



# Snowfooling

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The Peninsula's best Ski and Social Club for Singles

## St Anton, Austria and Prague, Czech Republic



Leave it our very own Miss Lisa Burgess to plan an even more exciting and fun-filled adventure this year. It seems that her creativity and energies for planning the perfect European winter trip are boundless. This year's journey to the Am Arlberg region in the Arlberg Valley of Austria, deep in the heart of Tyrol , with

a post-excursion trip to the beautiful city of Prague in the Czech Republic was no exception to her exquisite taste for planning an adventure that tempted many palates.

Twenty-three happy travelers embarked on the trip on the eve of February 17<sup>th</sup>, for a

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late night red-eye from SFO to Munich, Germany, which was a long 10+ hr flight. Upon arrival we boarded a cushy charter bus for the three (3) hr very scenic drive across the border south into the Tyrolean region of Austria. Of course it was pitch black on the autobahn, but we could see the outlines of castles on the hillsides and the massive Alps looming in the distance.



Dave and Bonnie

We arrived for a late, traditional supper at our hotel, “The Mooserkreuz”, which was a 4-story charming structure with cut-out shutters on the windows and murals highlighting its rich walls. The staff, bedecked in traditional Austrian dress of dirndles and lace blouses (not the gentleman, mind you!) were charming, polite, and ever ready to offer a “grosse bier” or a glass of the local “wein”. Our wine aficionados kept the barkeep, Alex (a transplanted Greek) busy with their ever-curious samplings on the wine menu of local red wines. The wines differ significantly than those we find in California, not as rich and with less tannin. Those who preferred white wine enjoyed many traditional Rieslings, Gewürztraminers, and similarly sweeter wines.

Our hotel was in the outskirts of town, so the daily trek to the slopes including boarding the free hotel shuttle, aptly nicknamed the “Mooserkreuzer” by Miss

Lisa to the town central. From there, a variety of options for skiing presented themselves. Triple chairlifts, gondolas and trams were available to whisk travelers to whatever level of the mountain they sought for a quick thrill. Steeps, bumps, chutes, wide open bowls, groomers, and a variety of off-piste options were available. A few of our folks took advantage of the local expertise and took advanced “off-piste” lessons, which allowed them access to portions of the mountain not usually discovered by the casual tourist. Both Betsy Couch and Chuck Roncanscio were thrilled with the experience they had with their instructor and guide. For the most part, we spliced into our respective skill level groupings, and skied with a small band of similarly minded folk. But, there always seemed to be a common meeting point, be it lunch at the St. Anton Café’ for traditional goulash and dumplings, or the ever-present on-mountain locations available for warming libations of “gluwein” or hot cocoa.



Lisa, Denise, Maurice, and Karen

The activities for non-skiers abounded, as well. There were day trips to Salzburg by a few, which was enjoyed immensely, as they toured the castle, and Mozart’s birthplace, coming back with famous Mozartkugel chocolates. Others ventured out on the train to local villages and smaller Tyrolian bergs to see the sights,

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enjoy the local fare, and do a little shopping. Midweek on Wednesday, Lisa arranged an English-speaking guide for a day trip to the town of Fussen, Germany, home of the famous Neuschwanstein Castle, which is the castle that Walt Disney fashioned his Magic Kingdom after. It was bit of a dreary, foggy day, so we could not see much of the surrounding township nor the lake, but the castle tour was phenomenal and we learned a great deal about King Ludwig and much about the Austro-Hungarian empire and the ruling leaders of the times. The 2 hr bus ride to Germany included a brief stop to view the highest peak in Germany, the Zugspitz, and we took advantage of the photo opportunities there.



Betsy, Sonia, and Bonnie

The skiing varied for all, as there is so much terrain there that one could ski two weeks and not repeat a run. The connecting resorts of St. Anton and St. Christoph also had the unique advantage of readily accessible bus access to the nearby resorts of Zug, Zurs, Stuben, Lech and Oberlech, for which our local ski passes allowed access. Many of us ventured out and took the local buses to the nearby resorts for shopping, lunch, and sight-seeing, and of course, skiing. There is a unique way to ski all 6 or 7 resorts in one day, called "**The White Ring**". Lisa's friend from the Chicago ski club who had just taken this trip provided us with some

insight and a helpful highlighted map of the route. Four of us ventured out for that day, and it was spectacular, skiing more than 30 miles in one day, and enjoying fabulous conditions all day. We even figured out how to take the "free" bus and add an additional leg, so we dubbed it the "White Pretzel"...

No trip would be complete without the addition of a few stories from the "après ski" hours of the day. There is an infamous on-mountain bar, the Crazy Kanguruh, which is accessed by skiing, or by a fire road from the hotel. It was jam-packed with raucous, crazy people every afternoon, and some wild shenanigans. I think a few in the group hold the record for attempting to put the Dubliners to shame in their quest for all-night partying. But, those Irish girls can drink! Other favourite local haunts included the "Funky Chicken", the "Kandahar Bar", and "Picadilly Postpile". I think at least a few of our group frequented all three.

The hotel was cozy and the food was good, replete with a traditional Tyrolian Buffet at the end of our stay. Saturday morning the 25<sup>th</sup> seemed to come too quickly for many of us, as we headed back to Munich for the quick puddle-jumper to Prague.

In stark contrast to our Austrian lodging, the 4-star Hotel Astoria was modern, sleek and contemporary, with one of the best showers I have ever seen. The European beds were firm and comfortable and the amenities keen, however the stern staff were a rude awakening after the friendliness of the Austrians. We had many varied experiences in Prague, as well, given our limited time, but we did do an organized bus and walking tour of the Prague Castle and the Cathedral on our first morning in town, in the bitter cold temperatures, and the snow! It was like -

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5°C and we felt it. The tour was informative and provided great insights into the nation and culture of the Czech people. Our hotel was within easy walking distance on ancient cobblestone streets of “*Olde Towne*”, which is the original town square and is bordered by massive gothic cathedrals and amazing architecture. You ask for it, Prague has it. It is an architect’s dream, with buildings ranging from Gothic, Baroque, and Neoclassical. There was so much to see. For the most part, we all spent the better part of the 2 days exploring Olde Towne, shopping for the traditional crystal, garnet and amber jewelry, and buying the very reasonable cashmere pashmina’s, available in every corner store. Of course, those of us that are beer lovers found sampling the many Czech beers available a treat, as well. And, of course, no trip to Prague would be complete without a late night “Pub Crawl”. We found food and drink quite reasonable, and enjoyed some very good meals. Our last night, Lisa arranged a group dinner to a lovely restaurant located in cellars beneath a hotel, called the “*Blue Rose*”. That memorable evening was filled with a decadent meal, good wine, and exquisite service, surrounded by large brick and mortar walls, suits of armor and coats-of-arms adorning the walls.



Highlights of the trip for many included touring the Jewish Quarter, the cathedrals, walking the James Bridge, and attending

arias, operas and organ concerts of local artists. There is just an incredible amount of history, both pre- and post- fall of the Iron Curtain that we were exposed to, that caused many of us to appreciate the freedoms that we have always enjoyed in our country.



Maurice practicing for his retirement...

It was a terrific trip, and many thanks to the able trip planning prowess of Lisa Burgess, assisted by Karen Albrecht to bring the entire logistics home for the wonderful and memorable adventure. We also enjoyed the presence of Lisa’s mom and stepfather, and Karen’s parents, friend and co-worker on the trip, as well as the usual suspects. The adult supervision kept some of us in line.

Here is looking forward to the surprises of the 2007 Adventure!

Jan Lynn Shriner  
Past President

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