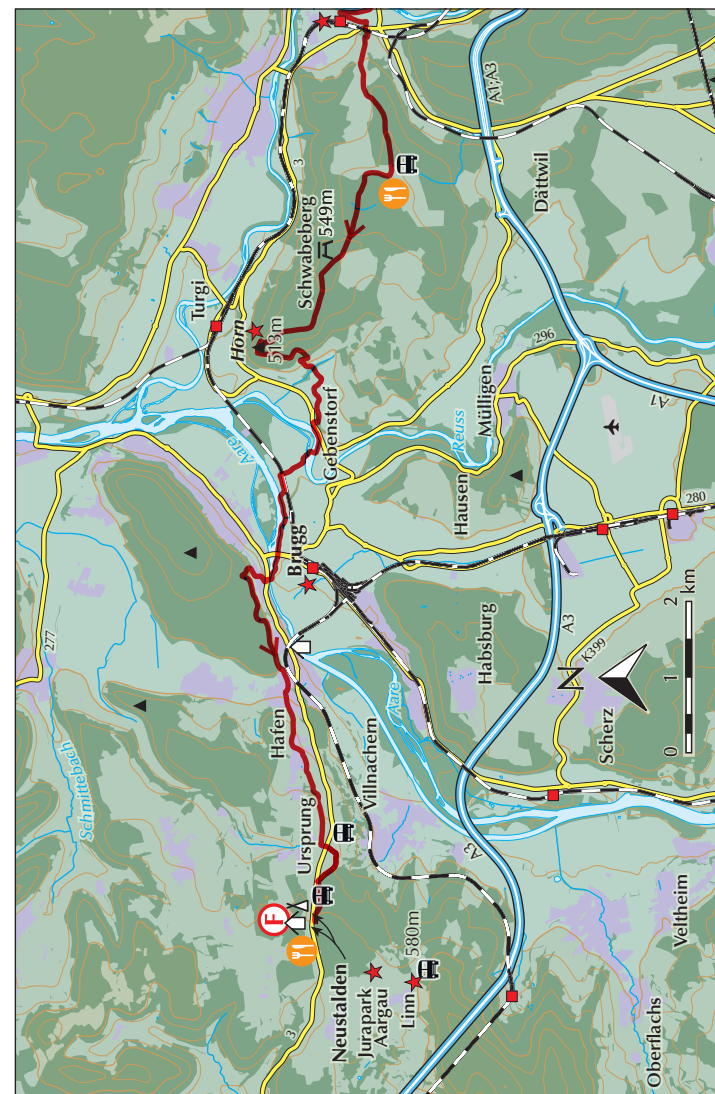
Nineteen sulphurous springs bubbling at a temperature of 47°C can be visited along with other sights such as the Villa Langmatt Museum, Lenzburg Castle and the traditional covered bridges over the River Limmat.

**Jugendherberge Baden:** Swiss Youth Hostel with self-catering facilities, low-cost. Kanalstrasse 7, 5400 Baden, tel +41 56 221 67 36, [www.youthhostel.ch](http://www.youthhostel.ch). To reach the hostel turn left before the bridge, continuing along the river for 400 metres.

Turn right onto Kronegasse, heading north for 300 metres along the River Limmat, before ascending the stairs to join Badstrasse. The route continues south-west passing through Baden's pedestrianised old town before continuing south on cobble-stoned Stadturnstrasse. Walk through Stadtturm Baden, and iconic clocktower, turning right onto Obere Gasse ascending up to Strasse Niklausstiege, a narrow pathway by house number 35 Obere Gasse. There is a hiking trail signpost at this cross-roads, although it is not very clear which route to take. Ascend a long narrow stairway up to Stein Castle (457m), a ruined tower with commanding views over the city and the Burghorn ridgeline back towards Dielsdorf.

Descend the pathway west, meeting the main road (Rütistrasse) towards Allmend. Gradually ascend onto Allmendstrasse then veer left onto Brennttrainstrasse. Turn left gradually climbing the gravel forest road for 1.2km before arriving at **Restaurant Baldegg** (566m), where there is public transport back into Baden. Turn right onto a farm track to join a paved road up to a five-way junction. Cross straight over, taking the footpath into the mixed woodland for 1km to the picnic and fire pit site just north of **Schwabeberg** (549m). Continue on the forest trail for another 2km towards the spot height and viewpoint at **Horn** (513m). ◀

From the viewpoint at Horn, **alluvial fan sites** are visible on the riverbank. These have been



The 180-degree view from Brugg to Kirchdorf is spectacular, taking in the confluence of the Aare, Limmat and Reuss rivers.





*Picnic and fire pit locations as well as swimming areas and diving boards are found on the banks of the River Aare*

preserved in a protection park at the 'water castle' (Wasserschloss). This dynamic ecological area sees around one-third of Switzerland's surface runoff pass through this point, therefore preservation from erosion and further damage is of high importance.

Descend the zigzagging footpath through the mixed woodland, passing a Parcoursvita (fitness trail) before reaching a gravel forest road. Turn right, following the path down to the town of Gebenstorf, meeting the paved road. Cross over the road onto a footpath descending steps down across a stream before ascending into a housing estate. Turn right and follow the road until you reach the main road, veering right again, through the main centre of **Gebenstorf** where several restaurants and cafés can be found. Turn left onto Unterriedenstrasse, passing high-rise housing estates before turning right before the bus stop, descending a narrow footpath, down steps through woodland to the main road (Ländstrasse). Using the pedestrian crossing, follow the yellow hiking path

signs pointing behind the bus shelter to descend steps to the **River Reuss**.

Follow the riverside footpath, crossing two footbridges to re-join the main road, Ländstrasse, to the crossroads. Continue straight, passing under the railway bridge before turning left onto Mühlemattstrasse. Upon reaching the last house, turn right onto a narrow footpath down to the **River Aare**. Continue upstream on a wide footpath, passing under the main road before the footpath detours inland, to join the Falkengasse road passing into the northern end of Brugg. Upon reaching the small pedestrianised area by the side of Hauptstrasse, you have two options. Continue north, passing by the Schwarzer Turm building and over the River Aare, to continue on the Jura Crest Trail. Or to visit the centre of **Brugg** turn left to reach the Rathausplatz and train station. ►

The town of **Brugg** is situated on the banks of the River Aare. The Romans were the first to bridge the Aareschlucht gorge in 1064, creating a meeting point for important routes throughout this part of Switzerland. Brugg is a stop-off point for amenities, accommodation and onward travel. There are several sights in Brugg, in particular the Vindonissa Museum which houses excavations of the only legionnaire's camp in Switzerland, where you can experience and learn about the Roman's habitation of the town and their day-to-day lives.

**Jugendherberge Brugg: Swiss Youth Hostel with self-catering facilities, low-cost. Im Hof 11, 5200 Brugg, tel +41 56 441 10 20, [www.youthhostel.ch](http://www.youthhostel.ch).**

Cross over the road at the traffic lights, turning left to a small alleyway that takes you past a castle tower ruin in among houses. ► Follow a set of steps, turning right at the top. Follow the road around to the left onto Hansfluhsteig, a cobbled road that climbs steeply into the forest. More steps follow that continue to get progressively more spaced apart until you reach the unpaved

For reasonably priced accommodation, continue west for 1km along Spiegelgasse, handrailing the River Aare to the historic listed building of the Jugendherberge Brugg.

Ursprung is 5km from this point with a walking time of 1hr 10min.

To the south, there is a stunning view straight down the Aare river valley, with the Bernese Oberland Alps in the background.

forest road. Turn immediately left onto a forest path along the top of the ridge overlooking Brugg. The footpath rejoins the forest road to pass a lumberyard, then back onto a footpath that meets a Parcoursvita activity area and car park. Turn onto the paved road, heading west along Parkstrasse to the main road. Turn right then immediately left across the pedestrian crossing onto Gäbistrasse, progressively ascending the road as it goes from paved to gravel to the village of **Hafen**. Follow the yellow sign-posted route through the village onto an unpaved farm road, Hinterer Hafen. ◀ Join the main road at the village of **Ursprung** where you will find a bus stop and restaurant Vier-Linden.

From the bus stop at Ursprung follow the hiking path signs towards Hauenstein south-west along the farm road Chilemättli. As you reach a fork, take the right-hand path with commanding views dropping away over the River Aare basin and the Alps. Follow the path along the tree line, through a working cattle farm just before reaching the main road. Turn left onto a forest track through

Brugg Old Town



mixed, but mostly deciduous woodland which becomes progressively more coniferous as you continue. The path gradually ascends up to a five-way junction, with a small stream naturally digging a re-entrant to your left. Take the second exit on your left to join an unpaved forest road for 400 metres through a managed forest, mostly coniferous, reaching a crossroads, where woodcarvings left by the foresters can be seen. Turn right, heading north for 400 metres to reach Neustalden, the end point of Stage 1. A basic campsite and guesthouse are located in the small village. ▶

*A view of the River Aare, with the Alps in the background, from Ursprung*

Another option is to take public transport back to Brugg, if you wish to stay in alternative accommodation.

Gasthof Bären Bözberg: hostel, campsite and restaurant. Book in advance. Neustalden 6, 5225 Bözberg, tel +41 56 441 15 65, [gasthof@baeren-boezberg.ch](mailto:gasthof@baeren-boezberg.ch), [www.baeren-boezberg.ch](http://www.baeren-boezberg.ch).