

IN, ON AND AROUND THE WATER: WINTER LAKES IN TIROL

Tirol is rich not only in mountains but also in lakes. There are over 600 of them large and small dotted across the region, surrounded by imposing mountain peaks. However, what many people don't know is that Tirol's lakes are well worth a visit not only in summer but also in winter, when the frozen surface and sparkling landscape give them a special charm. Here are some of the best ways to spend time in, on and around the water during your next winter holiday in Tirol.

Winter hiking to the Möserer See lake • Region Seefeld – Tirols Hochplateau

Unspoiled nature and a unique mountain panorama characterise the Wildmoos Nature Reserve near Seefeld. The winter hike to the Möserer See lake leads through this beautifully peaceful landscape with plenty of great spots for photos. The frozen lake itself is lined with trees dotted along the shoreline. After a fresh snowfall you can only guess that there is a lake hidden under the thick white blanket covering the landscape. Right on the shore you will find the charming *Möserer Seestub'n*, a traditional hut offering hearty local food its large sun-soaked terrace. Another place well worth visiting is the *Lottenseehütte*, where homemade cakes are available every day and on Saturdays they serve up *Kiachl*, a special Tyrolean delicacy perfect for filling up the stomachs of hungry hikers.

Tip! The hike takes around three hours to complete. If that's too much walking, there is the option of using the local shuttle bus or a horse-drawn carriage to complete part of the route.

Further winter hikes around and to Tirol's wintry lakes can be found at www.tyrol.com/winter-walking.

Ice skating at Piburger See lake • Ötztal

There are no fewer than eight lakes in Tirol which freeze over in cold winters to create natural ice-skating rinks. There are few more magical feelings than gliding across the ice under the open sky with the cold air in your face and mighty mountains on the horizon. One of these lakes is the idyllic Piburger See near the entrance to the Ötztal Valley. Situated in the middle of a forest, it has a two-kilometre-long and eight-metre-wide skating track on the frozen surface which is kept in excellent condition throughout the winter. Skates can be rented from the nearby *Gasthof am See*, which also has all the equipment you need for curling. If you don't feel comfortable on skates, the lake is also accessible free of charge for winter walking.

The two shoreside eateries *Restaurant am Piburger See* and *Gasthaus Seehäusl* are good places to warm up cold feet and enjoy a bite to eat.

More ideas for ice skating on Tirol's lakes can be found at www.tyrol.com/ice-skating-in-tirol.

Cross country skiing at the Vilsalpsee lake • Tannheimer Tal

The snow-covered meadows and forests around the idyllic Vilsalpsee lake in the Tannheimer Tal Valley make this area of Tirol popular among cross-country skiing enthusiasts. The 13-kilometre cross-country skiing trail runs from the village of Tannheim through the Vilsalpsee Nature Reserve and is designed for aficionados of both the traditional Classic technique as well as the more modern and dynamic Skating technique. Once you arrive at the Vilsalpsee lake itself, it's worth stopping for a moment and taking in the spectacular views. Directly next to the shore you will find the *Gasthaus Vilsalpsee* and the *Café Bistro Haubentaucher* – perfect for a little rest and refreshment before heading back down to the starting point in Tannheim.

More tips for cross-country skiing trails to and along Tirol's lakes can be found at www.tyrol.com/cross-country-skiing.

Ice diving at the Urisee lake • Naturparkregion Reutte

One of the most beautiful lakes in the Außerfern region of Tirol, the Urisee lake near Reutte invites brave visitors to have a go at ice diving. Taking the plunge in the icy waters of this lake, up to 38 metres deep in places, is an unforgettable experience even for experienced divers. Professional guides are on hand to support you every step of the way. A real challenge for body and mind that dares you to test your limits and will leave you with memories for a lifetime!

Dates, prices and more information about ice diving at the Urisee lake can be requested directly from the diving school *Tauchbasis Urisee*: www.instagram.com/tauchbasisurisee.

Ice swimming in the Hechtsee lake • Kufsteinerland

Swimming in an ice-cold lake as the water temperatures hovers around freezing? Visitors to Tirol keen to try something a little different this winter can do precisely that at the Hechtsee lake. The largest lake in the Kufsteinerland region, it enjoys an idyllic location in the heart of the Brandenberg Alps and is a well-kept secret, especially in winter. As well as winter walkers, the region also attracts hardy bathers who swim in the lake all year round. One such brave soul is Horst Karrer, who goes swimming in the frozen Hechtsee every day in winter – and even breaks a hole in the ice when the water freezes over. There are several spots along the shore where you can enter the water in winter. And once you have completed the ultimate challenge, head straight to the lakeside *Seearena Hechtsee* to warm up again with a hot drink!

***Important!** For safety reasons please always observe the following rules when swimming outdoors in winter. Never swim alone. Let your body slowly adjust to cooler temperatures by swimming outdoors regularly in autumn. Enter the water slowly – do not jump in. Do*

not stay in the water for more than two minutes. Protect your head with a woolly hat or bathing cap – do not put your head under the water.

For more information about the Hechtsee lake please visit www.kufstein.com/en/tyrol-nature/summer/bathing-holiday/bathing-lakes/hechtsee-kufstein.html.

More information with lots of tips for winter activities in Tirol can be found at www.tyrol.com/winter-holidays.

Tirol with its 34 regions is one of the leading tourist destinations in the Alps. Tourism in Tirol dates back almost 200 years and has been at the forefront of many innovations. Guests in both summer and winter appreciate the unique landscape, the high standard of service and infra-structure, and the traditionally warm welcome that has made Tirol famous throughout the world. Based in the regional capital Innsbruck, Tirol Werbung is the tourism marketing organisation for Tirol. Its main task is to position Tirol as the number one holiday destination in the Alps.

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