

# Vorarlberg Magazine

## A sense of snow

How the pace of life  
in Vorarlberg changes  
in winter

## Time to enjoy

Baking bread in the  
Paulinarium, mountain  
huts for connoisseurs,  
agriculture in winter

## Winter in the mountains

Skiing areas, cross-country  
ski trails, ski schools,  
ski clubs, a peek behind  
the scenes

# Worlds of winter

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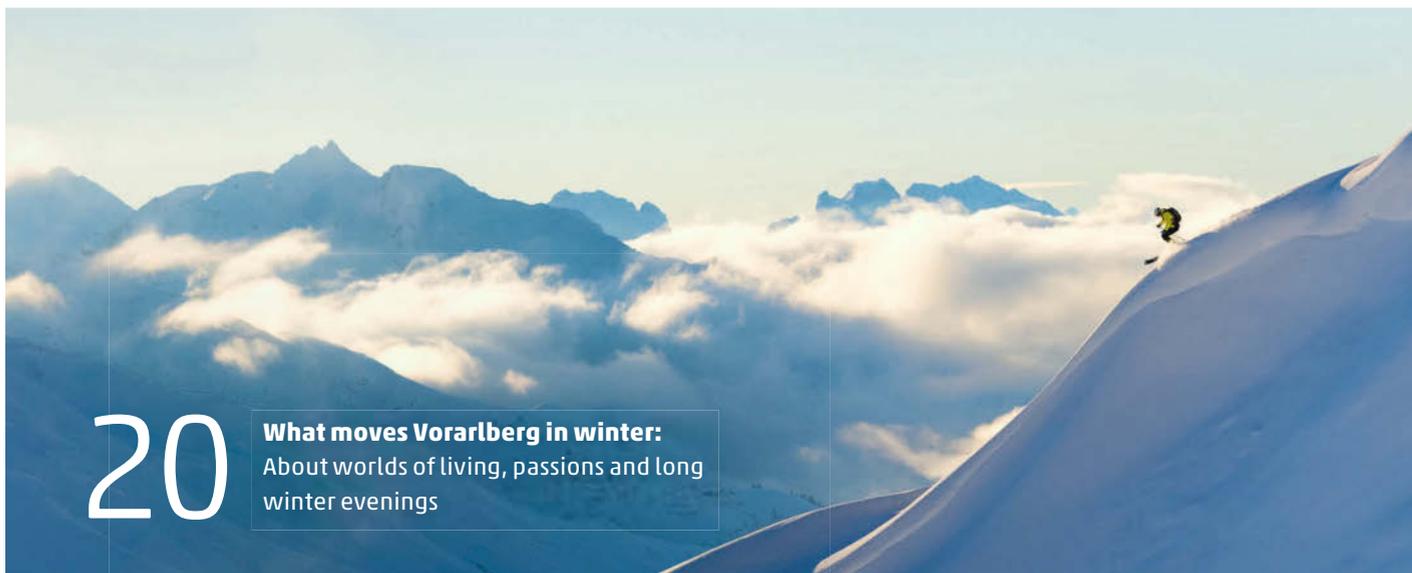
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About worlds of living, passions and long winter evenings



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Three very special huts in Lech Zürs



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You'll find all the links and videos at:

 [www.vorarlberg.travel/magazine](http://www.vorarlberg.travel/magazine)

**Welcome to Vorarlberg!** This magazine takes you to winter on our doorstep: to the snow-covered mountains, people who just love winter, cosy huts and scenic slopes. Take a peek behind the scenes here and there. And discover Vorarlberg with all your senses.

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“Sure, the risk has a certain appeal,” Lorraine Huber says. The passionate freerider likes to race down the steepest of slopes in the open terrain and has been doing so professionally for more than 10 years. She was born to the snow as the daughter of a ski instructor in Lech. That she would one day become one of the world’s top freeriders was not really apparent, though – that’s because she spent 10 years living in Australia and the profession of ‘full-time freerider’ had yet to be invented.



#### Freeriding – great freedom and dream job for Lorraine Huber

“The Arlberg,” says Lorraine, who feels deeply rooted here for all her love of the new, “is one of the best regions in the world for skiing. It’s the perfect terrain with a sophisticated system of lifts – and plenty of snow.” And freeriding to her means freedom: “You’re in it, you don’t think of anything else and you’re closer to nature than on groomed slopes.” In the process, you learn to deal with the alpine risks: “Today I can say ‘No’ even to a beautiful slope with deep snow and simply turn back if it’s too risky for me.”

**Her tip:** “The area around Lech Zürs is best explored on a guided ski tour – with a stop-off at one of the mountain huts and a good Kaiserschmarrn.”



**Lorraine Huber talks about the fascination of freeriding in the video** – the QR code will take you straight there.

» You have to be insanely honest with yourself when freeriding.«

**Lorraine Huber**, professional freerider from Lech am Arlberg. She won the Freeride World Tour in 2017. Lorraine co-founded Austria’s first freeriding school and has, since 2008, been organising the Women’s Progression Days in Lech Zürs am Arlberg, a women-only camp for freeriding.

# Dear Winter ...

Speaking about the (culinary) pleasures of the region, hiking on snowshoes and rapid descents: six Vorarlberg locals talk about how snow and ice change their lives, why they love it and what they think is most beautiful about winter in Vorarlberg.





It's a quiet winter's morning at Lake Constance. Frost covers the banks and a thin layer of ice rests on the trees. Several black coots swim by. This is her world: the biologist and ornithologist Johanna Kronberger is standing on the shore wrapped up in her winter gear and is looking through her binoculars. "It's possible to see many different species of bird at close range here in this European nature reserve that is the Rhine delta," she says.



**Biologist Johanna Kronberger**

More than 300 different species of bird breed and spend their winters in the Rhine delta. "With a little luck, you can even see Bewick's swans here in winter as well as different species of duck," Johanna says. She's regularly been taking interested visitors out on guided tours for the last three years. It's possible to book the tours either directly through her or through the Hotel am See. "Out here, in nature, it's all about the animals. I'm able to forget everything else for a few hours. It's what I love about my job."

**Her tip:** "Take a walk around the Rheindeltahaus if you want to set off on your own to see birds."



**The QR code will take you to the video** where you can experience the Rhine delta in the company of Johanna's colleague and nature guide Lukas Rinnhofer.

[www.hotelamsee.biz/birds-club](http://www.hotelamsee.biz/birds-club);  
[www.bodensee-vorarlberg.com](http://www.bodensee-vorarlberg.com)

» You can see different birds in the Rhine delta every day – and simply switch off and listen to the sounds of nature at the same time.«

**Johanna Kronberger** – as a biologist who specialises in birds, she regularly travels around Lake Constance and spends lots of time in the Rhine delta. She takes people out on bird-watching tours.





»» The powder snow glistens. When out on your snowshoes, you're right in the middle of nature – surrounded by mountain panoramas.«

**Bruno Berthold** is delighted when he can inspire enthusiasm in his guests for snowshoe hiking.

**In spite of his 86 years, Bruno Berthold is still to be found at the head of the group.** He always moves to the front anyway because he's a mountain guide and takes people out on snowshoe hikes in winter. He used to climb the summits in summer and ski down them in winter when he was younger. That he now prefers to go hiking in winter is his tribute to his age. And a real stroke of luck for his hiking guests because hardly anyone knows the mountains around the Klostertal as well as Bruno does.



**Bruno Berthold enjoys the silence of hiking on snowshoes**

"Hiking on snowshoes," says the old man with the young eyes, "is not an extreme sport, it's actually a pastime that anyone can take up." As a leisure activity it is a fairly recent trend but it's definitely not a new invention. "It used to be only farmers who had to climb to the mountain meadows on snowshoes in winter to collect the hay that they had stored there." He has covered his favourite hike through the fascinating 'moonscape' to the Muttjöchle countless times. The snowy landscape, the powder snow glistening in the sun, the wonderful silence and wide vistas – that's pure winter fun for him.

**His tip:** "When walking over the Sonnenkopf to the Muttjöchle, you can see far into the Montafon and into the Silvbertal – that's always impressive."



**In the video,** Bruno Berthold explains what makes hiking on snowshoes so special – the QR code will take you there.

A photograph of a man in a green sweater standing in a rustic wooden interior. He has his arms crossed and is looking towards the camera. In the background, there is a dining area with a table and chairs, and a window showing other people. The room has a warm, cozy atmosphere with wooden walls and floors.

»» The beauty of our culinary winter hikes is the shift between the silence of winter and the cheerful conviviality of dining indoors.«

**Hubert Egender** - with his wife and daughter, he runs the Jagdgasthaus Egender that also provides overnight accommodation.



It's quiet in the snowy alpine settlement of Schönenbach. The only thing to be heard is the almost silent snowfall. But it's still lively in the Jagdgasthaus Egender: guests spoon creamy cheese spätzle out of wooden bowls that are called 'Gebse' in Vorarlberg.



The morning starts with a hearty breakfast at the 'Der Hirschen' guesthouse. The tour ends with cheese spätzle at the 'Jagdgasthaus Egender'.

The Jagdgasthaus, which sources the cheese for its spätzle directly from the local alpine dairy, is the second stop on the culinary winter hike from Sibratsgfall to Schönenbach, after the Hirschen restaurant and hotel. Visitors out on the hike are able to enjoy nature and sample the specialities to be found in Vorarlberg on their travels. The tour is not guided, guests simply buy vouchers for the tour in the Bregenzerwald Tourism office.

**Hubert's tip:** "Explore the many hiking trails around our mountain pasture settlement - it's a great thing to do on snowshoes or skis."



The QR code will take you to the video where Hubert talks about the history of his inn.

[www.bregenzerwald.at](http://www.bregenzerwald.at);  
[www.vorarlberg.travel/winter-hiking](http://www.vorarlberg.travel/winter-hiking)



»» A wonderful moment? When I'm at my lookout and the animals turn up at the feeding station and I see that they're all well.«

**Andi Fritz** – professional hunter in his Kleinwalsertal home for 12 years. He feeds the wild animals in winter.



**Andi Fritz is a hunter by trade** – something he already wanted to do as a little boy because his father was also a hunter. “It’s got to be in your blood,” he says. “Because it’s much more than an eight-hour job.” In Kleinwalsertal he looks after the welfare of red deer, roe deer and chamois. “My main task now in winter is to feed the wild animals,” says Andi, who can’t even imagine living in the lowlands. He fills several mangers at Höfle Alp in Schwende early in the morning.



#### Red deer also appear in the evening

The animals are brave enough in the evening to leave the forest. “That’s a great moment,” says the hunter, who has a broad understanding of his tasks: “The wildlife population and forest have to be healthy and you have to create areas of calm for the animals.” A positive example: A ski trail passes close to the feeding station and it works perfectly: “When everyone abides by the rules, the animals have their habitat and visitors are able to enjoy nature.”

**His tip:** “Simply take a stroll along one of the many hiking trails through Kleinwalsertal at dusk. And you might see chamois with a little luck.”



**The QR code will take you to the video** in which Andi talks about his work.

[www.kleinwalsertal.com](http://www.kleinwalsertal.com)

**The last few metres are tough. The small group trudges silently through the deep snow.** One more step to the summit. A breathtaking view then opens up: across the valley and the peaks, the wonderful expanse of the snow-covered Montafon landscape. "It's discovering, step by step, until you're at the top. The view and the complete silence there are overwhelming," says Lukas Kühlechner, who is leading the ski tour. He grew up here and is familiar with every nook and cranny. He turned his passion for the Vorarlberg mountains into his job when he was still in his early twenties.



**Lukas Kühlechner, mountain and ski guide in the Montafon**

You can feel his passion for nature when he talks enthusiastically about the beauty of his home, about the winter idyll and the diversity of the Montafon, which he points out to the people he takes on ski tours. "You have to be able to push yourself out of your comfort zone a little," he says because you can't get to the summit by lift – only by your own efforts. Nobody should set off into the outdoors, however, without an emergency kit and it also makes sense to go with a mountain guide. Once at the top, another reward awaits beyond the silence and magnificent views: The return trip down to the valley with long parallel swings through virgin powder snow.

**His tip:** "You should come to the Montafon mountains at least twice: once in summer and once in winter."



**The QR code will take you to the video** in which Lukas Kühlechner talks about taking visitors out on ski tours.

» Standing on top of the summit in complete silence and looking down into the valley – that's the best thing for me.«

The mountain and ski guide **Lukas Kühlechner** describes the moment for which he keeps on climbing mountains.





# In pursuit of winter

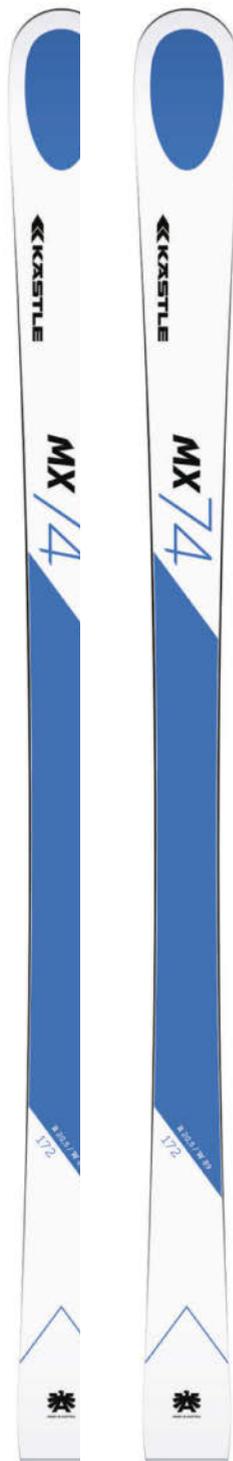
Life in Vorarlberg changes when the first snow falls – and not only because that’s when the ski resorts open. In the darker – but also the cosier – months, much revolves around tradition, culinary delights, nature experiences and the enjoyment of culture in small groups.

## Made in Vorarlberg: Kästle Ski



Kästle Ski has already helped win more than 130 Olympic and World Cup medals – and its products are genuinely made in Vorarlberg. The first pair of skis was produced in 1924 by a certain Anton Kästle in his small workshop in Hohenems in the Bodensee-Vorarlberg region. That was the start of a success story that turned Kästle into one of the most popular ski brands ever – although it disappeared from the market in 1998. The brand returned in 2007 thanks to a group of investors. It now stands for the development of innovative ski technologies such as Hollowtech, which is known for optimised smooth rides and directional stability with simultaneous weight reduction. And the best thing about it? Kästle returned to its original location of Hohenems in 2015.

[www.vorarlberg.travel/kaestle-ski](http://www.vorarlberg.travel/kaestle-ski)



## Where sparks fly...

...they drive out the demons of winter from Vorarlberg. One of the oldest traditions is the custom of 'Funkenabbrennen' ('Spark Burning'). Many places see towers of wood that have been artistically arranged up to heights of 30 metres set on fire on the first weekend to follow carnival. The so-called 'Funkenhexe' ('Spark Witch'), which is an effigy filled with gunpowder, sits right at the top. It is meant to drive away the winter with a loud bang. A watch protects the bonfire from being set alight by lads from neighbouring villages in the night from Saturday to Sunday. The bonfire is only lit as darkness falls on the Saturday or Sunday – it's the last remnant of a sun cult. Spring can come!

[www.vorarlberg.travel/bonfire](http://www.vorarlberg.travel/bonfire)

## Place of music

The Vorarlberg Symphony Orchestra (SOV) plays a cycle of six concerts in Bregenz and Feldkirch every season, some of them also in winter. There's also a major operatic production in cooperation with the Vorarlberger Landestheater, concerts and staged projects at the international Bregenz Festival in summer and more. The SOV performs works from the baroque period to the present day. Upcoming performances at:

[www.sov.at](http://www.sov.at)





## Ski Ride Vorarlberg

From Kleinwalsertal in the north to the Montafon in the south: the week-long 'Ski Ride Vorarlberg' is an experience that enables small groups of winter sports enthusiasts to enjoy the high mountains in the company of a guide during winter. The route covers both open terrain and ski resorts – a unique skiing, sport and nature experience for the participants.

The group members encounter new skiing, touring and freeriding challenges every day, always in search of the perfect route, always on the move to find the next story. The week spent out and about in the mountains is an intensive experience in a unique setting. The guided tour enables groups of no more than six participants to enjoy ascents that can last up to one and a half hours and that cover a maximum altitude difference of 400 metres. They're taken on trips of discovery through the regions from north to south: Kleinwalsertal, Bregenzerwald, Arlberg, Klosters and the Montafon. Professional mountain and ski guides accompany the small groups and provide tips about avalanche awareness, skiing techniques and off-piste touring. They also share the region's exciting stories. Luggage is transported, mountain railways facilitate the ascent, pleasant hotels and fine cuisine further enrich the week.

 [www.vorarlberg.travel/en/skiride](http://www.vorarlberg.travel/en/skiride)



## A light space on the mountain

Skyspace Lech by the world-famous light artist James Turrell from America is a unique work of art that is new to the Arlberg. "My works are not about light, they are light," Turrell says of his work. His Skyspace Lech – a work of art that viewers can enter and that is located above the Schloßkopfbahn's mountain station – is a largely underground building with a light opening that makes it possible for visitors to experience unforgettable visual impressions. Lech Zürs was able to acquire the new attraction with the help of Horizon Field – Kunstverein Vorarlberg and many donors. Skyspace Lech is a successful example of the link between public art and the region's natural setting. It is a light space that possesses an almost mystical character.

 [www.skyspace-lech.com](http://www.skyspace-lech.com)

## The magic of light

When it gets dark early in the evening and the first snowflakes start to fall, the fragrance of roasted almonds and fruity mulled wine wafts across the Christmas markets of Vorarlberg:

The one in Feldkirch casts its spell over the old town's alleyways from the end of November. Christmas spirit against the backdrop of magnificent mountain scenery is to be had in Zug in Lech Zürs. The markets where local craftspeople present their wares in Bregenz, Bludenz, Hohenems, Lustenau and Dornbirn (picture) are also very cosy.

 [www.vorarlberg.travel/christmas](http://www.vorarlberg.travel/christmas)



## Leave your car at home

By train on winter holiday – what happens then? Vorarlberg has come up with many ideas in this regard. Public transport is very important throughout the entire state of Vorarlberg: trains and buses are modern and comfortable and run to a tight schedule. That's why every bus is always a ski bus and every train is always a ski train. All ski buses may be used free of charge in winter by holders of a multi-day ski pass. Day trippers arriving in participating ski areas by bus or train will receive a discounted day ticket with the ski-pass bonus ticket. That means you can leave your car at home. All the details:

 [www.vorarlberg.travel/public-transport](http://www.vorarlberg.travel/public-transport)



## Three times wine enjoyment on the mountain

### Wine tavern on the summit

The Silvretta Montafon ski region is home to the highest wine tavern in Vorarlberg: the modern Vinnova wine tavern with lounge and bar was established in the former barn of the Nova Stoba mountain restaurant at an altitude of more than 2,000 metres (picture). The wine menu boasts more than 100 wines, the view through the large glass front towards the Heimspitze is simply splendid. The Versettla cable car will take you down to Gaschurn in comfort.

 [www.silvretta-montafon.at](http://www.silvretta-montafon.at)

### Wine on the Arlberg

'Arlberg Weinberg' – when international winegrowers and wine lovers meet in Lech Zürs, it becomes the hub for a life of pleasure as the venue for a culinary summit meeting that kicks off the winter season.

 [www.lechzuers.com](http://www.lechzuers.com)

### Cable-car tasting

A very special wine tasting takes place in Lech Zürs in the middle of April. That's when quality wines may be tasted inside the Auenfeldjet cable cars after a morning on the Arlberg slopes. An after-ski party and a six-course menu round off the event in the evening.

 [www.lechzuers.com](http://www.lechzuers.com)

## Places of beauty to recharge your batteries

The view stretches from the spa far across the landscape, you begin to feel calm and to find yourself. Body and mind deserve a break after a day out in the fresh winter air, so Vorarlberg's Feel Well hosts offer massages and gentle water, some even specialise in restorative treatments, healing peat baths and other treatments. Many wellness areas have been modernised in the style of Vorarlberg's (timber) architecture.

 [www.vorarlberg.travel/wellness-holidays](http://www.vorarlberg.travel/wellness-holidays)





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[www.volvocars.at/niederhofer](http://www.volvocars.at/niederhofer)



# Vorarlberg's sense of snow

A winter's journey: when everything turns white, the pace of life changes and the colours of autumn make way for delicate pastel. The world becomes less noisy. A lot of things suddenly change, some residents in Vorarlberg even take on different jobs – stories from a region that knows and loves winter.

**TEXT: STEFAN NINK**



**One of the many beautiful days in winter:**  
Freerider at the Pfannenkopf, the Rätikon rears  
its head out of the fog in the background



**There's the summit:** The Flexenbahn takes visitors to the Ochsenboden. Skiers are hardly visible in the Arlberg expanse



**New trails through the winter mountains:** Snow groomer at the Sonnenkopf against the backdrop of the Zimba

**White bonnets in Feldkirch:** The Johanniterkirche in the snow



**Winter time at Lake Constance:** Like a painting in shades of pastel



» Vorarlberg has changed colour – it's turned all white.«

**One of many:** Vorarlberg has 45 skiing areas. This one is a ski slope in the Silvretta Montafon ski resort



**A winter setting:**  
Nature sleeps.  
Tour in Laterns Gapfohl

**T**here's this one day when everything changes. When the landscape suddenly looks very different to what it did before. When a total regeneration, so to speak, takes place in Vorarlberg. It's usually not the first snow of winter that makes this day so special. The first snow probably fell earlier, on a dull afternoon at the end of October or sometime at night when nobody noticed. The first snowfall never lasts and it's usually not heavy, it's most likely to be more tentative, hesitant, dithering...as if it wasn't sufficiently courageous just quite yet. But then that day arrives when everything does change, when the complicated manoeuvring between autumn and winter finally results in a winner. That's the day when Vorarlberg visibly changes colour: when everything turns white. Everything. The valleys, the roofs, the cars in their parking spaces, the climbing frames on the children's playgrounds, the roads and the gardens

and, of course, the Alps and the mountains. No longer just up at the peaks, no longer just on the high flanks. Everything turns white on this day. Across the whole of Vorarlberg.

**A lot changes with the snow. Some people even take on different jobs.**

It's the day that constitutes a turning point for Vorarlberg's residents: from this day forth, it's winter. The snow may disappear for a while again, in a week or two, but, from now on, it will usually remain – and will stay in place for the next few months. From now on, the snow needs to be cleared from driveways and pavements; from now on, commuters need to schedule additional time for their trip to work in the mornings; from now on, kids prefer to spend their afternoons after school on the slopes and not on the football pitch. A lot changes with the arrival of winter: the lifts are



**Children's courses, lifts:** Not much would happen here without the help of the volunteers from the ski club

## SKICLUB HOHENEMS

# It's ideal for families here

**The priority at the Schuttannen ski resort is the work that's done with young people. Being outside and enjoying skiing – that's something that children learn very quickly here. "It's all very relaxed here," says Michael Aberer, Chairman of the Skiclub Hohenems in the Rhine Valley.**

Michael doesn't have to think long before he can tell you what's special about the region his club covers: "It's simply about skiing here. About being outdoors with others. It's what's called a unique selling point, I think." The flanks of the mountains in the Schuttannen skiing area keep the sun away, which means that the snow stays longer. But, at the same time, the summits are also responsible for that tiny 'no network' icon appearing in the top left of our smartphone displays. So there's no WhatsApp, no Facebook, no live video for Instagram: "We don't have a mobile network and you wouldn't believe the difference that makes."

Two lifts, six kilometres of slopes between 1,100 and 1,400 metres altitude, with descents of varying difficulty: the Schuttannen is the ideal place for families to ski. And so it's perfect for a club that's considered one of the most active in the Vorarlberg Rhine Valley where family and children's sports

are concerned. Skiclub Hohenems has 700 members, most of whom come from the municipality itself, which has a total of 14,000 residents, or the surrounding area: the people out on the slopes are usually acquainted with everyone else out skiing in front of, behind or next to them. "It's all very relaxed here," Michael says. "We're just a regular club."

One where a lot of the work is done by volunteers. Particularly when it comes down to working with young people. Michael estimates that around 200 of the

700 members are actually active. "They're the ones, for example, who organise everything that's needed for the children's courses. We wouldn't be able to do all this without them because we don't employ anybody full-time." The lifts? "Our pensioners operate them."



### Snow is fun

It's about skiing and being outdoors here

### "We all know each other":

Chairman Michael Aberer on the slopes





**The snow glistens in the sun:** Winter hike in Sibratsgfall in the Bregenzerwald

**Everyday winter life:** Snow piling up in front of the door, as here in Lech Zürs am Arlberg

## SKICLUB MELLAU

# He's the fastest

**"You only need mental training when you're an adult," Lukas Feurstein says. The 16-year-old is one of the three or four fastest skiers in his age group worldwide. The youth work that his club – Skiclub Mellau – does is so successful that it has made the club famous. A peek behind the scenes.**

The walkie-talkie crackles into life before Lukas can respond to the question about mental training. His father wants a quick word, he's at the giant slalom course's finishing line and wants to take Lukas' time. He has a few final words of advice for him: stay calm, stay relaxed, everything's fine, go on the count of three. He starts counting – and his son explodes. Well, that's what it looks like to an outsider. The sixteen-year-old member of skiclub Mellau is Austria's best in his year and is one of the three or four fastest skiers in his age group worldwide. Just a few moments ago, he moved away from the others to do some stretching and it was like he hadn't been there at all. But now, at the starting signal, the atoms in the air around him seem to contract briefly. Lukas shoots down the track as if he was being pulled down by a mighty, invisible force.



You don't have to know much about skiing to see that he's better than anyone else out on the slopes this winter's morning.

Skiclub Mellau may be a small club with just on 200 members but it has long been famous beyond the realms of Vorarlberg for the work that it does with young people. Besides Lukas, the club has also fielded two other skiers for the ÖSV (Austrian Ski Association) squad. Fifty children get





put into operation, the slopes and cross-country ski trails are groomed and the hotels get ready for the first arrivals. Mountain guides become ski instructors. And those who the other day were still repairing e-bikes are now being asked by their customers to explain bindings on snowboards.

Winter changes the region, in all aspects of life, it changes all everyday routines, that's what happens in the Alps. Its effects can already be felt in the morning when wardrobe doors are opened, when routes to work are chosen and, of course, later on at the office when the plans for the coming weekend become the topic of discussion during coffee breaks. When the question is whether to go up to the Walmendingerhorn or take the cross-country ski trail behind the house. Whether to meet with friends for mulled wine at the Christmas market or to set off as a couple on snowshoes at dusk. You could be lucky. And catch sight of deer. Or even a stag. Because that's what winter does, too: it brings a lot to light. The tracks in the snow suddenly reveal what else is nearby. The hare that must have zigzagged

across the meadow. The squirrel moving between the tree and its hiding place in the garage. And the fox that apparently slinks across the garden behind the house each night, secretly, stealthily, quietly – you can now see that happening, too.

### Earlier, thick downy flakes floated from the sky

It's sometimes said that snow's just snow ... but then you're out and about in Vorarlberg, the Montafon, Kleinwalsertal or the Bregenzerwald on a winter's day and suddenly you notice: that's not true – snow isn't just snow, snow is always new and always different. Earlier, thick flakes floated from the sky, in movements reminiscent of a swinging pendulum, downy flakes piling up on the branches of the fir trees like foam in a bath. That's when you realise that something has changed up there, the air pressure or the temperature or some other meteorological ingredient and the thick flakes have turned into small white lentils. Then it fell



### Like he's being pulled by an invisible force:

Skiing talent Lukas at the giant slalom; his father Patrick Feurstein (left) is often also to be found on the slopes

together for training every Monday in winter; the smaller group of racing skiers even meets three times a week for training. "That's really important," Patrick Feurstein says, as he's drilling holes into the snow with an ice drill for the slalom poles, "you can achieve so much when you've got the talent and are encouraged from the start." And that talent he mentions? How does it show itself? "You can see it. In the movements, the body, the spirit. Even in children. You can't miss it if you ski yourself."

Lukas Feurstein is now back on the mountain and ready for the next giant slalom descent. He says he's now had time to think about mental training. "That's something you only need as an adult, I think."

### Encouraging young talent from the start:

That's what skiclub Mellau in the Bregenzerwald has dedicated itself to – and very successfully, too



## FIS SKI MUSEUM IN DAMÜLS

# The mail comes on skis...

...and other anecdotes from the early years of skiing: the ski museum in Damüls in the Bregenzerwald presents its regional winter heroes, skiing farmers and life in the snowy mountains as a commemorative institution that's also fun.



There's more snow than you can imagine outside, it towers at least three metres high. And inside Colonel Bilgeri is dreamily staring at you. From a photo taken in 1910. Back then, Georg Bilgeri was not just a popular bachelor but perhaps the most innovative ski instructor of his time: winter sportspeople owe the stem turn as well as the two-pole technique to him without which no one would ever get down the mountain into the valley today. Colonel Bilgeri came from Bregenz, was a full-time ski instructor for the Austro-Hungarian army and – in 1892 – was the first to give ski courses in Gargellen: a Vorarlberg legend who has faded a little from people's memories. Someone like that needs to be represented here, of course.

The colonel is not alone. The FIS Ski Museum in Damüls, which has just been renovated, uses many photos and exhibits to tell the history of the heroes of a time when people traversed the mountains without breathable clothing, smartphones or avalanche air bags. This is where you'll discover skis from the early days of alpine sports, overlong wooden boards and those lined with seal fur. And,



of course, exhibits whose owners have written winter sports history. The first skis owned by Toni Innauer, for example. Or the original racing skis dating back to the 1950s that were used by Toni Sailer.

**Winter uniform:** This was what the postman used to wear. Centre: Kästle skis from many decades

**New design:** The ski museum in the former vicarage (below)

The museum in the former vicarage has grown from the private collection of Christian Lingenhölle, who was able to realise his dream of a ski museum with the support of the municipality a few years ago. The collection not only recalls 100 years of skiing history in Vorarlberg – it also keeps the memory of the region's skiing farmers alive: it's not so long ago that only a dozen small companies were producing winter sports equipment in Vorarlberg.

The museum's most beautiful piece, by the way, is a Damüls postman's uniform. Until a few years ago, the mail was delivered in winter by postmen on skis. Even when the snow was three metres high.



**Heaven and earth  
become one:** Chapel  
in Schönenbach

more densely, more quickly, as if it wanted to show everyone down there what real snow is. And even that's over now. The snow is now wet and it sloshes from the sky like millions of tiny facecloths splattering down from the sky. If you're very quiet, you can even hear it hit the ground. Sometimes it drapes itself like a veil on the local landscape. And sometimes it floats over the slopes like white powder. As if someone had just thrown a huge load down from above and the dust from the impact was still hanging in the air.

#### **The mountains look as if they've been covered in a soft duvet**

The snow changes Vorarlberg, it reduces the diversity of autumnal nature to an essential minimum. As soon as it has fallen, the mountains no longer look so rugged and angular but rather as if a soft duvet had been thrown over them, as if someone had blanketed the whole wide country up there. Of course, there are those days when an artist wanting to depict winter in Vorarlberg on canvas could get by with two colours –

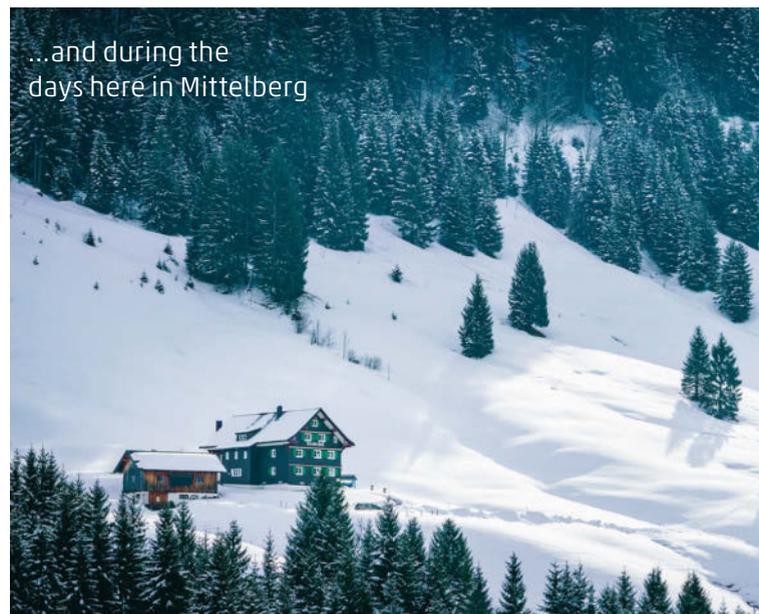
»» Snow reduces diversity to an essential minimum.«

more than radiant white and bright blue wouldn't be needed. But on other days, the dull and grey ones, when visibility is limited and your own sense of distance and dimensions fades, those are the days when winter creates pictures like landscape paintings by past masters. Views where the fine line between heaven and earth becomes blurred. And you need 117 shades of colour ranging from white to dark grey to do justice to the world.



**Winter wizardry:**

Like in the evenings here in the Bregenzerwald...



...and during the days here in Mittelberg

But, it's something wonderful, winter, and in Vorarlberg it's even a bit more wonderful than elsewhere. There are forty-five designated skiing areas in Austria's westernmost federal state as well as: husky sledge tours (in Brandnertal), winter trekking with llamas (in the Montafon) and even torchlight hikes through an icy gorge (in Kleinwalsertal) – just to name a few things to do. And, of course, more cross-country ski trails and winter hiking routes than you could book winter holidays in your entire life. And where is the village most assured of snow? Also in Vorarlberg. The snowfall in Damüls is the heaviest in all the world. While perhaps more snow does fall in northern Canada or in Greenland, there are no villages there.

**Sometimes you ask yourself whether a word spoken out loud is not going to destroy the silent magic of the world**

A walk in the snow around Damüls is therefore pretty much the most beautiful thing you could do in Vorarlberg on a winter's day (if you don't fancy skiing or snowboarding). More snow piles up around you than you could ever imagine. It grows higher and higher. And then even higher, as if, over the course of winter, it was attempting to make it back up to that brightly scrubbed deep blue sky from whence it recently came.

It's in those moments that you catch yourself suddenly speaking in hushed tones. And sometimes you ask yourself whether a word spoken out loud is not going to destroy the silent magic of the world. Snow has the wonderful property of being able to dampen. It creates

a sense of calm in the world because it makes it easier to grasp by making it smaller. It absorbs the noise and the roaring, it blocks valleys and roads, it drapes itself around the region like a big white cloth and creates its own small worlds. And silence – it creates that anyway. And with silence the realisation that it does not simply mean a lack of noise but rather the amplification of other sounds that suddenly become audible. The crunching of footsteps. The distant ringing of church bells. Your own breathing in and out. The whoosh created when a fir branch gives way and a lorry-load of snow comes down after it, when it whirls up the dust that then makes the whole world disappear in a swirl of white mist.

As if it wasn't important at all.  
As if it wasn't even there.



**All facets of winter:**

Discover even more experiences, activities, inspiration at

 [www.vorarlberg.travel/winter-holidays](http://www.vorarlberg.travel/winter-holidays)





**Landscape without corners and edges:**  
Snowshoe hike on the Sonnenkopf in Klosters



# It's all up and down

What do you need to run a cable-car system? A guided tour of Gargellner Bergbahnen will show you that cable cars are not only for transporting people – not by a long shot...

Perhaps a few numbers first, says Manuel Stross, because numbers are the best way of explaining what really goes on. For example: 10,600 kilograms of French fries every year. Or 850 kilograms of spaghetti. And more than 30,000 eggs, wait a minute, he looks it up: “Last year, it was 31,600 eggs, to be exact. That’s what we took up in the cable car.” The deputy manager of Gargellner Bergbahnen stops to think for a moment. “As far as I know, not one broke.”

Before the tour that shows visitors what really goes on behind the scenes at a cable-car system (which is available in Gargellen once a week), you’d be forgiven for thinking that cable cars only transported passengers up and down the mountain. Passengers are transported, of course. But that’s not all that goes on – not by a long shot. Its employees, for instance, have to start climbing into the snow groomers in the





**Technical questions:**

Manuel Stross uses a model to demonstrate the mechanics of how cars are suspended from the bearing cables on cable-car systems

**Point of return:**

The hub of Gargellner Bergbahnen where the cable car travels from the village to Schafberg Hüsli at an altitude of around 2,100 metres



late afternoon to prepare the slopes for the following day. They are also responsible for creating the right amount of mechanical snow. And they're responsible for rescue missions out on the slopes. And for avalanche blasting. They also run a winter-sports equipment store and a locker station for drying 500 pairs of skis and boots in Gargellen in the Montafon. And they get everything up the mountain that the restaurant needs: frying pans, beer mats, toilet paper. Plus the aforesaid 31,600 raw eggs.

**The cable car also runs in the summer but that's also when the entire system is checked - which takes months**

You'll discover all this on the guided tour behind the scenes. "Most people believe that we start the big motor in the morning and then everything happens more or less automatically," Manuel says. "But they soon realise that it's not at all as easy as it looks.

Most people understand when they've been on the tour why ski passes cost what they cost." Gargellner Bergbahnen employs 100 people in winter and around 50 in summer. Most of the summer employees are almost exclusively busy carrying out checks. "Everything is checked during the summer. All the cars, all the suspensions, every metre of cable – that takes months." And then? When you're finished? "That's when it usually starts snowing again."



**Not only in Gargellen - you can also take a peek behind the scenes in Lech Zürs, Golm and Damüls Mellau:**

[www.montafon.at/bergbahnen-gargellen](http://www.montafon.at/bergbahnen-gargellen),  
[www.lechzuers.com](http://www.lechzuers.com), [www.golm.at](http://www.golm.at),  
[www.damuels-mellau.at](http://www.damuels-mellau.at)





# Reading the snow

Experts like Andreas Pecl make sure that avalanches take as few people as possible by surprise. Andreas works for the Vorarlberg Avalanche Warning Service, which, in 1953, was the first to be established in Austria. His job involves sifting through reams of data every day and, as part of a team, issuing topical avalanche situation reports. Sometimes his gut instinct helps him, too.



### All he needs to explain how avalanches develop is a laminated menu and a napkin

The smooth menu, that's the layer of snow on a slope that is older and icy. "When new snow falls, it comes to rest on a smooth surface," he says and then drops the napkin on to the menu. "Nothing happens at first. But, if for any reason, the new snow starts to move, then..." He dramatically tilts the menu and the paper napkin immediately starts to slide down. "That's how an avalanche works," says Andreas Pecl. People used to think that avalanches were the work of the supernatural. Today, we know that about 90 percent of slips are caused by exactly the same people who then need rescuing from the snow.

### Andreas Pecl is a member of Vorarlberg's Avalanche Warning Service...

...which evaluates and interprets readings, weather forecasts, snow-cover tests, observations and feedback practically 'around the clock' in winter. The latest avalanche situation report with risk assessment, description of the snow cover, information about potential danger areas and regional risk levels is prepared and issued in the mornings. The data comes from numerous automatic measuring stations across the region, feedback from avalanche rangers and mountain guides, in-house reconnaissance of the terrain and regional observers who dispatch a range of specific snow and weather data very early in the mornings – e.g. temperature, snow depths, snow conditions, wind, observed avalanches, regional risk assessment. "These people are highly experienced and know what they're doing," Andreas says. "And I can call them. I can't talk to measuring stations." People like Andreas can read the snow like they can read a book. In the samples they take, they can see the rain that fell in January, see the dry period in February and the many sunny days in spring.

### Andreas Pecl gets out and about himself as often as possible

Andreas says he needs the direct contact with the snow, needs to hear how it crunches under his skis, needs to feel and press it together with his hands because that's the only way he can know whether the theoretical values correspond to the real situation. Andreas says that around 85 percent of his team's predictions hit the mark; the risk is overestimated in 10 percent of cases and underestimated in 5 percent. "The really difficult task is to filter out the information that's relevant from all the data the service receives." Sometimes his gut feeling contradicts the objective data. That's when Andreas Pecl trusts his instinct.



**Bora is training to find people buried in the snow** - it only takes her three minutes

# Time for Bora to go to work

They're put on standby as soon as the first snow falls: 25 avalanche search dogs are on alert in Vorarlberg. The animals must train regularly if they're to work well in an emergency. They can't be afraid of helicopters either.

**B**ora's training requires some preparation, so a hole is shovelled into the snow and a volunteer climbs into an aluminium box, which is then placed into the hole and covered with snow. And because Bora is really clever, a snow groomer rolls the surface flat until all traces have been removed. Fortunately, all that effort counts for nothing in the end because Bora finds the box with the 'casualty' buried in the snow – and it takes her less than three minutes.

Bora from St. Gallenkirch is one of 25 avalanche search dogs that are put on standby in Vorarlberg as soon as the first snow starts to fall. Bertram Klehenz trained the female Dutch Shepherd for three years. But that's only the start, he says, avalanche dogs keep learning all their lives. "That's why you always have to continue training with them. You only have minutes in a genuine emergency."

## The dog handlers often take their avalanche dogs piggyback when they ski back down to the valley – and so every kilo counts

The rescue helicopter with the medical emergency team sets off first in an actual emergency where people have been lost in an avalanche. Meanwhile, the police helicopter picks up the dog and its handler – dog handlers always have their animals with them at their workplaces. And their skis and other equipment as well, of course. The dog handlers ski back down to the valley after the deployment and carry their dogs across their shoulders when there are no snowmobiles on the mountain. That's why breeds that don't weigh too much – like Border Collies, Australian Shepherds and



**Bora is an avalanche dog –** she also enjoys skidoo rides, of course...

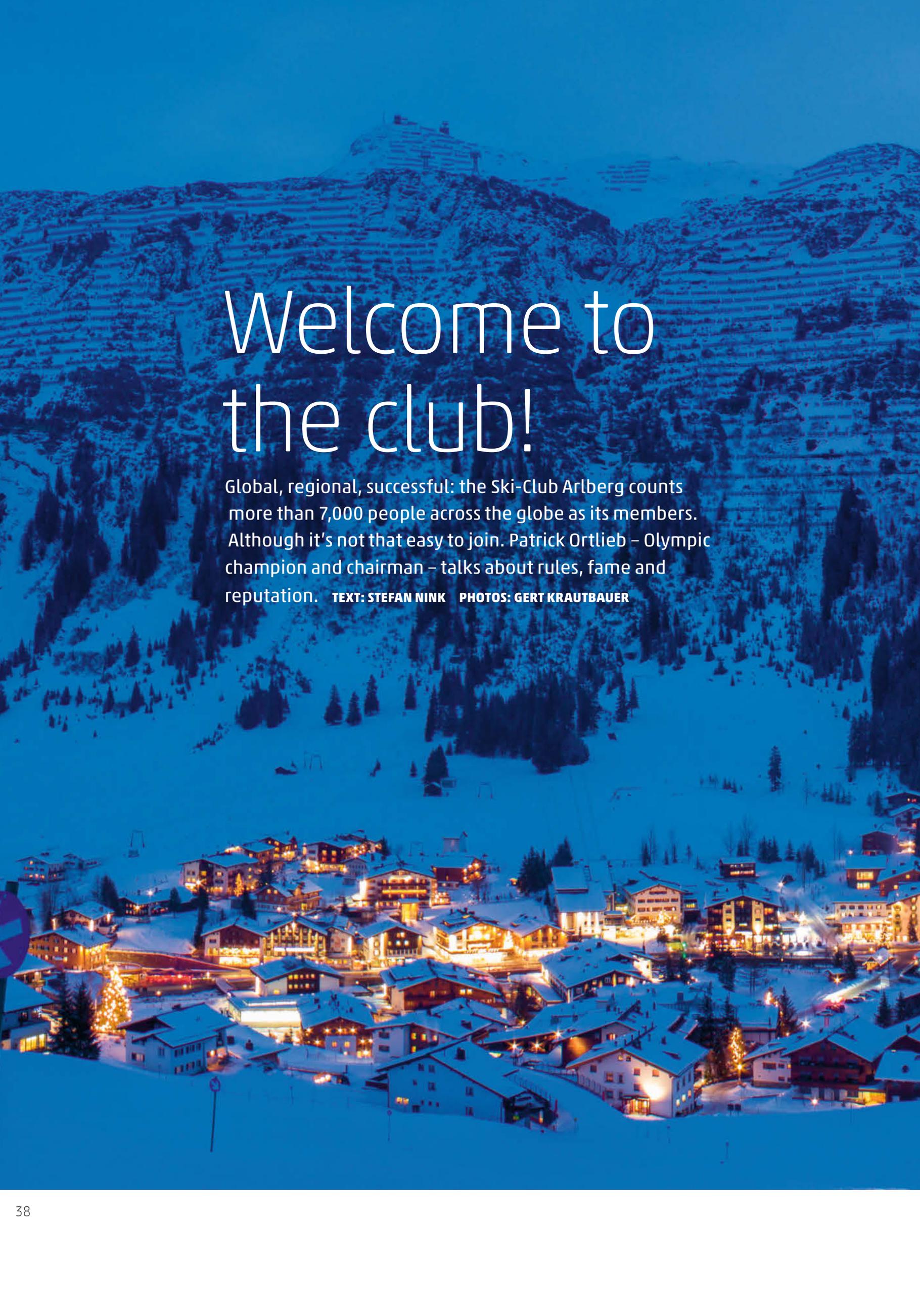
Dutch Shepherds like Bora – are popular. The nine-year-old bitch doesn't just love flying up the mountain in a helicopter, she also really enjoys coming back down on piggyback. Sometimes she starts barking on the way down. As if she was already looking forward to the next mission. Or at least to the next exercise.



**For more information about mountain rescues:**

 [www.bergrettung-vorarlberg.at](http://www.bergrettung-vorarlberg.at)





# Welcome to the club!

Global, regional, successful: the Ski-Club Arlberg counts more than 7,000 people across the globe as its members. Although it's not that easy to join. Patrick Ortlieb – Olympic champion and chairman – talks about rules, fame and reputation. **TEXT: STEFAN NINK PHOTOS: GERT KRAUTBAUER**



**A village of some note:** Lech am Arlberg in the blue hour



**Idyll at the Arlberg:**  
Lech on the Lech

**Ex-professional skier  
and hotelier:** Patrick  
Ortlieb at his hotel in  
Oberlech

**A**ll right: tennis and Wimbledon – that would perhaps be an appropriate comparison. St. Andrews in Scotland and golf would be another. Or Monte Carlo, if you’re into rally sports. But otherwise? “Otherwise there aren’t that many you can think of,” Patrick Ortlieb says. The Olympic champion, World Cup winner and downhill world champion sits in his hotel restaurant in Oberlech and is thinking about what other names he can compare his club to. Patrick is chairman of the Ski-Club Arlberg – Austria’s oldest ski club that’s still in existence (and thus also one of the oldest in the world). Founded in 1901, with members in more than 70 countries, it’s a club of both global appeal and regional significance: the club, Patrick says, unites the Arlberg region...also with neighbouring Tyrol. “At the same time, even in Tokyo, there are enough club members for regular meetings to be organised.”

As is often the case with such clubs: the beginnings were modest. Six friends were skiing from St. Anton to

St. Christoph on 3 January 1901. During a stop-off for lunch at the Hotel Hospiz at 1,800 metres, they came up with the idea of founding a ski club, “enchanted by nature, inspired by the sport, imbued with the necessity to create a modest meeting point on the Arlberg for the friends of this noble pursuit”, is what they wrote in the guest book. There was probably never a lunch break that was more momentous for the Arlberg region. The club already had one hundred members just two years later.

**Members must be skiers and must ski regularly on the Arlberg**

There are around 7,800 today. All skiers, Patrick says, and this needs to be confirmed by two sponsors because otherwise applicants aren’t admitted. People interested in joining must furthermore have been skiing in the region for at least three years beforehand. The admission fee of a good € 200.00 includes the famous club sweater, which club members wear just as proudly as they do the pin with the two crossed skis and the ski pole in the centre. And visitors in need of more



**Young but involved:**  
Ski-Club sweater for  
young club members

**The Ski-Club Arlberg**  
has long since become  
a brand of its own –  
for members only



» There are even enough members in Tokyo to organise regular meetings.«

**Patrick Ortlieb**

devotional items are able to stock up at the club store in Lech where members (and only members) may purchase the entire fashion range. That creates cohesion, the weekly club meetings at the Arlberg are always well attended. A recent meeting in Stuttgart also saw 370 club members turning up, “and, as I said,” Patrick says, “meetings could even be organised in Tokyo.”

#### **Encouraging new talent is the club's priority**

The Ski-Club Arlberg has long been the most successful club in the world by medal count; the list of winners is epic and ranges from Rudi Matt (slalom gold in Innsbruck 1936) to Lorraine Huber, who won gold at the Freeride World Tour in 2017. But it's still important to Patrick that the encouragement of young talent remains the club's top priority. If you asked 17 children on the way to school in the morning if they knew the Ski-Club Arlberg, at least 15, he says, would reveal themselves as members. “Should that ever no longer be the case, then something will have gone terribly wrong.”



**More information  
about the Ski-Club Arlberg at:**

 [www.skiclubarlberg.at](http://www.skiclubarlberg.at)





# Let's get started

It's nice to be there when children experience something for the first time, says ski instructor Maria Gobald. For the past 30 winters, she's been making sure that the ski school Hirschegg – one of seven ski schools in Kleinwalsertal – is a really good experience for kids.

**TEXT: STEFAN NINK PHOTOS: GERT KRAUTBAUER**



It's perhaps 150 metres from the bakery to the ski school but Maria Gobald is hardly able to cover the distance in less than 10 minutes. First, she bumps into a mother with three small children as she's leaving the shop...oh, look, it's Maria, and then there is a big hello: did you get here all right? Are all three of you back on my course? Great! I'll see you later then! Two cars sound their horns consecutively on the road, and Maria waves, although they passed far too quickly for her to

see who the occupants were. And then there's a family from Holland standing in front of her, whose children finished the course yesterday. When she arrives at the Hirschegg ski school, it's not yet eight o'clock, but Maria has already done a lot of PR for her employer. As well as for skiing in Kleinwalsertal.

**"There isn't a day without beautiful moments here," Maria Gobald says.**

She herself has a more relaxed attitude towards it all. It's only natural that, after 30 winters, people recognise her as a ski instructor all over Hirschegg and the surrounding area. And it goes without saying that she'll also answer questions about the right helmet or the new ski binding even when she's not at work. It's a privilege, she says, that she still enjoys her job as much as she did 30 years ago. "There isn't a day that goes by without beautiful moments." She pauses to reflect. "There aren't many people who can say that, are there?" The ski schools in Kleinwalsertal all have sections for children, instruction commences from three years of age. Maria enjoys teaching absolute beginners most – those who are now standing around her at the top of the mountain: wrapped up in warm clothes, with helmets

» I still enjoy my job as much as I did in my first season.«





**People grow:**  
Maria trains beginners and gives them self-confidence



**Refuelling, warming up:**  
Maria attends to her students during lunchtime, too

**Almost as beautiful as flying:** Having fun and being praised is part of the programme

on their heads and bibs depicting the ski school's mascot. "You'll be dashing around like groundhogs soon, only much better!" The kids seem sceptical. Maria squats down, eye level is important. "And, for lunch, we're going to have spaghetti and tomato sauce!" Now they're all beaming.

**Maria often sees kids of former students in her course**

It thrills Maria to see children experiencing everything for the first time. A sport like skiing can help shape little personalities a bit, which is also a positive aspect for the woman in her mid-fifties. Sometimes she sees children in her courses where it's obvious that they rarely get any praise. "And then, at the end of the day, they race down the slopes at full pelt and give me a massive hug when they reach the bottom, and I think to myself, 'You see, that kid did it, too.'" Maria instructs more than 1,000 children every season, many keep coming back. And, at some point, they turn up at the ski school with their own kids and look at her and say: "You're Maria, right? You taught me 20 years ago! This is Tobias, it's his turn now." Such moments, says Maria, are even more beautiful than the other beautiful moments.



**More about the ski schools in the region at**  
[www.kleinwalsertal.com/skischulen](http://www.kleinwalsertal.com/skischulen)



Climate change

# What's winter going to be like in the mountains?

Winter is what you make of it: skiing, tobogganing, wellness, great-tasting food along with visits to the museum and shopping trips. Vorarlberg's winter sports resorts are adapting to the trend where visitors are no longer spending all their time skiing and are more in search of variety on their winter holidays – it's a shift that's also helping the region respond to climate change.

**T**ake winter of 2017/18, for example: if it could be assumed that all winters would be similar, there'd be nothing to worry about. The first snow already arrived in November, a total of 8.8 percent more guests were recorded in December than for the same month of the previous year and winter ended with the third highest level of snowfall since records began. Which was 160 years ago. "But we shouldn't assume that we'll be experiencing winters like that regularly in the future," Markus Niedermair says. "Winters with that much snow won't be the rule. But rather the exception."

Markus works for the state government in Bregenz, the capital of Vorarlberg, and is responsible for climate-change issues there. He is appropriately part of the department that is also responsible for tourism. Like all alpine regions where tourism is geared towards winter, Vorarlberg is also concerned about the challenges that the future will be bringing.

And? Is it possible to predict how things are going to turn out? Markus can – at least in general terms. He's been given the relevant studies – studies that Vorarlberg itself commissioned. The general rule indicates that, in future, there will be less snow in ski resorts with valley stations that are lower 1,000 metres above sea level. Winter sports will continue to be possible in areas with valley stations above this 1,000-metre mark.

But the details are actually a bit more complicated. Its topography makes the landscape between Kleinwalsertal and Silvretta an extremely varied part of the Alps. The uninterrupted and extensive undulations of the mountain landscape create so-called microclimates that can differ widely from each other.

## **Change is already happening. Not only in regard to the climate.**

So change is definitely coming. In fact, the climate expert says, it's already been happening for a long while now. And tourism has also been adapting to it for some time. Because it's not only the climate that's changing, visitor behaviour is also moving in different directions. And the two developments are complementing each other perfectly.

Brigitte Plemel, who's been monitoring market developments at Vorarlberg Tourismus for many years, says, "Holidays where visitors were focused entirely on skiing are increasingly turning into winter holidays that incorporate a broad range of different activities." The way it used to be: get up at seven in the morning, be the first at the lift at half past eight and then skiing all day until the lift closed. And you just pulled your scarf up in front of your face if the snow started to get a bit heavy.

But today's visitors like to have a lie-in and take their time over a leisurely breakfast. Fine weather makes decisions difficult. Downhill skiing, cross-country skiing or snowshoeing in the seclusion of the mountains? And it's back to bed when the sky is grey. Or off to the village for a little shopping. And then meet with friends at the hotel pool, after lunch.

The change in behaviour has been documented in recent visitor surveys. Almost two thirds of those polled said that their main interest remained the classic skiing and snowboarding holiday. But more and more people said they wanted 'winter holidays in the snow' and recreational holidays. It's a shift that's also reflected in sports-related holiday activities: the proportion of skiers (70%) and snowboarders (28%) is consistently high. But the amount of time spent on such other outdoor activities as hiking, snowshoeing and tobogganing has increased at the same time. And cultural and culinary activities are also becoming more and more important to visitors.

"Snow experiences in the mountains remain the most important reason for taking a winter break in Vorarlberg, skiing remains our core product for winter," Brigitte says. "But holidays are becoming more varied – and that's also helping us adapt to the consequences of climate change." Bad weather won't spoil the holiday when visitors also have an interest in cultural and culinary experiences and similar activities.

People in the tourist industry have long since started to adapt to these changes in visitor and weather behaviour: cable-car operators have continuously improved snow-making over the years, hoteliers have invested in expanding their wellness, rest and relaxation areas. And there are new culinary and cultural experiences for visitors to enjoy.

All these efforts have not only extended the winter season. They've also started to transform Vorarlberg into a destination that is becoming increasingly popular throughout the year. Skiing holidays in winter, bathing in Lake Constance in summer, hiking in the mountains in autumn. Vorarlberg has established itself as a destination for short breaks from the routines of everyday life – and then there's the tourism that's associated with culture and congresses.

Such famous events as the Bregenz Festival and the Schubertiade attract visitors from all over the world. And they're being increasingly complemented by smaller festivals, often with lots of flair: hip like FAQ

in the Bregenzerwald, inventive like the Poolbar Festival in Feldkirch and keen to experiment like the Walser Herbst in the Große Walsertal.

The Kunsthaus Bregenz is home to an internationally renowned range of exhibitions. The Festival House now attracts 200,000 visitors every year to its congresses and events that take place outside the festival season. And, throughout the state, visitors may marvel at Vorarlberg's fascinating buildings on guided architectural tours.

"All this wasn't created just to entertain visitors," Brigitte, the tourism expert, says. "It's developed from the region's efforts and benefits both local residents as well as tourists." It's an authenticity that holiday-makers can also sense.

### **Visitors take note when their hotels are powered by biomass and the chef only uses local products.**

Regional aspects and sustainability are important to the people of Vorarlberg. All political parties in the state were unanimous in their adoption of energy autonomy as a common political goal. The 'organic farming strategy' is also founded on widespread consensus: food has to be produced regionally and organically as far as possible. In tourism, many hotels and restaurants have joined forces to form the 'Gastgeben auf Vorarlberger Art' network ('Welcoming visitors the Vorarlberg way').

"Visitors naturally take note when their hotels are powered by biomass or when the chef only uses local products," says Karl-Heinz Kaspar of the Energieinstitut Vorarlberg, who, along with his team, supports the municipalities in Vorarlberg in regard to climate protection. "It's particularly the younger generation of holidaymakers that is aware of such things. And shares it. It's something that can't be underestimated."

So the circle closes: climate protection and changing tourist attractions go hand in hand. Climate change will, of course, create challenges for Vorarlberg – as it is doing all over the world. But it's also opening up new opportunities. And making it possible to adapt to visitor needs in a new way. The people across Bregenz, Hirschegg and Partenen have not only already recognised these opportunities: they've long since begun to utilise them.



# Trips to other worlds

A bit of culture and pleasure, perhaps? Inclement weather? There are always days when skis, snowboards and toboggans remain unused even in the most beautiful of winter-sports resorts. That's why it's so nice that you can also enjoy unforgettable winter days and fun outings that don't have anything to do with ski lifts. Like these, for instance:

1

## Lech Zürs am Arlberg: Experience history up close at the Huber-Hus



The lovingly restored Huber-Hus is part of the Lechmuseum and specialises in preserving the region's cultural and historical heritage and presenting it in contemporary exhibitions. One of its main themes is language, specifically the local dialect. Visitors are able to enjoy leafing through old photo albums over a cup of coffee, marvel at the restored living rooms of days gone by and be there when volunteer Lech residents share their insights into history. The museum lives by its motto: 'Only in awareness of the past can the new succeed.'  
[www.lechmuseum.at](http://www.lechmuseum.at)

4

## Kleinwalsertal: Pleasurable shopping in the Hoflaada

The building was a stable in a previous life – a life during which wind and weather and around 200 years of history left their mark. But the old stable has now been carefully restored and converted into a shop for regional products and visually reflects what the owners stand for: a modern way of thinking that brings traditional production and sustainable business together. Good feed and the best living conditions for the animals constitute the basis for the fresh products from the proprietors' own and other regional farms. Dairy products, cheese from the farm's own dairy, meat and sausage products along with other foods from Kleinwalsertal are available here. [www.hoflaada.at](http://www.hoflaada.at)

2

## Alpenstadt Bludenz: Relaxation in ValBlu

Rainy day? Batteries drained? A trip to the ValBlu in Bludenz is a good way to take some time out and treat body and mind to something good. The Alpen Erlebnis Bad has an indoor swimming pool and an adventure pool as well as a spacious sauna and wellness area. Visitors who want more may book massages and treatments and enjoy the healthy, regional bistro cuisine that's served at the restaurant. [www.valblu.at](http://www.valblu.at)

3

## Bregenzerwald: Cooking with Frau Kaufmann

There are cooking sessions that you'll never forget – because of the quality of the regional products, the recipes, the atmosphere and because of the nice cook. Karin Kaufmann's cooking school has it all. She invites visitors to cook at the Engel in Egg – a historic inn – and enjoy the resulting four courses in the company of the other participants. [www.fraukaufmann.at](http://www.fraukaufmann.at)

5

## Bodensee-Vorarlberg: inatura – on the trail of plants and animals

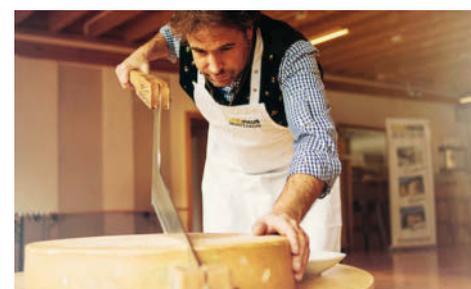


Walking through the human body, looking a life-sized stag in the eyes, listening to wolves howl, watching ants going about their business and marvelling at fish scales up close – that's what visitors young and old can do at the inatura Erlebnis Naturschau in Dornbirn. In addition to the museum's permanent exhibition, guided tours, workshops and special presentations offer exciting trips into the worlds of nature, people and technology. It's actually all right to touch the exhibits – because that's what they're there for!  
[www.inatura.at](http://www.inatura.at)

6

## Mini dairy course at the Käsehaus Montafon

The Käsehaus Montafon serves snacks with regional specialities – there's also bacon, schnapps and pickled foods along with cheese in all its varieties. The restaurant at the Käsehaus Montafon transforms these treasures into cheese spätzle, dumplings and cold platters. And, at entertaining dairy courses, visitors get the opportunity to spend some time – around two hours – making their own cheeses. [www.kaesehaus-montafon.at](http://www.kaesehaus-montafon.at)



+

Even more winter experiences?  
Look out for more ideas at:  
[www.vorarlberg.travel](http://www.vorarlberg.travel)



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# Soft beats at the summit

Of course, there are mountain huts in Vorarlberg that are both traditional and cosy. But contemporary architecture and international flair have long since found their way to the summits – to the mountain peaks around Lech, for example. Three huts, three concepts.

**TEXT: STEFAN NINK PHOTOS: DIETMAR DENGER**





**You have arrived at your destination:** The WOLF ski hut attracts winter sports enthusiasts and day trippers



## Clear line: DER WOLF

**Contemporary building in the mountains: Christian Wolf's ski hut (picture) was designed by the multi-award-winning architect Bernardo Bader.**

**DER WOLF possesses a manageable size and the wood makes it very cosy. The menu includes both local and international dishes.**



**T**hey're just standing there, the two of them, next to each other with their latte glasses in their hands...they're overwhelmed pure and simple: this snow, this view, this feeling of – well, what do you actually call it? "Perfect," Russ says in English. "There's nothing like this at home in Sydney." He has to laugh. There are thousands of beaches back home, he says, but such panoramic views? Such air?? Snow??? Come on! He drops into one of the red beanbags, the ones where – after three hours on the slopes – you know you'll only be able to get up again with somebody helping you. And Isabella flops into the one next to him. She's from Montevideo and met Russ yesterday. At the lift. They then had a drink together here in the WOLF ski hut on the Arlberg. And found that they quite liked each other. Now it's

looking as if something could develop between the woman from Uruguay and the man from Australia. Kalkbrenner's Cloud Rider is coming out of the loudspeakers. Perfect, as Russ would put it. A ski hut is a ski hut: that was what they used to be in the past; but that's all changed now.

### **Guests sit outside in the sun tapping their toes to the soft beats**

You have to come up with something special if you want to score points with skiers and snowboarders these days. Christian Wolf had his hut designed by one of Vorarlberg's most renowned architects: DER WOLF is a fine example of Bernardo Bader's ability to place unusual buildings in nature in such a way that they look as if they had always been there – in spite of

all their sophisticated design. Clear lines, lots of light, lots of blond wood and furnishings whose minimalist casualness seems absolutely unobtrusive: everyone feels comfortable in such an ambience, regardless of whether they're from Australia, Germany or the Netherlands. The hut's manageable size means that it's become the first port of call for many people coming up from Oberlech on the Petersboden cable car.

» DER WOLF is a place for feeling good, chatting and finding yourself.«

DER WOLF is a place for feeling good, chatting and finding yourself, and it also incidentally meets a need that has been neglected in many ski huts in the Alps over time, that is: you can have a rest here. Recharge your batteries. Restore your strength. You can even do so inside. Because it's not really loud even when it's jam-packed. Outside, snowboarders and skiers sit on the beanbags chilling in the sun, tapping their feet to the soft beats coming out of the speakers while watching the wind shepherd the clouds over the horizon. Very slowly, from right to left.

But, of course, it could be different. Totally different. For instance, 400 metres further on, a piece of urbanity has been dragged up the mountain to connect two worlds that would otherwise be worlds apart. The Schlegelkopf may call itself a mountain restaurant and may be situated high up in the Vorarlberg alpine world – but its interior and ambience wouldn't look amiss in a high-rise in mid-town Manhattan. Or in a Hong Kong skyscraper. But that would mean that the view it presents would be that of a sea of houses. And not this magnificent world of mountain peaks. That's what you call a panorama! A drink at the semi-circular bar in the Schlegelkopf is something that's almost surreal. You can watch clouds and fog change in the valleys, see how new formations are constantly materialising and then vanishing again. Many guests cannot tear themselves away from this sight for minutes on end and there are moments when it becomes almost



A class of its own:  
the Schlegelkopf

**The restaurant at the mountain station is as international as the people in Lech are: Mario Zacares, for example, makes sushi – as an homage to the twinned town of Hakuba-Happo in Japan.**

**An unobstructed view of the mountains may be enjoyed from the terrace.**





completely quiet. That's when it seems that up here you're floating above everything to the extent that you feel almost as if you're in another world.

### **The cuisine pays tribute to the twinned towns of Kampen, Hakuba-Happo and Beaver Creek**

However, most people actually come to the Schlegelkopf for the food. The chef Matthias Seidel celebrates regional recipes but also pays homage with his pots and pans to the twinned towns of Lech: Hakuba-Happo (Japan), Beaver Creek (Colorado, USA) and Kampen (Sylt). Doesn't that get really complicated, for example, with oysters from the North Sea? "Well," he says, "it's only getting the fresh produce that's complicated. But that's just the way it is at a mountain

restaurant that you can only get to by cable car. The vegetables that I order only arrive the following evening. So that requires foresight where placing orders is concerned." But it's really not a problem, you get used to it and you stay absolutely passionate about quality. "Our sushi chef Mario Zacaes makes sure that everything is fresher than fresh. He's relentlessly strict." The concept seems to be working. The Japanese ambassador recently visited – and he was very impressed. And on the other side of the mountain? When you travel up from the Zug part of the village? You arrive at the Balmalp. Rudi Walch has been running this hut for 16 years: a two-legged whirlwind who emerges from the white of the mountains on his skidoo and leaps into the dance beats like he was on fire. It takes him five minutes to climb the two floors because he looks into all the rooms and chats to all his



» Everyone gives 120 percent when the Balmalp is open!«

Rudi Walch – boss at the hut

### 360 degrees breathable

That's what it says on the menus at the Balmalp – which is situated in an exposed setting on a ridge. A location that's simply unbeatable in fine weather. That's when many day trippers besides the skiers also travel to the hut – in comfort with the Zugerberg cable car.



employees and says hello to at least every third guest. And incidentally notices that one of his bartenders can hardly keep up with serving the beer. The next moment, he's helping out behind the bar. The team, he says, is exactly like him: "Cool, good-looking and a little mad."

### The view is as breathtaking as the wind that blows from the peaks

'360 degrees breathable' is what it says on the Balmalp's menus, and anyone drinking their shandy on the balcony will quickly realise what that means: the view is as breathtaking as the icy wind that blows up from the peaks. The hut is situated in an exposed setting on a ridge; the lifts stop in storms. But the location is unbeatable when the weather is good – and so is the sunset. Oh yes. Hotspots like the Balmalp, DER WOLF and the Schlegelkopf have one thing in common for all their differences: an increasing number of guests are not here for the skiing – they're here on the mountain top for the food. For the drinks high above all earthly matters. And sometimes for the parties. And most certainly for the views and the clouds.



#### More information about the three huts is available at:

-  [www.schlegelkopf.at](http://www.schlegelkopf.at)
-  [www.derwolf.ski](http://www.derwolf.ski)
-  [www.balmalp.at](http://www.balmalp.at)

#### More information about skiing on the Arlberg at:

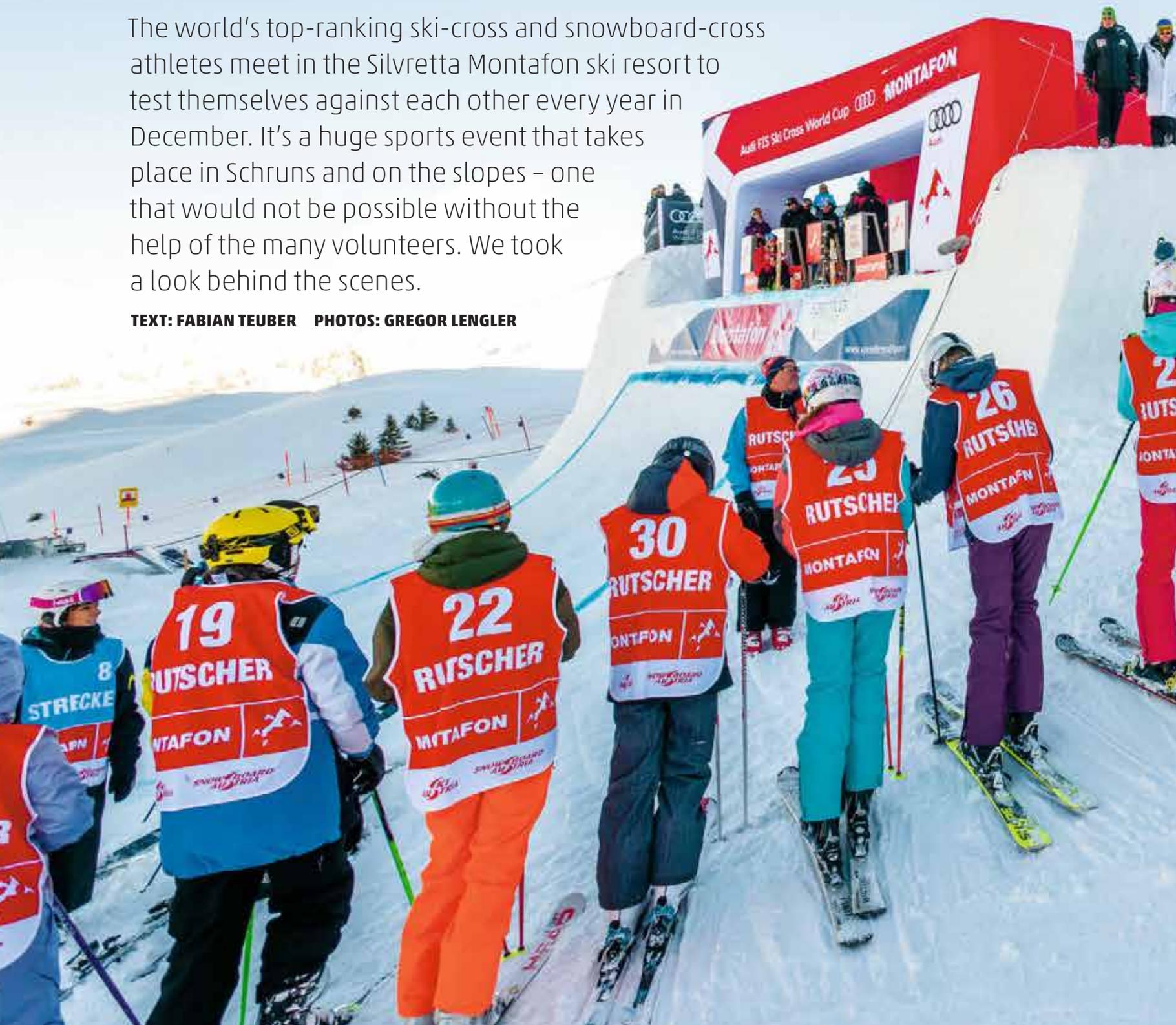
-  [www.lechzuers.com](http://www.lechzuers.com)



# World Cup in the Montafon – a valley gets to work

The world's top-ranking ski-cross and snowboard-cross athletes meet in the Silvretta Montafon ski resort to test themselves against each other every year in December. It's a huge sports event that takes place in Schruns and on the slopes – one that would not be possible without the help of the many volunteers. We took a look behind the scenes.

**TEXT: FABIAN TEUBER   PHOTOS: GREGOR LENGLER**





**Always ready:** Well wrapped up, the many slippers are waiting for their cue. Slippers are the people for smoothing out the track between races



**Race Director**

Christoph Arndt keeps an eye on everything from his position next to the starting box

**Well sorted –**

Dorle Hübler hands out the variously coloured bibs to the helpers

**S**kiers...ready? – Attention!” The flaps on the starting block drop with a bang, the first four opponents throw themselves into the halfpipe, which is a good three metres deep, whiz out at the other end again and head towards the first sharp bend. There’s a difference in altitude of around 200 metres from the start, which lies a little below the Hochjoch summit, to the finish, which is located near the cable car’s mountain station.

The winter sports professionals race down the 985-metre-long World Cup track at speeds of up to 65 kilometres per hour – the rapid descent takes barely 60 seconds. The atmosphere at the finishing line is like that at football stadiums: the excited spectators watch the race on a large screen and flags are waved in the filled-to-capacity grandstand. The noise from the vuvuzelas almost drowns out the party hits blasting from the loudspeakers.

The ski-cross and snowboard-cross track is similar to the ones seen at BMX events – only it’s made of snow. A total of 80,000 cubic metres of snow is needed to create the venue’s 32 elements: a halfpipe, five sharp bends, various jumps and bumps. The rough preparatory work for the Double World Cup on the mountain is handled by a specially designed digger – but most of it still needs to be done by hand: the ‘shapers’ use all kinds of standard gardening tools to get the snow into shape. A good five kilometres of safety nets and barrier nets are installed around the track in addition to the kilometres of cables needed for timekeeping and, of course, for the television cameras.



The events in both disciplines are held over three days. The preparations take months and the serious work commences a good two weeks before the weekend of the event. The World Cup is organised in perfect cooperation by Montafon Tourism, Silvretta Montafon and the ski clubs in the valley. The volunteer fire brigade and the Red Cross also get involved as do 13 clubs and three schools. Many helpers take leave from their work and some even travel from far afield to help at the event. Everybody feels privileged that they can join in. Why, you’d ask yourself, do they do it? The answer is: some of the best winter sports personalities in the world are from the Montafon. Some of them have even competed in the Olympics and have represented the valley across the world. And they’re also often club mates. That’s why they want the competitors to enjoy the best possible conditions at their home derby.

The first 40 helpers drive up the mountain in the dark at the beginning of each race day to bring the course back up to competition standards. The cable car doesn’t actually run that early, it’s only been put into operation for the hard core. Most of those standing



**The competitors** probably have no mind for the fantastic view during the race

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### The cross competitors also compete at the Olympics

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Ski cross has been an Olympic discipline since 2010, snowboard cross since 2006, so they are quite young sports but they're growing rapidly in popularity. Four competitors face off on a course with halfpipes, ski jumps and sharp bends during several heats of the knock-out competition in which the two fastest athletes advance to the next round. More than 200 competitors from 27 nations have registered to take part in both disciplines at the World Cup in the Montafon.

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crowded together in the car look tired because they already climbed out of bed at four in the morning the day before – and only got back down to the valley at seven in the evening. The mood remains buoyant in spite of the occasional suppressed yawn.

### One year's work, 700 hands – but it also all depends on the weather

Upstairs, in the cosy and warm green room, the first thing to do is get a bread roll. A total of 250 are consumed every day – in addition to all the fruit, cereal bars and mini-salamis. The coffee machine hums almost continuously. A queue quickly forms in front of Dorle Hübler: She's responsible for handing out the variously coloured bibs. "Slipper, track or gate judge?", she asks. The 'slippers' ski in single file down the track before and between the heats sliding at offsets through the sharp bends to scrape the loose snow off the course and level it out. The gate judges and track marshals spread out across the track, somewhere between start and finish, to keep an eye out for any violations; but they're also quickly to hand if any of the

**Major World Cup event:**  
The atmosphere is perfect  
at the finishing line at  
1,000 metres altitude



competitors suffer a fall. They keep in touch with the race directors by radio. And then there are the 'dyers'. They spray blue markings along the edge of the track and on the obstacles on the snow. That's when they don their white painter's suits, which are already speckled blue from the previous days' work. Snowmobiles are

» We're all winter sports enthusiasts here.«

waiting outside to tow the skiers up to the starting line. In the beam of the headlamps, the course is now 'slipped', sharp bend after sharp bend. The track is ready for the first training runs at half past seven and the competitors have started to get ready on the terraced slope behind the so-called starting box. That's where the boards are waxed and the final preparations are made. Race Director Christoph Arndt has already

taken up position in the starting area. He can see along the entire route from here. He's one of the first on the mountain in the morning and pretty much the last to return. Three radios dangle from his neck, plus a 'man in the ear' – and should there be radio silence for once, his mobile phone is bound to start ringing immediately. The job is stressful but it doesn't seem to be bothering the 47-year old... on the contrary, he actually seems to be really enjoying himself. At times, he has to raise his voice but somehow he manages to maintain his good spirits. Like him, all the people here are 'winter sports enthusiasts' and 'glass-half-full types' who are not discouraged by adverse weather conditions, he says.

**The people of the Montafon expect 8,000 spectators to attend the grand closing ceremony**

The weather is one of those things: sure, there would be no winter sports without snow but there mustn't be

too much of the stuff either. The night before last, for example, the wind had knocked down the fences across large sections of the track and fresh snow had fallen on it, so the helpers were out and about on the mountain from four in the morning. But their combined efforts resulted in everything being returned to perfect order again on schedule. But then it snowed like mad and a fog came up – the qualification heats planned for the day had to be postponed in spite all the workers' efforts.

At 1,500 metres lower down, a veritable festival area with open-air stage, marquee and snack stands is being created on the parking lot at the Hochjoch-Bahn valley station in Schruns. Mando Diao, the rock group from Sweden, is performing on the Saturday evening and DJs in the marquee are getting the crowd in the party mood. But the fact that 8,000 people will be turning up here for the closing party and that the main street will have been transformed into a colourful party venue is really not apparent on the Friday morning. But people don't appear to be stressed, which is probably due to the laid-back character of the Montafon residents. The tent is already up and the stage is gradually taking shape.

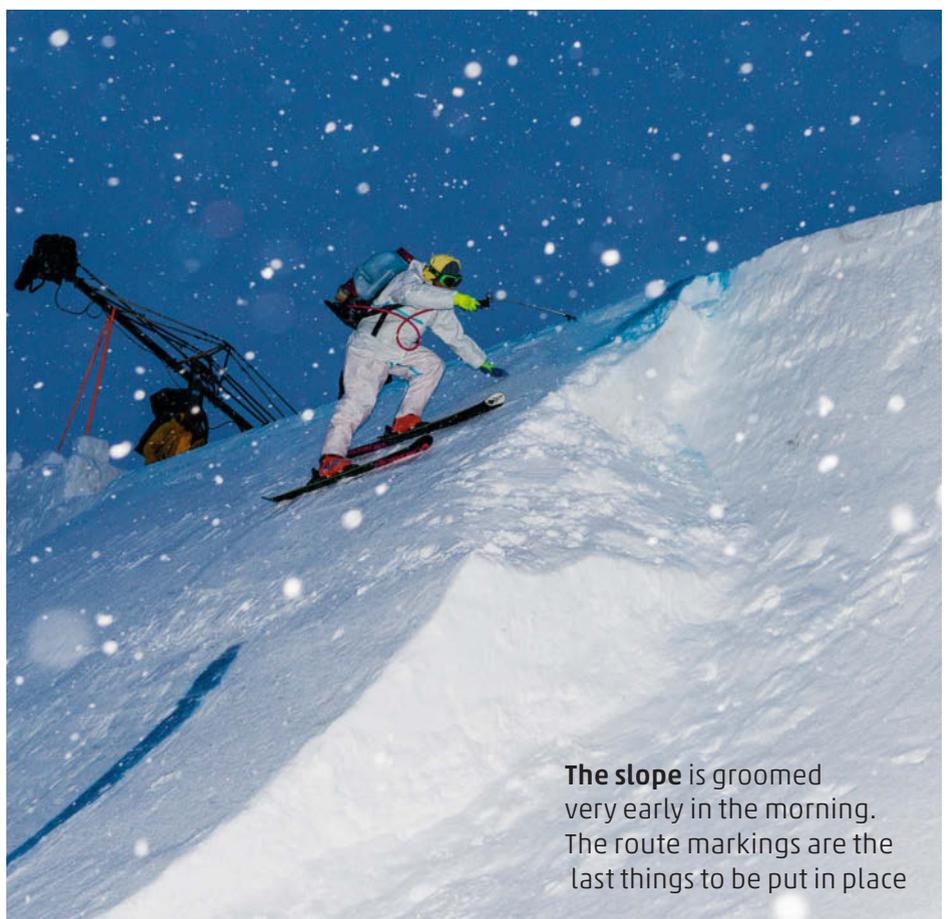
**The people in the valley stick together. Often whole families join in.**

The World Cup also marks the start of the winter season for the hospitality sector. Ewald Tschanz, for example, is a hotelier in nearby St. Gallenkirch; he's opened a few days earlier than planned in order to put up four national snowboard teams at short notice. The enthusiastic hotelier was also the village's mayor for several years. He thinks that the World Cup's success and the fact that the entire region has become associated with it is mainly due to just one thing: the close solidarity that exists between the Montafon residents. It's not unusual, for instance, for entire families to get involved as helpers; one good example is Eva-Maria Speckle's family. The 27-year-old marks down the results of the heats and the next pairings on a board while her older brother is the race commentator at the finish; her parents also lend a hand. From the beginning, and again every year.

After 24 heats, the final results are in and the names of the competitors who will have the honour of climbing the winner's podium are known. Until just a few minutes ago, that podium was hidden somewhere in the background between boxes and is now hurriedly being hoisted over the boards along with the inflatable display wall bearing the sponsors' logos. The helpers start draping the champagne bottles on the steps. The winners will treat themselves to a hearty slug and commence their celebrations while the Montafon residents can also be proud of themselves – this year's World Cup has been another great success.

**Behind the scenes:**  
Eva-Maria Speckle records the results of the heats at the finishing line

**On stage:** Sido and SDP, a duo from Berlin, get the ski fans going



**The slope** is groomed very early in the morning. The route markings are the last things to be put in place



**The Montafon World Cup...**

...takes place in the middle of December every year. For more information and the dates, please visit:

 [www.montafon.at/weltcup](http://www.montafon.at/weltcup)

# Crazy about snow



World-cup tracks and leisurely sunny hills, freeriding slopes and snow parks. The six regions of Vorarlberg are home to skiing areas that will suit any taste – but that's not all, not by a long shot. Unforgettable winter experiences are also guaranteed off-piste. [www.vorarlberg.travel/ski-areas](http://www.vorarlberg.travel/ski-areas)



**White giants as far as the eye can see:**  
Panoramic views in the Damüls-Mellau skiing area



## Bregenzerwald Parallel swings and the language of design

The Bregenzerwald, where snowfall is guaranteed, is associated as much with winter sports as with architecture. You'll find leisurely, family-friendly ski mountains with moderately-sized slopes where young skiers may practice their first turns along with skiing areas that feature a broad selection of slopes. The element that links them all is the three-valley ski pass. It may be used in all of the Bregenzerwald's skiing areas, in the neighbouring Große Walsertal, in Lechtal in Tyrol and in some areas in Germany's Allgäu region. And it's environmentally friendly as well because the ski pass also entitles holders to free public transport.



1

### Damüls-Mellau

An average of 9.30 metres of snow falls in Damüls every winter and turns the idyllic old village in the Walsertal into 'the village with the most snowfall in the world'. Another advantage: you can start directly on the slopes from most places where accommodation is provided. The mix of sunny southern slopes and northern slopes, where powder snow lasts particularly long, is popular with skiers in the extensive Damüls-Mellau skiing area. There are also several marked ski routes and plenty of opportunities for freeriders. Snowboarders and freeskiers also appreciate the variety on offer in the largest snow park in the region. Any other highlights? Two ski tunnels on the slope, a speed track with video analysis and the Damüls round trip which allows visitors to familiarise themselves with the skiing area on various slopes and ski routes.

**Ski slopes:** 109 km

**Off-piste:** 2 natural toboggan runs, 40 km of cross-country ski trails, 30 km of winter hiking trails

[www.damuels-mellau.at](http://www.damuels-mellau.at)

2

## Warth-Schröcken



The many eastern and northern slopes in the skiing area between the two Walser resorts, which are known for their reliable snowfall, provide good winter sports conditions that last right into spring. The area is also popular with free-riders and telemark skiers. Access to the family-friendly skiing area is now even easier thanks to the new village cable car in Warth. And Warth-Schröcken is no longer just an attractive destination at the end of the Bregenzerwald – it's become a gateway to the skiing paradise that is Arlberg thanks to the launch of the Auenfeldjet and its link to the lifts in Lech.

**Ski slopes:** 62 km (305 km with Ski Arlberg)

**Off-piste:** 3 toboggan runs, 14 km of cross-country ski trails, 20 km of winter hiking trails

[www.warth-schroecken.at](http://www.warth-schroecken.at)

### 9 Ski & Concert

Pop and rock, blues, funk, soul, Irish folk and the best bands of the new folk-music scene: starting in February, skiing in Warth-Schröcken will be ending with live concerts on the open-air stage at the Sporthotel Steffisalp from three in the afternoon on Saturdays. The motto: ski in & chill out.

[www.warth-schroecken.at](http://www.warth-schroecken.at)

3

## Bödele near Schwarzenberg

Skiing in the Bregenzerwald originated at the Bödele under the Hochälpelekkopf. The family-friendly area where snowfall is reliable has retained its leisurely charm and also remains popular with many locals. They appreciate the varied ski meadows between islands of forests and ski huts. The four-kilometre-long valley descent to Schwarzenberg, where world-cup races have been staged, is the main attraction. But you can also descend on the other side and enjoy the view of Lake Constance.

**Ski slopes:** 24 km

**Off-piste:** 3 to 9 km of cross-country ski trails, 15 km of winter hiking trails

[www.boedele.info](http://www.boedele.info)



4

## Diedamskopf near Au-Schoppernau

At 2,060 metres, the Diedamskopf mountain station is the highest in the Bregenzerwald and the 360-degree panorama is correspondingly magnificent. The range of available winter sports is just perfect: in addition to varied slopes of all levels of difficulty, there's also 'Didis Kinder-Erlebnisland', which is a snow play area that children accompanying guests who visit Au-Schoppernau may enjoy free of charge, a varied freeride area and the Pleasure Diedamspark. The Unterdiedams slope that covers an altitude difference of more than 1,200 metres over a distance of 10 kilometres is one of the most beautiful valley descents in Vorarlberg.

**Ski slopes:** 40 km

**Off-piste:** 40 km of winter hiking trails, 63 km of cross-country ski trails, 5 toboggan runs

[www.diedamskopf.at](http://www.diedamskopf.at)

### Other skiing areas:

#### 5 Egg-Schetteregg

Beautiful north-facing slopes under the Winterstauder mountain, perfect for families. 'Schettis Kinderland' with ski carousel, magic carpet, igloo, climbing hill and tubing track awaits the little ones.

**Ski slopes:** 10 km

[www.schetteregg.at](http://www.schetteregg.at)

#### 6 Hochlitten-Riefensberg

Slopes, racing tracks and small fun park with reliable snowfall.

**Ski slopes:** 4.4 km

[www.skilifte-hochlitten.com](http://www.skilifte-hochlitten.com)

#### 7 Niedere Andelsbuch-Bezau

Varied slopes with a beautiful ski hollow in the Niedere mountain's summit area and an attractive valley descent (ski route) to Andelsbuch.

**Ski slopes:** 10 km

[www.bergbahnen-andelsbuch.at](http://www.bergbahnen-andelsbuch.at)

#### 8 Hochhäderich Hittisau-Riefensberg

Reliable snowfall, moderately sized and with slopes for all levels of proficiency. Twelve kilometres of cross-country ski trails are groomed on the high plateau where snowfall is reliable.

**Ski slopes:** 9 km

[www.alpenarena.com](http://www.alpenarena.com)



**More information about winter holidays in the Bregenzerwald is available at:**

[www.bregenzerwald.at](http://www.bregenzerwald.at)

## Montafon

# Varied worlds of snow for advanced skiers

The Montafon is one of the most important winter-sports regions in Vorarlberg – and, as such, boasts top-notch infrastructure. Visitors may choose from more than 200 kilometres of slopes and many ski routes in five skiing areas. The Montafon Brandnertal Card allows skiers to explore the entire region and nine winter-sports areas with a single ski pass.



1

### Silvretta Montafon

A total of 140 kilometres of slopes with many freeride routes make Silvretta Montafon the most sporty skiing area in the Montafon. It ranges extensively from Schruns via St. Gallenkirch to Gaschurn. The available slopes are accordingly diverse, offering not only easy to moderately difficult descents but also great variety for sporty skiers. A special feature are the 'Black Scorpions': seven slopes signposted in black with gradients of up to 81 percent, which represent a challenge even to expert skiers. The main attraction for skiers is the HochjochTotale, which leads from the Silvretta Montafon's highest point (2,430 m) via 1,700 altitude metres into the valley to Schruns – its 12 kilometres make it the longest valley descent in Vorarlberg.

**Ski slopes:** 140 km

**Off-piste:** 2 toboggan runs, 97 km of cross-country ski trails, snow park

[www.silvretta-montafon.at](http://www.silvretta-montafon.at)

### Special skiing experiences

#### Skiing in the evening

Any questions about the operation of a skiing area will be answered on this ski tour on the Schafberg plateau – including an introduction to the techniques required for ski touring. The participants may enjoy the sunset at the foot of the Madrisa over a leisurely snack once the skiing area has shut down for the day. Perfect for ski-tour beginners.

#### Sunrise on the mountain

It's possible for winter-sports enthusiasts to be the first in the Silvretta Montafon skiing area in the mornings. As part of 'Nova Exklusiv', which takes place every Friday, visitors may take the Versettla cable car to the skiing area in the company of a guide to practically see the sunrise – and when normal skiing starts, a mountain breakfast will be waiting for the early risers.

2

### Golm skiing area

The Golm skiing area above Vandans and Tschagguns is great for families: there are many easy slopes and attractions such as the children's ski safari (every Thursday) or the 'Golmi Forest', where a mascot shows the youngsters how to behave on the ski slopes. But there are also more challenging slopes for advanced skiers: with 9.2 kilometres and 1,460 metres altitude difference, the descent from the Rätikon cable car's mountain station to Vandans, for example, requires very good physical condition. And visitors will encounter one of the steepest slopes in the country (a gradient of up to 70 percent) at the Golm – the Diabolo slope. Sustainable: the Hüttenkopfbahn is the world's first cable car to be partially driven by solar power.

**Ski slopes:** 44 km

**Off-piste:** 3 km of winter hiking trails, Alpine-Coaster-Golm and a toboggan run (night tobogganing on Wednesdays and Fridays)

[www.golm.at](http://www.golm.at)





**Gargellen:**  
The skiing area  
reaches up to  
2,300 metres

3

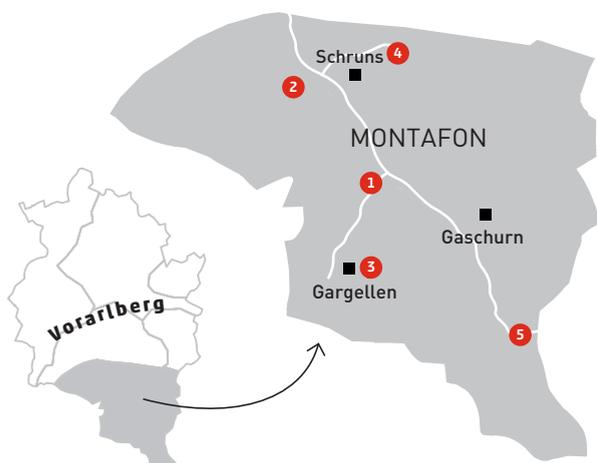
### Gargellen

Gargellen – a mountain village with only 110 inhabitants – is the highest winter-sports resort in the Montafon. The skiing area extends up to 2,300 metres. The snowfall is, of course, particularly reliable up there. A highlight for free-riders is the Nidla, one of the most beautiful deep-snow slopes in Vorarlberg with an altitude difference of around 500 metres. The red Schnapfenwald valley descent, which starts at the Schafbergbahn's mountain station, is popular with advanced skiers. The skiing area also boasts two black slopes and some challenging descents on sections that haven't been groomed. The sunny Schafberg plateau lies at the heart of the skiing area: there's enough space here for really enjoyable, gently undulating pistes and a race area with slalom track where skiers are able to measure their speeds and times. All this while the kids are being entertained at the ski school's 'Schmuggi Luggi Winterland'.

**Ski slopes:** : 32 km, 6 km of ski routes

**Off-piste:** great base for ski tours in the border region to Switzerland

[www.bergbahnen-gargellen.at](http://www.bergbahnen-gargellen.at)



4

### Kristberg

Leisurely and enjoyable – that's the Kristberg pleasure mountain at an altitude ranging between 890 and 1,600 metres. The always perfectly groomed slopes are moderately sized and are therefore great places to enjoy the quiet and the family atmosphere. There's also an entertaining 4.5-kilometre-long ski route into the Silbertal when there's enough snow.

**Ski slopes:** 7 km, 4.5-km ski route

**Off-piste:** 10 km panoramic cross-country ski trail, 25 km of winter hiking trails

[www.montafon.at/kristberg](http://www.montafon.at/kristberg)

5

### Silvretta-Bielerhöhe

The Bielerhöhe presents a fantastic view of the gigantic mountain world with Vorarlberg's highest mountain, Piz Buin (3,312 m), and Lake Silvretta to visitors. Perfectly groomed cross-country ski trails that cover all levels of difficulty invite visitors to put on their skis. The Bielerhöhe is also the starting point for fantastic snowshoe hikes and ski tours in the Silvretta and the Silvretta ski safari. This exceptionally scenic tour takes visitors via Galtür and the Zeinisjoch back to the Montafon where, on two sections, skiers are pulled along by a snowcat.

**Ski slopes:** 2 km

**Off-piste:** 24.5 km of cross-country ski trails

[www.silvretta-bielerhoehe.at](http://www.silvretta-bielerhoehe.at)



**More information about winter holidays in the Montafon is available here:**

[www.montafon.at](http://www.montafon.at)



## Lech Zürs am Arlberg

# The cradle of alpine skiing

Lots of snow, generous slopes and endless deep-snow opportunities make the Arlberg one of the best areas for skiing in the world. Winter sports also has a long tradition here: the first skiing course for visitors was held in Lech Zürs as early as 1906. With its 200 kilometres of high-alpine deep-snow slopes and 305 kilometres of uninterrupted downhill skiing, Ski Arlberg has now become Austria's largest skiing region and one of the five largest ones in the world – and Lech Zürs is right at the heart of it.



1

### Lech Zürs

No matter where you start, it's never very far to the next lift. Visitors staying overnight in Oberlech may even enjoy the comfort of skiing directly to the lift from wherever their accommodation is located. A very varied skiing area where everyone can find a favourite corner spreads out





**On the Weiße Ring:**  
Skiing with a view of Lech

from around the villages. Many winter-sports enthusiasts like to enjoy the slopes between Schlegelkopf, Kriegerhorn and Steinmähder because they're graced with sunshine all day long. Others prefer to start in the morning on the sunny eastern slopes above Zürs and enjoy the Zürser Täli, which is one of Ski Arlberg's most beautiful descents. Or visitors can start at the Rüfikopf and thus reach Zürs' pistes from Lech in order to then take the legendary Madloch descent to Zug and return to Lech via the Kriegerhorn. It's possible this way to explore the area with the rich variety of slopes by travelling in a clockwise direction, whereby the neighbouring skiing areas of Warth-Schröcken, Stuben, St. Christoph and St. Anton are now also directly connected by lifts and are therefore also easy to get to. The range of slopes leaves nothing to be desired. Plus, it's possible for advanced skiers to enjoy a wealth of different signposted ski routes, such as 'der lange Zug' – one of the steepest descents in the world – which runs from Rüfikopf to Lech, and other legendary deep-snow opportunities.

**Ski slopes:** 305 km

**Off-piste:** 27 km of cross-country ski trails, 40 km of winter hiking trails around Lech and Zürs

[www.lech-zuers.at](http://www.lech-zuers.at)



2

### Stuben

The smallest of the five Arlberg villages is situated below the Arlberg Pass and at the foot of the Albona (2,400 m), the mountain that freeriders long for. Its extensive northern slopes are a dream for all deep-snow skiers while offering safe conditions. But the short ascent to the Maroikopf is also worthwhile – because skiing to Langen off-piste is an unforgettable experience. Stuben's attractions include the groomed northern slopes of the Albona, the sunny southern hollow and the opportunity of exploring the entire range of skiing that's available in Arlberg while using the village as a base.

[www.stuben-arlberg.at](http://www.stuben-arlberg.at)

## Legendary circuits and concerts in the snow

### 3 The Weiße Ring

Winter-sports enthusiasts wishing to ski the entire skiing area in a clockwise direction from Lech via Zürs, Zug and Oberlech on the so-called 'Weiße Ring' will cover a total distance of 22 kilometres and 5,500 metres in altitude difference. Skiers should schedule at least two hours for this ski safari to enable them to enjoy the exceptional scenery. Time only becomes important at the 'Der Weiße Ring – Das Rennen' event, which takes place once a year. Former competitive skier Patrick Ortlieb holds the track record with 44:35:07 minutes. [www.derweissering.at](http://www.derweissering.at)

### 4 Run of Fame

All the Arlberg's skiing areas have been directly connected via lifts since the Flexenbahn was opened. Visitors following the 'Run of Fame' signposts – an 85-kilometre-long circuit with a huge 18,000 metres of altitude difference – will be able to gain an impression of the scope and variety that skiing on the Arlberg offers. It's possible to start almost anywhere in the region. [www.skiarlberg.at](http://www.skiarlberg.at)

### 5 Tanzcafé Arlberg

The sun terraces and bars in Lech Zürs and Stuben become open-air stages for musicians of various

genres during the first two weeks of April. Sun-skiing is where jazz riffs meet electro beats, modern pop songs meet vintage sounds, skiers meet music fans. [www.lechzuers.com](http://www.lechzuers.com)



**Information about the Arlberg's entire skiing region is available at:**

[www.skiarlberg.at](http://www.skiarlberg.at)

## Bodensee-Vorarlberg

# From the lake to the slopes

It's only a stone's throw from the lake to the next slope in Vorarlberg. The Bregenzerwald's gentle outliers boast many small, family-friendly skiing areas where visitors may enjoy the view across the Rhine Valley and the foothills of the Alps. All offer no-stress skiing fun and a perfect terrain for children and beginners. Winter at the Pfänder, Bregenz's local mountain, is simply a dream: it's skiing with a view of the deep wintry blue waters of Lake Constance.



**Small, varied, with reliable snowfall:**  
The Laterns Gapfohl skiing area



### Cultural pleasure:

The Kunsthaus Bregenz (KUB) frequently stages large exhibitions even during winter

1

### Laterns Gapfohl

Small, moderately sized and yet very varied: the Laternsertal skiing area where snowfall is extremely reliable is home to wonderful ski slopes with perfect gradients. The ski hollow at the Fallenboden double T-bar lift is particularly beautiful. Its practice lift, Kinderland and toboggan run make it the perfect choice for families with children who are just taking their first steps on their skis.

Ski slopes: 27 km

[www.laterns.net](http://www.laterns.net)

## Cultural excursions

### vorarlberg museum

The vorarlberg museum does not tell just one story about Vorarlberg – it tells many. It was reopened in a new building a few years ago and has since been presenting multimedia exhibitions.  
[www.vorarlbergmuseum.at](http://www.vorarlbergmuseum.at)

### KUB

An exciting building by Peter Zumthor is home to the Kunsthaus Bregenz (KUB) where changing exhibitions of contemporary art are presented. The KUB is the place where people of all ages may enjoy first-class non-formal art education programmes.  
[www.kunsthau-bregenz.at](http://www.kunsthau-bregenz.at)



2

## Bödele

A place where skiing enjoys a long tradition: the first winter-sports enthusiasts were already using skis on the Bödele as early as 1809 and the first motor-driven equipment for getting up the mountain was installed in 1907 – which was the first ski lift to be built in central Europe. And to this day, almost all Dornbirn children learn to ski on the perfect slopes to be found here. The moderately sized skiing area at the place where the Rhine Valley meets the Bregenzerwald is also easy to reach and home to slopes to suit all levels of proficiency. Visitors are not only able to enjoy downhill skiing to Schwarzenberg in the Bregenzerwald, they may also take in the view of Lake Constance. The 'Schneemann-Parcours' – a 150-metre-long track where young and old can try their hand at fun figures and kickers – is a new attraction. But the leisurely character has been preserved: everything is central, compact and comfortable and therefore perfect for families.

**Ski slopes:** 24 km

**Off-piste:** 3 to 9 km cross-country ski trail, 15 km of winter hiking trails

[www.boedele.info](http://www.boedele.info)



**More information about winter holidays in the Bodensee-Vorarlberg region is available at:**

[www.bodensee-vorarlberg.com](http://www.bodensee-vorarlberg.com)

## Other skiing areas:

### 3 Schneiderkopf-Buch

There's a practice lift for beginners right on the outskirts of Buch while advanced skiers will appreciate the Schneiderkopf T-bar lift.

**Ski slopes:** 2 km

[www.gemeinde-buch.at](http://www.gemeinde-buch.at)

### 4 Schuttannen Ski Lifts

Easy to moderate descents in the hollow under the Schwarzenberg, easily accessible from Hohenems.

**Ski slopes:** 4 km

[www.hohenems.at](http://www.hohenems.at)

### 5 Heumöser Lifts

Perfect practice area in Ebnit, a quiet side valley above Dornbirn.

**Ski slopes:** 2 km

[www.heumoesslerlift.at](http://www.heumoesslerlift.at)

### 6 Furx Ski Lifts

Popular ski slope in Zwischenwasser, above Rankweil. Floodlit.

**Ski slopes:** 2.5 km

[www.zwischenwasser.at](http://www.zwischenwasser.at)

### 7 Gröllerkopf Ski Lifts

Skiing with a view across the Rhine Valley: the T-bar lifts in Übersaxen, high above Rankweil, provide access to easy slopes.

**Ski slopes:** 2.5 km

[www.uebersaxen.at](http://www.uebersaxen.at)

### 8 Gurtis Skiing Area

Beautiful ski slopes above Frastanz – with fantastic views across the Rhine Valley. The Bazora ski lift is special: the lift supports are made of wood.

**Ski slopes:** 4 km

[www.gurtis.at](http://www.gurtis.at)

### 9 Pfänder

Easy descents, good views of Lake Constance.

**Ski slopes:** 6 km, 30 km of hiking trails

[www.pfaenderbahn.at](http://www.pfaenderbahn.at)

### 10 Luggi Leitner Lift

Visitors can get to the Scheidegg skiing area from the Pfänderrücken, near Möggers.

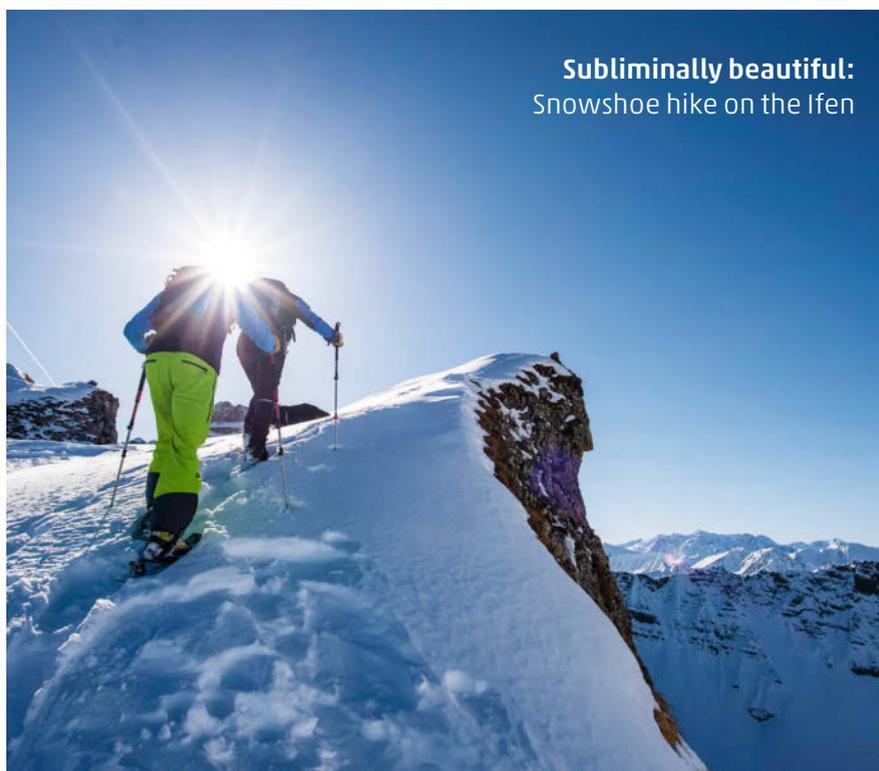
**Ski slopes:** 6 km, 30 km of hiking trails

[www.skilift-scheidegg.de](http://www.skilift-scheidegg.de)

## Kleinwalsertal

# To the rhythm of winter

Kleinwalsertal in Vorarlberg, once inhabited by Walser people and only accessible by road from Germany, is popular for the transnational skiing region of Oberstdorf Kleinwalsertal – three ski mountains which are connected by a valley skiing area. Skiing fun on 130 kilometres of slopes starts right on the doorstep of most places offering accommodation. The Walser bus – which is free of charge for all guests staying overnight in Kleinwalsertal – provides easy access to the cable cars, lifts, cross-country ski trails and winter hiking trails.



Subliminally beautiful:  
Snowshoe hike on the Ifen

1

### Ifen

Its new lifts have turned the Ifen skiing area into the most modern place to ski in Kleinwalsertal. The two comfortable 10-seater cable-car lifts and the modern six-seater Olympiabahn provide easy access to all the slopes. The mountain station under the Hahnenköpfe with its Tafel & Zunder mountain restaurant has become very popular with visitors looking for great food and drink. The landscape experience at the Ifen is also impressive: winter transforms the nine-square-kilometre karst plateau nestling in the shadow of the Hohe Ifen's striking rock faces into a fascinating landscape of snow dunes.

**Off-piste:** winter hiking circuit across the Gottesacker on the Ifen

2

### Walmendingerhorn

A cable car takes visitors from Mittelberg to the panoramic peak of the Walmendingerhorn, which is almost 2,000 metres high. In addition to the sunny slopes between the mountain station and the Muttelbergkopf as well as the more than four-kilometre-long descent to the valley, winter-sports enthusiasts also appreciate the many off-piste opportunities – the Walmendingerhorn enjoys a great reputation among freeriders.

**Off-piste:** large sun terrace and glass panoramic lift at the Walmendingerhorn mountain station

## Fun for young and old

### 5 Burmi's Winter World

Kleinwalsertal is perfectly prepared for young guests thanks to Burmi, the marmot mascot, and the perfect training area. Children will not only enjoy 'Burmi's Winter World' at the valley station of the Ifen, they'll also appreciate the Burmi descent in the Heuberg family skiing area where the FIS Rules are presented on boards in a child-friendly way.

### 6 Early-bird skiing in Ifen

Be the first to cruise down the freshly groomed slopes. The Olympic track in the Ifen skiing area already opens at 7.45 in the morning from mid-March until the end of the season to give early-bird skiers the opportunity to enjoy this unique experience.



**Ifen:** A modern cable-car lift opens up the skiing area

3

### Valley skiing area and Heuberg Arena



Centrally located in Kleinwalsertal and directly accessible from many different accommodation facilities: the valley skiing area and the Heuberg Arena are ideal for families and beginners. And surprisingly varied: there are a total of 22 kilometres of slopes to explore during a tour of the skiing meadows above the villages. Tip: all the skiing areas can be reached from Heuberg using valley lifts and ski trails.

4

### Fellhorn-Kanzelwand

The popular Fellhorn-Kanzelwand skiing area that crosses the borders between two countries is home to the largest number of slopes in Kleinwalsertal. Beautifully undulating, mostly treeless and varied slopes are to be found up there. Visitors who enjoy bagging kilometres are able to enjoy the long descents to Oberstdorf and from the Kanzelwand to Riezlern in Kleinwalsertal. The opportunities are rounded off with sporty ski routes for experts and several fun parks, including the Crystal Ground at the Kanzelwandbahn's valley station.

**Off-piste:** transnational skiing, Crystal Ground Snow Park



#### More information about winter holidays in Kleinwalsertal:

 [www.kleinwalsertal.com](http://www.kleinwalsertal.com);  
[www.ok-bergbahnen.com](http://www.ok-bergbahnen.com)



**Brandnertal · Alpenstadt Bludenz ·  
Klostertal · Großes Walsertal**

# Fun winter games

Brandnertal, Klostertal and Großes Walsertal are the three destinations for winter guests who want to experience the winter mountains both off-piste and on skis. The Alpenregion Vorarlberg skiing areas and valleys are also very popular with cross-country skiers and winter hikers and even with – on the partially signposted trails – snowshoe hikers.



**1**

## Brandnertal

The unspoilt Vorarlberg valley with its leisurely atmosphere primarily appeals to families and active winter holidaymakers. The two skiing areas at the villages of Brand and Bürserberg in the valley are connected by a spectacular panoramic cable car. The slopes are mostly easy to moderately difficult. The scenic highlight is the descent through the Lorenzital valley, which only opens when the risk of avalanches is low. The 'Kanonenrohr' ski route, which also leads over into the Lorenzital valley, is attractive but quite demanding. Tip: many winter hiking trails and signposted snowshoe trails can be reached from the skiing area.

**Ski slopes:** 65 km

**Off-piste:** winter hiking trails, 3 toboggan runs, cross-country skiing, Backyards Snow Park

[www.brandnertal.at](http://www.brandnertal.at)

2

## Kloostertal: Sonnenkopf



Two target groups will find the Sonnenkopf skiing area in Kloostertal, which is a bit further away from nearby Arlberg, particularly attractive: families who want to enjoy the winter sun on comfortable slopes and deep-snow skiers who are looking for a challenge in steep terrain that hasn't been groomed. Both families and freeriders appreciate the relaxed skiing days at the Sonnenkopf – no waiting times or crowds on the slopes. The fact that it's so easy to get to is another plus point: the valley station is right next to the Arlberg motorway. Besides, the Sonnenkopf skiing area with its extremely reliable snowfall is one of the few regions with natural snow in the Alps. Tips: the beautifully situated Mutjtöchle panorama restaurant and the sunny and scenic winter hiking trails.

**Ski slopes:** 31 km

**Off-piste:** 10 km of winter hiking trails, natural toboggan run

[www.sonnenkopf.com](http://www.sonnenkopf.com)

## Winter nature experiences

### 6 Enjoyable hiking

This culinary hike in the Sonntag-Stein skiing area in the Große Walsertal takes visitors from hut to hut and from course to course. The winter hike leads from the Sonntag-Stein cable car's mountain station via Steinbild along the groomed route to Partnomhüsle and back to the mountain station.

### 7 Counting stars

An evening spent under a sparkling canopy of stars will be remembered for a long time: the village and panorama cable car starts in Brand im Brandnertal and travels up to the Burtschasattel from seven in the evening every Tuesday. A cup of mulled wine or children's punch awaits to warm up the intrepid stargazers. And after a leisurely stop, it's back to the valley by cable car or toboggan.



3

## Großes Walsertal: Faschina

The traditional skiing area under the Glatthorn starts at an altitude of around 1,500 metres where the snow is guaranteed. The skiing area is moderately sized, yet varied and ideal for families – actually no one can get lost because all slopes end back in Faschina. The accommodation facilities at the top of the pass deliver ski-in/ski-out comfort. The three-valley ski pass (available from 2.5 days) entitles visitors to also experience the neighbouring skiing area of Damüls-Mellau and 36 other opportunities to ski in Vorarlberg and the Allgäu region.

**Ski slopes:** 12 km

**Off-piste:** winter hiking trails, guided snowshoe hikes

[www.seilbahnen-faschina.at](http://www.seilbahnen-faschina.at)

## Other skiing areas:

### 4 Sonntag-Stein

Family-friendly, tranquil skiing area high above the Große Walsertal with beautiful, undulating northern slopes and inviting huts that winter hikers will also find easy to get to. Access to the skiing area from Sonntag with a cable car that crosses the Große Walsertal.

**Ski slopes:** 7 km

[www.seilbahnen-sonntag.at](http://www.seilbahnen-sonntag.at)

### 5 Raggal

Varied ski meadows in the Große Walsertal near the village with rather easy to moderately difficult descents. The first skiing area visitors encounter as they arrive in the valley is ideal for beginners. Courses may be booked at the Faschina Ski School.

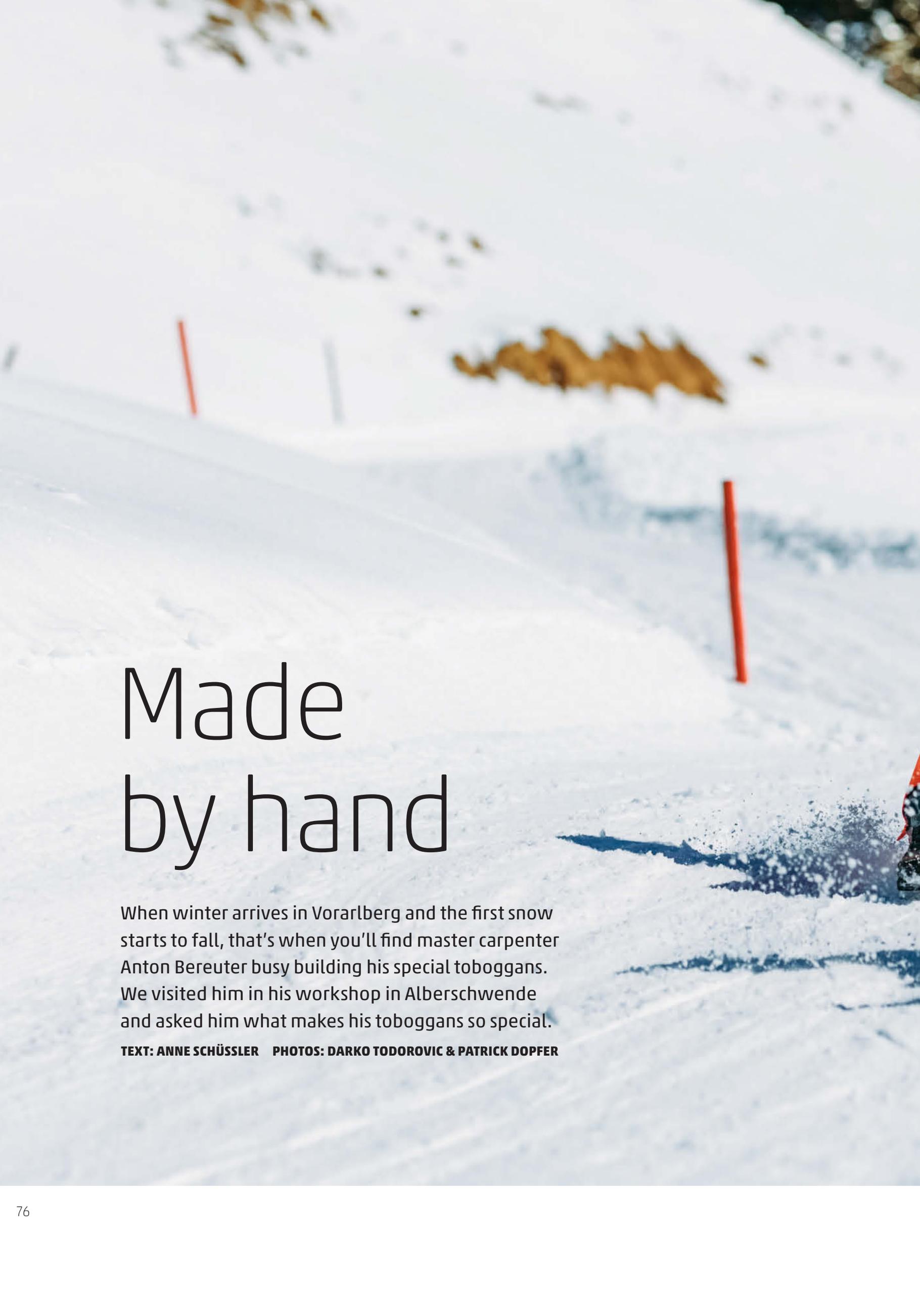
**Ski slopes:** 7 km

[www.skilifte-raggal.com](http://www.skilifte-raggal.com)



**More tips for winter holidays in the Alpenregion Vorarlberg is available at:**

[www.alpenregion-vorarlberg.com](http://www.alpenregion-vorarlberg.com)

A close-up, low-angle shot of a snowy mountain slope. The snow is bright white and shows tracks from skis or toboggans. Several red and blue vertical markers are planted in the snow. In the lower right, a shadow of a skier is cast on the snow, and a small portion of a red and black toboggan is visible. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the snowy slope and some brown patches of earth or rocks.

# Made by hand

When winter arrives in Vorarlberg and the first snow starts to fall, that's when you'll find master carpenter Anton Bereuter busy building his special toboggans. We visited him in his workshop in Alberschwende and asked him what makes his toboggans so special.

**TEXT: ANNE SCHÜSSLER PHOTOS: DARKO TODOROVIC & PATRICK DOPFER**



**Flexible and easy to steer:** The Ländlerodel's strengths are revealed on the toboggan run



**Carpenter, joiner and tinkerer:** Anton Bereuter has built his dream toboggan – and now everybody wants one

It's going to get loud now. Better put your earplugs in," says Anton warning us. The circular saw starts moving with a loud screech. Anton pushes curved, glued wooden boards over the rotating blade and cuts them into two halves. Wood dust whirls through the air, it smells strongly of freshly cut wood.

**A total of 60 separate parts are needed to make a toboggan. Anton makes them all himself.**

Anton Bereuter is a master carpenter and joiner in Alberschwende in the Bregenzerwald – and the inventor and builder of the Ländlerodel. He starts his mass production, so to speak, as soon as the snow begins to fall. Word has spread about the quality of his toboggans. What makes a good toboggan? "The mobility, the sloping, curved runners – and, of course,

» I tinkered with my own toboggan for 15 years. Now it's perfect.«

**Anton Bereuter,** Master Carpenter and Joiner

the Austrian mark of quality," says Anton. It all started small with Anton's own passion for tobogganing. He established his company 'Handwerkholz' in 1998. And began work on his Ländlerodel to satisfy his own needs. But in 2006, he decided to sell the fun and sports toboggans he was making. Vorarlberg would now not be the same without them and the locals have started to affectionately call them 'The Ländle'.



### A lot of manual labour:

Anton makes all the parts himself

### For sport or fun:

Anton builds two versions of his toboggan



“I make between 200 and 300 toboggans a season. It takes between three and four hours to complete one,” he says. Almost every step is done by hand. “It all starts with good wood. I only use ash. It’s the most flexible and doesn’t break that easy,” he says. The wood is dried first. He then cuts very precise strips from the wood on the circular saw. He glues seven strips together to make the two runners for one toboggan. He then places the glued strips into a gluing press that was made especially for him. This is where the wood is bent into the shape of the runners. A Ländlerodel is made from around 60 individual parts.

### The wood and all the purchased parts are sourced in Vorarlberg.

The 51-year-old already starts making the individual parts in batches throughout the year, between his other carpentry and joinery work, which helps him manage the rush in winter. He then assembles them in winter. It’s not only the quality that’s important to Anton, where his materials come from also matters. “The wood is sourced from local forests and all accessories, such as the straps and flat sheets of material, are produced by companies in the region,” he says. “Products made here in Vorarlberg possess a quality that’s unique. I couldn’t imagine doing my job anywhere else.” Which means that the Ländlerodel has Vorarlberg running through its veins – as has its creator.

He’s almost finished the toboggan he’s working on. He uses the pneumatic stapler to attach red straps that will later form the seat to the frame. “That’s where, for example, the fun and sports toboggans differ,” he says. The fun ones have seats woven from red straps while the sports ones have a lower seat made from a flat sheet or leather. The toboggans are available for purchase

directly from Anton’s workshop and the Werkraum Bregenzerwald in Andelsbuch, where he’s a member, as well as from sports outlets across the region.

Anton occasionally likes to have some fun on his own toboggan after work. He prefers the sports toboggan. “Once you’ve been on that one, you don’t want to use anything else. It’s an entirely different feeling.”



### A video of the master carpenter and joiner



Scan the QR code to see Anton in his workshop. And he’ll tell you what makes a good toboggan.

### Find out more about Anton and his Ländlerodel at:

 [www.handwerkholz.at](http://www.handwerkholz.at)

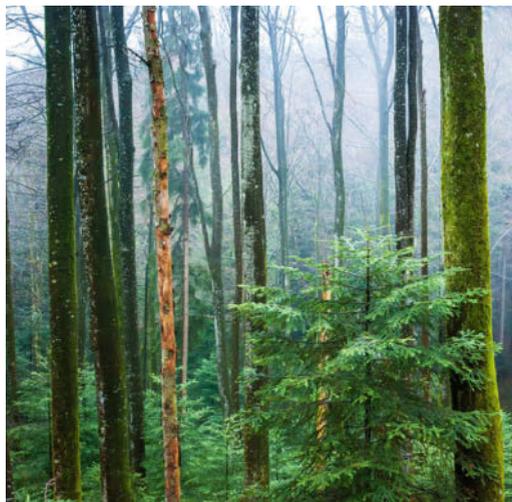




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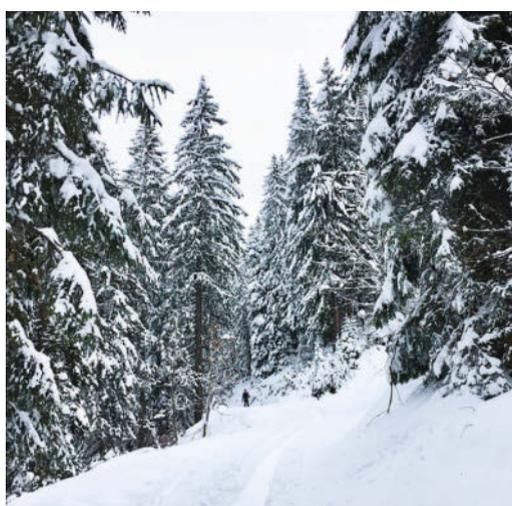
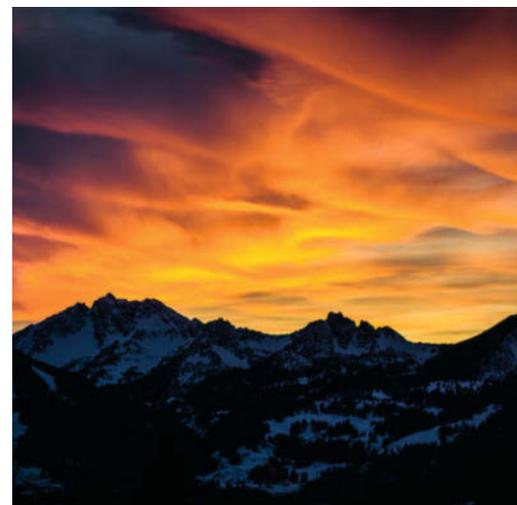
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 [steller.co/ visitvorarlberg](https://steller.co/visitvorarlberg)





# Snow groomer in action

Xander Mathies is responsible for grooming the cross-country trails in Kleinwalsertal. He starts early in the morning to make sure that cross-country skiers are able to stay on track and enjoy their day.

**TEXT: ANNE SCHÜSSLER PHOTOS: DIETMAR DENGER**



**Xander Mathies with  
his snow groomer:**  
"It's all about the  
downhill bends"



**T**he sky is dotted with countless stars, the air is clear and bitterly cold. The branches on the trees are blanketed in layers of ice and they make little sounds as they move in the wind. It's dark in Kleinwalsertal. But the snow glistens in the light from the snow groomer's headlamps. The vehicle winds its way slowly through the forest and across the meadows. It's surprisingly quiet for its size and so Xander sometimes catches sight of foxes and deer at night. "It's almost a bit cheesy but those are the best moments," he says.

Alexander Mathies, known to everyone as Xander, is a trail groomer in Kleinwalsertal and is responsible for keeping the Steinbockloipe (Ibex Trail) in good order. "I get up a little after four when it has snowed in the night to groom the trail," he says. "I'm usually finished

by 8.30." Xander is a self-employed carpenter and has been doing this job for eight years now. There are also other things to do besides grooming the track: "We plan the route with the municipality in the summer. We put up all the signs and provide the hoteliers with information material." After his shift on the trail, Xander returns to his workshop: "I do the trail grooming on the side with my team."

**The municipality was looking for people to help – and Xander applied because he enjoys cross-country skiing himself**

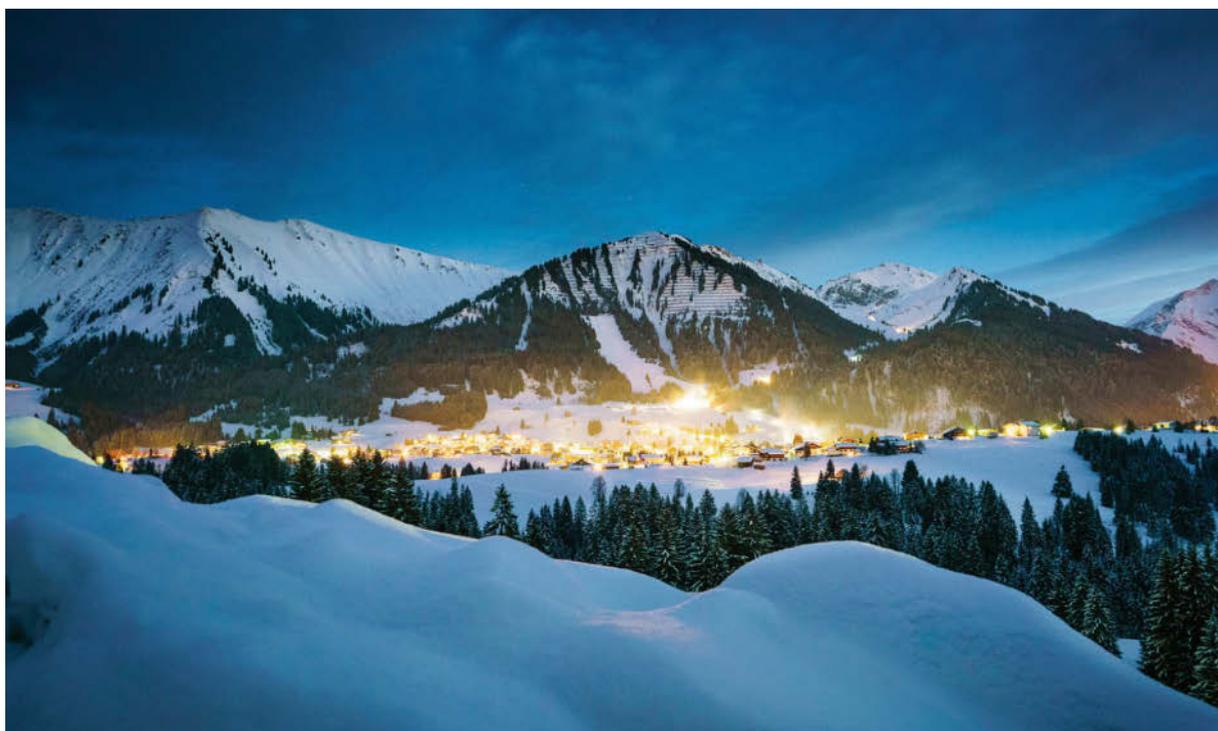
His team is currently made up of his younger brother Andi, 15-year-old junior machinist Adrian, and Roman, the mechanic. Xander could not have imagined that he'd be grooming cross-country ski trails one day.



**Left: The snow groomer** pushes the snow at the front to the side and lays the trail at the rear

**Love of nature:** Xander enjoys driving through the winter landscape in the early mornings





**Left: All ready on the cross-country trail in Mittelberg**

**Kleinwalsertal in the evening:** View from the Schwende to Riezlern in the evening

But then the municipality was looking for people to take care of the cross-country ski trail. “Two friends and I decided to apply on a whim,” he says. “One of them just loved driving snow groomers, the other two enjoyed cross-country skiing.” They got the job. “No-one else applied anyway,” Xander says and laughs.

### **The Steinbockloipe is one of three trails in the valley. It takes you from Mittelberg and Böldmen to Baad**

His two friends have in the meantime turned to other things but Xander has discovered his passion for the snow groomer. He’s out in it every day to make sure that everything is ok. “An outsider might think that it’s a monotonous job simply driving along the trail for four hours. But it’s always different for me,” he says. The Steinbockloipe is one of three trails in Kleinwalsertal. It takes you from Mittelberg to Baad at the end of the valley. The trail for classic cross-country skiers is 15 kilometres long in total and the stretch for skaters is five kilometres. “The nice thing about my trail is that it goes right past the hotels and inns,” says Xander, “so you can start anywhere and stop off where you like for refreshments.

How do you make a trail? “Well, it’s a bit of an art,” says Xander, “it’s important to create nice turns on the downhill slopes.” He prefers to see for himself whether he’s done a good job.



» I like to see for myself whether the trail has been properly groomed. «

**Alexander Mathies**, cross-country trail groomer in Kleinwalsertal

#### **A video of the trail-grooming team**



Scan the QR code to see Xander Mathies at work.

#### **More about the Steinbockloipe:**

🌐 [www.steinbockloipe.at](http://www.steinbockloipe.at)



# With hand and heart

For almost 30 years, Karl Kühne and his wife Brigitte have been farming organically out of conviction – working without pesticides, allowing the animals to move more freely and sustainably managing the soil. This means more manual work, also during winter **TEXT: ANNE SCHÜSSLER PHOTOS: DIETMAR DENGER**





**Green islands in the snow:** The Kühne family harvesting curly kale



**The chickens are often moved around:** They live in mobile coops. It helps protect the soil



**Nuzzling around:** The pigs are happy here

**Delicious fortification:** Lunch made from the family's own produce is served here



It's early. It's still dark in Meiningen. But the proprietors of Lisilis organic farm, the Kühne family, are already up and about. The pigs, chickens and cows are still dozing in the stables, their breath hangs in the still air and the fields and the farm are cloaked in white frost. Karl and his son Michael are feeding the animals. "They're always first," says Karl.

There are now more than 20 cows but there were only six in the beginning. "My father ran a small conventional dairy business here," says Karl. He and his wife took over the farm in Meiningen, which is eight kilometres north of Feldkirch, and switched completely to organic farming 29 years ago. "The decisive factor for my parents was the high nitrogen content in the groundwater at the time," explains son Michael, who now works as an organic farming consultant in Vorarlberg. "We didn't want to be farmers who poisoned their own drinking water." The Kühne family won the Landwirtschaftlicher Zukunftspreis (Agricultural Future Prize) in 2015 for their organic farming methods and careful soil management.

**That's quality – the region's hotels and restaurants also cook with the organic vegetables**

Michael, who is 28 years old, and his three adult siblings regularly help out on their parents' farm. Because there's still a lot to do in spite of the frost and snow. "Even in winter, we're still harvesting vegetables and have to clean them and get them ready for selling," says Karl. Leek, Brussels sprouts, parsnips and other root vegetables are now growing in the fields around the farm. The vegetables and many home-made products are sold in the family's own farm shop. Some of the region's hotels and restaurants also source their organic supplies from the family. Customers can even get milk outside business hours from the milk filling station. It's also where eggs from the family's chickens are sold. The chickens live in mobile coops, called 'chicken mobiles', which are moved around the farm.



» We want to make visitors more aware of our sustainable way of living.«

Karl Kühne, organic farmer



**Well covered:**  
Root vegetables grow under the snow

A few helpers join the family once a week to pack vegetable boxes. “Customers are able to order the boxes with vegetables of the season from us and have them delivered to their homes on fixed days of the week,” Michael explains.

**School classes regularly visit the organic farm – and the children are allowed to help out**

The family also enjoys the help of young people on practical training schemes and ‘Wwoofers’ – people from all over the world who volunteer to work on organic farms. That way, the family is able to provide valuable insights to interested people. “We think it’s important to explain to people how we work,” Karl says. He and his wife also use their free time to meet with farmers all over the world and swap ideas with them. They’ve just returned from Vietnam. The family has also installed many colourfully illustrated signs for children that explain the work on their own farm. Visitors are able to read at different points about what

work needs to be done there and how the animals contribute to farm life. “School classes often come to visit us,” Karl says proudly. The kids can also get involved.

Karl and Michael now have to get back to work. They’re just loading the last vegetable box into the car. Numbers have increased recently – a good sign for the family and their organic farm.



**A video of Karl and Michael Kühne**



Scan the QR code to see the Kühne family at work.

**Find out all there is to know about Lisil's organic farm here:**

 [www.lisilis.at](http://www.lisilis.at)



# The smell of fresh bread

High above Ludesch, on the "Terrace of Walgau", stands the 360-year-old Walserhaus that is owned by Pauline Burtscher and her husband Reinhard. This is the place where she kneads and shapes bread – and she'll teach the traditional craft to anyone who wants to learn it.

**TEXT: ANNE SCHÜSSLER PHOTOS: ANNE SCHÜSSLER & MARKUS GMEINER**



**A baker out of passion:**  
Pauline Burtscher  
loves traditions – and  
home-made bread



**Giving the dough time:**

The loaves of bread are allowed to rise in round fermentation baskets before they are put into the oven



**T**he fire in the oven crackles quietly. The wood hisses and snaps, the embers glow red and orange. Grey smoke streams from the chimney into the white snow-covered winter landscape. The warmth and smell of freshly baked bread hit Pauline as she opens the oven’s cast-iron door. “Nothing is as good as this smell,” the passionate baker says. “My mother always baked bread. And the memories never left me.” She and her husband bought the old, enchanted house built from timber in the Walser style along with the stables on the Ludescherberg in 2001. The building’s dark wooden door with wrought-iron handle and old-fashioned bell that visitors must ring instead of an electric one makes it look a little like a little witch’s cottage. “Yes, I’m a big fan of fairy tales,” says Pauline laughing. She particularly likes the figure of Mother Hulda.

**Pauline only bakes with good ingredients. She sources her flour from farmers in the region – and she’s acquainted with most of them.**

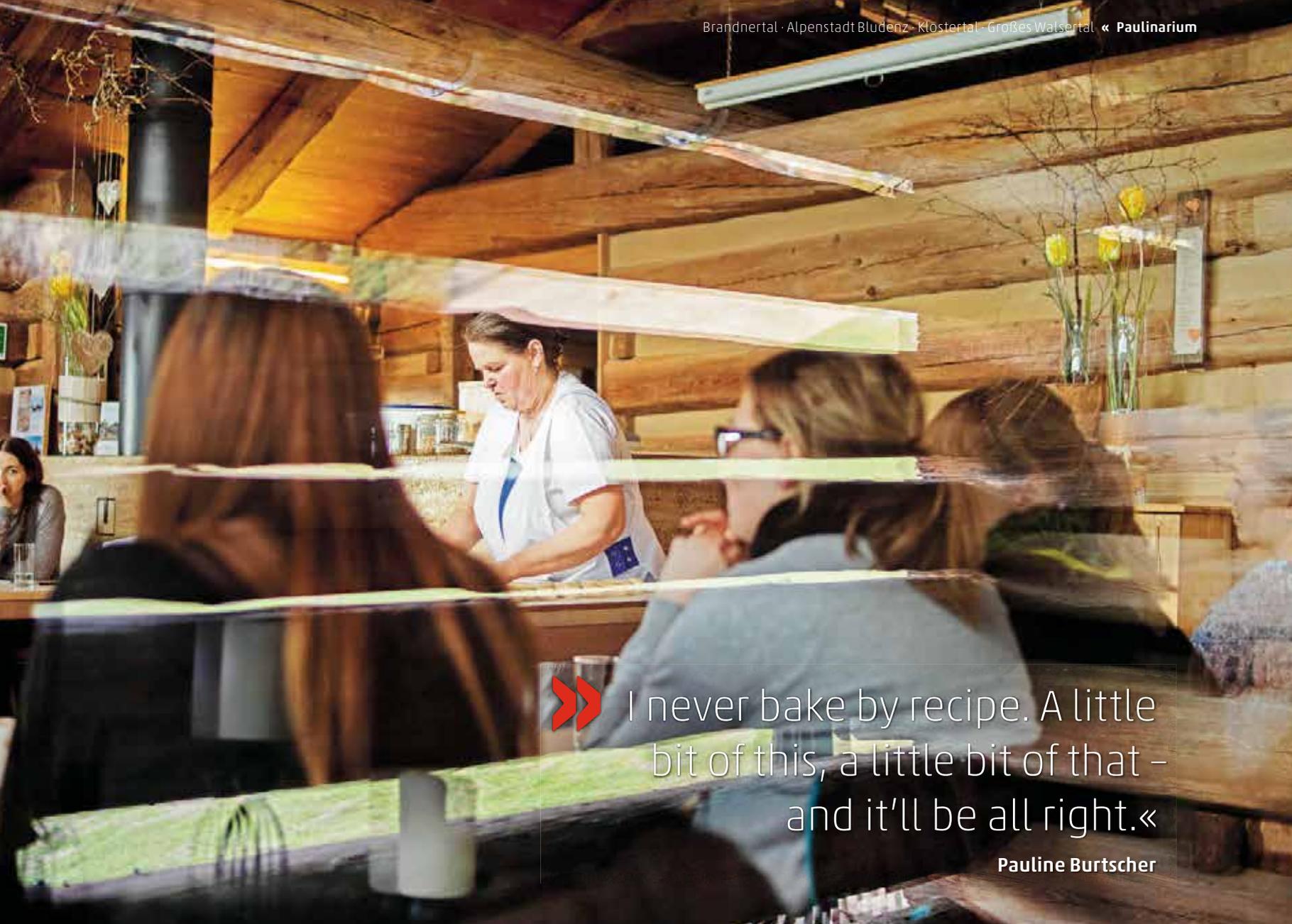
There’s a girl in that fairy tale who has an encounter with a bread oven from which she hears the loaves shouting: “Oh, get me out, get me out, otherwise I’ll burn! I was ready ages ago!” Pauline was so taken with

these lines that she had a wood-burning oven built in her garden. She regularly bakes her bread creations in it. “I never have a recipe,” she says, “a little bit of this and a little bit that – it’ll be all right.” She only weighs the ingredients for visitors who take her bread-baking courses so that they can recreate the same breads at home. The trained cook sources her grain from local



**Joining in:** Pauline’s courses usually fill up quickly; she also arranges additional dates for groups





» I never bake by recipe. A little bit of this, a little bit of that – and it'll be all right.«

Pauline Burtscher

farmers. She doesn't have a favourite type of flour. "I use all kinds: spelt, wheat, rye, barley, oats and even buckwheat – the main thing is that it has to be very high quality. I prefer it when I know the farmer personally." Her most important rule for baking? "Good bread takes time." People never had much in the past so they baked lots of bread with just a little bit of yeast. That worked because they gave the dough time. "Today people use a lot of yeast to make the dough rise faster. But it also means that the bread will spoil faster." It's precisely this philosophy of bread-baking that Pauline tries to convey to the people attending her courses. But it's not always about bread. If they're interested, Pauline's friends will also show visitors how to weave baskets or take them out on walks to discover the world of herbs.

### **Baking bread isn't just about kneading. You can also enjoy the peace and quiet.**

She holds her courses in the old stables, which today have been converted into a place where she can teach: the Paulinarium. It was extensively renovated and glazed on the interior to preserve the original look. "I definitely wanted to reintegrate the old wood," says Pauline,

"historical buildings have a soul. Preserving the old is the real art," she believes. "Anybody can do new."

Pauline's courses are not only about baking bread, not even when she's kneading dough. She also wants visitors to feel at ease up here. "I want them to forget the stress of their everyday lives and focus entirely on shaping and kneading," says Pauline. She simply loves what she's doing: "I've only very rarely bought any bread over the last 17 years."

**A passionate baker:**  
Pauline Burtscher  
shares her knowledge  
in courses

### **A video of Pauline and her bread**



Scan the QR code to see Pauline baking. She also shares tips for baking the perfect bread.

### **Discover all you need to know about baking bread at the Paulinarium at:**

[www.paulinarium.at](http://www.paulinarium.at);  
[www.walsertal.at](http://www.walsertal.at)

# Information and travel arrangements

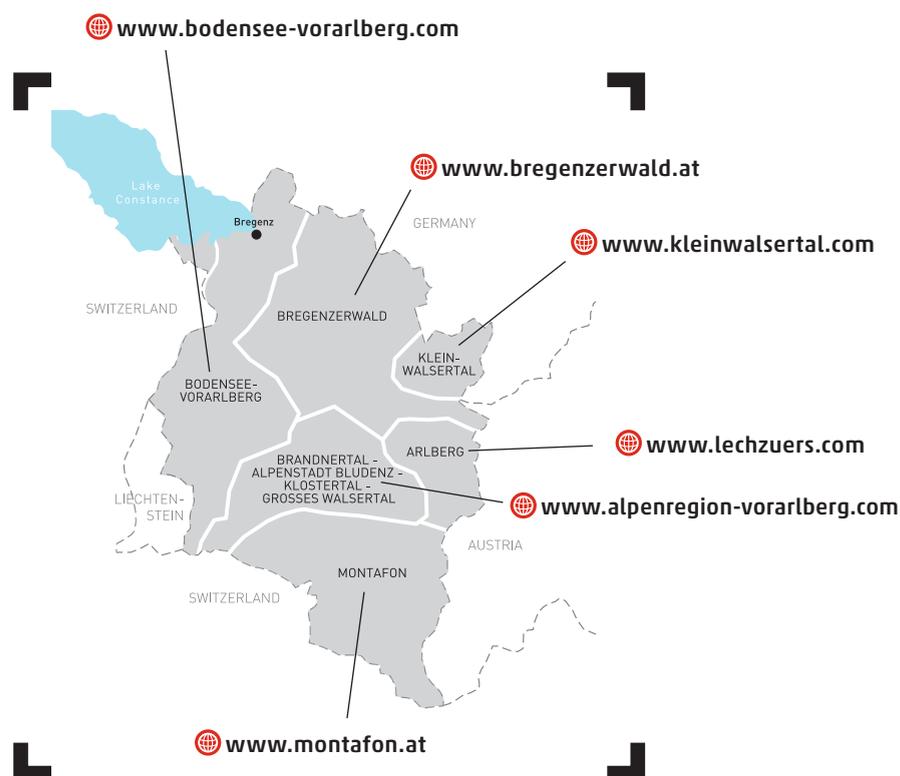
Here's everything you need at a glance for planning and booking your holiday in Vorarlberg

## Six regions full of diversity

Vorarlberg measures 100 kilometres from north to south and impresses with its rich variety of landscapes. An hour's drive takes visitors from the shores of Lake Constance at an altitude of 400 metres over gentle hills and into the high mountains. Landscapes and different cultures of living mean that each of the six holiday regions possesses its own entirely individual character.

## Vorarlberg interactive

Practical aids are available for the preparation of hikes and to help you find your way around once you get there. Interactive maps on [www.vorarlberg.travel](http://www.vorarlberg.travel) describe numerous paths in detail. The information about all routes can be downloaded and printed out. Via "layers", you can add further information, from sights through to restaurants, from photos through to bus stops.



## Travelling to Vorarlberg

Vorarlberg is easy to reach by all traffic routes and all modes of transport. The public transport network is well developed.

[www.vorarlberg.travel/getting-there](http://www.vorarlberg.travel/getting-there)

### ... by car

**Coming from the north** via Singen-Lindau or Singen-St. Gallen, via Ulm-Lindau. Via Augsburg or Munich-Lindau or via Nuremberg-Lindau. **Coming from the west** via Zurich-St. Gallen or Zurich-Walensee-Sargans. **Coming from the south** via Como-San Bernadino-Chur, Brenner-Innsbruck or Reschenpass-Landeck. **Coming from the east** via Innsbruck-Arlberg or via Reutte-Bregenzerwald (please note: the L 198 Lechtal Straße from Warth to Lech is usually closed in winter). **The Kleinwalsertal** can be reached on the A 7 via Immenstadt and, further, via Sonthofen and Oberstdorf.

### ... by train

**Austria:** [www.oebb.at](http://www.oebb.at); **Germany:** [www.bahn.de](http://www.bahn.de) and [www.dbautozug.de](http://www.dbautozug.de); **Switzerland:** [www.sbb.ch](http://www.sbb.ch)

### ... by air

The closest airports (distance to Bregenz): **Bodensee-Airport Friedrichshafen** (D, 35 km), **St. Gallen-Altlenrhein** (CH, 20 km), **Allgäu-Airport Memmingen** (D, 77 km), **Zurich** (CH, 119 km), **Innsbruck** (A, 184 km)

## Information and booking

If you have any questions regarding the planning of your holiday or require further information about any of the topics, please contact Vorarlberg Tourismus directly. You can also order brochures directly from the website:

[www.vorarlberg.travel](http://www.vorarlberg.travel)

T +43.(0)5572.377033-0



#visitvorarlberg #myvorarlberg

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