

## Looking at the starry sky. An evening foray through Tyrol's Hohe Salve region

**Tobias Muster reveals to guests the inspiration seclusion provides.**

**The setting: A tranquil high plateau, instead of a piste paradise. The guide: kitted out with laser pointer, instead of ski poles. Anyone who is out and about in the Hohe Salve region with hiking guide Tobias Muster (37), will discover the hidden aspects of the region at the westerly end of the Kitzbühel Alps. As you stomp through the idyllic Schneerosental wearing your snow-shoes, the real stars of his tour gradually emerge.**

‘Here we have the polar star, there the ‘Big Dipper’. Surely everyone recognises it’, says Tobias Muster, letting his laser pointer wander across the starry sky. There are occasional nods and murmurs of agreement. ‘Here the Milky Way. And if you look very closely you might even make out the Andromeda Galaxy.’ Everyone is now craning their necks, silently gazing in wonder at the spectacle opening up before them here.

Hiking guide Tobias Muster knows all about this scenario. ‘Most people don’t expect to be able to see so much with the naked eye’, explains this Wörgl born gentleman. About two years ago he completed his training to become a ‘Star Guide’. So much was packed in during the training – the stars and planets, galaxies and legends. It quickly became clear to him that he wanted to pass on this knowledge. He was already living in the right location. ‘We are very privileged in Tyrol. There are so many secluded valleys and mountains here and no artificial light sources. Perfect for stargazing.’

Perfect, just like Schneerosental, where Tobias has brought his group to today. A small, tranquil valley on the Angerberg high plateau, above Wörgl. During the day, a paradise for cross-country skiers and winter hikers, then for stargazers in the evening. Initially you walk in snowshoes along a stream, staying well away from the edge of the forest and the feeding areas out of respect for the animals who live there. There are several reasons for doing this easy hike - which takes around half an hour – ahead of the actual programme: ‘We have to get far away enough from any artificial light sources. Our eyes also need a bit of time to adapt to the darkness.’ As the group stomp through the snow, increasing numbers of stars become visible in the sky. Then there is the tranquillity. This peaceful stillness. ‘It is always important to me that guests ‘find themselves’ while out on my hikes. This happens best in secluded natural surroundings. “

When he is not working, the 37-year-old prefers to be out and about where there is no-one else around too. Also, preferably on touring skis as opposed to snowshoes. In Kelchsau for instance, a picturesque lateral valley in the Hohe Salve region – ideal for ski tourers, as Tobias reveals: ‘gentle ascents through secluded expanses, dreamy descents in the deep snow and superb views to the Kitzbüheler Horn, the Wilder Kaiser and the Hohe Tauern.’ And if he wants to take his leave of civilisation a little bit longer, he heads up to Neue Bamberger Hütte having donned ski skins and stays up there for the night. ‘Also, by the way, a dreamy spot for counting stars.’

Apropos, back to Schneerosental. Here Tobias reveals his favourite formation to the group: The Pleiades. A dazzling cluster of several stars – for Tobias, this is the loveliest cluster that can be seen in the night sky with the naked eye. And one which has an exciting story (‘that’s all part of stargazing.’). According to an Indian legend, The Pleiades are seven sisters, who fled to a rock to escape a bear. This rock grew higher

and higher to save the girls, until it reached the sky above, where The Pleiades were finally safe and where they still sparkle to this day.

After around two and a half hours the hiking group is back at the start point, snapping off their snowshoes and swapping stories about what they have experienced. 'You can do this at home off your own bat too', says Tobias and gives everyone a few tips. 'You don't have to travel for hundreds of kilometres. Just head out of the town or city for a little bit, where it is fairly dark and there isn't much artificial light. Take a simple map of the stars with you to get your bearings and maybe a pair of hiking binoculars. There is so much to discover just doing that alone.'

Those of you who would prefer to head out on an exploratory tour with hiking guide and star guide Tobias Muster can do just that on 2nd January, 9th January, 6th February, 13th February, 5th March and 12th March, during his snowshoe stargazing guided hikes in Schneerosental. (Register by the day before, 16.00, online or in the information office for the Hohe Salve region. Cost: 10 Euro with a guest card, 20 Euro without). Alternatively, Tobias offers his tours on request too, covering various topics. More information is available at [www.wandersguide-tirol.at](http://www.wandersguide-tirol.at).

**Hohe Salve region:** The Hohe Salve region brings together town and country. Wörgl which has 14,000 inhabitants, shopping options, restaurants and cafés, is regarded as the gateway to the Kitzbühel Alps. The towns of Hopfgarten, Itter, Kelchsau, Angath, Angerberg, Mariastein and Kichbichl each have their own charm – with rural structures and plenty of romance in unspoilt natural surroundings, lovely inns and churches. Meanwhile skiers will be right in a piste paradise in Hopfgarten, Itter and Kelchsau.

**Your guest ticket is also your train and S-Bahn ticket:** All holidaymakers in the four Kitzbühel Alp regions can use a valid guest card for transport in the local area. It can be used on trains (REX) and S-Bahn services, on the Wörgl to Hochfilzen route.

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