

PRESS INFORMATION



OF MYSTICAL FIGURES AND ANCIENT TRADITIONS - THE GASTEIN PERCHTENLAUF

There, where the mountains are high and the valley are narrow, folk traditions are kept alive and well in a truly special way. After the usual four-year intermission, on January 1st and 6th 2018 the Perchten of Gastein, whose roots can be traced back deep into the 12th century, will pay their compliments to locals and visitors alike, bringing good luck and good health to all during the year to come.

Gastein's Perchten group is actually one of the oldest in the entire Alpine world, having managed to preserve itself true to its original form here in Gastein valley. Taking place only once every four years, from a folk-culture perspective the Gastein Perchtenlauf is quite unique, not least because over 140 different creatures and figures plucked from mythology and the world of legend take part. This custom has its origins in the efforts of our ancestors to drive out the winter, with all of its terrors, as effectively as possible. As the popular saying goes, the Perchten bring "happiness and health to the house, fields, stables and everywhere".

The Perchtenlauf tradition was actually suppressed for years during its early history by means of official bans and strict punishments. Yet to spite the opponents, during this time the Perchten simply roamed communities during the nighttime hours instead.

In the year 1837, King Ferdinand visited Gastein valley. The grandiose appearance of the Gastein Perchten to bid him welcome impressed him so much, he proclaimed that all prohibitions be lifted and thus laid the foundation for the Perchtenlauf we know today.

The program of the Perchtenlauf in Gastein is governed by a series of strict rules. The Perchten figures gather in the early morning hours while it is still dark, with festivities not ending until around 6 p.m. when night has once again shrouded the valley. During those approximately 9 hours in between, participants have to cover a distance of around 16 kilometers. For the 30 or so celebrants wearing headdresses that weigh as much as 50 kg a piece, this can be a major physical challenge. According to custom, no women are allowed to take part in the Perchtenlauf.

“In contrast to many similar events, in keeping with a centuries-old tradition our Perchten procession doesn’t just make its way to popular tourist centers, but also to all the smaller communities with a primarily rural population, such as Bad Bruck, Kötschachdorf, Remsach, Gadaunern and others”, says the marshal of the Perchten event, Andreas Mühlberger.

Text & Photo (in print quality) can be downloaded at <http://www.gastein.com/de/service/presse>.

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