

Organic farm in the Berner Oberland: www.bioferien.ch

The owners

Natalie and Hans Graber-Amstutz, Zelg, 3655 Sigriswil,
Tel.fax: ++41 33 251 32 13, E-Mail: graber@bioferien.ch

Hans (42), a qualified carpenter and mason, uses his handicraft skills to realise the ideas thought up by Natalie, although paragliding is his passion.

Natalie (37), a trained medical assistant, is always looking for ways to achieve new goals with her family and her farm. One of her principles is living as close to nature as possible.

Children: Angela (19), who is living in a partner village in Argentina, Sven (16), who is taking a course in agriculture, Kevin (14) and Jenny (12)

The farm

- Altitude: 1000 m (3280 ft), mountain zone 2
 - Organic (Bio Suisse label)
 - 11 hectares farmable land (of which 8 ha are owned by the Grabers) and 1 ha of forest that was purchased from the parents in 1991; the farmhouse and buildings were modernised in 1997
 - Dairy farming, 13 cows, young livestock and calves
 - Milk quota 56,000 kg
- Every year 8 cows and all the young livestock are taken up to Alpine pastures for around 100 days from the middle of June to the middle of September
Various other animals including hens, turkeys, rabbits, cats, one dog, sheep, goats, 2 donkeys and 1 horse

Our philosophy

1. Our aim is to live in harmony with nature.

2. Farming is our basic means of existence.

We aim to find an optimal path between these two ideas. To us, sustainable land-use is of essential importance. We want to let our animals live as close to nature as possible. Keeping animals is our basic means of survival. We therefore realise that however hard we try, keeping animals will always be a compromise.

3. Our agricultural produce is obtained using the organic guidelines set out by BIOSUISSE.

4. We have set a high standard for our products. For ecological and economic reasons, we prefer to sell our produce direct.

5. We give our guests a warm welcome and try to meet their needs within the limitations of running a farm.

6. Our privacy is very important to us.

Our products:

The livestock is fattened using our own fodder. We sell the meat in mixed packs of at least 5 kg.

Turkey, lamb, kid and rabbit:

We only keep these animals in the summer. In autumn we can supply limited quantities of meat. All our animals travel the short distance to Sigriswil to be slaughtered. After being hung in the cold store the carcasses are cut up, cut into portions and vacuum-packed. In this way we can guarantee that our meat is of the finest quality.

Dairy products

Our organic Alpine Gruyère cheese from L'Etivaz is particularly popular, as is the traditionally produced Justistal mountain cheese. In summer we also produce cheese and curd made from goat's milk.

We sell untreated organic milk (from cows and goats) on request. Our range of products also includes eggs from free-range hens and vegetables in the summer.

It will be our pleasure to spoil you with our healthy, environmentally friendly produce and hope that you will become a regular customer if you are not already one.

Meals/apéritifs

We also welcome smaller or larger groups to our farm. We shall be pleased to let you have an offer. We specialise in particular in barbecues with a plentiful salad buffet followed by one of our various cream desserts! And to round off an evening visit you can always stay overnight in one of our tepees!

Markets

We regularly have stands where we sell our organic products on two different markets in Berne! You can stock up on our organic products at the Breitenrain market every 2 weeks.

Large holiday apartment

What will immediately strike you about our large holiday apartment is its roominess and its incredible position. It is on the first floor of our farmhouse. The south-facing veranda, which is decorated with geraniums in the summer, looks out over Lake Thun with the Bernese Oberland in the background.

Accommodation:

- 1 large kitchen and living-room combined, with dish-washer
- 1 sitting-room with TV and telephone
- 3 bedrooms with a total of 4 to 8 beds
- 1 shower, 1 WC

The apartment also has its own washing machine.

Camping

There are also a limited number of sites for pitching tents on our organic farm in Sigriswil at an altitude of 1000 m (3280 ft); this area is a favourite with hikers and mountain-bikers.

You need have no worries about sanitation! Although our farm is outside the village of Sigriswil it doesn't take long to reach the many beautiful sights that the Bernese Oberland has to offer.

Hiking paths go right past the farm across the south-facing slope above Lake Thun. Easy to medium mountain hikes are a special favourite in spring and autumn.

We offer you a family welcome and the many different types of animals that we keep underline the fact that children are naturally welcome too.

Tepees

We have set up a tepee camp for you on one of our most beautiful fields. In the tepees visitors sleep on a bed of straw. If you require more than straw please bring your own sleeping mat; alternatively you can hire a mattress for a modest sum. The normal washing facilities and toilets are available.

Learning on the farm

At our farm your school class can learn all about how a dairy farm runs. And don't forget we have lots of different animals that will fascinate children, including cows, a horse, a donkey, pigs, goats, sheep, turkeys, hens, a dog and several cats.

The area where we live is also ideal for addressing various aspects of biology and geography.

Why not combine a visit to our organic farm with an overnight stay in one of our tepees!

We shall be pleased to prepare a good meal for you and your class!

Excursions

- Gold-washing and trout-fishing at Grabenmühle, Sigriswil
- Ballenberg Open-Air Museum Discover how the majority of Swiss people lived and worked in centuries past.
- Mystery Park in Interlaken A unique park that presents the inexplicable but at the same time comprehensible mysteries of this planet.
- Beatus Caves (with stalactites and stalagmites) Here you can admire in one day what has taken millions of years to form.
- Niederhorn A mountain that offers a wonderful panoramic view as well as excellent hiking and winter-sports facilities, scootering, guided tours for those interested in wild animals, plus Nordic walking.
- Aare Gorge Over thousands of years the River Aare has eroded a passage through the rock which is today an impressive gorge of 1400 m in length and 180 m in depth.
- Jungfraujoch – The Top of Europe The Sphinx Observatory, the Ice Palace and the panorama terrace in the middle of permanent snow fields are features that attract thousands of tourists to the Jungfraujoch all year round.