

## **Berggasthaus Aescher: A Quaint, Yet Adventurous Hideaway at the Foot of the Alps**

On the northeastern corner of Switzerland, along the border of Austria and Germany is the picturesque town of Appenzell. Don't be fooled by its seemingly quiet charm. Appenzell is located close to the town of St. Gallen, at the foot of the Alps. After heading to Wasserauen Station you will find yourself at the base of an adventurer's paradise.

Stepping off the platform is a red cable car, which you can opt to take up the mountain for round-trip 30 CHF, or Swiss francs (about \$30 USD). The cable car is a quick jaunt, climbing close to 5,000 feet in a matter of minutes.

Once at the top, hike about 15 minutes along the grassy terrain, through a cave, and around a corner to reach Berggasthaus Aescher. Or, if you are in the mood for a good thigh-burning trek, skip the cable car and hike up the mountain for about 2 hours before reaching the guesthouse.

Once there, Berggasthaus Aescher is impressive. Let me set the scene: the guesthouse is a 170-year old building situated on a cliff overlooking the mountainous terrain. In the summertime, most of the farmers round up their sheep, goats, and cows and take them up the mountain to graze. The animals all have bells around their necks, so all you hear is chiming in the wind—literally all day long. Talk about amazing!

When my partner, Weston, and I traveled to Berggasthaus Aescher in July 2014, we spent our entire day hiking. There were para-gliders, rock-climbers, and hikers along the trails, but it wasn't overcrowded. Throughout most of our day hiking, we ran into about 30 people, just a couple here and there.

We also visited a small lake about two hours down the mountain and through a herd of cows, which is actually where Weston proposed! Well, not in the herd of cows, but at the lake. (Take notes boys and girls—that was good.)

As for Berggasthaus Aescher, this retreat is not only a resting point where the day-hiker or adventurer can grab a jolt of caffeine or partake in a local cuisine. The guesthouse is run by the Knechtle family (a husband, wife, and their two young kids) and for 45 CHF per person (about \$45 USD), you can stay overnight. When Weston and I were there, this price also included a fabulous breakfast and a hefty cup of Swiss hot chocolate the next morning (completely needed for the hiking hangover we had). The only downside is that the guesthouse has no showers (there is running water and toilets), and the rooms and beds were so-so.

The room we stayed in was very small, about 10'x10', and the bed was literally only pads on the ground with a down blanket and pillows. However, considering the hiking available and the view (not to mention the amazing food), I still give this place a five star. Plus, the guesthouse is more a place to sleep, as you *should* be spending most of your day outside.

Staying overnight may not suit everyone, so a good alternative is to book a guesthouse in Appenzell and taking the cable car up the mountain for some day hiking. Or, if you are a true badass, surpass the cable car and just hike to Berggasthaus Aescher for the day.

Berggasthaus Aescher is an amazing little hideaway that I recommend time and time again to just about anyone I meet travelling to Europe. Seeing the big sites is a great opportunity, but personally, after traveling to over 20 countries I like to get out of the cities and explore the more natural wonders of our world. Berggasthaus Aescher is an amazing way to do just that.

**For More:**

- Berggasthaus Aescher, <http://aescher-ai.ch/aescher-en.html>

- Photos by Abby Dahl.