

# Stop-Go 2020

by Jacky Rix-Brown

The ÖAV “Stop Go” safety folder on ski touring took on a whole new meaning in March 2020!

We seniors had a ski-tour booked with Mc2Alpin for the week 22-28 March at Wildschönau. We looked forward to great days on the mountains with ascents gentle enough for us to enjoy yet strenuous enough for a challenge. We would enjoy the beautiful alpine views, and the freedom and exhilaration of skiing down in untracked snow! We knew our guide, Robert, would keep us safe, always applying ‘Stop-Go’ to ensure we missed avalanche prone slopes or other dangers.



*Heading for a good summit, Zederhaus 2017 - Jacky Rix-Brown*

Then, before Italy closed its ski areas, we were relieved that the Austrian government closed its borders with Italy, to keep Covid-19 out, and were glad we hadn't opted for a tour in Italy. It must have been about 7 March that we heard this had failed to prevent the virus reaching Ischgl. So the Stop-Go process began to be applied to our whole trip, re-enforced by news from Diana Penny Sherpani that other tours and courses were being cancelled.

Checking Mc2Alpin's ts & cs we knew we would be liable for almost all the cost of the tour if we cancelled so late, yet didn't want to risk waiting till cancellation was forced by governments. We knew we'd be safe enough out on the mountains away from crowds, but we needed to get there which meant crowded airports, 'planes and trains. A 'phone call to M2Alpin met with an understanding sympathetic ear. They contacted the hotel and negotiated only a small cancellation fee there. Adding a negligible amount to go straight to the guide, they offered us cancellation at a minimum charge – such a very reasonable offer. So we accepted.

For me that meant also cancelling a warm up week too, and changing plans only 2 days before due to fly out. A pleasant surprise was finding that about half what I paid for a non-refundable flight was in fact refunded because it was the tax part!

Within a week Austria went into lock-down and the UK followed only days later. Having been training since Christmas to get fit, suddenly we were limited to 1 hour a day exercising outside. Those of us considered extra vulnerable were shielded and not meant to leave our homes at all. That was when I discovered that if I walked round our back garden 20 times I had done a whole kilometre and climbed very little indeed!

We are a positive-thinking bunch – you have to be to go ski-touring when over 70 years old! So we have arranged with Mc2Alpin just to postpone the tour until 2021. So there will be a Senior tour appearing in the MENOC section of the newsletter, but priority for places will be given to the 8 disappointed seniors who couldn't go this year. Of course one or two could fall by the wayside at our age, so then others would be welcome to join the tour.

As soon as Covid and lock-down allow, we'll begin getting fit again ready for 2021!



*Robert assists at a tricky stream crossing, Zederhaus 2017 by Jacky Rix-Brown*