

MEET THE WORLD IN THE MOUNTAINS.

The UK guide to Kandersteg International Scout Centre



scouts.org.uk/kandersteg



kandersteg
international scout centre

A message from Kandersteg International Scout Centre...

Kandersteg International Scout Centre, a World Scout Centre, was the dream of Lord Baden-Powell. In total, it welcomes over 11,000 Scouts and Guides each year. The centre invites you to come and enjoy a unique and international Scouting experience as part of an 86 year old dream.

Need any other recommendation? Well, Mark Twain fell in love with Kandersteg and declared it – ‘A place you need to see!’ Kandersteg also has its place among the ‘1,000 Places to See Before You Die: A Traveller’s Life List’.

Young people come here and leave enriched by the special atmosphere of the Permanent Mini Jamboree, by challenges met and friendships made. These themes bring our guests together and encourage them to live, learn and ultimately try to make the world a better place.

So, come and ... live your dream!



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Why visit Kandersteg?

Sharing dinner and friendship with Scouts from another country who you only met that morning...

Opening the tent door in the morning and being amazed by the snow-covered mountains right in front of you...

Discovering a place that lives Scouting for real every day, from caring for the environment to friendship without borders...

Why has Kandersteg become such a favourite destination for Scouts from the UK? Over 3,000 of us travel here each year, and if you're reading this booklet, maybe you're planning to visit as well.

Who is this guide for?

We've written this guide to help you get the most out of your visit. It's designed for UK Scout Groups visiting Kandersteg for the first time and aims to provide you with some useful inside knowledge.

The information is based on interviews with UK leaders who have already run successful expeditions to Kandersteg, combined with information and advice from the staff at Kandersteg International Scout Centre and The Scout Association at Gilwell Park.

Our aim in this booklet is not to repeat information already provided in the excellent official *KanderActive* brochure (available online at www.kisc.ch), but instead to share experiences and advice on visiting Kandersteg specific to UK Scouting.

So why visit Kandersteg?

Because – as B-P knew, it combines three of the best things that Scouting has to offer:

- Outdoor adventure – in and around the Swiss Alps
- An international atmosphere – the 'Permanent Mini Jamboree'
- The opportunity to live the dream of Scouting values.

It is also the ideal place for UK leaders to run a safe and successful international expedition, through the support, staff and activities provided by the International Scout Centre.

Planning for a successful expedition to Kandersteg

Every leader who has organised a trip to Kandersteg stresses the importance of planning ahead. Here's a quick checklist to help you prepare.

1. When to visit

Most UK Scouts visit Kandersteg in the summer (July/August) or over winter half-term (February). These are good times for activities, but are also very popular, so you will need to book well in advance.

July to mid-August is the best time for the international atmosphere, since European Scouts are also on school holiday. On the other hand, the second half of August has some great deals on tourist attractions for youth groups, since many of the European schools are back from holiday. However contact with Scouts from other countries is more limited.

Outside these times, Kandersteg is quieter but still can be a great place to visit. Mountain routes start to open up in late May and the first snow can start to fall as early as the beginning of September.

2. Book well in advance

High season in Kandersteg is July to late August (especially around Swiss National Day, 1 August), February (especially around half-term), and mid-December to mid-January (check the latest issue of KanderActive for exact dates). Here are some guidelines on how far to book in advance for high season:

- Book 12-18 months ahead for camping
- Book 2-3 years ahead for the Chalet, Sunneblick or Kander-Lodge
- Book 4 years ahead for the Tower

Outside of high season, you won't need to book as far in advance, but it's still worth booking early - although once a provisional booking is made, you will be asked by KISC to pay a booking fee by a specified date to confirm your booking.

3. Develop your budget and payment schedule

Expeditions to Kandersteg typically cost in the range of £300-£500 per person, depending on the length of trip, mode of transport, exchange rate, and activities included.

Developing a budget is an important early step. Major items include transport, food, site fees, and activities. Switzerland can be a costly place to visit, and the varying exchange rate between UK Pounds and Swiss Francs makes accurate budgeting more difficult. For example, during 2008 the average sterling exchange rate was CHF 2.00 but the high was CHF 2.26 and the low was CHF 1.5. Include a 10% buffer in the expedition fee – you can always give it back if you don't spend it.

A booking fee is payable to KISC to confirm a provisional booking, and cancellation fees will then apply. It's also worth considering payments to KISC before the event in order to make the most of a favourable exchange rate. In addition to campsite or chalet fees, money to cover other KISC costs such as food and activities can also potentially be transferred in advance.

Payment schedules make it much easier for participants or parents to pay the expedition fee, and also enables you to gain early commitment. A non-refundable 20% deposit paid one year in advance is a useful guideline.

Effective Group fundraising can also help reduce the cost of the expedition, and grants may also be available from District or County. See the factsheet *Fundraising for Visits Abroad* at www.scoutbase.org.uk/library/hqdocs/facts/pdfs/bp260006.pdf for more details. Car washes and bag packs are also a favourite!

4. Choose and book your method(s) of transport

Coach, car, train and air are all possible ways of getting to Kandersteg. The various options are discussed in more detail on page 7.

Some groups, especially larger ones, have also found it useful to have their own car or similar independent means of transport during their time at Kandersteg. Although KISC has enough vehicles available for emergencies and is always happy and ready to help, having a car for your group can make checking up on expedition groups simpler and bulk shopping easier. However, parking can be limited in high season.

5. Plan and book your activities

KanderActive, produced by KISC, provides a great description of all the various activities available from the Scout centre both directly and from commercial providers.

Pre-booking all your activities is strongly recommended, and booking for summer activities is available from 1 March each year. Booking should normally be completed by 1 June. Avoid waiting to book activities until you arrive at Kandersteg, since popular activities may already be full, but note that cancellation of booked activities may incur a late cancellation charge. See *KanderActive* for further details.

It is of course also possible to run your own activities, such as hiking, climbing and more, assuming you have qualified instructors. The KISC Programme Office is happy to offer help and advice with this.

Since Kandersteg village is at roughly the same height as Snowdon and the mountains are even higher, training beforehand and acclimatisation in the first few days are strongly recommended activities.

Activities which have worked well on previous trips are discussed in more detail on pages 8, 9, 10 and 11.

6. Gather local knowledge about Kandersteg

The best way to gather local knowledge about Kandersteg is for some of the leaders to do a recce visit beforehand, perhaps 6-12 months in advance. Not only will this enable you to get a feel for the place and test your assumptions, but you'll also be able to meet and get to know the staff at KISC.

Another approach is to meet with someone who has run a previous expedition to Kandersteg and pick their brains. The Kandersteg Scout Fellowship can help here and put you in touch with an expert who lives locally – see contact details at the end of this booklet.

KISC are keen to help you have a successful trip, and encourage groups to discuss any questions or concerns with them in advance rather than arrive with problems.

Finally, both the Kandersteg Scout Centre website at www.kisc.ch and the Kandersteg village website at www.kandersteg.ch are very good.

An overview of local facilities is provided on pages 11 and 12.

7. Discuss how to make the most of the international opportunities

Scouts from over 40 different countries visit Kandersteg each year, and this 'permanent mini-Jamboree' offers UK Scouts a range of international opportunities.

International opportunities can be encouraged by taking part in the KISC International Friendship programme or undertaking the International Friendship Award, as described in *KanderActive*.

It's also a good idea to contact Kandersteg before your visit to find out what other countries will be visiting while you are there. This will give you time to contact a visiting group beforehand to arrange a joint activity during your visit.

However, it is always worth remembering that some of the best international experiences are unplanned and arise from chance meetings between young people. More information on international opportunities is provided on page 10.

8. Complete all the official forms

Start by contacting your ACC/AAC (International), who can give you advice and provide you with the Visits Abroad pack. Then, as with any Scout activities, you'll need to complete all the relevant forms. These include:

- Nights Away Notification (NAN) form.
- Activity Permits for any adults leading adventurous activities
- Insurance
- Travel Abroad form and Home Contact postcard – included in the Visits Abroad pack

9. Think about your report back

It's always worth holding an evening or afternoon report back for parents and friends following a major expedition. To make this easier, decide in advance who will be responsible for:

- activity photographs during the expedition
- Group photographs
- diaries by participants
- mementos and souvenirs
- thank you gifts.

Where to stay in Kandersteg

There are many options available, each with different advantages.

Camping

'Incomparable for the views in the morning - and a great way to meet other Scouts.'

KISC has about 50 different campsites, surrounded by trees and shrubs and with a range of sizes from 10-50 people.

Unfortunately the ground is hard (made of rubble from the inside of the railway tunnel with very little topsoil) and some sites are prone to flooding after prolonged heavy rain, so choose where you pitch your tents carefully. Encourage everyone to bring along camping mats. Camping also needs lots of kit so feasibility depends on your mode of transport.

Cooking on the campsite is best done on gas, but is also possible with wood on altar fires. Calor gas bottles (butane and propane) are available for hire from KISC but the fittings are different from the UK. Adapters are also available to hire.

Tents, cooking stoves and other campsite equipment are also available for hire from KISC – see www.kisc.ch/?uid=59 for the latest information.

There are three toilet and shower blocks on the campsite, which can get quite busy at peak times.

Chalet

The Chalet is ideal as a warm, dry base for high adventure activities and right in the centre of the action.

The Old Chalet has an amazing atmosphere and 23 dormitories ranging in size from 2-22 beds in bunks. Most of these have been recently refurbished; toilets and showers have also been upgraded.

Electric sockets are mostly European 2-pin (4mm round contacts) in Kandersteg, although some Swiss sockets (including the KISC coffee bar) are hexagonal in shape and require a special adapter. A UK adapter for these sockets has recently been donated to KISC, and with luck may be available to borrow from Reception. (Note that plugs in other parts of Europe including Germany and France are similar but have 4.8mm round contacts).

Kitchens are in a separate block next to the Old Chalet and can also be hired, though for smaller groups you may need to share with another group. There is limited room for eating inside the kitchens, and tables and benches are provided for eating outside in the summer months. Meals can also be booked in the Dining Hall in the New Chalet.

The New Chalet has a small number of comfortable three bedded rooms which are available for hire except in the summer (when they are used by staff).

Tower

This is a self-contained base at the far end of the campsite with integrated accommodation and dining.

The Tower is based around a large hall which can be used for both dining and activities, with a large kitchen, plus one six bed and one three bed leaders rooms. Next to the Tower is a bunkhouse with four twelve bed dormitories, showers and toilets.

Kander-Lodge

The Kander-Lodge is a new building across the river from the Chalet, which opened on 30 May 2009.

Kander-Lodge provides a range of higher quality small rooms with two beds and bathrooms shared between every two rooms, along with a communal lounge and kitchen in the accommodation part. The building also includes a separate activity hall and meeting room.

Sunneblick

The existing Sunneblick building next to the Chalet became part of Kandersteg International Scout Centre on 1 May 2009. It is similar in use to the Tower with 47 beds in different sized rooms, a dining hall, a fully equipped kitchen and a living room.

Hotels and Hostels

Close to KISC are some small hotels, B&B and backpacker hostels suitable for accommodating families, including the Hotel Crystal, Hotel Alpenrose and the Gemmi Lodge.

When the centre is fully booked the reception can always check if other nearby buildings with group accommodations are available, such as the Villa Foree and the YMCA.

Down in the village (15-20 minutes walk or a five minute bus ride away) is a wide range of hotel accommodation suitable for accommodating special guests, such as the Hotel des Alpes or the Hotel Victoria Ritter, and it is sometimes also possible to rent apartments in the village.

How to travel to Kandersteg

There are many options available, each with different benefits and drawbacks.

By coach

This is probably the cheapest mode of travel for a large group, as long as you can fill all the seats.

Coach travel offers direct point-to-point travel between your home location and KISC, and many groups keep the coach with them for day trips. Coach drivers typically stay in one of the local small hotels near KISC.

The drawback of coach travel is that it is a long trip and can be uncomfortable, often travelling through the night, and lasting typically between 15 and 22 hours. Some groups split the journey with an overnight stop, for example at Strasbourg, Metz, or the Scout Centre in Wiltz.

By rail

Rail offers a more comfortable mode of travel to Kandersteg, but transfers at both ends and connections can complicate the journey.

Rail journeys can start either at London Eurostar or Calais, typically route via Paris or EuroDisney and then direct via Bern or Brig, and finish at Kandersteg Railway Station. If the route goes via Paris then you will need to transfer between stations – either a 10 minute walk to Paris Gare de l'Est station (direct to Basel) or a 10 minute ride on the RER (fast underground railway) plus 15 minute connection to Paris Gare de Lyon (direct to Bern, Geneva or Lausanne). Total travel time from London to Kandersteg is typically 10-11 hours.

There are many special deals available to Scout Groups – contact the Rail Account Manager at the Switzerland Travel Centre in London (www.stc.co.uk). For the best rates quote 'KISC' or 'Kandersteg Scout Fellowship' at the time of booking. Very large County groups (300+) have even successfully hired their own train!

Kandersteg Railway Station is a short bus ride (the blue bus towards Sunnbuel costs CHF 2 each or free for any person wearing a neckerchief) or a 20 minute walk from the Scout Centre. KISC also offer shuttle runs for kit to and from the station, at a nominal charge of CHF 20 per trip.

Car/minibus

Cars or people carriers provide a straightforward way

to travel to Kandersteg for a small group or as part of a larger group. It can also be useful to have a car available in Kandersteg, both for checking on groups away from the site and for shopping.

Driving time to Kandersteg varies from 12-16 hours, and the recommended route is to use the Channel Tunnel and travel via Belgium, Luxembourg, Metz, Strasbourg and Basel to avoid French motorway tolls (except for one section between Metz and Strasbourg). It is therefore possible to travel between the UK and Kandersteg in one long day, assuming you have at least two drivers.

Cars using the Swiss motorways need to purchase a 'vignette' – a special sticker for the windscreen. These currently cost CHF 40 and are available at the border in Swiss Francs, or can be purchased in advance in Pounds Sterling from the Switzerland Travel Centre in the UK. Trailers or caravans also require their own vignette.

Minibuses are a less attractive option, since minibus drivers outside of the UK need to have a PCV enablement on their license and are limited by tachometer on the hours they can drive – see www.scoutbase.org.uk/library/hqdocs/facts/pdfs/fs260008.pdf for more details.

By air

The fastest way to travel to Kandersteg is to fly, and this has become feasible with the availability of low-cost airfares

British Airways, Swiss, EasyJet, RyanAir and Flybe all offer good deals to Switzerland from various airports around the UK, but low-cost airfares are likely to be easier to obtain for smaller groups. Many flights go to Zurich or Geneva, some go to Basel and one goes to Bern. Flying to Milan in Italy is also an option.

Beware - the cost of travelling from a Swiss airport to Kandersteg, either by train or hire car, can easily exceed the cost of the airfare. Special deals for train transfers are available in advance, such as the Scout Swiss cards – contact the Switzerland Travel Centre.

Fly Rail Baggage is available from many airports with the major carriers, a facility whereby luggage booked in at the airport will be transferred in Switzerland to Kandersteg station where it can be collected later (but often on the following day).

Travel time is 1.5 hours by air plus 2-3 hours by rail or road, and waiting times in the airports. Both Zurich and Geneva airports have integrated railway stations, and Kandersteg is closer to Zurich than to Geneva.

For groups of 20 or more the most cost effective way from the airport to KISC is to book a coach transfer through the Programme Office.

High adventure

For most UK Scouts, High Adventure is an essential part of the Kandersteg experience.

KanderActive, produced by KISC and available both online at www.kisc.ch and as a printed booklet, is highly recommended and contains the definitive descriptions of activities available in Kandersteg.

The UK regulations for groups participating in KISC-organised activities were updated from April 2009. The new regulations state that, when staying at Kandersteg, UK members may take part in activities being run by Kandersteg International Scout Centre following KISC guidance and rules. However, there must be a leader from the UK present who is able to halt the activity if they have safety concerns at any point, and activities forbidden by UK Scouting remain forbidden even when at Kandersteg.

Summer activities

Summer activities are available from the end of June to early September – check the latest *KanderActive* for the exact dates. Activities can be KISC-led, commercially-led, or self-led (subject of course to normal Scout activity rules). Some activities are free, others are chargeable, and many require a certain level of fitness at altitude. Some of the activities are only for those aged 12+, 14+ or 16+.

GUIDED HIKES – these are led by experienced KISC staff, and should be accompanied by a UK leader - see the information sheet for UK groups at www.kisc.ch/programme/summer/guided-hikes. The maximum group size is as advertised in *KanderActive* and on the KISC website, and is typically 7 or 15. Further information on the UK activity regulations for Kandersteg can be obtained from The Scout Association (UK), and the KISC Programme Office is always happy to help guests with any questions they have about them. Favourite hikes include the Cheesery Hike and the Lötschenpass Hike.

UNGUIDED HIKES – these are pre-planned hikes with route descriptions that are classified to show comparisons with the UK terrain definitions. UK Scout groups will need to provide their own qualified leadership (Hillwalking Permit) for hikes classified as Terrain 1 or 2. UK groups should follow UK rules for party size. PDFs for all the unguided hikes are available on the KISC website. Footpaths in and around Kandersteg are normally clearly marked and should be followed. Favourite hikes include the low-level Blausee Hike, the walk up to the mountain lake at Oeschinensee, and the high-level Gallihorn.

MOUNTAIN HUTS – it is possible to stay in a mountain hut overnight – book in advance via KISC for discount rates. It is also possible to bring your own food but the dinner and breakfast offered by the huts is the best value option. Favourite huts include Fründenhütte, Doldernhornhütte, and the KISC mountain hut in the Ueschinen Valley. It is also possible to gain the Swiss Hüttentest Award for visiting a series of mountain huts.



See the KISC website for prices and more information on the huts.

CLIMBING ACTIVITIES – these are all run by experienced KISC staff, and some involve an overnight stay in a mountain hut. Activities range from fun and introductory to intermediate.

SNOW & ICE WORKSHOPS – these are also run by experienced KISC staff, and vary from introductory ice climbing workshops to climbing major local peaks such as Wildstrubel. Many of these activities have age restrictions of 14+ or 16+ and all require a good level of fitness.

WATER ACTIVITIES – whitewater rafting and canyoning are favourite activities for UK Scouts, and KISC arranges them via a local commercial company, Swiss Adventures. These require a train journey to and from the venue, unless you have your own transport, the cost of which needs to be included in your budget. Minimum age is 12+, and full details are included in *KanderActive*.

Although groups will naturally want to pack in as much as possible into their visit to Kandersteg, it's worth considering time for recovery and relaxation – for example after returning from an overnight mountain hut hike and before starting the next activity.



Winter activities

Winter is a very special time at Kandersteg and the Centre operates through the winter.

SKI WEEKS – these are aimed primarily at groups and families who have some or no knowledge of skiing or snowboarding, and initially use the ski slopes above Kandersteg and Lauchernalp. Ski weeks run from Sunday to Saturday and include ski passes and experienced KISC Ski Guides who can supervise and advise groups. However KISC Ski Guides are not professionals and first-time skiers must have initial lessons from the village ski school. Advanced Ski Weeks are available for those who can ski and want to explore larger ski resorts beyond Kandersteg. The new Flexi Ski Weeks are for groups who don't require KISC Staff and want to make up their own Programme.

WINTER ACTIVITIES – these range from snowshoeing and building igloos to ice-climbing workshops. Packaged options include Winter Activity Weeks and Winter Extreme Weeks. Full details are available in *KanderActive*.

The Kandersteg High Adventure Award and Snow Adventure Award are popular special badges which can be gained by completing a range of Swiss alpine or winter activities. Please note that these are not official UK Scout badges so cannot be worn on uniform, unless authorised as an occasional badge, by your County Commissioner.



International friendship

Kandersteg as a meeting place for Scouts from around the world was Baden-Powell's dream, and today KISC is a permanent mini-Jamboree.

Each year, Scouts from about 40 countries visit Kandersteg. Regular visitors include Denmark, Italy, Ireland, USA, Holland, Spain, Belgium, Portugal and Germany. In addition, many other countries are represented on the international staff team.

Scouts from Scandinavia and the USA are typically similar to the UK in looking for Alpine Adventure from their visit, while Scouts from Italy, Spain, Belgium, Portugal and France tend to be more interested in doing on-site Scouting activities. Meanwhile, Scouts from Holland, Germany and Switzerland often prefer independent options.

International activities organised by KISC bring groups from different countries together, for example:

INTERNATIONAL EVENING & BBQ – an opportunity to find out about Scouting in other countries, run your own stall about UK Scouting, and meet Scouts from other countries. The cost includes a small (CHF 2) donation towards the development of Scouting in Brazil.

INTERNATIONAL CAMPFIRE – for many a highlight of their stay in Kandersteg, with the opportunity to take part with your own skit or song.

LEADERS GATHERING – normally Wednesday and Sundays at 5pm in the Old Main Hall – a chance to meet leaders from other groups and countries.

SWISS NATIONAL DAY – if you're in Kandersteg on 1 August, this is not to be missed. A full day of international activities, starting with early aerobics and breakfast, continuing through international patrol games during the day, and ending with an unforgettable parade down to the village to join in their celebrations.

The Kandersteg International Friendship Award is another popular special badge which can be gained by completing a range of international activities in Kandersteg. As with the other Kandersteg awards, please note that this is not an official UK Scout badge.



Other KISC and Swiss Activities

In addition to High Adventure and International Friendship, Kandersteg and the surrounding area of Switzerland offers a wide choice of activities

ECO-ADVENTURE – KISC has for many years encouraged caring for the environment, and has recently been awarded the EU Eco-Label. The strong focus on recycling at the Centre can encourage UK Scouts to think more about being green. Activities include the KISC Climate Adventure, the Gemmipass Eco Hike and the Electrifying Oeschinensee Adventure, which can all lead towards the KISC Eco Adventure Award.

CAMPSITE ACTIVITIES – KISC also has a range of simpler activities available on site, including orienteering, pioneering, craft activities, the discovery trail, and even its own on-site sauna. Some of these activities are free, others have a nominal charge.

INTERNATIONAL SERVICE PROJECTS – help the Centre for a half or full day by participating in service projects around the campsite ranging from building fences to cutting down trees.

KANDERSTEG VILLAGE – The village is both a year-round community and a summer and winter tourist destination, and offers many activities including a public swimming pool, an indoor climbing wall, in winter an ice rink and curling, and in summer (up at Oeschinensee) the unbeatable Rodelbahn (summer toboggan run). Some hotels in the village also have attractions such as mini-golf and skittles. Special reduced price entry tickets for many activities can be purchased in advance from the KISC Programme Office, who can also provide the free Kandersteg Guest Card which offers additional discounts on village activities.

CABLE CARS – Kandersteg Village is the starting point for three cable cars up into the mountains: the Sunnbüel cable car from the far end of the village which travels up to Stock, the Allmenalp cable car which runs only in the summer and rises almost vertically up the mountain side, and the newly opened Oeschinen Gondola which has replaced the previous chair lift and travels from the centre of the village to a station next to the Rodelbahn, from where it is a 15-minute walk to the Oeschinensee Lake.

DAYS OUT – Popular destinations beyond Kandersteg are accessible both by train and by coach (either your own coach or a coach trip organised by KISC). Options include the local towns of Interlaken and Thun, the Swiss capital of Bern, the World Heritage Jungfrauoch & the Eiger Trail mountain area, the James Bond Schilthorn mountain restaurant, and even Stresa in Italy.



Food, shopping and other local facilities

KISC

Basic foodstuffs for self-catering including milk and bread can be ordered from the Scout Centre the day before, for collection in the morning.

Full catering and special meals (such as the yummy fondue) in the dining hall can be booked in advance through Reception.

KISC also has a small souvenir shop which sells branded clothing and gifts, postcards and stamps, along with soft drinks and chocolate. There is a post box at the entrance to the New Chalet.

Kandersteg Village

There are a number of small shops in the village, including bakers, a butchers, a cheese shop, and a Co-Op supermarket. These offer a range of fresh and packaged food and you can probably buy everything you need in Kandersteg, but prices can be quite high and many shops close during lunchtime.

There are two banks in the village, both with outside ATMs which work with UK debit and credit cards and can display instructions in English. To minimise bank charges, if asked whether the transaction is to be in Pounds or Swiss Francs, choose Swiss Francs.

Kandersteg Village also hosts a Tourist Office, gift shops (including cuckoo clocks), a post office, and outdoor sports shops (including ski hire in winter). There are of course, also many cafes, restaurants and hotels.

The shops in the village are 20 minutes walk from KISC or a short car or bus ride. There is an hourly bus that runs between the railway station and the Scout Centre which is free with a Kandersteg Guest Card (available from KISC Reception), Ski Pass or when wearing a Scout neckerchief.

There is no petrol station in Kandersteg Village – the nearest is in Frutigen.

Supermarkets

For major supermarkets, it's necessary to leave Kandersteg and travel further afield. Recommended supermarkets are the Co-Ops at Frutigen and Spiez, and a hypermarket near the motorway at the edge of Thun. If shopping for larger groups, it's recommended to take carrying bags with you, since the shopping trolleys are smaller than in the UK.



Dealing with emergencies

Although everything possible is done both in Scouting and at KISC to encourage safety, accidents and emergencies can happen. Here is a quick guide to the best ways of handling emergencies during your visit to Kandersteg.

Before you go

RISK ASSESSMENT – as with any Scouting activity, a risk assessment needs to be carried out in advance of the expedition, including both activities and travel to and from the UK.

TRAVEL INSURANCE – for any Scouting visit abroad, you need to take out additional insurance to cover your trip. Often this will be via the Unity (Scout Association) Travel Insurance Group Policy, although there are other options. This provides good basic cover, although it is limited to a maximum payout of £50,000 for travel cancellations and does not automatically cover helicopter mountain rescue in Switzerland. For this you may want to discuss additional insurance with Unity (www.unityins.co.uk) or KISC in advance of your visit

EUROPEAN HEALTH INSURANCE CARD (EHIC) – these are available for free via the NHS website (www.nhs.uk/healthcareabroad), and entitle the named bearer to the same level of public health cover as for citizens in countries in the European Economic Area, including Switzerland. However, this does not mean that health care is free, and you may have to pay and later reclaim. Also, please note that the doctor in Kandersteg village does not accept the EHIC card as a form of payment, although the nearby hospitals do. EHIC cards are valid for up to five years, so check they are valid before travel.

HOME CONTACT SYSTEM – again, this is mandatory for Scouting trips abroad and is very valuable in cases of emergencies. For large expeditions it is worth having a cascade system.

MEDICAL DETAILS – knowing any medical conditions, allergies or current treatments and medications of everyone on the expedition (both young and old) is vital and details should be readily available if you need to visit the doctor or hospital.

COPIES OF DOCUMENTS – multiple photocopies of key documents (including passports and driving licenses) are invaluable if any of the original documents get mislaid.

MOBILE PHONES – these make handling emergencies much easier. Although many UK mobile phones can work in Switzerland, using them is expensive and they may need to be explicitly enabled. A good option is to hire Swiss mobile phones for the leader team for the duration of the trip – this can be easily done at Swiss airports.

During your visit

KISC STAFF – the first point of contact for any emergency should be the KISC staff in the Chalet. Staff living at the Centre are available during night-time, all year round. If reception is closed and no-one is around downstairs then follow the instructions next to reception, ring the centre telephone number or go to the staff accommodation on the top floor of the New Chalet. KISC Staff can help you make appointments with the doctor and also provide help in handling the emergency.

DOCTOR IN KANDERSTEG – there is a very good local doctor's surgery in Kandersteg village, where English is spoken. It is similar to a minor injuries unit at a small UK hospital and is able to handle many accidents directly. You will need to pay for treatment at the time and then reclaim through your insurance. The doctor in Kandersteg is a private practice and so EHIC cannot be used.

HOSPITAL IN FRUTIGEN – there is a well-equipped hospital in the next village down the valley (Frutigen), which is able to handle major incidents. You may need to pay for treatment at the time, including for overnight stays, or the hospital may contact your insurance company directly to arrange payment. EHIC cards can be used at the hospital

LOST PASSPORTS – if you lose a passport, you will need to contact the local police and visit the British Embassy in Bern to get a replacement.

Useful sources of information

Here are some of the most useful sources of information to help you plan and run your trip

KanderActive 2009 – PDF available from the KISC website at www.kisc.ch/programme, printed copy available on request from KISC

KISC Website – www.kisc.ch

Kandersteg Village Website – www.kandersteg.ch

UK International Scouting - www.scouts.org.uk/international

Scout Travel Insurance - www.unityins.co.uk/scouts/travel.html

European Health Insurance Card - www.nhs.uk/healthcareabroad and www.ehic.org.uk/Internet/home.do

Foreign and Commonwealth Office Travel Advice - www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country/europe/switzerland

British Embassy in Bern - www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-the-fco/embassies-and-posts/find-an-embassy-overseas/europe/embassy-berne

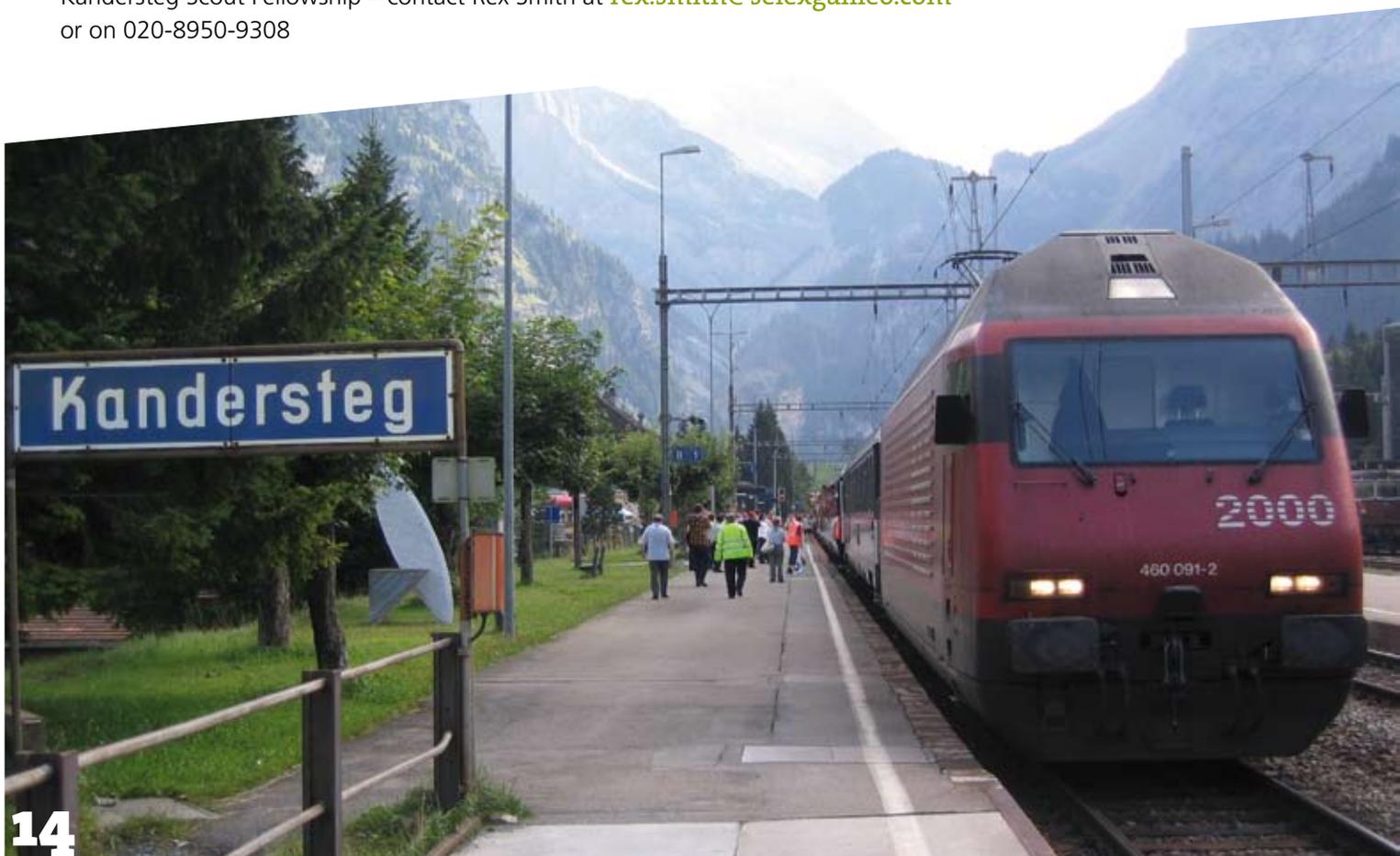
Switzerland Travel Centre - www.stc.co.uk - contact currently Jean-Pierre.Bantin@stc.org.uk

Swiss Railways - www.sbb.ch/en

Fly Rail Baggage - <http://mct.sbb.ch/mct/en/reisemarkt/services/schalter/reisegepaeck/flyrail-baggage.htm>

Switzerland Tourism - www.myswitzerland.com

Kandersteg Scout Fellowship – contact Rex Smith at rex.smith@selexgalileo.com or on 020-8950-9308



What next?

Many people who have visited Kandersteg want to return or stay involved. Here are some ways to do so.

Join the UK Kandersteg Scout Fellowship – an easy way to contact other people who have been to Kandersteg and to potentially arrange for someone to come along to your group and make a presentation about visiting KISC – contact Rex Smith at rex.smith@selexgalileo.com

Become a member of the Kandersteg Association – this enables you to vote at the General Assembly held every two years, to receive regular updates from Kandersteg and allows one free overnight stay per year – visit www.kisc.ch/?uid=118

Apply to become a short-term staff member – probably the best way to spend three months of your gap year – visit www.kisc.ch/staff

Credits

Written by Adam Jollans and David Coppock, with contributions from Richard Bong, Andrew Breese, Ian Coates, Nigel Coopey, Kenneth Dunne, Bob Keens, Mark Knippenberg and the staff at KISC, Alison Martin, Leon Mielewczyk, Tony Parkinson, Rex Smith, Paul Spencer, Mark Tarry, Ben Whitehouse and The Scout Association staff at Gilwell Park.

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Kandersteg Scout Fellowship – June 2009





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and leave enriched by the
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