

Short History of skiing

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SHORT HISTORY OF SKIING.

The Swiss Skiing Schools have now been in existence for 20 years. During this time they have taught altogether six million pupils of all countries and it is estimated that in Switzerland alone 2,500,000 persons are capable of skiing out of a population of about 4,500,000.

It would seem that skis came to the knowledge of the western European countries through a book entitled *Voyage en Laponie* in which the French playwright Jean-François Regnard described the journey he made in Lapland in 1681. He was astonished at seeing the Laps sliding on the snow on "long fir tree boards" on which their feet were secured by means of a leather strap, and he remarked that they could thus reach such a velocity that they could even exceed the speed of the wild animals they were hunting.

Nearly 200 years elapsed before skis made their appearance in the snowy regions of Central Europe and in the Alps where a few individuals began to ski in the nineties. It is interesting to note that skis were introduced in the Grisons by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. In 1893, when his wife was dangerously ill, he was advised to try a high altitude cure, the benefits of which having already been ascertained by several lung specialists. Conan Doyle took his wife to Switzerland and they spent the winter of 1893-94 at Davos. It is there that he wrote the greater part of the "Deeds of Brigadier Gerard" and, for his own amusement, he created a golf links at Davos.

When reading the English translation of Dr. Nansen's crossing of Greenland, Conan Doyle was struck by the description the Norwegian explorer gave of the skis used for crossing the snowfields. He mentioned the fact to a local maker of sledges, named Tobias Brangger, who immediately showed a great interest in these "instruments" as they called them — and three pairs of skis were ordered from Norway. Conan Doyle, Tobias Brangger, and his brother began forthwith their difficult training. Their first attempts and their innumerable falls thoroughly amused the crowds which gathered to look at them. After much practice and when they thought they had almost mastered their skis, the three men climbed to the top of the Jacobshorn (7,700ft.), about two miles southwest of Davos. From the summit they could see the flags the people of Davos had hoisted to celebrate their conquest.

Encouraged by that feat they decided to demonstrate the utility of that new means of transport by opening a direct communication from Davos to Arosa in winter time without going down to Chur and climbing again to Arosa. They crossed the Maienfeld Furka (8,022ft.) without any great difficulty and arrived at Arosa where in the hotel visitors' book Tobias wrote after Conan Doyle's name "sportsman." That was the first winter crossing of the pass and after that many other followed the example of Conan Doyle and his two Davos companions.

BY SWISSAIR TO SOUTH AMERICA.

On the 27th May Swissair inaugurates a new Service from Switzerland to South America, thus extending their network to embrace both the North and South Atlantic. During the initial period the route will be flown once weekly, from Zurich and Geneva to Sao Paulo via Lisbon-Dakar-Recife-Rio de Janeiro.

The latest long distance DC-6B aircraft, the same as on the New York route will be used exclusively to cover the 10,000 km between Switzerland and Sao Paulo. Flying time 25 hours. Total elapsed time, including stops en route 30 hours.

From Zurich and Geneva the departure will be early afternoon on Thursdays, arriving Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, afternoon on Fridays, whence excellent air connections are available to other South American destinations.

The return flight has been timed so as to provide immediate air connections from Switzerland to most of the Cities of importance in Europe and the Near East.

Swissair South Atlantic flights will be First Class only, carrying 48 passengers, i.e. 36 seats plus 12 slumberettes, for which there will be a small surcharge.

The opening of this new line to South America marks another milestone in the remarkable development of Swissair. Passengers from the U.K. may make connection with the South American service at Zurich by the daily Swissair DC-6B service, or at Geneva by the daily Convair service, both from London. Air Cargo has to be consigned to Swissair on Wednesdays, to allow time for the legalisation of documents.

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