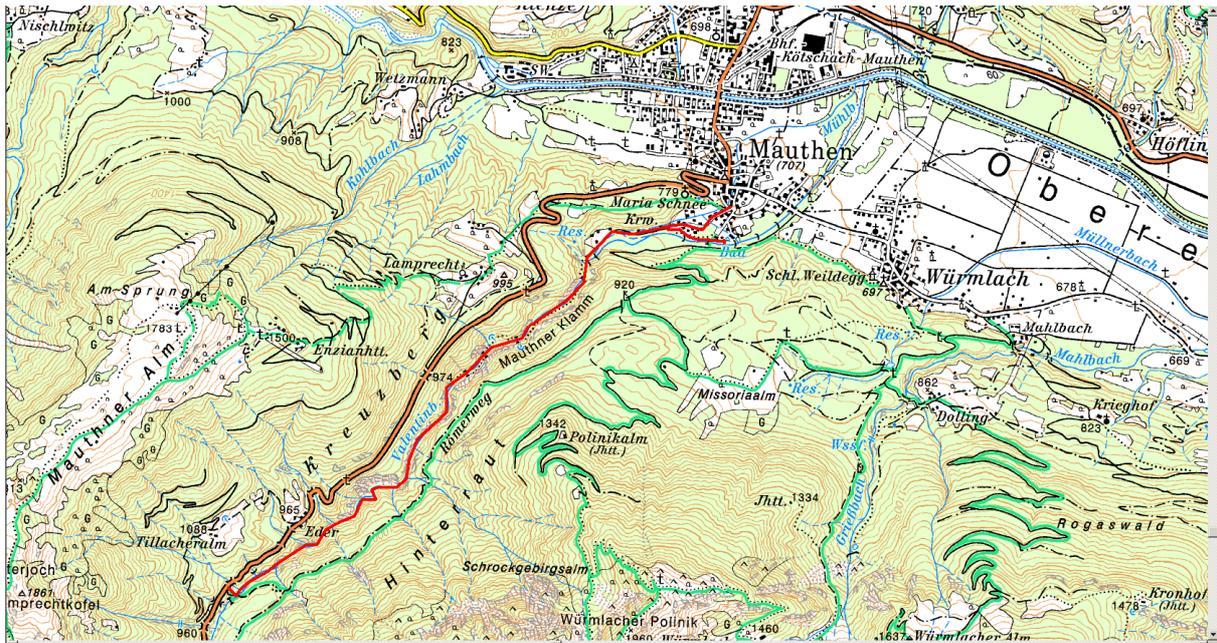


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Geotope 10. Mauthen Gorge – The Adventurous



Red marking: Hiking route according to advance description; green tracks: hiking trails; ©BEV: Federal Office for Calibration and Measurement, 2005

Access:

From the village of Mauthen a paved road passes the bath and leads along the Valentin River to the entrance of the gorge.

Description of the Geotope

The gorge comprises two sections. The outer very appealing section extends over some 1.5 km and can be walked-on in about one hour. It is followed by the 2.6 km long adventurous and very challenging “Klabautersteig” which requires climbing over rocks and wading through the water.



The entrance to the gorge is through a banded limestone gate named “Felsentor”.

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gate named “Felsentor”. The vertical beds are characterized by mm-thick clayey interbeds alternating with lightgrey and darker beds. After the gate the gorge is widening due to shale intercalations. They are less compact than the limestones and were thus easier to erode.

At the first bridge a thick zone of platy banded limestones are passed in which the creek is incised for some 80 m. About 200 m after the bridge the limestones are followed by darkgrey shales of presumably Carboniferous age (360 to 290 million years BP) composed of weaker rocks which were responsible for the widening of the gorge.

After additional 200 metres a second zone of intensively fissured and foliated banded limestones occur. Here starts the most impressive part of the gorge with vertical and partly overhanging walls. After passing the “Schwarzbrunnquelle” having its source in banded limestones the gorge is frequently changing its direction. This is also the end of the well-kept trail.

The following part is very varied comprising dark passages with overhanging rocks, broad shallow levels, pools inviting for bathing and small rocky steps with waterfalls.

For those who are interested in more details: The banded limestones are weakly metamorphosed rocks of presumably Devonian age (420 to 350 m. y. BP). Their banded appearance was caused by lateral movements along the Gailtal Fault which is a segment of the Periadriatic Line. According to tectonic analysis (and models) crustal wedges north of this fault were displaced over several kilometers to the east into the Pannonian Basin.

