

Mathias Zdarsky

1856 - 1940



Mathias Zdarsky Founder of alpine skiing
Lilienfeld Cradle of the alpine ski technique



www.lilienfeld.at



Mathias Zdarsky – Founder of alpine skiing **Lilienfeld – Cradle of the alpine ski technique**

The millennium old nordic ski technique found large interest in middle Europe about 100 years ago through **Dr. Fridtjof NANSEN**'s report "With Snowshoes through Greenland" (about the expedition in 1888).

Mathias ZDARSKY, a teacher, inventor and talented artist, lived since 1889 on Habernreith, a farm lying on a mountain in Lilienfeld.

Encouraged by Nansen's reports, Zdarsky sent for skis with the usual loose bow-rod-binding (without a sideways hold). He saw immediately that these skis were only useful on gentle sloping ranges and not for the mountainous and steep slopes of the alps.

In the winters of 1890 to 1896, he constructed the revolutionary steel-sole-binding that held the heel straight, not allowing it to move sideways. This was the only way to steer the skis properly.

With this binding and a much shorter ski than used by the nordics, he developed a new technique called the "**Alpine (Lilienfelder) Ski Technique**", which he first introduced in a book in November 1896.

This was the start of a new sport and there was no way of stopping it. Mathias Zdarsky made history by being the **founder of alpine skiing**.

In January of 1905, **Ing. Hassa HORN** from Oslo, the englishman Richardson, Mathias Zdarsky, and members of the "Alpine Ski Club" met in Puchberg in the "Wide Ream" of the Schneeberg. Here they made a race comparing the two techniques. A decision should be made by the fans of nordic skiing and the "Alpine (Lilienfelder) Ski Technique" if Zdarsky's technique was better.

The nordics realized that Zdarsky's ski technique was more suitable for the mountainous alpine ranges.



Sir Arnold LUNN, ski pionier and founder of the Arlberg-Kandahar-Race, congratulated Zdarsky to his 80th birthday by saying: **“Zdarsky will never be dethroned as father of alpine skiing”** (Zdarsky was also a honorary member of the Ski Club of Great Britain and the Kandahar Ski Club).

On March 19th 1905, Zdarsky organized **the first gate race in the history of alpine skiing** on the Muckenkogel in Lilienfeld, which was followed by many more important races.

Zdarsky also held ski courses as up from 1903 for the Austrian-Hungarian army. Major-General **Theodor Edler von LERCH**, a student of Zdarsky, taught alpine skiing from 1911 to 1912 in Japan (in the area of the present city of Joetsu) to japanese soldiers and other interested athletes.

Lilienfeld, the birthplace of alpine skiing, and **Joetsu**, the starting-point of this sport in **Japan**, signed on October 7th 1981, a city-partnership.

Zdarsky also made a name for himself as an avalanche-researcher. During the First World War he was active as “Alpine-Expert of the 10th Army”. During an avalanche salvage on February 28th, 1916, Zdarsky was caught by a following avalanche. The pressure of the snow broke over 80 of his bones. He kept his body well in shape with much discipline up to a high age and was still able to ski at the age of 80.

Mathias Zdarsky was born on 25th of February 1856 in **Kozichovice near Trebic** in the **Czech Republik**. Since 26th of October 1991 Trebic and Lilienfeld are partner-towns. The connections between Lilienfeld, Joetsu and Trebic are still maintained by active cultural exchanges and mutual visits to this day.

Zdarsky died on 20th of June 1940 in St.Pölten, he was buried in an alpine garden near the house in Lilienfeld where he lived.



The Zdarsky-Ski-Museum and the Zdarsky-Archives in the District-Folklore-Museum Lilienfeld:

The museums impressively shows the history of alpine skiing, the lifework of Mathias Zdarsky and a lot of historic ski equipment – and also the historical associations with both partner-towns.

www.zdarsky-ski-museum.at

Lilienfeld – The green heart of Lower Austria:

Lilienfeld is not only the birthplace of alpine skiing, it is also the capitol in the greenest district of Austria where over $\frac{3}{4}$ of the area is covered by forests.

The well-kept hiking paths offer something for every taste. The wonderful alpine region on the Muckenkogel (1248 m) is accessible by a chairlift – also in winter to enjoy alpine and off-piste-skiing, snowboarding, tobogganing and hiking.

The Cistercian monastery of Lilienfeld

is the largest medieval monastery of Austria with numerous architectural treasures, a wonderful baroque library und a skript dated in 1230 first showing the austrian colors red-white-red.

www.stift-lilienfeld.at

We would be glad to serve you with more informations and give you tips for your stay in Lilienfeld:

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