

Vorarlberg Magazine

Out and about with insiders

Worlds of living, culture and pleasure: through Bregenz and Feldkirch in the company of two austriaguides

Temporary home

Hosts talk about why contact with their guests is important to them

A path that inspires

Hikers encounter art and get chatting with each other along the Green Ring

Encounters



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Personal contact is very important to these Vorarlberg hosts

Welcome to Vorarlberg, the region that's situated between Lake Constance and mountains that are more than 3,000 metres high. A place to live that's inspiring. This magazine focuses on the places and encounters that make time spent in Vorarlberg special.

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 www.vorarlberg.travel/magazine



“Walser structures were always built in line with the points of the compass and not along streets”, says Lucia Riezler. She breathed new life into one such building that was built in Mittelberg in 1459. It’s situated diagonally opposite the church, in Mittelberg’s ‘Gelbe Zone’ (‘Yellow Zone’) where traffic is limited to a speed of 20 kilometres per hour and pedestrians and drivers enjoy equal rights – and which as a consequence automatically became a place where encounters take place. And then the house also tapers towards the street and is conspicuously bright. Hundreds of honey-coloured shingles cover the façade. They seem to radiate something magical. “People touch them, stop and run their hands over them – that was something we first had to get used to because we live here and my tax-accounting firm is located on the ground floor. But it’s also a compliment for the work that we’ve done.”



Lucia Riezler is proud of her house

Lucia Riezler and her partner, her family and the architect Max Dünser worked for one and a half year to turn her house into something that is so radiantly beautiful. They removed dozens of partition walls and paint and false floors, revealed the original wooden beams and walls, exposed and scrubbed everything down with wire brushes and sanded down the doors for hours on end. All with the help of tradespeople from Kleinwalsertal and in coordination with the monument conservation authorities. “ People keep saying that this is actually Mittelberg’s new village square.”

Her tip: “The most beautiful view of Mittelberg is from the Zafernalift. That starts right in the middle of the village and, while you are floating upwards, you can see the whole of Mittelberg from the chair, including our Walserhaus. We enjoy spending time at the mountain hut up on the Sonna-Alp.”

 www.sonna-alp.at;
www.vorarlberg.travel/walser-cultural-trail



Harmonious togetherness:

The Walserhaus (Walser House) that dates back to 1459 fits in well, it’s good for the village center

What moves us

It is often the encounters that stay in our minds when we travel. Vorarlberg boasts many places where visitors may meet interesting people. And it's easy to start chatting about such topics as music, the trades and pleasure...





Like the old days, only today: The Tanzcafé Arlberg Music Festival series of concerts gets the crowds dancing with swing and pop



Take a break from skiing for a bit of swing in Lech Zürs am Arlberg. When the days start to get longer again, the sun above the snow in Lech will sometimes turn up the heat to T-shirt temperatures. The Tanzcafé Arlberg Music Festival in the bars and hotels serves up lovingly selected soundtracks to accompany the feeling of spring approaching. It's not even necessary for skiers to climb out of their ski boots or snowboarders to get out of their clothes for some of the concerts in the series because the stages right next to the slopes are an invitation to stop and enjoy the swing!



Josh. & band got the party going

Even if the programme does include trendy pop acts as well as jazz and electro-swing, the music festival continues the fine traditions that legendary winter sports resort are famed for: enjoyable teatime dancing. Dance halls from the days of yore are passé on the Arlberg but ski huts, sun terraces and hotel bars in all the districts – from Lech and Oberlech to Zug and Zürs – present charming and varied settings. Live acts and times are perfectly adapted to skiing routines. The Pasadena Roof Orchestra, singer-songwriter Milov and 'Russkaja with her crazy ska polka' among others have performed here in the past.

Tip: the Swing & Snow dance courses with Lindy-Hop classes (a dance for couples from the 1930s) for different levels create a dignified dance café atmosphere and old-school grooves. It's said that the dancing makes some people even forget that they've come here to ski. It's best to book early.

“We’ve got a cosy bar here but most people are drawn to the Montafon tables in the lounge”, says Bianca Mangard, the landlady at the Krone in Schruns. They’re real gems, the oldest were commissioned in 1823. Crowns have been inlaid like coats of arms into some of them while others have been decorated with flowers, tendrils and diamonds. Bianca Mangard runs her hand over the marquetry pattern, which appears almost three-dimensional. Pear, cherry, oak, beech, walnut, elm and maple are still used today by St. Gallenkirch cabinetmakers to achieve this effect, using only local woods that have been air-dried for 25 years.



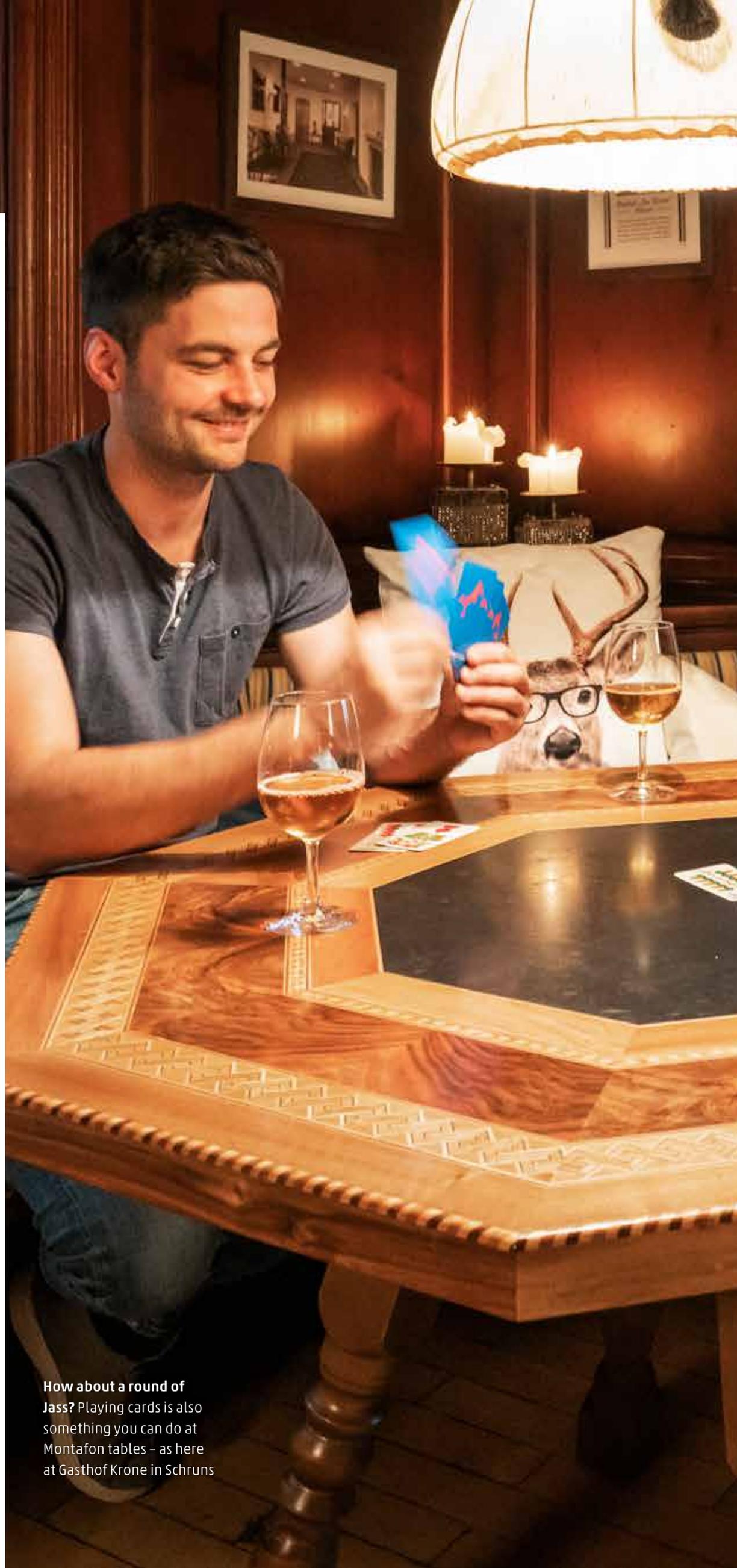
Very practical: slabs of slate

It can easily take around 100 working hours to complete the artistic inlays. And then the table will last – not only for a lifetime but also for the next generation and the one after that. Most of these tables are still with Montafon families today. In the past, they were the central meeting places for dining, playing cards, socialising: “You can put hot pots and pans on the slabs of slate in the centre without needing coasters and guests playing cards can chalk up the scores on them.”

Montafon tables may not only be found at the Krone but also at Gasthaus Löwen in neighbouring Tschagguns. This is where people come together or as the people in Montafon say, ‘Kon’d Lüt zemma’.

Bianca Mangard’s tip: “The ‘Fellimännle’ alpine hut in Silbertal. That’s where Montafon locals meet at the weekends and on holidays – first we walk or cycle deep into the valley and then we stop for a ‘Brettljause’ – snack platter.”

www.kroneschrunds.at;
www.loewen-tschagguns.at;
www.fellimaennle.at



How about a round of Jass? Playing cards is also something you can do at Montafon tables – as here at Gasthof Krone in Schruns



“It’s nice to talk to customers regularly, to chat about this and that with them,” says Susanne Maaß from the Bluamahof farm. That’s why she books a stall at the market in Dornbirn every Wednesday and Saturday. A crowd of people usually quickly gathers around it. That’s because she sells freshly made roast pork in a roll or Leberkäs, which is a type of meat loaf, from there. Many consume their purchases right there on the spot because they can’t resist the tempting smells.



Bee-keeper Matthias Neuhauser is happy to advise

The farmers’ market in Dornbirn is one of the most beautiful in all Vorarlberg: stalls with full-flavoured mountain cheese, fruit and vegetables from the surrounding areas, flowers in all colours and intensely fragrant herbs are to be found along the pedestrian zone. Matthias Neuhauser sells the honey that his 300 bee colonies produce, Naturmanufaktur’s Ines Orsag offers her home-grown vegetables and medicinal herbs. Buck’s-horn plantain, purslane, pimpnel, for example: “The demand for old plants, including the herbs that Hildegard von Bingen used, is increasing – we’ve got everything that’s healthy here already, we don’t need super foods from China or the Andes.” Once the shopping is done, it’s time to catch up with friends in one of the many cafés that have sprung up around the Rote Haus, the city’s landmark that dates back to 1639. Or to take some time out at the parish church of St. Martin where music is performed on the large Behmann organ from 10.30 to 11.00 a.m. – a beautiful combination of culture and enjoyment.

Tip from Susanne Maaß: “I like to take a trip up the Karren, which is our local mountain. That’s always been one of the places where we residents of Dornbirn have met since I was young. It takes just five minutes to get to an altitude of almost 1,000 metres from where it’s possible to enjoy the view across the Rhine Valley. That’s where many hiking trails start and there’s also a panorama restaurant up there.”



Room for enjoyment:
Regional products are available to purchase twice a week at Dornbirn’s weekly market



The St. Gerold Provost Church in Großes Walsertal is a place to draw strength, take some time out and rest.

It is, above all, a place of 'valuable encounters', as Father Kolumban says. Encounters that make something resonate in people – and everyone takes something of that home with them. Guests are welcome regardless of their denomination, the Father emphasises.



Father Kolumban in front of the Provost Church

Hikers stay overnight here, as do participants of the yoga and voice training courses, the retreats, concerts and readings that take place on a regular basis. The unifying idea: "The appreciation of creation," says Father Kolumban. And they all get talking to each other – at the latest at the evening meals that are served at the long tables in the restaurant or on the terrace with the magnificent view across the valley to Raggal. The St. Gerold Provost Church, whose origins date back to the 13th century, belongs, by the way, to the monastery in Einsiedeln in Switzerland. And Großes Walsertal is exactly the right environment for such a spiritual place. Because here, in the Biosphere Park, there is still time for yourself and others – and of course for walks in nature.

His tip: "The 'Weg der Sinne – Weg der Stille' ('Trail of the Senses – Trail of Silence') below the Provost Church that leads past 14 ponds. Poetic words and aphorisms by mystics from different religions invite you to linger and meditate – in an encounter with yourself."

 www.walsertal.at/en;
www.vorarlberg.travel/provostry-st-gerold

Other places of cultural and architectural interest: www.vorarlberg.travel/places-to-breathe



The skies are so close: the Provost Church in Großes Walsertal offers nature, culture and culinary delights. The idyllic location is an invitation to pause and relax



Anyone who chooses to look beyond the food that's served at the **Werkraum Wirtschaft** will find that there's much to discover. That's because this is where carpenters, electricians and plumbers may be found sitting next to the guests at the long wooden tables. The **Werkraumhaus** in Andelsbuch is a regional trades hub and a social venue at the same time. That's because the steel-and-glass exhibition hall – which was designed by star architect Peter Zumthor in 2013 – is open to everyone. The **Werkraum Wirtschaft** has made a significant contribution to this project's success because it's such a great place for visitors to fall into conversation with the people who've made the **Bregenzerwald** famous.



Exhibition at the **Werkraumhaus**

The association that is the **Werkraum Bregenzerwald** counts around 100 trades companies as its members – an innovative platform for contemporary trades. The unmistakable architecture, the innovative design concepts, modern but rooted in tradition – they've long since found appreciation across the globe. Visitors are able to chat with the creators of these simple and beautiful things over regional delicacies – vegetables and fruit sourced from local farmers, meat from farmers from the surrounding areas. The **Werkraumhaus** also functions as a joint showcase for the products and work produced by the region's trades. It has long been a place of encounter. The **Werkraum Bregenzerwald** was also included in UNESCO's 'Register of Good Safeguarding Practices for the Preservation of Intangible Cultural Heritage' in 2016.

The Werkraumhaus makes the unique quality for which the region's tradespeople are famous tangible, serves as a shop window and a place for meetings and encounters. It is also the venue for changing exhibitions.

 www.en.werkraum.at;
www.vorarlberg.travel/architecture



Contact desired:
The **Werkraum Wirtschaft** restaurant brings tradespeople, locals and guests to one table



Special encounters

A gymnastics festival that brings people together from all over the world. A village that has at last started telling its stories again. And an inn that doesn't have a menu. This is where we discover unusual hosts, great events and initiatives



An inn without a menu

The Hörnlingen in Rankweil is an inn, wine bar and club at the same time – as well as a restaurant without a classic menu. Dominic Mayer, head chef and manager, cooks with sustainably produced food that is as regional and as seasonal as possible. Guests tell him which of these foods they like and how hungry they are – and then they're served a two- or three-course meal. Which is a great way to get chatting with each other. And the in-house wine bar and club provide a good excuse for people to stay after dinner. The Hörnlingen's motto: 'Eat, drink, dance and come back.' The innovative tavern is one of six traditional inns in Rankweil that are members of the 'Zemma Wirta' network, which also organises joint events. 🌐 www.hoernlingen.at

Specialities directly from the farm

Whisky made from Vorarlberg grain, ham, various types of cheese, pestos and chutneys, home-made pasta, fine fruit brandies and care products made from whey: Many farming families in Vorarlberg sell their carefully manufactured products and know-how at their own farm shops. That means that visitors are able to do some shopping while they're out and about, taste lovingly produced specialities and see what life on a farm is like while chatting to the family members. The addresses of recommended and certified organic farms and companies that belong to the 'Vom Ländle Bur' ('From the Country Farmer') association can be found here:

🌐 www.vorarlberg.travel/farm-shops





16th World Gymnaestrada Welcoming the world

Vorarlberg hosted the World Gymnaestrada for the second time in summer 2019. This – the largest gymnastics festival in the world – became an unforgettable event for the whole country, not least thanks to the 8,000 volunteers. The festival focused once again on a passion for sport, fun and the joy of getting to know each other

It was really impressive: more than 18,000 participants from 66 countries travelled to Vorarlberg to take part in the 16th World Gymnaestrada in July 2019. But those are just the statistics. Those who experienced the festival of gymnastics in the towns and villages of the Vorarlberg Rhine Valley will never forget what actually happened there. Not only did thousands of athletes from Sweden, Brazil, South Africa, Australia and other countries attend – tens of thousands of locals were also happy to have their guests. And welcomed them. Cheered them on. Talked to them, ate together, danced and laughed. The World Gymnaestrada was also a success in that the sportsmen and sportswomen were able to enjoy food and drink that were sourced as regionally as possible, in that a sustainable mobility concept was put into place and in that a bespoke World Gymnaestrada app was made available. But, in the end, the festival's most important aspect was hospitality.

The World Gymnaestrada, as it has now been held for the second time in Vorarlberg, was an all-round successful example of international

understanding. Proof that it is possible for people from different cultures to easily come together. And that, in this dog-eat-dog world, it doesn't only have to be about higher! faster! further! The event is staged with the intention of bringing people together from all over the world to perform gymnastics – without any judging or points being awarded. Its motto says it all: 'Come together! Show your colours!' Reveal who you are and show what you can do! One special aspect of the World Gymnaestrada in Vorarlberg was the decentralised accommodation of the participants in separate so-called

national villages. People who speak the same language were put up at the same place. Some participants slept with families they knew from the first World Gymnaestrada to be held in Vorarlberg, which was in 2007. And some of the villages organised a genuine programme for 'their' guests. The Gymnaestrada's Managing Director Erwin Reis and his team, which included 8,000 volunteers, were responsible for making it all happen. The International Gymnastics Federation (FIG) said what everyone was thinking: "The true spirit of the Gymnaestrada is to be found in Vorarlberg." 🌐 www.wg2019.at



The Gymnaestrada is all about passion for sport and international understanding

Come in! It's open



Two interesting ways of experiencing Vorarlberg architecture: residents open their wooden houses and are available for a chat with people during the 'Kumm ga luaga' ('Come and See') open day that's organised by the Vorarlberger Holzbaukunst (Timber Structure Art) association. The 'Vorarlberger Holzbaukunst' association also presents new timber-construction trends during the event. But guests who don't want to wait that long, however, are able to enjoy the company of expert guides on tours of a variety of contemporary buildings that take place on (almost) every last Friday of the month as part of the 'Architektur vor Ort' ('Local Architecture') series of events that is arranged by the Vorarlberger Architektur Institut (vai). Admission is free. www.holzbaukunst.at; www.vorarlberg.travel/architectural-tours

» You can choose the path you want to go but not the people you meet.«

Arthur Schnitzler



Music affects society

The Vorarlberger Landeskonservatorium (VLK – Vorarlberg State Conservatory) likes to mix with the people and arranges many events across the region. There's the 'Konzert am Mittag' ('Concert at Noon') series of free concerts, for example, at such different locations as the Montforthaus Feldkirch, the vorarlberg museum in Bregenz and in Lindau. There are also plans for symposia (e.g. Music and Society in February), workshops and cooperations with various partners. Young musicians from all over the world intend to enrich the cultural life of Vorarlberg even more than before.

www.vlk.ac.at



Stories from the village

People used to tell a lot more stories in the past when there was no television, no Internet and no smartphone. It's a pity that they no longer do so, is what the people from the Bregenzerwald community of Lingenau thought and came up with the idea for a project that has since won awards. It's called 'Lingenau erzählt' ('Lingenau Tells Stories') and consists of several building blocks: story evenings are, on the one hand, staged at the inn where locals and guests tell stories from their lives - and accordingly get to know each other better. While, on the other, local knowledge is shared on walks. A total of 28 'story benches', for example, have been set up where people may use QR codes to listen to stories from the village that revolve around the respective location. They're also told by people from Lingenau. So smartphones do help with storytelling after all.

www.lingenau-erzaehlt.at

Alma

There is a reason why Alma Alp and Mountain Cheese are awarded most.

On the mountain in the small Alma alpine dairies the cheesemakers only use untreated pasture milk for their famous cheese specialities from Vorarlberg.

They manually produce their Alma Vorarlberg Mountain Cheese PDO and their Alma Alpine Cheese in huge copper vats according to traditional methods. Let's try a piece of Vorarlberg's culinary heritage and culture.





Places to remember

The 'Verweilorte' ('Places to take a breather in Vorarlberg') in Vorarlberg are locations that possess special architecture, which are freely accessible and may be easily combined with hiking or cycling tours. People may discover, among other things, James Turrell's Skyspace in Lech, the Wasserhaus (Water House) in St. Arbogast near Götzis and the Wirmboden alpine settlement's new mountain chapel in the Bregenzerwald.

www.vorarlberg.travel/places-to-breath



Small town on a grand scale

Is it coincidence that a small town that's able to look back on lots of history also possesses a particularly lively contemporary culture? The first bank, the first coffee house as well as the first printing press in Vorarlberg were, after all, opened in the Dornbirn district of Hohenems. The small town in the Vorarlberg Rhine Valley is also known for being the place where the Nibelungenlied was discovered (1755 in the Hohenems Renaissance Palace).

Today, guests and locals alike enjoy strolling through the Jewish Quarter, which is one of the few completely preserved ensembles with Jewish history. A tour of the small, owner-run shops on Marktstraße is also fun, as is a trip to the Schokoladenmanufaktur Fenkart (Chocolate Factory) on Schlossplatz and the Renaissance Palace still inhabited by the count's family. And for those who love old history and stories, there are two castles to look up to: the wildly romantic ruins of Alt-Ems perched 300 metres above the Rhine Valley was once one of the largest castle complexes in central Europe. While the Neu-Ems Castle, which is also called Schloss Gloppe and is not open to the public, stands next to it. www.hohenems.at

Schwarzenberg celebrates

Being cosmopolitan and possessing a sense of tradition, being on familiar terms with the world while loving the region you call home – that has long been how the residents of Schwarzenberg have viewed life. Angelika Kauffmann, for example, came from the village in the Bregenzerwald. A small museum today commemorates the famous portrait painter who lived during the 18th century. Schwarzenberg is also one of the places where the renowned Schubertiade festival takes place. And Hotel Hirschen also celebrates art in its rooms. The people from the village say that Schwarzenberg is just the way it has to be. Not too big, not too small – yet down to earth, with a penchant for art. The village celebrates its 750th anniversary in 2020. www.schwarzenberg.at/en

Visiting the museum with children

A playful encounter with nature and culture: there's a lot going on in Vorarlberg's museums – even for young visitors. Kunsthaus Bregenz, for example, stages events that focus on children's art and arranges guided tours for families. The vorarlberg museum in Bregenz also offers a programme for children – from open creative studios to the 'Jung & Weise' ('Young & Wise') generational dialogue and family activity days. One of the most popular museums for children is the inatura - Interactive Nature Exhibition in Dornbirn. The interactive exhibitions provide information on nature, the alpine living environment and allows visitors to experience physical phenomena at numerous experimental stations. www.kunsthhaus-bregenz.at; www.inatura.at; www.vorarlberg.travel/culture-activities-family; www.vorarlbergmuseum.at



Bergpartner



„As a guide I want to inspire my guests to enjoy Vorarlberg's nature and mountains.“

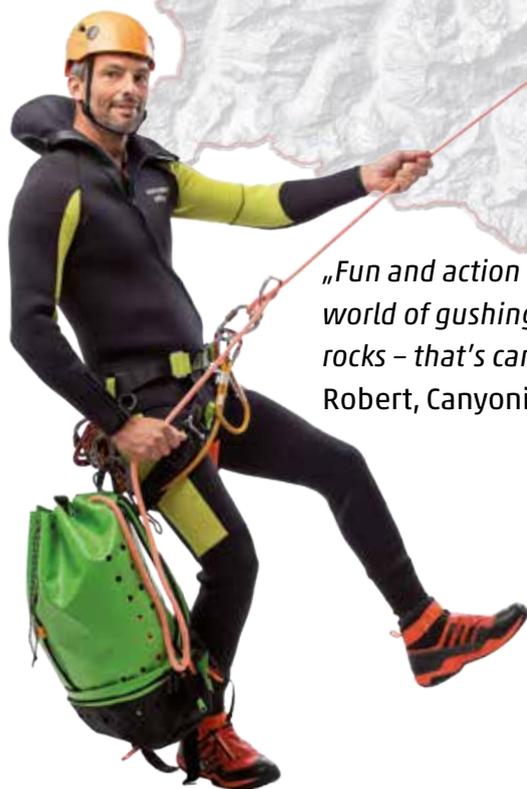
Lukas, Hiking Guide



„Mountaineering rock and ice walls, climbing along narrow ridges and up to high mountain peaks, always with the utmost safety for my guests.“

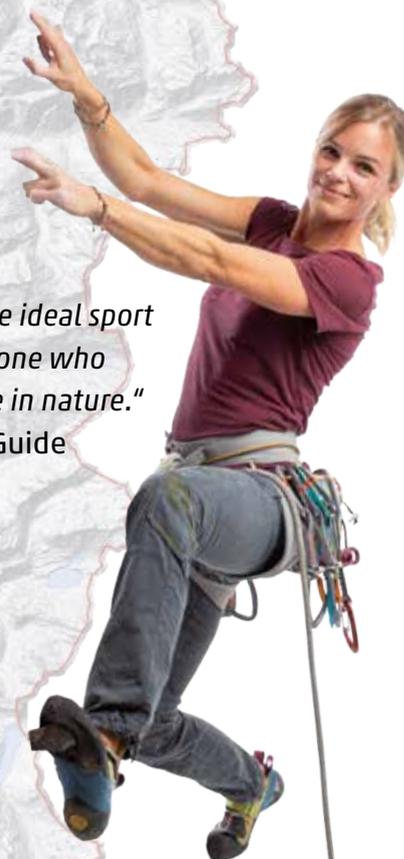
Alex, Ski- & Mountainguide

'Bergpartner Vorarlberg' is a co-operation between 'Vorarlberg state tourist board' and the service providers of the 'Vorarlberg Mountain Guiding Association'. Their guides are experts and offer the highest quality mountain activities and experiences.



„Fun and action in a fascinating world of gushing water and rocks – that's canyoning.“

Robert, Canyoning Guide



„Rock climbing is the ideal sport for all ages and anyone who loves spending time in nature.“

Barbara, Climbing Guide

More information about the Bergpartner programm at:

www.bergpartner.at





Dining together:
with Jodok Dietrich's
'Fragenhaftes Menü'
(('Questionable Menu'))

Festival of questions

Sometimes answers are not that important. It's much more exciting to exchange ideas and information with other people. The FAQ Bregenzerwald is a festival that focuses on the joy of asking questions – and that makes surprising encounters possible

TEXT: STEFAN NINK PHOTOS: DIETMAR DENGER



Summit talks: this wooden chapel is a 15-minute walk from the Niedere mountain station



Singer Lùisa at the FAQ Bregenzerwald



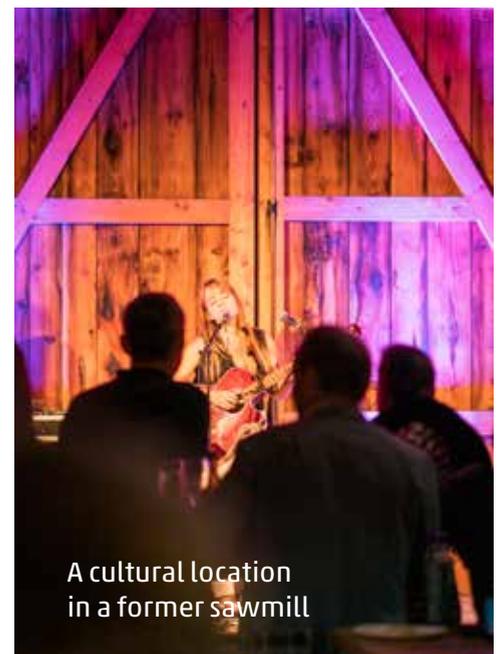
Meeting up in front of the Alte Säge (Old Sawmill) in Bezau



FAQ meeting point: Jöslar in Andelsbuch



People often get to know each other before the concert start



A cultural location in a former sawmill

Well,” says Dr’ Holzbauer and glances down as he runs his hand over the freshly planed board, carefully, almost tenderly, as if it were fragile. “It’s basically like you’ve fallen in love. You’re meant for each other and you feel that at every moment. That’s what it’s like when you work with wood.”

Dr’ Holzbauer (“Timber-Builder”), of course, isn’t the speaker’s real name – it’s actually the name of the wood-working business that Dietmar Berchtold runs in Andelsbuch. Dietmar is a guy like a tree

and has a smile like the morning sun when it pokes its head above the Bregenzerwald mountains. Dietmar builds those structures that are so typical of Vorarlberg, the ones that make the wood seem almost weightless and causes guests to take photos of entirely normal supermarket outlets because they just look so great. He opens up his workshop to the public once a year during the FAQ festival and a lot of people come to see him then. He explains what he does to them and these encounters usually rather quickly lead him into philosophising about the meaning of work. Is it important? And, more particularly, when does it make us happy?

Music pleasure:

singer and songwriter Lùisa from Hamburg performed a concert that contributed to the FAQ's success. For her, the journey to Vorarlberg was already 'like a film'.

A nice move: Aurelia Windhager of the FAQ Bregenzerwald works as the conductor on the Wälderbähnle train during the festival. It provides a nostalgic service between Andelsbuch and Bezau during the festival.



» You can enjoy both: Places that are familiar – like home – and those that are not. «

Aurelia Windhager

Those are exactly the kinds of questions that are asked during the Bregenzerwald FAQ. The three letters that are used as the heading for this 'forum with festival character and culinary sophistication' stand for 'Frequently Asked Questions'. Questions that people are always asking themselves and have always asked themselves down the ages and across cultures and to which the answers are continuously changing: was everything better in the past? Do you have time? What do I really need? What can you do? Am I allowed to be happy? In a way, the festival, which now runs for a week, focuses on such questions as they are asked at presentations, meals taken together, panel discussions and

concerts that are staged at unusual locations. There are items on the programme where visitors simply sit back, close their eyes and listen. But there are others where they first start to reflect with the other participants and then join in the discussions because the questions have triggered something in them. Virtually all of them possess social relevance. Even if many of them appear rather personal at first.

It all started a few years ago with a kind of field kitchen, which later developed into friendship.is, the company behind the FAQ. "A meal together in the meadows, that's all there was at first."

Martin Fetz is one of the creative minds behind the FAQ. He comes from Egg and had lived elsewhere for almost twenty years. But, when he decided to visit his home in Vorarlberg more often, he found that his circle of friends was also back and had returned from such places as Vienna, Berlin and London. "We met up for meals and, at some point, we realised that we were all asking the same questions," he says. "And that we talked about them completely differently on a mountain meadow than at the office. Or on the phone. That's when we came up with the idea of organising the FAQ." Fetz and his colleagues from friendship.is were, of course, aware of the fact that

it's easier for people to get into conversation when they meet outside their familiar surroundings. "But we weren't expecting that the right combination of event and location would produce such a response."

Martin Fetz and his team had the president of the Caritas organisation in Austria present a talk in a carpenter's workshop and held a panel discussion with Armin Wolf, who's a journalist with the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation ORF, at the Baumgarten mountain station. They chartered an old steam engine, chauffeured passengers through the Bregenzerwald and, as they travelled,



Dietmar Berchtold of
Dr' Holzbauer

Workshop tour: there's no reserve where the FAQ is concerned – Dietmar Berchtold talks enthusiastically about wood as a material while the Felder brothers share their passion for metal.

And then you realise that no matter what you do or what sets you on fire – you have so many questions and need other people to answer them. Or to help you better come to terms with it when there are no answers.



For many customers it's important that their furniture comes from the valley.«

Johannes und Andrea Mohr

asked them about the last WhatsApp message they received. Schwarzenberg's sustainability icon Alois Flatz discussed the future of the planet with visitors (and revealed what he told his client Al Gore). Communication design professor Elisabeth Kopf from Vorarlberg curated an exhibition at the Werkraumhaus in Andelsbuch for which her students in Vienna did not go on-line in search of inspiration but found their ideas on walks and hikes in nature (or as Elisabeth put it, "in real life.") Top chef Jodok Dietrich served a 'Fragenhaftes Menü' ('Questionable Menu') in a former stable and incidentally explored the social aspects of food with his

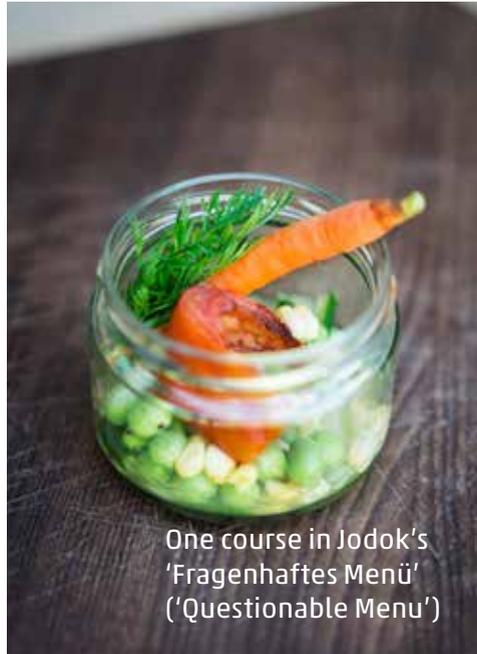
guests. And Lùisa, who's a singer from Hamburg, performed in an old barn and, in the breaks between songs, she enthusiastically talked about her trip to the Bregenzerwald, "It's just like being in a film if you've got the right music playing in the car!"

Martin Fetz chuckles as he realises that the unusual combinations of events and locations during the FAQ surprise even the artists. And the continuing demand proves that two things were destined for each other: a festival idea that, at first glance, may seem somewhat unusual and 'the most urban rural region in the whole of Austria' as



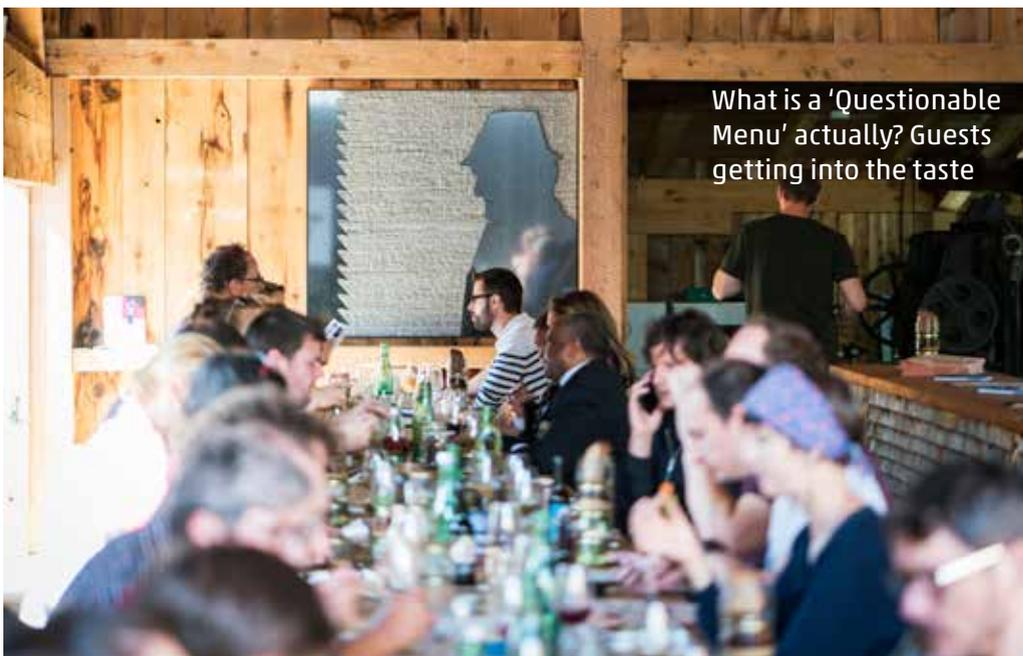


FAQ protagonist and cook Jodok Dietrich



One course in Jodok's 'Fragenhaftes Menü' ('Questionable Menu')

Moments of pleasure: top chef Jodok Dietrich comes from the Bregenzerwald and returned there a while ago. Dietrich's projects are aimed at finding the secrets of regional cuisine. He has come up with his 'Fragenhaftes Menü' for the FAQ.



What is a 'Questionable Menu' actually? Guests getting into the taste

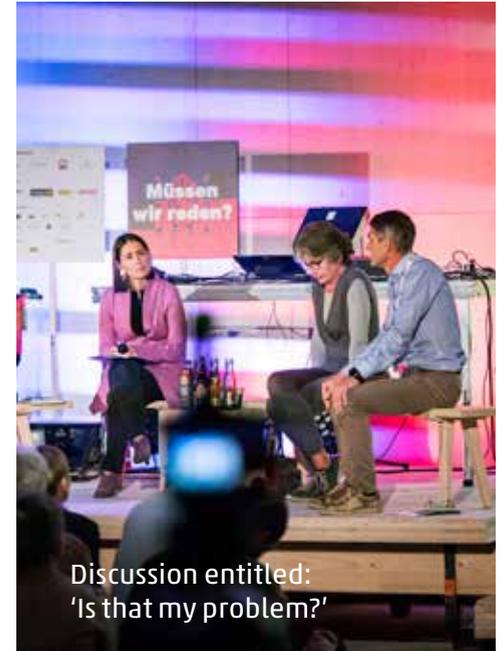
Driving force: the FAQ always goes a bit further with its questions - for example, in a discussion panel with lateral thinkers who work in the economy.

Fetz likes to call the Bregenzerwald. "That's always been a trait of the people here, this curious looking-over-the-hill thing, which is great for the FAQ."

Reserve? Not at all! Like the way Dietmar Berchtold was able to convince his guests of the benefits of wood as a raw material within a few minutes this Sunday morning and the way Jodok and Konrad Felder opened up the world of metals to the same visitors shortly afterwards. The company that the two brothers run is another stop on the tour of workshops that opens the doors to the trades

around Andelsbuch and allows people in the region to take a look behind the scenes. The two Felder brothers make hotel pools, show kitchens, alpine dairy equipment and such custom-made products as the copper façade for the restaurant on top of the Nebelhorn – 'actually anything that's complicated' – as Jodok says in summary of their corporate philosophy. The FAQ to match: do I need challenges? What skills do I actually possess? And is there always a solution? Or rather: are there answers to all these questions? Well, there are, but none that are always right in all locations, as people at the FAQ events are quick to realise. But, maybe, answers are not what





matters. Perhaps it's actually much more important to ask the questions. That you meet up with other people who are also looking for answers.

That you get talking to each other and that you enjoy a meal together and listen to music and maybe even run your hand carefully over a piece of freshly planed wood. Who knows? Perhaps you'll fall in love.



FAQ Bregenzerwald

The FAQ Bregenzerwald is a forum that possesses a festival character. It promises potential for a good time.

The next FAQ will be taking place in early September.

More about the festival:

www.faq-bregenzerwald.com;
www.bregenzerwald.at



Encounters

Why do we travel? The cultural anthropologist Theresa Frank says, ideally to preserve our curiosity and liveliness. An essay about the opportunity for encounters – including those between hosts and guests

“People who feel at home anywhere they go don’t deserve to be trusted much.” When the writer George Bernard Shaw said this, he certainly didn’t have the ideal traveller in mind – the one characterised by openness, tolerance, adaptability and a willingness to look beyond their own horizons. Travel (and travellers) has (and have) been criticised – and idealised – for as long as people have been setting off on journeys. But it is particularly industrialised mass tourism as the supposed destroyer of nature and culture that suffers from a rather poor reputation. ‘Blundering tourists’ are frequently the subject of much complaint for their

lack of consideration for the local residents and their ‘well, I did pay for it, after all’ attitude. It is therefore understandable that people today do not want to be thought of as ‘tourists’ as such but rather as ‘travellers’ since the latter remains associated with a little of the splendour of the ‘grand tours’ of previous centuries when education and the broadening of horizons was the goal of the departure.

But one thing is certain: intentionally setting off towards new horizons always brings both opportunities and limits – and the possibility of returning enriched by encounters with others. What does encounter mean? It means being with an other. An other who enters into a relationship with us, who sees us, who responds to us, asks us questions, provides us with answers and enters into dialogues with us. As corny as it may seem, seeking encounters means preserving our curiosity and interest in life. And actively engaging with the world. As well as exploring new boundaries – above all our own – again and again.

A better understanding of the relationship between oneself and the other is essential to understanding that the other is a prerequisite to preventing oneself from falling into stagnation. It is in this way that culture, tradition, customs, identity – whatever term you wish to use to describe the familiar, the supposed it-has-always-been-this-way – lose their rigidity to create a space in which dialogue is able to develop. A dialogue whose authenticity arises from entering into conversation about the exchange and not in elucidating what is supposed to be ‘genuine’ as opposed to ‘adulterated’ culture. To quote ethnopschoanalyst Mario Erdheim: “Instead of equating culture with what you know and are already acquainted and familiar with, it should be set in the context of what is not commonplace for us: culture is what arises from engaging with what we regard as foreign.”

» We are accompanied on our travels by the desire to discover new things and rediscover ourselves.«

Encounters play a special role on journeys: being on the move and curious about the new surroundings make us more open and accessible but they do, at the same time, when we find ourselves on unfamiliar ground, make us more susceptible to becoming unsettled if not more vulnerable. We are more dependent on others than is otherwise the case. How people enjoy sharing tales of how they were only able to communicate with hands and feet or how a single glance or gesture was enough to engage with the locals. Even if it sounds like a romantic cliché, they do express a desire for encounters that are positive.

The longing to discover something new through travelling and to rediscover oneself in the process and the yearning of finding a place of where one has arrived and returned to oneself are not necessarily contradictory. How else could the phrase 'being at home on the road' become a popular motif for travellers? Making it easier for guests to settle into temporary homes is an important task for hosts. In classical ethnology, hosts are always ascribed a certain power over their guests. The various rituals enacted to welcome them, for example, serve not least to domesticate the 'intruders', i.e. to integrate them into the community for the duration of their stay. Hosts therefore wield the creative power over the nature of the encounter, they stake out the setting and determine to what extent guests are allowed to become involved. And, finally, being a guest means placing your fate in the hands of others, being dependent on and, last but not least, being indebted to them.

Hosts in the context of mass tourism may often be perceived as something between a ringmaster and animal tamer, as someone who entertains the masses while keeping them in check at the same time. The tourists, on the other hand, are often reduced to their role as paying guests. The exchange between hosts and guests in tourism is, of course, always anonymous and staged to a certain extent. The fact that the respective roles are clearly defined also helps people find their way and feel safe because both hosts and guests are able to draw on more or less clear patterns of interaction. Specific stereotypes therefore do not automatically prevent the encounter from

being constructive and mutually enriching. They do, however, become problematic when the other is actually only viewed as an exchangeable entity – or it is only possible to see him or her as such – because the context of the encounter is (or has become) too anonymous and literally too massive. Just as hosts are no longer able to perceive their guests as individuals, there is also the danger that the places the tourists visit degenerate into backdrops and the locals into bit players, i.e. consumable elements in a world of recreation and experience.

» Hospitality is particularly important in the Alpine region.«

If, however, tourism is thought of not merely as an industry but becomes more focused on the social and empathic aspects, encounters between people advance from being merely something incidental that has happened to becoming central to the entire experience. Playing host to guests is something enriching, the personality and everyday life of the hosts are a source of interest to the travellers. That is particularly true in the Alps, where hospitality is not only important but frequently essential to survival in the face of inhospitable nature – which may sometimes be extreme. A fact to which the mountain huts and shelters bear witness that are open for everyone to use at any time.

It is in this way that the 'feeling of being at home everywhere' could also be reinterpreted as an opportunity to feel safe and secure thanks to authentic encounters in foreign realms. Because that is what actually makes travelling so attractive: throwing yourself into the unknown and finding new homes when doing so. Creating spaces where encounters are able to take place to this end is certainly a fruitful endeavour.



The author Theresa Frank

Theresa Frank, born in 1980, studied cultural and social anthropology as well as comparative literature. She spent many years freelancing as an editor and proofreader before joining a scientific publishing house in Innsbruck.

She has also written a book on the subject: 'Begegnungen. Eine kritische Hommage an das Reisen' (LIT-Verlag, 2011).



One city and three valleys

Bludenz is located in the south of Vorarlberg and is a charming place to set off on a trip into three valleys – each of which possesses its own distinct character **TEXT: STEFAN NINK PHOTOS: DIETMAR DENGER**

A vote in 2019 saw the ORF TV channel's viewers crown the Brandnertal's Lake Lünensee as Austria's most beautiful location



Probably because a lot of things come together there in the most beautiful of ways: culture, city life and nature. In fact, several other fascinating alpine valleys are situated nearby. Bludenz, however, is not only a great place to meet but also a charming place from which to set off on trips into Brandnertal, Klostersertal and the Biosphere Park Großes Walsertal.

Brandnertal

Small world on a grand scale

Sometimes it's better to start at the end and that's certainly the case with Brandnertal: a short cable-car ride takes visitors up to an altitude of almost 2,000 metres from where panoramic views of Lake Lünensee present themselves that are simply breathtaking. It's beautiful! And its colours! And the mountains behind! It all looks like a painting, the sky blue, the water's aquamarine, the washed-out grey of the steep faces that make the lake look as if it's been set like a gem in a piece of jewellery. Would anyone want to leave here

straight away? Of course not. So you set off to walk around the lake to soak in more of this panorama. And all the hikers you encounter coming the other way have all got that same rapturous look on their faces that you have. And they, too, keep stopping every 20 or 30 metres to take pictures.

It's possible to meet the widest variety of different people in Brandnertal. That's mainly because this valley has something for everyone. There's a bike park and several mountain bike trails of varying levels of difficulty that lead through the beautiful landscape. There's archery, too. And climbing, of course. Hikers will find more than 400 kilometres of hiking trails, the most charming of which take visitors to Loischkopf or Kesselfall and, when the weather is good, the high plateau of Tschengla with its Alpe Rona is so enchanting that visitors often start asking themselves why they shouldn't actually spend their entire holiday there.

Steep slopes do not bear down on Brandnertal unlike other valleys in the eastern Alps: it's actually possible for visitors driving up from Bürs via Bürserberg and Brand to turn right or left into the gently rising



A day in pastel: Gayenhofen Castle in the Alpine town of Bludenz

Cycling and e-biking: heading off into the distance



Panorama cycling: short stop at Lake Seewaldsee in Großes Walsertal

Almost 300 kilometres of cycling and mountain-bike routes of all levels of difficulty invite visitors to discover the mountain world around Bludenz – and the most energy-saving way to do so is on e-bikes. The 155-kilometre-long five-valley mountain bike tour around Bludenz – best tackled on an e-bike – is one of the most charming. The five-day trip presents magnificent views of the Rätikon, the Verwall and Lechquellen Mountains and the Rhine Valley.

www.alpenregion-vorarlberg.com/bike

landscape wherever and whenever they want. By the way, the Tierwelten-Weg (Animal World Trail) at Alpe Parpfienz is always a delight for kids. Interactive stations have been set up where they can play hide-and-seek in marmot winter dens, join Bienen GmbH (Bees Ltd.) and learn more about birds of prey and owls.

For a valley that's less than twenty kilometres long, it's surprising how much there is to do in Brandnertal. And visitors shouldn't forget to explore right to its end because there's this lake high up that looks as if it's been set like an aquamarine in between the mountains.

Kloostertal

Water at its most beautiful

Kloostertal is also home to a lake that plays a leading role there – Lake Formarinsee that is situated at 1793 metres above sea level with the Rote Wand in the Lechquellen Mountains. The lake is fed by melt water that flows from the peaks in spring – so its size varies. The body of water that frequently shimmers in an intense blue-green can be reached on foot from Kloostertal, from Großes Walsertal and from Lech Zürs. Or on the hikers' bus that travels through Zugertal directly to Lake Formarinsee.



Deep impressions: view of Braz in Kloostertal

Generally, lots of things revolve around water here. The around 30-kilometre-long Kloostertal (which branches off from Walgau near Bludenz and extends to the Arlberg and the Tyrolean border) is a narrow valley with steep slopes to the right and left that have waterfalls plunging down them from seemingly everywhere. Charming circular hiking trails lead, for example, to the Allmeinwasserfall and Fallbachwasserfall waterfalls. And then there's the Alfenz that rushes through the centre of the valley – such landscapes are always called 'wildly romantic' in travelogues – as well as the municipalities of Klösterle, Dalaas and Innerbraz with their beautiful hotels, good restaurants and well-established traditions that are dotted along

»» It must have once looked like this all over the world. «



A feast for the eyes:
the Lake Seewaldsee
in Großes Walsertal



the landscape. Travellers have always been well looked after in Klostertal: the first hostels were built in the Middle Ages because the route between the Alpine ridges used to be a long and arduous one. Merchants and packers were able to find rooms and enjoy warm meals and one or two cups of wine at these stops. Klostertal has to this day remained a part of Vorarlberg where active visitors will feel right at home: you almost always have to climb high if you want to go hiking or mountain biking, perhaps to Lake Spullersee, to Muttjöchle or to the Wasserstuben-Alpe. Visitors not wishing to make the effort to go up that far may hike from Klösterle into the secluded Nenzigasttal up to the alp. Or even deeper into the Verwall Mountains.

People exploring the area between Bludenz and the Arlberg will at some point start asking themselves why the TV votes limit themselves to choosing just a single location as the one that's most beautiful. Klostertal is home to many more that deserve the accolade.

Biosphere Park Großes Walsertal **In harmony with nature**

And now just take a break somewhere, maybe just up there ahead, where there's a nice view, stop, park the e-bike and ... look. It's really beautiful here, don't you think? Some people even claim that Großes Walsertal was the model for all the other valleys in the Alps during the creation – although not all of them were as successful. Where else could you find 40 mountain peaks standing to attention? And where else would you feel that you're cycling through one of those 'Planet Earth' documentaries that always seem to feature the most beautiful spots in the world?

The Biosphere Park Großes Walsertal is so wide in many places that it no longer looks like a valley but rather like an oversized model railway landscape. The towns and villages are marked by tapering church spires and the houses disappear behind infernos of colour in flower





Alpine meadow: 3D view from the mountain station in Sonntag-Stein in Großes Walsertal

boxes rushing by as cyclists pass through them. And then you're already leaving Sonntag or Fontanella behind you and its back into the expansiveness, which, with all the mountains, is really not so wide ... it's rather a depth that seems to have everything, groves, meadows and pastures, lakes and rugged peaks further up. And everywhere the apparently harmonious coexistence of the rural cultural landscape and species-rich nature, fields and villages. It makes you think that everywhere else in the world must have once looked like this valley.

Hiking fun: sound-space installation in Sonntag-Stein. Right: on the Alpe Nenzigast

Perhaps that's what the people who first settled in the valley and named it in the 14th century also thought. The Walser, a group of people who started out from the Wallis and established settlements all across

the Alps, initially came from Switzerland. They were followed by others and they all lived in and off nature. Großes Walsertal has today been designated a UNESCO Biosphere Park. The organisation is of the view that it's a habitat worth preserving. Großes Walsertal is practically a model for people to live in harmony with nature.

Visitors feel this every time they come into contact with the local residents, at every snack that the innkeeper on the Alpe Oberüberluth serves with a proud: "It comes from happy cows!" It can often be felt out on hikes and while chatting with the people who live here. Visitors can even feel it when they just climb off their e-bikes somewhere just to take it all in.



Bludenz and the three valleys

Bludenz is a great place for visitors who want to dive into nature and culture in equal measures. A special plus: guests of the Alpine city, Klostertal and Brandnertal (Nüziders has not yet joined) will be eligible for a guest card that entitles them to free travel by train and bus across Vorarlberg.

More information:

 www.alpenregion-vorarlberg.com

Getting in touch with nature

Spending a week in the mountains, enjoying regional cuisine while out and about or watching the sun rise: there are very special ways of encountering Vorarlberg's landscapes

1

Min Weag (My Path) – just keeps on going



The circular 'Min Weag' hiking trail – 'Min Weag' is Vorarlberg dialect for 'My Path' – is 400 kilometres long and takes hikers across 15,000 altitude metres in 31 stages, from Lake Constance over the Silvretta and back to the starting point. The hike through hilly landscapes and alpine regions provides stimulating insights into a variety of habitats and results in many an enjoyable encounter. Directions, maps and additional information about the stages are also available from within the free Vorarlberg app. The new 'Min Weag' hiking guide published by the Löwenzahn Verlag is now available in bookshops.

www.vorarlberg.travel/min-weag-circuit

Sightseeing by bus and train

It's possible to easily explore Vorarlberg with inexpensive day tickets that allow travellers to hop on and off public transport. Set off independently across the region by train and the uniformly designed country buses that run at hourly intervals: from Lake Constance to Montafon, the Brandnertal valley, to Lech am Arlberg or from the towns in the Rhine Valley to the picturesque Bregenzerwald – or in the reverse direction. It is easy to stop off for culinary refreshments, strolls through villages or short circular hikes. www.vorarlberg.travel/sightseeing-hop-on-hop-off

2

Give my regards to the sun

Sunrises and sunsets develop their own magic – especially when the panorama is so extraordinary. It's possible to experience these perfect moments in Vorarlberg on guided hikes to mountain peaks, such as the almost 2000-metre-high Mondspitze in the Brandnertal valley or the Hohe Fraßen in the Großes Walsertal Biosphere Park. Such trips are often followed by evening meals or breakfasts taken together on the mountain. The west-facing shore spots along Lake Constance, such as the steps on the Bregenz breakwater, are free of charge and also extremely popular.

www.vorarlberg.travel/hiking



3

The most enjoyable dead end in the world

'Kulinarische Talwanderung' ('Gourmet valley hike') is the name of a tour through the Kleinwalsertal valley that is available for booking and for which five hours – but ideally the whole day – should be scheduled. The trip takes in three delightful inns in the valley. The first is Hotel Krone in Mittelberg – with Walser tapas and home-made mountain herb syrup. Followed by pork cheeks at Hotel Birkenhöhe. A vegetarian option is of course also available. And to round off the day, the Genuss- und Aktivhotel Sonnenburg will be serving Kaiserschmarrn made to grandma's recipe.

www.kleinwalsertal.com



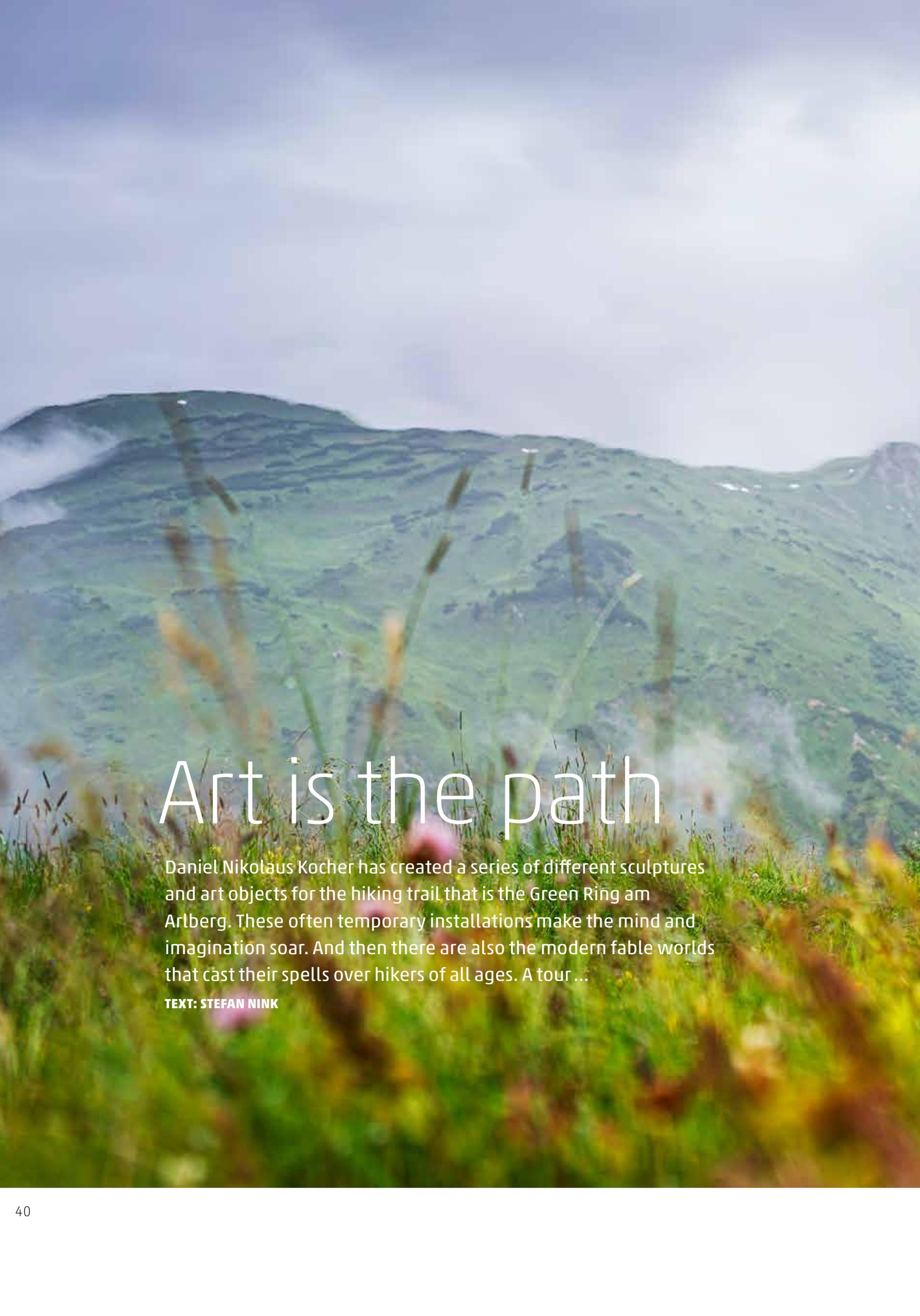
4 Berggespür Vorarlberg – out and about with your personal mountain guide

Visitors may spend a week in the company of Vorarlberg mountain guides and acquaint themselves with various forms of movement in the mountains and get to know the natural alpine world: the new and out-of-the-ordinary 'Berggespür Vorarlberg' ('A Feeling for Vorarlberg's Mountains') programme has been created specifically to this end and allows small groups to enjoy tours through the mountains of Vorarlberg under the direction of two mountain guides. Active guests on these tours will be able to experience the Bregenzerwald, Arlberg, Klostersertal und Montafon regions off the beaten track, along smugglers' paths and at night, on fixed rope routes and across glaciers. They'll cover up to 1,000 metres difference in altitude each day. The hikes will be interspersed with a trip on the e-bike once in a while.

Hikers wishing to experience that "mountain feeling" should be physically fit, sure-footed and have the stamina for hikes that may last up to six hours per day. But there will also be enough time en route to regenerate and relax and enjoy nature thanks to regular breaks. Participants will be accommodated overnight in comfortable hotels along the way – including cosy stops in the evenings.

www.vorarlberg.travel/berggespuer-mountain-feeling





Art is the path

Daniel Nikolaus Kocher has created a series of different sculptures and art objects for the hiking trail that is the Green Ring am Arlberg. These often temporary installations make the mind and imagination soar. And then there are also the modern fable worlds that cast their spells over hikers of all ages. A tour ...

TEXT: STEFAN NINK



A scenic view of a mountain valley. In the foreground, there are lush green hills with a few small houses and a winding path. In the background, a large, rugged mountain peak rises above a layer of white clouds. The sky is blue with some light clouds.

» Those who have already hiked around the Green Ring should be able to discover different art next time.«

Daniel Nikolaus Kocher

Last summer, as the season was ending, he hid behind a rock again, up at Zürsersee lake. Daniel Nikolaus Kocher was checking one of the doors when he heard the voices of approaching hikers. So he decided to hide and do what he always does when he's on the Green Ring, which is to watch how people interact with the art up there. Well, it is rather unusual to walk around a corner in a meadow high above Lech and suddenly find yourself standing in front of a closed door. "You always see very different reactions," says Kocher. But something like the other day at the Zürsersee lake? "Two of the hikers actually walked around the door as if it wasn't there at all. They just kept going without interrupting their pace." Behind his rock, the curator of the Door Project and the Green Ring's Artistic Director was dumbfounded, he'd never seen anything like it before. And the others in the group? They responded to the door, he says. Which is what actually everyone normally does. They walked through it back and forth several times before taking selfies. "They interacted with the art, each in their own way. Which is precisely why we installed it up there at the Green Ring."

A wall bearing the names of the inhabitants of Lech

'Up there': the Green Ring is a hiking trail that takes hikers around Lech am Arlberg at an altitude of 2,000 metres and has, for a number of years now, made it possible for them to not only enjoy the spectacular 180-degree panoramic views but also encounters with art. Daniela Egger, who is a writer from Bregenz, has invented a complete world of legends for the trail and Daniel Nikolaus Kocher has created the appropriate sculptures for it. A hut library (where everyone can find something appropriate to read while taking a break from hiking) and an installation at the Europäische Wasserscheide (the watershed where visitors are able to see how the water on one side flows towards the North Sea and towards the Black Sea on the other) were gradually added, among other things, over time. The sixty-metre-long 'Lecher Mauer', which is to be found

The doors and what's behind them

Each door has its own story – and now even new locations. Three examples:



This door has been dedicated to the subject of being free. What do I need to be free? How much – or how little? That's something for hikers to ponder after encountering the door by designer Andreas Knoop. It now resides with its sponsors Natascha and Joschi Walsch at Hotel Gasthof Rote Wand in Lech, where it's possible for visitors to view and interact with it at any time.



The door by author Daniela Egger is rusty but yet not old. It revolves around a world that's somewhere between reality and fantasy, that's home to concealed beings and a samurai. The rust stands for the decay that is inevitable in nature. The door has now relocated from its previous location on the Kriegerhorn to the Burg Hotel that is run by the Lucian family in Lech.



The door with mountain and QR code was realised by graphic designer Martina Strolz. The code was created during a project by young people living in Lech who used it as an opportunity to see what their futures might hold. The door is sponsored by the Raiffeisenbank Lech, which installed it at the Libellensee lake in Oberlech in summer – a creative space for children and young people.

right behind the mountain station of the Petersbodenbahn cable car, lists the names of all the townspeople on its stones, in a sense as a permanent and everlasting contrast to the storage of digital data that has taken hold down in the valley.

A letterbox with postcards that visitors can write and post on the spot stands just a few metres further on. Lech Zürs Tourismus GmbH handles the postage at the end of the hiking season: 'Emptied once a year at 4.00 p.m.'

There's a separate Green Riddle. Ring for children

But the doors designed by nine artists from five different countries probably produced the most beautiful 'What's that?' moments over the last three summers. Lines from a story were written on one of them, another had a small sign with the word 'free' on it, which

Stage 2 also leads to lake Zürsersee (below). Right: Riddle Ring from Lech to Rud-Alpe



immediately triggered associations under the endless arcing skies above Lech. And another one looked – well, just like a normal white door. The spyhole through which people could peep only became visible to them as they approached. And it suddenly made the seemingly endless world of peaks and ridges appear very small and manageable. The doors were brought down from the mountain last autumn. They have found new homes with their sponsors where they can now be admired (see box, page 43).

It's possible to hike around the Green Ring in separate stages over the course of three days and ride back to the valley at the end of each stage. But it's still possible for visitors to encounter art even if they've only an hour to spare. They simply have to walk just a few hundred metres into the Vorarlberg mountains along with their children for whom the special Rätsel-Ring has been created. The art is supposed to be there for everyone, not just for those who manage 25 mountain kilometres a day. And it is intended that there will always be different encounters with art. Daniel continues to install small temporary works along the trail, which requires no or hardly any intervention at all into nature and which then disappear again after a few years. He wants guests to be able to regularly experience something new, he says. Those who've already hiked around the Green Ring should be able to discover different art next time.

» The doors make you think – about rooms that you enter or leave. «

And, in the best case, a new mountain world. "Taking works of art out of their context and introducing them into new ones always affects the surroundings," says Daniel. "They then also change the way people perceive nature." The art on the Green Ring creates highlights and, because it often seems to hikers that the works appear out of nowhere, it changes their view of some of the most beautiful summit-and-valley panoramas in Austria. Daniel Nikolaus Kocher calls it making outdoor spaces tangible.



Seeing the mountains differently through art:
Riese Taurin (Taurin, the Giant) on the Green Ring



You could also say that the works of art on the Green Ring succeed in making people look differently at the landscape above Lech. You suddenly see things that you wouldn't have noticed otherwise without encountering the art.

Most hikers on the Green Ring enjoy the food for thought that the art gives them and children like outdoor art anyway. Daniel Nikolaus Kocher and the Raiffeisenbank Lech organise an annual workshop for children in which the natural environment around the Libellensee lake is artistically decorated – with animals made from wood, leather, stone and paint.

With a little luck, it's possible to get answers along the way – from the artist himself

So it's not only possible to encounter art but also to participate in the activity. And sometimes it's possible to meet the artist while hiking. And ask questions as well as get answers. When Daniel isn't hiding behind a rock.



The artist

Daniel Nikolaus Kocher (born 1981) has been the Green Ring's Artistic Director since 2009. He specialises in art projects in nature and in unusual places.



More information:

www.daniko.info;
www.lechzuers.com/the-green-ring

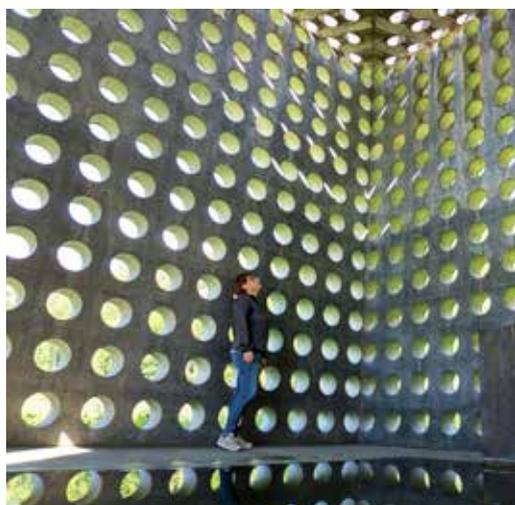




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Culture to go in Kleinwalsertal valley

It's possible while hiking to discover stories that have been told for around 700 years and walk in the footsteps of Walser families in and around Mittelberg. A trip through time – with refreshingly modern stopovers

TEXT: KORNELIA DIETRICH PHOTOS: DIETMAR DENGER



Old villages, big mountains: the Walser Kulturweg – the Walser Culture Trail – runs through the entire Kleinwalsertal valley



Meeting:
Wolfgang
Hilbrand with
author Kornelia
Dietrich

Remembering:
panels explain
sights worth
seeing – including
the Walserhaus
(Walser House)

We meet Wolfgang Hilbrand sitting on a bench at Mittelberg’s church. It can’t be missed as the starting point for our hike: its 66-metre-high spire is the village’s and – for many – even the entire Kleinwalsertal valley’s landmark. “It’s more than 600 years old and has never had to be restored,” says Wolfgang Hilbrand proudly. Five Walser families arrived here from Switzerland and settled here at the end of the 13th century. “They didn’t have any steel or iron so they built walls that are between two and a half and three metres thick in order to ensure that St. Joduk would last forever.”

The Walser have left their mark in many places between Riezlern and Baad. And so, a few years ago, Wolfgang Hilbrand came up with the idea of creating the Culture Trail, a hiking trail that takes visitors through beautiful scenery through the valley and at the same time explains many of the things that some people would otherwise pass by without noticing. The ‘Uusrüafschtei’, for example, which is a flat stone slab behind the church. “It weighs several tonnes and was dragged here on a sleigh in 1595 – there wasn’t any other way of transporting objects that were that heavy.” The Waibel, the usher, would stand on it every week after Sunday service and read the news: which meadows were to be sold or when the next cattle auction would be taking place. “That was the easiest way to reach the whole community since at the time everyone went to mass.” The church these days is often quite empty when Reverend Edwin Matt, whom



Mittelberg shares with the neighbouring parishes, climbs the pulpit every second Sunday. But, on this sunny afternoon, we meet many visitors who have come to see the frescoes, the beautiful altar and the painted wooden Vortragetafel (Carrier Panel) that the girls used to carry in front of them in processions, hence the name. “Are you from here?” A man asks whose accent clearly reveals that he’s from the Ruhr district. He then immediately follows that up with: “When does the Corpus Christi procession start tomorrow?”

What Heinzen are? Wooden hangers above the doors which used to be used for drying hay

We walk past the sacristan’s house, old Walser stables, the ‘Hoflaada’ (‘Farm Shop’), where the wooden Heinzen, which used to be used to hang small bundles of grass to dry in bad weather, are still to be seen above the doors. This is the place where tradition and modern technology meet – inside this building customers are able to draw fresh organic farm milk





Walser Kulturweg (Cultural Trail)



The Culture Trail runs through the entire Kleinwalsertal valley. An interactive digital map also provides information about the routes.

The Mittelberger Runde (Mittelberg Round Trip) is eight kilometres long. Hikers wishing to take their time at the 20 stations without hurrying should plan a good three hours for the tour.

There are similar round trips in Hirschegg (11 stations, 2.5 kilometres), Riezlern (10 stations, 13 kilometres) and a round trip around the valley (9 stations, 20 kilometres). And it's always possible to hop on the Walserbus, which connects all the villages, to shorten the trip. The bus is free of charge for holders of the Kleinwalsertal Guest Card.

Tour details: www.vorarlberg.travel/walser-cultural-trail

from the milk-vending machine – automatically, cooled and hygienically. Mountain cheese and yoghurt are also available from vending machines and we quickly get chatting with visitors from Bavaria who've come to us to change banknotes into coins so that they can pack the delicacies into their hiking rucksacks.

Wolfgang Hilbrand knows all the stories – even the gruesome ones

We knock on the door of the more than 450-year-old Kohler Walserhaus in Böldmen and are allowed in to admire the parlour with its wood panelling and 'Herrgottswinkel' (shrine) that has hardly changed for generations. We meet lots of hikers coming the other way who give us a friendly greeting as they pass. And local residents keep stopping Wolfgang to have a chat with him – everyone in Mittelberg seems to know him – no wonder, he was headmaster at the elementary school until he retired. And that's why he also knows the gruesome stories that are associated with the 15th century conciliation crosses that we pass on our way. These are memorial crosses that murderers were

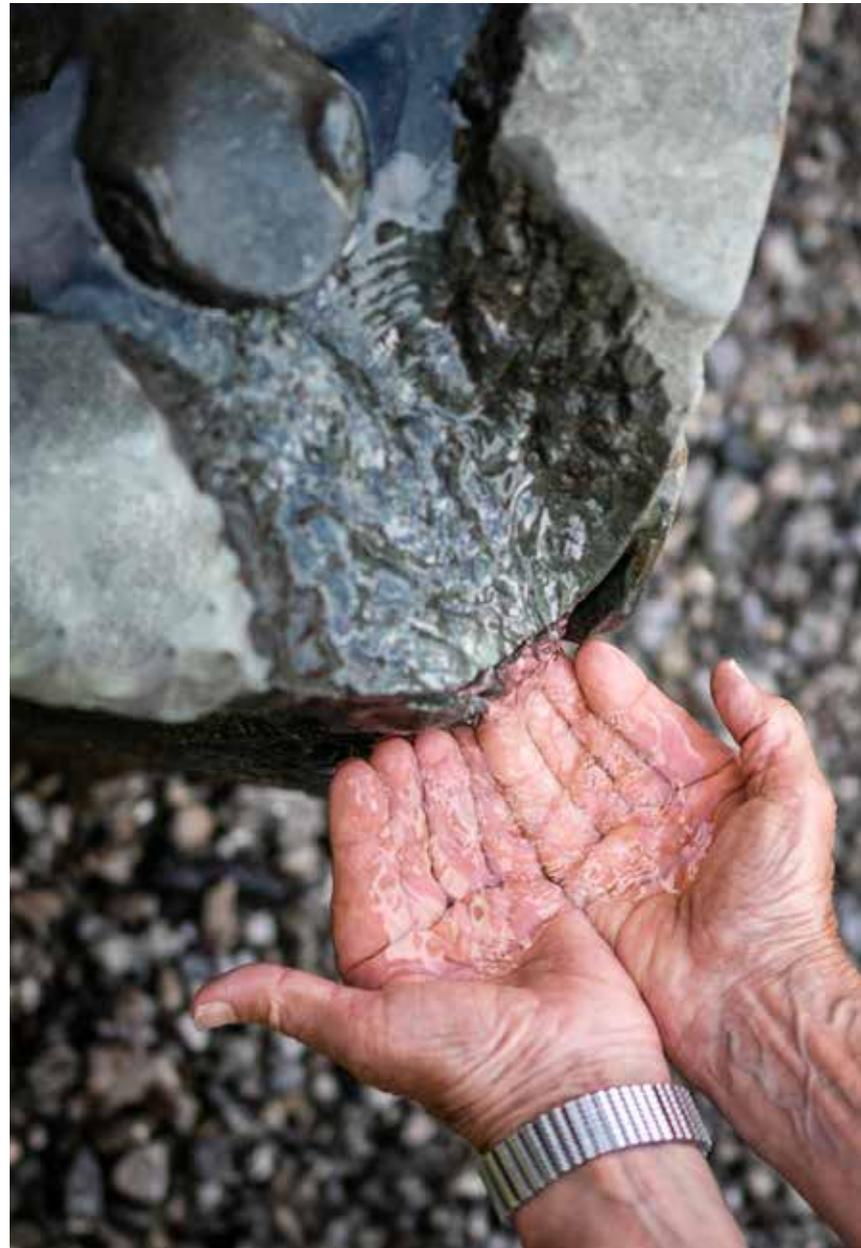
» We're the most beautiful cul-de-sac in Austria. «





Organic dairy products: also available from the vending machine. Changing bank notes for coins is a good way of meeting people

Mountain water: well on the Baad-Mittelberg high trail



forced to carve out of stone with their own hands and that were then installed at the scenes of their crimes: a man who got into an argument with his three brothers after a drinking session and killed them all or a father who killed his son.

Interested visitors, however, may also walk the Culture Trail without a guide because there's a small guide to the sights, too, that's available from the tourist office. And plaques have been installed at each monument that tell the associated stories; the texts were written by Wolfgang Hilbrand – so expertise and love of the homeland are guaranteed. We walk past the alpine woods, through colourful meadows full of dandelions, clover, crowfoots and buttercups. Bees buzz and swallows circle high above us until the trail gently descends to the chapel of St. Martin in Baad. Our guide thinks it's a little gem – and not only because of the beautifully painted ceiling. "I'm particularly fond of this church because we celebrated our golden wedding anniversary here," he says.

Baad is the last stop. Not only for our little trip – this is also where the Kleinwalsertal valley ends, the small village is surrounded by mountains, the only road leads back to Mittelberg. "We're the most beautiful cul-de-sac in Austria," says Wolfgang. "And we want it to stay that way – we've always resisted a through road." Which they have fortunately done with success.



More information about the Walser Culture Trail and holidays in the Kleinwalsertal valley is available at:

 www.kleinwalsertal.com



Culture that brings people together

Picking up particular nuances, get talking about design and discovering art outside in the fresh air – this is where we present interesting sources of inspiration for the curious

1

Music is taken to the mountains

Unusual places and top-notch musicians from a variety of genres make the charming duo that is the annual 'Montafoner Resonanzen' music festival. That's where people come together in summer to play jazz and jam in the lofty mountains. Other areas of focus include wind instruments, folk music, cross-over and chamber music. The programme also includes events with organ music every year.

www.vorarlberg.travel/montafon-resonances



3

Literature at unusual places

This new cultural festival is all about poetry, battling, whispering, drawing and sometimes even making music. The Kleinwalsertal Literature Festival aims to bring together texts, poets and unusual places in the Vorarlberg valley. Interactions, for example, between walking and listening to texts or between the artists and the audience are also explored here. The three-day event along with a specific motto is taken to the mountains every two years and definitely crosses genres.

www.kleinwalsertal.com

2



When the artists and the audience...

This innovative festival is all about give and take. The programme, which is dedicated to a specific theme three times a year, aims to encourage local and international artists as well as performers and guests to engage in vibrant exchanges. The topics here include central socio-political questions and moods. The Montforter Zwischentöne events take place at a variety of venues in Feldkirch. The topics they take up are linked to the respective season as well as regional customs and festivals.

www.montforter-zwischentoene.at

4

'Beauty' at the vorarlberg museum

Why do people feel drawn to beauty? What are the positive effects that beauty can have? The 'Beauty' exhibition at the vorarlberg museum in Bregenz deals with these and similar questions. It was conceived by Stefan Sagmeister, a graphic artist from Vorarlberg who now lives in New York, and graphic artist Jessica Walsh, who hails from the USA. The objects originated in different worlds – graphics, product design, architecture and urban planning. And they reveal that beauty is not only beautiful but also functional. From June 2020 to January 2021.

www.vorarlbergmuseum.at



5

Making music together

A cross-national orchestra with young musicians from the Lake Constance region – that was the idea behind the 'Quarta 4 Länder Jugendphilharmonie' ('Quarta 4 Country Youth Philharmonics') project. A place of encounter where friendships for life are formed. The young talents rehearse together under the supervision of initiator and conductor Christoph Eberle. Their concerts may then be enjoyed during spring and autumn at several locations in Vorarlberg – from Bregenz to Bludenz. www.vorarlberg.travel/music-across-borders



6

Next stop: art!

Open-air art that is freely accessible and invites you to reflect, enjoy and stay: there's a whole range of interesting 'art stops' in Vorarlberg. Pieces that fascinate are, for example, the bronze sculpture "Homage to Brigantium" by Herbert Albrecht on the waterfront promenade in Bregenz and the light tunnel by Gerry Ammann at the harbour. Today's artists not only want to enhance the look of the site with their works but also open them up and create connections, for instance, between art and the buildings or in interaction with nature. So just stop for a moment and let the effect of art works soak in. A selection of pieces may be found here:

www.vorarlberg.travel/art-in-public-spaces

7

Being inspired by the new

Trade fairs are meeting places to marvel at: several special events in Vorarlberg attract attention. They stand for a close relationship between products and designers and invite people to inform themselves, appreciate and buy. Inquiries expressly desired! It's often even possible to watch manufacturing processes. Interesting, beautiful, sustainable things, many from local manufacturers and designers, are to be found, for example, at the 'Unikat B', an exhibition for applied art and design in Bludenz. The 'POTENTIALe' trade fair in Feldkirch is also unusual in that it's simultaneously a festival where the aim is to enable visitors to experience what a future worth living could look like.

www.vorarlberg.travel/discover-design



Landesgrenze
TIROL | VOR-
ARLBERG

Pushing the boundaries in a good way: writer Stefan Herbke and son Moritz made the panoramic trip together

Mountain yearning

Many people see hiking on the trails in the Silvretta mountains in the Montafon region as a way to unwind from their everyday lives. The high alpine panoramic trail around the Hohe Rad rewards hikers with impressive views of Piz Buin, which is the highest mountain in Vorarlberg. But there's even more to discover here: green meadows, glaciers and sometimes even your partner for life

TEXT: STEFAN HERBKE PHOTOS: DIETMAR DENGER





And off we go: across alpine meadows and past grazing cows to the Radsattel mountain

Arrived: Tina Reyer, who runs the alpine hut, is glad to have got her first season under her belt

» I am not a classic alpine host, I feel more comfortable in rock and ice. «

Tina Reyer, landlady at the Wiesbadener Hütte



Well-deserved break: a hearty snack awaits you at the Wiesbadener Hütte



Piz Buin conquerors: mountain guide Andreas Pecl (left), Thomas Ogermann and Jochen Krauss join forces to climb to the summit



Thunderous finale: this impressive waterfall awaits on the descent through the Ochsental valley



Embedded: the Silvrettasee lake with the Hohe Rad and Piz Buin mountains

Onlooker: an ibex watches the hikers from up close

Whatever your worries are, you'll forget about them at the latest when you reach the summit," says Klaus Kühlechner. The 65-year-old has realised his dream of living in the mountains and working as a hiking guide. And he continues to look forward to every single day that he can spend high up in the Silvretta mountains: "You just stop thinking and simply enjoy the panorama – it touches your heart." Slowly, almost thoughtfully, Klaus sets off from the Bielerhöhe and proceeds with steady steps towards the Bieltal valley, past the Silvretta reservoir with its ice-cold waters, while the Silvretta range's three thousand-metre-tall mountains in the background look like they're wearing fluffy hats because they're all poking their high peaks into the clouds. "I want to show visitors my home," Klaus explains, "then they'll understand why I live here and never want to leave."

The view from the top of the Radsattel opens up to the heart of the Silvretta mountains

The best proof of this is the hike that Klaus is taking us on today: the panoramic trip around the Hohe Rad mountain. The hike starts at the Bielerhöhe and continues into the Bieltal valley and then across the Radsattel to the Wiesbadener Hütte at the foot of Piz Buin – at 3,312 metres, the highest peak in Vorarlberg. The fascinating round trip starts at the lake and leads hikers across green alpine meadows almost up to the glaciers. The vegetation becomes sparser with every metre climbed, trained eyes will recognise old moraines, deposits of debris and boulders, that are clear indicators of the glaciers' former dimensions.



The ice has, however, long since retreated, water gushes everywhere, cows graze beside the path. The first steep ledge already results in an encounter with the first hikers coming from the Wiesbadener Hütte. Some seem to be in a hurry and want to get back to the valley as quickly as they can. Others, like Petra Dimitrovova from the Czech Republic and Huyen Vuong from Vietnam, are more inclined towards taking their time, entirely in line with the motto: "The path is the destination." The two young women work in Switzerland, live in Vorarlberg and are thrilled with the mountains. "There are, of course, mountains in Vietnam," says Huyen, "but hiking is not at all popular there." But she can find many like-minded people here. "We sit in the office all week," says Petra, "so we need to do something to unwind at the weekend – and that's what the mountains help us do. And you're always meeting nice people." And then the two set off again towards the valley albeit a bit hesitantly: "We're a bit wary of the cows."





» We sit in the office all week and it helps us unwind when we're in the mountains. «

Petra Dimitrovova

Fit and thrilled with the mountains: Petra Dimitrovova from the Czech Republic and Huyen Vuong from Vietnam live in Vorarlberg

Panoramic trip around the Hohe Rad

The round trip, which boasts lots of variety, takes hikers from the Bielerhöhe (2,036 m) across the Silvretta reservoir's dam into the Bieltal valley. The rather leisurely start is followed by a somewhat steeper but short ascent past the Radsee lake to the Radscharte (2,652 m). The descent, which presents views of Piz Buin and the Ochsentaler Glacier and is interrupted by a short counter-ascent, takes hikers to the Wiesbader Hütte (2,443 m) and then on to a narrow track back to the Silvretta reservoir and the Bielerhöhe.

Hiking time: 6 to 6.30 hours

Getting there: it's possible to drive on the Silvretta-Hochalpenstraße (toll road) to the starting point or comfortably take the bus.

A guided hike is offered once a week during the summer. The Montafon Guest Card entitles users to a 20% discount; there's no charge for guests of the BergePLUS partner businesses.

Information and dates at: 🌐 www.montafon.at

The view from the top of the Radsattel presents the heart of the Silvretta range and the still impressive Ochsentaler Glacier with its crevasses and tongues of ice. Fascinating, even for Jonas Hermann, who can't take his eyes off the vista. He was born in Franconia in Germany and even as a child he couldn't wait for his annual trip to see his grandparents in Pinzgau during the holidays. "I feel safe in the mountains," says Jonas, "and I really missed them at my last job in Frankfurt, especially the peace and quiet and the endless nature." He now lives and works in Tirol and it's really easy for him to get to the mountains by public transport. "I like to go a little faster when I'm out, also because of the benefits that hiking brings as an exercise," he says, "but I then occasionally like to stop for a little longer, take a seat and just look."

We almost didn't see the ibex for looking; it was standing just a few metres beside the path and was staring at us with curiosity. "Many of our guests find

Happy to reach the summit: the Swijnenburg family from the Netherlands. Parents Maud and Harry met in the mountains





Sure-footed:
it's sometimes a
steep climb up the
Radsattel



Hiking guide: Klaus
Kühlechner offers
tips for the tour

it almost incredible when they see such an impressive animal in nature." Klaus is happy about the surprising encounter and adds: "Such experiences make the effort of making the long climb worthwhile." The ibex would certainly have thrilled the Swijnenburg family's two children but they're even more excited about the large snow field they've discovered directly next to the trail. "We love the mountains, particularly because of the views," raves Harry Swijnenburg about his holidays in the Alps. "We obviously don't have any at home in the Netherlands." He met his now wife Maud on a training course at an Alpine Club hut 22 years ago: "We now have two children and still enjoy hiking in the mountains." The kids also like going to the sea, of course, but Harry says: "We've usually had enough of the water after two days." The children are not quite as enthusiastic even if snowball fights in summer provide a welcome change and twelve-year-old Kelvin raves about the glaciers. Maud reveals how she motivates the children: "We've promised them that they can have Kaiserschmarrn when we stop for a break at the alpine hut."

The dream of the summit demands a lot but it also gives a lot back

Day trippers, hikers and mountaineers sit comfortably together on the Wiesbadener Hütte's terrace while landlords Emil Widmann and Tina Reyer and their team tirelessly serve drinks and food. The weekends are very busy for them and the hut's 180-bed capacity is completely booked out. Tina is proud of their successful first season and the location in sight of the glaciers: "I simply feel more at home in rock and ice – I am not a classic alpine host." But she hasn't yet had time to climb Piz Buin. For others like Jochen Krauss and Thomas Ogermann from Germany, on the other hand, a dream has come true, they've just come from

Piz Buin, the most famous peak in the Silvretta range of mountains. "That was a very special experience," says a thrilled Jochen. "We had fog and sleet showers but the sun did come out for a short time at the summit." And hiking with crampons was especially exciting as it was a first for both of them. "It's only natural that you sometimes push yourself to your limits in the mountains and sometimes you even have to go beyond them," says Jochen, "but, in regard to Piz Buin, it was clear from the outset that we'd only go with a mountain guide." A task that Andreas Pecl from the Vorarlberger Lawinenwarndienst (Vorarlberg Avalanche Warning Service) is happy to assume. He accompanied the two and is pleased with how the day went: "They handled themselves well." Andreas has probably been up Piz Buin around one hundred times and he, too, looks forward to every tour in the mountains that are his home. "I've had many wonderful moments here even if they were often only brief – but those are precisely the times that make living here special."



Hiking in the Montafon region

A total of 21 three-thousand-metre peaks and 1,160 kilometres of marked hiking trails await visitors. There's something for everyone here – from family walks to trips to the summit.

More information:

 www.montafon.at/hiking;
www.silvretta-bielerhoehe.at



Good advice: Raphael Mäser of Hotel Alpenrose with his grandmother, the founder Fini Mäser

A temporary home

For that to work, it needs hosts who put their hearts into what they do. Vorarlberg is home to many family-run businesses where everything revolves around the guests. We would like to introduce two of them: Hotel Alpenrose in Montafon, which is managed by three generations, and Gasthof Krönele in the Rhine Valley, whose goal it is to be a second home to business travellers **TEXT: STEFAN NINK PHOTOS: ANGELA LAMPRECHT**



Family links: Ulrike Fink, who runs Gasthof Krönele, with daughter Johanna and mother Wilma



**Raphael Mäser,
Hotel Alpenrose, Schruns**

A fondue at the hut like on the other day, for example, and then hiking back together to the hotel: “Those are the small undertakings that stick in your memory. People talk about them forever,” says Raphael Mäser, who is the manager at Hotel Alpenrose. And while he’s at it, a few other things come to mind that he believes – no, that he knows – are more important to the relationship with his guests than all the pillow choices and TV channel options. The aperitif with guests on bank holidays, for example, when the host family takes the time to chat with the guests. Or just being constantly available: “There’s always someone from the family on hand. Always. Some very early in the morning, others late at night. We want our guests to know that the Alpenrose is a hotel where people are taken care of. That’s always been the way we’ve done things.”

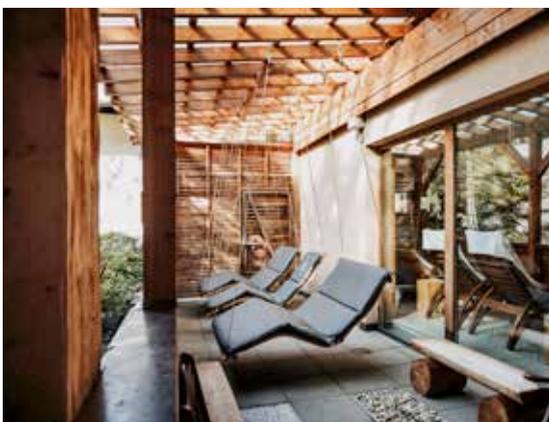
Hotel Alpenrose in Schruns has been in business since the middle of the last century. Raphael’s grandmother, who had been forced to flee from South Tirol, launched and then developed the business at the tender young age of 18 after renting a small inn, which, by the way, was where she made the catch of her husband (and Raphael’s grandfather) as he stopped by for a beer every now and then after a day out fishing. When it wasn’t possible for her to purchase the inn, she used

» The Alpenrose is a hotel where people are taken care of. That’s always been the way we’ve done things. «

Raphael Mäser, Manager

Match with a view: the small tennis court on the Alpenrose's roof terrace presents a magnificent panoramic view

Alpine lifestyle: it's also possible to relax outdoors in the spa area. Monika Mäser is responsible for the hotel's decorations and interior design



the money she had saved to buy the land on which the Alpenrose was subsequently built: an inn with a few beds, which over the years was transformed into a four-star upmarket business with 46 rooms. That was quite an achievement at the time for a young woman with no links to Vorarlberg says her 29-year-old grandson about his grandmother's life's work. "She always knew what she wanted. And she was good with numbers."

The senior boss still bonds with guests – in her own way

And she's still here: Fini Mäser is now 87 and does her rounds through the restaurant every evening to chat with guests about their stay in the Montafon and to philosophise about God and the world. She's known most of her guests for a long time; Hotel Alpenrose has plenty of regular guests, most of whom have been coming to Schruns for many, many years. Raphael



Host family: Raphael Mäser with mother and grandmother

Mäser takes the opportunity to nip into the office to do some work while his grandmother is mixing with the guests. His father manages the Almhütte Fellmännle alpine hut in Silbertal (and is the hunter responsible for supplying game to the restaurant) while his mother is responsible for everything related to the interior furnishings and decoration. And his sister at the reception desk makes sure that no question remains unanswered and no wish remains unfulfilled. Her little son is, so to speak, the fourth generation in the family business.

"We automatically complement each other," says Raphael Mäser, "we don't have to coordinate with each other much." The fact that there's always a family member on hand sometimes surprises new guests on the first day of their stay, "But they wouldn't want it any other way from the second day on." And, because many of the employees have also been with Hotel Alpenrose for many a year, guests are always bumping into familiar faces wherever they go.

There's been an unwritten law at Hotel Alpenrose since it was founded

Is that the secret of its success? The family thing? Raphael Mäser is unable to say. He obviously doesn't know any different. Like his parents, he grew up in the hotel business and much has probably become second nature to him. "I can't remember my grandmother or parents ever having to set down any rules for us when we were kids," he says before he finally comes up with one of those unwritten laws that the hotel adheres to: "My grandmother to this day still doesn't like it when you slam the doors. That's an expression of anger, she always says. And hosts shouldn't be angry and so anger has no place in her hotel."

Ulrike Fink, Gasthof Krönele, Lustenau

Ulrike Fink stops to think for a moment and then she takes another minute just to be sure, which is understandable because the question is a difficult one: how would you sum up the secret of your success as a host in a single sentence? The thing that characterises our own business? “The second time decides,” says Ulrike Fink. You have to be able to greet guests by name when they come back for a second time to reception. “Travellers stay with us overnight. Most of them are travelling on business. Many would rather be at home with their families. They’d be missing something if they didn’t feel at home here at the Krönele.” A brief pause. “And we’d have got it wrong.”

The boss’ gut feeling is more important to her than what management consultants say

Gasthof Krönele in Lustenau has been in business since 1875; the inn initially only had a handful of rooms offering overnight accommodation to peddlers, soap boilers and coopers at the end of their long working days. Maria Sperger, Ulrike Fink’s great-great-grandmother, ran the business with her husband Gebhard – but the hotel has, of course, long since grown extensively: it now has 70 rooms and the restaurant area now 200 seats. And up to 50 employees, depending on the season.



Destination dining out: the Krönele’s restaurant is famous beyond national borders

Personal reception: it’s important to Ulrike Fink, who manages the hotel, that all the guests are individually welcomed to the Krönele

And four stars, as well. “But we’re still the Krönele,” says Ulrike Fink, “we’ve stayed true to who we are.” The business has probably simply developed with the location. Because Lustenau in the Rhine Valley – situated directly on the Swiss border – has also enjoyed considerable economic growth in the past. It started booming when Lustenau’s Rhine Bridge, the first bridge over the River Rhine in Vorarlberg, was opened in 1867. The new bridge allowed goods to be rapidly traded with Switzerland and was the basis for the rapid development of the region’s prosperous embroidery industry. More and more business travellers always turn up where many medium-sized and often family-run businesses have settled. To this day, most guests stay overnight at the Krönele because they have a business meeting at one of the companies in the Rhine Valley the following day. The proximity to Switzerland has also been noticeable in the restaurant business for some time now; many people cross the border to dine in the evening. A better price-performance ratio is apparently to be had, says Ulrike Fink.

Five generations of women in charge – carte blanche for the daughters

Over the years, different management consultants have suggested this and that to her but she’s always relied on her gut instinct. “The stuff they wanted me to automate! But that’s just what we didn’t want, a





»» Guests must feel that they're in good hands with us. «

Ulrike Fink, Managing Director

standardised template. We never wanted to do that. And particularly not at check-in.”

Five generations have run Gasthof Krönele now and it's always been the women at the helm while the outgoing generation has always looked after the incoming one for a while. Ulrike Fink's mother is now in her early eighties but remains present everywhere – even when she's not around – which is because she produced the large-format abstract paintings that are on prominent display at the inn. Ulrike Fink has two daughters, 15 and 10 years old. Both, she says, are free to decide whether they want to continue running the business or not. Ulrike Fink is needed at reception, a guest wants to settle up and she won't let anyone leave without having a little chat with them first because personal contact is important to her: 'You're giving guests a temporary home. And, if you can't do that, then they won't come back.’



Hosts in Vorarlberg

Guests don't feel (almost) at home only at the Krönele and Hotel Alpenrose. A family-like ambience is very important to most hotels, guest houses, farms and mountain huts in Vorarlberg.

🌐 www.kroenele.com;
www.spa-alpenrose.at



Overview: Ulrike Fink with mother Wilma and daughter Johanna. The Krönele has a cosy restaurant

Bregenz

Austriaguide Sabine Spiegel knows why the heart of the town is situated on the waterfront. And, during her guided tour of Bregenz, she also reveals where the best place to talk about art is.

So let's take it from the top, in other words, let's start in the cosy upper town: only a handful of small streets, surrounded by a ring wall in olden times and fortified by several towers – that's what the fort settlement that the Counts of Montfort built on the hill above Lake Constance in the 13th century looked like. We are standing under the last surviving gate to the mighty building at Ehregutaplatz 1 and are looking around: medieval houses everywhere, cobblestones, shutters, lots of half-timbered structures. "There are no hotels, restaurants or bars up here", says Sabine, "which means that only people who live here can stay overnight." And that's just a small community of residents who know each other and who lovingly tend its squares and front gardens: fig trees, rosebushes, lavender, everything is in bloom and fragrant, which also delights the walkers who come to enjoy the view across the city, the countryside, the mountains and the lake from above. Sabine is an Austriaguide, a certified tour guide.



Sabine, expert in all things concerning Bregenz, is proud that there's so much art here

Austriaguides speak at least one additional language and continue to regularly educate themselves further – many also offer special tours dedicated to specific topics. Sabine is an ambassador for guests with whom she shares her expert knowledge of the Vorarlberg state capital of Bregenz.

The city does need to make some additional effort because it's not outstandingly beautiful everywhere and it doesn't have a picturesque old town at its heart. But it is a vibrant city of business – and it is situated



Experiencing the towns in Bregenz und in Feldkirch

Each one beats to its own rhythm and has a different way of welcoming guests: Bregenz is full of art while Feldkirch is a great place to delight (not only) your palate. Two guided city tours in the Bodensee-Vorarlberg region

TEXT: KORNELIA DIETRICH AND STEFAN NINK
PHOTOS: GREGOR LENGLER



Kunst am Bau (architectural art): Florian Pumhösl's panorama room at the vorarlberg museum is a genuine favourite with the public



directly on the waterfront. Sooner or later, everyone is drawn to the shores of Lake Constance, but first it's necessary to cross the wide through road and then the railway lines.

Small numbers, big art – there's always something to talk about in Bregenz

But perhaps it's a blessing that Bregenz doesn't only have picturesque aspects to offer because contemporary artists have always found it easy to make their mark here: Heinz Gappmayr, for instance, painted the number 0.000000001 mm in huge letters on the wall of a house on Rathausstraße. A very small measure of length in oversized writing – it catches the eyes of everyone passing by. People who don't know each other chat about what the number means – just as the artist intended. A stumbling block, a pause in

everyday life, visual poetry. "Art in public spaces is one of Bregenz's strengths", says Sabine, "that's what makes it so charming, there are exciting works to discover everywhere."

Particularly at the KUB, the Kunsthaus Bregenz, of course. The building polarises: Swiss architect Peter Zumthor created a simple cube clad with large glass shingles that pick up the colour of the nearby lake – a dark grey on rainy days and a light blue when it's sunny. Artists loved the high, elegant rooms from the outset: Miriam Kahn, Mika Rottenberg and Simon Fujiwara, for example, have installed large exhibitions since the building was completed in 1997. But some of Bregenz's residents weren't that happy with their new Kunsthau. Many thought it was too bare and even the prestigious accolades for architecture that have been heaped on it did nothing to change their opinions. "I didn't like it much at first," says Sabine. "But it was like a switch

Scary and beautiful: the stage design for Verdi's 'Rigoletto' on the Bregenz Festival's lake stage is not only a big draw for opera fans

Attention, Middle Ages: Ehregutaplatz 1a used to be the gate to the city of Bregenz; it's also where a mummified shark hangs

More than just a façade: the vorarlberg museum has been adorned with 16,656 concrete flowers to symbolise the trades and mass production



Landmark: the Martinsturm presents a panoramic view and an exhibition of the town's history

was flipped at some point. I noticed that I become very calm when I'm inside the Kunsthaus – it's as if the building was slowing me down – the architect must have planned it that way.”

The second famous museum was also controversial: the listed façade of the former district administration building, which, like the KUB, is located not far from Lake Constance on Kornmarktplatz, was transformed into the vorarlberg museum. This was achieved by placing a white plinth on it and decorating the concrete with flowers that the artist Manfred A. Mayr cast in the bottoms of PET bottles. Not everyone in Bregenz liked it. But the great experience that awaits inside has reconciled many critics to the museum: there's a kind of oversized camera obscura on the fourth floor, which is a dark panorama room with a window that takes up a whole wall to present a view of the lake. “Wow! I would never have expected that!” One girl whispers.

The Erzählcafé is the place to meet the locals in Vorarlberg and hear their stories

People get together at the museum on every second Tuesday of the month for the 'Erzählcafé' ('Storytelling Café'). The topics: growing old, community and cohesion, or: life where Vorarlberg is home. That's when visitors are also able to tell their stories and talk to each other about the often touching contributions – an unusually beautiful place for encounters. “The lake promenade is the heart of Bregenz,” says Sabine. This is where the pulse of life beats when the bar on the Fischersteg opens for aperitifs and visitors on their way to the Bregenz Festival's lake stage start chatting excitedly about how much they're looking forward to the opera. The enthusiasm is infectious here and visitors are able to immerse themselves in the shimmering atmosphere between the Festspielhaus and the bold structure that is the casino.



The beating heart:
Marktgasse in Feldkirch
has been the town's
centre of trade since the
13th century



Feldkirch

Statistics are a staple of most guided tours. But not with Alexandra Frick. People on this culinary excursion through Feldkirch will be told interesting facts about the city while also being able to sample such regional specialities as chocolate, spices and wine.

The wall used to run around the whole city, it was strong and closed and well guarded and the residents felt safe behind its battlements. The gates were shut in the evenings and only opened again at daybreak when the merchants with salt from Tirol and messengers from distant principalities started to arrive. Not much is left of that medieval wall. The Austriaguide has gathered her visitors in front of the Montforthaus, the culture and conference venue. She points out an area a few metres to the right where some of the historic city wall has survived through the centuries. Above it, and previously connected to the city's wall, stands Schattenburg castle, which dates from the Middle Ages. The modern Feldkirch and the historical one alongside it – that's something her guests will keep on seeing on the tour, says Alexandra. But now it's time for a tasting.

There are guided tours that discuss a lot of a city's history and culture – and two hours later most of it has been forgotten. That's why Austriaguide Alexandra prefers taking people through her home city on this tour that's a little different. The 'Schnabulieren und Degustieren' ('Feasting and Tasting') tour combines Feldkirch history with stops at coffee houses and places where items are still made mostly by hand. The participants meet honey experts, wine specialists and chocolate masters at the various stops and are able to chat with Feldkirch residents.



Culinary and cultural delights: Alexandra Frick takes visitors on a tour of her home

The tour leads also to where Kathi Schwärzler works, for example. She's standing behind the counter, beaming and talking about bees. It is their products – different types of honey and liqueurs – around which the Culinara revolves and the new honey-balsamic vinegar arrived just this morning. Come on, don't hold back. Give it a try! And some of the other oils and vinegars as well, please! "The aronia vinegar is wonderful – the boss grows the berries himself!"

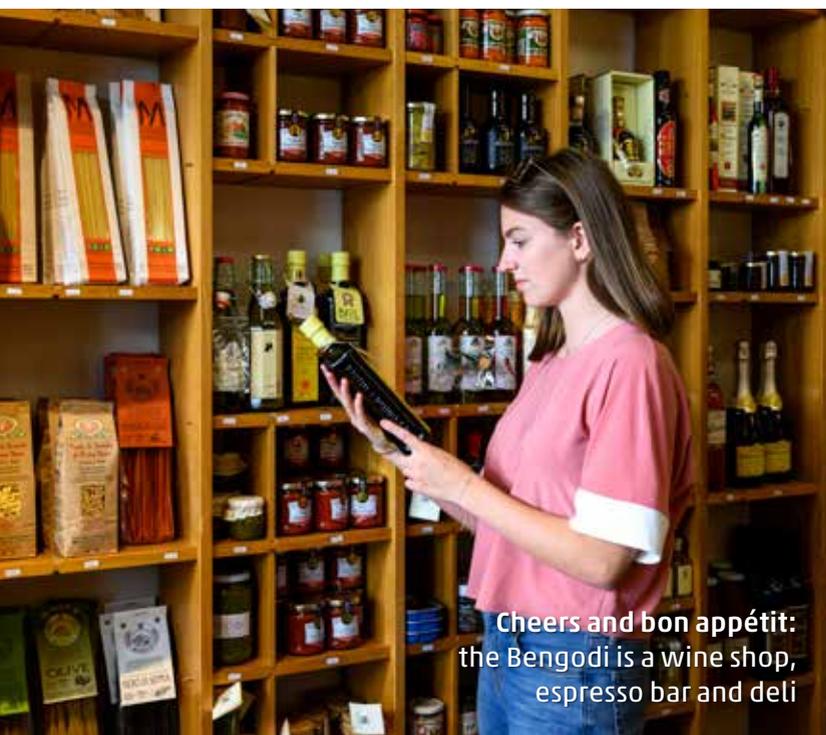
There are many shops like the Culinara in Feldkirch: unusual, different, often hidden down narrow alleyways or concealed in courtyards. Elsewhere in

Austria, the same chains have long since spread but in the country's westernmost city is still home to many jewellery workshops, espresso bars and bookshops that are run by their owners. "The Feldkirch Salzstadel used to be next door to the Churer or Salztor gate," says Alexandra on the way to the next stop on the tasting tour. "Feldkirch's favourable location meant that the town became a transshipment point for many goods, especially salt, which was traded in large quantities with the city of Chur."

The good is often concealed here but it still remains within reach

Vienna is quite far away but its coffee-house culture may still be experienced in Feldkirch. That's because Café Zanona where it's possible to study the daily newspapers and talk about everything under the sun while drinking a Verlängerter – a strong coffee with added hot water – has been in business here since 1979. "The men over there were already sitting at that table when I was still at school," says Martina Häusle, who took the coffee house over from her parents 10 years ago. Café Zanona had long since become permanent fixture in Feldkirch by then, partly because it makes its own cakes and pastries. And eight out of 10 visitors are regulars, says Martina. And seven of those eight like to get chatting with guests they haven't seen before at the coffee house.

One last chocolate and Alexandra takes her group to the next stop. The tour usually takes in three stops, which each last around 20 minutes. "But a glass of wine is always to be had," says Alexandra and heads for the Bengodi, where Dieter Schönenberger-Wohlgenannt has been sharing his enthusiasm for Italian wines and liqueurs with customers for 10 years. And where the first thing to do is to sample a prosecco. And Parma ham. And an espresso.



Cheers and bon appétit: the Bengodi is a wine shop, espresso bar and deli



Invigorating: the prosecco at the Bengodi is poured by the owner himself



Stately: Schattenburg castle rises above the old town, Feldkirch's landmark



Appetiser: Kathi Schwärzler presents delicatessen from the region at the Culinara





Traditional coffee-house culture: cakes and tarts sweeten the day at Café Zanona

The ‘Schnabulieren und Degustieren’ tour isn’t the only one during which visitors are able to experience special aspects of Feldkirch because other guided tours that focus on such topics as ‘Zauberei, Aberglauben und Magie’ (‘Witchcraft, Superstition and Magic’) and ‘Tatort und Strafort Feldkirch’ (‘Feldkirch as a Scene of Crimes and Punishment’) are also organised.

Half an hour later, Alexandra is standing in front of the town hall with the participants of her culinary

tour and suddenly they’re right back in the middle of Feldkirch of the past. A painting that shows the town of Feldkirch during the Middle Ages hangs in the lobby. It shows the warren of streets that the participants just walked through. And, of course, the painting also depicts the strong city wall, a small piece of which has somehow survived down through the centuries, right next to the Montforthaus.



Modern: the Montforthaus is the city’s culture and conference venue



Reception: Viennese coffee-house culture is lived at Café Zanona



Guided city and town tours

Whether on foot through the city, an ArchitekTour or a museum tour:

The Austriaguides are great at helping visitors find their way around Vorarlberg. They’re always happy to share interesting facts from the past and present

More about:

www.findaguide.at/Vorarlberg;
www.bodensee-vorarlberg.com;
gruppen.vorarlberg.travel/en/reiseleitung

Infos and getting here

Overview of everything you need to know to plan and book your holiday in Vorarlberg

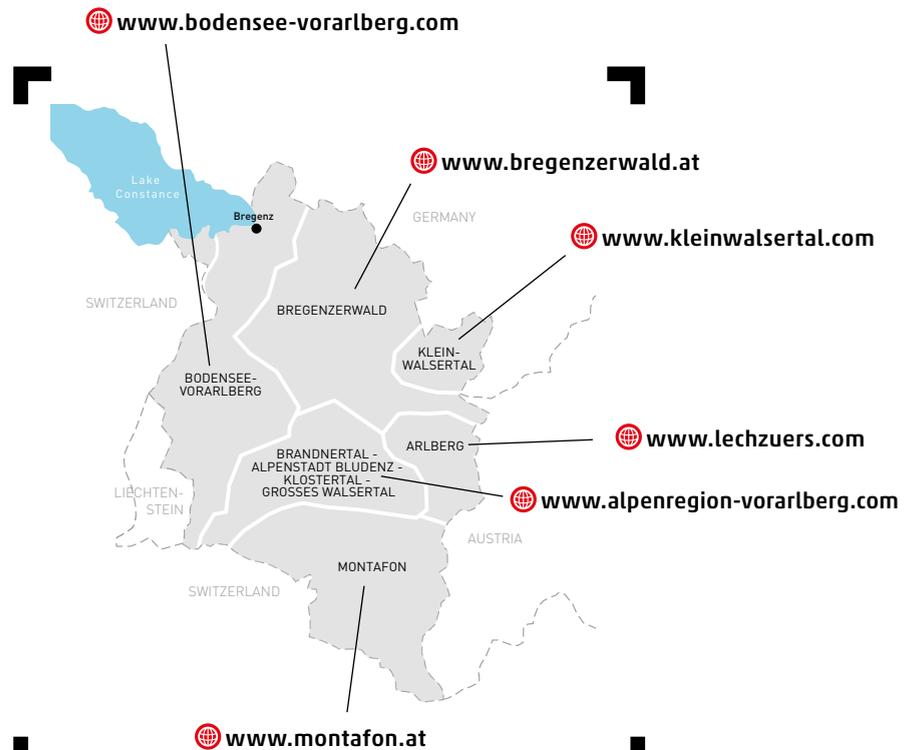
Six regions full of diversity

Vorarlberg measures 100 kilometres from north to south and impresses with a great variety of landscapes. An hour's drive takes visitors from the Mediterranean-like shores of Lake Constance at an altitude of 400 metres above sea level across gentle slopes up into the high mountains. Landscapes and lifestyle give each of the six holiday regions their own character.

Vorarlberg interactive

Practical assistants are available to help visitors prepare for hikes and find their way around here. Interactive maps at www.vorarlberg.travel provide detailed descriptions about many of the routes. Information about all the routes may be printed out and downloaded. 'Layers' make it possible to import additional information – from sites worth seeing up to places to stop off for food and drink, from the best places to take photos up to where to find the bus stops. These and other tips are available with the free 'Urlaub und Freizeit' ('Holiday and Leisure') app for Vorarlberg – to help you stay up to date while you're out and about.

www.vorarlberg.travel/app



Travelling to Vorarlberg – travelling around the region

Vorarlberg is easy to get to from all directions and by any means of transport.

www.vorarlberg.travel/getting-there

... by rail

Austria: www.oebb.at; **Germany:** www.bahn.de;

Switzerland: www.sbb.ch

... by plane

The nearest airports (distance to Bregenz):

St. Gallen-Altenrhein (CH, 20 km), **Bodensee-Airport Friedrichshafen** (D, 35 km),

Allgäu-Airport Memmingen (D, 77 km), **Munich** (D, 218 km),

Zurich (CH, 119 km), **Innsbruck** (A, 184 km)

Mobile on holiday

The people of Vorarlberg are proud of their well-developed (and modern) public-transport system: rural, city and local buses and trains are comfortable, they run frequently and are well coordinated with each other. The use of public transport in summer is usually already included in the regional Inclusive Cards for holiday guests while the ski buses may be used in winter free of charge with the multi-day ski passes. All of which means it's easy to leave the car behind from time to time.

www.vorarlberg.travel/public-transport

Information and booking

Please get in touch with Vorarlberg Tourismus directly if you have any questions about your holiday planning or need further information about something. It's also possible to order brochures directly through the website:

www.vorarlberg.travel

T +43.(0)5572.377033-0



#visitvorarlberg #myvorarlberg

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IMPRINT Editor/Publisher: Vorarlberg Tourismus GmbH, Poststraße 11, 6850 Dornbirn, Austria

Conception, Editorial Office, Design: Cross Media Editors Buchholz, www.cross-media-redaktion.de; Joachim Negwer, Maja Schollmeyer, Christiane Würtenberger, Thomas Zwicker, Anne Schüßler. **Editor:** Dr. Sandra Meinzenbach; **Fotos:** Cover: Gregor Lengler; **Contents:** p. 3: Dietmar Denger, Angela Lamprecht, G. Lengler; **Places of Encounter:** p. 4-9, p. 12: D. Denger, p.10, p. 15: A. Lamprecht, p. 14: Roswitha Schneider; **Gallery:** p. 16: Markus Gmeiner, Agnes Ammann, p. 17: Fototeam Digital Wolfurt, p. 18: Darko Todorovic, Victor Marin Roman, Lingenau Tourismus, p. 19: Florian Holzherr, Dietmar Walsler, p. 20: M. Gmeiner; **FAQ:** p. 22, p. 24-29: D. Denger, p. 23: Ian Ehm; **Essay:** p. 31: Mariya Nesterovska; **Bludenz:** p. 32-27: D. Denger; **Info Aktiv:** p. 38: Martin Vogel, Melanie Fleisch/Alpenregion Bludenz Tourismus, p. 39: Sebastian Manhart; **Green Ring:** p. 40-43: D. Denger, p. 44: Lech Zürs Tourismus, Daniel Nikolaus Kocher, p. 45 D. N. Kocher; **Social Media:** p. 46: Petra Rainer, Verena Hetzenauer, A. Ammann, D. Denger, Lucas Tiefenthaler, Josef Mallaun, Kevin Faingnaert, p. 47: S. Manhart, A. Lamprecht, Katharina Fa, D. Denger, Herbert Schröer/alltheplacesyouwillgo, M. Gmeiner, G. Lengler; **Kleinwalsertal:** p. 48-53: D. Denger; **Info Culture:** p. 54: Patrick Säly/Montafon Tourismus GmbH, Patricia Keckeis, S. 55: P. Rainer/Bodensee-Vorarlberg Tourismus, Marcel A. Mayer; **Montafon:** p. 56-63: D. Denger; **Hosts:** p. 64-67: A. Lamprecht; **Bregenz & Feldkirch:** p. 68-71, p. 73-77: G. Lengler, p. 72: Ralph Laumann/ralph@lahrmann.com; **U4:** Josef Mallaun; **Print Production:** Buchdruckerei Lustenau GmbH, Lustenau

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