

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 40 (2013)
Heft: 6

Werbung

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Masks for New Year's Eve in Urnäsch in the canton of Appenzell (AR) on January 13th, Eastern Switzerland / Liechtenstein

Long live the New Year with vibrant winter traditions.

Welcoming the New Year

In Switzerland many different traditions and customs linked to New Year's Eve and winter are celebrated. They often give rise to noisy processions of strange and sometimes terrifying figures, accompanied by the sound of bells or the cracking of whips. It's a way of chasing away evil spirits in order to start the New Year on the right foot, or to see in the end of a long winter.

"Silvesterchlausen" in Appenzell

At dawn on the 1st or 13th of January, strange figures dressed in beautiful costumes invade the whole valley of Urnäsch in the canton of Appenzell (AR). "Wüeschte" (ugly figures), dressed in natural materials, "Schöne" (beautiful figures) and "Schö-Wüeschte" (beautiful ugly figures) ring the small and larger bells that adorn their clothing and go from house to house wishing a happy New Year to the residents within.

The wild ones of Lötschental

The remote valley of Lötschental in Valais has given rise to a number of different stories and legends. These are behind the custom of the dancing, masked carnival figures, the "Tschäggättä", who make their appearance in the valley around the time of Candlemas, scaring all those in their path.

Witches on the slopes

It's the maddest ski race of the season. Kitted out with their brooms, up to 1,000 witches take part in this popular race in the Aletsch region.



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The spirits of Appenzell

In addition to the procession of the "Chläuse" figures through the Urnäsch valley, the Säntis region offers a vast array of winter sports, from trekking in snow shoes to sleigh rides.



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The valley of the masks

An introduction to sculpting the wooden "Tschäggättä" masks is a very original way to round off a stay in Lötschental, the winter sports paradise in the canton of Valais.



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A collaboration between Switzerland Tourism and the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA)



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