



## Inside the Birthplace of Modern Skiing: Q&A with Arlberg Insiders Barbara Sanders, Lisa Baker and Nina Gigele



*Photos courtesy Kristiania Lech (left) and by Jakub Sedivy courtesy Nina Gigele (middle and right)*

“As the world opens up after Covid, I think there is a sense of joy in every traveler. Combine that with an endorphin-inducing day on the slopes and I think that the ski resorts in Austria might be the happiest places on the planet this ski season!” says **Lisa Baker**, *SNOW Magazine* representative and founding Indagare Ambassador. An avid skier for over 30 years, she has skied everywhere from the Tatra mountains in Slovakia to the Highlands Bowl, but Lech’s glorious ski runs keep her returning to the Arlberg.

Lisa will be leading our **Insider Journey to Lech** in March, in the company of **Barbara Sanders**, as well as world-class skiers **Nina Gigele** and **Mike Perl**. Barbara is the Publisher, Founder and Owner of *SNOW Magazine* and has extensive ski guiding experience throughout the world. She started the magazine in 2007 to fill what she felt was a void in the publishing industry—a magazine focused on the prime combination of lifestyle with winter and ski fashion. Out on the slopes, **Nina Gigele** has spent the past seven years sharing her knowledge with others as a ski instructor, coach and ski

mountain guide, helping them experience the joy and adventure of being outdoors on the beautiful terrain.

**Here, Barbara, Lisa and Nina share an insider's look at the Arlberg—plus a few highlights of our [Insider Journey to Lech in March](#).**



Travelers on our Insider Journey to Lech with SNOW Magazine will enjoy four days of adventures on the ski runs, with all passes included. The Arlberg's carefully groomed slopes and diverse ski routes are connected with 88 different lifts and cable cars; rest assured, your guides will know where to take you to experience the best that the Arlberg region has to offer! Photo by Jakub Sedivy, courtesy Nina Gigele.

## What do you think makes Lech, Austria so special?

**Nina Gigele:** For me as a ski guide who is passionate about nature, snow and the mountains, I have been traveling all over the world, and I always find the most appealing feeling at home in Lech. The people are a big part of what makes Lech so special, especially what they have built up in the last year. Everyone is very passionate about what they do, whether it's working in one of the hotels or teaching ski lessons, and that's very unique. There is a lot of history and tradition that people here are proud of, creating a shared passion between them. The Insider Journey participants will really get a chance to meet the people of Lech and feel immersed in the community. Furthermore, the landscape and colors—especially in the evening with sunset—is

incredible and you can't find it anywhere else.

**Lisa Baker:** Lech is a fabulous town. You really start to feel the energy in the late afternoon, when skiers and snowboarders head down the mountain to gather on Lech's main drag—mingling at the terrace bars for après-ski, listening to music. It's a small town, but super buzzy and vibrant, which makes for a really fun end to the ski day.

What are some things our travelers might not know about Lech, or Austria in general—or might be surprised to learn about the destination?

**Nina Gigele:** When I was writing the book *Inside the Arlberg*, I realized that the Arlberg connects different villages from different provinces, therefore connecting different cultures. These communities had to build up their relationship with one another over the past years in order to make the Arlberg what it is today—this amazing ski resort and area that people from all over the world talk about.

Why is the Arlberg mountain range a unique destination as compared to other ski destinations nearby?

**Lisa Baker:** Not only will we be skiing in Lech, we'll also have easy access by slope or transport to St. Anton, St. Christoph, Stuben, Zürs, Warth-Schröcken and Oberlech.

**Barbara Sanders:** The Arlberg region is the birthplace of modern skiing. It's one of the world's prime ski destinations, the largest connected ski resort in Austria and the best après-ski in the world.



Immerse yourself in true Austrian ski culture in the company of insider Lisa Baker and fellow travelers who share your passion for skiing. You will ski exciting routes through the towns of Lech, Zürs and St. Anton, all with plenty of time to enjoy the après-ski scene. World-class skiers Mike Perl and Nina Gigele will coach you in daily skiing or snowboarding sessions down these legendary slopes. Photo by Jakub Sedivy, courtesy Nina Gigele.

## Who is this trip right for? What types of travelers do you hope it will attract?

**Nina Gigele:** This group trip to the Arlberg is right for anyone who loves skiing, is interested in the history of skiing and who would like to get to know my fellow ski instructor, Mike Perl, and myself as well as other locals. Those who love culinary destinations and want to meet and network with others that are passionate about skiing.

**Barbara Sanders:** This trip is great for strong, intermediate skiers up through experts. Anyone looking to connect with authentic alpine culture.

## What is special about traveling to Austria at this particular moment?

**Nina Gigele:** Since Covid, my travels have led me to meet many people that I have learned a lot from. You can meet so many inspiring and great personalities at our ski

resorts. They have a shared passion and pride for their home and are interested in living in the present—I appreciate that. Combine the community with the unique daily experiences, the beautiful homes and hotels and culinary delights and there you have a perfect trip.



As Barbara mentions, this Insider Journey will include invitations and visits to some of the top restaurants in the Arlberg. While spending the days skiing the snowy terrain, you will stop for lunch at the ski hütte Der Wolf (pictured above) to enjoy a meal prepared by award-winning chef Manuel Festner, as well as Burg Hotel, a legendary castle situated in Oberlech known for its humble beginnings in the early 1960s as a small milk parlor, among others. Photo by Adolf Bereuter, courtesy Der Wolf

What is the culinary and restaurant scene like in the Arlberg? Are there any new openings to note? Do you have any favorite spots—for lunch, dinner, après-ski?

**Lisa Baker:** The culinary scene in the Arlberg features delicious Tyrolean comfort food with inventive additions. One of my favorite mountain restaurants in the world is the **Hospiz Alm** in St. Christoph. It has a huge wine cellar, an outdoor deck with the most incredible views and an indoor slide to help you make it down to the restrooms in your ski boots.

**Barbara Sanders:** The dining scene is amazing, and on this Insider Journey we are

planning to have lunch at Der Wolf with the owner, Christian Wolf, where we will dine at **Hus Nr. 8** (almost impossible to get into without local connections).

**Nina Gigele:** Jakob & Ethel at Restaurant Klösterle

On our Insider Journey we will have a special shopping experience at Strolz (the most exclusive sports and fashion house in the Arlberg). What are your favorite items to shop for there? Is there anything in particular our travelers should know to buy?

**Lisa Baker:** I visited Lech in my earlier skiing days, when I had been a ski boot renter, which was typically really uncomfortable. My first visit to Strolz led to the purchase of ski boots. Strolz was a pioneer in the ski boot-fitting scene, being the first to use the foam fitting technique that so many other boot shops use today. The boots fit like a glove. If you need or want new ski boots, this is the place!

**Barbara Sanders:** Strolz carries all the best brands in the world—we are planning something special on this Insider Journey with Goldbergh.

What will the weather be like skiing in Austria in March?  
What do you recommend to pack?

**Barbara Sanders:** The Spring is generally warmer, but whenever you ski in the mountains, you should prepare for every possible type of weather. Bring your boots and a ski outfit on the plane with you in case a checked bag doesn't arrive.

**Nina Gigele:** The weather will most likely be sunny, and sometimes overnight snow will fall. It can be quite cold in the day, so I would recommend thinking about layering while packing—a ski jacket and ski pants, both thick and thin pullover options, sunglasses. I would say March is the best time to ski at the Arlberg.

At Indagare, we believe that how you travel matters. What was a most memorable travel moment on a recent trip you took?

**Lisa Baker:** Our family traveled to the Cyclades in Greece this past June. We spent a week on a catamaran exploring islands such as Sifnos and Milos, enjoying the sunshine and eating delicious Greek cuisine.

## What's next on your travel wishlist?

**Lisa Baker:** I'm traveling to Zimbabwe and Zambia with Indagare in January! A bucket list trip that I'm so excited for.

**Barbara Sanders:** I'm hoping to Heli Ski in Turkey soon!

## Do you have any book or movie recommendations for skiing in Austria?

**Barbara Sanders:** *Downhill Racer* is still the most iconic ski film of all time.

**Nina Gigele:** The book I wrote with other locals, called *Inside the Arlberg!*

**Learn More and [Book Now](#):** *You can travel with Lisa Baker and Nina Gigele on our Insider Journey to Lech with SNOW Magazine in March 2023.*

Follow Nina's adventures and ski inspiration on Instagram [@ninagigele](#).

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- Sydney Lapin on November 6, 2022

