



**Austria** By JOHN RITCHIE

John Ritchie, professional writer and ski adventurer, has just returned to his Europe after a his and ski-club has made the Alps. Chris

# you are here to learn..

The ski day never varied. It was up at the crack of dawn, a quick breakfast and a fast dash to the beginners's slopes as if your very life depended on it.

For unless you were all killed up and ready to roll at 9.58am you would get a heck of a rollicking from instructors Rudi or Leuki.

They have ways of making you learn these Austrians.

From 10am until noon we were mercilessly drilled, side-stepping up our little patch of mountain and snow-ploughing (or tumbling) down it again. Time after time. And how they bawled at us.

"Bend zee kneeze pleeze. Quiet zee body. You are here to learn you must make the good progress."

They only gave us an hour for lunch and then there was two more hours of torture before they let us down the mountain to the cream cakes and tea/dance.

But it worked. And after much bending zee kneeze (it's actually your ankles you zee bend Rudi) much making zee gut plow and agonising with too-tight boots I learned to ski. Or at least they gave me a certificate at the ski school prizegiving.



All this happened a good dozen or so years ago—on a £25 Clarkson's holiday to be precise—when I first went to Austria to be captivated by the beautiful mountain scenery, traditional villages and lively apres ski entertainment.

Today, not much has changed. And Austria is still attracting large numbers, including the British.

Some villages, like Mayrhofen, have been teaching the British for so long that the instructors can take off Cockney, Geordie, and even Irish and Scottish accents! The entire Zillertal valley round Mayrhofen is a British stronghold and is

included in the brochures of numerous ski tour companies. British skiers will be able to get packages this season to the charming resort of Geries for the first time. It has a big advantage for learners—a four-lift area for beginners only—and "bombers" are banned at all times. Good skiers visiting the Zillertal should take a 20-minute drive up to the valley to Hintertux, which has skiing up to 10,700ft. This is a wide open ski prairie, with great long runs, wide pistes and incredible snow bowls. There are no crowds and you sometimes ski for 20 minutes without sighting a lift.

Austria also boasts two big international resorts in Kitzbuhel and St Anton.

Both have very good skiing, but they have been left behind by the development-mad French.

Kitzbuhel is the ideal place to take a non-skiing partner—it has plenty of shopping and apres ski entertainment.

St Anton, in the Arlberg, attracts fanatical skiers who want to test their skills on the tough mountains there. Challenging, even frightening runs, I had expected at St Anton, but not the frightening apres skiing. And I'm not talking only about the high prices.

With little snow in Italy large numbers of Scandinavians and Germans packed every bar making the social situation far from jovial.

I crammed in as much skiing as I could—then took a 20-minute drive to Lech, a delightful resort with much less challenging skiing and much more relaxing nightlife. Lech and near neighbour Zurs, are on the same lift circuit as St Anton, and in my view if you want to ski in the Arlberg, these two places are best.

To see Austrian skiing at its best you should visit Saalbach-Hinterglemm, in the Europasport region.

These twin villages offer great skiing opportunities for all standards, especially third-year skiers on. The whole lift circuit is linked and you can make a super circular tour of the region—all on skis.

The apres skiing is good too—everything from tea dancing to flashy discos. The resorts do tend to be a bit pricey but the value is terrific.

Most major tour operators have Austrian programmes



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## Confessions of a ski instructor



They are the kings of the slopes... those bronzed red-jacketed instructors of the Zillertal. Men who love their ski mountains intimately... and their female pupils nearly as much. And the thigh-slapping they know most about is not the kind you see at the village Tyrolean evening.

The red devils are always on the job, week in week out. Work for them begins as soon as the first package coach arrives with a new intake of pupils. It is just the ladies they want to appraise, however. The Good Ski Guide has secured the exclusive Confessions of a group of elusive instructors, led by Lusty Mayrhofen instructors, lead by Hans Lucian, Fast Fritz and Handy Hans. Everything you are about to read is entirely true...only we have changed the names to protect the guilty. Most ski schools start on a Monday. But at Mayrhofen it is Saturday. This is the crucial "allocation" day.

Thomson Holiday intake arrives at the

Strass Hotel at 4 pm. In the lobby are the bachelor bronzed heroes looking the new bunch over.

At 4.45 pm Swans arrivals come in at the Kramerwirt.

The second appraisal takes place. Then over to the Berghof for the 7 pm coach from Munich airport with more innocents. Lucian and his pals have a system of "marking" their proposed conquests. The rule is: no poaching, it saves wasting time and energy and avoids punch-ups.

But, after two days if no progress had been made, a "marked" lady would be released. They are rationed to seven "marked" girls a week. English girls are the favourites. They are more liberated, and generally they rate quite highly, but Dutch girls are generally a waste of time—too stuffy.

Daughters of holidaying American servicemen are also a useful source.

Says our hero Lucian: "To go with a ski instructor is as important to many girls as taking lessons on the piste."

"Somehow being in the mountains, with the exercise, the fresh air and the holiday atmosphere, girls like to complete the experience with a little loving with their favourite instructor."

## Confessions of a Ski Instructor

And Austrian learning feature and more fun – Confessions of a ski instructor first reported by GSG has since been copied by every ski mag and national newspaper.

# Switzerland

By PAULA PAGET





*The magic of Switzerland*

There is a certain magic about skiing in Switzerland. It is hard to put your finger on but it is there, in so many ways. The skiing is top class, so is the quality of life and the Swiss look after you—indeed spoil you. Not just on the slopes but in hotels, shops, restaurants—everywhere.

And Switzerland need not be expensive. Some of their best resorts, Zermatt, Saas Fee, Verbier, Villars, Davos, Grindelwald are within the reach of the British package skier.

So too is St Moritz the legendary winter playground of the jet set. The international set jetting in their own private mountain retreats, sipping champagne on the slopes at lunchtime and stepping out, mink-coated and bejewelled to the top nightspots at night. This does happen. The streets are lined with Maseratis, Porsches and even Rolls.

And you do rub shoulders with the famous (and infamous). Film stars Jane Fonda and Dustin Hoffman were among my star 'spots' last season. I even saw Prince Charles pop in for a day from Klosters.

But the resort that bristles with non-ski winter attractions has plenty of skiing too. St Moritz is the centre of a huge ski 6,000 ft.

The famous ski areas of Corviglia, Piz Nair, and Corvatsch (sking up to resorts of 10,500 ft) are on the same Engadine lift pass as neighbouring resorts of Furiischellas, Pontresina and Diavolezza, and there are splendid and punctual bus and rail links between all these areas. Because of the height snow is guaranteed—and so is the cold.

On my first day on the icy slopes on Corvatsch it dipped to minus 10 and gave my underclad bones a good old freezing. Nevertheless it made me ski all the harder and on the home run, the Hahnersee, I got my knees moving properly at last and look everything in my stride, including protruding rocks and tree stumps, to skate the last few hundred yards to my hotel, the Park Kurhaus, for a welcome steep in the bath. This fine old hotel has hardly changed since it was built 130 years ago, yet it offers standards of comfort and service forgotten in today's fast-pace society. Things may be old-fashioned but the standards are impeccable.

Waiters wait properly, maids "do" properly, (even run your bath for you), porters carry for you. You are looked after from the time you ring zimmer service in the morning till you put your shoes out at night for polishing.

Chery Kurhaus manager, Herr Illi, has banned celebrities. "Too much trouble", he says. He goes after steady types—business and top professionals. Others might feel out of place. His hotel, one of the resort's langlauf centres, is ideally situated for skiers—at the bottom of the Corvatsch area—and only 200 yards from the Signal cable car which leads from Conzgia and then the Piz Nair slopes.

St Moritz is still dreadfully old-fashioned, a place for the older skier. Young folk will like it for the skiing, not the apres-skiing. There are prices to suit every pocket, although be prepared to pay as much as you would in London's West End.

St Moritz's champagne skiing is rivalled by near neighbour Davos, an hour and a half's drive over the desolate Flüela Pass. I arrived late at night and took the hotel nearest the famous Parsenn station so that I could get an early crack at the resort's super skiing.

But I overslept and was roused from my ski dreams by the sound of hundreds of ski boots crunching in the snow outside. It was a public holiday and earlybird me to the station and huge queues meant it was almost midday before I hit the slopes. But I must say the Parsenn skiing was well worth waiting for. From the top of 2844m Weissfuh there are some super runs fanning out in all directions—back to the village, to Wolfgang or even the five-mile run to Klosters (a resort made famous by Prince Charles). At Klosters a cable car whisks you back to the Parsenn side again. On the way up you gasp in awe at the steep, near-vertical Wang run.

How H.R.H. managed this on only two weeks skiing a year I'll never know. Davos, 5,100 ft has good skiing on four other mountains, each of which could easily qualify as a separate resort, in a nutshell, the skiing is among the best in the world—and should not be missed. Nightlife in the town is varied and relaxing, and to give an indication about prices, fur coats easily outnumber anoraks.

Another quality Swiss skiing area is at Villars, a compact and classy resort in the Vaud Alps not too far from Geneva. Villars is a dream of a resort just being discovered, or rather re-discovered by the British, who are made very welcome.

It has 30 miles of well-cared for runs to suit all grades of skier, especially the holiday skier, and queues are rare. It is St Moritz without the high mountains or high prices, and the skiing is so easy you'll perform like a Steiermark most of the time.

Among those offering quality tours to Switzerland are Erna Low, Neilsens and the Swiss Travel Service.



## VILLARS

Here is what the 1981 Ski Diary said about Villars:

"Villars really has a lot to offer. Good runs for everyone from beginner to advanced, including cross country lovers. The catering runs, and leisurely, even quiet pace of life make it an up-market resort for the peace-loving, comfort-loving, quiet and crowd-hating skier. In short, the discriminating skier."

Untold in this Swiss story is the sad tale of James Hunt, Britain's F1 ace, who skied with GSG Editor John Hill and a lady guide in Verbier. Hill found it hard to keep up with speeding Hunt so left him and they promised to meet in the hotel bar that night. Hunt was in fact seriously injured in fall after leaving Hill and had both cruciate ligaments torn. He missed half a season of F1 races and died a year later from cancer.

## Hill Meets Hunt