



PAT'S PADDLING GUIDE TO THE NORTHERN ALPS

Pat Thoyts

Last Updated July 1993

Paddling in Austria

A lovely place to go. Big rivers, lots of water a nice campsite good beer and not that much more expensive than France, though it did seem to be a lot more until the total was added up at the end.

We got a nice cheap ferry to Calais and going via Rhiems-Metz it took us about 12 hours in a car. Augsburg to Landeck was about 4 hours. In the meantime, the other car discovered that in France a speeding ticket is FFr600! So be careful out there!

The best plan seems to be to camp at Landeck for the first week, as this provides a good central base for many rivers. Once you have an idea of what the rivers are like you can then move onto other areas of this region. On the way down, stop at Augsburg (near München) for a play, and to get used to paddling again. The water at THIS artificial site is a lot cleaner than that at Holme-Pierrepoint.

About this Guide

The main purpose of this guide is to provide a current and easy to produce canoeing guide for the club. I've only been to this area once, so the information is not as comprehensive as that for the French Alps, but what is here should be accurate. Obviously things change from year to year and you need to remain alert when paddling. If something has changed, a new barrage, or a landslip etc, then don't sit around wingeing, write it down and tell me about it later, and it'll be corrected in the next guide.

As the guide has grown a bit I have had to split it into regions. I now have separate French Alps, Corsica, Austrian Alps guides and some minor notes for Italy and a few other places (eg: some Chile, British Columbia). If you want some of these, ask me (see below).

Each river has a header telling you, after the name of the section, how long the described section is, what the general grade is, how long it took us to paddle it and which year I last paddled it. The year is partly for my own sake, and partly because I was asked to indicate clearly when the information on that river was last updated. {92} means I paddled it in 1992. {} means I never paddled it at all, and its all hearsay. {92} is used to mean that someone I trust and know well paddled it in 1992 and I consider the information to be accurate.

The maps have been copied from 1:100 000 maps and scanned into the computer. The overall style owes much to Joseph Haas as I like the way he does his maps for their clarity.

If you have any comments, complaints, or if you do a river that isn't in here, please tell me about it. I can easily be reached through E-mail as thoyts@bsa.bristol.ac.uk or possibly through the BUCC at the club's address: B.U.C.C., University of Bristol Students Union, Queens Road, Clifton, Bristol, UK.

Grading

Every other guide has one of these, so why should this one be any different. These should give you a fair idea of what can be expected on a section of river, and are not just here for me to show what hard rivers I've paddled (or haven't - in most cases!). Here are what I think each grade means, plus an example of each - just my opinion!

Grade I EASY BORING

Regular flow, regular waves, little swirls, easy obstacles.
You should stay in the car and get some tea, or find a pub quickly.
eg: River Avon at Saltford

Grade II MEDIUM STILL FAIRLY BORING

Quicker water, easy obstacles, obvious routes
You should only leave the pub to laugh at the nobbos, but don't leave your beer behind.
eg: Symonds Yat on the Wye

Grade III DIFFICULT

Swift current, short stretches of difficult rapids. Route may be obscure.
You should be paddling a comfortable boat with lots of beer in the back for emergencies.
eg: The Dart, Middle Trisanna

Grade IV VERY DIFFICULT

Long stretches of unbroken rapid, very fast or heavy water. Previous inspection likely. Very difficult route through the rapid.
You should wrap your beers in some spare underwear, just in case things get nasty.
eg: Llangollen Town Falls, Spean Gorge, Sanna

Grade V SEVERE

The worst waves, whirlpools and rapids. Narrow routes, very high or obstructed drops, difficult to get in or out.
Take spare underpants in your BDH. Tie the BDH to you so it's still with you when your boats smashed.
eg: Easn Dubh (Orchy), Triple Step (Guil), Falls of See (Trisanna)

Grade VI EXTREME

Impassible most of the time according to water level. Very hazardous rapids, badly obstructed drops.
After the inspection, put your clean kacks on and go to the pub and get smashed.
eg: Swallow Falls, Gyronde Portage, Slot (Guil), Ardez Gorge

Grade VII VERY EXTREME

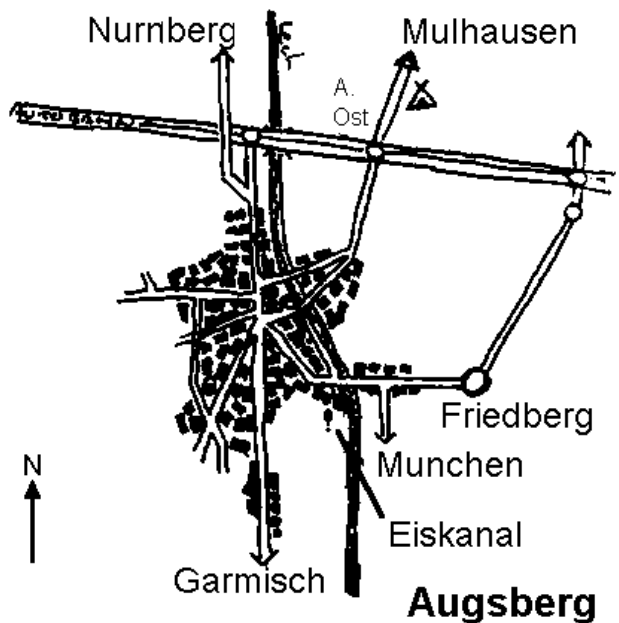
Very high and obstructed drops, often close together, frequently shallow plunge pools. Serious danger to life.
The pub was closed and someone stole your kacks and all the beer.
eg: Conwy Falls, Llanberis Falls, Upper Restonica

Southern Germany and Bavaria

Augsburg Eiskanal Grade IV

Surprisingly big water in a strangely small channel. This looks very odd to anyone used to Holme-Pierrepont, but watch out for those gobbly stoppers! Endless fun.

To get to the water, come off the autobahn at Augsburg Ost. There is a campsite just up the road left here, away from Augsburg called Camping Augusta. It was expensive (6DM per adult, 5DM for a car and 5DM per tent). Showers and stuff included and a late shop. But **NOTE - NO CREDIT CARDS**. They'll take Eurocheque, but not any card we had, and we had loads to chose from. This is a common problem throughout Germany, so be careful. We even had trouble getting petrol on plastic here.



To reach the Eiskanal, drive into Augsburg from the motorway Ost exit, or out of the campsite. As you come into town, take the second left, across the bridge over the river, and take the first right over the other side of the bridge. The road curves under the bridge you just crossed so follow it right, along the river bank. You go past 'Big' a large supermarket (still no credit cards) and come to another major junction. Go straight accross and down the lane here to the Eiskanal. Parking is on the right.

Top tips:

- Take a video camera
- Smile for it.

Loisach Grade IV

This river runs into Garmisch-Partenkirchen. Very pretty grade III river, suitable for beginners.

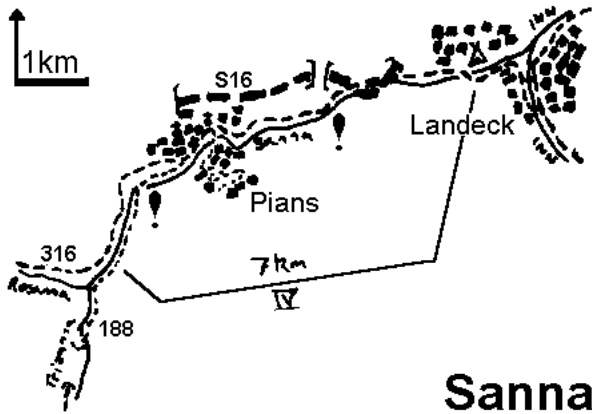
Landeck Area

Campsites around Landeck

The biggest is the campsite at Landeck, 'Camping Hubert' on the banks of the Sanna. This is convenient for paddling the Sanna, and as a get out for the Inn from Fließ. It also put you in easy driving distance of a lot of rivers, as listed in this section. To get here, drive out of Landeck up the Sanna, and turn right as soon as you cross over the river. You cant miss it. The campsite isn't cheap, but then nothing is in Austria.

Another possibility we tried out was Camping Prutz, which is on the banks of the Inn at Prutz, just downriver of the large Prutz bridge. This was a bit of a family campsite, and wouldn't really be suitable for a large and pissed up club. It was very slightly cheaper than Camping Hubert.

Sanna 7km Grade IV 2hr {93}



This has to be the best and most paddled river around. This is partly because the main campsite, in Landeck, lies on the banks of this river, and thus the get out is at the campsite, just before the confluence with the Inn. The get in is as high up as you can get, just below the confluence of the Trisanna and Rosanna. Drive up from Landeck and turn towards Silvretta on the 188, about 2-3km up the road there's a large layby on the left, and an obvious raft launching ramp on the river bank. There is a guage on the bridge at landeck

by the campsite, underneath the bridge on river left. We paddled this between 160cm and 220cm. Below 150 would probably be a bit rocky, though it gets paddled down to at least 130. Over 210 and it is a definate grade IV.

There are three major rapids: Schiefes Eck, Pians, and Three Stones. They're not dangerous, but are usually fun to run. You'll spot them!

Upper Trisanna 18km Grade III {}

From Mathon to Ishgl (7km) or down to Kappl. Supposedly lots of grade III but we never got around to it.

Middle Trisanna 8km Grade IV 2 hr {93}

This is a good section for everyone. It's mostly fairly continuous grade III and IV until you reach the Falls of See which is grade V at the end. There are a lot of stakes down the banks but they pose no problems on this section. Good levels are 160-180 on the Sanna guage at Landeck. We ran this at 180, which was OK.

Drive up the Sanna from Landeck and turn down the 188 towards Silvretta continuing up the Trisanna valey. Stop in See and inspect the get out you want to use. The Falls of See are grade V preceeded by a section of about 500m grade IV. So you want to be able to know if you are going to get out before or after the Falls. Get in above Kappl. The first hard rapid after the get in has stakes on the left bank by a stopper so be careful here. Its just below a bridge.

Lower Trisanna 6km Grade IV-V {}

Not suitable for general club lemming run as this river is made quite dangerous by the presence of stakes in the river bed. Seek some local advice before paddling. The section is from See down to the Sanna.

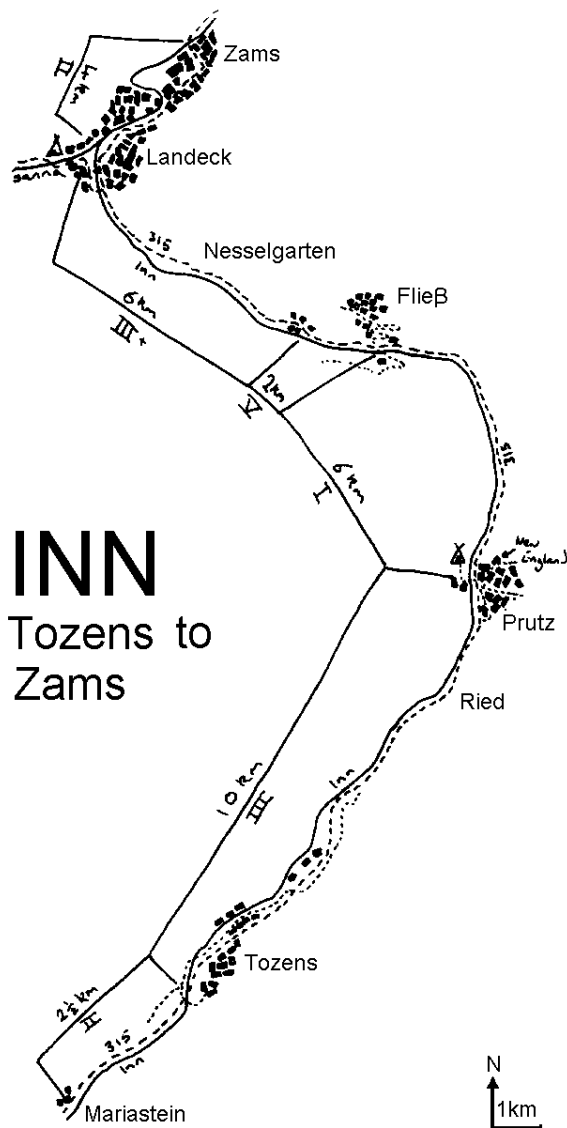
Upper Rosanna 17km Grade III then II 1½hr {93}

Drive up the Rosanna valey to St Anton. In StAnton turn left by a double gondola ski-lift (Regelbahn) and then down the road and track under the autobahn tunnels and up. Get in by a confluence at a turning point and big eddy. Get out just upstream of a wooden and concrete bridge by the autobahn flyover just above Flirsch. Its a bit of a crap get out though.

There is a weir to portage in the middle of the river somewhere. It was easily portaged on the left.

Lower Rossanna 8km Grade IV (V) {}

Supposed to be quite good fun, kind of like the Onde. We decided there were too many stakes in nasty places by the river banks and went to do the Ötz. Here is advice by hearsay:



Drive up the S6 from Landeck towards Firsch to a big layby on the right close to the river at the 7.2km marker. The get out is at some water works opposite a layby and portakabin café. Beware of the right hand bank, the water goes under the weir.

Of note is a section ¼ mile from the get in where there is a dubious weir downstream of a wooden bridge. Further downriver is another wooden bridge, which precedes a sweeping bend lined with stakes, following which there is a stake in the middle of the river - fun for all!

**Inn - Such to Ardez (Giarsunschlucht) 8km
Grade III then IV (IV then V) 2hr {93}**

Up in Switzerland is the Giarsunschlucht. A fine paddle, if a little testing in high water! You should be aware that there are access problems up here. Only get on and off where the signs say, usually at the places indicated in the guides. There's a monster fine if you get caught wandering about elsewhere. To get here takes about 1½ hours from Landeck. Drive up the Inn (route 315 then 27) to Such. Just before Such is a large layby, get in here. The get out is at Ardez by a sort of pointy arched concrete bridge which you want to be able to recognise to make sure you don't casually paddle the Ardez gorge by accident.

The first 5km are grade III, the last 3km are in the gorge proper and are grade IV. It's irritating, but due to the access restrictions, 'big boys' have to

paddle the whole lot, and 'nobbos' can't get out after the fifth kilometre.

In high water (3.30m at Vulpera and the odd tree floating down) the gorge turned into very heavy and continuous grade V. If you have to walk out, go up the river right bank. Its strenuous but possible and takes you to a track from Sur-En from which you can scamper back to the vehicles.

Inn - Ardez Gorge Grade V+/VI {-}

Eeek! Apparently it not too bad, though the portage around the grade VI is supposed to be a bit arduous.

Inn - Vulpera to Sur-En (Schulsterschlucht) Grade III (IV) 2 hr {93}

There is a guage in Vulpera if you walk down the path on river left it's in a big green box by the path and has a paper chart in it. There's also another more conventional guage opposite on the other side of the river. According to the chart, the highest water seems to be at midnight, tailing off all day to rise again after dark?? Oh well. We found 1.00 was an OK level. We also paddled this in flood, when it gets a bit bigger (grade IV) and the river right guage was at 3.30.

We got in above Vulpera from an obvious layby where the river approaches very close to the road, about 2km upriver. Beware falling rocks from the cliff that will dent your car! The get out is at the road bridge to Sur-En, just follow a sign for Sur-En camping.

A better get out might be at the new dam below Scuol. This is a portage which is marked by signs on the river. You need to be aware and get out on the river right. The banks below have been straightened and the stopper on the barrage is absolutely huge. I don't know if the access is permitted here, but to get to the dam, turn down to EKW Pradella and drive up the other side of the river. This may change the character of the river in the future as they are piping water to this dam from above.

Inn - Martina 8km Grade III {92}

Errrm.

Inn - Finstermunster Gorge ? km Grade VI {}

EEk.

Inn - Tosens to Prutz 10km Grade III(IV) 1hr {93}

We got in at a layby on the left upriver of Tozens, opposite a road right. An alternative, giving nobbos a warm up is to get in at a large layby by a bridge at Mariastein, where the rafts get in. Send your bank bunnies into Tozens to head for the river to find a good photo spot, near a delapidated bridge. There's a gauge here which was 2.5ish. The paddling is fairly easy with only two points of note, see if you can spot them. Get out at the campsite at Prutz just after the Prutz bridge.

Inn - Prutz to Fließ Grade II {-}

Flat, we drove it.

Inn - Fließ to Landeck 10km Grade IV 1½hr {93}

Also known as the 'Consumer' section of the Inn and apparently commonly misnamed the 'Constrictor' in the English guides, this is one of the most popular sections of the Inn, especially as the get out is walking distance to the campsite at Landeck. There are two get ins. The uppermost is for a section of about a kilometre of grade V down to the woodyard. The alternative is to get in at the woodyard, just at the upstream end of Nesselgarten. The first get in is at a bridge over the Inn to Niedergalmig at the first collection of houses upstream of Nesselgarten. Otherwise drive into the woodyard and get in round the side of one of the wood piles.

We did this in low water and it was a bouncy III and the Consumer was not a problem, in higher water it was a big water IV. Get out at the confluence of the Sanna with the Inn on river left and walk through the industrial yard over the Sanna bridge and up the track on Sanna river left to the campsite.

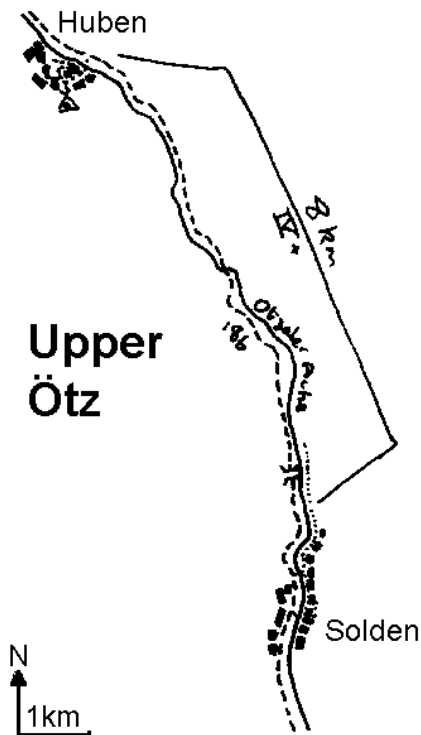
The bit down to the woodyard is a V-. Of particular note is the first rapid where a pourover blocks about half of the river from the left. It gets harder as the water level rises.

Inn - Landeck to Zams 5km Grade II-III {93}

Get in at Camping Hubert on the Sanna. There is a weir just before you join the Inn which was OK. Get out on river left at Zams. Nothing much here.

Inn - Imst to Haiming 14km Grade III 1hr {93}

The biggest bit of the Inn, especially after the Ötz joins in. A very high volume river with huge standing waves but almost no stoppers and is good at any water level. To get here drive through Imst and get in at a rafting place on the right before a big bridge (heading towards the railway station). Get out in Haiming below the first bridge at the second set of steps opposite a rafting place.



Upper Ötz 8km Grade IV+ 2hr {93}

Drive a long way up the Ötz valley to get in at Sölden where the section starts off immediately with the hardest 400m at about grade V. You can drive down the river right bank to the sewage works to have a look. From here on the river is slightly easier yet very continuous IV+ tailing off to IV-. When we paddled this the river gauge at the Ötz weir was 1.20. The proper gauge to use is apparently at Tumpen. The get out is at the first bridge in Huben.

Middle Ötz 2km? Grade V+ {}

You can see this clearly from the road as you drive up. Its not long but it looks pretty hard. There's an awful lot of rock in it all. I did meet a bloke who said he'd rafted it, but....

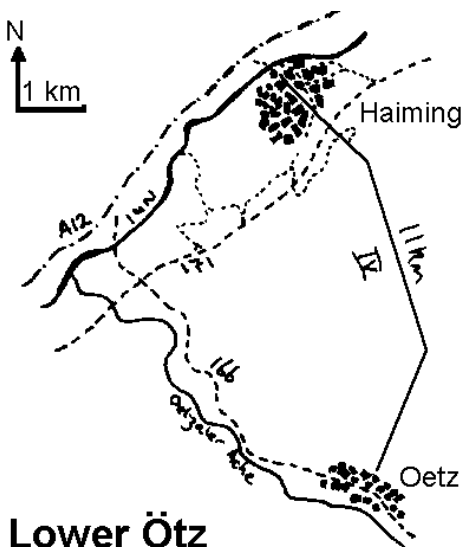
Its worth having a look at the Ötz falls. Pull over as you drive out (downriver) of Habichen at the restaurant and wander through the woods to the falls.

Lower Ötz 16km Grade IV+(V) 1½hr {93}

Drive down the Inn towards Innsbruck on the autoroute and turn off to Ötztal and drive up the valley to Oetz. Just before you drive out of the town there's a parking area and a wooden bridge on the right by the river which is where you get in. The get out is at the first bridge in Haiming, easy to find as there's a rafting base here, follow the little canoeist signs.

The main point to note on this section is the Ötz weir. There are two currently. The first is fine and quite small, the second you must portage. It regularly kills smartasses. We got out at a stone ramp on river right by a sign saying 'Privatgrund' which seems to say 'get off my land'. Immediately before the weir there are few breakouts so get out at the ramp. There is a gauge by the weir which was on 1.10.

In '93 there was a bloke at the get in who was charging AS 30 per kayak to get on the river. He's definitely there on Sunday as he charges the punters for parking their cars. You may be able to avoid him on weekdays outside the holiday season.



Upper Pitzbach 10km? Grade II with III {}

From Plangeross to Hairlach the Pitzbach is mostly grade II with 1km an grade III at the get in, and about 400m of grade IV near St Leonhard about 9km downriver.

Middle Pitzbach 11km Grade V {}

From Hairlach to Jerzens the river is well overgrown with trees and very technical. There is a gauge at a small wooden bridge in Wiesle, when we went to have a look at this in '93 this was at 1.15. According to the AKC guide high water is over 170, medium is between 130 and 160.

There are a few danderous looking weirs on the river, and especially one 1km from the start. Also a little below here is the Kitzgarten gorge, which looks deep and fairly inaccessible, if short. The whole river looks dead hard, small and very technical. In Hairlach you get

in at the downstream end of town at the layby before the gas station. Just downstream of Wiesel the road crosses the river at a grade V+/VI tree infested rapid. Have a look. You may need to get out above here.

Lower Pitzbach 7km Grade III {}

From Wengs down to the Inn the river is supposed to be grade III, but the water generally gets piped away and is seldom runnable.

Elsewhere in Austria

Once you move away from Landeck more driving needs to be done between different rivers. If you find it convenient, try Italy's Noce valley (see end), it's not as far as you might think.

Rivers to think about are:

Brandenberg Ache

Runs into the Inn at Rattenburg. Good fun grade IV, should be good for nobboish paddlers.

Lofer Bach 4km, Grade IV

4 km of river running into Lofer. A fast "Welsh type" river, grade IV. Probably fun in low water too.

Koppentraun 7km, Grade IV(V)

Two good waterfalls. Should be OK in low water.

Schwartzbach 3km, Grade IV

grade IV in lowish water. About 3 km into St Johann?

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Also, not guides as such but I've got bits and pieces of information from various people including Nepal (from Joe), Chile, Italy, Scotland and British Columbia on the computer and can provide these on request. Once I've been there there'll be more ☺, but these are just notes I've aquired in case I can afford to get there.

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