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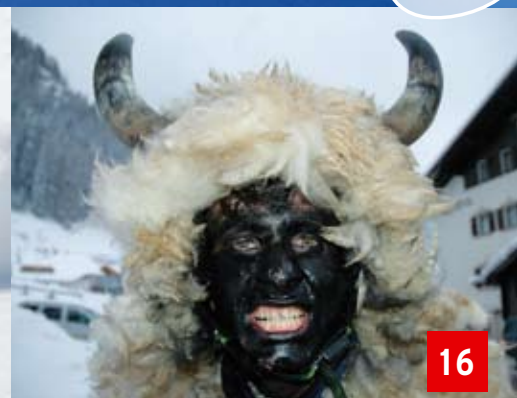




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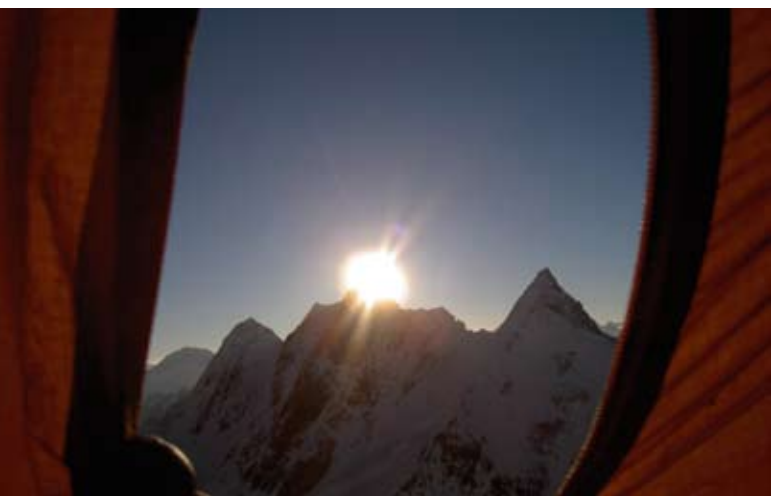


# IN MEMORY OF KARL UNTERKIRCHER (1970-2008)

Leo Senoner

**Farewell Karl - the Karl we all knew so well, a little man with a great spirit, a fantastic mountain climber, resourceful, courageous, a sincere friend who died in Pakistan on 15th. July 2008 whilst trying to reach the summit of Nanga Parbat, 8,125 mt. above sea-level.**

The terrible news reached Val Gardena early in the morning of Wednesday 16th. July and none of us knew what had hit us. We simply could not believe it but, as details came in, we soon realised that it was true. A terrible tragedy had taken place on Nanga Parbat in the Karakorum Range and everyone connected with mountain climbing was affected by it for well-known mountaineer, Karl Unterkircher, who was making his way up a new route on the Rakhiot wall, had fallen into a deep crevice. His two climbing companions, Walter Nones and Simon Kehrer, who had been climbing roped together with Unterkircher, their team leader, had spent an agonising night on the open mountain side trying to save their friend but all to no avail. They eventually managed to find his satellite phone and that is how the news got through to everyone in Gardena. "We can't go back the way we've come", they said during their short conversation before being cut off because the phone battery was so low. "It would be too dangerous. We're both well now that we've got ourselves out of the rocky scree at about 6,400 metres altitude but we'll have to go on up to past 7,000 metres before trying to get off this rock face. Then, we'll take the safest and quickest way back down". Although they made it all sound quite easy, the descent turned out to be an agonising experience for them and went on for no less than eleven more days. Eventually, even though Walter and Simon got down safely and flew home to where their loved ones were anxiously waiting for them, Karl Unterkircher will rest for ever in that awesome crevice at 6,400 metres in the middle of the Rakhiot rack face of Nanga Parbat, a mountain which he had always loved but which was to claim the ultimate sacrifice as it folded him inside its frozen depths for eternity.







Karl Unterkircher was born at Selva on 27th. August 1970. He was a member of the valley Mountain Rescue team and of the Catores. He had been a fully-qualified Alpine guide since 1998 and president of the local Aiut Alpin Dolomites since 2005. He started his climbing career as a teenager of 15 years of age and, over the years, had climbed countless peaks in Val Gardena and the Dolomites as well as the Central and Western Alps in Austria, France and Switzerland before undertaking more demanding expeditions to Peru, Argentina, Patagonia and Nepal. Then he turned his attention to the greatest mountains in the world in Tibet, the Himalayas and the Karakorum range, and in a period of only four years between 2004 and 2008, notched up one success after another, making him one of the most highly-quoted and respected mountain climbers in the world.

In 2004, the name of Karl Unterkircher made its appearance in the history of alpinism when he took part in the Italian K2 2004 - Fifty Years After expedition which set off to conquer the world's two highest mountains, Everest at 8,848 metres and K2 at 8,611 metres. A team of thirty-three climbers and some fifty researchers and others, including physicists and geologists, made up the largest mountaineering and scientific expedition ever seen in the Himalaya and Karakorum region. Karl was the only climber to make it to the top of the two peaks, going on to conquer the second only two months after the first, and he did so without the use of oxygen. A truly incredible feat which got his name into the Guinness Book of Records. In May 2006, Unterkircher led the Ladin expedition on Mount Genyen, a mountain in the Chinese region of Sichuan which Buddhist monks consider sacred. It was

there that he came into contact with and learnt to admire the culture and traditions of the monks who place great importance on visions which appear to them. Karl and his brave, intrepid companions climbed Genyen's previously impervious north wall to reach the highest flat area on the mountain but, in respect of local traditions, did not set foot on the sacred peak. In 2007, a mere year after this great climb, Karl notched up two more world successes when he was the first mountaineer to reach the summit of Jasemba and Gasherbrum II. Jasemba, also known as Pasang Lhamu Peak, is one of the most fascinating and demanding of the Himalayan mountains straddling the border between China and Nepal and had until then never been conquered. Yet Hans Kammerlander and Karl managed to get to the top of this beautiful, impossible mountain which had claimed the life of their friend Alois Brugger just one year before, on their third attempt. "Alois was there with us when we got to the top", Karl said in a later interview and the two climbers dedicated their route to the friend they had lost. Jasemba means "luck" is Tibetan, just the very thing great climbers need to have in addition to a wide range of climbing techniques if they really do intend to have a chance of getting to the top and Kammerlander, undoubtedly one of the greatest climbers of all time, had long dreamt of conquering this exceptionally difficult mountain.

In the meantime, only two months had gone by when Karl Unterkircher decided on yet another impossible challenge, an exceptional feat which would strike terror in the hearts of lesser mortals. He decided he wanted to tackle the awesome north route of Gasherbrum II, an 8,000 plus metres peak in the Karakorum range between China

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and Pakistan, and off he went with two Italian companions, Daniele Bernasconi, nicknamed "the spider from Lecco", and Michele Compagnoni. A real "pearl" of an expedition which justly won the prestigious Riccardo Cassin prize as the mountaineering success of 2007.

Then, in spring 2008, Karl Unterkircher organised an expedition to the Karakorums with the intention of climbing Gasherbrum but when, at the last moment, the Chinese authorities refused to grant visas for the mountaineers in the time coming up to the Olympic Games, Karl had to reconsider his plans and turned his attention to another mountain which had always fascinated him, Nanga Parbat. Walter Nones and Simon Kehrer, the friends and companions who had accompanied him on his Genyen expedition, were more than ready to go along knowing that Karl never liked the easiest way up and always wanted a challenge. Unterkircher, in fact, chose the impossibly difficult Rakhiot wall, a climb which had never been done before and it was there that he died in a crevice on 15th. July 2008.

Karl Unterkircher, climber, mountaineer, adventurer and great sportsman was also a simple man who loved and respected nature, especially mountains with their very own, particular kind of culture and traditions. He was an expert Alpine guide and voluntary rescue service team member who was always ready to set out and help should others find themselves in danger or difficulty. Unterkircher, with his very profound personal feelings of respect for all things natural and the true essence of human life, loved and revered mountains as he did all other aspect of nature it all their beauty.



### Awards:

**"Guinness Book of Records"** world record for his Everest and K2 successes attained in one season only and without the use of oxygen.

**"Riccardo Cassin Prize"** 2007 for his Gasherbrum II success which was named Mountaineering Event of the Year.

**"Cator d'or"** - 2007 Gold Medal awarded by the Catores Association and which, in the past, has been won by such illustrious mountaineers as Batista Vinatzer, Rafael Kostner, Adam Holzknecht and Edi Stuflesser.

**"Cavaliere della Repubblica"** (Knight of the Republic of Italy) awarded in 2006 and presented to Unterkircher by then President of the Republic, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi.

**"Honorary Citizen of Selva".**

**"Paolo Consiglio Prize"** awarded by the Italian Academic Alpine Club in 2008.



# *Gardena, past and present*







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## THE STORY OF ONE OF OUR LOYAL GUESTS ...

*Selva, My Love!*

Fosca Fornai



...I am a ninety six year old Tuscan lady, with many wonderful memories of summer holidays in the Dolomites but most of all in Selva, together with my sister, brother in law and sometimes a few cousins. These romantic memories help my sister and I through many long afternoons on the sofa. Together we reminisce and our memories transport us back in time to the summers we passed in Selva, an enchanting village that welcomed us back for a good thirty years. For the first few years of holidays in the Dolomites we chose to visit different places but after finding Selva we couldn't tear ourselves away. It was love at first sight! The pretty church tower, the simple but cosy hotels of the time, the newspaper shop at Villa Riffeser, the houses with pointed roofs and whiter than white net curtains hanging at the windows, not to mention the beautiful overflowing window-flower boxes!!

We have always become friends with the various hoteliers that have provided us with accommodation over the years. They have presented us with the most delicious local dishes sometimes prepared by our hostess herself. The hoteliers of Selva always work tirelessly and the guests always come first.

Something that always struck me from the first visit to the valley is the intensity of the colours: the bluest sky, the greenest grass and the multicoloured flowers...

Sometimes my sister and brother in law would go off for day trips elsewhere but I would always stay behind preferring to take a walk in the valley. I could walk for hours, admiring the pink imposing rock and the fir woods, the meadows with the odd farm house here and there, gave me the energy to go on. When I reached a place which seemed particularly magical I





would sit on the grass and admire the uncontaminated beauty, occasionally I found myself speaking out loud, "Thank you Lord, for all these beautiful things and allowing me to enjoy and appreciated them!"

I have been for many walks in Vallunga, through the fir wood with the overhanging rock faces. I would reach the "San Silvestro" chapel and from there would continue with a strong sense of peace in my heart. The first time my grandchildren spent their Christmas holidays in Selva I told them that they must visit the chapel on the evening of the 31st of December to make a traditional wish for the New Year.

There is a Carabinieri base in Vallunga and in the past the President Pertini used to spend his holidays there. I remember perfectly when his car with darkened windows passed through the village, the men would take off their hats and we would wave, Pertini would always smile and wave politely back.

Another memory that I treasure dates back to one of my last holidays in Selva. One day I was on one of the gondolas, sitting in a cabin together with a group of youngsters. The boys were messing about and winding each other up. After a while I decided to speak up, I said "Boys, what are you doing, look out of the windows, there are so many wonderful things to see from up here? Look at the fields and the stunning mountain peaks, which change colour continuously throughout the day! Instead of winding each other up, look at nature and the beauty surrounding us!" Then, we started to chat and when it was time to leave the

gondola they thanked me and said that I had given them a "lesson in life". This made me feel so happy, I have always enjoyed being in the company of youngsters.

I doubt I will be able to return to Selva, age is no longer on my side, I will however always travel there with my imagination, and relive those magical days....



Do you have some special memories of your holiday in Val Gardena? Send us an e-mail: [info@snovevents.it](mailto:info@snovevents.it)



# THE HISTORY OF FIGURE SKATING IN THE VAL GARDENA

it all started 40 years ago when ...

Leo Senoner

So, our story begins way back in autumn 1968 when Lino Regine, Nanda Toccaceli and Sibille Obletter founded a new branch of Hockey Club Gardena, a section devoted entirely to figure skating.

In that self same year, a new ice rink was being built at Setil, just outside Ortisei, but as the skating club did not have a trainer as yet, the skaters had to go all the way to Merano, quite a fair distance away, twice a week for training. They began to train at home in Ortisei in 1969 with a daily four-hour session from Monday to Saturday and, in summer, the skaters could be seen on the ice as early as 6a.m. and stayed there virtually all day. The club had a good number of girl members but only one boy plus a brother-and-sister combination for the pairs, Federico and Tiziana Toccaceli.

Petra Demetz was also one of the club's first members and she went on to take part in figure skating competitions for something like fifteen years afterwards. When she stopped skating, she became a trainer and still likes to look back to those years which are so well imprinted in her memory. She tells how her father, who was care-taker of the Ortisei ice rink, would bring her her breakfast out onto the ice after she had done about 2 hours of training.

The first edition of the Italian Figure Skating Championships was held at Ortisei in January 1971 and skaters from the Figure Skating Section of Hockey Club Gardena took part in the event. Two local skaters, Guendalina Regine and Patrizia Mureda, did very well for themselves and everyone in the valley was proud of their results. In the meantime, the club continued to grow and attract more and more enthusiastic members.

The Figure Skating Section, under its leader Toni Oberrauch, separated from Hockey Club Gardena in 1977 and

a new club, named "Eisclub Gardena" came into being. Swedish trainer, Eva Maria Nelander, was appointed coach in the same year and, thanks to her technical ability and Guendalina Regine's natural talent, many Gardena figure skaters went on to win a number of prestigious prizes including Tiziana Mussner and Heidi Demez who came home with medals from the Italian National Championship Junior Meeting. The atmosphere in the club and throughout the entire valley in general was one of vibrant enthusiasm and more and more fans were attracted to figure skating. The Gardena Eisclub organised an increasing number of very popular events, especially for the traditional Carnival celebrations in February and, as larger numbers of the general public got interested in the sport, numerous girls joined the club.

Both Eva Maria Nelander and Guendalina Regine gave up coaching in 1986 and one of Nelander's Swedish pupils, Christa Andersson, took their place. She went on working in the same way as her own coach had done previously and club skaters Laura Schmalzl, Katia Aversani and Christine Dorigo won various national and international trophies. Carolina Kostner, one of the world's top figure skaters of the moment, also began her career under coach Christa Andersson at about the same time.

Eisclub Gardena started to organise the international "Spring Trophy" competition in the year 1990 and this meeting has, in the meantime, become one of the world's top-level competitions for both junior and young skaters with well-known names competing in every meeting such as, in past editions, world-famous Michelle Kwan from the USA and Irina Slutskaja from Russia to name but a few. The best result obtained by a Gardena skater was when Christine Dorigo came in







second in 1994.

Sadly, however, a tragedy hit Eisclub Gardena and the valley as a whole, when, on the night of 9th. June 1999, an enormous landslide came down the mountain-side at Setil and destroyed the Ortisei ice rink, literally flattening parts of it. This was a very difficult time for the club which, from one day to the next, found itself without an ice rink and with its skaters and their trainer and coach dispersed elsewhere. It is mainly thanks to a group of devoted mothers, amongst whom Annelies Schenk and Patrizia Mureda deserve special mention, that the figure skating tradition continued in the valley. From a previous total of thirteen skaters, only six remained active and parents accompanied them to nearby Bressanone so that they could go on with their training while Patrizia Mureda organised figure skating training sessions on a provisional natural ice rink at Roncadizza. All this was no easy undertaking but, once more thanks to the enthusiasm and hard work of a number of local people, all this is now in the past. Things started to look up when Eisclub Gardena was finally accommodated at the Selva ice rink in 2003 and the club went on with the work which had been started thirty years before. A new trainer, Jyrina Lorenz from Berlin, was engaged and the future soon began to look more rosy with Martina Schenk winning a prestigious second place in her category at the Italian Championships.

There is much enthusiasm and interest for figure skating throughout the valley largely due to the international successes of Carolina Kostner and Eisclub Gardena now has more than thirty members, many of whom take part in our training and coaching courses and, who knows? Maybe, we'll be lucky enough to have another Carolina somewhere there in the making!

## CAROLINA KOSTNER

2008 has been a year full of success for Carolina Kostner. Valgardena's gem in world artistic skating was raised at Eisclub Gardena and has become one of the goddesses in the Olympus of this very difficult and fascinating sport.

After winning the first place at 2007 European championship and arriving third at the Grand Prix finals, Carolina in 2008 again won the gold medal at the Zagabria European championships and the silver medal at Goteborg World Championship in Sweden. Our best wishes to you, Carolina...keep on like this!





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## SELVA CENTRE FINISHED



After two years of work, the new centre of Selva has finally been completed.

The project has created a large square with an underground car-park, and a pedestrian zone which takes you from the Nives square to the church. This pedestrian path is without a doubt highly unique, as it is one of the first in Europe to be constructed with an underground heating system which will prevent the area from icing over avoiding the risk of pedestrians slipping. The heating of the path is obtained by recycling excess heat dispersed from the nearby Ice Stadium.

Walking along the path you can admire the 'old' Nives barn, which has been reconstructed and rebuilt in its original position. The barn will be home to a new museum. The Nives barn is something of an institution in Selva, being one of its oldest buildings. You can already see it in some of the oldest photographs of the town. The idea to use it as a museum and allow public access is a wonderful one.

The square has also received a very original fountain, which is definitely worth a look. A competition was held among the Gardena artists to select the new fountain, and they presented many original ideas. The work chosen was from Teo Mahlnecht who worked together

with the architect Rudi Perathoner. "Noahs Ark" was chosen for the symbolic message it transmits. To make room for all the animals, Noah throws out all the appliances made by modern civilization.

The fountain has already become a noted symbol of the town for our guests, many of whom, before leaving, will throw in a coin as a way of expressing their desire to return to this wonderful place.







## OUR TRADITIONS

# ST. NICHOLAS AND KRAMPUS ... BOTH ON THE SAME DAY

St. Nicholas, patron saint of children, arrives on 5th. December every year in a horse-drawn carriage or on a sleigh with gifts of sweets and dried fruit for children who have been good or a little bag of coal and a few words of caution for those who have not behaved quite so well during the year. Youths dressed up as Krampus, a hairy beast who wears a nasty-looking wild animal fur, also roam the streets looking for some poor unsuspecting person to pick on. Krampus is a rather frightening character with long, unkempt hair who usually carries a cosh or stick. He is often out-and-about on the same day as groups of strange little imps who love to play tricks on whoever they meet. Although they may push passers-by out of their way and shout and yell a lot, they do very little harm and there's always someone there to rescue you if needs be. The tradition of Krampus goes way back over the centuries and is well-known both in German language and Latin-speaking areas and may well originate from tales of the god Faunus who was feasted on 5th. December in Ancient Greece. The original Krampus, in fact, is believed to have lived in a mysterious lair in the forest. He only came out of hiding at sunset on 5th. December and was well-known to our ancestors who feared the onslaught of winter with its cold, darkness and gloom. Linguistic experts believe that the name Krampus comes from the German word "Kramp" or "claw" and, as we all know, the Devil himself has thin, tapering, claw-shaped fingers as well as an ugly face and long red, white or neutral-coloured horns. Our present-day Krampus tradition dates back to an ancient ceremony during which mountain farmers and animal breeders called on various spirits and demons to initiate young people into adulthood and to perform certain rituals regarding fertility and the cycle of nature. These ancient rites have their origin in times when people worshipped the Earth and the forests and held special celebrations at the time of the winter solstice when kind, gentle St. Nicholas appeared to counter the evil influences of various spirits with his welcome little gifts for children who had been well-behaved throughout the year.







# VAL GARDENA: PARTY AFTER SKIING

Filly Vilardi



Val Gardena is worldly known for its numerous, beautiful and well organized ski trails, but it also has a rich night life offering different alternatives to skiers from the "Après-ski" (after-ski) time till late at night. Après-ski's start at four: skiers end their day, take off their skis and snowboards, get warm with a good "grappino" (grappa is a strong spirit distilled from grapes) or a hot "vin brulé" (hot wine with spices) and abandon themselves to dance with their ski boots still on...

The atmosphere is typical Tyrolean and all the people feel like they are friends with a common wish to have fun. These bars and pubs are located at the end of the ski trails as well as in town, and here are the most famous.

Stopping at Igloo in Plan de Gralba right after skiing is a must; it is located right at the foot of the mountains. It is a glass pub with the shape of an igloo making it look like it is in ice, but right inside the atmosphere is warm and lively, with dances and hot "grappini"...

After this "icy siesta" put your skis on again to go back to town, but suddenly, almost in the middle of the trail you will see a large pot with a large variety of vins brulés inside, it is the "Caminetto".

Stop there and give it a try! The atmosphere of this place takes you to Cuba, where latin-american rythms like salsa will shake your senses and bodies.

Right in town, there is Saltos, another place where to stop. It is the ski instructors' favourite place and very famous in the valley, not only for its good music and efficient staff but above all for its delicious appetizers. It is also much visited after dinner, being one of the best places to go with friends.

Another must is restaurant-pizzeria and disco-bar "La Bula", very well known for its tasty menu and colourful after-dinner atmosphere with good music by legendary D.J. Mino: the familiar atmosphere and typical cuisine will make you feel at the home of the Ladins.

For those who love pubs, excellent Irish beer and Irish atmosphere, go to the Goalies Pub. After skiing and later. Smokers will be able enjoy their cigarettes in a smokers room, avoiding the not so warm outside temperatures... while beer lovers will find a large variety in the menu.

Let's finish our tour at Yello's Music Lounge Bar. It is located in the centre of Selva and is a refined modern lounge bar with very good drinks and exquisite "sushi" dishes, it will certainly become a must during your holiday Gardena nights.

Unique nights, in traditional, modern or original places will make your holidays unforgettable.



## NEWS &amp; PEOPLE



## The Gardena train goes back home

Everyone remembers the delightful little train which once puffed its merry way up-and-down the Val Gardena and what stories it would have to tell if it could only talk! It was commissioned by the Austrian government and built in a few months between the winter of 1915 and that of 1916 by a work-force comprised of 3,500 soldiers, 6,000 Russian prisoners of war and 500 civilian workmen. It was intended to carry men and supplies to the front along the Dolomite peaks further south but it actually fulfilled a much more important role in later years when it became the main means of transport for both people and goods throughout the valley. The courageous little engine with its gaily-painted miniature carriages did its last run almost fifty years ago in 1960 and then the engine was set out on display for all to admire along the Col da Brida path at Ortisei. There it stoically stood for some forty-eight years right up to the summer of 2008 when it was decided that it should return to its original home where it can now be seen proudly displayed in piazza Stazione, the Station Square in the centre of Ortisei.



## ITF Tennis Tournament in Val Gardena

The history of the most important tennis tournament in Alto Adige/South Tyrol goes back to the year 1999 when it offered a total of 10,000\$ in prize money to its well-known competitors. Over the intervening years, the sum has risen from 25,000\$ to 50,000\$ and 75,000\$ to reach a grand total of 100,000\$ for the X edition which took place from 11th. to 19th. October this year. This made it the richest sporting event in the entire region and the third most important fe-

male event in Italy. At the time the X Jubilee Edition was actually taking place, it was quoted at second place in the world behind Zurich in Switzerland which paid a total of 600,000\$ in prize money. The 2008 Val Gardena ITF showed a record number of entries with seventeen of the world's top one hundred players present. It was won by Mara Santangelo and was a repeat win for Mara after her victory at Ortisei in 2003.





## Special Place in Selva

A group of twenty business people, amongst them eighteen hotel owners and two shop proprietors, from the via Puez in Selva, started a very original new tourist promotion in 2005 under the title the "drawing room of Selva". They were hoping to create a new impetus for local tourism and, since then, the committee has organised various extremely popular, well-attended, regular culinary attractions during the tourist season. One of their most successful initiatives, without any doubt, has been "Four Star Menu Under The Stars At Night" at which five hundred guests staying in Selva had the chance to sample delicious local specialities. They sat outside under the starry night sky at a gigantic table along the via Puez which, of course, had been turned into a pedestrian only zone for the occasion. On one evening, ten decorated stands, the so-called "Ronda del vin brulè", competed against each other to see which made the best Mulled Wine of the event with everything from the traditional spicy Hungarian classic to a non-alcoholic version. Then, there was the "serata contadina", or Farmers' Evening, with the chance to sample simple boiled potatoes served with cheese and a glass of delicious milk from the valley's Alpine pastures followed by the WSpeck with Easter Eggs" festival in spring and



the "Soup served with Sparkling Spumante evening with a choice of fifteen tasty specialities. The events were accompanied by discreet live back-ground music and all the money taken was given to the "Medicus Comicus" Association which helps entertain sick children in local South Tyrol hospitals.

LEADING  
MOUNTAIN  
RESORTS  
OF THE  
WORLD

## Leading Mountain Resorts of the World



Lake Louise  
(Canada)

Val Gardena is a founding member of the international chain of tourist destinations - "Leading Mountain Resorts of the World", which are able to offer their guests holidays of a very high standard all year round. Other members of this exclusive "club" are Bariloche (Argentina), Queenstown (New Zealand), Bannf Lake Louise (Canada), Saas Fee (Switzerland) and Are (Sweden). Holders of the Dolomiti Superski seasonal ski-pass are entitled to a 50% discount on a 7 day ski-pass at any of the other member resorts.

## Young Talent



Val Gardena not only produces Alpine ski champions, but our talented young skiers are also growing in the field of Free Style, a discipline of great creativity. How many of you have seen the development of these very young athletes on our slopes? Like Ralph Welpner (Class of '97), who took part in the Alto Adige Jump Circuit Contest with a great win last year, or Victor "Vrino" Pri-

noth (Class of '90) from Selva V.G., who is capable of doing a Best Trick: the 1080° Switchmisty 540° mute. Watching them is a spectacle in itself, their talent is obvious. But the talent also hides a highly athletic and technical preparation, and of course a lot of passion. Helping them on their way is sponsor MORMAI EYEWEAR, the ski-mask and sunglasses producer.

# THE CHURCH OF SACUN (ST. JAMES) IN VAL GARDENA

Giovanni Di Vecchia

its history, legends and art



The delightful little church of St. James, locally known as “Dlieja da Sacun”, is found near Ortisei to the east of the Col de Flam at 1,565 metres above sea-level surrounded by a thick, shady wood. It is the oldest place of worship in the entire valley and its tall, elegant bell-tower and octagonal dome can be seen from miles away. It stands near where Stetteneck Castle once stood and has inspired many legends and folk tales over the centuries. Unfortunately, no traces of the imposing castle remain to be seen nowadays. As in many other sacred places, ancient myths and rites have flourished in this area since pagan times centuries before the little church was built. Clear remains of a Roman settlement are still in evidence in the area and this confirms the belief that the original building actually stood close to Troi Paian, the old Pagan path which meanders its way along the valley, half-way up the mountain side. This path was one of many similar ones used by migrating hunters and shepherds centuries ago. Certain historic elements as well as suggested hypotheses and architectural research carried out in the area hint at its origin and the building of the church seems to have something to do with a legend about a certain Count Gebhard II of Stetteneck, nick-named “Graf da

Sacun” (the Count of Sacun), who lived in the castle of the same name with his wife and son James.

Count Gebhard, a devote, religious man, had long prayed for a male heir and, some years after James’ birth, decided to go on a pilgrimage with his wife and son to the Sanctuary of St. James at Compostela in Spain. During their long, arduous journey, they were guests of a certain Spanish count whose daughter fell in love with James. Unfortunately, James did not feel the same way about the girl who was so hurt that she decided to get her own back by hiding a valuable golden goblet in the boy’s belongings, hoping it would be found and James would be accused of having stolen it. The Spanish count sent soldiers to arrest Count Gebhard and his wife and son after they had set out from his castle and the golden goblet was found hidden in the young man’s clothing. They would not listen to reason and, some time later and unbeknown to his parents who continued on their way to the sanctuary, an innocent James was hung for a crime he had not committed. His worried parents, who had had no news of their son, stopped at the Spanish count’s castle on their way back home only to be told by the cruel noble that their son had, in fact, “died like the





chicken they were at that moment eating". To their great astonishment, no sooner had the Spanish nobleman finished explaining what had happened to James, that the roast chicken came back to life and flew away from the dish it had been served on. A miraculously resuscitated James also appeared and returned with his parents to their home in Val Gardena where his father had the little church built in thanks for the miracle which had saved his son's life. A XV century fresco near the pulpit comprises five scenes which illustrate this story and the legend of St. James but we have no way of knowing whether this wall painting was commissioned by the son or his father or not.

The little church took on its present-day appearance after restoration work following a bad fire and traces of Gothic style and Baroque elements date from then. The altar and lower walls of the bell tower are amongst the oldest parts of the building while the portal is in Gothic style. The little church has winged windows and the main altar, carved by well-known craftsman Melchior Cassiano Vinazer around 1750, is made of wood with rich gilt decorative motifs. Vinazer also sculpted the pulpit with its angel statues and the Baroque-style statues of four saints, Peter, Ulrich, Nicholas and Paul, above the altar are fine copies of the originals crafted by Cassiano Vinatzer in the first half of the XVIII century which are now safely housed in the Val Gardena museum. The statues stand either side of a central column which shows the Madonna and Christ Child. Visitors can admire various polychrome frescoes from the 60's and 70's which are the work of present-day artist Leonardo Scherhauff from nearby Bressanone, including those in the choir stalls showing the Fathers of the Church, the symbols of the Evangelists, the Twelve Apostles and the figure of a saint, although those in the nave are somewhat difficult to see because of a lack of natural light. The outside of the little church is also well-worth a look with noteworthy works of art including the image of Christ which W. Moroder, "Lusenberger", brought to light, a figure of St. Christopher dating from circa 1460 and the via Crucis. A small cemetery also stands nearby.

All in all, the inhabitants of the valley are rightly proud of the little church of St. James which is a real work of art and popular place of devotion. Protected as it is by the beauties of nature which surround it, it is the perfect place for a pleasant walk on a hot summer day and is especially fascinating in winter, shrouded by fog or blanketed by pristine, white snow which makes it a true, ideal place of mystery, devotion and prayer.

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# SNOWBOARD



## PASSION, MOTION, FREEDOM!

**Filly Vilardi**

Snowboarding - not just a sport but really more a way of life! Snowboarders live for snowboarding - they have their own way of dressing, their own ideals, their own way of thinking.

The feeling of absolute freedom is what snowboarders love. The excitement of twisting and turning in the air and the sense of danger and risk gives them an adrenaline boost like nothing else in the world as they land safely on the soft, pristine, snowy mattress.

But, who actually invented snowboarding?

It's certainly not easy to answer that question but, maybe, people who live in the mountains have always needed to get around on the snow and transport heavy weights and they may have been the first to use wooden boards for this purpose!

We can, however, say with absolute safety that the first snowboards as they are known today were used in the USA by surfers who adapted their sea boards for use on snow and the first patented snowboard prototype appeared in 1929 when a certain Jack Burchett, a surfer from California, carved a flat piece of wood and added material loops on the surface to slip his feet into. The first modern snowboard was made by engineer Sherman Poppen for his children a mere thirty or so years ago. He originally set out to make a home-made version of a mono-ski but his sons liked standing sideways on the board and this gave him inspiration to change his test design and adapt an original surf-board adding metal edges. He called his board a Snurfer and immediately patented his invention.

It was an immediate hit throughout the United States and eventually came to the attention of a certain Jack Burton who, together with colleague Tom Sims who had had some previous experience of skateboards, is considered one of the true snowboard pioneers. Together the two men designed a completely new kind of board.

Burton and Sims built the first real snowboards and were the organisers of the first real snowboard competition and it is thanks to them that the sport really took off and became so popular at the end of the 1970's and beginning of the 80's.





The first USA national championship event was, in fact, held in Vermont in 1982 and, from that moment, snowboard fever spread amongst young and not-so-young fans everywhere. It was, however, not so easy to get official recognition for the sport. Few ski resorts were ready to accept snowboarding and there were many heated arguments about the future of the sport. Ski resorts did not want to allow snowboarders space on their already over-crowded ski runs and people were not always ready to change rules and regulations to accommodate snowboarding fans and their boards.

The new sport was often seen as an enemy and rival to skiing but, in very little time, the sport had caught on in Europe, too. It soon became very popular in France where a promotional video was made and then continued on round Europe to Switzerland where the first European competition was held. Snowboarding made its appearance in Italy in Piedmont in 1986 and then arrived in Val Gardena at the beginning of the 1980's where local sports enthusiasts have always kept an eye open for new attractions and disciplines. Snowevents, the valley's very own promotion team, has organised any number of prestigious national and international snowboard meetings over the intervening years, events which many top-notch, world acclaimed athletes have competed in.

Val Gardena is also rightly proud of its countless very good home-grown athletes who compete in both slalom and Free-style events at world level including slalom greats such as Luciano Pioli, Ascan Pitscheider and Georg Rabanser as well as Freestylers like Giorgio Righi, the only local snowboarder to have won international awards. Snowboarding became an Olympic sport in 1998 and

the 2006 Winter Olympics were the first to feature male and female Snowboard Cross events.

So, the way from the first rudimentary Snurfer which Sherman Popper made for his sons has been quite long and torturous but Snowboarding is now considered as a sport in its own right and has countless fans world-wide. These fans are brave, daring athletes who simply could not live without that feeling of freedom and space they feel as they head down a snow-covered slope leaving only the very lightest of traces behind them.





# RADIO GHERDĚINA DOLOMITES

Leo Senoner



It is the job of our very own little private Radio Gardena Dolomites to transmit local, national and world news throughout the valley itself and all the surrounding districts including the provinces of Bolzano, Trentino and Belluno where Ladin is the traditional, historic language of the population. It is the Ladin-language radio for Ladin speakers in this part of Italy and is much-loved by the people of the Sella area and as far afield as the valleys of Badia, Fassa, Livinallongo and Cortina in the Ampezzo basin. Radio Gardena Dolomites has made an enviable name for itself amongst similar private concerns and offers an interesting, stimulating assortment of programmes to suit all ages and all tastes throughout the day and into the hours of darkness.

Radio Gardena Dolomites was founded almost thirty years ago in 1979 when experienced electro-technician Ivo Walpoth from Ortisei decided to send a dedication to his girl friend over the air. A simple, rudimentary radio transmission service soon appeared and Arno Mahlknecht and Oswald Rifesser also found themselves involved in the project. Within a year, the three men got their hands on the necessary equipment as well as legal rights to transmit radio programmes over the air. Then, thanks to the generous financial backing of Luis Sottriffer, everything fell into place and Radio Gardena started its official career transmitting on 92.5 mhz. frequency throughout most of the Gardena area. The radio's original team of staff included Raffaella Endrich, Leo and Rainer Bernardi, Oscar Runggaldier,

Ewald Moroder and Markus Schenk and the most popular transmissions were music programmes. The local population clearly favoured hit parade successes, pop and jazz in addition to special requests and the news. To guarantee good reception in the valley, the necessary transmitter was installed on Ciampinoi at Selva in October 1979 yet, relying solely on its enthusiastic amateur owners and staff, the radio was forced to close down after only two years. That seemed to be the end of things but, in the summer of 1981, along came Othmar Moroder from Ortisei who bought the radio and infused it with new life. Radio Gardena moved to the centre of Ortisei, a second transmitter appeared on Seceda and a number of professional radio staff including two from Austria, a speaker from Castelrotto and Armin Moroder from Ortisei were employed. After only a few months' hibernation and having much improved its facilities and equipment, Radio Gardena resumed transmitting at the beginning of October. It offered a rich choice of informative, cultural programmes as well as music to suit everybody. Unfortunately, however, the life of the radio was once more at risk a mere ten years later when, in 1990, its owner, Othmar Moroder, decided it was time to give up. Nothing more was heard of Radio Gardena for about a year until business man Franz Rabanser from San Pietro in Val Gardena arrived on the scene. He wanted to buy the radio as a present for his wife who had merely asked him to get her a new radio, not a radio station! Radio Gardena underwent a







complete technical and organisational revamping and, with its well-qualified, dedicated work team, both professionals and amateurs, is now ready to face the future with confidence and courage. It has more than twenty internal and external staff working for it and offers a full service of interesting, informative programmes covering the news, sports, culture and music, day and night, in the three local languages, Italian, Ladin and German. Radio Gardena Dolomites has earned itself a fine name amongst both its privately and publicly owned competitors.



*A present from Gardena Valley*



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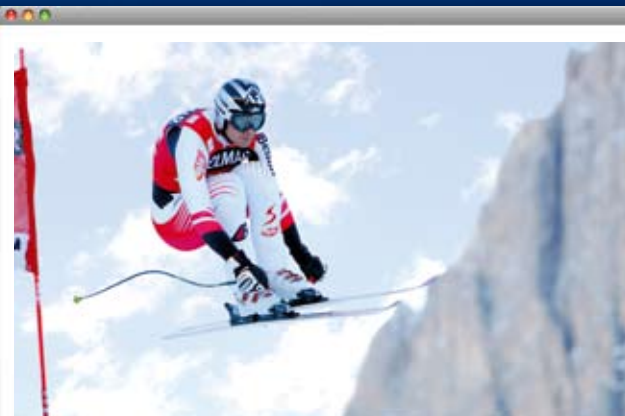
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# High lights

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**29.11.2008 - 30.12.2008**  
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**19.12.2008 - 20.12.2008**  
Fis Ski World Cup Val Gardena  
Men's super G and down hill competition



**04.01.2009**  
Val Gardena Sprint  
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**27.12.2008 - 30.12.2008**  
13<sup>th</sup> Snowsculptures contest



**18.01.2009**  
8. Val Gardena Ciasp  
Snowshoe competition - Italian Championship





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**06.03.2009**

15° Sellaronda Skimarathon

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**05.04.2009**

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**July/August/September**

25. ValgardenaMusika

Concert series of classical music

**12.07.2009**

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Bike day - mountain passes are closed for motor vehicles

**04.09.2009 - 06.09.2009**

UNIKA - Fair of sculpture

[www.valgardena.it](http://www.valgardena.it)





# III WORLD STARS SKI EVENT IN VAL GARDENA

International VIPs compete for children's charity Leo Senoner



Prince Albert of Monaco

This exciting charity event held right here in the very heart of the Dolomites registers more success with every edition and, last year, the weather was perfect, too, as numerous celebrities got together on the slopes for a really special competition under the watchful eye of our honoured guest Crown Prince Albert of Monaco.

The idea behind this very popular competition is to collect money for the A.M.A.D.E. charity organisation which was founded by Princess Grace of Monaco in the year 1963 with the aim of helping needy children and which is presently working on twenty-four projects throughout the world.

Many well-known champion skiers, both past and present, and other famous athletes, actors and show-business names took part in the latest edition including Pernilla Wiberg from Sweden, Franz Klammer and Fritz Strobl from Austria, Jure Kosir from Slovenia and Italian champion Denise Karbon as well as two locally-born skiers, Isolde Kostner and Peter Runggaldier.





Valerio Staffelli gives Prince Albert of Monaco the „Tapiro d'oro“



Prince Albert of Monaco arriving at Hotel Alpenroyal in Selva Gardena

They were joined by a host of other famous names such as Italian racing drivers Riccardo Patrese, Vito Antonio Liuzzi and Emanuele Pirro, Paris-Dakar rally winner Jutta Kleinschmidt from Germany and footballer Thomas Berthold, also from Germany, who played in the 1990 World Championship games in Italy and other VIPs such as Mauro Serra, president of the Stars for Children team, Hubertus von Hohenlohe, Valerio Staffelli, travelling reporter for the popular Italian TV programme “Striscia la Notizia” and, last but certainly in no way least, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Albert II of Monaco.

Val Gardena has hosted a huge variety of successful sporting events over the years but this particular one,

which took place from 8th. to 10th. February 2008 under the sponsorship of Prince Albert II, proved to be truly momentous. As we have already said, the weather was simply fantastic with great snow cover and cornflower blue skies set against the impressive scenery of the majestic, pristine Dolomites. The competition was, however, the main attraction and everyone who took part put heart-and-soul into it and both the athletes and numerous spectators had a great time. A total of fourteen teams took part with three athletes in each team and the event was comprised of two parts, a bob race and then a skiing race. One of the most highly quoted teams was that made up of “Kaiser” Franz Klammer, world champion footballer Thomas







Berthold and ex-Formula 1 driver Riccardo Patrese while our very own born-and-bred in Gardena, Peter Runggaldier, promoter of the event, raced together with Mauro Serra, president of the Star Team for Children and racing driver Emanuele Pirro. Crown Prince Albert himself set out first in the motorised bob event and completed the course with elegance and dignity. Unfortunately, not all the competitors looked as much as home on the snow cats but Jutta Kleinschmidt showed many of the male testers that the “weaker sex” can certainly hold its own and that her experience in the desert can come in useful on ice and snow, too. Ex-World Cup Athlete, Jure Kosir, very talented Slovenic slalom star was the fastest skier down the Giant Slalom run, managing to beat all the “home-grown” champions but, even so, Peter Runggaldier, Mauro Serra and Emanuele Pirro still managed to win the event. A very enjoyable Prize Winning Ceremony, during which the largest ice hockey stick in the world, specially made for our local Hockey Club Gardena, was presented, marked the end of the sporting events and then the more social part of the celebrations could begin. First of all, sports equipment and other articles donated by the athletes taking part in the event were auctioned off for charity to the highest bidder then followed a whole line-up of other entertainment and, finally, after three great days of fun for everyone, during which a true spirit of friendship and solidarity was seen under the patronage of Monaco’s Crown Prince Albert II, the III World Stars Ski Event closed and everyone involved felt satisfied to have had the opportunity of helping children in need.

## VIPs in Val Gardena



King Umberto of Italy  
with his wife Maria José

Sandro  
Pertini

Carlo Azeglio Ciampi



## Val Gardena ... home to Presidents of State and VIPs!

Over more than a century of tourism, Val Gardena is rightly proud for having hosted many important visitors in the valley including all kinds of VIPs, politicians, presidents and even members of various royal families. Representatives of the Royal Family of Savoy and King Umberto of Italy with his wife Maria José were the first to arrive followed a little later by King Baldovic of Belgium in the 50ths. Gardena has also been the favourite holiday place for presidents of the Republic of Italy, including Sandro Pertini, Giovanni Leone, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi and Francesco Cossiga while Mikhail Sakaschvili, President of Georgia, also spent some time in the valley a few years ago.



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