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TOBOGGANING IN SWITZERLAND FOR THRILLS WITHOUT FUSS



The modest but sturdy Davoser sled is nearly 100 years old and was already sliding down the slopes when Christoph Iselin introduced skiing to Switzerland. But it does not look its age, although it was as far back as 1879 that Davos inaugurated its first toboggan run. Four years later the town set up a planning team and organised the first big race.

In recent years the sliding "duckboard" on steel runners has been overshadowed by other snow sports but unexpectedly it has revived and the new enthusiasts are digging out and dusting down their long-neglected Davosers from attics and cellars. At the same time new models made of plastic in all shapes and colours have been appearing and quite suddenly tobogganning has become everyman's sport.

Almost every town and village in Switzerland has its slopes and non-skiers — or those who seek a day's change from a tricky descent — are now trying them out. Old and young alike can, cheaply and without fuss, expense or long hours of practice and training, set off and enjoy a long-forgotten thrill.

And for those who want a bit more excitement there are the toboggan races, though here some additional qualities — such as experience and courage — are necessary if you are thinking of attempting the world famous Cresta Run, otherwise you might come a cropper rounding the Shuttlecock curve. Or, even worse for your tobogganing prestige, your sled may run out of steam and slide gently to a humiliating standstill on the straight just before the winning post — "verhungert" as they call it in the jargon of the Swiss experts.

Hundreds of specially prepared runs now stand ready for the eager tobogganers to try out in sparkling winter sunshine, through turbulent drifting snow or under the eerie blue of a moonlit winter's night. More than a third of them



are over a mile long and easy to reach by bus or train.

To name a few, there is Arosa, Bergün, Braunwald, Engelberg, Grächen, Grindelwald, Mürren, Rigi, Saas-Fee, Tête-de-Ran, and the run at Weissenstein. Throughout the winter in these resorts there are races for the visitors and runs by torchlight.

And should you want to know more about trying this old-new sport, you can get additional information from the tourist bureau or from agents representing the Swiss Tourist Office.



History repeats itself, even in winter sports. Long ago the Helvetians slithered down the slopes on their shields. Now these "shields" are made of plastic. This, and the other photographs on this page, are by courtesy of SNT.O.