



Sweden, Beautiful Sweden

Winter conditions greet skiers at competition in Are

By Britt Janyk

The World Championships are behind us and we've already had one week of racing on the World Cup circuit. This past week I was up in Sweden racing in Are and we were welcomed with winter conditions. The physiotherapy tape was back on our faces to protect our skin from the wind and cold - brrr! But, thankfully it warmed up and by race day it had reached much more bearable temperatures of -10 to 0 C.

This week it's off to Tarvisio, Italy for the final Downhill and Super G races before World Cup finals. I've raced before in Tarvisio - it is a fun track. There are few good jumps and it is long so you need your skiing legs right to the end!

I always enjoy going to Sweden for races - the landscape is beautiful, the people are nice and the skiing is great (not that I get off of the race hill much!). I get porridge for breakfast in the mornings and the food is more like home.

I've had great results in Are before so I was really looking forward to the week in Sweden. Unfortunately, this year that was not the case. But the track was still fun and I just love standing in the start gate in Are and looking down the hill at the enormous frozen lake below.

During inspection, off of the jump I usually pick something in the distance to mark my line. At Are, those markers are usually the Audi ice track on the lake... one jump may be the left corner of the track and the other jump may be down the middle. I still haven't made it out on the ice to drive Audis on the track but it's on the list. Some of the girls tried to go this year but apparently there is only English instruction on Wednesdays. We don't need instruction - please just let us drive!

Across the lake and all around the edges there are snowmobile tracks - they are everywhere. They do some great snowmobile tours in Are, and when you are standing at the top of the ski hill you can see where they go.

Even the Are airport is fun. You fly in to a tiny little airport in Ostersund after connecting from Stockholm. There are two gates and on Monday morning when we went to catch the plane back to Munich we arrived at the airport to check in about 30 minutes before our flight was departing. One of the passengers on our shuttle bus from the hotel said that sometimes if a passenger is on the bus and is going to be late for their flight the bus will call ahead and get the plane to wait. Hilarious!

On Sunday after the super G race it is always a bit of a rush leaving because everyone loads up on buses at the same time. Half the race flew out of Trondheim instead of Ostersund, because it would be too crazy with all the teams. In Ostersund we were with the Italian girls and we arrived at our hotel in town before the sun had set so we decided to go check the town out. Being Sunday, every shop was shut so off we went to explore and found ourselves out on the frozen lake. And it was a BIG lake. There were people skating across it and it looked like you could go for miles. And they had plowed a big strip of it so that it was clean enough to skate on. Kids were skating and playing hockey, and Moms were skating and pushing strollers. It was fantastic.

We didn't have skates but our shoes were slippery enough on the ice. We finished the evening with some beautiful photos of the sunset and then set off back to the hotel to find some dinner. Most of the Italian girls speak English well enough to have a conversation, but one girl, Elena Fanchini, doesn't really speak any at all.

She will come up to you and speak in Italian and you have no clue what she is saying. She told us, in broken English that she wants to learn. I told her I'd make her a deal - she learns English and I'll learn Italian. Looks like I'll be working on my Italian all summer.

Earlier that day she had said on the bus, 'my English is best!' but she had actually meant to say 'better'! And of course everyone was laughing. And, this week I am in Italy where I can practice my Italian - Grazie! Mostly you need to use hand gestures and throw out a few words.

So, until next time - keep skiing and having fun out there because that is the most important part. But let's be honest, how can you NOT have fun when you are out on the mountain playing on your skis.