



AllWays Traveller

Adelboden, Switzerland

[www.allwaystraveller.com](http://www.allwaystraveller.com)

## Majestic mountains everywhere in this stunning Alpine resort

**Adelboden is a traditional mountain village at the end of the Engstligen valley in the Bernese Oberland region of the Swiss Alps.**

The road ends at Adleboden but there are cable cars and ski lifts to take visitors up to some of the most spectacular Alpine scenery.

From December to early-May, Adleboden's snow covered mountain slopes are a magnet for winter sports enthusiasts.

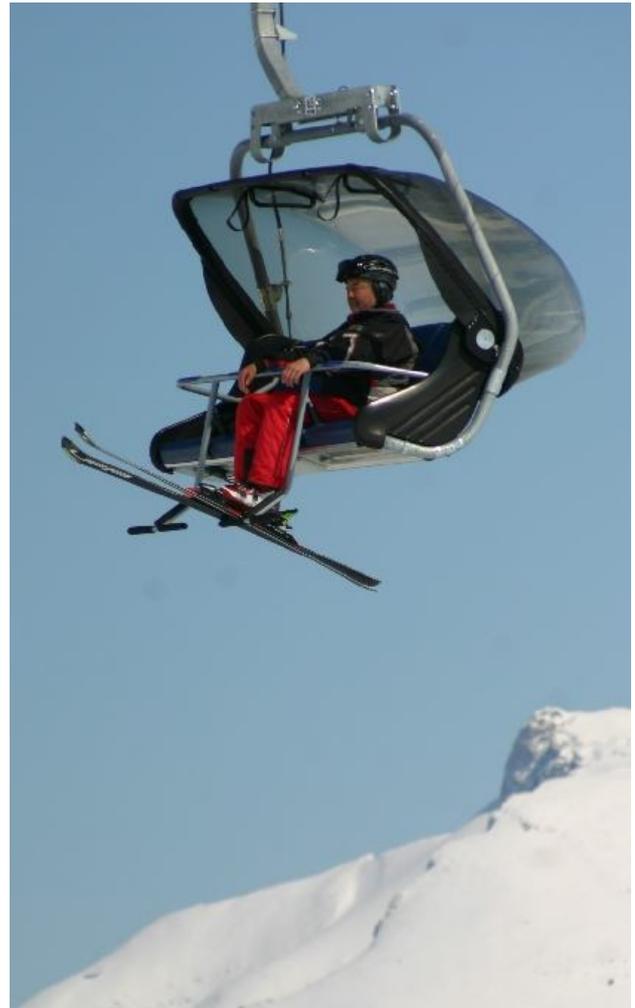
From June to October, the mountainsides turn into a lush green tapestry of grass that carpets the area.

It is then the walkers and bikers who come to Adelboden.

Adelboden, is yet to be as well known as some of the other Swiss mountain resorts – and it is this that makes a visit all the more enjoyable.

### Ashley Gibbins

Managing editor  
**AllWays traveller**



[www.adelboden.ch](http://www.adelboden.ch)

### The Alpine World Cup

The annual Alpine World Cup is considered the premier competition for alpine ski racing after the Winter Olympics and the Adelboden heat, held each January is known as the tournament's best.



### My first Alpine experience – and stunning



By Ashley Gibbins

**Leaving Berne airport for Adelboden, the first 20 minutes of the journey through the suburbs of the Swiss capital are relatively unremarkable.**

But then we leave the main road and head through the pine covered slopes that rise on either side of the road. Expectations rise with them.

Twenty-five minutes later we have driven as far as the road can take us through the Engstligen valley and are in Adelboden.

It's snowing heavily, as I was hoping it would be on our first visit to an Alpine resort.

But the resulting cloud cover brings visibility right in.

#### Where are the mountains?

They must be close at hand because Adelboden's 'city' centre' is bustling with men, women and children in ski gear.

Everyone seems to be walking with that distinctive, clumping, double limp type gait caused by wearing heavy ski boots.

The skis (which are carried on the shoulders) are also an obvious give-away, as is the window of the tourist information centre, which displays the smiling faces of the several dozen ski instructors operating in the resort.

As the snow continues to fall I find two ways to get to know more about Adelboden.

#### Hans Peter

The first comes in the smiling form of Hans Peter Oester, one of the regular tour guides used by the tourist office.

We take shelter in the village's small but fascinating museum, which is housed in a turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century English church, and worth an hour whatever the weather.

Peter whose family have been here for over four hundred years, and whose father Ernst helped to build the first ski lift, is a passionate perveyor of information on the village.

#### The first winter holiday package

By talking (or rather listening) to him we learn that skiing started in about 1900 and Adelboden was chosen, in 1903, for the first winter package holidays organised by Sir Henry Lunn, who went on to create the Lunn Poly travel agency empire.

### Adelboden in winter

The winter season in Adelboden is from 1 December to early-May (when the ski lifts close until June).



During this season, Adelboden offers every pursuit it is possible to peruse on snow – for beginners through to experts.

For those looking to try a winter activity holiday for the first time, all necessary clothing and equipment can be hired.

#### Winter in Adelboden includes :

##### Alpine skiing



Alpine, or downhill, skiing is sliding down snow-covered hills on skis with fixed-heel bindings.

Adelboden is a skiers paradise with 210km of ski pistes, of which 92km are blue; 96km are red and 22 are black.

## Even the internees were reluctant to leave

During the Second World War, Adelboden was used as an internment camp for some 600 Allied airmen.

Being interned in the village's hotels, on full pay and with local girls bussed in for the Saturday evening dance, it is perhaps not surprising that few were inclined to attempt an escape.

In the post war years, Adelboden grew in importance as a ski resort, with many airmen and their families returning on vacation to Adelboden.

International Ski racing began here in 1955 and Adelboden hosts one of the heats of the Audi FIS World Cup every January.

Then there are the many local farmers who winter their small herds (of up to a dozen cows) in the valley before moving them up to the lush mountain pastures for spring and summer, staying with them in the summer chalets dotted on the higher slopes.

The farmers are called the *gardeners of the mountains* because their cows keep the grass down during the warm spring and summer months.

## Fast facts about Adelboden

The second, and excellent, source of information is a little booklet called *Facts about Adelboden*.

Being produced by a Swiss tourist authority it is, as one would expect, a meticulously researched gem with of all manner of information.

It tells me, for instance, that in addition to 25 hotels in Adelboden, there are two farms in the area where it is possible to sleep on straw in one and wild hay in the other.

Snippets of information about the village and its Alpine location, as taken from *Facts about Adelboden*, are likely to crop up throughout this *AllWays traveller to Adelboden*.

## And there they are



We went to bed with the snow falling and woke to the sun shining brightly on a crystal clear day.

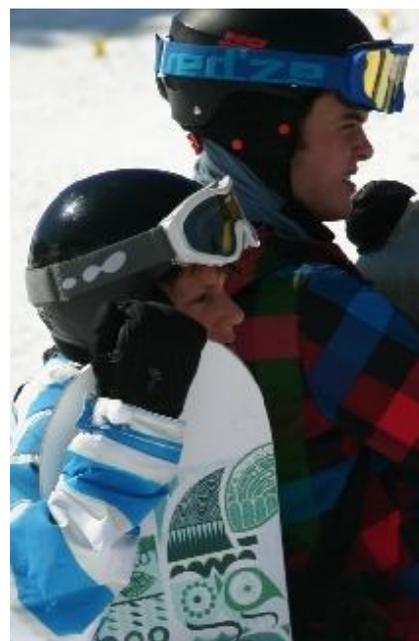
And there were the magnificent, majestic, snow covered mountains towering on all sides.

### Up into the mountains

The impulse to get up into the mountains was considerable and off we went.

A series of breathtaking ski lifts to the Silleren-Hahnenmoos ski area with Alfred Zumbach, one of Adelboden's ski instructors.

## Snowboarding



Snowboarding involves going downhill on a snowboard attached to the feet using a special boot set onto a mounted binding.

The development of snowboarding, in the 1960s to 1970s, was inspired by skateboarding, sledging, surfing and skiing and became a Winter Olympic Sport in 1998.

Regular guided snowboard tours are organised by the Ski and Snowboard School Adelboden.

## Cross-country skiing



There are 21km of cross-country skiing courses in Adelboden at Boden and Engstligen.

## An exhilarating landscape



With Alfred as our guide, we walked through this exhilarating landscape, while most others up there were skiing - or snowboarding.

On route are a number of bustling mountain restaurants offering the chance to relax over a coffee, hot chocolate, beer or a meal.

During the afternoon we meet Alfred's wife, Gabby, who is another of the Adelboden ski instructors and was taking one-to-one tuition of a German skier.

### Ski schools

The regions ski instructors and guides are provided through the official Ski and Snowboard School Adelboden and the Alpine School.

The Ski and Snowboard School, a partner organisation to Adelboden Tourism, which has its desk in our tourist office, provides ski and snowboard instructors for group or private lessons in skiing or snowboarding.

The Alpine School organises snow-shoe hikes, overnight stays in igloos and ice-climbing, avalanche and deep-snow survival training.

[www.adelboden.ch/.../SkiSnowboard](http://www.adelboden.ch/.../SkiSnowboard)  
[www.alpinschule-adelboden.ch](http://www.alpinschule-adelboden.ch)

### Engstligen



A wonderful day in the fresh mountain air, was followed by a second when we went up to the stunning Alpine plateau of Engstligen and the highest ski area in the region.

This area was also bustling with skiers, snowboarders, snow walkers and hikers.

### The fondue igloo



A unique experience on Engstligen is to enjoy fondue and ice wine by candlelight in the large igloo that has been here, during the winter months, since 1995.

### Winter hiking



There are hiking trails, of varying difficulty, in the region that allow walkers to enjoy the snow covered landscape.

Each one tends to start and end at one of the mountain restaurants.

### Skibocking



The first Skibock was developed in Adelboden, between 1920 and 1930, using a sawn-down ski and some form of simple seat.

The wooden seat is screwed onto sawn-down skis and children in Adelboden have used this to get to school more quickly in winter.

It is also a thrilling experience for visitors.

### Sledging



There are five sledge/toboggan runs of 15km in total in Adelboden: TschentenAlp-Möser, Sillerenbühl-Bergläger, Hahnenmoos-Geils, Hohliebe-Oey and Elsigenalp-Elsigbach.

## A place to stay

There is a wide choice of accommodation in and around Adelboden.

### The Baren Hotel



**We were fortunate enough to stay at the three star Hotel Baren, located right in the heart of the village.**

This traditional Swiss hotel has been run for many years by Christine and Peter Willen and has the comfort and relaxed efficiency that so suits its Alpine location.

The hotel's restaurant is open to non-residents and the outside cafe seating is always popular on sunny days.

[www.baeren-adelboden.ch](http://www.baeren-adelboden.ch)

Other hotels that come recommended are :

### The Cambrian



**The Cambrian is one of the flagship hotel's in Adelboden.**

A four star delux hotel it is a modern, stylish, designer hotel with all of the services one would expect from a hotel that would impress anywhere in the world.

The hotel's lounge and patio area, which is open to non-residents, has one of the best mountain views anywhere

[www.thecambrianadelboden.com](http://www.thecambrianadelboden.com)

### AdlerAdelbden



**The history of the three star delux AdlerAdleboden is remarkable.**

When the previous hotel was demolished, the site was earmarked for private apartments.

To ensure a new hotel replaced the old, 480 Adelboden villagers contributed CHF5 million, in large and small amounts, to fund the design and construction of the AdlerAdleboden.

The reward for these 480 shareholders? An annual dinner.

The delightful AdlerAdleboden opened in 1988 and has been popular ever since with many guests returning again and again.

[www.adleradelboden.ch](http://www.adleradelboden.ch)

## And dog sledging



Sledge dog driver Markus Röthlisberger spends the winter months with his dogs on Engstligen from where he offers cross-country dog sled rides.

## Snow tubing



Snowtubing, which is high-speed and great fun, rubber tyre ride, for all ages, is on offer on the Engstligen.

## Igloo building and sleeping



The Alpine School runs workshops on Engstligen for those wanting build their own igloo – and sleep in it afterwards.

## And where to eat

Adelboden has 47 mountain restaurants and snow bars next to the ski runs and a fine choice of establishments in the village itself.

Of these, two I can certainly recommend are the *Alt Taverne* and the *Alpenblick*.

### The Alte Taverne



**The Alte Taverne is one of the best bar restaurants in Adelboden.**

The building itself is a remarkable collection of three buildings, with the oldest dating back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

Within this is an intimate, fine dining restaurant linked to a lively bar that is the hub of the village's social scene.

[www.alte-taverne.ch](http://www.alte-taverne.ch)

### The Alpenblick

The Alpenblick has been serving some of Adelboden's finest cuisine and succulent Swiss wines for over 24 years.

This is the place for a very special meal during a visit to the village.

[www.alpenblick-adelboden.ch](http://www.alpenblick-adelboden.ch)

### A glimpse of seasons to come

We left Adelboden in complete contrast to our arrival.

The sun was shining on yet another beautiful day and I spot paragliders, circling overhead. Just a handful of colourful dots in a clear blue sky.

Though there is still excellent skiing to be had in the mountains, in Adelboden the pavement cafes were doing a roaring trade for customers in shirt sleeves.



Driving back down the valley to Berne, the lower slopes had shed their covering of snow to reveal brownish green grassy meadows.

This dullish hue, due to lack of sunlight since the first snow in December, would soon change to a bright green splattered with the colours of Alpine flowers.

The scene did though give a hint as to the spectacular summer beauty that will welcome visitors coming this way from June through to October.

But that's a completely different story – although one I will hope to write.

## The FIS Alpine Ski World Cup



The FIS Alpine Ski World Cup is one of the top international ski competitions in slalom and giant slalom.

The annual Ski World Cup heat in Adelboden in January is one of the most difficult, requiring great technical skill and can put the most experienced skiers through their paces.



The Adelboden ski festival held during the World Cup weekend attracts more than 40,000 enthusiasts.

[www.weltcup-adelboden.ch/en](http://www.weltcup-adelboden.ch/en)

### The Adelboden leisure and sports centre

If the weather closes in the thing to do is visit the Adelboden Arena to enjoy a wide range of activities.

The Arena has an ice skating rink, ten-pin bowling, a climbing hall with separate boulder room and a restaurant with a panorama view terrace.

There's also the chance to watch curling and ice hockey during their respective seasons.

[www.arena-adelboden.ch](http://www.arena-adelboden.ch)

## When to go



### Adelboden has two seasons.

Adelboden in winter (the focus of this *AllWays traveller*) starts on 1 December, by and stretches to early-May, when the ski-lifts close the first snow will have fallen, and stretches to early-May, when the ski-lifts close, when the ski-lifts close.

Adelboden then all but shuts down until June when the warm weather brings the summer visitors to hike and bike until October.

November is another very quiet month in Adelboden

## How to get there

### The best way to get to Adelboden is to fly into Berne.

It is then a 45-minute taxi ride, which costs approx CHF200, or the so efficient train to Frutigen and then a bus the last 10km to Adelboden.

Visitors can also fly into Zurich, Basel or Geneva and then go by rail.



I flew the London City Airport/Berne route with SkyWork, which flies to 25 European destinations from Berne.

SkyWork Airlines made its UK debut with direct flights from London City to Berne in March 2011 opening up the Swiss capital to leisure travellers.

SkyWork offers a twice daily direct service between London's premier business airport and Berne.

SkyWork Airlines has complimentary catering, free hold baggage allowance of 15kg and cabin baggage of 8kgs.

Fares start from £58 one way bookable online or on 0871 977 6088.

[www.flyskywork.com/en](http://www.flyskywork.com/en)

## Where to stay

For a small village, Adelboden provides a range of accommodation options.

There are 25 hotels in Adelboden ranging from two four star superior hotels, through four, three and two star, mountain hotels and b&b.

Other accommodation includes three campsites and, of course, the two farms with wild hay or straw bedding.

Accommodation in Adelboden can be reviewed and booked via :

[www.adelboden.ch](http://www.adelboden.ch)

## How to get around

This is a very small village so walking everywhere is the best option.



To get up into and around the mountains, a lift pass will cost about CHF60 and provides access to 72 ski lifts; eight cable cars and 11 chair lifts.

## What to speak

German is the official language in this part of Switzerland with residents speaking Swiss German which is slightly different.

French is also widely spoken and as with tourist destinations everywhere, English is widely understood.

## What to eat

### Bread and cheese

Swiss bread is something special and the cheese produced by the Adelboden farmers is delicious.

Each farmers cheese will have a slightly different taste.

## What to spend

Switzerland, which is not a member of the European Community, has the Swiss franc (CHF) as its national currency.

The Euro is also widely accepted

### taxes and tips

Adelboden levies a 'visitor' or 'bed tax' of between CHF3.00 and CHF4.20 a night, which helps to fund tourism promotion and the staging of events.

Service charge is not automatically added to any bills and is not expected 'as of right'. Where it is deemed to be deserved a tip of approximately 10% is customary.

## More information



Adelboden Frutigen 

[www.adelboden.ch](http://www.adelboden.ch)

### Promoting the region

The destinations of Adelboden-Frutigen, Thunersee, Kandertal and Lenk-Simmentalare beginning to coordinate the promotion of the Bernese Oberrand region.

## A snapshot of Adelboden



### AllWays traveller and the International Travel Writers Alliance

### Ashley Gibbins



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AllWays traveller provides independent travellers with an equally independent view of the world from the travel journalists in the International Travel Writers Alliance.



**The International Travel Writers Alliance**

[www.itwalliance.com](http://www.itwalliance.com)

The International Travel Writers Alliance is the worlds largest association of professional travel journalists.



Ashley is Chief Executive of the International Travel Writers Alliance and Managing Editor of *AllWays traveller*