

PRESS RELEASE

The cradle of Alpine skiing - Milestones in the history of skiing on the Arlberg

Lech Zürs am Arlberg, 29. October 2020. The cradle of Alpine skiing is located in the heart of a vast mountainous area between Tyrol and Vorarlberg. This region of Austria, one of the snowiest in the Alps, inspired daring young ski pioneers at the beginning of the 20th century. Their inventiveness and ingenuity both shaped and influenced the sport of alpine skiing.

With 88 lifts and cable cars, 305 km of ski runs and 200 km of high-Alpine powder snow runs, Lech Zürs is today part of the largest and most extensive ski area in Austria. Moreover, "Ski Arlberg" is one of the world's 5 largest ski regions. What separates this area from others is the unrivalled passion for skiing, which has shaped the development of Lech Zürs for more than 100 years. More than any other winter sports destination, the Arlberg defines ski culture and ingenuity.

Where history is made...

The Arlberg's legendary status is rooted in its storied history, geography, and extensive cable car infrastructure. No one better embodies this local pioneering spirit better than Hannes Schneider. Born in Stuben am Arlberg, he founded Austria's first ski school in St. Anton in 1921, thereby revolutionising skiing with his 'stem christie' technique.

The first surface lift in Austria was built in Zürs in 1937 to suit the growing number of young amateur sports enthusiasts. In the same year, the Galzigbahn became the first cable car on the Arlberg designed specifically for winter tourism.

In the 1960s and 1970s, innovators of subsequent generations established the 'Bundessportheim', the forerunner of today's Ski Austria Academy, in St. Christoph. This became the most important breeding ground for new developments in skiing.

In 1951, the Interski Congress was held in Zürs for the first time, thus establishing the event as a global leader in the ski instructor community. The conference returned to St. Anton am Arlberg in 1991 and 2011.

Since being founded in 1901, Ski-Club-Arlberg athletes have won 83 combined medals at the Olympic Games and World Championships. After 26 years, the World Cup will return to Lech Zürs in November 2020.

All milestones at a glance

- The Arlberg railway tunnel attracts first tourists to the region (1885)
- Birth of ski racer and pioneer Hannes Scheider (1890)
- Father Müller of Warth brings the first pair of skis to the Arlberg (1894)
- Founding of the Ski Club Arlberg (1901)
- First ski race in the Alps (1904)
- Viktor Sohm organises the first ski lesson in Zürs (1906)
- Founding of the first ski school in Austria by Hannes Schneider (1920/21)
- Opening of the first surface lift and the Galzigbahn as the first cable car specifically designed for winter sports in Austria (1937).
- Opening of the then highest cable car in Austria: the Vallugabahn cable car (1955)
- Deployment of technical snowmaking technology in Lech (1970)
- World's first heated chairlifts go into operation in Lech and Schröcken (2004)
- The new Galzigbahn cable car opens (2006)
- The Auenfeldjet connects the ski resorts of Lech Zürs and Warth-Schröcken (2013)
- Construction of the Flexenbahn cable car – Arlberg becomes the largest contiguous ski area in Austria (2016)

Additional information at <https://www.lechzuers.com/en/fis-ski-weltcup/>

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