

AN ADVENTURE AT WERFEN

We had just recuperated from a most unusual journey when we fell head first into an experience one is not likely to forget.

It was a sunny morning on August 24th. Dad, an outdoor lover, decided a day like that should not be wasted. So he bundled us into the car and drove off. Mummy asked where we were going and the reply was "To Werfen."

When we arrived we parked the car and saw the Reisebureau for the Cisleitensland. We all decided that it would be fun to go inside an ice cave, so we bought the tickets and had lunch.

At 2 p.m. a small Volkswagen Van came to fetch the people going on the trip. We were driven up the mountain until we came to a small, muddy path. We climbed out of the van and walked for thirty minutes. During that time we walked through a forest and over piles of rocks. The path became narrower and the trees fell back and we were like mountain goats, clinging to the rock side, looking at the 1,000-odd metres of nothingness below us. We clambered over more rocks with mummy yelling at us every two seconds to be careful. We suddenly sighted a small cabin some metres above us. When we arrived we were able to rest for a few minutes and have a drink. Then six of us got into a small, rickety cable car and were pulled up; we were extremely high and the rocks were sheer and cruel-looking.

At last we arrived and saw a sign which said '1,580 metres to the ice caves' in German. A priest joined us and when daddy saw a two foot wide railway track, he asked the priest if we got a car here. The priest smiled and said "Oh no, no! We must walk." Then he trotted along the track; we all groaned and started walking. The path was very dangerous. We had to walk over lumber bridges of two trees with no barrier.

Finally we reached the cave. The place was immediately cold and our nostrils made jets of steam. The main discomfort was the dripping ceiling. Half an hour later the guide came out and handed every fifth person a lantern. He then opened the huge door to the cavern – a monstrous, icy wind blew through. As daddy had not told us where we were going, we had all worn light clothes, whilst the other visitors had come bundled up in heavy clothes and thick boots. Then the guide started talking in German and my sister and I tried to look intelligent and follow. We walked on a $1\frac{1}{2}$ foot wide wooden plank which was almost submerged in slosh and freezing water, and then reverted to walking on the ice floor. The cavern was huge and ominous. The guide lit a flare and showed us stalactites of pale blue and green like white jade. We climbed half-rotten vertical stairs up a blue glacier. Dad said he had had enough, so he turned back and joined another 'tour' which had just finished its exciting trip. $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours later we joined daddy, thoroughly wet, frozen and nearly frost-bitten, and perfectly miserable, after seeing a huge glacier, Alexander Mörbl's Tomb, and climbing 500 metres inside the mountain. Daddy who had been sitting outside frozen for nearly an hour was overjoyed to see us.

On the way down we had two accidents in our haste to reach the car. Lindy twisted her knee and I almost broke my ankle but was lucky enough to escape with only a badly twisted one.

We finally arrived home (in Salzburg) at 8.30 p.m. We thought we would sleep late but it was impossible. Lindy and I both awoke at 6.30 a.m.

Now when we think about it, it is all very amusing, but during the actual trip, it was murder.

I am sure you will all agree it was a real experience.

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