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ABSOLUTELY

Awesome Austrian skiing spot is simply sensational

A LITTLE piece of the Austrian countryside is about to be painted green as the Skiwelt region readies itself for its annual Irish invasion.

By KEVIN PALMER

The ski haven of Soll has long been a favourite for Ireland's Alpine lovers and such is the scale of the influx from this island each and every year that you could be forgiven for wondering whether the non-Irish

feel a little out of place.

While the distinctive Tyrolean hotels and bars scattered across the compact and idyllic village of Soll may not be akin to Dublin or Cork, the myriad of Irish voices around



GREEN SLOPES: Kevin Palmer (centre) with skiing pals

every corner make you feel very much at home.

And when it comes to the slopes that are guaranteed to be overloaded with the vital commodity that is snow, it quickly becomes apparent that you have stumbled across skiing heaven in Soll.

Highly productive snow cannons ensure some

210km of rolling hills can be covered with white powder, even if nature opts out of its role in the party and all levels of skiers catered for, so this relatively low resort (the village height is only 703m) has solved its biggest potential flaw.

The beauty of this ski resort is that one lift pass grants you access to almost 280km of slopes, with the interlinked runs to the villages of Scheffau, Westendorf, Hopfgarten, Ellmau, Going and Brixen all accessible on a brisk afternoon of skiing.

Plunge

However, it's easy to get lost when you take the plunge and venture off the home tracks in Soll, so the best way to navigate your way around the Skiwelt region is by signing up for the superbly efficient Ski School, who act as both tour guides and instructor during their five day course, depending on your ability.

Skiing virgins are well catered for by multi-lingual instructors who are sympathetic to the most nervous of first timers, while the more advanced groups can quickly progress from the technicalities of skiing to the more enjoyable pursuit of getting down to enjoying the art at increasing speeds.

The Skiwelt kids Ski School also win rave reviews, with parents comfortable leaving their beloved little ones in the capable hands of trained experts who generally get them skiing at a higher standard than the grown-ups by the end of the week.

And if the kids aren't satisfied with their days skiing, they can have extra entertainment in the evening with a toboggan ride home. Oh and if the grown-ups fancy a touch more skiing after the sun has set, the floodlit slopes are a great novelty.

Another cute innovation Skiwelt organisers have introduced is the comput-

STUNNING: Beautiful slopes lit up at night



erised system that tracks your progress across the slopes every time you jump on a ski lift. It means that you can see how far you have travelled throughout your holiday on your return.

An ideal day's skiing offers you a glimpse at many miles of runs that will test you and enchant you in equal measure and there's nothing better than stopping off at one of the numerous wooden eateries that litter the snowy landscape.

No trip to Austria would be complete without a sample of the delectable apfelstrudel (apple strudel), while the piping hot goulash or a warming hot chocolate are an ideal lunchtime offerings for those on their best behaviour.

Warmer

Soll really comes alive when the lifts close for the day at around 4pm as the bars in the village fill up with skiers telling tales of their days on the slopes and tucking into the Glühwein that is an essential end of day warmer.

You can feel the hot red wine warming the bones as you drink it.

The best post-skiing bar in Soll is Salven Stadl, a buzzing hang-out with great music and a host of the traditional Austrian games on



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OFF WE GO: Skiers prepare for a day in the open air