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The non Swiss perspective: A winter experience

Nobody does winter quite like the Swiss. As the nights get cooler and we all strive like mad to keep our Kiwi homes warm, I can't help but think of winter in the Bernese Alps.

The small town of Kiental boasts one of the longest Sledging routes in Switzerland. The Ramslauenen Schlittelweg (Toboggan Route) is 7km long and suitable for young and old. Sledging in Kiental is, by far, one of my all time favorite things to do. Much of the route is the road in Summer to the Ramslauenen Restaurant at the top of the chairlift; but short-cuts across the hairpin bends make for a much more interesting and bumpy ride. Your Society president has the fastest sled in the village. It's been modified with Skis which gives it far superior handling on those icy corners.



I remember one time, my mother-in-law (Ingrid), my wife and I were out sledging. Ingrid went down first and I followed with Tanja behind me. I came around a corner and up ahead on the next corner, I watched Ingrid pick herself up from the ground, look up at me and carefully step aside. I tried as hard as I could but crashed straight into the same mattress protected tree as she did. I quickly picked myself up and stood aside to wait for Tanja. Well, she came along on her modified sled. She saw us and we saw her. The grim look of determination on her face said it all! She grabbed the side of her sled and leaned into it...unbelievably, she lifted one ski off the ground and took the corner! I could hear her ski cut into the ice as her mother and I cheered her on! A true professional. I was extremely impressed and very much aware of how much I have to learn about this fun activity.

During January and February, on good nights, they open the lift in the evening and, if you have booked, you can ride the lift to the restaurant, enjoy a kirsch or three with some fondue and then strap on a head torch (or not...) and sled home in the dark. They call this moonlight sledging and it's fantastic fun.

If you find yourself in Kiental (or anywhere in the Thun, Spiez, Frutigen area) then do take the opportunity to go moonlight sledging. It's a unique experience that will stay in your memory for a long time.

Find out more about all the fun winter things to do on the Kiental - Reichenbach website:

<http://www.kiental-reichenbach.ch/en/page.cfm/erlebnisse/winter/schlitteln>

By David Latham

Dog sledge races - "Hundeschlittenrennen" in Kandersteg



Another really exciting and somewhat Nordic experience in the Bernese Alps are the dog sledge races in the wonderful winter scenery of Kandersteg. The best national and international mushers and their huskies, malamutes and other breeds meet up to find the best team.

The racers compete in different categories with up to 12 dogs per sledge. Kandersteg has a long tradition of organising international sledge dog events and the trail is very popular among the mushers because of its "Nordic" character. At the stake out area near the finishing area you can meet mushers and watch their preparations before and after the races - I found that incredibly interesting! In February 2014 Kandersteg is even hosting the dog sledging world championship!

By Tanja Latham-Zurbrugg

Consigli della Nonna

1. Make furniture polish by combining 3 parts olive oil with 1 part white vinegar and apply with a soft cloth. This does not keep because of the olive oil content so make up small quantities as you need to use it.
2. Mildew can develop on walls in areas that are poorly ventilated. Wash down with a 50-50 solution of vinegar and hot water. If the problem persists, mist the area with neat vinegar and allow to dry. The vinegar will prevent further build-up.

