



INSIDER'S GUIDE: DISENTIS

Swiss Team leader Martin Scheel explains how to fly his favourite 'secret' spot in Switzerland

Where is it?

The Alps are divided in Switzerland by two large valleys. The Valais, which stretches from the Gotthard Mountains to the west, and the Rhine Valley, which stretches to the east. Disentis lies in the upper part of this valley. It is the counterpart of the flying mecca of Fiesch.

Interestingly enough, Disentis is better for the "normal" pilot, but has not yet reached the status of Fiesch. It's better because the conditions are not as strong as in Fiesch, and better because it is much easier to fly back and forward to the east and west, not only along the normal ridge. In addition, in Disentis you don't fly next to, but often over the mountains, which is simply nicer!

Why August?

Disentis is good from July to September. August is the best month to fly a lot. The Paragliding World Cup is always in the second week of August here because there is more accommodation available then, and it is far enough away from the hunting season, which starts on 1 September. The hunters would not

like to have 120 competition paraglider pilots flushing out the game just before the start of their season.

Getting to launch

There is a cable car to launch that runs regularly throughout the summer season. The second section, a chairlift, is put into operation when required. Mountain bikers also use it. The take-off is right next to the top station.

The basics

There are several launches, but experience has shown that Gendusas starting place is optimal. If it is not possible to take off from Gendusas, then the north wind is too strong to fly anyway. There is then a good launch site at Illanz, but not to fly a task.

Because Disentis (like Fiesch) is embedded in the Alps, you can almost always fly when the weather is reasonably good. Strong north wind is not good, you have to start very early and change to the other side of the valley. But this needs experience. With a southwest wind, you fly one-way to Davos.

The classics

The nice thing about Disentis is that even inexperienced pilots can fly XC. Towards the east this is very easy. If you turn back before Brigels, you have made a wonderful 40km flight. It's the green line on the map.

For intermediate pilots first you fly at the "normal" ridge, from 12 noon you can change to the other side of the valley. These are super nice places to fly.

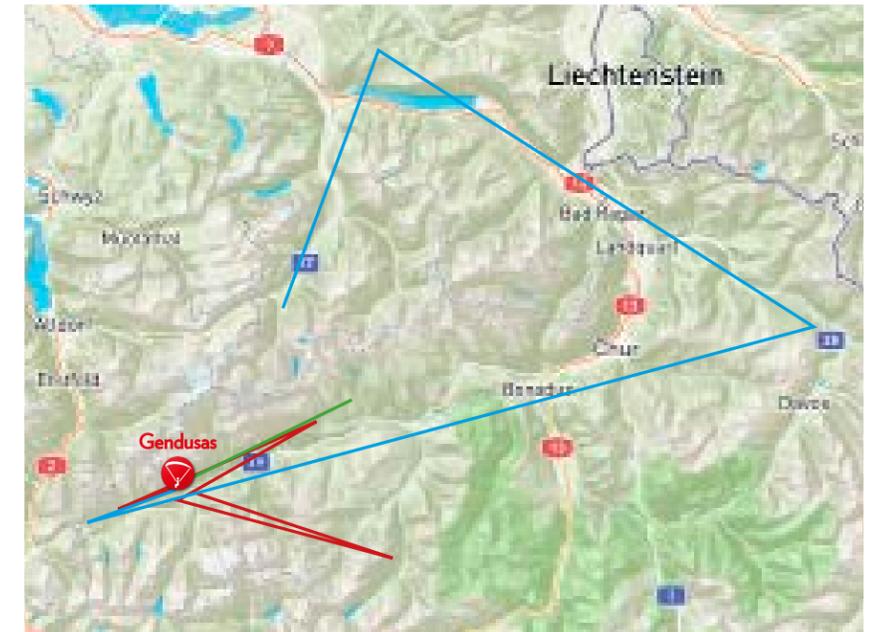
For advanced pilots 100km is easily possible (red line), while 200km triangle flights are often done (blue line), but then you land on the other side of the Alps. That's ok as you can get home again quickly by public transport.

Disentis is a great site for competitions as you can fly a task in many and varied conditions. It is the area where I most prefer to set tasks. There are so many possibilities. But Disentis also lies in a deep sleep among paraglider pilots in general. Wake up! It has the potential of Fiesch!

Local rules

For competitions we have special arrangements with the hunters, and I recommend you observe these for flying outside competition too. You can find all the info at the Disentis Open website. There is also a lot of information about accommodation and the many other offers in the region (biking, hiking, climbing – as well as a collection of weather reports. ☒

Find local info at disentis-open.ch, in the Pilots Area tab



▲ ► HEART OF THE ALPS
Pilots flock to Fiesch but many ignore Disentis. Don't!
Photos: Martin Scheel

Map: © Mapbox, © OpenStreetMap