

WORLD TRAVEL

September/October 2015

MAGAZINE

Wildly Wistful

**SOUTH
AFRICA**

**Luxury
Best New
Hotels** 50

Singapore S\$8
Malaysia RM 20
Thailand THB 200
Indonesia IDR 70,000
Vietnam VND 130,000
Hong Kong HK\$ 48



MCI (P) 093/10/2014
KDN PPS 1856/2/2015(025588)

**Beach
Getaways**

FEATURING *BAHAMAS, MALAYSIA, PHILIPPINES,
SEYCHELLES, BORA BORA, ST. LUCIA, MEXICO & THAILAND*



INSPIRE ME

Notable Look at the extraordinary

LECH-AM-ARLBERG

Austria's Most Exclusive Ski Resort

Stuart Forster introduces the pistes, restaurants and shopping of Austria's Lech-am-Arlberg, one of the world's premier winter sports destinations.



A view of chalets in Lech-am-Arlberg from a nearby mountain *Right* Traditionally carved wooden figures at the Lecher Schnitzstube store.



The Alpine village of Lech-am-Arlberg has evolved into one of the world's premier ski resorts. Members of the royal families from the Netherlands, Jordan and Scandinavia are known to often visit this village on winter vacations. The list of stars who have holidayed here includes the likes of Michael Douglas and Tina Turner. Part of the attraction is the diversity of skiing possible on the 340 kilometres of interlinked pistes in the Ski Arlberg region. The highest runs are at 2,450 metres above sea level. In 2013 the region was ranked first of 250 global ski resorts on the specialist website skiresorts-test.com. Touring runs, which should not be attempted without a local guide, offer a challenge to even experienced skiers.

The area has won renown thanks to the annual White Ring race (derweissering.at). The event starts at the Rüfikopf ski lift in the centre of Lech and is held over a 22-kilometre circuit with 5,500 metres of vertical difference. Just 1,000 racers can participate in the January race but anyone can follow the route throughout the rest of the 2015-16 season, from 4 December until 24 April.

Techniques employed by skiers today owe much to those popularised around the world by instructors influenced by Hannes Schneider, the founder of the Arlberg Ski School. Locals proudly claim the foundations of modern Alpine skiing were laid here. The Ski-Club Arlberg was founded in 1901 and its crest can be seen at venues around the resort, which straddles a glacial valley 1,450 metres above sea level.

Look out for them by the entrance to Schneggarei (schneggarei.at), a rustic-chic restaurant and après-ski bar with stripped wood décor and warming hearths. The kitchen is popular for its pizzas. The starters including snails in garlic sauce and there's a range of grilled meats meaning plenty of choice for discerning diners. »

INSPIRE ME



Top row from left Clemens Walch, proprietor of the Hotel Gotthard, playing accordion; The Skiclub Arlberg sign at the Schneggarei ski hut **Middle row from left** The Strolz department store in Lech; Kaiserschmarrn served at the Hotel Gotthard's restaurant **Bottom row from left** The Strolz department store in Lech; Kaiserschmarrn served at the Hotel Gotthard's restaurant **Opposite** The River Lech runs past chalets in the town centre







The altar of the St Nicholas Church.
Right Snow on the pistes above Lech.



A regional menu is served in the Gotthard Stube dining room, within the 52-room Hotel Gotthard (gotthard.at), which blends modern comforts with Alpine interiors and has a wellness centre with a swimming pool. Female staff wear traditional Dirndl dresses as they serve hearty Austrian delicacies such as Käsespätzle (cheese covered pasta) and Kaiserschmarrn (shredded pancake) in the cosy Lecher Stube dining room.

The Gasthof Post (postlech.com) offers 5-star accommodation in 46 rooms plus a wellness oasis around a heated outdoor pool. The wood-clad Post-Stuben restaurant is an option if you're seeking a fine-dining experience.

It's worth taking time to walk through Lech to take a look at St Nicholas church, whose origins date to the late 14th century. The ostentatious artwork above the Baroque altar draws most people's eyes but it's worth glancing left to see the remnants of glass-covered medieval frescoes.

If you're looking for a new outfit, a chic winter jacket or to hire state-of-the-art ski gear stroll into Strolz (strolz.at), the elegant department store within a roomy four-storey chalet. One of the key reasons serious skiers visit is because the store offers personalised fittings for ski-boots; for which appointments are necessary. You could also while away time by the Champagne bar.

Lech has a reputation as a Champagne resort yet it remains grounded and traditional. That, and good skiing, is the secret of its sustained popularity.

More Information: lechzuers.com and vorarlberg.com