

Gliding in the Alps

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GLIDING IN THE ALPS.

Already in the old days there were Alpine Gliders in mountainous Switzerland. To-day, as then, the kite and buzzard, borne on the scented upward currents of sunny mountain forests circle soundlessly and without beat of wings up and ever up into the vivid blue sky. In the higher regions, where firs and pines become smaller and more scarce, and the alpine meadows reach up through boulder-strewn slopes to the weather-beaten crags, is the country of the lively mountain rooks. During their pause at the summit, mountaineers and skiers always admire the acrobatic flying feats of these wind-tossed creatures, sailing over steep precipices with indescribable elegance in their lustrous black dress coats. Their mastership of the art of gliding in the fresh, cool upward current from the ridge is an open challenge to copy them and fly oneself. So at last, human beings dared to step off into space. They built themselves wings, which, gliding across the sea of air bore them safely through the ether. Gradually they, too, mastered the secrets governing the motorless attainment of height, by utilizing the sources of power in the air itself, and then kite, rook, tercel and eagle had to share their kingdom of the air with human gliders.

There will soon be no district above the alps that has not been invaded by gliders in their hovering flight. Mountain taking off points on Les Pléiades, Rochers de Naye, Bretaye and Crans-Montana opened up magnificent possibilities for gliding.

In the Bernese Oberland international flying camps were already to be found in the old days. Grisons offered far-sighted possibilities for taking-off in Arosa, Chur, Flims, Lenzerheide, Davos and Samaden. From Magadino you can glide over the Tessin Alps, and over the Säntis chain climb up to a height of 20,000 ft. in the upward currents of the Föhn wind. In the near future, alpine gliders in Switzerland will also reach the stratosphere; some time ago successful attempts were made in the Tyrol in this respect.

A stay in Switzerland can now be completed by the unforgettable experience of a motorless flight in the Alps. The country has comfortable passenger gliders at its disposal, steered by pilots with much alpine flying experience behind them, so to speak mountain guides who have put on wings. If you are especially lucky, you will even be received in flying audience by the king of the air during your trip; for it quite frequently happens that as the gliders hover silently in the evening air, eagles fly so close as almost to touch them. Safe and comfortable the passenger reclines in the wind-protected cabin of this modern air-yacht, from which he can see out on every side, while the wind rustles softly past the open window. Under the wide-spread wings there pass thousands of feet below you rough glacier crevices, eternal snowfields and dark pine-forests in lonely mountain valleys. When the sun sinks slowly in the west, and distant blue shadows change the Alps into a plastic relief, over which the light glints in magic colours, the glider with its passenger returns once more to its eyrie. Alpine gliding — who will come for a flight with us?

