

## Summer in the Ötztal

### A Mountain Novel in 4 Parts

#### Part 2: Mountaineers just want to have fun

Should we do it? Do we really want it? During dinner in the quaint Stube of Gasthof Wildspitz in Vent our group discusses in detail if a full-day mountain tour is suitable for children and young hikers or not. "I am very skeptical. Claudia climbs a mountain only if I invent an endless number of fairytales for her, until we reach the top. But after 2 hours I am gasping for breathe," states Heike. I myself agree with her. "But Claudia is only eight years old while Niki is already ten," replies my husband Peter. His best friend Markus shares his opinion: "You are right! Kids grow with such experiences."

Finally we make a compromise. The two sportsmen start their peak tour early in the morning, heading towards the "Ötzi Stage" – a brand new route of the ultimate Ötztal Trek. This high Alpine trail leads from the village of Vent across Niederthal valley to Martin-Busch-Hütte and further on to Similaunhütte located at 3017 m above sea level in the Italian Tirol. From there they continue up to Tisenjoch col and Hauslabjoch saddle at 3283 m, the site where Ötzi the 5300 year old Iceman was found by chance.

In the meantime, we and the kids become acclimatized to Vent and its scenic surroundings at some 2000 m altitude. This picturesque mountaineering village in a truly unique setting has only 150 inhabitants. Vent boasts a beautifully decorated church, a wonderful graveyard, a couple of small shops, marvelous farmhouses and splendid hotels. Heike is an excellent storyteller! She knows everything about the local glacier priest Franz Senn, the founder of modern Alpine tourism. Already 130 years ago Vent had the first professional mountain guides.

Heike is a walking encyclopedia and she provides us with plenty of information on the people and the valley. But we still wonder what's behind the little piles of stone next to the brook and the futurist sculptures around the stone-age hunting base? We cross the awe-inspiring Rofen Gorge on a narrow suspension bridge and meet Anny Klotz, the innkeeper of Berggasthof Rofenhof located at the edge of the breathtaking Rofen Gorge. She can tell us the secret: "During three weeks in August, young and upcoming sculptors create art objects on the occasion of the yearly open-air Art@Vent Symposium held amid Vent's meadows." The two Rofenhöfe inns are the highest, permanently settled farmhouses within the Eastern Alps. This unique spot was also the location of the world-famous "Die Geierwally" mountain melodrama. Claudia and Niki left the homey terrace after only a couple of minutes. They saw the sweet young Haflinger horses of Franz Klotz, the farmer and owner of the Rofenhöfe Haflinger breeding.

"Phew...", says Heike a few evenings later, "we are close to getting hyper-active, don't we!" Maybe she is right, we really had an infinite number of high Alpine experiences. The kids enjoyed their first climbing adventures offered by the varied Tabaluga Activity Program while the adults improved their mountain biking skills on a memorable tour to Obergurgl and Hochgurgl. Together with the whole family we headed towards the fantastic panorama road leading from the village of Sölden up to Rettenbach Glacier, where we watched the impressive glacier fields and crevasses close-by and without any danger. We spent a romantic night with jovial hours in the rustic parlor at Breslauer Hütte. And afterwards Peter and Markus conquered Tirol's highest mountain, Wildspitze peak at 3774 m above sea level, guided by the truly legendary mountain expert Luis Pirpamer – owner of the traditional Hotel Post in Vent. Luis and a couple of other professional alpinists took Ötzi the Iceman down to the valley. Although he is over 70 years old, he is still a passionate mountaineering guide who takes his guests safely to the valley's highest peaks. After a fine dinner menu served at Hotel Post we say goodbye to Vent and the friendly Pirpamer Family. Now we have other things to do. "Finally it's time for well-earned water pleasures," jokes Markus winking at Heike.

**Next Part (3): Concert for a hundred water voices**

(Wild and silent waters)

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